

London Borough of Islington

Executive - 28 September 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 28 September 2017 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Watts, Burgess, Comer-Schwartz, Hull, Shaikh, Ward and Webbe

Also Present: **Councillors:** Councillor Greening attended for items 1-7.

Councillor Richard Watts in the Chair

424 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Caluori.

425 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

426 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting on 13 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

427 INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO PAST ABUSE IN ISLINGTON CHILDREN'S CARE HOMES

Councillor Richard Watts welcomed everyone present, particularly the members of the Islington Survivors Network and introduced the item with the following statement:

“Tonight’s meeting includes a report relating to abuse of children in Islington’s care homes in the 1980s and 1990s. It is no exaggeration to say that this was the darkest chapter in the council’s history. Children, placed in our care, were subjected to terrible physical and mental abuse which, understandably, has had a deeply traumatic effect on those who are now adults and continue to suffer.

As Leader of Islington Council I want to say again we are deeply sorry for the council’s past failure to protect vulnerable children. Although the word ‘sorry’ feels inadequate, I offer this apology to every single person who has been scarred by the events of that terrible time. Today it is our duty as a council to do the right thing and to try to address the failings of the past. The report recommends that the Executive as a whole formally apologises for past failures, and I am sure all my colleagues will

strongly support this recommendation.

In recent years, we have worked closely with many survivors of this abuse. We are grateful for the help we have received from the Islington Survivors Network, and for the support they offer to survivors. We also want to thank Liz Davies for her dedication to the survivors and for her ongoing work with the council.

The Council has helped people to report allegations to specialist police officers without the need to visit a police station. We've also helped survivors to get extra priority for council housing, and advice about legal representation, and we are commissioning a specialist counselling service for abuse survivors.

The council appointed James Goudie QC and Holly Stout to examine the issues raised in May this year by the Islington Gazette about former mayor, Ms Sandy Marks. We said at the time that they would be free to follow any line of inquiry they felt appropriate, and that the council would be bound by their recommendations. In 1995 the Council received a report of an investigation by Ian White and Kate Hart – known as the White Report – into the council's management of allegations of abuse of children in Islington's care. This report is very much of its own time, and some of the language used is insensitive by today's standards. The report was deeply critical of the council and led to profound changes in the council's management of children's services.

Tonight, the Executive receives the Joint Opinion of James Goudie QC and Holly Stout as to whether the Islington Gazette's information about Sandy Marks could reasonably be said to call into question the integrity of the White Report. Their conclusion is that the new allegations do have an impact, albeit a limited one, and that a new, independent investigation should examine the issues the White Report would have covered had the allegations about Sandy Marks been known at that time. The Executive should note that the allegations are denied by Sandy Marks.

We will continue to keep in close contact with the Islington Survivors Network and to keep them updated on developments. We have already shared the Joint Opinion with the Islington Survivors' Network and the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Islington Council today is a very different organisation, and protecting children from harm is our top priority. But we rightly remain deeply sorry and ashamed of the failings of the past."

A number of the survivors recounted details of their experiences of repeated physical, sexual and emotional abuse whilst in council care homes and in council approved foster care and of the devastating and lasting effects it has had on their lives and their families. They recounted that even staff not directly involved didn't care and that no-one did anything to stop it. Some recounted that the abuse continued over a number of years, throughout all their time in care, regardless of what home they were in. A number of survivors expressed their view that the abuse was organised and that a paedophile ring had been operating in the borough. One survivor, who had not been in care, recounted his experience of being chosen from his junior school class, by a council care home manager, to go on holiday and of being repeatedly abused while there. One of the survivors advised that he believes he was taken to Haut de la Garenne in Jersey in 1978 and requested that the report be amended to recognise that children in care in the 1970s also suffered abuse.

Councillor Watts and the Executive agreed to add a recommendation to the report to acknowledge this.

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The survivors asked a number of questions about the process to lodge complaints, what support is available, for assistance with benefits claims, about whether or not today's foster carers understand the complex issues being experienced by those in their care and if children are being excluded from school too quickly. They also raised questions about the integrity of the White Report and asked if the remit of the investigation could be widened.

Dr Liz Davies, Reader in Child Protection (Emeritus) at the London Metropolitan University and founder of the Islington Survivors Network, advised that there was evidence that lots of people were involved and that new survivors were coming forward every day with additional information. Dr Davies advised that the survivors want justice; for the abusers to be convicted, for those who colluded with them to be convicted and for the survivors to get full redress. Dr Davies advised that she was very grateful that the council has initiated the investigation.

