

London Borough of Islington

**Executive - 14 March 2024**

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on 14 March 2024 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**                    **Councillors** Diarmaid Ward, Una O'Halloran, Rowena Champion, John Woolf, Santiago Bell-Bradford, Nurullah Turan and Michelline Safi-Ngongo

**Also**                            **Councillor:** Benali Hamdache

**Councillor Diarmaid Ward in the Chair**

**207            APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Received from Councillors Kaya Comer-Schwartz and Roulin Khondoker.

**208            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**209            MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**210            BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24 QUARTER 3**

**RESOLVED:**

(a) To note the breakdown of the forecast General Fund outturn by variance at Appendix 1 and service area at Appendix 2 of the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.

(b) To note the forecast 2023/24 GF position, as detailed in the report.

(c) To note, and where necessary agree, the virements of budgets between directorates.

(d) To note the Collection Fund forecast for council tax and National Non-Domestic Rates.

(e) To note progress on delivering the 2023/24 agreed budget savings.

(f) To note the Housing Revenue Account forecast.

(g) To note the capital expenditure forecast at Q3 for 2023/24 and revised multi-year capital programme and how it will be financed.

(h) To approve capital reprofiling with future financial years and budget adjustments, and to note that there was a risk of further reprofiling over the

remainder of the financial year, all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Development.

Reason for the decisions – to enable members to monitor the Council’s budget.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

211 **PROPOSAL ON THE FUTURE OF BLESSED SACRAMENT RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**RESOLVED:**

(a) To approve the proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024, as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families.

(b) That the following commitments be made to mitigate the impact on existing pupils of closing Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, which included an additional modification to support parents with the cost of new school uniforms:

- To offer and provide individual support to pupils and their families with transition from the point a decision was taken, through to the pupil settling into a new school.
- To work with local headteachers of nearby Islington schools, including Islington Roman Catholic primary schools, to provide support to the school and its families, noting that there were places available for every child at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School in nearby Islington schools.
- To separately offer to all parents of current Year 5 pupils the option to move this class together to another school, either to join another Year 6 class in September 2024, or as a separate bulge class in another school. This was because this was the largest year group at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School and would have only one year of primary schooling left. Moving the pupils together as a group would mitigate the impact of their transition ahead of a further transition when they moved to secondary school.
- To provide early dedicated professional support for pupils with Education, Health, and Care plans to support all aspects of transition. The SEND team would work with individual children and their parents/carers to support their transition, including identifying a tailored list of alternative schools suitable to the child’s needs as set out in their plans, if required.
- To offer financial support to all parents with the cost of purchasing new uniform for their children in their new school.

Reasons for the decision

By closing Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, the children that currently attended would be dispersed to other schools (dependant on parental choice). This would contribute to the ongoing financial resilience of Islington's school estate and would support the Council's ambition to strengthen the resilience of all Council schools, ensuring that they were financially healthy and able to sustain a quality curriculum.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

212 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR FUTURE SCHOOL MEALS' ARRANGEMENTS**

**RESOLVED:**

(a) That the procurement strategy for school meals procurement set out in the report of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, be approved.

(b) That the Corporate Director of Children's Services, following consultation with the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, be authorised to award the contract for an initial period of five years, with optional contract extensions of up to two years.

(c) To note that the Council would investigate with the Mayor of London's Office whether there could be an opportunity for joint work on school meals procurement.

- Reasons for the decision - As it had not been possible to establish an insourced service on a basis that was affordable for schools, the decision had been made to commence the process to procure a new school meals contract to start in April 2025.

Other options considered – Six options in total were considered, all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

213 **IMAGINE ISLINGTON CULTURE STRATEGY 2024-2030**

In the absence of Councillor Khondoker, the report was introduced by Councillor O'Halloran.

**RESOLVED:**

(a) To approve the new Imagine Islington Culture Strategy and action plan, attached to the report of the Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion, which would help bring about a shift change within the Council, to elevate Culture as an intrinsic tool to achieving the Council's core priorities.

(b) That officers be thanked for their work in producing the Strategy.

