

MINUTES OF CABINET

Tuesday, 17 October 2017
(7:00 - 7:57 pm)

Present: Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair), Cllr Saima Ashraf (Deputy Chair), Cllr Sade Bright, Cllr Laila M. Butt, Cllr Cameron Geddes, Cllr Lynda Rice, Cllr Bill Turner and Cllr Maureen Worby

Apologies: Cllr Dominic Twomey and Cllr Evelyn Carpenter

47. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes (19 September 2017)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2017 were confirmed as correct.

49. Budget Monitoring 2017/18 - April to August (Month 5)

The Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement introduced a report on the Council's revenue budget monitoring position for the 2017/18 financial year as at 31 August 2017.

The General Fund showed a projected year-end overspend of £5.517m against the budget of £145.13m, which represented an increase of £0.15m on the position reported for the end of July 2017. The Cabinet Member referred to the ongoing areas of overspend and the arrangements in place to monitor and mitigate the pressures.

The report also set out the position in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, which showed a projected shortfall of £0.769m against the budgeted contribution of £39.642m to the HRA Capital Programme, and the proposed allocation of £250,000 revenue funding to Be First. The purpose of the funding was to support essential feasibility works, site surveys, market valuations and legal and financial modelling costs in respect of five projects, in advance of Be First's inaugural Business Plan which would be presented in due course.

The Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the forecast outturn position for 2017/18 of the Council's General Fund revenue budget as detailed in section 2 and Appendix A of the report;
- (ii) Note the ongoing and new financial pressures and the suggested mechanisms for resolving them, as detailed in sections 3 and 4 of the report;
- (iii) Note the overview of the HRA for 2017/18, as detailed in section 5 and Appendix B of the report; and

- (iv) Approve the allocation of up to £250,000 for Be First to undertake essential feasibility works in advance of its full business plan, as detailed in section 6 of the report.

50. Fire Safety Policy Proposals

Further to Minute 41 (19 September 2017), the Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development introduced a report setting out a series of fire safety policy proposals that had been developed by the Council in consultation with the London Fire Brigade and other key partners, specifically those involved in the construction industry.

The Cabinet Member explained that 11 specific recommendations had been developed that also reflected the Government's direction, the early findings from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the recommendations of the 2013 Lakanal fire inquiry. There were three main principles of 'Improving fire safety in buildings', 'Using regulation to improve fire safety', and 'Protecting people from the risk of fire and reducing the impact of fire if it occurs', which covered aspects such as building materials, sprinkler systems, fire detection and alarm systems, Building Control requirements and the stringent enforcement of powers relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in residential tower block of more than five storeys. With regard to the retro-fitting of sprinkler systems, the Cabinet Member confirmed that premises would be individually assessed against key criteria to ensure that any works would not have a detrimental effect on the integrity of the building.

Cabinet Members spoke on the need for Central Government to introduce more robust national fire safety standards and requirements to help prevent future tragedies and to properly fund the fire safety improvement works being undertaken by local authorities. The Leader advised that the Local Government Association was actively lobbying the Government on that issue and he was also pleased to offer the reassurance that all tower blocks in the Borough had successfully undergone a fire safety assessment in the last few months.

Cabinet Members commended the proactive work by Council officers and the local Fire Brigade and asked to be kept regularly informed of progress.

The Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve the policy recommendations set out in section 2 and Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (ii) Note the potential financial implications on the Housing Revenue Account of the policy recommendations, the impact of which would be developed in conjunction with the HRA Business Planning process.

51. 2018/19 Local Implementation Plan Funding Submission

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development presented a report on the make-up of the Council's Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding application to Transport for London (TfL) for the 2018/19 financial year.

The Cabinet Member clarified that the Council had been allocated £2.075m for 2018/19 and he referred to the range of proposed local transport projects, including road safety, traffic management, highway maintenance and cycling / walking network schemes, that would be supported by the funding. In respect of the latter, the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration referred to the provision of appropriate resting points, such as benches, in the Borough's parks and main thoroughfares to encourage local people, and particularly the elderly and those with mobility issues, to walk more as part of the Council's drive to promote healthier lifestyles. The Leader suggested that an audit of current provision should be undertaken as a starting point and the Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development agreed to take that proposal forward, along with other comments made in respect of cycle routes.

