

CABINET

MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 5.00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Donatus Anyanwu
Councillor Matthew Bennett
Councillor Edward Davie
Councillor Jim Dickson

Councillor Paul Gadsby
Councillor Claire Holland
Councillor Jack Hopkins
Councillor Mohammed Seedat
Councillor Andy Wilson
Councillor Sonia Winifred

Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for the Voluntary Sector & Partnerships (job share)
Cabinet Member for Planning, Investment & New Homes
Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care
Cabinet Member for the Voluntary Sector & Partnerships (job share)
Cabinet Member for Housing
Deputy Leader of the Council (Environment and Clean Air)
Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Community Safety (job share)
Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Cabinet Member for Equalities & Culture

Apologies for absence: Councillor Jennifer Brathwaite and Councillor Jacqui Dyer

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were none.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 18 September and 07 October 2019 be signed and agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. FINANCE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY REPORT 2019 TO 2024

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, Councillor Andy Wilson. He highlighted that:

- Local government financing was uncertain, with Government's Fair Funding Review and

Business Rates Retention both stalled; and further compounded by the unpredictable political landscape.

- The expected four-year Government spending review had not occurred, instead there had been a one-year cyclical spending round causing difficulties in planning for the future.
- Lambeth was currently overspending in Children's Services and was managing Adults and Health pressures with one-off funding; with both areas having uncertainty of future income.
- The last Budget review identified a £38m spending gap and Lambeth was still required to find an additional £6m savings, but aside from £100,000, no savings would impact on frontline services and was to come from efficiencies and improved income generation.

Cabinet next heard from Councillor Liz Atkins, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC):

- The protection of frontline services and the most vulnerable was welcomed, but the difficulty of setting financial strategies with one year funding commitments and Brexit impacts was noted.
- Further information was required on addressing climate change, business rates pooling, and the forthcoming business rate evaluation.
- The effects of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) 1% rate increase on the capital programme was queried.
- The focus on growth was welcomed, especially given the difficulties of meeting savings in Adults' and Children's Social Care.
- Reviews of council tax and voluntary contributions were needed.
- Resident Services covered most savings, but were failing to recover income on waste and events.
- The impact of cuts on the most vulnerable concerned the OSC, which did not want to see funding balanced on those suffering the most and requested that service delivery offer value for money and positive outcomes. Evidence of progression on the proposals would also be required.
- It was requested to include CIPFA benchmarking on future reports to compare with peers and assess whether the Council was meeting its residents' needs.

Councillor Pete Elliott, Green Party Opposition Standards and Monitoring Member, noted that:

- The absence of frontline Adults and Children's Social Care savings was welcomed, but it was queried why more savings from Policy and Communications, and Legal and Governance, could not be made.
- There was little evidence of resources being used for the climate emergency; with the cycling infrastructure capital investment too low to create liveable neighbourhoods and car-free roads.
- High levels of incinerated waste meant increasing investment in waste and recycling was negated.
- Lambeth' Housing Standard was poor and needed improvement, and raised questions on the Council's contractor relationships, whilst empty properties investment and not estate regeneration was required.

In response to the above representations, Cabinet Members advised that:

- Cabinet, nor the Council, was complaisant with contractors and put the interests of residents first.
- Lambeth had upgraded 23,000 homes over the last five years, improving residents' lives.
- The housing focus and priorities had been decided by residents, with the considerable investment the first in 30 years and Lambeth could be proud of its delivery.

- Voluntary contribution schemes, such as in Westminster, would not translate to the demographics and council tax base found in Lambeth, although the Council was reviewing broadening contribution remits. Whilst the administrative costs of the scheme were thought to be small, the possible income stream was also likely to be small and Members were not confident that the drastic funding cuts would be mitigated by this policy.
- CIPFA data would be used to benchmark Lambeth against other local authorities in future and officers would review when best to report this.
- The refurbishment of empty homes instead of regeneration would not impact greatly on homelessness or temporary accommodation lists; however, the Council had increased tax on empty properties and land, forecast to generate £200,000, and was taking action to free up existing resources for housing.
- Funding cuts in Policy and Communications, or Legal and Governance would not yield considerable savings, and would decrease the ability to inform residents or hear their views.
- Full Council would likely be asked to utilise reserves in its Budget, and this would detail CIPFA benchmarking and whether the use of resources was a suitable proposition.
- The Capital Investment Programme was meeting delivery targets, with the Parks services delivering health initiatives and continued to win awards.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, Councillor Andy Wilson; and, Christina Thompson, Director of Finance and Property, responded to questions as follows:

