

## **MINUTES**

**of the proceedings of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the London Borough of Waltham Forest held at Walthamstow Town Hall, Forest Road, London E17 on Thursday, 8 December 2022.**

### **PRESENT:**

**Mayor:** Councillor Karen Bellamy

**Councillors:** Raja Anwar, Naheed Asghar, Vicky Ashworth, Elizabeth Baptiste, Tony Bell, Kastriot Berberi, Marsela Berberi, Roy Berg, Emma Best, Tom Connor, Catherine Deakin, Andrew Dixon, Rosalind Doré, Paul Douglas, Shabana Dhedhi, Rhiannon Eglin, Marion Fitzgerald, Jenny Gray, Kisha Green, Justin Halabi, Jemma Hemsted, Crystal Ihenachor, Whitney Ihenachor, Sazimet Palta Imre, Kay Isa, Tim James, Ahsan Khan, Kira Lewis, Khevyn Limbajee, Sally Littlejohn, Clyde Loakes, Zafran Malik, Anna Mbachu, Miriam Mirwitch, Louise Mitchell, John Moss, Sam O'Connell, Jack Phipps, Caramel Quin, Uzma Rasool, Keith Rayner, Catherine Saumarez, Sebastian Salek, Alistair Strathern, Richard Sweden, Steve Terry, Katy Thompson, Sharon Waldron, Terry Wheeler, Grace Williams and Jennifer Whilby

### **40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Afzal Akram, Kastriot Berberi, Kizzy Gardiner, Mitchell Goldie, Johar Khan, Gerry Lyons, Jonathan O'Dea, Yusuf Patel and Marie Pye.

### **41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **42. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER**

The minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 20 October 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### **43. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, COUNCIL LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Mayor referred to the death of Su Gomer, Director of Housing Assets and wished to record that Council offered its sincerest condolences to her family and friends.

The Mayor gave information on her forthcoming charity events taking place at Leyton Great Hall: Civic Carol Concert on 13 December 2022 and Soul Music Extravaganza on 25 March 2023.

The Mayor also spoke of the events she had recently attended including the Pride of Waltham Forest Awards, Remembrance Sunday, Flag Raising ceremonies, school visits, Jack Petchey awards and her visit to the PL84U foodbank.

Cllr Khan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration advised members that during the current cold weather, Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPP) had been activated across London which meant councils had opened emergency provisions to ensure that rough sleepers could be accommodated somewhere warm. Councillors and residents could also report rough sleepers using the *Tell Streetlink* smartphone app and website.

Cllr Douglas, Cabinet Member for Public Service was pleased to announce that the nearly all of the £120k NWLA windfall had been allocated through the community ward funding and the remaining £9,000 balance would be given to the night shelters in the area.

#### **44. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

The Head of Democratic Services read out three statements received from people resettled in the borough in relation to the notice of motion:

- (i) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child
- (ii) Person Resettled from Syria
- (iii) Person Resettled from Ukraine

#### **45. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Council noted the eleven questions from Members and received replies as set out in the Order Paper in Appendix A.

The following supplementary questions were put to the Portfolio Holders:

Councillor Moss to Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council:

The Government announced that 6,000 households in Waltham Forest would receive an additional £324 in cost of living support. How many of the 2,000 households referred to in answer would receive the additional payments and how are they being chosen?

Cllr Williams said she would respond in writing to explain how the Council support given overlaps with those receiving help from the Government and would also explain how the households were chosen.

Councillor Best to Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader, Housing and Regeneration Portfolio Holder:

How viable is the target for new homes in South Chingford given the Council had recently stated, in its assessment for the Lido, that the area has low public connectivity?

Cllr Khan said that public accessibility links are not a factor in determining locations for new homes and housing growth.

Councillor Whilby to Councillor Ashworth, Portfolio Holder for Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities:

What does the Portfolio Holder think of comments made that it is not the role of Government to provide free food?

Cllr Ashworth stated that over 11,000 of Waltham Forest residents were using food banks. The Council had responded to the cost-of-living crisis by contributing £4m of support. The situation would not get better, and the Council would help by setting up food banks and community kitchens, along with working with voluntary groups.

Councillor Quinn to Councillor Douglas, Portfolio Holder for Public Service:  
How will residents that don't speak English access the cost-of-living help provided by the council?

Cllr Douglas stated that they would help by

- 1) Working with community groups.
- 2) Everyone would be encouraged to attend drop-ins at libraries support with accessing the internet.
- 3) Support through community migrant groups.

#### **46. NOTICE OF MOTION: BOROUGH OF SANCTUARY**

With the consent of the meeting and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.8.1 Councillor Williams altered the motion of which she had given notice.

It was then moved by Councillor Williams; seconded by Councillor Mitchell.

