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CABINET

Monday 3 July 2017 at 5.00 pm

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Jennifer
Brathwaite
Councillor Jim Dickson

Councillor Paul McGlone
Councillor Jackie Meldrum
Councillor Lib Peck
Councillor Jane Pickard
Councillor Mohammed
Seedat
Councillor Imogen Walker
Councillor Sonia Winifred

Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Housing & Environment

Cabinet Member for Healthier and Stronger Communities
(job-share)
Deputy Leader of the Council (Investment and Partnerships)
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Families and Young People
Cabinet Member for Healthier and Stronger Communities
(job-share)
Deputy Leader of the Council (Finance & Resources)
Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture

Apologies for absence

Councillor Matthew Bennett and Councillor Jane Edbrooke

Also present (non-voting):

Councillor Donatus Anyanwu Lead Member for Community Relations and Neighbourhood
Lead for Brixton (attending Cabinet)
Councillor Mohammed Cabinet Member for Healthier and Stronger Communities
Seedat (job-share)

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held Monday 24th April 2017 be approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. HOUSING FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

The Chair and Leader of the Council, Councillor Lib Peck, introduced the urgent report and thanked all Lambeth staff who had assisted the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) with their operations since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. London Councils was now analysing the initial response of RBKC and the Chair would report any future developments to Cabinet.

The report had the goal of providing reassurance to Lambeth residents that the council was taking all necessary and appropriate steps to ensure their safety. The council had worked collaboratively with external partners and other public bodies, including the London Fire Brigade, when responding to new demands that had emerged since the fire. Further appreciation was expressed to members of the Fire Brigade and other emergency services who had worked tirelessly and shared information with officers willingly.

The Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods and Growth provided the following information when updating Cabinet:

- This was a fast moving situation and the Council was responding to new developments on a daily basis. Since the fire, officers had worked proactively to understand the implications for Lambeth.
- Lambeth Council had provided support for RBKC as well as Camden Council. It had also worked jointly with the DCLG, the London Fire Brigade and the Building Research Establishment (BRE).
- The Council owned 31 medium and high-rise residential blocks with some form of cladding and had submitted samples from each of these to the BRE for fire testing. One of the buildings, Southwyck House, had been found to have a similar type of cladding to that used on Grenfell Tower and the council had been managing this case as a matter of urgency.
- At present, the safety of people living in the 31 cladded blocks was paramount and officers had communicated with all residents. Information had also been provided advising residents how to keep themselves safe.
- All Lambeth-owned housing blocks had up-to-date Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) and additional Level 4 FRAs had been commissioned for the 31 cladded buildings.

Cabinet members then made the following comments:

- The council had collaborated well with external partners and actively engaged with local MPs, councillors and residents.
- Thanks were expressed to the London Fire Brigade local command who had supported the actions of the council.
- Lambeth officers were commended for their work ensuring the safety of local people. The organised question and answer sessions had been helpful for residents.
- Residents were thanked for cooperating fully with officers and supplying information when required. Local communities had also displayed compassion and generosity to those affected by the fire.
- It was important that Lambeth Council continued to be open and transparent with all information relating to fire safety in the borough.
- Lambeth should continue to assist other London Councils whenever possible.

- Further consideration was required of the specific risks of fire to vulnerable residents living in sheltered accommodation.
- The Government had clearly indicated that local government should make all necessary changes to prevent fires. This needed to be backed up with a clear funding commitment.
- The Grenfell Tower tragedy had demonstrated how some communities felt marginalised and left behind. The council needed to listen to local residents and take appropriate action to prevent such sentiments prevailing in Lambeth.

