

# **MINUTES OF MEETING Full Council HELD ON Monday, 4th March, 2024, 7.30pm - 9.15pm**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Anna Abela, Gina Adamou, Peray Ahmet, Kaushika Amin, Emily Arkell, Dawn Barnes, Nicola Bartlett, John Bevan, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Zena Brabazon, Cathy Brennan, Lester Buxton, Dana Carlin, Liam Carroll, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Lotte Collett, Pippa Connor, Nick da Costa, Lucia das Neves, Isidoros Diakides, Erdal Dogan, George Dunstall, Scott Emery, Ruth Gordon, Mark Grosskopf, Makbule Gunes, Mike Hakata, Emine Ibrahim, Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Thayahlan Iyngkaran, Sue Jameson, Cressida Johnson, Ahmed Mahbub, Mary Mason, Sean O'Donovan, Felicia Opoku, Ajda Ovat, Sheila Peacock, Reg Rice, Alessandra Rossetti, Michelle Simmons-Safo, Anne Stennett, Elin Weston, Matt White and Sarah Williams**

## **ALSO ATTENDING:**

### **57. FILMING AT MEETINGS**

The Mayor referred to the filming at meetings notice and members noted this information.

### **58. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The following apologies for absence were noted:

Cllr Elliott

Cllr Jogee

Cllr Chandwani

Cllr Culverwell

Cllr Lawton

Cllr Ali

Cllr Worrell

**59. 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 Mayor accepted the budget amendment from the Liberal Democrat group as late business.

**60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Ibrahim declared a personal interest as a council employee of another London Borough and full time Unison trade union representative of employees.

**61. 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.

**62. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2023, 20 NOVEMBER 2023, 12 FEBRUARY 2024**

**RESOLVED**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meetings held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2023, 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2023 and 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.

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

These would be emailed at the next meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2024.

**64. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no matters to consider.

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

There were no matters to consider.

**66. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2024/25**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment introduced the report, which set out the process and content of proposed changes to the administration and policy of the Haringey Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be introduced in 2024/25. The report set out a series of options to amend the current scheme, with a preferred option recommended. It also set out the results of the consultation process undertaken.

## **RESOLVED**

1. To note that a public consultation has been carried out (see Appendix 2) and its findings incorporated into the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3)
2. To agree to adopt the amended Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 (Appendix 4) from 01 April 2024 and delegate authority to the Director of Finance, the Director of Environment and Resident Experience and the Assistant Director Resident Experience to take all appropriate steps to implement and administer the Scheme. In addition to the changes prescribed by law, agreed the new CTRS would include the following proposed changes:
3. To introduce income and capital disregards for payments made under the following schemes:
  - Windrush payments
  - Historical Child Abuse payments
  - Grenfell Tower support payments
  - Child Disability payments
  - Payments made by the Child Migrant Trust
  - Compensation payments for DWP errors
  - We Love Manchester emergency funds
  - Payments made due to an error of law
  - Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme
  - An approved blood scheme
  - London Emergencies Trust
  - Thalidomide payments
  - Payments made under Section 49 of the Childrens and Families Act 2014.
4. To agree to update the scheme to include the following changes in Scottish and Welsh legislation and match the pension-age scheme:
  - Payments of Adult Disability Payments will be disregarded as income and residents in receive of this income will be treated as disabled.
  - Child Disability Payments will be included as a qualifying condition for receiving the enhanced disability premium.
  - Scottish social security payments will be disregarded as capital.
  - The definition of childcare will be updated to include people employed by a domiciliary support service and charges referred to in

the Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.

- Care and support payments made under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 will be disregarded as income.
  - Include references to Scottish taxpayers and Scottish basic rate of income tax when calculating earnings.
  - Include a new category of part-time firefighter in earned income disregard qualifying conditions, for part-time firefighters employed by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
  - Expand the definition of disability to include changes made in the Social Security and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
  - Amend references to The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to reference the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013.
5. To agree to amend the scheme to make the following administrative changes, thereby matching the pension-age scheme:
- Include Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay as income.
  - Update references to the personal allowance and personal reliefs from the Income Tax Act 2007.
  - Include carers in receipt of the carer element of Universal Credit for the purposes of awarding the Severe Disability Premium.
  - Amend references to the family premium to state 'a family including at least one child or young person'.
  - Amend terminology to include references to service group users, national insurance contributions and exempt work.
  - Include a new category of part-time firefighter in earned income disregard qualifying conditions, for part-time firefighters defined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
  - Disregard payments made under the Care Act 2014.
  - Expand the definition of disability to include severely sight-impaired residents included in registers kept under the Care Act 2014.
  - Include references to paternity leave and shared parental leave.

