

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST MINUTES OF THE CABINET

13 July 2023 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT:

Chair:	Councillor Grace Williams	Leader of the Council
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Clyde Loakes	Deputy Leader (Climate and Air Quality)
	Councillor Vicky Ashworth	Portfolio Lead Member - Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities
	Councillor Paul Douglas	Portfolio Lead Member - Finance and Resources
	Councillor Kizzy Gardiner	Portfolio Lead Member - Children and Young People
	Councillor Ahsan Khan	Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)
	Councillor Khevyn Limbajee	Portfolio Lead Member - Community Safety
	Councillor Louise Mitchell	Portfolio Lead Member - Adults
	Councillor Alistair Strathern	Portfolio Lead Member - 15 Minute Neighbourhoods
	Councillor Elizabeth Baptiste	Cabinet Commissioner - Renters
	Councillor Catherine Deakin	Cabinet Commissioner - Health Equity
	Councillor Rosalind Doré	Cabinet Commissioner - Destinations

(Cabinet Commissioners are appointed by the Leader to assist Cabinet in leading engagement with our community on four key priorities for the Council and to support our borough to recover from the pandemic. These Councillors are not Members of the Cabinet and do not have any voting rights nor decision-making powers.)

Councillors in Attendance: Councillor Marie Pye, Chair of Growth Scrutiny Committee

Officers in Attendance:

Martin Esom	Chief Executive
Heather Flinders	Strategic Director, People
Joe Garrod	Director of Housing
Shazia Hussain	Deputy Chief Executive
Mark Hynes	Director of Governance and Law
Anthony Jackson	Democratic Services Officer

Rob Manning
Debbie Porter

Strategic Director, Resources
Strategic Director, Environment and Neighbourhoods

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Naheed Asghar and Sharon Waldron.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

10. MINUTES OF CABINET

The minutes of the meeting, held on 8 June 2023, were approved and signed as a correct record.

11. GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THEMED REVIEW: TOWN CENTRES

Councillor Pye addressed Cabinet in relation to the report and, in doing so, made the following points:

- That, partly due to the Council's emphasis on 15 Minute Neighbourhoods, the profile of town centres had increased and were of paramount importance to residents.
- That the Growth Scrutiny Committee had recommended the development of a Town Centre Strategy and had focussed on what the strategy should include.
- That Councillor Khan and relevant officers had co-created the strategy with Growth Scrutiny Committee Members.
- That the majority of recommendations, as detailed in appendix 2 to the report, were around how the strategy should bring together the work being undertaken on town centres.
- The importance of coordinating and learning from the work and being clear on outcomes.
- The excellent witnesses that had attended Growth Scrutiny Committee from other local authorities, various organisations concerned with town centres and academics.
- The importance of being aware that the whole community used town centres and therefore it was important to ensure there was something for everybody.

Councillor Khan thanked Councillor Pye for the update on the work of the Committee. He confirmed that the timing of the strategy was fortunate as there was work taking place through levelling up, substantial evidence gathered through area frameworks and ambitious plans were coming forward through the Local Plan. Councillor Khan referred to the witnesses that had attended previous Growth Scrutiny Committee meetings to inform the strategy who had spoken of the role local authorities were playing in revitalising town centres at a time where the private sector was withdrawing in that area. He highlighted the interventionist approach that LBWF had undertaken and pointed to examples such as the Creative Enterprise Zone in Blackhorse Road, Soho Theatre in Walthamstow, the Estate Regeneration Scheme

in Wood Street. Councillor Khan highlighted the importance of putting residents at the heart of any action taken and stated that the 15 Minute Neighbourhood framework provided the mechanism for that to be done. He went on to say that a Town Centre Strategy would be brought to Cabinet in due course, taking onboard the recommendations from the themed review. Councillor Khan gave thanks to the Growth Scrutiny Committee, Will Teasdale – Director of Area Regeneration Delivery and his team for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

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

12. HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THEMED REVIEW: DELIVERING THE BEST REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE TO RESIDENTS

Councillor Khan stated that one of the key functions for which the LBWF was responsible, as a landlord, was undertaking repairs. He said that the pandemic, staffing and material costs had led to a backlog of non-urgent repairs and that the themed review had focussed on that area. Councillor Khan stated that the recommendations, detailed at appendix 2, would be actioned through the repairs workstream within the Housing Transformation Programme which had been presented to Cabinet previously. Councillor Khan thanked the Housing Scrutiny Committee, and Joe Garrod and his team for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

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

13. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE JOINT THEMED REVIEW 2022-23: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Councillor Gardiner stated that equality, diversity and inclusion were vital for children and young people, particularly in relation to child safeguarding. She referred to the motion passed recently at Full Council in relation to adopting care status on protected characteristics and confirmed that the motion had led to the formulation of

some of the recommendations in the appendix to the report. Councillor Gardiner thanked both the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee and the Communities Scrutiny Committee and relevant officers for their hard work.

