

MINUTES OF MEETING Full Council HELD ON Tuesday, 1st March, 2022, 7.30pm to 9.50pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charles Adje, Peray Ahmet, Kaushika Amin, Dawn Barnes, Dhiren Basu, John Bevan, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Zena Brabazon, Gideon Bull, Dana Carlin, Vincent Carroll, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Seema Chandwani, Sakina Chenot, Eldridge Culverwell, Nick da Costa, Lucia das Neves, Julie Davies, Mahir Demir, Paul Dennison, Isidoros Diakides, Josh Dixon, Erdal Dogan, Scott Emery, Ruth Gordon, Bob Hare, Emine Ibrahim, Adam Jogee (Mayor), Peter Mitchell, Khaled Moyeed, Felicia Opoku, Tammy Palmer, Reg Rice, Viv Ross, Yvonne Say, Anne Stennett, Noah Tucker, Matt White and Sarah Williams

67. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Mayor referred to the notice of meetings, section of the agenda and Members noted this information.

68. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from:

Cllr Peacock
Cllr Connor
Cllr Morris
Cllr Adamou
Cllr Chiriyankandath
Cllr Rossetti
Cllr Hinchcliffe
Cllr Weston
Cllr Ogiehor
Cllr James
Cllr Hearn
Cllr Gunes
Cllr Hakata
Cllr Ejiofor
Cllr Berryman

69. TO ASK THE MAYOR TO CONSIDER THE ADMISSION OF ANY LATE ITEMS OF BUSINESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 100B OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Chief Executive outlined that there was one item of business, which could not be available earlier, and which would need to be dealt with at the meeting.

Item 14 - Budget amendments - Council standing order 15.8b allowed amendments to recommendation to be put forward by 10am on the day of the meeting.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were personal declarations of interest put forward in relation to agenda item 14, Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/ 27 from the following councillors.

Cllr Bull was a leaseholder in the borough.

Cllr Chandwani was a leaseholder in the borough.

Cllr Ibrahim was a Unison Branch Secretary at another London Borough.

Cllr Adje was a Union Branch Secretary of the London Fire Brigade, part of the GLA group.

71. TO ASK MEMBERS WHETHER THEY NEED TO MAKE A DECLARATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 106 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992 IN RELATION TO UNPAID COMMUNITY CHARGE OR COUNCIL TAX LIABILITY WHICH IS TWO MONTHS OR MORE OUTSTANDING

No declarations were made.

72. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 22ND NOVEMBER 2021, 10 JANUARY 2022 & 17TH JANUARY 2022

Cllr Gordon, started to raise a matters arising from the minutes of the 22nd of November 2021, and was advised that only points relating to accuracy could be raised.

Cllr Gordon referred to the debate discussion on small businesses and recent award to the borough from London Councils, the Leader of the Opposition raised a point of order.

The Mayor continued to call on the meeting to consider the minutes and it was:

RESOLVED

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on the 22 November 2021, 10 January 2022 and 17th of January 2022.

73. TO RECEIVE SUCH COMMUNICATIONS AS THE MAYOR MAY LAY BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The Mayor provided a summary of his Mayoral activities and engagements attended since the November Council meeting.

The Mayor expressed his and councillors full solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their courage in the face of the Putin's sickening disregard for human life and crimes against humanity were example for all.

74. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There were no matters to report on.

75. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER AND HEAD OF LEGAL & GOVERNANCE SERVICES

There were no matters to report on.

76. REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME ADMINISTRATION FOR 2022/23

Councillor Chandwani moved the report and recommendations.

Following questions from Cllr Dennison, Cllr Bull, and Cllr Williams, the following was noted:

- The Labour manifesto had said that there would be a fairer council tax reduction scheme and the possibility of having a 100% means tested benefit system was taken away by the previous coalition government. There was now a scheme that was having to be funded by local government and the Council was ensuring that lowest income families(6000) have 100% reduction. This was a pragmatic solution that stopped people getting into debt , worked for residents that are having to do zero hours contracts and can also be backdated to help people in debt.
- Reach out to residents that do not know what benefits they were entitled to. This was through availability of benefit maximisation officers, finance support officers and Homes for Haringey financial inclusion team.
- The Council was trying to combat the stigma of claiming benefits and access to support should be viewed as a social security payment. Work continues on this with local and community partners to get a clear message out.
- 'Haringey Here to Help' lets people knows that Council is there to support them. Promote benefit availability through helplines and services. There were local billboard campaigns and the annual council tax letter will have this information included as well.

