

London Borough of Islington

Executive - 11 January 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on 11 January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

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

Also present: **Councillor:** Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong

Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz in the Chair

183 **VICTORIA LAWSON - CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ISLINGTON COUNCIL**
The Chair welcomed Victoria Lawson, the new Chief Executive of Islington Council, to her first Executive meeting.

184 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
None

185 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
None

186 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

187 **DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (POST-SETTLEMENT)**

RESOLVED:

The General Fund Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

(a) To agree and recommend to Council the latest assumed MTFS and 2024/25 budget, including the underlying MTFS principles, in-year monitoring position (to date) and the budget assumptions, as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.

(b) To agree and recommend to Council the proposed 2024/25 net budgets by directorate, as detailed in the report.

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- (c) To agree the annual budget for the London Councils' Grants Committee and proposed Islington contribution, following consideration by the London Councils' Leaders' Committee on 12 December 2023, and to note that this would be reported for information to the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee on 30 January 2023.
- (d) To agree and recommend to Council the 2024/25 savings detailed in the report, noting that individual savings might be subject to individual consultation before they could be implemented.
- (e) To note the funding assumptions following the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Settlement on 18 December 2023.
- (f) To note that the fees and charges policy and the General Fund fees and charges from 1 January 2024 were as agreed by Executive on 30 November 2023.
- (g) To agree that a green garden waste chargeable service be introduced from 1 April 2024.
- (h) To agree and recommend to Council that the Section 151 Officer be delegated responsibility for any technical adjustments required for the 2024/25 budget (in line with the Council's Financial Regulations).
- (i) To agree and recommend to Council that centrally held demographic growth be allocated to service budgets in-year once a more evidenced assessment was available and had been approved by the Section 151 Officer.

Reserves and Balance Sheet Strategy and CIPFA Financial Management Code Assessment

- (j) To agree and recommend to Council the Reserves and Balance Sheet Strategy, including proposed minimum reserves levels, and agree the movements to/from earmarked reserves assumed as part of the 2024/25 revenue budget, as detailed in the report.
- (k) To note the assessment of compliance against the CIPFA Financial Management Code and that this would be re-visited annually as part of the budget process, with any actions or recommendations implemented on an ongoing basis.
- (l) To note the balance sheet analysis, which provided a snapshot of the Council's financial position detailing assets, liabilities and reserves, and aided understanding of the underlying financial position of the Council.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

- (m) To agree and recommend to Council the balanced HRA 2024/25 budget and note the latest estimates over the 3-year MTFS period.
- (n) To agree the HRA rents and other HRA fees and charges for 2024/25, as detailed in the report.
- (o) To agree and recommend to Council the 2024/25 savings and note that individual savings might be subject to individual consultation before they could be implemented.
- (p) To note that the HRA 30-year business plan was currently being updated to reflect latest government policy
- (q) To agree to delegate authority to the Acting Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Communities and the Corporate Director of Resources, to amend the heating and hot water charges, in year, between budget setting cycles.

Capital Investment and Treasury and Investment Management

- (r) To agree and recommend to Council the proposed 2024/25 to 2026/27 capital programme and latest indicative capital programme for 2027/28 to 2033/34.
- (s) To agree and recommend to Council the funding of the 2024/25 to 2033/34 capital programme and to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer, where necessary, to

apply capital resources to fund the capital programme in the most cost-effective way for the Council.

(t) To note that the final version of the budget report to the Executive on 8 February 2024 and to Council on 29 February 2024 would include the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy.

Council Tax and Retained Business Rates

(u) To note that the detailed, statutory council tax calculation and the recommendations for the final 2024/25 council tax, including the GLA precept, would be included for agreement in the final budget report to the Executive on 8 February 2024 and Council on 29 February 2024.

(v) To agree that authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer to finalise the Council's 2024/25 NNDR1 (detailed business rates) estimate, ahead of the 31 January 2024 statutory deadline.

