

## 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, 27 April 2023.

### PRESENT:

**Councillors:** Afzal Akram, 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, Mitchell Goldie, Jenny Gray, Kisha Green, Justin Halabi, Jemma Hemsted, Crystal Ihenachor, Sazimet Palta Imre, Kay Isa, Tim James, Ahsan Khan, Johar Khan, Kira Lewis, Khevyn Limbajee, Sally Littlejohn, Clyde Loakes, Gerry Lyons, Zafran Malik, Anna Mbachu, Miriam Mirwitch, Louise Mitchell, John Moss, Sam O'Connell, Yusuf Patel, Jack Phipps, Marie Pye, Caramel Quin, Uzma Rasool, Catherine Saumarez, Sebastian Salek, Alistair Strathern, Richard Sweden, Steve Terry, Katy Thompson, Sharon Waldron, Terry Wheeler, Grace Williams and Jennifer Whilby

### 62. ELECTION OF CHAIR

In the absence of the Mayor, the Director of Governance and Law asked for nominations for Chair.

Councillor Williams moved that Councillor Elizabeth Baptiste was appointed Chair for the meeting. Councillor Steve Terry seconded the motion.

There being no further nominations, the Director of Governance and Law put the motion to the vote and it was declared to be **CARRIED**.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Baptiste was appointed Chair for the meeting.

### 63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karen Bellamy, Jonathan O'Dea, Whitney Ihenachor and Keith Rayner.

### 64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer provided all Members with a dispensation to vote on the recommendations in item 9 of the agenda - Councillor and Co-Optee Remuneration. This on the grounds that, without it, so many Members would have a disclosable interest in the matter that it would impede the transaction of the business.

## **65. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH 2023**

The minutes of the Special Council meeting (Budget and Council Tax Setting), held on 2 March 2023, were approved as a correct record.

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

The Chair invited Cabinet Members to make their announcements.

Councillor Williams wished a speed recovery to the Mayor. She then referred to John Turnbull, Strategic Director of Finance and Governance who was leaving the Council. She spoke of Mr Turnbull's achievements at Waltham Forest Council and wished him the best in his retirement.

Councillor Mitchell, Portfolio Lead for Adults, referred to the fact that LBWF was one of four authorities in the country to have a dementia hub which provides support for those living with dementia and their carers. She then announced that the long-awaited Sanctuary Hairdressing Salon was opening next month. Councillor Mitchell explained that the salon was fully accessible and fitted with professional equipment. She gave thanks to colleagues from the Adult Learning Service who provided assistance in fitting out the salon with necessary equipment; and the students who would be providing the hair and beauty treatments. Councillor Mitchell highlighted the importance of dementia support and confirmed that in LBWF there were over 1,200 people, aged 65 and over, diagnosed with some form of dementia and the number of people living with the condition was expected to increase significantly in the future, with an anticipated increase of 45% by 2040. Councillor Mitchell explained that dementia could also have a significant impact on people who provide care as two thirds of those living with dementia were living at home and most of their care provided by family members. She went on to commend the excellent work Mr Matthew Mint, Ms Jo Buller and the rest of the team undertake at the dementia hub, who were supported by Mr John Giffney, Ms Maureen McEleney and the rest of the Adult Social Care team. Councillor Mitchell added that next month was Dementia Awareness Week and there were a number of events should Members wish to attend.

Councillor Ashworth, Portfolio Lead for Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities, was pleased to announce that, following the success of the Winter Spaces Network, the Council was able to encourage the opening of more community spaces across the borough. Councillor Ashworth then summarised the work completed since November 2022:

- 47 network spaces across Council libraries, voluntary spaces and community settings
- Over 300 people, per week, visited the winter spaces around the borough
- 9,000 meals were served from community kitchens
- 16,000 visits were made to the Council's 'Warm Spaces' webpage

Councillor Ashworth confirmed that there were plans to extend the offer throughout the next 12 months, that community groups could apply for up to £10,000 to create a new offer and that those with an existing community living

room or other space could apply for funding to enhance their existing offer of support. She then confirmed that Council was looking for new partnerships across the borough that would bring underutilised community spaces into public usage.