Councillor Limbajee said that the joint work between the committees was very important and gave thanks to committee members and officers for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the Communities Scrutiny Committee and Children and Families Scrutiny Committee Joint Themed Review report; and
- (2) adopted and took forward the recommendations outlined in the report as outlined in the proposed response in appendix 2 to the report.

14. FINANCIAL MONITORING: MONTH 2 (MAY)

Councillor Douglas introduced the report.

The Leader highlighted the importance of Cabinet noting the growing gap to £16 million and acknowledged that a number of local authorities were experiencing the same issues due to inflation and the wider economic downturn. She pointed out that Councillor Douglas and relevant officers were taking strong action to identify savings and look at ways of addressing the issue.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the Council's financial ground rules that service directors are required to implement management actions to mitigate any pressures outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the report, before the use of corporate or reserves items are considered;
- (2) approved £0.500m investment in parks for the maintenance of play equipment and new provision to support 15 minute neighbourhoods to be funded from contingency;
- (3) approved one off funding of up to £0.273m from contingency for 2023/24 and £0.574m in 2024/25, to implement a new operating model within Community Safety Service;
- (4) approved £1.2m from contingency to fund the base budget issues for the Antisocial behaviour service for 2023/24, with ongoing resolution sought in the MTFS;

- (5) approved £0.938m for Accelerator Programmes resource costs across 2023/24 & 2024/25 to be funded from the budget strategy reserve;
- (6) approved 0.153m for the Commissioning Quality Improvement project to be funded from the budget strategy reserve;
- (7) approved £0.140m funding for Learning and Development Strategy Delivery Manager costs to be funded from the budget strategy reserve;
- (8) approved funding from budget strategy reserve of £37k for additional hardware and £20k to fund technical upskilling in the Data & Intelligence service;
- (9) noted the transfer of £0.385m from the contingency to Technology and Digital Services to cover additional costs relating to telephony and licensing; and
- (10) noted the transfer of £0.013m from the contingency budget to Revenues and Benefits to cover the cost of collecting the Business Improvement (BID) Levy, following previous agreement that this would be funded corporately.

15. REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022/23

Councillor Douglas introduced the report.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2022/23;
- (2) approved the Capital carry-forwards in respect of programme slippage totalling £50.5 million at Appendix 2(i) to the report;
- (3) noted the movement of reserves at Appendix 3 of the report; and
- (4) approved the Capital First Review Appendix 4 of the report.

16. RESHAPING OUR HOMELESSNESS OFFER

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, confirmed that a number of residents were being housed outside the borough at a considerable distance. He said that policy, in the first instance, was to house residents within the borough or as close as possible. Councillor Khan stated that unfortunately there were not enough homes within the borough to house all residents. He went on to say that, according to London Councils' research there had been a 41% drop in private rental listings since the pandemic. Councillor Khan stated that he had written to the Chancellor to request that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate be unfrozen, however, he had not received a reply. Councillor Khan thanked Joe Garrod and his team for their

hard work, particularly on the Housing and Families Need Programme and Councillor Ashworth and relevant officers, for their support in relation to jobs and skills.

The Leader referred to the work outlined in the report to support tenants which she said was very important and was underpinned by the appointment of Councillor Baptiste in her position of Cabinet Commissioner for Renters. She went on to thank Councillors Khan, Baptiste, Ashworth and Joe Garrod and his team for their work in this area.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) approve the budget allocation relating to the Families in Housing Need Programme, including the establishment of a Flexible Support Fund and delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Place, in conjunction with the Portfolio Lead Member, to approve the final eligibility criteria for the fund;
- (2) note the plans to support residents in temporary accommodation to increase their working hours and therefore avoid the Benefit Cap;
- (3) note plans to develop an enhanced Renters Advisory Offer for residents living in the PRS;
- (4) note the reintroduction of the use of some face-to-face homelessness assessments, as part of a hybrid approach to customer contact;
- (5) note plans to improve temporary accommodation supply and staff recruitment and retention within the Prevention and Assessment team; and
- (6) note the Shelter review of homelessness services which will be undertaken as part of the 2023/24 Audit plan.

17. AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, stated that there did not seem to be a coherent plan to bring forward affordable housing at national level. He went on to say that over recent years LBWF had a good record of bringing forward affordable housing, however, he acknowledged that it was becoming more difficult due to inflation, interest rate rises, staffing and material issues. He said that the aforementioned issues were one of the reasons that the Affordable Housing Commission had been set up. Councillor Khan went on to say that, in the last year, LBWF brought forward one of the highest numbers of affordable homes in London. He then gave thanks to Gita Nanda - Chair of the Affordable Housing Commission, the other Commissioners, all relevant officers, Councillor Pye and Councillor Dixon for their hard work.

The Leader stated that she was pleased to see the detail in the recommendations from the Commission and echoed Councillor Khan's words of thanks to all involved.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted and consider the final report of the Waltham Forest Affordable Housing Commission, including the final recommendations, as set out in appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) approved the proposed formulation of the Council's response to the report, including the development of an action plan, which will come back to Cabinet in the Autumn.

18. PERMANENT EXPANSION OF KELMSCOTT SECONDARY SCHOOL FROM 6FE TO 8FE

Councillor Gardiner introduced the report and, in doing so, confirmed that the proposals within would go some way to supporting the principles of the Council's 15 Minute Neighbourhood Strategy.

Decision

Cabinet approved the permanent increase of the PAN for Kelmscott School from 6 forms of entry (180 pupils) to 8 forms of entry (240 pupils).

19. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Cabinet agreed to exclude the press and public from the meeting by resolution during consideration of agenda items 13 to 17 in accordance with Section 100 (A) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, on the grounds that consideration of the appendices may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the Act.

20. CREMATORIUM NEW BUILD

Councillor Loakes introduced the report and, in doing so, said that Chingford Cemetery had approximately 10 years left at its current capacity and that it was important to build new capacity for the future.

The Leader gave thanks to all councillors that had engaged with the project and to relevant officers for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) approved the capital budget of up to £8.4m for the Crematorium capital scheme which is funded by prudential borrowing;
- (2) noted the Crematorium service will aim for a Return on Investment for the new Crematorium facility through revenue generation from cremations over 25 years;
 - (a) noted the Operations of the Crematorium has been assessed by modelling revenue against the overall project costs of £8.4m (2 chambers);
 - (b) noted the analysis of ROI for all Crematorium operations indicates a potential £21m surplus over 25yrs, this will be subject to demand and successful marketing of the Crematorium facility;
 - (c) noted the financial business case scrutinised by Finance and Neighbourhoods;
 - (d) noted the Chapel has capacity to host burial ceremonies, which could generate additional revenue; and
- (3) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Property & Delivery, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods, to deliver the crematorium scheme, taking the project through the developed design programme, planning, procurement approvals and construction.

21. APPROPRIATION OF LAND REQUIRED TO DEVELOP AVENUE ROAD ESTATE FOR NEW HOUSING

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so gave thanks to Mark Crane – Director of Housing Delivery; Meera Kumar – Director of Housing Regeneration and Joe Garrod for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) authorised the Commercial Director of Property and Delivery in consultation with the Director of Governance and Law to appropriate the land edged red on the plan attached at Appendix A to the report (“the Land”) for planning purposes under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 227 Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- (2) noted that the appropriation of the Land will trigger the protection of Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which is subject to:
 - (a) planning permission for the proposed development of the Land being granted;

- (b) consent to the appropriation from the Secretary of State in accordance with Section 19 of the Housing Act 1985;
 - (c) the appropriation of open land being advertised in accordance with the requirements of Section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and due consideration being given to any representations that are made in respect of the proposed appropriation of the open space land that is situated within the Land; and
 - (d) no material matters arising in the engagement process which substantially alter the Council's factual case so that the Council considers that the criteria for appropriation are no longer met;
- (3) authorised the Commercial Director of Property and Delivery in consultation with the Director of Governance and Law to take all necessary steps and deal with all necessary legal arrangements, including (but not limited to) entering into an indemnity agreement with Bellway Homes Limited, making compensation payments in line with the statutory framework, responding to any claims and dealing with any disputes.

