



Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road
E17 4JF

Cabinet

Minutes of
17 March 2026 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Chair:

Councillor Grace Williams Leader of the Council

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Ahsan Khan	Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)
Councillor Clyde Loakes	Deputy Leader (Climate and Air Quality)
Councillor Rosalind Doré	Portfolio Lead Member - Libraries, Culture and Sports & Leisure
Councillor Andrew Dixon	Portfolio Lead Member - Stronger Communities
Councillor Paul Douglas	Portfolio Lead Member - Finance and Resources
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
Nicky Crouch	Strategic Director, Children Services
Marc Gadsby	Strategic Director, Adult Services
Joe Garrod	Strategic Director, Place
Jarlath Griffin	Director of Neighbourhoods
Mark Hynes	Director of Governance and Law
Anthony Jackson	Democratic Services Officer
Rob Manning	Strategic Director, Resources
Rianna Terry	Assistant Director, Leadership and Democracy
Lee Witham	Director of Culture and Workforce Development
Emily Wood	Head of Democratic Services

68. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Naheed Asghar.

69. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

70. Minutes of Cabinet

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 February 2026, were approved and signed as a correct record.

71. Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) Mobilisation

The Leader introduced the report and, in doing so, highlighted its critical importance following the previous month's budget management process. She confirmed that the primary objective of the report was to ensure that Cabinet was fully informed and comfortable with the proposed approach to mobilising the exceptional financial support that had been sought and subsequently agreed by Government. The Leader placed particular emphasis on the governance framework surrounding this process, how the Council would address transformation and clear milestones and metrics to measure the impact. The Leader gave thanks to the senior leadership team and all Cabinet Members, particularly Councillor Douglas, for their significant contributions and leadership. She then highlighted the importance of having the right personnel in place to deliver objectives as detailed in the report. Consequently, the report included a proposal for the creation of a new strategic director role for Strategy, Change, and Communities. This new position was deemed essential to ensure coherence of the transformation plan and to provide the necessary staff resources for its successful implementation, thereby enabling the delivery of required savings. Furthermore, significant changes were outlined regarding the prevention operating model, a key area of work led by Councillor Dixon and Ms. Amy Buxton Jennings - Interim Corporate Director of Strategy & Change. The Leader confirmed that the model aimed to clearly define interventions, establish measurement methodologies, and articulate the desired impact. She concluded by saying the report empowered herself and the Chief Executive to refine the directorate structure, ensuring it effectively supported change management and contributed directly to the achievement of savings targets.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) noted the mobilisation activity undertaken to meet EFS requirements and the strengthened governance arrangements supporting financial sustainability and transformation;
- (2) agreed that Cabinet will receive regular updates on progress against EFS, savings delivery, transformation milestones and prevention impact through the Budget Monitor;
- (3) approved the creation of a Strategic Director for Strategy, Change and Communities to lead the Mission Waltham Forest Transformation

Programme, deliver the associated £40m savings, and oversee the organisation-wide Prevention Operating Model; and

- (4) delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, authority to implement the Directorate structure in line with the Council's Managing Change Policy. The creation of this new directorate will contribute to delivery of the savings required from the senior management review in 2026/27 and will not create further financial pressures.

72. Capital Investment Strategy 2025/26-2035/36

Councillor Khan introduced the report and, in doing so, confirmed that the report updated the strategy presented to Cabinet in the previous year, now incorporating the context of the agreed Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). He emphasised that despite the new financial context, the capital strategy maintained the ambitious scale previously outlined and was one of the few initiatives that cut across all of the Council's missions within its overarching 'Mission Forest' framework. Councillor Khan said that the report presented an opportunity to intensify focus on the capital prioritisation framework, ensuring that all investment decisions directly benefited residents across the borough. He added that a clearer alignment with the inclusive growth and economy framework was also a key objective. Councillor Khan highlighted the fact that the report demonstrated the coming together of the Place and People directorates and referred to the important projects delivered over the last 10 years. He stated that key investment areas included housing, culture, community facilities, sports facilities, green spaces, public realm improvements, schools, and a new crematorium, indicating a broad and sustained investment programme. Councillor Khan outlined the anticipated benefits for residents, including the creation of nearly 3,000 new homes, approximately 50% of which would be affordable. He confirmed that the strategy also projected the creation of 2,000 jobs and 700 apprenticeships and work placements, all designed to directly benefit local residents. Councillor Khan stressed that the development of this strategy was a collective effort which involved contributions from across all Cabinet portfolios and the Senior Leadership Team and appreciation was extended to all involved.