Reasons for the decision - Launching the new cultural strategy for Islington Council would have a positive impact on the borough, most notably community cohesion, health and wellbeing of all local people, the attainment and future of children and young people, the safety, welcome and aesthetic of the borough, improving access to skills and jobs and the future of creative industries and the people who worked in them. The strategy would also help develop a thriving, diverse and inclusive local cultural sector, where people from all backgrounds were able to succeed in business and where businesses were supported to grow sustainably and operate safely

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

## 214 **ESTABLISHMENT OF A BLACK CULTURAL CENTRE**

In the absence of Councillor Khondoker, the report was introduced by Councillor O'Halloran.

### **RESOLVED:**

(a) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing for final lease approval, in order to confirm an operator to deliver the Black Cultural Centre service provision and social value for Islington residents.

(b) To grant a lease at 16-18 Hornsey Road to a provider, with a built in break clause as agreed with Legal Services, in order to establish the Black Cultural Centre, inclusive of a 'peppercorn rent' arrangement, in support of Islington's equality commitments made through the Borough Manifesto and Islington Together 2030 Plan

(c) To approve funding being drawn down from the grant allocations for the Black Leaders Alliance of £50k, in order to support the Establishment of a Black Cultural Centre through year one seed funding.

(d) That thanks be expressed to the Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing and officers for their work on this project.

Reasons for the decision - A comprehensive process had taken place since 2022, shaping the business case, vision and approach to establishing a Black Cultural Centre, as set out in the report. Capital works were taking place in order to develop a Centre to house the Black Cultural offer for Islington residents.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

215

**ISLINGTON'S NEW COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To agree to retain the ambition of building 750 new council homes, as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.
- (b) To approve plans to build approximately 178 new council homes, as well as 10 shared ownership homes, at the Finsbury Leisure Centre, Vorley Road, Harvist Estate and Bemerton Estate (south) sites, subject to ongoing viability reviews and planning permission.
- (c) To approve plans to commence the design of schemes seeking to deliver a further 570 new council homes, as set out in exempt appendix two of the report, subject to ongoing viability reviews and potential replacement schemes.
- (d) To note that the expected resources needed to deliver these new council homes and commence design of further schemes were approved by the Executive on 9 February 2024. (e) To note the risk that all or part of the costs of the pipeline programme in exempt appendix 2 of the report might need to be written off if these schemes did not proceed to construction, to be mitigated by robust gateway management and the early cessation of non-viable schemes
- (f) To note that some previously publicised schemes would no longer proceed on viability grounds and that these decisions had been communicated to residents as appropriate, as well as local ward members
- (g) To note that the New Council Homes Programme's strengthened governance and assurance processes had also been reviewed by Audit Committee in January 2024 and were subject to an Internal Audit review in 2024/25.
- (h) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Community Wealth Building to settle any claims arising from the schemes under construction as set out in exempt appendix one of the report, following consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources, the Monitoring Officer and the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.
- (i) To approve increased fee spend of £0.492m on the Finsbury Leisure Centre Scheme to cover additional costs up to the submission of the planning application.
- (j) To note that the Council continued to lobby the Government to allow more flexible use of receipts and grants and to increase funding for new genuinely affordable homes.

Reasons for the decision - Despite the many significant risks and challenges, including the significant financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account, the Council retained its ambition to deliver new council homes. Schemes that offered poor value for money, had been stopped and any remaining budgets would be used to support schemes that offered better value for money and a more effective and efficient use of Council resources. To improve the likelihood that schemes would become viable and deliverable, significant new governance, assurance and control processes had been put in place to

manage costs and control risk at both scheme and programme wide levels, as well as a new delivery team structure, which were all subject to ongoing scrutiny and review.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

**216**      **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR ARBORICULTURAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT**

**RESOLVED:**

(a) To approve the strategy for the procurement of an arboricultural services framework agreement, as outlined in the report of the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport.

(b) To delegate authority to award the framework agreement to the Acting Corporate Director for Homes and Neighbourhoods, following consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport, on completion of the procurement exercise, as an officer key decision.

