

# MINUTES OF CABINET

Tuesday, 17 November 2020  
(6:00 - 8:24 pm)

**Present:** Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair), Cllr Saima Ashraf (Deputy Chair), Cllr Dominic Twomey (Deputy Chair), Cllr Sade Bright, Cllr Evelyn Carpenter, Cllr Cameron Geddes, Cllr Syed Ghani, Cllr Margaret Mullane and Cllr Maureen Worby

## **39. Declaration of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **40. Councillor Lynda Rice**

The Chair placed on record his thanks to Councillor Lynda Rice for her work, having recently stood down from her position on the Cabinet as the Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Diversity. He confirmed that, during the period of the pandemic, the responsibilities of the portfolio would be overseen by Councillor Ashraf, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Engagement and Councillor Sade Bright, the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Skills and Aspiration.

## **41. Minutes (20 October 2020)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 were confirmed as correct.

## **42. Update on COVID-19 Issues**

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration gave an update on COVID-19 issues relating to the Borough.

It was noted that since the beginning of the pandemic approximately 3,430 residents had tested positive for the virus and there had been an increase of 520 cases in the past seven days, which meant that the Borough infection rate was now at 244 cases per 100,000. Whilst testing rates had increased there was still more to be done with current capacity only at 40% utilisation across the five test sites in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member stated that the increasing rates of positivity was concerning with outbreaks occurring in various locations across the Borough driven by household transmission. The worst affected age group was in the 45-64 bracket while it appeared that no one ethnic group had been adversely affected.

Sadly, the total number of deaths in the Borough due to COVID stood at 190 which represented approximately 11% more excess deaths than would be expected at this time of the year.

Public Health had undertaken local test and trace to help support the national effort, although the success of test and trace was hindered by the fact that not everybody was self-isolating when notified. The Cabinet Member, whilst

recognising the difficulties and hardship that self-isolating brought, urged all residents to play their part in order to save lives and defeat the virus. She welcomed the latest news about possible vaccines but stressed that was for the future and residents must obey the restrictions and rules over the Christmas festive period.

Cabinet **resolved** to note the update on the latest COVID-19 pandemic issues relating to the Borough.

#### **43. Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (Period 6, September 2020)**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on the Council's revenue budget monitoring position for the 2020/21 financial year at 30 September 2020 (period 6).

The Cabinet Member introduced the report by referencing the recent events in the London Borough of Croydon which, following a report from external auditors on 21 October, had been issued a Section 114 Notice due to significant financial problems. He pointed out that whilst it would seem that some of Croydon's financial problems were of its own doing, what it did highlight was the extremely difficult and challenging financial environment that all local authorities had faced for many years due to a decade of Government austerity measures and the pandemic was the tipping point for Croydon. He added that for many authorities including Barking and Dagenham, the full effects of Covid-19 were still to be felt and that there would be difficult financial times ahead. He was confident, however, that Barking and Dagenham would not face the same position as Croydon due to this Council's robust governance and financial management over recent years which was underpinned by the plan of growth and investment.

The Council's General Fund revenue budget at the end of period 6 indicated that despite the continuing economic impacts of COVID-19, including the lockdown, and the high level of additional costs and pressures including loss of service income from fees and charges, the underlying budget variance was £5.525m, which represented an improvement on the period 6 position.

Another tranche of non-ringfenced grant support funding for Local Government was announced in mid-October, taking the total allocation for Barking and Dagenham to £22.56m, plus £1.363m which was expected as compensation for the loss of income. The Cabinet Member stated that after taking into account the significant financial pressures stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, current year-end projections gave the potential range of outturn variance of between £1.525m and £10.465m which was a narrowing of the range since last month. In practice it was likely to fall between those extremes with a likely overall variance of £5.987m which would be met by using a combination of reserves, efficiency savings, short term cost reductions and maximising income subject to Covid-19 restraints.

The Cabinet Member summarised the budget monitoring position across the range of services including the additional Covid pressures, the current forecasted position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the level of reserves, details of the key savings programme, the Council Companies and particularly the returns and expected dividends due to the Council in the light of Covid, and finally an

update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the projected revenue outturn forecast for the 2020/21 financial year as set out in sections 2 to 4 and Appendix A of the report and the potential impact on the reserves position as set out in section 7 of the report;
- (ii) Note the update on key savings programmes, as set out in section 5 of the report;
- (iii) Note the update on the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown, as set out in section 6 of the report; and
- (iv) Note the update on the Dedicated Schools Grant position including in section nine of the report.