This council notes that:

- Waltham Forest is proud of its diversity and history of welcoming people from across the world to the borough; we believe we are a better place for it.
- We are standing up for those facing persecution and speaking out against the intent of the Home Office to make the UK unwelcoming for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- The Hostile Environment policy of the Home Office has caused harm to various groups within our borough. This includes residents caught in the Windrush scandal and EU migrants who are facing an uncertain future as a result of Brexit.
- In recent weeks the Council has also discovered significant safeguarding concerns in Home Office accommodation in the borough and has taken purposeful steps to address them and push the Home Office to make immediate improvements.
- That the Council has challenged the Government publicly on its failure to keep people in its care safe, and will continue to do so.
- We are committed to continuing to work with partners, schools, and the voluntary and community sector to create a welcoming and secure borough for those seeking sanctuary.
- So far Waltham Forest has:
  - Hosted 346 people escaping the war in Ukraine
  - Provided wraparound support to 400 asylum seekers in contingency accommodation including financial, food and clothing
  - Resettled 13 refugee families through the UK Resettlement and Afghan Resettlement pledge
  - Provided over 3,000 people with holistic support including ESOL, social integration, volunteering and employment
- Waltham Forest is currently supporting 66 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

- That Borough of Sanctuary is awarded by City of Sanctuary to institutions that are welcoming to those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries, and protecting the rights of all migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees.

This council believes that:

- The Council must continue to go above and beyond to support its migrant communities and that the journey to become a Borough of Sanctuary will solidify this commitment.
- We have a duty of care towards children, and vulnerable and trafficked adults in our borough, and this must extend to refugees and migrants.

This council resolves to:

- Launch the journey to become a Borough of Sanctuary by joining City of Sanctuary's local authority network and demonstrate its values of Inclusive, Openness, Participation, Inspire, and Integrity.
- Continue to welcome and support all people seeking sanctuary in the borough and stand in solidarity with them.
- Challenge anti-migrant sentiment wherever we find it.
- Find more opportunities across the Council to celebrate our migrant communities, tell their stories, and promote their voices.
- Work with local community, health, and education partners, including those with lived experience, to shape Waltham Forest's borough of sanctuary ambition.
- In addition to taking local action, we will call out Home Office policy failure and demand they:
  - Guarantee the safety of all children under their care
  - Create a proper plan for resettlement
- Join with civil society organisations to campaign for changes to Home Office policies, such as:
  - End the Hostile Environment policy including no Rwanda deportations and ensuring all those eligible for the Windrush compensation scheme are supported to claim
  - Remove the ban on work for asylum seekers
  - Housing contracts for asylum seekers will never put profit before people

It was then moved by Cllr Best and seconded by Cllr Moss as an amendment to the Motion above that

This council notes:

- Waltham Forest is proud of its diversity and history of welcoming people from across the world to the borough; we believe we are a better place for it.
- We are standing up for those facing persecution and speaking out ~~against the intent~~ **where** of the Home Office **policy could** to make the UK unwelcoming for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- The Hostile Environment ~~policy of the Home Office~~ has caused harm to various groups within our borough. This includes residents caught in the

~~Windrush scandal and EU migrants who are facing an uncertain future as a result of Brexit.~~

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- Join with civil society organisations to campaign for changes to Home Office policies, such as:

- ~~End~~ **Review of the Hostile Environment policy including no Rwanda deportations and the migrant and economic partnership with Rwanda.**
- Ensure all those eligible for the Windrush compensation scheme are supported to claim
- **Effective policies to end the scourge of people smuggling and trafficking and address its devastating consequences.**
- Remove the ban on work for asylum seekers
- Housing contracts for asylum seekers will never put profit before people

There was debate, in which Councillors Dhedhi, James, Saumarez, Halebi and Mirwitch spoke, following which Councillor Williams exercised her right to reply.

The amendment in the names of Councillors Best and Moss was put to the vote.

As a result of the voting, the Mayor declared the amendment **LOST**.

The substantive motion in the names of Councillors Williams and Mitchell was put to the vote.

As a result of the voting, the Mayor declared the motion **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**

That this council notes:

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#### **47. THE MARMOT INSTITUTE HEALTH INEQUALITIES RESEARCH REPORT**

It was moved by Councillor Asghar and seconded by Councillor Deakin that the Council **Acknowledges** the publication of the independent Health inequalities research; and **Notes** the key content and proposed next steps as detailed in the Appendix A of the report.

#### **48. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

##### **RESOLVED:**

It was moved by Councillor Strathern and seconded by Councillor James that the Council **Notes** the progress made and **Endorses** the Corporate Parenting Board priorities for next financial year.

On being put to the vote, the motion was **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### **49. FEES AND CHARGES 2023-24**

##### **RESOLVED:**

It was moved by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Douglas that the Council **Agrees** the schedule of Fees and Charges set out in the Appendix of the report.

On being put to the vote, the motion was **CARRIED.**

#### **50. APPOINTMENTS**

None.

The Council rose at 8.47 pm having completed its business.