Reasons for the decision

The procurement of an inhouse framework agreement, with up to eight contractors and an option to bring works in-house, was the best option for the Council as it provided opportunities for smaller contractors to deliver the service, reduced the risk of breaks in service delivery due to mediocre performance and allowed the Council to explore the potential savings of in-house delivery.

Other options considered – Five options in total were considered, all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

**217**      **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY: MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY PATHWAY**

The Executive heard an address from a representative of Islington MIND LGBTQ services, who talked about the valuable services provided. He urged members of the Executive to ensure that the new provider of services had a good awareness of the needs of the users of the service. The Executive Member for Health and Social Care stated that he was aware of the very good services provided by Islington MIND LGBTQ services and that he would ensure that the comments made would be taken on board to ensure that the procurement was inclusive and that users would receive a good service.

**RESOLVED:**

(a) To approve the procurement strategy for the Mental Health Recovery Pathway, as outlined in the report of the Executive Member for Health and Social Care.

(b) To delegate authority to award the contract to the Director for Adult Social Care, following consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Social Care.

Reasons for the decision -The preferred option (4) would secure a more integrated and holistic offer of support for residents which delivered better outcomes and improved value for money. This would be achieved by providing a comprehensive proactive mental health early intervention and prevention offer for adults in Islington as detailed in the report and aligning the service with wider council and VCS early intervention and prevention initiatives. Review findings and resident feedback would inform the service specification development to ensure resident voices were reflected in service design.

Other options considered – Four options in total were considered, all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Health and Social Care.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

## 218 **AGREEMENT OF CITY FORUM HEAT SUPPLY CONTRACT**

### **RESOLVED:**

To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Community Wealth Building, following consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport, to execute the heat supply agreement with Berkeley Homes, as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport.

Reasons for the decision – Connecting the City Forum development to the Bunhill Heat Network would provide a benefit to both the network (through increased revenue) and the local environment (through reduced emissions from the gas boilers at City Forum). A proposed heat supply agreement had been agreed between the Council and Berkeley Homes for the connection to go ahead and funding had been secured from central government to deliver the connection. Delivering the extension of the network to City Forum and Telfer House was subject to this heat supply agreement being signed. It was therefore necessary for the Council to execute the agreement to allow the connections to both sites to go ahead.

Other options considered – as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

## 219 **MONITORING REPORT - FEBRUARY 2024**

Noted the report of the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer detailing the following two decisions taken by Corporate Directors, which would ordinarily have been taken by the Executive, where the matters were urgent and delay would seriously have prejudiced the interest of the Council or of the public and an occasion where a general exception notice had been issued as the matter had not been publicised 28 days in advance of the decision :

(a) Andover Health Centre Funding:

A decision taken by the Corporate Director Community Wealth Building (i) To agree to receive a funding contribution of £4.313m from NHS England towards the costs of the Andover Health Centre Scheme at 7 Newington Barrow Way, subject to the agreement of a 25 year lease with NHS England.(ii) To note that any unspent monies from the £4.313m contribution would be ringfenced for other health related projects in Islington that would be agreed with NHS England, or would be returned to NHS England (iii) To note that, if the scheme did not go ahead, the £4.313m contribution (less any costs incurred in relation to the scheme) would be returned to NHS England. (iv) To note that a further report would be brought to the Executive to agree to enter into a lease with NHS England for the provision of the Andover Health centre at 7 Newington Barrow Way.

(b) The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme 2024-2028

Decisions made by the Committee were:

- (i) To note the update on the VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2024-28 and
- (ii) To confirm the funding allocation of £2,711,500 per full financial year and over the programme for four years, totalling £10,846,000.

Reasons for the decision - To comply with the rules in the Council's Constitution.

Other options considered – none

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

**220 PROPOSAL ON THE FUTURE OF BLESSED SACRAMENT RC PRIMARY SCHOOL - EXEMPT APPENDICES**

Noted.

**221 ISLINGTON'S NEW COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME - EXEMPT APPENDIX**

Noted.

**222 AGREEMENT OF CITY FORUM HEAT SUPPLY CONTRACT - EXEMPT APPENDICES**

Noted.

MEETING CLOSED AT 7.35 pm