

MINUTES OF MEETING Full Council HELD ON Thursday, 2nd March, 2023, 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Anna Abela, Charles Adje, Peray Ahmet, Ibrahim Ali, Dawn Barnes, Nicola Bartlett, John Bevan, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Zena Brabazon, Cathy Brennan, Lester Buxton, Dana Carlin, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Seema Chandwani, Pippa Connor, Eldridge Culverwell, Nick da Costa, Lucia das Neves, Isidoros Diakides, Erdal Dogan, George Dunstall, Sarah Elliott, Scott Emery, Ruth Gordon, Makbule Gunes, Mike Hakata, Harrison-Mullane, Tammy Hymas, Emine Ibrahim, Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Thayahlan Iyngkaran, Sue Jameson, Adam Jogee, Cressida Johnson, Ahmed Mahbub, Mary Mason, Ajda Ovat, Sheila Peacock, Reg Rice, Alessandra Rossetti, Anne Stennett, Elin Weston, Matt White, Sarah Williams and Alexandra Worrell

46. FILMING AT MEETINGS

In accordance with Council standing order 2(1) there was a need to elect a person to preside if the Mayor was not present.

The Leader of the Council nominated, and the Chief Whip seconded, and it was AGREED that Cllr Buxton, Deputy Mayor, chair the meeting.

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings, there was a pause whilst the sound issues were resolved and the meeting made fully available to the public and members noted this information.

47. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from:

Cllr Collett
Cllr Davies
Cllr Opoku
Cllr Arkell
Cllr Adamou
Cllr Harrison-Mullane
Cllr Simmons Safo
Cllr Joy Wallace

Apologies for lateness have been received from Councillors:
Cllr Adje
Cllr Amin
Cllr Gunes

After the meeting apologies were provided from Cllr Moyeed and Cllr Say.

48. 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 meeting noted that there was one item of business, which could not be available earlier, and which will need to be dealt with at this meeting.

Item 13 - Budget amendments - council standing order 15.8b allowed amendments to recommendations to be put forward by 10am on the day of the meeting.

The Deputy Mayor accepted this as late business.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ibrahim declared a personal interest as she was a Unison Branch Secretary at another London Borough.

50. 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.

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

These would be provided by email and at the next meeting.

52. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There were no matters to report on.

53. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER AND HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

The Monitoring Officer had no matters to report on.

54. REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME ADMINISTRATION FOR 2023/24

The Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services introduced the report and MOVED the recommendations which set out details of the review of Haringey's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) 2022/23 and recommended that it continued unchanged for 2023/24.

In response to a question from Cllr Culverwell, it was noted that care leavers were exempt from paying council tax under the local Government Finance Act of 1992 under Section 13. The Council had used this discretionary power to exempt all care leavers in Haringey from paying council tax from the ages of 18 to 25. This included care leavers who might have been a care leaver from another borough, but now lived in Haringey.

With regards to exemption for mental health conditions, this was not as clear. There was a definition in the Local Government Finance Act called severe mental impairment with SMI as the acronym. However, this was not the same definition as contained in the Mental Health Act. For residents with schizophrenia, later stages of Alzheimer's and dementia, they would get a 100% exemption under that law.

RESOLVED

1. To note that an Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) has been undertaken in relation to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and that the findings of this EIA must be taken into account when making a decision regarding the Scheme for 2023/24.
2. To agree to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24 as contained in Appendix 1 and therefore retains the same Scheme agreed for 2022/23. This means that from 1st April 2023 there is a means-tested scheme which provides:
 - I. That pensioners continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
 - II. That working age claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
 - III. That working age claimants with children continue to receive support for the payment for Council Tax up to 100%.
 - IV. That all other working age claimants continue to receive support for the payment for Council Tax up to 80.2%.
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.

The recommendation to retain the current scheme would help to ensure that the already protected claimants will not be further disadvantaged and pays due regard to the challenging financial climate.

The real reduction in Council resources and service pressures have required the Council to implement significant annual expenditure reductions since 2011. These are forecast to continue for 2023/24 and future years. The affordability to the Council of the CTRS scheme therefore continues to be an important consideration.

Haringey's scheme is comparable with other London local authorities and its scheme reflects the need to strike a fair balance between protecting the wellbeing of our residents and recognising the challenging financial situation we are in.

Consideration has been given to revising the current scheme, however a longer period is needed to fully evaluate the impact of the last changes.

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.