- The Business Rates 75% pilot would cease next year, but with London boroughs to continue a policy of pooling at a lower rate meant Lambeth would receive an additional £700,000 funding, treated as one-off.
- The PWLB 1% rate increase was unexpected and impacted on capital expenditure and consequently also on the capital programme, which would be brought to February Cabinet.
- Lambeth had one of the lowest levels of reserves in London, and was having to utilise earmarked reserves. A review of the General Fund balance would help ensure security, but required prudent management and responding to unexpected strategic issues would use these reserves.
- There were no additional saving proposals for Adult nor Children's Social Care outside of efficiency savings, but they still had to find efficiency savings and minor service reduction from previous review.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jack Hopkins, summarised the discussion as follows:

- Lambeth had come a long way since 2006 when it had no reserves, during a period of cuts and financial uncertainty, whilst providing services for residents, however the successful management of these services required long-term certainty.
- Lambeth needed to be risk aware, ensure the impact of expenditure, and reduce service demands.
- He concluded by thanking officers for their work in delivering a strong budget.

RESOLVED:

Medium Term Financial Strategy

1. To approve the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy as set out within the report.
2. To note the continued uncertainty regarding elements of government funding, price and demand pressures and the need to ensure that budgets set each year are sustainable during the settlement period to 2023/24 and beyond.
3. To note the current funding gap of £6.001m for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and how we have reduced this gap through brought forward savings and new proposed savings, which are detailed within section 2.

4. To approve the principle of a five-year planning cycle for capital with overall budget agreed for each delivery area.

Financial Management

5. To note the financial position of the Council budget in 2019/20 and the actions in pace to balance it over the period.
6. To note the revised total of £386m for the three-year Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2021/22 as described in Section 4 and summarised in appendix 2, and with how the programme is financed within Appendix 3.

London Business Rates Pool

7. To approve in principle to the creation of the London Business Rates Pool for 2020/21.
8. To delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree the operational details of the pooling with the participating authorities.

5. LAMBETH TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The report was introduced by the Deputy Leader (Environment and Clean Air), Councillor Claire Holland. She highlighted that:

- Lambeth had responded to feedback and continued to make improvements, noting the considerable input from organisations like Mums for Lungs in tackling toxic air and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in January 2019.
- Lambeth was working with the Mayor of London and other boroughs to decarbonise transport and improve road safety, and had signed up to the Mayor's Zero Carbon Plan by 2025.
- Cabinet wanted to stop road use by non-residents and had instigated low-traffic neighbourhoods and 10 miles of healthy routes to reclaim local areas for local businesses and residents.
- More initiatives and proposals would arise from future implementation plans.
- Thanks were offered to partners and residents, who provided invaluable, critical challenge.

Cabinet next heard from Simon Still, Lambeth Cyclists; Sarah Richard, Valley Road Residents' Group; and, Sally Warren, Vauxhall Gyrotory residents group; who gave the following representations:

- The Strategy set out implementation and would address many issues disproportionately affecting young people, primarily on their health and safety, with 50% of London air pollution and a third of carbon emissions caused by traffic.
- Work to improve traffic was urgent and consultation needed to be short.
- The Council was thanked for its response to decrease rat-running, noise and air pollution, and safety; and Valley Road Residents' Group were keen to assist with local engagement, support other initiatives in the borough and Strategy, and lobbying to improve bus and train services.
- The Vauxhall area had significant traffic problems, with increasing volumes and speeds ruining residents' quality of life, and the gyrotory expected to compound issues.

Councillor Scott Ainslie, Green Party, provided the following comments:

- There was considerable improvement from the draft strategy and the new initiatives were welcomed, however, it was believed that the climate emergency should entail greater urgency, a thorough and bolder review of approach, and mention of CO₂ reduction.
- Electric vehicle charging points were embraced, but further work with Transport for London

(TfL) to limit through traffic and a commitment to the working parking levy was required.

- Cycling routes circumnavigated the borough, but more routes were needed within the borough; additionally two junctions (between A205-A23 and A24 and A3) were of concern and officers were asked to detail proposals to make these safe.

Cabinet Members provided the below representations:

- The Strategy would have positive impacts on public health and wellbeing, clean air, and the community; however, it needed to counter cultural influences, including the rise of SUV sales.
- The Strategy was filtered down throughout the Council and had seen pro-cycling measures, cleaner transport, improved recycling, and review of electrical charging on estates.
- The Strategy did note CO₂ reduction and air quality, and would help deliver the Healthy Routes plan.
- The Strategy inputted into the Brixton Neighbourhoods Plan to reshape transport moving within Brixton and improve community safety.
- The input of children and young people into consultation was of the utmost importance.
- The Strategy was welcomed by residents, partners and stakeholders; but would need to be taken forward by residents with neighbouring boroughs to be a success.