## **Reasons for decision**

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is a way the Council can redistribute the financial burden on Council Tax payers and provide additional support to those in need.

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

The proposed amendments to the rules for working age claimants would have the following benefits:

Promotes fairness and consistency. The proposed changes will align the scheme with the pension age scheme and the housing benefit scheme so that residents are treated fairly and consistently regardless of their age.

Improving the accuracy of claims processing. Having multiple schemes with minor differences leads to additional administrative complexity and reduced levels of accuracy. The alignment will improve the accuracy of administrative decision-making.

These changes predominantly relate to ways to simplify the administration of the scheme and maximise uptake. The council is not seeking to reduce the generosity of the current scheme or to reduce 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 simplify the administration of the working-age scheme by matching changes already introduced in the pension-age scheme.

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.

A decision to consult on the changes detailed above was agreed by the Lead Member for Resident Services & Tackling Inequality on 07 November 2023.

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 1.

### **Alternative options considered**

#### **No change to the existing CTRS**

This is not recommended because amending the scheme will reduce the administrative burden on the Council and allow residents a consistent and fair experience regardless of age.

#### **Partially adopt the proposed changes**

Consideration was given to adopting some of the proposed changes, such as the capital disregards, whilst retaining the existing rules in the other areas. This is not recommended, as it will retain complexity within the scheme by retaining differing rules for working-age and pension-age residents.

## **67. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM THE FOLLOWING BODIES**

The Mayor outlined that there were four reports to consider as part of this item, two reports from Cabinet and a report from the General Purposes Committee and a report from the Audit Committee.

Following Cabinet approval in December 2023, the Cabinet now proposed that Full Council adopt a new Housing Strategy to set out the Council's vision and strategic approach to housing in Haringey over the next five years. This was in accordance with Council's Policy Framework, Article 4.01(a) of the Council's Constitution. The Cabinet Member Cabinet Member for Council House building, Placemaking, and Local Economy MOVED her report and recommendations on the Housing Strategy.

### **RESOLVED**

1. To note Appendix 3 which detailed the outcome of the consultation.
2. To adopt the Housing Strategy attached at Appendix 2.

This report was put forward by Cabinet and asked Full Council to consider the following:

- Determination of the Council Tax premium in respect of properties occupied periodically.
- Council Tax Premium for Long-Term Empty Dwellings.

The Cabinet member for Finance and Local Investment MOVED the report and recommendations and it was,

### **RESOLVED**

1. To agree that for any dwelling within the area of the Council if, on any day, there is no resident of that dwelling and it is substantially furnished, the following shall apply:
  - i. the discount in s11(2)(a) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (LGFA) shall not apply to that dwelling; and
  - ii. the amount of council tax payable in respect of that dwelling and that day shall be increased by 100 percent.
2. That with effect from 1 April 2024, that a premium shall be applied to long term empty dwellings as defined in s11B(8) of Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992 (as amended from time to time), and that the amount of council tax payable in respect of that dwelling and that day shall be increased by 100 percent.
3. That, if on any day a dwelling is a long-term empty dwelling, the discount in s11(2)(a) of LGFA shall not apply to that dwelling.

4. To note that until 1 April 2024, the decision made by Full Council in January 2019 in relation to the premium payable in respect of long-term empty dwellings, shall continue in full force and effect.
5. To note that the premium shall not apply to dwellings that are exempt under Regulations 9 and 10 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003.

The Council was required to produce an annual Pay Policy Statement to comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. The attached report from the General Purposes Committee meeting on third of October 2023 recommended that Full Council approved the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 (attached) for publication in April 2024. The Chair of General Purposes Committee MOVED the report and recommendations.

## **RESOLVED**

To approve the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25, attached at Appendix A.

Council were presented with the updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25, contained as an appendix at item 13, following its scrutiny at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presentation at the Audit Committee and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment.