#### **44. Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25**

Further to Minute 18 (14 July 2020), the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on the Budget Strategy for 2021/22 to 2024/25 and an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that was revised and approved by Cabinet in July 2020 in response partly to Covid-19 as well as other issues including the ongoing delays with the Fair Funding Review and other Government plans around the retention of business rates.

He explained that the MTFS would continue to be reviewed and revised, not least to address the Borough's growing population and the added pressures and demands that would bring. The financial uncertainty had also not been helped by the Government delaying the Autumn Spending Review and the likelihood that there would be a one-year only funding settlement for 2021/22, probably to be announced in December 2020. That timetable made it incredibly difficult and challenging for the Council to plan and consult on a four-year budget strategy, albeit it was necessary to do so.

The Cabinet Member advised that the strategy included many uncertainties due to Covid-19. Assumptions on a series of best projections over the period had, by necessity, been made including income returning to near normal levels by the start of the next financial year. However, that would be wholly dependent on the public health situation at that time and, therefore, further Government financial support may be necessary. The strategy also set out the planned budget public consultation process on the Council Tax levy for next year.

The Cabinet Member referred to the progress on the savings achieved through the Council's Transformation programme which, up to the beginning of the current financial year, had achieved savings totalling £32m. A further £12m had been projected during the current financial year but had not been realised due to Covid-19, creating further pressures on achieving a balanced budget and, therefore, further mitigating measures were required.

It was also noted that the report had been prepared before the latest tranche of

Government funding had been known and the Cabinet Member confirmed that the updated position would be reflected in future budget monitoring reports. There were also a number of other savings and improvements in practices set out in the report which had helped to improve the financial position of the Council.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the continued commitment to delivering the savings proposed in the MTFS reports approved by Assembly in February 2017 and updated in subsequent years;
- (ii) Agree the proposed consultation process for the budget, as set out in section 9 of the report;
- (iii) Agree to consult the residents and taxpayers of the borough on the levying of a 2% General Council Tax increase and a 1% Social Care Precept to support the Borough's most vulnerable residents, subject to those thresholds being confirmed;
- (iv) Note that London authorities were currently exploring the possibility of continuing the business rates pooling arrangement and approve, in principle, that the Council should continue to participate in such an arrangement if deemed appropriate; and
- (v) Delegate authority to the Finance Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to enter into the Memorandum of Understanding for any future London pooling arrangements.

#### **45. Fees and Charges 2021**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced a report on the proposed fees and charges for Council services, the majority of which would come into effect from 1 January 2021.

The Cabinet Member referred to the Council's Charging Policy which underpinned the review of fees and charges and explained that the default position, which had been applied to the majority of services, was an inflationary increase of 1.6% in line with the July 2020 Retail Price Index.

In response to the report the Cabinet Members for Public Realm and Enforcement and Community Safety drew attention to a number of specified fees as follows:

- Due to increasing development across the Borough and a growing demand for refuse collections, a small charge had been introduced for additional collections;
- Given the level of take up for the green waste collection service the existing charge of £40 annum would be capped for 2021;
- In recognition of their vital work during the pandemic, key NHS workers would continue to receive free parking permits up to 31 January 2021;
- Charges for care workers to park in all CPZ's had been set at £100 per annum, the cost of which was refundable through HRMC;

- Barking Market pitch fees had been frozen.

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety also provided information as to how the Council used the income generated through the parking service which included the upgrading of uniforms, radio equipment and body worn cameras for parking attendants.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix A to the report, to be effective from 1 January 2021 unless otherwise stated,
- (ii) Note the fees and charges no longer applicable from 1 January 2021, as set out in Appendix B to the report; and
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Director of People and Resilience, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and the relevant Cabinet Members, to set fees and charges to be applied from September for schools and academic year-based activities.

#### **46. Treasury Management 2020/21 Mid-Year Review**

Further to Minute 104 (17 February 2020), the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced a report on the mid-year review of the Council's treasury management activities for 2020/21 and, in summarising the content of the report, he highlighted compliance with the Council's policies and statutory requirements.