The Leader further elaborated on the Council's strong track record in capital investment over the past 15 years, attributing success to long-term political and officer leadership. She pointed out that the Council had attracted expertise from various sectors, including other boroughs, government departments, and private development, which had provided a leading edge. She added that the sustained focus stemmed from a long-standing recognition that a robust capital investment strategy was fundamental to achieving the borough's ambitions. The Leader stated that the work, led by Councillor Khan and Mr. Joe Garrod, along with their teams, demonstrated both the scale of ambition and how investments were strategically used to address inequality and improve services. She then cited examples, which included the recent completion of homes at Marlowe Road, providing social and affordable housing alongside other tenures. The strong relationships forged with the Greater London Authority and developers were highlighted as crucial for maximising investment returns, which were then reinvested into town centres, public realm, and services. The Leader pointed out that the historical success was seen as a strong

platform for the next decade, with continued dedication required to ensure each project aligned with the overarching purpose of improving residents' lives.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) agreed the draft Capital Investment Strategy 2025/26–2035/36, attached as Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) noted the significant forecast physical and social return on investment from the council's capital investment plans by spring 2036; and
- (3) noted that the Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed annually and reported to Cabinet for approval;
- (4) agreed that no financing sources, unless stipulated in regulations or necessary agreements, are ringfenced; and
- (5) noted that the financing of the Capital Programme is delegated to the Strategic Director of Resources to provide sufficient flexibility to allow for the most effective use of council resources.

73. New Section 75 Partnership Agreement for Health and Social Care - Better Care Fund

Councillor Mitchell Introduced the report and, in doing so, said that the total allocation for the borough's funding framework for 2026-27 was confirmed as £42,387,779, which formed an integral part of the wider neighbourhood health plan, consolidating various plans into a single framework. She confirmed that it aligned local authorities and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) with the NHS's 10-year health plan and its updated objectives. Councillor Mitchell then explained that the performance of the Better Care Fund, and subsequently the Integrated Care Funding Framework (ICFF), was developed with significant input from the Council and overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board. She said that a key function of the Section 75 agreement was the strategic use of funds to achieve critical outcomes, including reducing hospital discharges, enhancing intermediate care, minimising emergency admissions, reducing delayed discharges, and monitoring care home placements. Councillor Mitchell confirmed that the overarching aim was for Waltham Forest to ensure residents received the right care, in the right place, at the right time, particularly as they age. She then highlighted the fact that Waltham Forest had been the only North-East London authority with a time-limited Section 75 agreement. The new agreement would be open-ended, with a preference for breakthroughs from both partners, aligning with current health and neighbourhood strategies. Councillor Mitchell then gave thanks to Ms. Sarah Perrin – Assistant Director of Commissioning (Adults) and her team, and to Mr. Mark Gadsby for his leadership and ensuring statutory requirements were met.

The Leader recognised the significant positive impact of the work on the lives of some of the borough's most vulnerable adults and gave thanks to Councillor Mitchell and the Adult Social Care team for their hard work.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) approved that the Council enter into a new Section 75 agreement with NHS North East London (NEL) Integrated Care Board (ICB) from 1 April 2026 for the management of the Better Care Fund (BCF) and other pooled funding arrangements. The agreement will be open ended, with mutually agreed termination clauses; and
- (2) delegated authority to sign and approve the final terms of the Section 75 agreement to the Strategic Director of Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Member for Adults and Health, the Strategic Director of Resources, and Director of Governance and Law.

74. Schools and Early Years Budgets 2026/27

Councillor Gardiner introduced the report and, in doing so, highlighted a significant financial change - the Government's rollout of 33 hours of funded childcare for working families. She pointed out that the initiative would provide substantial financial relief to many families, enabling parents to return to work and supporting children's development in early education settings. Councillor Gardiner highlighted Waltham Forest's achievement of being ranked 7th nationally for outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in early years. She extended particular thanks to early years providers for their dedicated work and to early years officers for their support, whilst acknowledging the challenging yet rewarding nature of caring for young children and achieving excellent outcomes. Councillor Gardiner highlighted the considerable period of change currently affecting schools, including the Schools and Wellbeing Bill, reforms in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and developments in family purchase information. She said that, in light of these changes, appreciation was extended to the Council's Schools team and all educators across the borough for their daily efforts in supporting young people to thrive. Councillor Gardiner shared a recent positive experience of visiting a school and noting the pride headteachers expressed in the borough and its young people. She then referred to the recent visit by the Secretary of State, with discussions around forthcoming changes aimed at enabling the borough to further thrive.

The Leader commended Councillor Gardiner for her leadership and agreed that while there was much change, it was for the better. She also referred to the recent visit from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions where discussions aligned with the Council's objectives. The Leader stated that the Secretary of State had outlined plans to invest in young people who were not in education, employment, or training, particularly relevant given that youth unemployment benefit claims in the borough stood at 10%, compared to a national average of 5%. The aforementioned

plan aimed to boost jobs, apprenticeships, and essential skills for young people. The Leader also gave thanks to Ms. Nicky Crouch and her team team, all educators, parents, and children for their contributions.

Decision

Cabinet:

- (1) approved the final 2026/27 Local Funding Formula for 5-16 year olds at Appendix A of the report;
- (2) noted the changes of the Local Funding Formula from 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A of the report;
- (3) noted the indicative 2026/27 High Needs Block budget in Appendix B to the report; and
- (4) noted the 2026/27 Early Years Funding Formula for early years providers at Appendices C to the report.

The meeting closed at 2.21 pm

Chair's Signature _____

Date _____