

MINUTES OF CABINET

Tuesday, 23 June 2015
(7:02 - 8:27 pm)

Present: Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair), Cllr Dominic Twomey (Deputy Chair), Cllr Evelyn Carpenter, Cllr Cameron Geddes, Cllr Lynda Rice, Cllr Bill Turner and Cllr Maureen Worby

Also Present: Cllr Syed Ghani

Apologies: Cllr Saima Ashraf and Cllr Laila Butt

11. Declaration of Members' Interests

Councillor Twomey declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 6 "Review of Local Welfare and Crisis Support Schemes to Vulnerable Residents with options for the Local Emergency Support Service", as he was an employee of a local voluntary organisation. Councillor Twomey chose to leave the room while the matter was being discussed and took no part in the decision-making.

12. Minutes (2 June 2015)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2015 were confirmed as correct.

13. Review of Local Welfare and Crisis Support Schemes to Vulnerable Residents with options for the Local Emergency Support Service

(The Chair agreed to bring forward consideration of this item in view of the attendance of representatives of Harmony House and the Council for Voluntary Services.)

Marie Kearns, Harmony House Contract Manager for the Local Emergency Support Service (LESS), and Erica Jenkins, Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Services (BDCVS), were invited to address the Cabinet on their response to the proposals contained within the report. Ms Kearns advised that she was also speaking on behalf of Pip Salvador-Jones, Director of the Barking and Dagenham Citizen's Advice Bureau who were a delivery partner of the LESS, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Ms Kearns referred to her email to the Council of 19 June 2015 in which she highlighted a number of issues and sought clarification on several aspects of the report. She explained that over 3,000 vulnerable local people apply for support each year and the cessation of the LESS would place considerable pressures on other statutory services provided by the Council and voluntary sector partners. The role out of further Government welfare reforms, including the Universal Credit, would bring additional pressures on many individuals and families who were already finding it extremely difficult to manage with the little money that they had. Ms Kearns stressed that resilience work was essential and the current model of delivery was founded on that.

Ms Jenkins reiterated the concerns regarding the changes to the benefits system and felt that it was crucial for the LESS to continue while the support agencies and businesses put in place additional arrangements to meet the inevitable pressures arising from those changes. Both Ms Jenkins and Ms Kearns acknowledged the difficult position that the Council had been placed in by the withdrawal of Central Government funding for the LESS and the other cuts to statutory services that support the vulnerable in the community, but suggested secondary safety nets such as the LESS were vital and should continue.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health introduced the report and similarly expressed her frustration at the impact that the Government's austerity measures were having on local authorities and the voluntary sector agencies that support local communities. The Cabinet Member reminded her colleagues that the decision taken by Cabinet under Minute 101 (16 February 2015) was to extend the current contract for a further six months from 1 April 2015, funded from the Council's Revenue Support Grant settlement, and that the proposal in today's report was to discontinue the project at the end of that extension in favour of alternative arrangements to support vulnerable residents and build resilience in the community.

The Cabinet Member referred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Emergency Budget expected in July 2015, which was predicted to make £12 billion cuts to the welfare budget, and stressed that it was vital for the Council to retain as much flexibility as possible in the lead-up to that announcement. The funding of £300,000 that the Council was able to allocate to the LESS would not properly address the level of need, so it was necessary to look at how any available funding could be best used in the longer term. Reference was also made to the delivery costs of approximately £90,000 for the LESS.

Cabinet Members spoke in support of the need to retain as much flexibility at the present time and welcomed the further work that would be undertaken by the Council's Strategic Welfare Reform Group which would inform a report to Cabinet towards the end of 2015.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the background information and context around welfare reform and the funds which the Council makes available to those in priority need;
- (ii) Agree to cease funding a Local Emergency Support Service in Barking and Dagenham and use the remaining additional revenue support grant to develop two pilots to support identified cohorts of vulnerable residents to build self reliance; and
- (iii) Request that the Strategic Welfare Reform Group complete a further, more holistic assessment of welfare support across employment, housing, and general assistance, as part of the Ambition 2020 proposals, with a 3-5 year timeline, to return to Cabinet later in the year.