The Chair of Audit 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.

## **68. TO CONSIDER REQUESTS TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS AND/OR PETITIONS AND, IF APPROVED, TO RECEIVE THEM**

Local resident, Paul Burnham, was joined by Michael Hodges, Jacob Secker and Florence Allaway and addressed Council in respect of item 13 on the agenda, Final 2024-25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy and specifically spoke on the proposed service and rent charges increases. The following points were raised:

- In reference to pages 508 and 509 of the Council agenda pack, the deputation felt that the service and tenant charges proposed could not be justified and would adversely life standards for tenants.
- There had been an increase of £2.7 million for Council tenant service charges, significantly affecting some of the poorest in the borough. This needed to be considered in the context of the borough having the highest proportion of lowest paid jobs in the country, with around 17,000 being in low paid jobs.

- The Council was proposing increases to main tenant service charges, including cleaning inside the blocks by 47%, waste management by 43% and concierge charges by 31%.
- These charges would increase the service charge burden for a flat in a block with a concierge from £42 a week to £52 pounds a week. Overall, this would represent an increase of £17 to £18 a week when including both rent and service charges combined.
- Universal credit claims could not be relied upon to manage these increases. He referred to a statement by the Chief Executive of the anti-poverty group Trussell Trust, that Universal Credit was not sufficient to cover living costs.
- In the borough, 95% of food bank users were claiming Universal Credit and nationally 47% of food bank users were social housing tenants and reiterated that Universal Credit was not a solution.
- Reflected that the service-charging model was not effective, did not mean a quality of provision, and called on the council to work with residents to rework this model.
- He contended that there were miss- allocated charges in the report and he queried why local tenants received clean up charges when organisations were holding events, in particular those hosted at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. He felt that the event host should be responsible for the costs. He therefore objected to what he considered excessive charges to residents.
- Service charges were supposed to be split fairly between tenants and leaseholders. However, in many instances, the deputation contended that this was not the case.
- Queried the charging for communal lighting in housing blocks considered in past cabinet reports and the difference in charging for leaseholders.

In conclusion, the deputation were not seeking higher charges for leaseholders and not seeking to capsize the HRA but wanting fairer charges. The level of detail in the report was questioned and probity of the recommendations on service and tenant charges being put forward. They felt it was incorrect to claim that service charges were to recover the cost and that contended that the Council have discretion on these charges.

The deputation requested that residents work with the Council to change the current policy on service charges and refer this matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Mayor invited the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Private Renters and Planning to respond to the issues raised in the deputation, Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Private Renters and Planning, responded as follows to the issues in the deputation:

The Cabinet Member began by emphasising that no one wanted migration to universal credit and this was not the matter in hand. The Cabinet member continued to respond as follows:

- These were challenging times for all local authorities.



- The medium-term financial strategy and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was being set in a considerably challenging environment and the sharp rise in interest levels since the September 2022 mini budget had exacerbated this.
- Over the last decade, including last year's below inflation rent cap, there had been an equivalent of a 3% reduction in rental income, and this placed considerable pressure on the HRA.
- There was a need to invest significantly in Council homes ensuring that they were decent, safe and well insulated and this was non – negotiable. There was not a desire to cut services as it was acknowledged that these areas needed to be improved and these required improvement actions which were included in the Housing Improvement Plan.
- The Council Service charges would need to be set at a level that recovered the cost of the service and no more than this.
- The Council had been increasing service charges in line with inflation for several years now. However, the divergence between the cost to the Council of providing services to tenants and the amount it charged tenants for those services had been growing. If service charges were not reset to cover the cost of providing services, the gap would continue to increase and would mean that the HRA was covering the shortfall. This would further result in tenants who do not receive services subsidising those who do, which was fundamentally unfair.
- Service charges were only set to cover Council costs.
- In relation to the application of the 5% flexibility, there had been consideration of the effect of increases on tenant's finances. As already noted the Council provided support to all tenants whether in work or in receipt of benefits with financial advice, including support accessing all benefits to which they were entitled and supporting better-paid employment and access to a hardship fund, which applied to those tenants who were finding them themselves, falling into arrears.
- Residents were consulted on rent increases as part of the budget consultation.
- Increases to existing rents and service charges were set in line with government guidance and the recovery of cost. There was no requirement to consult except where a new service was introduced.
- Leaseholders were already charged services on a full cost recovery basis. Resetting tenant service charges on a full cost recovery basis meant the Council was treating tenants and leaseholders in the same manner, getting rid of unfairness, which was arising through the diversion of the inflationary application and the forecast application.