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

The Chair of Staffing and Remuneration MOVED the report and recommendations and it was:

RESOLVED

To approve the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24, attached at Appendix A.

56. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Corporate Committee Moved the report and recommendations.

The recommendation on the Treasury Management Strategy appeared under the budget item 13, when it will be decided on.

57. TO CONSIDER REQUESTS TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS AND, IF APPROVED, TO RECEIVE THEM

The Deputy Mayor invited Mr Paul Burnham and Mr Jacob Secker to make their representations in relation to the budget and from concerned residents from Broadwater Farm. They were asking the Council, to not agree the Council tenant rent increase of 7% as shown on the budget report.

Mr Burnham raised the following issues:

- The Council's failure to consult with tenants about the 7% rent increase. He contended that 22 other local authorities did not increase rent to the government maximum last year.

- Speculating that the Cabinet's refusal to consult with tenants might be due to their expectation that tenants would oppose the increases during a cost-of-living crisis.
- That he had made a formal objection to the lack of consultation.
- Concerns about the proposal to implement London Affordable Rent for over 870 new homes. The proposed rent for a 2-bed property was £79 per week higher than the average Council rent in Haringey and would have a significant impact on household budgets.
- Housing Charity Shelter had already deemed the proposed Mayor's rent unaffordable, as low-income families would be paying up to 36% of their income on rent and service charges.
- That the economic rationale for LAR rent was poorly explained in the report and the proposed £14 difference from Council rents was unlikely to be critical to the £900M development program's viability.
- That a simplistic approach of charging higher rents across the board was risky and that the proposals should be rejected.
- Parents with existing properties have raised concerns about proposed rent and service charge increases.
- Cabinet suggested a maximum rent increase of 7%, but service charges may increase even more.
- Freedom of Information received indicated that tenant service charges for the current year were £11.7M, and the proposed service charges increase would generate more than £3M, a 23% increase per household from April.
- Specifically, heating and lighting charges may double, and that these charges were not covered by Universal Credit and currently stand at £10 a week. Despite government assistance programs, any increase in charges would cause financial hardship and discontent among residents.
- Referred to page 318 of the pack, which indicated that freezing all tenant heating and lighting charges would cost £2M from the housing revenue account reserve of £20Million and proposed that the report be amended to freeze these charges, alleviating the financial burden on residents.

The Deputation called for change in decision making on the rent increases and for the Council to campaign alongside tenants for a government supported rent freeze without any loss of services or of new build capacity.

In response to the questions from the Councillors: Dunstall, Ovat and Ibrahim, the deputation provided the following responses:

- Government investments were necessary to address social inclusion issues particularly, in Northumberland Park, and that social landlords' reliance on

- tenant funding was not a sufficient solution. The deputation suggested that Haringey should advocate for government investment in public assets, such as major repairs and fire safety grants, to improve the situation.
- The government had broken a previous agreement with councils by reducing the amount of money they received through self-financing, and this needed to be addressed through the public policy process. The deputation proposed that local authorities should stand together to prevent money from being siphoned out of council housing.
 - Additionally, he expressed concern about a £3Million increase in tenant service charges and the lack of information about the pros and cons and consequences in a report.
 - Defend Council Housing was a national campaign group that advocated for council housing tenants in Haringey, and the deputation was a member of this group as well as the Broadwater Farm Residents Association.
 - The deputation outlined concerns about the potential doubling of the district heating charges, which would have a detrimental impact on residents, particularly those on job seekers' allowance who may struggle to pay their bills and afford food. [It was noted that this was not an issue in the report or on the agenda]

The Cabinet Members for Council Housebuilding, Placemaking, and Development and Housing Services, Private Renters, and Planning responded outlining the following:

- Manifesto pledge is to build 3000 Council homes at by 2030.
- Currently in an economic climate of huge increases in construction costs.
- Need to use the London Affordable Rent on those new homes to be able to progress with the housing delivery programme and ensure financially viable.
- 12500 people on Housing waiting list and need to provide homes
- London affordable rent was not the first option. However, it is a way in which to ensure housing pledge is achieved.
- The London Affordable Rent means that these new homes will be Council homes at council rents for people on the Council is Housing register and they will be secure tenancies. Residents would be on Haringey's housing register and able to be offered a home by the Council.
- The funding came from the Building Council Homes for Londoners programme and to contend that these are not Council homes was not correct.
- There was need to increase the rent and services charge to continue to provide services and repairs.
There was no legal requirement for the Council to specifically consult with tenants on the increase.
- Fire safety, was a high priority and the Council had allocated £30 to £35 million over the next five years to ensure that housing stock continues to meet the constantly evolving statutory requirements and that housing provision is safe.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the deputation for attending and making their representations.