- The Council were going out to people in locality hubs and combat this fear of claiming benefits.

RESOLVED

1. To note that a public consultation has been carried out (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) and its findings incorporated into the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3).
2. To agree to adopt the amended Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23 (Appendix 5). This would include the following proposed changes:
 - Simplifying the claims process by adding a new channel for residents on Universal Credit to claim council tax reduction automatically as set out in paragraph 4.3.1
 - Stabilising entitlement for residents by simplifying what happens when a working age resident's income changes by a small amount during the financial year as set out in paragraph 4.3.2.
 - Extending the period for backdating council tax support for working age residents to up to 12 months to allow more time for residents to claim as set out in paragraph 4.3.3.
3. That authority be given to the Director of Finance, the Director of Customer, Transformation and Resources and Assistant Director of Corporate and Customer Services to take all appropriate steps to implement and administer the Scheme.

Reasons for decision

The CTRS is a way the Council can redistribute the financial burden on Council Taxpayers and provide additional support to those in financial need.

It is important that the CTRS is simple and easy to claim to maximise uptake and reduce the burden on residents. A scheme that is easy to access can help residents to minimise debt, assist household budgeting, and increase the ability to pay council tax.

The proposed amendments would have the following benefits:

Simplifying the claims process. The proposed change is to add an additional way for residents to claim CTRS automatically when they start receiving Universal Credit. This will have a positive effect because it will simplify claiming for most residents and reduce the difficulty and anxiety for residents who claim Universal Credit. It will also ensure that as many people as possible claim the support to which they are entitled.

Stabilising entitlement for residents. The proposed change is to simplify what happens when a resident's income changes by a small amount. This will have a positive effect because constant changes in a council tax bill can make household

budgeting difficult for residents as well as imposing a significant and costly administrative burden on the council.

Extending the period for back-dating claims for working age claimants. The proposed change is to extend the period an award of CTRS can be backdated from six months to twelve months. This will have a positive effect because it will mean the award can be backdated to the start of a Council Tax liability where the Council Tax liability has itself been backdated.

It is also proposed to **promote better understanding of the CTRS** by publishing an additional explanatory note written in plain English. The current regulations are complex and run to 214 pages. It is not proposed to re-write the CTRS entirely as it is recognised that, although complex, the existing CTRS nevertheless contains important technical details. Providing an additional explanatory note in addition to the published scheme will make it easier to understand and help to improve transparency and uptake. This informal guide, written in Plain English has no legal status and it is purely intended to operate as a guide to aid understanding. It is not proposed to re-write the CTRS entirely as it is recognised that, although complex, the existing CTRS nevertheless contains important technical details.

These changes predominantly relate to the simplification of the administration of the scheme and maximise uptake. The council is not seeking to change the generosity of the current scheme or to change the maximum entitlement awarded since 2019.

The affordability to the Council of the CTRS scheme continues to be an important consideration, balanced with the need to support as many residents as possible. The changes will reduce the number of transactions that the council must administer.

The Council is obliged to consider whether to revise or replace its CTRS each year. However, it is not obliged to revise or replace it. If any revision or replacement is to be made, the Council must follow the consultation process set out in the legislation and the decision must be made by Full Council.

At the Cabinet meeting held on 22 July 2021 Cabinet resolved to agree to consult on the following changes to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

Simplifying the claims process by adding a new channel for residents on Universal Credit to claim council tax reduction automatically

Stabilising entitlement for residents by simplifying what happens when a resident's income changes by a small amount during the financial year

Simplifying the scheme by changing the way that council tax support can be backdated to allow more time for residents' claims to be backdated

Simplifying the scheme through improved transparency by publishing a revised statement of the scheme written in plain English

A draft CTRS was published, and a public consultation has been carried out.