Officers then provided the following information in response to questions and comments from members:

- Only metal-based Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding had been tested by the BRE at this stage. Consequently all samples had failed the tests.
- ACM cladding was used on other buildings outside the housing stock and officers would eventually work to identify all affected buildings in the borough.
- The council would continue to work with the London Fire Brigade to disseminate clear guidance to residents.
- The council had limited responsibility over housing provided by Registered Providers (RPs); however it would continue to work in close partnership with all local housing associations. Of all the housing blocks in the borough managed by RPs, it appeared that just one had ACM cladding. This building did however have other fire safety mechanisms built in.
- The Government had indicated there would be resources provided to implement changes in the wake of the Grenfell fire. There was as yet no further detail about what form these would take.
- Building regulations were likely to be revised as a result of fire at Grenfell Tower, but this would take time. In the meantime the council would assess its own housing stock and make recommendations in line with advice for the London Fire Brigade.
- The Frequently Asked Questions sheet was evolving regularly as the situation developed and officers would continue to provide updated versions for residents.
- Officers were developing a strategy to communicate fire safety risks to private tenants.

The Chair reiterated thanks to all council officers and emergency services personnel that had been involved in the local response to the fire at Grenfell Tower. She then noted the importance of clear communication and engagement with residents and community leaders. The council would report any key future developments to Planning and would continue to press the Government on funding commitments.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the issues and actions to date arising from the Grenfell Tower fire.

4. NEW RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing, Councillor Jennifer Brathwaite, introduced the report and thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing for her work alongside officers in developing the new

resident engagement structures. The Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), Area Housing Forums, Tenants' Council and Leaseholders' Council had all played an important role in developing the new arrangements. Just two main issues of contention remained and therefore it was disappointing that both Tenants' Council and Leaseholders' Council had rejected the proposals. A more flexible approach was now required that enabled a greater diversity of views to feed into resident governance structures.

The Governance & Resident Engagement Manager, Mark Howarth, then provided the following information:

- Tenants' Council and Leaseholders' Council had rejected the proposed engagement structures but had acknowledged the need for change.
- The new structures would initially be piloted for a period of 12 months.
- Officers had worked to widen the engagement process and enable more to be facilitated online, for example through the Lambeth 500+.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Anna Birley, thanked residents for their comments on the proposals and confirmed they had been taken on board. The new engagement structures were more flexible and would ensure residents' interests were at the heart of the service. The focus would be on service improvement and performance monitoring.

The Vice Chair of Tenants' Council, Nicholas Greaves, then addressed Cabinet and raised the following issues:

- Tenants' Council and Leaseholders' Council had been involved in the process since November 2015 but some issues of concern remained unresolved. Tenants' Council Executive would for example be dissolved despite this having been one of the most effective mechanisms for change.
- There would no longer be separate bodies for tenants and leaseholders. This could lead to the interests of one group becoming dominated by those of the other.
- Delegating more authority to Area Managers carried significant risks.
- The emphasis on online working was welcomed but only 58% of tenants were currently online and public meetings were still necessary.
- There was a diverse mix of people engaged in the current process. It was not necessary to take replace the entire structure and risk losing the input of those currently involved.
- Despite the focus on 'Walkabout Wednesday' sessions, many residents remained unaware of them.
- Tenants must be able to raise and pursue service improvements without having to navigate complex governance structures.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Tim Briggs then raised the following points:

- The main problem with the existing structures was that none of the various residents' meetings had any significant decision making or scrutiny power. The proposed resident engagement structures also failed to devolve any authority to residents. They would also fail to facilitate any accountable decision making.

- The alternative resident engagement structures proposed by the Conservative Opposition Group were preferable. This centred on a Borough Residents' Forum which was fed into by a number of other bodies, including the Lambeth 500+ and three Housing Area Panels. Power would be partially devolved to resident representatives who would be genuinely involved in the management of their housing.
- (On behalf of the Chair of Leaseholders' Council, Shemi Leira) Leaseholders' Council and Tenants' Council had rejected these proposals along with every resident that had heard the presentation by Lambeth Council. Conversely, Leaseholders' Council and Tenants' Council had endorsed their own joint proposals, also approved by residents that had seen the presentation by Leaseholders and Tenants' Council Executive.