14. Statement re: Pre-Start Industrial Dispute

(The Chair agreed that this matter could be considered at the meeting as a matter

of urgency under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order for the Cabinet to be advised of the latest developments in relation to the industrial dispute.)

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services and the Council's lead spokesperson on the pre-start industrial dispute with the GMB Union, to present a statement concerning the latest position on the dispute.

The Cabinet Member reminded his colleagues that the Council had reached agreement with UNISON and UNITE trade unions, and with GMB drivers accepting the Council's revised pay offer and returning to work the strike had effectively ended last month. The domestic waste, recycling and green waste collection services had returned to normal across the Borough, with bulky waste collections resuming later in the week. In that regard, the Cabinet Member placed on record the Council's thanks to staff for all their hard work and extra effort.

Agreement had been reached with representatives from the GMB to return to ACAS, the body set up to help resolve employment disputes, in order to look at the future working relationship and to see if lessons could be learned. This would have enabled a formal end to the dispute and the meeting was scheduled for earlier today.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council had every intention of playing a full part at the meeting and officers had been asked to look at what the Council could offer to address some of the issues raised during the dispute. He was sorry to report, however, that the Council had been notified yesterday by the GMB's National Secretary for Public Services that its representatives would not be attending, on the grounds that there was no point to the meeting unless there was more money for the affected staff over and above that already offered.

In response to that decision and in the absence of any indication from the GMB of when or if it would be willing to meet to bring the remains of the dispute to an end, the decision had been taken that the Corporate Director would write to all affected staff today putting to them the proposals that were to be shared with the GMB at the ACAS meeting. The Cabinet Member outlined the terms of the proposals, which from a financial perspective amounted to more than the standard practice of one year's pay protection and also included a comprehensive development plan for staff and managers as well as an event later in the year aimed at bringing together senior managers and trade union representatives to build on the positive relationships that existed. The Chief Executive had also been asked to advise all Members of the Council of the developments.

15. Revenue and Capital Final Outturn 2014/15

Further to Minute 3 (2 June 2015), the Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services introduced a report on the final revenue and capital outturn position for the 2014/15 financial year.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the position remained unchanged from the provisional outturn reported to the last meeting, with the General Fund showing a year-end overspend of £0.07m against the net revenue budget of £165.3m, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) showing a breakeven position and the Capital

Programme showing an outturn of £128.9m compared to the revised budget of £143.1m.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the final outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's revenue budget as shown in paragraph 2.1 of the report;
- (ii) Note the final outturn position for the HRA as shown in paragraph 2.2 of the report; and
- (iii) Note the final outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's capital budget as shown in paragraph 2.4 of the report.

16. Corporate Delivery Plan - End of Year (2014/15) Update

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the 2014/15 end of year report in respect of the priority projects and performance indicators agreed as part of the Corporate Delivery Plan as well as progress against the LGA Peer Challenge implementation plan.

Arising from the discussions, the following issues were highlighted:

- a) **Repeat incidents of domestic violence** – It was suggested that the 2014/15 target of 'not more than 28%' was not particularly challenging and should be reviewed. The Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services explained the background to the setting of the target and undertook to discuss the matter with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health at their next portfolio meeting and to circulate London-wide data to Cabinet Members. The Cabinet Member advised that she intended to review all of the key performance indicators within her portfolio over the coming months to ensure that they were addressing the right areas and acknowledged that while the Domestic Violence service was working well there was a greater need than ever before. The Chief Executive also referred to the Council's Ambition 2020 programme which would give a focus to reducing incidents of domestic violence.
- b) **Londoneast-uk Project** – The Cabinet Member for Regeneration gave an update on the latest developments regarding the former Sanofi site and confirmed that more major partners were taking an active role in the Steering Group and good progress was being made. It was noted that although Sainsburys plc was no longer planning to build a superstore on the site it was expected that a local store would form part of a wider retail and leisure offer, with strong potential for a Travelodge hotel.

On a general note, Members commented that greater emphasis and publicity should be given to areas of achievement covered in the report.