The Cabinet **resolved to recommend the Assembly** to approve the Council's 2018/19 Local Implementation Plan funding submission to Transport for London, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

52. Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme 2017/18

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development introduced a report on the implementation of a Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme for 2017/18 to support the dispersal of grant funding aimed at compensating local businesses that had been adversely affected by the Government's revaluation of business rates which came into effect on 1 April 2017.

The Cabinet Member advised that the grant totalled £909,000 over the four-year period up to 2020/21, with over half (£530,000) to be allocated in 2017/18 and reducing each year thereafter. The funding would be open to small local businesses with a rateable value (according to the 2010 Valuation List) below £70,000 whose net rates payable had increased by at least 1% as a result of the 2017 revaluation. Current estimates suggested that 1,129 local businesses would be eligible to apply for support, with the average award being £402.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Performance and Delivery referred to a change to business rates for newsagent and other small outlets that provided free-to-use Automated Teller Machines (ATMs or cashpoints). The changes increased the rateable value of those premises which the Cabinet Member suggested would, in turn, lead to free-to-use ATMs being replaced with fee-charging machines, although the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the relief arrangements may go some way to reducing the impact.

The Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the four-year grant funding arrangements for the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme, following which the costs of providing relief to the affected businesses would need to be absorbed into the Council's overall budget; and
- (ii) Approve the Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme 2017/18, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

53. Impact of the Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration presented a report on the likely implications for the Council of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The Cabinet Member explained that although the Act received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017, there was limited information on the details and timescales for the introduction of its various elements. Despite the lack of clarity, the Council was developing plans in response to the known requirements of the seven key areas of:

- Corporate parenting and Looked After Children;
- Adoption;
- Safeguarding Children;
- Abolition of Local Safeguarding Children Boards;
- Child Death Reviews;
- New Regulatory Regime for the Social Work Profession; and
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE).

The Cabinet Member outlined some of the key issues, which included the extension of the offer of local authority support to care leavers up to the age of 25, a duty to have regard to the ongoing relationship with adopters, the use of secure accommodation for placements and the compulsory inclusion in the school curriculum of relationships education for all primary school pupils in England, as well as sex and relationships education for secondary school children.

In response to issues raised, the Cabinet Member confirmed that:

- a) There would be cost implications for the Council of supporting care leavers up to 25 years of age and further information would be provided to the Cabinet when the detail of the Government's plans was known;
- b) The Council would ensure that appropriate consultation took place regarding the PHSE school curriculum requirements to ensure that parents were aware of its value, particularly in today's society, and could contribute to discussions on the issues to be covered in lessons;
- c) Parents retained the right to withdraw their child from PHSE lessons in certain circumstances.

The Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the report and the potential implications for the Council of the Children and Social Work Act 2017; and
- (ii) Request the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider the extended Corporate Parenting duty and develop proposals on how the Council should meet the new requirements.

54. Growth Commission Recommendations Progress Report

Further to Minute 118 (19 April 2016), the Leader presented a report on progress against the principles that were adopted by the Council in response to the independent Growth Commission report "No-one left behind: in pursuit of growth

for the benefit of everyone”, together with the latest position on the priority actions identified by the Select Committees following their consideration of the Growth Commission’s specific recommendations.

The Leader referred specifically to the development and publication of the Borough Manifesto, which set out a 20-year vision for the Borough, the Council’s plans to build new housing that offered greater choice and the opening of Coventry University’s new London campus at the Civic Centre, Dagenham, and the launch of the Barking & Dagenham Lottery which would raise money for local good causes, as examples of progress over the past 12 months. The Leader also pointed to the updates in respect of the 16 priority actions identified by the Select Committees.

Cabinet Members commended the progress that had been achieved to date and suggested that an annual appraisal should be presented. It was further suggested that the Council would benefit from an independent assessment of progress, possibly through a reconvened Growth Commission, at key milestones during the years ahead.

The Cabinet **resolved** to:

- (i) Note progress made against the principles adopted by the Council following the Growth Commission review;
- (ii) Note progress made against the priority actions identified by the Select Committees; and
- (iii) Agree that a similar progress report be presented to the Cabinet on an annual basis and that an independent assessment of the Council’s progress against the Commission’s 109 recommendations be undertaken during 2018/19.