The Council has consulted formally with the Greater London Authority (“GLA”), and the result of the consultation is that the GLA supports the proposed changes. The letter from the GLA is included at Appendix 2.

Alternative options considered

There are a range of ways that the council could alter its CTRS. The Council updated its CTRS policy in 2019/2020 which included providing more financial support to working age claimants with children. The council is not seeking to reduce or increase the generosity of the current scheme or to change the maximum entitlement awarded since 2019. Reducing the generosity would add to the financial burden of those currently deemed to be in financial need. Increasing the generosity of the claim would result in a significant ongoing additional cost to the Council's budget each year and so is not currently considered to be financial sustainable. Instead, the council has explored a variety of options to make the scheme simpler to administer and to assist in reaching everyone who is entitled to support.

No change to the existing CTRS

This is not recommended because amending the scheme will help residents to access the support to which they are entitled, improve their experience, and reduce the administrative burden on the Council.

Do not simplify the claims process.

This is not recommended because simplifying the claims process to introduce an automatic claims channel for those on Universal Credit will improve uptake of council tax support and improve the experience for residents. It will also improve access to the scheme for those for whom, for a variety of reasons, such as digital exclusion or language barriers, may struggle to access it.

Make a single annual award to residents without an earnings threshold

One alternative to our proposed way of stabilising entitlement for residents would be to introduce a single annual award for residents with no income threshold. This means that the award would only be reassessed during the year if residents moved between legacy benefits and Universal Credit or changed work status. This approach is not recommended because it would lead to a greater variation in levels of support provided for residents where a key goal is to maintain the current level of (generous) support as far as possible. The additional cost of this scheme is estimated at £458,000 annually. Increasing the generosity of the claim would result in a significant ongoing additional cost to the Council's budget each year and so is not currently considered to be financial sustainable.

Do not extend the period for backdating claims for working age claimants

It would be possible to not change backdating rules to allow claimants to back-date claims by up to 12 months rather than the current 6 months. However, reducing backdating restrictions is likely to improve resident's experiences, reduce complaints and appeals, and remove barriers to the take-up of the scheme.

Do not publish a plain English guide to the Scheme

It would be possible to not provide an additional explanatory note in addition to the published scheme; however, this should make it easier to understand and help to improve transparency and uptake.

77. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Cllr Basu, Chair of Staffing and Remuneration moved the report and recommendations and it was:

RESOLVED

To approve the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, attached at Appendix A of the report.

78. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE

Councillor Mitchell, Chair of the Corporate Committee, moved the report and recommendations and it was:

RESOLVED

To opt in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) scheme to enable them to appoint the external auditor for the Council and for the Pension Fund.

79. TO CONSIDER REQUESTS TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS AND IF APPROVED, TO RECEIVE THEM

There were no deputations received.

80. 2022/23 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM - FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/27

The Mayor invited the Monitoring Officer to outline the requirement for votes.

It was noted that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, and the Council's Standing Orders required the Council to record in the minutes how each Councillor voted, including any abstentions, when determining the Council's Budget and the level of Council Tax to be levied.

The only requirement was to record in the minutes of the meeting how each member voted, and given that there were 5 amendments and a substantive motion to be voted on, it could be recorded in the minutes of the meeting how each member voted, including any who have abstained, by a roll call vote.

The Mayor then called on Councillor Diakides, Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce the budget and move the 2022-23 budget and 2022- 2027

Medium Term Financial Strategy and the recommendations a - o at page 330 of the agenda pack. Councillor Ahmet, Leader of the Council formally seconded the motion.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Dennison to move the Liberal Democrat group's 5 amendments, as set out in the tabled papers. Councillor Cawley- Harrison formally seconded the amendments and spoke in favour of their adoption.