Councillor Limbajee, Portfolio Lead for Community Safety, referred to the fact that the previous week had marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic and racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence. He stated that the McPherson report detailed that institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police had prevented a full investigation. 30 years later, the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard took place by serving police officer Wayne Couzens. Baroness Casey's report described the Metropolitan Police as not only being institutionally racist but also sexist and homophobic. Councillor Limbajee said that policing by consent was fundamental to democracy and pointed out that Baroness Casey made it clear that trust and confidence in the Police service was at an all time low. He highlighted the importance of the Police reflecting the community it served. Councillor Limbajee stated that the Metropolitan Police was in crisis and said there was a need to see real and demonstratable change. Councillor Limbajee said that LBWF were partners of the Metropolitan Police to help bring about that change as soon as possible. Councillor Limbajee went on to say that it was essential that the local community helped to shape and drive that response which would form the heart of the Council's Safe Streets pilot and would be running in South Leytonstone and South Chingford. He went on to say that Safe Streets took a problem-solving approach to antisocial behaviour and crime. Councillor Limbajee confirmed that Council officers were on the streets everyday working with residents, businesses and the Police to get information, to report and to act swiftly. Councillor Limbajee stated that being responsive, being attuned to residents, providing constant updates, taking a coherent response to community safety, tackling causes and effects of crime and making interventions to prevent crime from happening was the approach being taken by the Council. He said the pilot would last for 6 months and that he looked forward to updating Council on how it went.

Councillor Strathern, Portfolio Lead for Children and Young People, highlighted the success of the Breakfast Scheme following plans to bring forward £300,000 from the Leader's Priority Fund into primary schools to assist their most vulnerable pupils by introducing the scheme. Councillor Strathern explained that each school had implemented the scheme in a different way depending on what best suited their facilities and communities. He added that feedback had suggested that the scheme had had a significant positive impact on their pupils, including better academic performance. Councillor Strathern was pleased to announce that, from April 2023, the Council will be using the Government's latest round of funding to bring forward extra support to enable the scheme to continue until the end of the school year. He said that he was grateful to Headteachers and Council officers who had mobilised quickly to allow the scheme to work effectively and said he looked forward to seeing the positive impact as a result.

## **67. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Goldie that the Council Procedural Rules 13.1 be suspended to allow Council to consider an additional motion on the subject of care leavers, to be considered immediately following Public Statements.

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

## **68. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

Maria Kiyanimehr, Assadala Al-Khazaali and Sandra Slaby, local residents and young carers, addressed Council in relation to the care leavers motion. All 3 speakers were care leavers and they spoke of the disadvantages and lifelong impact that many care leavers face.

Terry Galloway, Care Leaver Officer, thanked the Council for bringing the motion and said he was pleased to see cross party support. Mr Galloway gave the view that the care system was not fit for purpose and explained that he was now helping to create solutions for care leavers. He called for Councils, Government, businesses and the wider community to work together to improve the care system.

Fadumo Alinur Adan and Madina Sahag, local residents and care leavers, addressed Council and spoke in support of the motion. Ms Adan gave the view that the care leaver motion would help remove the stigma attached to care leavers and could bring about positive change. Ms Sahag stated that the motion would help others overcome some of the difficulties that she had faced.

Mark Riddell MBE, National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, Department for Education, addressed Council and, in doing so, stated that he welcomed the motion, that young people deserved the best start in life and pointed out that there was a duty to consider the thoughts and feelings of children in care/care leavers at the forefront of the work undertaken.

