

MINUTES OF CABINET

Monday, 15 February 2021
(6:03 - 8:38 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

75. Death of Former Councillor George Shaw

The Leader advised Cabinet that former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough, George Henry Shaw, had passed away on Sunday 14 February at the age of 94.

Members paid tribute to Mr Shaw's significant contribution to the Borough throughout his life and especially during his 31 years as a councillor, where he was affectionately known as 'Mr Housing'.

The Cabinet held one minute's applause in memory of Mr Shaw.

76. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

77. Minutes (19 January 2021)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 were confirmed as correct.

78. Independent Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission Report

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced a report on the independent Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission Report.

The Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission was launched in September 2019 at Eastbury Manor House. The Commission brought together a panel of 12 national experts, chaired by Polly Neate CBE, CEO of Shelter and former CEO of Women's Aid. The Commission was given three tasks – to look at the community attitudes towards domestic abuse, to look at the response of the Council and partners and to provide a toolkit for others to follow.

Nicki Norman OBE, Acting Chief Executive of Women's Aid England, who was part of the Commission, addressed the Cabinet on the work undertaken since the Commission was launched. It had conducted a range of qualitative and quantitative insight in the Borough with residents and professionals. In particular, Ms Norman advised that survivors of domestic abuse had co-produced the report and the outcomes, and recommendations within it.

The Cabinet noted that the report was structured as seven survivor-based outcomes with a series of recommendations.

The Cabinet supported the work of the Commission and welcomed the launch event for the report, which would be taking place virtually on 10 March 2021.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree to the publication of the Independent Domestic Abuse Commission Report, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (ii) Note that the Council's formal response to the Commission, outlining how it intended to respond to the recommendations, would be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval.

79. Update on COVID-19 Issues

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

The Cabinet Member advised with regret that 471 Borough residents with COVID-related symptoms had passed away since the start of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member further advised that:

- There were still two testing centres in the Borough for those who had symptoms, one at Mayesbrook Park and one in Chadwell Heath;
- For those who did not have symptoms or were not sure, there were testing centres at Gascoigne Children's Centre and Becontree Leisure Centre;
- Although reduced, the Borough's rate was still 160 per 100,000 residents and the Cabinet Member urged residents not to be complacent;
- Over 19,000 individuals had now received their vaccination, with a take up of over 70% in residential homes and the over 70 age group; and
- The vaccination centres were at Parsloes Clinic and the Broadway Theatre in Barking.

Cabinet **resolved** to note the update.

80. Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (Period 9, December 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 as at 31 December 2020 (Month 9) and the revised Capital Programme.

The Council's General Fund budget for 2020/21 was £155.796m. As a result of underlying financial pressures including increased costs, demographic and other demand growth, savings not yet delivered and other risks, there was an underlying budget variance of £5.934m largely in Care and Support and My Place service areas.

In addition and as a direct consequence of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council had experienced a high level of additional costs and pressures including loss of service income from fees and charges. The minimum impact was assessed to be £28.175m including delayed or reversed savings which were also

in the main forecast. Including those Covid costs, the Council's final net expenditure for the year was expected to be at least £189.951m, resulting in an overall expenditure variance of £29.972m. Once Government COVID grant funding had been taken into account, a year-end variance of approximately £8.5m was currently projected.

The Cabinet Member also referred to proposed loans to Barking and Dagenham Reside Ltd and Barking and Dagenham Reside Regeneration Ltd to confirm arrangements already in place and assist with the sign-off of the companies' annual accounts.

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;
- (iv) Approve the loan of £308,828 (including capitalised interest) to Barking and Dagenham Reside Ltd to smooth the financial return to the Council, as set out in section 9 of the report;
- (v) Approve the working capital loan to Barking and Dagenham Reside Regeneration Ltd, at 3% interest with a maximum loan facility of £371,000, as set out in section 9 of the report; and
- (vi) Approve the budget amendments / virement totalling £1.32m, as set out in section 10 of the report.

81. Budget Framework 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced the Council's proposed budget framework for 2021/22 which incorporated the following:

- Proposed General Fund revenue budget for 2021/22;
- Proposed level of Council Tax for 2021/22;
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 to 2024/25;
- Draft capital investment programme 2021/22 to 2024/25; and
- Update on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Local Funding Formula for Schools.

The Cabinet were reminded that the budget framework for 2021/22 was prepared in the context of unprecedented uncertainty arising from the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on the community of COVID-19 had resulted in financial pressures to the Council throughout 2020/21 which would have

implications for years to come.

The Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement raised concerns that the census data for pupil premium, based on the take up of free school meals, had been moved back, potentially creating a huge loss for schools. This would mean that during a time of increasing child poverty, funding for the most vulnerable children in schools was being reduced.

The Cabinet Member for Health Integration and Social Care raised concerns that the Government's lack of support for social care and recent decision to reform the NHS following the pandemic may put more obligations on the Council, without additional resources being provided.

Cabinet resolved to recommend the Assembly to:

- (i) Approve a base revenue budget for 2021-22 of £174.326m, as detailed in Appendix A to the report;
- (ii) Approve the adjusted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position for 2021-22 to 2024-25 allowing for other known pressures and risks at the current time, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, including the revised cost of borrowing to accommodate the capital costs associated with the implementation of the MTFS;
- (iii) Note the observations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2021 in respect of the Cabinet's savings and growth proposals for 2021/22 and beyond and the outcome of the public consultation on the budget proposals, as set out in section 14 of the report;
- (iv) Approve the budget savings and growth proposals for 2021/22 and beyond, as detailed in section 8 and Appendix C to the report;
- (v) Delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to finalise any contribution required to or from reserves in respect of the 2021-22 budget, pending confirmation of levies and further changes to Government grants prior to 1 April 2021;
- (vi) Approve the Statutory Budget Determination for 2021-22 as set out at Appendix D to the report, which reflects an increase of 1.99% on the amount of Council Tax levied by the Council, an Adult Social Care precept of 3.00% and the final Council Tax proposed by the Greater London Assembly (9.5% increase), as detailed in Appendix E to the report;
- (vii) Note the update on the current projects, issues and risks in relation to Council services, as detailed in sections 8-10 of the report;
- (viii) Approve the Council's draft Capital Programme for 2021-22 totalling £399.105m, of which £30.845m are General Fund schemes, as detailed in Appendix F to the report;
- (ix) Approve the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in

Appendix G to the report;

- (x) Note the update on Dedicated Schools Funding and approve the Local Funding Formula factors as set out in section 13 and Appendix H to the report; and
- (xi) Note the Chief Financial Officer's Statutory Finance Report as set out in section 15 of the report, which includes a recommended minimum level of reserves of £12m.

(Standing Order 7.1 (Chapter 3, Part 2 of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue beyond the 9pm threshold).

82. Housing Revenue Account: Estimates and Review of Rents and Other Charges 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing presented a report on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estimates, rents and other related charges for 2021/22, and the available HRA resources within the context of the 30-year Business Plan.

The Cabinet Member advised that 2021/22 was the second year in which the Council was able to increase rents since the Government imposed the 1% rent reduction policy on all providers of social housing from April 2016. It was proposed that rents increase by CPI + 1% from April 2021, resulting in an average HRA rent increase of £1.44 per week, from £95.76 per week to £97.20 per week.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree that rents for all general needs secure, affordable and sheltered housing accommodation be increased by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (September 2020) of 0.5% + 1%, from the current average of £95.76 per week to £97.20 per week;
- (ii) Agree the following service charges for tenants:

Service	Weekly Charge 2021/22	Increase / reduction
Grounds Maintenance	£2.93	£0
Caretaking	£7.65	£0
Cleaning	£3.68	£0
Estate Lighting	£3.94	£0.02
Concierge	£10.06	£0
CCTV (SAMS)	£6.17	£0
Safer Neighbourhood Charge	£0.52	£0.02
TV aerials	£0.62	£0

- (iii) Agree that charges for heating and hot water increase by CPI (September 2020), as follows:

Property size	Weekly Charge 2020/21	Weekly Charge 2021/22
Bedsit	£13.34	£13.41
1 bedroom	£14.16	£14.23
2 bedroom	£16.99	£17.07
3 bedroom	£17.30	£17.39
4 bedroom	£17.75	£17.84

- (iv) Agree that the above charges take effect from 1 April 2021; and
- (v) Agree the HRA Investment in Existing Stock Capital Programme of circa £30.494m for 2021/22, together with the commitment of circa £6.06m for 2022/23 to enable My Place to commence design and procurement arrangements, as detailed in Appendix 5 and paragraph 4.4 of the report.

83. Air Quality Action Plan 2020-2025

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety introduced a report on the Air Quality Action Plan 2020-2025.

The Cabinet Member advised that although the air quality in the Borough was above the legal limit set by EU, it was still poor and remained a public health worry. In January 2020, the Council declared a climate emergency in the Borough to try and address the inequalities that existed. For example, poor air quality impacted more on those with respiratory illness and disproportionately affected the old and young.