The Mayor thanked Mr Burnham for attending and making his deputation to the Council.

## **69. FINAL 2024-25 BUDGET AND 2024-29 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

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 was one amendment and a substantive motion to be voted on, and it could be recorded in the minutes of the meeting how each member voted, including any who have abstained.

Members NOTED this advice.

The Mayor then called on Councillor Carlin, Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment to introduce the budget and move the 2024-25 budget and 2024- 2029 Medium Term Financial Strategy and the recommendations a - o at page 438 of the agenda pack. Councillor Ahmet, Leader of the Council formally seconded the motion.

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

Cllr Collett, Leader of the Independent Socialists group, was invited to respond to the budget presentation in accordance with CSO 15.6 c (ii).

The Mayor then opened the debate, in which Councillors: Bartlett, da Costa, Arkell, Rossetti, Gunes, Emery, O'Donovan, Isilar -Gosling, Mason, Connor and Iyngkaren contributed to the discussion. Councillor Cawley- Harrison and then Councillor Carlin responded to the debate.

The Mayor then called for a vote on Budget Amendment 1, as set out in the tabled papers. There being 7 Members in favour ( Barnes, Cawley- Harrison, Connor, da Costa, Emery, Isilar- Gosling Rossetti) and 39 Against (Abela, Adamou, Ahmet, Amin, Arkell, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, M Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Carroll , Collett, das Neves, Diakides, Dogan, Dunstall, Gordon, Gunes, Grosskopf, Hakata, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Johnson, Mahbub, Mason, O'Donovan, Opoku, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Simmons- Safo, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams )

Abstentions – none

Amendment 1 was declared lost.

The Mayor then called for a vote on recommendations a to o contained at page 438 paragraph 3.1 of the agenda pack.

There being 10 Members against ( Barnes, M Blake, Cawley- Harrison, Collett Connor, da Costa, Emery, Isilar- Gosling, Mason, Rossetti)

36 in Favour (Abela, Adamou, Ahmet, Amin, Arkell, Bartlett, Bevan, B Blake, Brabazon, Brennan, Buxton, Carlin, Carroll, das Neves, Diakides, Dogan, Dunstall, Gordon, Gunes, Grosskopf, Hakata, Ibrahim, Iyngkaran, Jameson, Johnson, Mahbub, O'Donovan, Opoku, Ovat, Peacock, Rice, Simmons- Safo, Stennett, Weston, White, Williams )

Abstentions – none

The Recommendations were AGREED as follows

- (a) To approve the proposed 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2024/29) agreed by Cabinet on 6th February 2024 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 2024/25 of £302.05m, net of Dedicated Schools Budget, as set out in Section 7.22 of this report;
- (d) To approve the Cash Limits for 2024/25 of £302.05m as set out in Annex 2;
- (e) To approve the 2024/29 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 Appendix 6 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (g) To approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2024/29 as set out in Table 9.6 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (h) To approve the 2024/29 HRA Capital Programme set out in Table 9.7 of Annex 1 to this report;
- (i) To note the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept (para. 7.21);
- (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 2024/25 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 the budget consultation as set out in Appendix 7 of Annex 1 which has been updated since the 6 February 2024 Cabinet meeting to include an additional 111-consultee responses.

**Reasons for decision**

The Council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget by 11 March each year.

The report and recommendations from the Cabinet meeting on 6th February 2024 were agreed in full and are attached as Annex 1.

The Budget now proposed has been updated to reflect the final funding allocations announced in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement. Taking all relevant factors into account, this report sets out Cabinet’s 2024/25 Budget and 2024/29 MTFS proposals, including the level of Council tax for 2024/25, for the Council to consider and approve.

**Alternative options considered**

The Council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 by 11 March 2024, accordingly, no other options have been considered.

Therefore, in accordance with legislation and the Council’s constitution, this report recommends that the Council should approve the proposed 2024/25 Budget and 2024/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 6th February 2024, 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 2024/25.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....