

MINUTES OF CABINET

Thursday, 25 September 2014
(6:34 - 8:00 pm)

Present: Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair), Cllr Saima Ashraf (Deputy Chair), Cllr Dominic Twomey (Deputy Chair), Cllr Laila Butt, Cllr Evelyn Carpenter, Cllr Cameron Geddes, Cllr James Ogungbose, Cllr Lynda Rice, Cllr Bill Turner and Cllr Maureen Worby

18. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes (4 August 2014)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 August 2014 were confirmed as correct.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care requested clarification on Minute 4 (Corporate Priority Performance Reporting – End of Year 2013/2014) in relation to where statistical information suggesting that Barking and Dagenham had the highest level of domestic violence figures in London had emanated from.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care also referred to the cost of social care and housing from other Local Authorities placing families into the Borough that he had raised at the last meeting.

20. Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - April to July 2014 (Month 4)

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced a report updating the Council's revenue and capital position for the four months to the end of July 2014.

The Council began the current year in a better financial position than the previous year with a General Fund (GF) balance of £27.1m. The Council's approved budget of £165.3m for 2014/15 included a budgeted drawdown of reserves of £1.0m, agreed by Assembly in February 2014. This budget gap formed part of the savings requirement for 2015/16.

The Cabinet noted that at the end of July 2014 (Month 4), there was a projected overspend of £3.5m, predominantly on the Children's services budget. Since the publication of the report further pressures had been identified on the service, which would be mitigated by further controls on all expenditure.

The total service expenditure for the full year was projected to be £168.8m against the budget of £165.3m. The projected year end overspend coupled with the reserve drawdown would reduce the General Fund balance to £22.6m at the year end.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projected to break-even, leaving the HRA reserve at £8.7m. The Cabinet Member for Finance advised Cabinet that he had asked officers to consider why the reserve was so high for the HRA.

The Capital Programme had been updated to reflect changes approved at Cabinet on 30 June 2014, including roll forwards and re-profiles. The capital budget at 31 July stood at £154.9m.

The report also presented a request for a new capital budget of £307,000 to upgrade the Environmental Asset Database, 'Confirm', to be funded from existing invest to save revenue sources.

The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that the report before Members instilled good financial practice within the Council.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the projected outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's General Fund revenue budget at 31 July 2014, as detailed in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.9 and Appendix A of the report;
- (ii) Request a report from the Corporate Director of Children's Services setting out the detailed reasons for the directorate's forecast overspend and options for eliminating the overspend;
- (iii) Require all Chief Officers and budget managers to authorise only essential expenditure relating to their service areas;
- (iv) Note the progress against the agreed 2014/15 savings at 31 July 2014, as detailed in paragraph 2.10 and Appendix B of the report;
- (v) Approve 2014/15 HRA savings as detailed in paragraph 2.11 and Appendix B and note progress on delivery at 31 July 2014;
- (vi) Note the position for the HRA at 31 July 2014, as detailed in paragraph 2.11 and Appendix C of the report;
- (vii) Note the projected outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's capital budget as at 31 July 2014, as detailed in paragraph 2.12 and Appendix D of the report; and
- (viii) Approve the new capital budget of £307,000 to fund the upgrade to the Environmental Asset Database, 'Confirm', as detailed in paragraph 2.12 of the report.

21. Barking Town Centre Strategy 2014-18

(Cllr Lynda Rice arrived at 18:42 for the commencement of this item)

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented a report concerning the draft Barking Town Centre Strategy, which was appended to the report.

Barking Town Centre was identified as one of the five Growth hubs in the Council's new Vision and Priorities and formed a key part of the adopted Growth Strategy. The draft Barking Town Centre Strategy had been produced in order to establish a

shared way forward and set out how partners could work together realising Barking's full potential.