The Cabinet Member advised that the new Air Quality Action Plan was being written into all strategic documents produced by the Council. An Air Quality Steering Group was also meeting quarterly with key partners across the Borough.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve and adopt the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Air Quality Action Plan 2020-2025 for implementation, as set out at Appendix A to the report; and
- (ii) Authorise the Operational Director for Enforcement and Community Safety, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety, to approve any non-material amendments to the AQAP prior to publication.

84. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced a report on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22 which set out the Council's borrowing, investment and funding plans for the year ahead.

Cabinet **resolved to recommend the Assembly** to adopt the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021/22 and, in doing so, to:

- (i) Note the current treasury position for 2021/22 and prospects for interest rates, as referred to in sections 4 and 8 of the report;
- (ii) Approve the Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 outlining the investments that the Council may use for the prudent management of its investment balances, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (iii) Approve the Council's Borrowing Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (iv) Note that the Capital Strategy 2021/22, incorporating the Investment and Acquisitions Strategy, shall be updated and presented for approval in April 2021;
- (v) Approve the Capital Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2021/22 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report;
- (vi) Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2021/22, representing the Council's policy on repayment of debt, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report;
- (vii) Approve the Operational Boundary Limit of £1.70bn and the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £1.80bn for 2021-22, representing the statutory limit determined by the Council pursuant to section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, as referred to in Appendix 4 to the report; and
- (viii) Delegate authority to the Finance Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to consider the increase in short-term cash held from borrowing.

85. Procurement of All-Age Care Technology Service

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced a report on the procurement of an all-age care technology service.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council needed to revolutionise the way care and support was provided and by procuring the right innovation partner, the Council would save money in the long term and provide a better service for residents. Key benefits of the new service could include:

- Improving access for groups who traditionally have had limited access to Care Technology;
- Delivering better outcomes for service users;
- A smooth and responsive experience for Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, and other referrers;
- A more cost-effective service than the current service, Financial benefits would be from both existing service users for whom new solutions are introduced at review and new entrants to social care support for whom costs will be mitigated and avoided; and
- A more flexible service that will be able to develop as new innovative

opportunities emerge and our health partners progress further with their offer.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve the procurement of an Innovation Partner for the management and delivery of an all-age Care Technology solution to the residents of Barking and Dagenham, in accordance with the strategy set out in the report; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Director of People and Resilience, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration and the Director of Law and Governance, to award and enter into the contract and any extension periods with the successful tenderer, in accordance with the strategy set out in the report.

86. Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced a report on the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22.

The Cabinet Member advised that, as required by the Localism Act 2011, the Council must agree, before the start of the new financial year, a pay policy statement covering chief officer posts and other prescribed information. The Council's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22, which was attached at Appendix A, set out the expected position at 1 April 2021.

The report also sought Cabinet's approval to apply the uplift in the London Living Wage with effect from 9 November 2020, which increased the minimum hourly rate of pay from £10.75 to £10.85 per hour.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the implementation of the London Living Wage increase from £10.75 to £10.85 per hour for employees and apprentices operating in service areas covered by Green Book terms and conditions, with effect from 9 November 2020; and
- (ii) Recommend the Assembly to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for 2021/22 as set out at Appendix A to the report, for publication on the Council's website with effect from April 2021.

87. Short-Term Contract for SIA Security and Ancillary Services - Direct Award

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety introduced a report on the proposal to directly award the Council's SIA Security and Ancillary Services contract to the current contractor, MPD FM Limited, for the seven-month period 1 February 2021 to 31 August 2021, while work continued on the full retendering of the service via a long-term contract.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree to the waiver of tendering requirements under the provisions of paragraphs 6.3 and 6.6 of the Council's Contract Rules and approve the direct award of the Council's SIA Security and Ancillary Services contract to MPD FM Limited (company no. 04632279) for the seven-month period 1 February 2021 to 31 August 2021, in accordance with the strategy set out in the report; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Operational Director for Enforcement and Community Safety to negotiate and enter into the contract on behalf of the Council.

88. Barking & Dagenham Trading Partnership - Request to Change Auditors

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced a report on the request from the Barking and Dagenham Trading Partnership (BDTP) to change its auditors, in line with the requirements of the Shareholder Agreement.

It was noted that BDTP wished to explore the potential benefits of changing auditors in view of performance issues being experienced with its current auditors, BDO.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve the Barking and Dagenham Trading Partnership's request to change its auditors; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, or nominated deputy, the power to agree on behalf of the Cabinet the appointment of an alternative Auditor on such terms as considered to be reasonable and effective to the Council as a Shareholder.