Matters for consideration in setting the Budget

(w) That the following be noted:

- The need to have regard to the Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves when making decisions about the budget and the level of council tax, as required under Section 25(2) of the Local Government Act 2003.
- The Monitoring Officer comments.
- The Equality Impact Assessment and the need to take it fully into account in approving the overall budget and related proposals.
- That the Council was inviting residents and business rate payers (or representatives of business rate payers) in Islington to comment on the draft 2024/25 budget proposals in the report, as required under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(x) To agree and recommend to Council the Retail Relief Scheme for 2024/25

Reasons for the decision – to agree draft proposals in respect of the Council's 2023/24 budget and level of council tax and the latest assumed medium term financial position, for approval by Council as appropriate

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

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

188 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR ENFORCEMENT AGENCY SERVICES FOR COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES**

RESOLVED:

(a) To approve the procurement strategy for Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Services, as outlined in the report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.

(b) To delegate authority to award the contracts to the Corporate Director of Resources, following consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance.

Reasons for the decision – These services provided an important revenue stream for the Council whilst also ensuring residents, including vulnerable residents, were supported on matters related to debt management

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

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

189

PROPOSALS ON THE FUTURE OF BLESSED SACRAMENT RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

RESOLVED:

(a) That the responses to the consultation on the proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, and detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, be noted.

(b) That approval be granted to proceeding to the next stage and that a statutory notice be issued to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024, noting the outline draft statutory notice attached as Appendix D to the report.

(c) That, based on the feedback received during the consultation, the following commitments be made:

- To offer and provide individual support to pupils and their families with transition from the point a decision was taken, through to the 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, should the proposal to close proceed.
- 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, noting that the Special Education Needs and Disabilities 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.

(d) That Councillor Ngongo and Jon Abbey, Corporate Director Children and Young People, be thanked for their management of this issue.

Reasons for the decision – Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School had been significantly impacted by falling rolls over a number of years, with 64% of

places unfilled. Each surplus place was equivalent to a £5,700 loss of income, creating financial pressure on the School, which could result in an inability to deliver quality education because resources were stretched. Less funding for the School also created a pressure on staffing budgets.

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

190 **COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING STRATEGY**

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Community Wealth Building Strategy and full performance matrix appended to Appendix 1 of the report of the Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs, be approved

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

Reasons for the decision – to build resilience so that Islington’s communities may weather the storm and protect its most vulnerable residents and small businesses.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

191 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY: SUPPLY OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS**

RESOLVED;

(a) To approve the procurement strategy for the supply of building and construction materials as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Homes and Communities.

(b) To delegate authority to award the contract to the Acting Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods, after consultation with Executive Member for Homes and Communities.

Reasons for the decision – The current gas materials contract was due to expire on 31 May 2024. A recent restructure had realigned the Gas Team to the Repairs Team and the renewal of the contract had provided an opportunity to combine the contracts, which would be beneficial to service delivery.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

192

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR TESTING AND MAINTENANCE OF FIRE PROTECTION, FIRE DETECTION AND EMERGENCY LIGHTING

RESOLVED:

(a) To approve the procurement strategy for testing and maintenance of fire protection, fire detection and emergency lighting, as outlined in the report of the Executive Member for Homes and Communities.

(b) To delegate authority to award the contract to the Acting Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods, after consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Communities, following completion of the tender process.

Reasons for the decision – The Council had a duty to carry out testing and maintenance of fire protection and fire detection equipment to keep existing installations in good working order. The procurement of two contractors was required to support the continuity of service for the delivery of the two key components.

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Homes and Communities.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

193

REPORT OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF OVERCROWDING IN ISLINGTON

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report of the Housing Scrutiny Committee on “Overcrowding in Islington” be received.

(b) That it be noted that the Executive Member’s response would be reported to a future meeting of the Executive, including having due regard to any relevant implications of the Committee’s recommendations.

(c) That the Housing Scrutiny Committee be thanked for their report.

Reasons for the decision – The Housing Scrutiny Committee had considered the challenges of overcrowding experienced by households and recognised that, although the housing crisis was a national issue, Islington had its own particular characteristics which made it very difficult to address. The Committee had proposed a number of recommendations which in the short run addressed the waiting list on the housing register and in the long run sought to commence exploring innovative and collaborative ways of building social housing

Other options considered – all as detailed in the report of the Executive Member for Homes and Communities.

Conflicts of interest / dispensations granted – none

MEETING CLOSED AT 7.15 pm