The draft Barking Town Centre Strategy had five strategic objectives which together aimed to ensure Barking realised its full potential and established its own unique position in East London as a place to live, work, learn and spend time. The five objectives were:

1. **Housing Delivery:** Provide a wider choice of quality housing.
2. **Places of Work:** Increase the town centre's profile as a place to do business, enable the creation of attractive workspaces and create more jobs.
3. **Barking as East London's cultural hub:** Increase creative industries and participation in arts and culture.
4. **Accessibility:** Improve the transport infrastructure and provide convenient access to the town centre.
5. **Place making:** Continue to improve the quality of buildings, spaces and to value the heritage and diversity. Plus, engaging Barking's diverse communities in delivering the vision.

The strategy set out the detail of numerous development opportunities and included an action plan of deliverables.

Reference was made to Barking becoming the cultural hub of East London, which would promote the creative industries and participation in arts and culture. Rather than seeking to compete with neighbouring large retail centres such as Lakeside and Westfield, the aim was that Barking would become a destination place for alternative shopping and cultural events.

With regard to consultation, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised Cabinet that there would be an exhibition rather than a public meeting to ensure engagement with local people.

Cabinet Members spoke in support of the draft Barking Town Centre Strategy and made a number of observations which included:

- Creating a theme in the Town Centre, especially with the cultural offer growing;
- Becoming a zone for culture;
- The need for regular cleaning of the Town Centre especially in relation to bird droppings;
- Changing the frontage of Barking Station and articulating a greater vision for station improvements such as lifts, escalators and making the case to Transport for London for a bus stop outside the station;
- Creating spaces for young people;
- Greater signage for the area;
- Aspirations for a cinema;
- Increased arts activities outside Barking Town Hall.

In response to some of the comments made, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that whilst there were already retail opportunities in the Town Centre, there would be further opportunities in Barking Riverside also.

There had been an increase in eating establishments coming to the Town Centre which in itself was attracting trade.

With reference to Barking Station frontage and improvements, it was noted that the bridge infrastructure was a significant barrier to achieving major structural changes. That said it was acknowledged that improvements were required to improve accessibility. Unfortunately due to the footprint of the station, it would not be possible to introduce escalators although lifts could be brought in.

Reference was made by the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care to the private rental development by Grainger plc in the Town Centre and has asked for an analysis of the pros and cons of this type of development.

Finally, the Cabinet Member of Regeneration confirmed that the Council was committed to increased signage and to examine the business case for a cinema.

The Leader responded to a question regarding TfL zoning and confirmed that the cost had been estimated at £7m, meaning such a proposal would not be appropriate for the Council to undertake at this time.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve the draft Barking Town Centre Strategy (Appendix 1) for public consultation; and
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Growth to make any non-substantial amendments to the Strategy following the public consultation and, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to approve the final version for publication, subject to the proviso that any proposed substantial amendments to the Strategy are presented to the Cabinet for decision.

22. London Overground Gospel Oak to Barking Line - Extension to Barking Riverside

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented a report on the proposal to extend the London Overground line to Barking Riverside.

The delivery of a rail link to Barking Riverside was a key infrastructure requirement to deliver much of the anticipated growth over the next 10 years including new housing and jobs of importance for the Borough and London. Transport for London (TfL) was to start to seek powers in 2015 to construct the extension to Barking Riverside of the Gospel Oak to Barking line. These powers would be secured under the Transport and Works Act and a preferred route for the scheme was being proposed by TfL following extensive technical studies on route options.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration requested that two further recommendations be included, one to request from TfL that the Hammersmith and City line use Platform 1 at Barking Station if the Overground extension went ahead and the second to assure residents that there would be minimum disruption during the works.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools questioned as to whether further

stations could be provided along the line, however it was considered that this would increase journey time. In response to a further question, it was also noted that a tram system would not be appropriate at this time.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care felt the Council should be working up the business case to deliver a second station to serve Thames View / Great Fleete and that careful thought needs to be given to secure good bus links to the station(s), all of which will require focussed lobbying of the next London Mayoral candidates.

Cabinet supported the proposal and felt encouraged that those residents already living in Barking Riverside would benefit from a new train station.