Cabinet therefore **resolved to recommend the Assembly** to note:

- (i) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2020/21;
- (ii) That the value of the treasury investments as at 30 September 2020 totalled £241.1m;
- (iii) That the treasury investment strategy outperformed its peer group, with a return of 1.50% against an average of 0.48% for London Local Authorities and 0.34% for the total comparable population of 211 Local Authorities;
- (iv) That the value of the commercial and residential loans lent by the Council as at 31 March 2020 totalled £171.0m;
- (v) That the value of long term borrowing as at 30 September 2020 totalled £945.8m, of which £275.9m related to the Housing Revenue Account and £669.9m to the General Fund;
- (vi) That the value of short term borrowing as at 30 September 2020 totalled £99.5m;
- (vii) That interest would be capitalised on long term developments of over £10m, effective from 1 April 2019; and

- (viii) That in the first half of the 2020/21 financial year, the Council complied with all 2020/21 treasury management indicators.

#### **47. Annual Education Performance Review 2019/20**

The Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement introduced the annual report on educational and participation performance during 2019/20 and progress against the key priorities of the Education and Participation Strategy 2018-2022, and opened by thanking the Schools and teachers for their creative work in keeping schools open safely during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member referenced a recent Ofsted Panel meeting where members heard about the measures schools had introduced to ensure safe teaching and learning practices and the steps taken to prepare pupils should it prove necessary for them and teachers to self-isolate. The wellbeing of pupils and staff was a high priority for all schools with a wide range of training and support available. She welcomed the report detailing the response of schools to the pandemic and how it had worked with Public Health and Children Services, providing valuable lessons for the future.

The principle purpose of the report was to review progress against the five objectives of the Education & Participation Strategy 2018-22 as detailed within the context of Covid-19. The Cabinet Member highlighted the achievement of a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted rating of 91.5 % by the schools, which was well above the national benchmark and just below the London average of 93%. In respect to exam performance, it was noted that performance at GCSE and A level were largely based on teacher assessment, and that following a U-turn by Government there was no national benchmarking. That said, the Cabinet Member was pleased to report that the number of young people going onto higher education had increased and most obtained their preferred choice of University.

Other issues in the report highlighted by the Cabinet Member included:

- the strengthening of the Early Years' Service;
- the important roles played of B&D School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP) in offering a wide range of training and support, and the Education service in working with schools striving for continuous improvement, as well as responding through campaigns with partner agencies to Black Lives Matter and youth violence and knife crime;
- the role of the local Further Education college which was well placed to respond to the various regeneration opportunities in the Borough offering state-of-the-art vocational training; and
- the financial pressures on the Dedicated Schools Budget (DSB), particularly those areas not covered as a result of the effects of the pandemic.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member stated that whilst there was still a lot to do she was confident that the Schools, the Early Years' Service and partners would rise to the challenges ahead and achieve the objectives set out in the report. The Chair echoed those sentiments and added that the Council was rightly proud of what the staff, governors and teachers do for the Borough's young people who, despite such challenging times, had performed amazingly.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Renew the Council's commitment to continuing to strengthen and develop partnerships with Barking and Dagenham's family of schools, BDSIP, Barking & Dagenham College, CU London and other key partners to achieve the best possible outcomes and opportunities for the borough's children and young people; and
- (ii) Note performance against the priorities of the Education and Participation Strategy 2018-22 as set out in section 3 of the report and in the dataset at Appendix A to the report, acknowledging that 2019/20 updates had been made to lines 25-28 of the dataset only and were provisional.

**48. Proposed Redevelopment of Brocklebank Lodge site, Becontree Avenue, Dagenham RM8 3BX**

Further to Minute 93 (21 January 2020), the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing presented a report of proposals to redevelop the Brocklebank Lodge site to provide 53 new homes, 16 of which would be specifically for local people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as part of the Council's Housing for Vulnerable People Programme.

