

**LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST  
MINUTES OF THE CABINET**

**05 November 2024 at 2.01 pm**

**PRESENT:**

<b>Chair:</b>	Councillor Grace Williams	Leader of the Council
<b>Cabinet Members:</b>	Councillor Ahsan Khan	Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)
	Councillor Clyde Loakes	Deputy Leader (Climate and Air Quality)
	Councillor Naheed Asghar	Portfolio Lead Member - Inclusive Economy
	Councillor Vicky Ashworth	Portfolio Lead Member - Stronger Communities
	Councillor Kizzy Gardiner	Portfolio Lead Member - Children and Young People
	Councillor Khevyn Limbajee	Portfolio Lead Member - Community Safety
	Councillor Louise Mitchell	Portfolio Lead Member - Adults and Health

**Officers in Attendance:**

Linzi Roberts-Egan	Chief Executive
Temitope Ademosu	Strategic Director, Stronger Communities
Ian Buckle	Head of Electoral and Democratic Services
Nicky Crouch	Strategic Director, Children Services
Marc Gadsby	Strategic Director, Adult Services
Joe Garrod	Acting Strategic Director, Place
Mark Hynes	Director of Governance and Law
Anthony Jackson	Democratic Services Officer
Rob Manning	Strategic Director, Resources
Debbie Porter	Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods and Environment

**41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Rosalind Doré and Paul Douglas.

**42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

#### **43. MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting, held on 1 October 2024, were approved and signed as a correct record.

#### **44. HOUSING SCRUTINY THEMED REVIEW - HOUSING OPTIONS AND SUPPORT**

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, thanked the former Housing Scrutiny Committee for the work undertaken, with particular thanks to Councillor Andrew Dixon for his leadership.

##### **Decision**

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the Housing Scrutiny Committee Themed Review report; and
- (2) adopted and agreed to take forward the recommendations outlined in the report as outlined in the proposed response in appendix 2 of the report including where recommendations have been amended.

#### **45. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY**

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, referred to the property licensing scheme which held landlords to account and gave thanks to Councillor Limbajee for his oversight and to the officers in his team for their hard work. He went on to say that he looked forward to the Renters Rights Bill progressing through Parliament as it would provide powers for local authorities to hold landlords to account. Councillor Khan then confirmed that he and Councillor Limbajee had written to the previous Government to request a decent homes standard within the private rented sector space. He then went on to confirm that a key focus was to build on the work by the housing sustainment team and support residents by increasing their chances of remaining in the borough should they be evicted. Councillor Khan gave thanks to John Coker and his team for their hard work.

Councillor Limbajee gave thanks to Councillor Khan for his leadership and to officers, particularly David Beach – Director of Regulatory and Contingency Planning Services; and Julia Morris – Assistant Director of Regulatory Services, for their hard work.

The Leader referred to the need to balance enforcement, prevention and affordable homes. She also highlighted the importance of prevention to sustain residents' tenancies.

## **Decision**

Cabinet:

- (1) approved the Council's new Private Rented Sector Strategy and Delivery Plan;
- (2) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing and Regeneration to make any changes to the strategy and development plan necessary if, and when, the current Renters Rights Bill is enacted; and
- (3) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regulatory & Contingency Planning Services in consultation with the Director of Governance and Law to make any changes to the Council's Housing and Licensing Team Enforcement Policy necessary if, and when, the current Renters Rights Bill is enacted.

## **46. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2027/28**

The Leader introduced the report and, in doing so, stated that the Council were facing significant financial challenges and had a moral obligation to meet those challenges, particularly those around vulnerable people. She went on to say that Members needed to be aware of the pressures that residents were facing and what was driving the financial crisis. The Leader confirmed that relevant officers were doing all they could to alleviate financial pressures and gave the example of the work being undertaken to reduce the number of agency staff being used. She added that officers would also be looking at how best to deliver services and support residents in a cost-effective way. The Leader then gave thanks for all officers, who had worked on the budget setting process, for their hard work.

Councillor Loakes referred to the challenge of responding to key pressures and said that good communication to residents in relation to public services were paramount. He gave the example of revising or reissuing some of the Council's wording around its duty to provide adequate housing. Councillor Loakes went on to say that he had confidence in the leadership and teams of officers within the Council and in their ability to ensure a legal and balanced budget was in place to deliver the Council's aspirations.

## **Decision**

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the potential funding gap of £18.058 million for the 3-year period 2025/26 to 2027/28 with £11.201 million in 2025/26, assuming all service-related pressures are resolved. (The final position will not be known until the provisional local government finance settlement and final settlement are released. The provision settlement is expected in late December);
- (2) noted the MTFs refresh assumes a council tax increase of 4.99% for all 3 years which is subject to confirmation of the referendum level and Council

approval. (If the council tax increase is at 1.99%, the gap for the 3 years would be £23.860 million);

- (3) noted the requirement to achieve savings from management actions, efficiencies and a transformation programme, to mitigate the in-year baseline pressure reported in the month 3 monitor of £14.038 million, the potential funding gap of £18.058 million to £23.860 million for the 3-year period to 2027/28;
- (4) noted the continuing uncertainty resulting from likely delays to the spending review, Fair Funding Review and proposed changes to the Business Rates Retention scheme;
- (5) note the outline timetable for the budget process as set out in paragraph 3.32 of the report; and
- (6) delegated, to the Strategic Director of Resources, the authority to distribute any contingency budgets and/or reserves as per the Council's financial ground rules.

#### **47. IN-BOROUGH HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND)**

Councillor Gardiner introduced the report and, in doing so, confirmed that officers were working hard to reduce expenditure on home to school transport, however acknowledged that, although costs had been fairly stable over the last few years, they were likely to increase as there was substantial need in that space.

The Leader commended the work undertaken by Nicky Crouch and her team.

#### **Decision**

Cabinet:

- (1) approved the commencement of an Open Procedure exercise for the recommissioning of the In-borough Home to School Transport contract for children and young people with SEND aged 5-19 and up to 25 for young people with an EHCP and who are residents of Waltham Forest. The contract will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 for an initial three (3) year period until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2028, with the option to further extend for a further two (2) years until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2030. (The total spend on the transport contract in 2023/24 was £3,328,197 against a budget of £2,278,300); and
- (2) delegated approval of the appointment of the successful provider and contractual arrangements to the Strategic Director of Children Services, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Stronger Communities, the Strategic Director of Resources and the Portfolio Lead Member for Children's Services.

#### **48. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN**

The Leader introduced the report and, in doing so, said that the report demonstrated the Council's commitment to transparency and self-awareness.

#### **Decision**

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the outcome and recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge report;
- (2) agreed the action plan, which sets out the council's response to the recommendations; and
- (3) delegated authority to the Leader of the Council for further refinement of the action plan.

**The meeting closed at 2.26 pm**

**Chair's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_