## **69. CARE LEAVERS**

### **RESOLVED:**

It was moved by Cllr Strathern and seconded by Cllr James that:

The Council noted:

- The campaign to make care experienced a protected characteristic and applauds the several councils across the UK have done so;
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
- Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;
- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority;
- All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- Councillors should be champions of our looked after children and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;
- Waltham Forest has a proud record of providing support to its care experienced young people and through its partnership approach has good collaborative

mechanisms spanning the Probation Service, DWP, housing and homelessness teams, revenue and benefits, primary care and Citizens Advice;

- We have established pathways for care experienced people to go onto further and higher education, helped with the transition to suitable accommodation, and sponsored access to key life skills such as driving and cooking;
- The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives which are to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation of people with protected characteristics, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This council believes that:

- All children and young people deserve the best start in life, reflected in making it a corporate priority;
- We have a duty to put the voices, needs, and rights of care experienced people who face challenges and discrimination at the heart of decision-making;
- Decisions and policy changes should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact to changes on people with care experience;
- We should use this change to seek opportunities to create and improve policies and decision making that improve outcomes for care experienced people.

This council resolved to:

- Recognise that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination;
- That this council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic so that future services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a Protected Characteristic;
- For the Council to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views;
- That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic in services and employment;
- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a Protected Characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation;
- To formally call upon all other bodies to adopt corporate parenting principles for children in care and care leavers until such time as it may be introduced by legislation;
- To recognise the intersectionality of care experienced with other protected characteristics and adopt an approach that takes a systemic approach to tackling discrimination and disproportionality;
- To identify and review barriers that impact care experienced people in our own recruitment including extending the right to a guaranteed interview for applicants who are care experienced who meet who meet the minimum requirements for a job vacancy;
- To work with statutory partners and small businesses to encourage them to

- take a similar approach in their own employment practices;
- To create a cross-council approach that proactively creates opportunities for care experienced people with training for recruiting managers, work experience opportunities, careers advice and support into Council apprenticeships;
  - That the Council reports its progress and achievements in the annual Corporate Parenting Board report; and
  - To formally support the 'Show Us You Care Too' campaign and write to Government calling for care experience to be made a protected characteristic as part of the Government's Independent Review into Children's Social Care and for a sustainable, long term funding settlement for Children Social Care.

There was debate, in which Councillors Littlejohn, Eglin, Ashworth, Best and Akram spoke, following which Councillor Strathern exercised his right of reply.

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

## **70. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

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

Question 1 from Councillor Dixon to Councillor A. Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration). There were no supplementary questions.

Question 2 from Councillor Dore to Councillor A. Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration). There were no supplementary questions.

Question 3 from Councillor Lewis to Councillor Ashworth, Portfolio Holder for Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities. The Council noted the supplementary question put by Councillor Lewis which was to ask how the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) would help young people. Councillor Ashworth stated that officers responsible for the CEZ were already engaging with schools and colleges in the borough. She added that the Council was actively seeking underrepresented residents and students to form part of the governance structure for the CEZ. Councillor Ashworth went on to say that further opportunities were being developed for young entrepreneurs to showcase their wares and confirmed that there would be mentoring and other forms of support around that. She also explained that the Council was working with Small Business Enterprises (SMEs) to develop work experience placements which would evolve into a programme to support flexible apprenticeships in the creative sector.

Question 4 from Councillor M. Berberi to Councillor Loakes, Deputy Leader (Climate and Air Quality). There were no supplementary questions.

Question 5 from Councillor Best to Councillor Loakes, Deputy Leader (Climate and Air Quality). The Council noted the supplementary question put by Councillor Best which was to first, reference the consultation results in relation to fortnightly bin collections. Councillor Best highlighted the fact that only 5% of respondents had said they felt positively about the change. She then asked:

- (a) for confirmation on how the consultation was considered sufficient when, in relation to the question about the barriers residents were facing with regard to recycling, the only possible response was:

- The Council is doing the right things to address the issue; or
- The Council is doing enough to address the issue.

And if the consultation was considered successful, why it was not mentioned in last years' Labour Manifesto which detailed 23 pledges.

(b) how much money was expected to be saved from the move to fortnightly collections.

(c) whether the change would be in place by next summer.