In their capacities as ward councillors, the Cabinet Members for Social Care and Integration and Public Realm fully supported the proposal and urged the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing to progress phase 2 of the development to realise a community use on the site, linked to the ongoing work on developing a model of community hubs in the Borough. The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Integration added that the scheme would support the objective of bringing out-of-Borough placements back into the Borough, giving those local residents a better quality of life as well as reducing the high cost of out-of-Borough placements. On that point, it was noted that further discussions would be held to explore the opportunity for similar developments on other sites in the Borough.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the proposed redevelopment and use of the Brocklebank Lodge site as shown edged red in the plan at Appendix 1 to the report;
- (ii) Agree that, subject to the grant of planning permission and receipt of satisfactory construction tender prices, the project be financed and held within the residential asset class of the Investment and Acquisition Strategy;
- (iii) Agree the inclusion of the project in the Council's Capital Programme, subject to securing planning permission and procurement of a contractor in accordance with the project outputs and budget;
- (iv) Agree that the total development cost of £14,903,642 be funded through a combination of GLA grant funding/Right to Buy receipts and borrowing, as set out in section 3.4 of the report;
- (v) Agree that, on completion, the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) housing land be appropriated from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue

Account with the necessary accounting reconciliation;

- (vi) Agree that the affordable rented housing be leased to the Special Purpose Vehicle owned by Barking & Dagenham Renew and Barking and Dagenham Reside Regeneration Ltd, which would manage and maintain the units in accordance with the funding terms in a loan agreement between the Council and the Special Purpose Vehicle;
- (vii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, on the advice of the Procurement Board, to approve the final procurement strategy for the project works;
- (viii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Members for Finance, Performance and Core Services and Regeneration and Social Housing, to negotiate terms and agree the contract documents to fully implement and effect the proposals set out in the report; and
- (ix) Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, or an authorised delegate on her behalf, to execute all the legal agreements, contracts and other documents on behalf of the Council.

#### **49. Reviewed Corporate Plan 2020-22**

By Minute 132 (21 April 2020) the Cabinet and subsequently the Assembly, agreed the new Corporate Plan and Single Performance Framework (SPF) on the understanding that their contents would need to be reviewed, later in the year, to take account of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's plans for the next two years.

In that respect, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on updates to the Corporate Plan 2020-22 and the SPF which took account of the developing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as lessons learned from the implementation of the SPF over those past few months. He commented that whilst the pandemic continued to evolve, the Council was now in a much better position to understand how Covid-19 was impacting on its resources, priorities and plans, and the updates documents reflected those issues.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Recommend the Assembly to agree the reviewed Corporate Plan as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (ii) Agree the reviewed Single Performance Framework as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

#### **50. Appropriation of Land at Dagenham Film Studios**

Further to Minute 35 (20 October 2020), the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing reported on a number of land-related matters associated with the development of major film/TV studios and associated media related activity at the LEUK (former Sanofi) site, Rainham Road South, Dagenham.



Members were fully supportive of the proposals set out in the report to enable the Council to achieve its ambitions for the site.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree to appropriate the land shown edged red in Appendix 1 to the report for planning purposes (namely the construction of Film Studios), in accordance with section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to acquire the land shown edged red in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 to the report for planning purposes (namely the construction of Film Studios) once ownership transferred to the Council, in accordance with section 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- (iii) Approve the subsequent use of the Council's powers under sections 203 - 206 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 in respect of the land to override third party interests that may be infringed by the development of the Film Studios;
- (iv) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to waive the condition linked to the expiry of the judicial review period in respect of decisions contemplated within the report and to take out judicial review insurance if appropriate; and
- (v) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, to enter into confirmatory deeds as set out in the Section 106 agreement once the Council acquired the land shown in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report.

## **51. Draft Thames Road Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing presented a report on the draft Thames Road Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), forming part of the Borough Local Plan 2021-2037, and plans for an 8-week statutory public consultation during December 2020 and January 2021.

The Cabinet Member explained that the SPD would help change the physical infrastructure of the area with a view to introducing new residential development and community facilities as well as maximise a mixed range of employment uses in the location.

Arising from the discussions, the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration suggested that given the industrial nature of Thames Road and the longer term aspirations set out in the Plan, it would be helpful as an interim measure to soften the look and feel of the location by introducing some low-cost tree planting to have an immediate impact. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing welcomed the suggestion, commenting that it would help to change the public realm and would build on the current Thames View Greenway project.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve the Draft Thames Road Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) at Appendix 1 to the report for consultation; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing and the Chief Planner, Be First, to make any appropriate revisions to the SPD following consultation and approve the final version for adoption.