22. APPROPRIATION OF LAND REQUIRED TO DEVELOP AVENUE ROAD ESTATE FOR NEW HOUSING

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so gave thanks to Mark Crane, Meera Kumar and to all involved in Sixty Bricks for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) authorised the Commercial Director of Property and Delivery in consultation with the Director of Governance and Law to appropriate the land edged red on the plan attached at Appendix A ("the Land") for planning purposes under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 227 Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- (2) noted that the appropriation of the Land will trigger the protection of Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which is subject to:
 - (a) planning permission for the proposed development of the Land being granted;
 - (b) consent to the appropriation from the Secretary of State in accordance with Section 19 of the Housing Act 1985;
 - (c) the appropriation of open land being advertised in accordance with the requirements of Section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and due consideration being given to any representations that are

made in respect of the proposed appropriation of the open space land that is situated within the Land; and

- (d) no material matters arising in the engagement process which substantially alter the Council's factual case so that the Council considers that the criteria for appropriation are no longer met;
- (3) authorised the Commercial Director of Property and Delivery in consultation with the Director of Governance and Law to take all necessary steps and deal with all necessary legal arrangements, including (but not limited to) entering into an indemnity agreement with Sixty Bricks Limited, making compensation payments in line with the statutory framework, responding to any claims and dealing with any disputes; and
- (4) noted that, Sixty Bricks Limited will be responsible for negotiating and settling any compensation associated with Rights to Light.

23. LOW HALL DEPOT REFURBISHMENT AND SOUTH ACCESS ROAD COMMERCIAL FACILITIES

Councillor Loakes introduced the report.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) approved a total capital budget of up to £10.3m for development of the scheme and refurbishment works for the Depot. The financing cost of the scheme results in additional revenue costs of £678,000p.a. which will be included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) refresh later in the year;
- (2) noted that the above budget does not include capital delivery costs for the new commercial units, which will be subject to a separate business case and Cabinet report;
- (3) delegated Authority to the Corporate Director Property and Delivery in consultation with the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and Environment, the Strategic Director – Resources, the Deputy Leader - Climate and Air Quality and the Deputy Leader - Housing and Regeneration, to proceed with any design development and then procure and award the contract for the preferred layout of the depot refurbishment works; and
- (4) noted that the Corporate Director Property and Delivery, in consultation with the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and Environment will carry out further commercial options development and bring back a report to a future Cabinet for decision as a Return-on-Investment opportunity.

24. SOHO THEATRE WALTHAMSTOW - PROJECT DELIVERY AND BUDGET UPDATE

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, confirmed that the project was near completion and that there had been substantial benefits to date. He confirmed that the theatre would be a large attraction for London and pointed to the number of job opportunities created as a result. Councillor Khan gave thanks to Councillor Doré and relevant officers, particularly Martin Esom who had driven the project to its current stage.

Councillor Doré pointed to the significant economic benefits as a result of the development and gave thanks to relevant officers.

The Leader stated that the development was a great example of the regeneration of a listed building and pointed to the significant impact it would have on the area.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the updated and increased economic impact assessment and improved forecast to the local economy;
- (2) noted the programme and construction update that advises practical completion in Quarter 1 2024;
- (3) agreed and noted the revised project budget as identified in exempt Appendix 1 of the report;
- (4) agreed and noted the letting of Commercial Unit C to Soho Theatre in line with terms identified in exempt Appendix 4 of the report;
- (5) noted the establishment of the Young Persons Bursary Programme; and
- (6) delegated authority to the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing and Regeneration, in consultation with the Corporate Director - Property and Delivery, the Strategic Director of Place and the Strategic Director of Resources, subject to commercial negotiation, the final contract sum not to exceed the budget detailed in Appendix 1 (exempt) of the report.

25. MARTIN ESOM

On behalf of Cabinet, the Leader thanked Martin Esom for his sterling work for the Council.

Mr Esom said that he had enjoyed the role and had undertaken it to the best of his ability. He stated that he was pleased to say that there had been no disagreements with the 5 administrations that had been present during his tenure and no tensions within the Senior Leadership Team – both of which he acknowledged were quite

rare. Mr Esom stated that he would retire content in knowing that, together with colleagues and Members, he had changed the borough and residents' lives. He gave thanks to all for making his time at LBWF so memorable.

The meeting closed at 2.53 pm

Chair's Signature _____

Date _____