

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 19 AUGUST 2008**

Councillors Councillors Bull (Chair), Adamou (Vice-Chair), Aitken, Alexander, Egan, Winskill and Demirci (substituting for Dodds)

Apologies Councillor Dodds
Felicity Kally (parent-governor representative)

Also Present:
Councillors Adje, Gorrie

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
OSCO21.	WEBCASTING The meeting was webcast on the Council's website.
OSCO22.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dodds, who was substituted for by Councillor Demerci
OSCO23.	URGENT BUSINESS There was no such business.
OSCO24.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Egan declared a personal interest in respect of item 5 by nature of being a Member for Woodside Ward. Councillor Demerci stated that to avoid a future conflict of interest, he would not sit on the Planning Committee in the event of the below item being considered by that body.
OSCO25.	CALL-IN OF THE CABINET ITEM REGARDING CIVIC CENTRE AND CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS The special meeting of the committee had been convened to consider the call-in of the Cabinet item regarding the Civic Centre and ceremonial functions. A decision on the item had been taken by the Cabinet on 28 July 2008, and had been called in, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Constitution, by Councillors Whyte, Gorrie, Oakes, Wilson and Reid. The proposal was considered by the above Councillors to be outside the budget/policy framework.

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The committee noted that the Monitoring Officer had ruled the call-in valid for the following reasons:

- (a) it was submitted and signed by 5 Councillors
- (b) it was received by the Head of Democratic Services by 10.00 a.m. on the fifth working day following publication of the draft minute on 30 July 2008 i.e. before 10 a.m. on Wednesday 6th August.
- (c) it specified the decision to be called in
- (d) it specified whether the decision was claimed to be outside the policy/budget framework
- (e) it gave reasons for the Call-In and outlined an alternative course of action
- (f) the original decision has not been subject to the urgency procedures required in paragraph 18 of the Rules.

The committee was addressed by Cllr Gorrie, a signatory to the call-in, who stated that the proposed decision was the second largest discretionary expenditure by the Council this decade, that there had been a lack of consultation on the decision and that the proposed new Civic Centre was not explicitly stated in the Council's budget. The signatories to the call-in regarded the proposal as unjustifiable, and stated their belief that the Council should trial a system of holding Civic meetings at a variety of other buildings around the borough.

The committee was also addressed by Michael Corwell Jones of the Friends of Woodside Park, who stated residents concerns over the impact of the proposed development on the park itself. Concern was also raised that the proposed timescale would leave little time for consultation with the local community.

The Cabinet Member for Resources addressed the committee and, in concurrence with the Chief Financial Officer, stated that the decision was part of the Council's policy/budget framework, as it was in accordance with the agreed Accommodation Strategy. The decision had been taken in public at a meeting of the Cabinet, with final approval for the sale of the Civic Centre site not required for a further two years, thus allowing opportunity for further consultation. He stated a number of positive benefits of the move, including the need for the delivery of modern Council services, with the Civic Centre being no longer fit for purpose. The Cabinet Member stated that proposals put forward by the call-in signatories for a trial period without a central Civic Building were uncostered and had no precedent in London governance.

With regards to the services at Woodside House, Officers assured residents that equivalent alternative accommodation would be provided. A site at Commerce Road already identified, and extensive consultation would be carried out prior to the proposed move. The committee was further assured that the proposals would not encroach onto the park landscape in the long-term.

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Members expressed their concern over the proposed sale of an asset at a time when the property market was in a 'slump'. The Cabinet Member responded that as the sale would not take place for two years, he was confident that the market would have stabilised by that point. He stressed that that would be the correct time for the Civic Centre site to be sold from a development perspective.

Officers informed the committee that all known risks had been identified and provided to Members in the report detailing the proposal. The committee was assured by the Cabinet Member that Project Boards were in place and that he had confidence that the proposed project would be managed effectively. It was noted that senior oversight would be provided through the Regeneration Stream Board.

Members were also informed that sustainability was at the heart of the proposals, with further work on issues such as energy efficiency to be carried out in due course. It was acknowledged that the Civic Centre was, by nature of its age, a poor performer in terms of both energy efficiency and in the lack of provision of a temperature-controlled environment within its walls.

Following the withdrawal of the Cabinet Member, Members discussed the proposals, noting their concern that the issue was not brought to the committee's attention as part of the Budget Scrutiny process. Nevertheless, they agreed that the Scrutiny Budget process would continue to be improved year-on-year

Councillor Winskill then moved a MOTION that the decision was outside the Council's Budget/Policy framework and voted to refer it back to the decision maker. Following a vote, the motion FELL.

Councillor Aitken then moved a MOTION that the decision should be referred to Full Council. Following a vote, the motion FELL.

Councillor Bull then moved a MOTION that no further action be taken in respect of the decision, thus allowing the decision to be implemented immediately. Following a vote, the motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken in respect of the call in of Cabinet decision CAB47, Future Accommodation for Civic Centre and Ceremonial Functions.

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COUNCILLOR GIDEON BULL

Chair