The Cabinet Member for Finance raised a query in relation to the anticipated investment required of this Council of £9.0m over the three year period from 2017 to 2019 for which there is currently no provision in the Capital Programme. In response, the Chief Finance Officer advised Cabinet that he anticipated that the Council would recoup their costs through the additional investments the link would bring.

Cabinet Members also discussed issues relating to potential new housing-related opportunities in the area brought about by new transport links and it was noted that an appropriate report would be presented to the Cabinet in due course.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Strongly support, in principle, the proposal to extend the London Overground line to Barking Riverside and the action of making a Transport and Works Act Proposal;
- (ii) Support the broad route alignment as detailed in the report;
- (iii) Support the continued safeguarding of the Docklands Light Railway line through Barking Riverside;
- (iv) Support any designs which provide for a second rail station near Thames View East;
- (v) Support the proposal to extend the London Overground line to Abbey Wood Station in Bexley; and
- (vi) Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet setting out the financial implications of any proposed contribution by the Council towards the London Overground line extension to Barking Riverside;
- (vii) Ask TfL to examine the possibility of the Hammersmith and City Underground line using Platform 1 at Barking Station, if the London Overground line is extended to Barking Riverside; and
- (viii) Assure residents and commuters that there will be minimum disruption during the works to the proposed new line.

23. Supporting londoneast-uk Business and Technical Park

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented a report on the londoneast-uk Business and Technical Park proposal on the former Sanofi site, Rainham Road South, Dagenham.

Sanofi had been working closely with the Council to deliver an employment-led legacy for the site including the retention and reuse of the company's laboratory and scientific manufacturing facilities. The facilities would cost tens of millions to build from scratch and offer scope for a wide range of science sectors as well as other industries (e.g. food) that would benefit from controlled conditions. Their reuse as a multi-occupation science park would secure a much stronger future for skilled jobs in the borough as well as helping change perceptions of the local economy and linking the borough with growth sectors.

The site was one of the five key Borough development sites in the Growth Strategy which recognised its critical role in delivering jobs, businesses and physical regeneration. Cabinet Members supported the proposal and noted that it could provide up to 1,000 new jobs in the area.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Members were advised that the Council would be seeking to forge relationships and synergies between the site and the local universities.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Confirm the Council's support for SOG Ltd establishing a science and technology park utilising Sanofi's science facilities at their Dagenham East plant;
- (ii) Approve the means by which the Council shall support the project as set out in section 3 of the report; and
- (iii) Approve the grant of full discretionary business rate relief for londoneast-uk for two years to assist with early occupation of the site.

24. Review of Planning Policy for South Dagenham

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented a report reviewing the planning policy for South Dagenham.

Combined Chequers Corner, the Ford Stamping Plant and Beam Park sites were one of East London's largest regeneration opportunities, one of the Borough's five growth zones and a major brownfield site with great potential for housing and commercial activity for 2,500 new homes and over 1,000 new jobs.

The history of these sites and their current status were explained. The preferred option was for a mixed use residential development on Beam Park and the Ford Stamping Plant with a new centre at Chequers Corner incorporating the existing stores at Merrielands Crescent, the Premier Inn hotel and Brewers Fayre restaurant, a potential Ford Heritage Centre and some of the new community facilities necessary to support the new housing.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools was reassured that the review of the Local Plan, which could take between 18 to 24 months, would not hold up progress.

Cabinet **resolved** to endorse a residential-led mixed use scheme at South Dagenham incorporating Beam Park and the Ford Stamping Plant with a new District Centre focused at Chequers Corner, as detailed in the report.

25. People Strategy 2014/15

The Cabinet Member for Central Services presented a report on the People Strategy 2014/15, which was focused on assuring that the Council was “well run” from a people management, development and leadership perspective.

It was recognised that the Council was going through a period of significant change and, to be successful in the future, would need to have the right people with the right skills motivated to perform well. Sustaining high levels of staff engagement through change was challenging.