The Mayor then opened the debate, in which Councillors: Say, Dixon, Brabazon, Chenot, Ibrahim, Emery, das Neves, Barnes, Carlin, Palmer, Williams, Mitchell, Barbara Blake, Bull and Gordon contributed to the discussion. Councillor Dennison and then Councillor Diakides responded to the debate.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 1. There being 10 Members in favour(Barnes, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

29 against(Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – 1(Cllr Bull)

Amendment 1 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 2. There being 10 Members in favour(Barnes, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

29 against(Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – 1(Cllr Bull)

Amendment 2 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 3. There being 11 Members in favour(Barnes, Bull, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

29 against(Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – none

Amendment 3 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 4. There being 11 Members in favour(Barnes, Bull, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

29 against(Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – none

Amendment 4 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 5. There being 10 Members in favour(Barnes, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

29 against(Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Bull, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – none

Amendment 5 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on recommendations a to o contained at page 330 paragraph 3.1 of the agenda pack.

There being 10 Members against (Barnes, Cawley Harrison, Chenot, da Costa, Dennison, Dixon, Emery, Hare, Palmer, Ross)

30 in Favour (Adje, Ahmet, Amin, Basu, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Bull, Carlin, Carroll, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Davies, Demir, Diakides, Dogan, Gordon, Ibrahim, Jogee, Mitchell, Moyeed, Opoku, Rice, Say, Stennett, Tucker, White and Williams.

Abstentions – none

The Recommendations were AGREED.

- (a) To approve the proposed 2022/23 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2022/27) agreed by Cabinet on 8th February 2022 as set out in Annex 1;
- (b) To approve the increase of 1.99% in Haringey's element of the Council tax and an additional 1% for the Adult Social Care Precept;

- (c) To approve the General Fund budget requirement for 2022/23 of £262.923m, net of Dedicated Schools Budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (d) To approve the Priority Cash Limits for 2022/23 of £262.923m as set out in Annex 2;
- (e) To approve the 2022/27 General Fund Capital Programme set out in Appendix 4 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (f) To approve the strategy on the flexible use of capital receipts as set out in and Appendix 6 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (g) To approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2022/23 as set out in Table 9.4 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (h) To approve the 2022/27 HRA Capital Programme set out in Table 9.5 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (i) To note the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept (para. 7.6);
- (j) To approve the budgeted level of non-earmarked General Fund balance and the specific and other reserves as set out in Annex 3b;
- (k) To approve the reserves policy including the Chief Finance Officer's (CFO) assessment of risk and the assessment of the adequacy of reserves, as set out in Annex 3 (a – c);
- (l) To note the report of the Chief Finance Officer under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of proposed reserves set out in section 9;
- (m) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 set out in Annex 4; and
- (n) To pass the budget resolution including the level of Council Tax, in the specified format, and to determine that the Council's relevant basic amount of Council Tax for the year is not excessive as set out in Annex 5.
- (o) To note the results of consultation as set out in Appendix 8 of Annex

Reasons for decision

The Council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget each year. The financial planning process this year has been markedly different. Our strategy has been to look to align fundamental future budget decisions with knowledge of our fundamental future funding position, in the context of that new borough plan. We have also gone into this budget round knowing that the Council as part of its outturn for 20/21 was able to assign £10m into the Strategic Budget Planning reserve, in anticipation of the sorts of timescales that would be associated with such future change.

The 2022/23 Budget & 2022/27 MTFS Cabinet report of 8th February included Cabinet's response to feedback from the Budget consultation, the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20th January 2022 and also the outcome of the overall equalities assessment. Relevant budgetary allocations announced in the Provisional Local Government Finance settlement on 16th December 2021 were also included. The Final Settlement ratified by Parliament on 7th February 2022 was largely as expected and no further adjustments have been required.

Taking all relevant factors into account, this report sets out Cabinet's 2022/23 Budget and 2022/27 MTFS proposals, including the level of Council tax for 2022/23, for the Council to consider and approve.

The report and recommendations from the Cabinet meeting on 8th February 2022, were agreed in full and are attached as Annex 1.

Alternative options considered

The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget for 2022/23. Therefore, in accordance with legislation and the Council's constitution, this report recommends that the Council should approve the proposed 2022/23 Budget and 2022/27 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 8th February 2022, including the outcomes from the budget consultation exercise, budget scrutiny and equalities review, which is attached as Annex 1 and approve the Council tax for 2022/23. Accordingly, no other options have been considered.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date