Councillor Loakes explained that with substantial change to services, it was good practice to see how other boroughs had implemented the change, such as, how local authorities engaged with residents. He also pointed out that it was difficult to get residents to respond to such consultations. Councillor Loakes confirmed that 60% of borough had moved to fortnightly collections. He went on to say that there was a substantial response rate to the consultation in LBWF and he was confident that residents understood the consultation questions. Councillor Loakes said that he had answered the first supplementary question and that if Councillor Best wishes to email him the remaining questions he would respond. He added that the subject had been debated at length by the Climate Scrutiny Committee and suggested that she might want to speak to colleagues on the committee to acquire more information.

Question 6 from Councillor Moss to Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council. The Council noted the supplementary question put by Councillor Moss which was to ask what the scope of the investigation was and whether the terms of reference for the investigation could be provided. Councillor Williams confirmed that the information would be provided.

Question 7 from Councillor Hemsted to Councillor Douglas, Portfolio Holder for Public Services. The Council noted the supplementary question put by Councillor Hemsted which was to ask when it was expected that the lease extension would be signed. Councillor Douglas explained that asset management was not within his portfolio but said he would endeavour to find out the answer and get back to the Member.

Question 8 from Councillor James to Councillor Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration). The Council noted the supplementary question put by Councillor James which was to ask whether there were any barriers preventing the Council from using the 12 remaining units for temporary housing, for the homeless or for care leavers. Councillor Khan stated that the Sixty Bricks operating model focussed on selling the units for private sale as they relied on that money to bring forward more affordable housing. However, he said that he took the point of having empty homes during a housing crisis and referred to the fall-back position where the Council could acquire the units and bring them back into use as affordable housing, subject to Cabinet approval.

## **71. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME**

### **RESOLVED:**

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

notice.

The amended motion was then moved by Councillor Saumarez and seconded by Councillor Best.

In October 2021, the government announced a 3 year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme.

Since 2018, the HAF programme has provided support to children in receipt of free school meals through holiday periods.

Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families and lead to a holiday experience gap for some children. Evidence shows that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people.

The HAF programme funding is primarily for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

Local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related FSM but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF.

In Waltham Forest, we have prioritised using this flexibility to support vulnerable families who otherwise would not meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals. Working with schools, this has enabled us to identify and target support for some of the most vulnerable families across the borough. This may include young carers, looked-after children, children with low attendance rates at school, children in low-income households who do not receive free school meals and children in transition phases between primary and secondary school for example.

Recognising the wider value of holiday activity clubs to all residents, Waltham Forest Council is one of the few boroughs in London to supplement the HAF funding, though the Leader's Pledge since 2008, to provide a separate universal activity offer for families across Waltham Forest.

Activities took place right across the borough over the Easter break, as in previous school breaks, enabling families from a cross Waltham Forest to access free and affordable activities for their children over the holidays. Within this, 40% of places were offered in 5 settings across Chingford

Waltham Forest Adult Learning services offered a holiday workshop for parents and children aged 3 to 11 at Wood Street Library, Lea Bridge Library, The Junction and Leytonstone Library – as well running activities in a range of other settings across the borough including the Spring Family Club at Pimp Hall.

For families who may not be eligible for the Holiday Activity and Food Programme this Easter, a number of clubs across the borough offered affordable paid places as well as a wide range of free provision offered by groups supported by the council. As a council, we want to bring even more



activities closer to families right across the borough, building on the ambitious local hub-and-spoke vision at the heart of our families and youth hubs programmes.

However, given the range of activities and programmes we have on offer in Waltham Forest, it's more important than ever to make sure these are communicated clearly, as we know from parents that at time the current offer can be hard to navigate or get a complete picture of.