Cabinet **resolved** to note the performance for the priority projects, peer review challenge actions and KPIs as at 31 March 2015, as detailed in the appendices to the report.

17. Estate Renewal Decant Assistance Scheme

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration introduced a report on the proposal to establish an incentive scheme which would support the regeneration plans for the Borough and help to enable Council tenants to buy a property on the open market, as part of a project linked to the Government's Social Mobility Fund.

The Cabinet Member explained that a successful bid of £1.2m had been made to the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Council would contribute a further £400,000 to enable 40 households to benefit from a cash incentive of £40,000 towards a property. In view of the limited scope of the funding, the Cabinet Member advised that priority would be given to those households subject to the Council's Estate Renewal decant programme and, amongst that group, priority would be given to older tenants and those who wished to purchase a property in Barking and Dagenham.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Authorise the establishment of a Cash Incentive Scheme, aimed primarily at accelerating the Council's Estate Renewal decant programme;
- (ii) Approve the delivery approach for the scheme as set out in section 2 of the report; and
- (iii) Approve the recommended targeting and cascade strategy as set out in section 2 and Table 1 of the report.

18. Equalities and Diversity in Employment Policy - Action Plan

Further to Minute 99 (16 February 2015), the Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services presented an update report on the implementation of the Council's Equalities and Diversity in Employment Policy, the associated costs and the proposals to establish a workforce that was properly reflective of the community that it served.

A number of observations were made regarding the proposed Action Plan and the positive steps already made and it was suggested that as well as regular monitoring by the Cabinet, the information should be shared more widely with the workforce as a whole. Cabinet Members spoke on their commitment to and the importance of maintaining momentum on the project. The Chief Executive referred to the key components of attracting candidates from the local community who were from the protected groups as defined by equality law, the need to tackle the fall-out rate of people from the black and minority ethnic (BME) community during the recruitment process and the need to ensure that there was a higher percentage of BME staff and women in more senior positions in the Council. Following on from that point, officers undertook to provide Cabinet Members with an equalities breakdown by grade for each department within the Council.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the progress to date in respect of the implementation of the Equalities and Diversity in Employment Policy;

- (ii) Agree the Action Plan at Appendix B to the report; and
- (iii) Agree that performance data be presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

19. Procurement of 0-5 year Healthy Child Programme (Health Visiting) Service and Family Nurse Partnership Programme

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health presented a report on a proposal that NHS England (London) puts in place a six-month NHS England contract for the period between April and September 2015 and the Council puts in place a new contract from 1 October 2015 with the North East London NHS Foundation Trust in respect of the commissioning of public health services for children aged 0-5, which would transfer to the Council under section 6C of the National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012).

The Cabinet Member advised that the transfer of responsibilities on 1 October 2015 created the opportunity for the Council to provide joined up services across the 0 to 19 age range and would bring about a number of significant benefits both to the local community and to the Council in terms of how it planned its services.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Waive the requirement to tender for the commissioning of the 0-5 year Healthy Child Programme (Health Visiting) Service and Family Nurse Partnership Programme, in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Adult and Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Public Health, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to procure a direct award of a two-year contract from 1 October 2015, with an option to extend for up to 12 months, to North East London NHS Foundation Trust in accordance with the strategy set out in the report.

20. Treasury Management Annual Report 2014/15

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2014/15 which set out the key areas of performance during the year.

The Cabinet Member referred to the challenges going forward of low interest earnings. In response to a question regarding the £89m borrowing from the EIB to support major regeneration projects in the Borough, the Chief Finance Officer explained the overall benefits that the Council achieved from borrowing in advance of the commencement of the projects.

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

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2014/15;

- (ii) Note that the Council complied with all 2014/15 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Note £89m was borrowed from the European Investment Bank to fund an urban regeneration and economic growth programme of Gascoigne Estate (East) Phase 1 and Abbey Road 2;
- (iv) Approve the actual Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2014/15; and
- (v) Maintain the delegated authority given to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to take into account the additional cash holdings resulting from the £89m borrowed from the European Investment Bank.