58. 2023/24 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM - FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/28

The Deputy 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 Leader of the Opposition called for a point of order, stating that at a recent Cabinet meeting an incorrect value had been included in one of the fees and charges reports, concerning all day visitor permits and this was advised to be corrected in the budget report being considered. However, this was not included in the report and this would cause an issue for the budget being considered and not containing the correct information

The Monitoring officer responded and advised that this correction was now part of a separate decision report to be taken forward as a Cabinet Member signing. This figure was not included in the budget and did not cause an issue.

The Mayor then called on Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment to introduce the budget and move the 2023-24 budget and 2023- 2028 Medium Term Financial Strategy and the recommendations a - o at page 256 of the agenda pack. Councillor Ahmet, Leader of the Council formally seconded the motion.

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

The Deputy Mayor then opened the debate, in which Councillors: Brabazon, Da Costa, Bartlett, Isilar – Gosling, das Neves, Connor, Hakata, Emery, Ibrahim, Rossetti, Ali and Mason contributed to the discussion. Councillor Cawley- Harrison and then Councillor Williams responded to the debate.

[Cllr Diakides left the meeting at 8.45pm]

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 1. There being 7 Members in favour (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar- Gosling Rossetti) and 38 Against (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – 0

Amendment 1 was declared lost.

The Deputy Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 2. There being 7 Members in favour (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar-Gosling Rossetti) and 38 Against (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – none

Amendment 2 was declared lost.

The Deputy Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 3. There being 7 Members in favour (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar-Gosling Rossetti) and 38 Against (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – None

Amendment 3 was declared lost.

The Deputy Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 4. There being 7 Members in favour (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar-Gosling Rossetti) and 38 Against (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – None

Amendment 4 was declared lost.

The Deputy Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 5. There being 7 Members in favour (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar-Gosling Rossetti) and 38 Against (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – None

Amendment 5 was declared lost.

The Deputy Mayor then called for a vote on recommendations a to o contained at page 256 paragraph 3.1 a to o of the agenda pack.

There being 7 Members against (Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, Da Costa, Emery, Isilar- Gosling Rossetti)

38 in Favour (Abela, Adje , Ahmet, Ali, Amin, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Chandwani, Culverwell, das Neves, Dogan, Dunstall, Elliott, Gordon, Gunes, Hakata, Hymas, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Jogee, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams and Worrell)

Abstentions – none

The Recommendations were AGREED as follows

- (a) To approve the proposed 2023/24 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2023/28) agreed by Cabinet on 7th February 2023 as set out in Annex 1;
- (b) To approve the increase of 2.99% in Haringey's element of the Council tax and an additional 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept;
- (c) To approve the General Fund budget requirement for 2023/24 of £279.517m, net of Dedicated Schools Budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (d) To approve the Cash Limits for 2023/24 of £279.517m as set out in Annex 2;
- (e) To approve the 2023/28 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 2023/28 as set out in Table 9.3 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (h) To approve the 2022/27 HRA Capital Programme set out in Table 9.4 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (i) To note the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept (para. 7.13-7.14);
- (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 2023/24 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 1.

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 influenced by the economic environment specifically high rates of interest, cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, ongoing high demand for services overlaid with increased acuity has led to forecast overspends in the current financial year which have had to be addressed in the construct of the 2023/24 Budget.

The 2023/24 Budget & 2023/28 MTFS Cabinet report of 7th February included Cabinet's response to feedback from the budget consultation, the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19th January 2023 and also the outcome of the overall equalities assessment. Relevant budgetary allocations announced in the Provisional Local Government Finance settlement on 19th December 2022 were also included. The Final Settlement ratified by Parliament on 8th February 2023 was in line with the Budget assumptions in the attached documents.

The report and recommendations from the Cabinet meeting on 7th February 2023, were agreed in full and are attached as Annex 1.

Taking all relevant factors into account, this report sets out Cabinet's 2023/24 Budget and 2023/28 MTFS proposals, including the level of Council tax for 2023/24, for the Council to consider and approve.

Alternative options considered

The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget for 2023/24. Therefore, in accordance with legislation and the Council's constitution, this report recommends that the Council should approve the proposed 2023/24 Budget and 2023/28 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 7th February 2023, 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 2023/24. Accordingly, no other options have been considered.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date