

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CABINET** held on **WEDNESDAY, 24TH JANUARY, 2024** at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET PRESENT

Councillors Georgia Gould (Chair), Meric Apak, Danny Beales, Marcus Boyland, Pat Callaghan, Sabrina Francis, Adam Harrison, Richard Olszewski, Nadia Shah and Anna Wright

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Cabinet and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcasting of the meeting

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the internet and could be viewed for twelve months thereafter and then archived and made available on request. Anyone who had asked to address the meeting was deemed to be consenting to having their contribution recorded and broadcast and to the use of the sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

4. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no notification of urgent business.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 20th December 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. MATTERS REFERRED FROM A COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no matters referred from a scrutiny committee.

Please note that there were no alternative options considered or rejected by the Cabinet for the following items, unless indicated, although Cabinet Members duly considered, where applicable, options listed within the reports.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET AND RENT REVIEW 2024/25 (CS/2024/01)

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes.

Members remarked on the challenging financial climate and the difficult decisions that had to be made as a result, as well as the need to continue lobbying government for better financial support to local authorities.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member remarked that the support available to those who were struggling with the cost of living was being communicated to tenants. Work was also ongoing on the transformation agenda in housing and a detailed action plan would be presented to Cabinet in due course.

RESOLVED –

THAT, having considered the views of the District Management Committees (Appendix D), the Housing Scrutiny Committee and the results of the Equalities

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Impact Assessment (Appendix C), and having had due regard to the obligations set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:

- (i) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2024/25 (Appendix A) be approved to ensure a balanced HRA budget for 2024/25;
- (ii) Social housing rents be increased by 7.7% (CPI + 1%) from April 2024 (paragraph 3.4).
- (iii) The revised tenant service charges for Caretaking, CCTV, Communal Lighting, Communal Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance and Responsive Housing Patrol (paragraph 3.15) be agreed.
- (iv) The revised service charges in the HRA hostels and supported housing of 7.7% increase (paragraph 3.17) be agreed.
- (v) The approach to the Heating Pool set out in paragraph 3.22 and Appendix B, including to keep scales at same level being paid in 23/24, be agreed.
- (vi) It be agreed to keep Temporary accommodation purchase programme 2 and 3 schemes (TAPP2 and TAPP3) rents at 23/24 levels so that they remain affordable to homeless households (paragraph 3.8).
- (vii) It be agreed to increase shared ownership rents by CPI + 1% (7.7%) (paragraph 3.9).
- (viii) It be agreed to set rents at Agar Grove at an affordable level for refugee housing and for temporary accommodation as set out in paragraph 3.12.
- (ix) It be agreed to increase resident garage rents from £14/week to £16/week from 2024/25 and to increase £2/week each year for the following 1 year in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy savings strategy (paragraph 3.26).
- (x) In relation to the proposals (with associated budget reductions) set out in section 3.27 to 3.30:
 - Authority be delegated to the relevant Director(s) to immediately implement proposals listed as Decision Category A.
 - Proposals listed as Decision Category B be agreed in principle, and authority be delegated to the relevant Director(s), in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to decide whether and how to implement the savings identified within each proposal, having had due regard to the Council's general equality duties, any other applicable legal duties and the results of any consultation undertaken in respect of the proposal; undertake any necessary consultation; and make any

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necessary redundancies, including for any proposals involving more than 20 redundancies.

- (xi) The decisions (i) to (ix) above be exempted from call in, subject to the agreement of the Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee, in order to facilitate the notice of rent change being given to tenants within the necessary timescales.

Reasons

For the reasons set out in the report.

9. APPROVAL OF RESOURCE BASE FOR COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES (CS/2024/02)

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member commented that it was not yet clear how much of the emergency funding that the government had just announced would be allocated to Camden, but in any event the Local Government Association estimated that the total amount was less than half that needed by councils in order to bridge the funding gap. He also remarked that the comments of the Secretary of State on 'discredited equalities schemes' did not reflect the view in Camden and amongst its communities.

RESOLVED –

THAT Council be recommended:

- (i) That the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the year 2024/2025 as set out in appendix 1 be approved.
- (ii) That in accordance with Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the London Borough of Camden as its Council Tax Base for the year 2024/2025 shall be 91,675 as shown in appendix 1.
- (iii) That the tax base for the three Garden Squares as shown in appendix 2 shall be as follows:

Gordon Square	23.93
Fitzroy Square	53.84
Mecklenburgh Square	94.52

- (iv) That the approach and assumptions for the calculation of the Council's business rates yield as set out in appendix 3 be approved.

- (v) That, in accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2013, the amount calculated by the London Borough of Camden as its business rates yield for the year 2024-2025 shall be c£676.2 million as shown in line 17 of Appendix 3.
- (vi) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Corporate Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living, to make any adjustments to the calculation of the estimated business rates yield for year 2024-2025. This is to reflect any technical amendments to the calculations or late regulatory changes made by the Treasury or in respect of the former London Pilot Pool.
- (vii) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Corporate Services to submit the notification of the calculation of the estimated Non-Domestic Rates income to the Secretary of State and the Greater London Authority.

Reasons

For the reasons set out in the report.

10. LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN'S ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022/2023 (CS/2023/16)

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor, which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living.

In response to a question regarding the large number of Freedom of Information (Fol) requests received, the Borough Solicitor remarked that this was fairly common for a borough like Camden and many came from students and academics. The Fol team had introduced two initiatives to deal with these requests more effectively, one being the 'business as usual' approach where with the agreement of the enquirer their request was simply answered as a business as usual question, and the other being the provision of a suite of frequently asked questions. Responses to Fol requests were retained and could be a valuable source of information.

Members commented on the amount of effort that went in to learning and improving as a result of complaints and noted that there was a great deal of positive work going on.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

Reasons

For the reasons set out in the report.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.34pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END