In response to questions, the Deputy Leader (Environment and Clean Air), Councillor Claire Holland and officers advised that:

- The declaration of a climate emergency had had a significant impact on the Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan (TSIP). Carbon reduction was also a new guiding principle for the Council, which had a rigorous monitoring programme to meet its high ambitions.
- Lambeth was reviewing the Parking Levy with other boroughs and would report in early 2020.
- Consultation for the A205 South Circular cycle route was expected to start in January.
- Significant budget cuts meant that the Council needed to be strategic in its investment and delivery.
- The Council was working with TfL, the community, and other partners to deliver; and it was noted that some roads came under the management of TfL.
- The Workplace Parking Levy was under review through London Councils, although public institutions exempted in Nottingham (e.g. schools and hospitals) comprised Lambeth's largest employers and emitters.
- Resident feedback was positive, but consensus was needed and meant delivery could be slow.
- Proposals, such as the Brixton Liveable Neighbourhood, relied to some extent on Mayoral funding, with whom Lambeth had a good relationship.
- Lambeth held regular meetings with neighbouring boroughs and continued to work with them.
- There would be extensive engagement with children and young people, who were key to success, comprised some of the most vulnerable road users, and were most at risk from traffic pollution.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jack Hopkins, summarised the discussion:

- Thanks was offered to all who had been involved in designing proposals, and noted that these had only been possible with the step-change in attitudes.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan (appendices 1 to 9 of the report).
2. To delegate authority to the Strategic Directors for Sustainable Growth and Opportunity, in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Environment and Clean Air), to approve the publication of future iterations of the Transport Strategy Implementation Plan, subject to the provisions of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

3. LAMBETH WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE

The report was introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Council (Environment and Clean Air), Councillor Claire Holland. She highlighted that:

- The Waste Strategy ran from 2011-2031 and this report provided a framework for continuous improvement and review given the climate emergency, with proposals for achievable targets, improved customer access and digital services; whilst responding to resident consultation.
- Waste was a universal service and there had been a considerable consultation response.

Cabinet next heard from Councillor Pete Elliott, Green Party Opposition Standards and Monitoring Member, who gave the following representations:

- It was welcomed that the report referred to tackling pollution and filtered throughout the Council's activities; but targets lacked ambition with a less than 6% decrease in residual waste per household.
- There was no mention of Lambeth's high levels of waste incineration.
- The Council was committed to removing single-use plastics, but needed to lobby and work with local businesses beyond Lambeth's remit and prospective event organisers. The report only detailed six additional water fountains, but more would be needed to have an effect.
- It was hoped that Lambeth would be a trailblazer and set bolder targets.

Cabinet Members provided the following representations:

- The challenging Strategy was commended, with the good recycling for street properties noted; however, increasing recycling and use of fixed-charge penalty notices were needed.
- Further work with street champions and education could improve recycling rates in flats.
- It was queried if the Western Riverside Waste Authority was in synchronisation with the Strategy.
- Officers would respond to Councillor Elliott on measures to improve incineration of waste.

In response to questions, officers and Cabinet Members advised that:

- The targets were ambitious, but the difficulty of recycling from flats and estates was noted, and there were trials in place and review of other boroughs' policies. However, the Strategy included increasing recycling targets from 32% to 37% whilst other boroughs had decreased theirs.
- There were further review periods in 2022, and ongoing through 2025-2030.
- Carbon reduction formed a significant part of the Waste Strategy.
- The Council was focused on reducing single-use plastics, and had an action plan and working groups to do so, but it was noted the Council could apply further pressure on businesses. The importance of and current projects on working in partnership, in addition to the events strategy review detailing that organisers met policies, was noted.
- The Western Riverside Waste Authority was generally aligned and had state-of-the-art

recovery for materials, but was not aligned on food waste recycling, although the contract allowed for this to be taken elsewhere. There were also plans to develop the Belvedere site to handle more recycling and would provide greater alignment with the borough's proposals.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jack Hopkins, summarised the discussion as follows:

- He noted that Lambeth was one of the first boroughs to declare a climate emergency, and had been improving food waste collection, LED light installation, and other climate-friendly measures for a considerable time and had an impressive track record.
- He concluded by thanking officers and representations into the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Waste Strategy Update.

The meeting ended at 6.14 pm

CHAIR
CABINET
Monday 16 December 2019

Date of Despatch: Friday 22 November 2019

Call-in Date: Friday 29 November 2019

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