The Council had, with staff, developed a revised set of organisational values. These sat alongside the new vision and priorities to define what the Council wanted to achieve and the culture of the organisation needed to be successful.

The actions in the People Strategy sought to reinforce that culture, strengthen line management and the consistency with which policies were applied and ensure that two-way communications with staff was effective.

The Cabinet Member for Environment sought clarification on the accountability of Trade Union Secretaries and was advised by the Group Manager for HR Strategy that ultimate accountability lay with their members but would circulate details to Members to confirm the accountability / hierarchy arrangements.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care raised concerns that there was no explicit reference in the Strategy to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and in particular there was no representation at a senior management level. Further concerns were raised by the Cabinet Member in relation to the results of the staff survey. It was considered that whilst the overall response rate was very high, the numbers of positive responses were very low and it was felt that more analysis of the results was required. The Cabinet Member also requested more analysis to be provided of Stage 3 grievances, which were referred to in the report. .

In response, the Cabinet Member for Central Services advised that a separate report was due to be presented to Cabinet shortly addressing the issue of BME representation within the Council. With regard to the staff survey, the Group Manager for HR Strategy advised that the People Strategy contained statistics from the staff survey of where action was required.

Cabinet Members were encouraged by such a high response rate to the staff survey and noted how it informed the People Strategy 2014/15.

The Leader expressed his support for the Strategy and commented that the

Council was in a far stronger position than in previous years, pointing out that Barking and Dagenham was soon to be one of the first London Councils to sign up to the Gender Equality Charter.

Cabinet **resolved** to adopt the People Strategy 2014/15 at Appendix A to the report.

26. Contract for Asbestos Removal Works in Residential, School and Corporate Buildings

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented a report on the proposed procurement of a new contract for the provision of asbestos removal works in residential Council properties, schools and corporate buildings.

The current provision was not compliant with recently implemented internal Council rules, and had therefore been reviewed. The new contractual arrangements were expected to bring about continued efficiency, elimination of waste and improved value for money through market-competitive pricing, contractual improvements and process redesign.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the procurement of a contract for the provision of asbestos removal works in residential council properties, schools and corporate buildings in accordance with the strategy set out in the report; and
- (ii) Authorise the Interim Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to conduct the procurement and award the contract to the successful bidder.

27. Contract for Electrical Repairs and Minor Works in Public Buildings and Schools

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented a report on the proposed procurement of a new term contract for electrical repairs and minor works in public buildings and schools which covered day-to-day reactive electrical repairs and minor works.

Cabinet Members attention was drawn to the scoring matrix on the basis of 70% price and 30% quality and the Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that this would not mean a reduced quality service.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the procurement of a new Term Contract for the Electrical Repairs and Minor Works in Public Buildings and Schools in accordance with the strategy set out in the report; and
- (ii) Authorise the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to conduct the procurement and award the contract to the successful bidder.

28. Debt Management Performance and Write-Offs 2014/15 (Quarter 1)

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the performance report for the first quarter period of 2014/2015 in respect of the debt management function carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service within Elevate East London, together with details of the debts written-off as uncollectable during the period and comparable information from the previous year. He highlighted the fact that year on year the overall level of write-offs has continued to reduce.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools added that the level of general income had increased considerably which contributed to the positive position.

Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the contents of this report as it relates to the performance of the debt management function carried out by the Revenues and Benefits service operated by Elevate East London, including the performance of enforcement agents; and
- (ii) Note the debt write-offs for the first quarter of 2014/15 and that a number of these debts will be published in accordance with the policy agreed by Cabinet.

29. Building Maintenance Term Contract for School and Public Buildings

Further to Minute 29 (24 July 2012), the Cabinet received a report on the outcome of the procurement process, evaluation of tenders and selection of preferred bidder.

Cabinet **resolved** to approve the award of the Building Maintenance Term Contract for School and Public Buildings to Kirkman and Jourdain Limited on the terms set out in the report.