Councillor Watts thanked Dr Davies and all the survivors for coming to the meeting and for their bravery in telling their stories. Councillor Watts said how sorry he was and apologised to the survivors again. Councillor Watts also apologised to Dr Davies for the way the concerns she raised were handled at the time. Councillor Watts also put on record his thanks to Gazette for undertaking the initial investigation.

In answer to the questions asked, Councillor Watts advised that the council does not have power to investigate crimes or arrest anyone and that any investigation of criminal activity, such as this, must be undertaken by the Police. Councillor Watts advised survivors to contact staff from the Metropolitan Police's Operation Winter Key and advised that the council will assist the Islington Survivors Network to contact the Police and offer the Police any support necessary to bring people to justice.

Councillor Watts advised that today's council and its children's services are very different and although the White Report investigation did not lead to significant numbers of convictions, its remit was to look at what the council should do differently and it was very important within the council as it was the catalyst for the positive changes that have happened since in children's care.

Councillor Watts advised that the council is putting new services in place provide trauma and abuse counselling and that we are getting better at spotting and helping people to deal with trauma and violence they have experienced or witnessed. Councillor Watts also advised that there is a process to lodge complaints and a range of care packages available and advised the survivors to speak to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services after the meeting.

Councillor Watts also committed to liaise with the Islington Survivors Network over the appointment of a QC to undertake the investigation.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations as amended below be agreed:

- 2.1 That the statement by the Leader from May 2017, and an apology to victims of child abuse in Islington care homes for the council's past failings (see paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 of the report) be endorsed.

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- 2.2 That an independent investigation of the new evidence relating to Sandy Marks, adhering to the terms of reference set out in paragraph 3.20 of the report, be agreed.
- 2.3 That authority to select of the lead investigator be delegated to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
- 2.4 That the Executive recognises that some children in Islington's care had been subject to abuse during the 1970s, as well as the 1980s and early 1990s and that the apology be extended to all victims who suffered child abuse whilst in the borough's care be noted.

Reason for decision – to acknowledge the fact that people are still suffering from the Council's past failings, and to apologise for them and to commission a further independent investigation as described in the recommendations.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.

Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

428 2017 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF: MITIGATING THE IMPACT ON BUSINESSES IN ISLINGTON

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the award of Pub Relief of up to £1,000 to qualifying public houses in occupation of premises which have a Rateable Value of less than £100,000 for the financial year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 only, be agreed.
- 2.2 That the award of Supporting Small Business (SSB) Relief to cap any increase in rates payable to £50.00 per month for those companies who have lost small business rate relief as a result of the 2017 Revaluation be agreed. That SSB will be awarded for 5 successive financial years starting from 1 April 2017 and ending in March 2022 be agreed.
- 2.3 That the Pub Relief and SSB Relief will both be applied in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in their "Business Rates Information Letter (4/2017): Spring Budget Update" which is contained in Appendix A of this report be noted and that the awards will be made to the affected businesses automatically and as soon as is practicably possible following approval by the Executive be noted.
- 2.4 That the creation of a local discretionary relief scheme, known as Revaluation Relief, as detailed in Section 5 of the report, be agreed.
- 2.5 That the Council's Revaluation Relief scheme does more than the government's national transitional relief scheme to further reduce business rates bill rises, with tiered amounts based on the size of the business, be noted.
- 2.6 That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development, to vary the discounts and/or make individual awards of relief, if it appears that there

will be unspent funds at the end of the financial year, which would otherwise have to be returned to central government, be agreed.

- 2.7 That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development, to adjust scheme awards proportionately or stop applications so as not to exceed the funding provided by government and to assess further awards of relief by reference to the sum that remains available, be agreed.

Reason for decision – to reduce the financial burden for a significant number of local businesses.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.

Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

429 FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 JULY 2017

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the forecast revenue outturn for the General Fund (Table 1 of the report) of a gross overspend of £9.4m, including corporate items (Paragraph 3.1 of the report) be noted.
- 2.2 That the actions to reduce the forecast gross General Fund overspend be noted, and that any remaining overspend at year-end will be covered by drawing down from the corporate contingency budget in the first instance (Section 4, Paragraph 3.2 and Table 2 of the report) be noted.
- 2.3 That the breakdown of the forecast General Fund outturn by key variance at Appendix 1 of the report and by directorate at Appendix 2 of the report be noted.
- 2.4 That the HRA forecast is a break-even position (Section 5, Table 1 of the report) be noted.
- 2.5 That the latest capital position with forecast capital expenditure of £132.5m in 2017-18. (Section 6, Table 3 and Appendix 3 of the report) be noted.

Reason for decision – to allow members to monitor the budget.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.

Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

430 SCRUTINY INTO THAMES WATER'S RESPONSE TO MAINS WATER BURSTS - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Greening, Chair of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee, presented the report and thanked all the organisations and individuals that assisted local residents and businesses during the burst water main on 5 December 2016 and those who contributed to the scrutiny.

Councillor Watts thanked the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee for all their work.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the report of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee be received.
- 2.2 That the Executive Member's response be reported to a future meeting of the Executive, including having due regard to any relevant implications of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Reason for decision – to receive the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

**431 IMPROVING ACCESS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPIES SCRUTINY -
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

This item was deferred to the Executive meeting on 19 October 2017.

**432 HOUSING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE SCRUTINY REVIEW -
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Watts thanked the Housing Scrutiny Committee for all their work.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the report of the Housing Scrutiny Committee be received.
- 2.2 That the Executive Member's response be reported to a future meeting of the Executive, including having due regard to any relevant implications of the Housing Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Reason for decision – To receive the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

**433 POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING - RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Watts thanked the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for all their work.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee be received.
- 2.2 That the Executive Member's response be reported to a future meeting of the Executive, including having due regard to any relevant implications of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Reason for decision – To receive the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

434 **REGENERATION OF RETAIL AREAS - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Watts thanked the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for all their work.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the report of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be received.
- 2.2 That the Executive Member's response be reported to a future meeting of the Executive, including having due regard to any relevant implications of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Reason for decision – to receive the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

435 **DOCKLESS CYCLE SHARING POLICY**

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the introduction of dockless cycle schemes in the borough, subject to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, be agreed.
- 2.2 That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment & Transport to agree and finalise the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) be agreed.

Reason for decision – to enable increased cycling, encourage residents to have healthier lifestyles, promote the uptake of more sustainable travel and help improve local air quality.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

436 **AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SHARED ICT AND DIGITAL JOINT COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Terms of Reference for the Shared ICT and Digital Service Joint Committee attached to this report as Appendix 1 to come into effect from 1 October 2017 be agreed.

Reason for decision – to agree the changes to the Shared ICT and Digital Service Joint Committee's Terms of Reference.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

437 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR DOOR ENTRY AND ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEMS TESTING SERVICING AND REPAIRS CONTRACT**

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the procurement strategy for Door Entry and Access Control Systems Testing Servicing and Repairs Contract as outlined in this report be agreed.
- 2.2 That authority to award the contract be delegated to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Development be agreed.

Reason for decision – to ensure service continuity and increased value for money.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

438 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME MAJOR WORKS TERM PARTNERING CONTRACT**

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the procurement strategy for Housing Capital Programme Major Works as outlined in this report be agreed.
- 2.2 That authority to award the contract be delegated to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Development, be agreed.

Reason for decision – procure contractors to carry out major works to the Council's housing stock from 1 April 2019.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

439 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR BUILDING MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, TOOL HIRE AND PLANT HIRE SUPPLY CONTRACT**

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the procurement strategy for Building Materials, Equipment, Tool Hire and Plant Hire supply contract as outlined in this report be agreed.
- 2.2 That authority to award be delegated to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Development be agreed.

Reason for decision – to procure cost effective materials supply contracts.
Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.
Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

440 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the procurement strategy for Supported Accommodation for Young People as outlined in this report be agreed.
- 2.2 That authority to award the contract be delegated to the Corporate Director for Housing and Adult Social Services, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care, be agreed.

Reason for decision – to provide an improved service.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.

Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

441 **OFFICER DECISION SUMMARY**

RESOLVED:

That the decision detailed in Point 3.2 of this report be noted.

Reason for decision – to receive notice of an urgent key decision, taken by a Corporate Director, in accordance with the Constitution.

Other options considered – none other than as specified in the report.

Conflicts of interest/dispensations granted – none.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.35 pm

CHAIR