**This Council resolves to:**

- offer a summer activities programme that builds on successes thus far and continues to provide equal opportunity for attendance across the borough by building on the council's priority of delivering more services closer to residents through our Families and Youth Hubs programmes.
- Consider whether a subsidised holiday club scheme should form part of our support and reward package for Council staff as part of the ongoing review of staff reward led by the Deputy Chief Executive and to be undertaken in consultation with trade unions. (NB: this offer would not be extended to Councillors).
- write to the government asking them to extend eligibility for the HAF programme, by expanding the eligibility criteria for FSM to all children on Universal Credit
- In the meantime, continue to support some of the most vulnerable families through targeted use of the limited flexibility in the existing scheme, support all families across the borough through the Leaders Priority Fund, and work with other authorities to share best practise
- continue to utilise the invaluable asset of Epping Forest for activities and family events as well as locations such as Fellowship Square and the Hive, building on the successes of recent family events like Spring Fest.
- Continue to work across services and partners to provide a clearer and more comprehensive view of what is on offer locally, including improvements to online and social media advertisement and making better use of our schools and family hubs more effectively as a conduit to connect with parents
- Recognising the importance of councillors insights in helping to inform how we best deliver an activities programme for all our residents across all our communities, bring our annual holiday activities programme as an annual standing item to Children and Families scrutiny

There was debate, in which Councillors Strathern, and Mirwitch spoke, following which, Councillor Saumarez exercised her right to reply.

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

**72. COUNCILLOR & CO-OPTEE RENUMERATION**

## **RESOLVED:**

It was moved by Councillor Phipps and seconded by Councillor Terry that:

Council agreed:

- An increase of 4.04% to the basic member allowance and all special responsibility allowances as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- To increase remuneration for the independent member of the Audit & Governance Committee to match that of the independent person for standards;
- To backdate the increase to 26 May 2022 (the last AGM) to reflect the period of the NJC pay award for staff; and
- To adopt into the constitution, the amended Appendix A to the Scheme of Member Allowances at Appendix 3 of the report.

There was debate, in which Councillor James spoke, following which Councillor Phipps exercised his right to reply.

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

### **73. WALTHAM FOREST LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

#### **RESOLVED:**

It was moved by Councillor A. Khan and seconded by Councillor Gray that Council approved the Waltham Forest Local Development Scheme attached at Appendix A of the report and resolved that it take effect immediately.

There was debate, in which Councillor Moss spoke, following which, Councillor A. Khan exercised his right to reply.

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

### **74. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

It was moved by Councillor Phipps and seconded by Councillor Terry that Council agreed the revised terms of reference at Appendix 1 of the report.

An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Best and seconded by Councillor Moss, that:

In light of the CIPFA guidance which says:

1. The audit committee should be established so that it is independent of executive decision making and able to provide objective oversight.
2. The purpose of audit committees is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements.
3. Audit committees require a strong, independently minded chair, displaying a depth of knowledge, skills, and interest
4. The audit committees of local authorities should include co-opted independent members in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

*That Council agree the revised terms of reference at Appendix 1 with the following amendment:*

*Add additional third and fourth paragraphs in “Membership” section:*

*In order to be fully independent of the executive the Chair of the committee shall be from a different political group than the political group(s) that form the executive or an independent member.*

*The two independent members shall be adequately qualified and nominated by each of the two largest political groups*

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 Phipps and Terry was put to the vote.

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

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Council agree the revised terms of reference at Appendix 1 of the report.

## **75. APPOINTMENTS**

In order to allow members of the Children & Families and Communities Scrutiny Committees to vote on their joint themed review on 4 May 2023, Council agreed that a joint Sub-Committee be constituted with the following membership:

### **Joint Children & Families and Communities sub-committee**

Councillor Miriam Mirwitch	Chair	Labour
Councillor Kisch Green		Labour
Councillor Kastriot Berberi		Labour
Councillor Sally Littlejohn		Labour
Councillor Sazimet Palta Imre		Conservative
Councillor Catherine Saumarez		Conservative
Councillor Terry Wheeler		Labour
Councillor Yusuf Patel	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Katy Thompson		Labour
Councillor Roy Berg		Conservative
Councillor Shabana Dhedhi		Labour
Councillor Zafran Malik		Labour
Councillor Steve Terry		Labour
Councillor Emma Best		Conservative

The Council rose at 9.27 pm having completed its business.