In response to comments made by the registered speakers, officers provided the following information:

- The new resident engagement structures would have an accountable Coordinating Committee attended by the relevant director and lead cabinet member. Area Managers would also be made more accountable to residents.
- New methods of engagement would be promoted by the council but meetings would continue to be used to interact with residents. It was important to maintain the expertise and experience of all those involved in Leaseholders' and Tenants' Council.
- Under the new arrangements, Task and Finish Groups would be set up to investigate particular issues. Residents would decide what issues needed to be scrutinised.

Cabinet Members then asked questions and made the following comments:

- The Sheltered Tenants Forum seemed to be detached from the other groups and boards in the new structure.
- The range of issues discussed by residents should go beyond repairs and performance management to include wider social issues affecting local communities.
- The Council should look to provide training for residents to assist with the understanding of complex housing issues.
- There was a growing need to introduce broadband into new housing schemes.
- It was positive that freeholders and private tenants would also be engaged within the new structure.

In response to points raised, officers provided the following information:

- Further information about the Lambeth 500+ would be published in due course but officers were optimistic that it would result in a wider range of responses with more residents contributing to debates.
- It was important to maintain a separate Sheltered Tenants Forum so that the specific issues facing disabled residents were not overshadowed by issues raised by other groups. Despite this, sheltered tenants were encouraged to engage in other parts of the revised structure.
- Training would be provided for residents.
- Many community hubs in Lambeth had internet access and facilities that allowed local residents to get online.

The Chair, Councillor Lib Peck, thanked all residents that had engaged in the process and said the Council would continue to rely on their expertise. Local tenants and residents associations were an invaluable part of local communities and the Council would continue to encourage them moving forward. Officers and councillors were thanked for their work.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the consultation undertaken since the Cabinet proposals and agree the new resident engagement structures as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. To agree the new engagement structures be piloted for 12 months and subject to a full review to be completed within 18 months, noting the Council's Constitution will need to be amended when any changes to the engagement structure are finalised.

5. APPLICATION TO DESIGNATE NORWOOD PLANNING ASSEMBLY NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM AND NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Councillor Jackie Meldrum, introduced the report and noted that the recommendations had been arrived at following much positive work from the local action groups in Norwood.

Graham Pycock, Chair of the Norwood Planning Assembly, then addressed Cabinet and made the following points:

- This would be the fourth neighbourhood area designated by Lambeth Council.
- The Norwood Plan would sit as a new tier of local planning policy and would ultimately need to be passed by a referendum. It was an opportunity to involve local people meaningfully in the planning process and engage the community.
- Many parts of the local area would benefit as a result of the designation.
- Under the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 the local council was required to set out how it would support the neighbourhood planning process.
- The Norwood Planning Assembly looked forward to working with council officers.

Cabinet members then made the following comments:

- Local action groups had engaged well with the local community up to this point. Meetings had been well attended and the process had been positive.
- The designation of the neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum was an important part of the journey towards establishing a new neighbourhood plan.
- It was important that all groups in the local area were represented on the forum and the Norwood Planning Assembly was encouraged to provide information about the make-up its members.
- The Norwood Planning Assembly should reach out to the local black and minority ethnic (BME) community and actively encourage people from under-represented groups to get involved.

The Chair thanked Mr Pycock for his contribution and stressed the importance of diverse representation on the forum.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the responses to the publication of the Norwood Planning Assembly neighbourhood forum and neighbourhood area combined application as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
2. To designate the Norwood neighbourhood area as shown in the map 'Norwood Planning Assembly boundary' at Appendix 1 for the reasons set out in the report.
3. To approve the application for designation by the Norwood Planning Assembly as the neighbourhood forum for the area recommended to be designated in recommendation (2).
4. That Cabinet instructs officers to publicise its decision in relation to recommendations (2) and (3) in accordance with the statutory requirements.

6. FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY REPORT 2017/18 TO 2019/20

The Deputy Leader of the Council (Finance & Resources), Councillor Imogen Walker, introduced the report and highlighted a number of achievements and service improvements the Council had delivered recently despite unprecedented cuts to its funding. The Council would continue to support the most vulnerable members of society, set balanced budgets, and lobby Government for additional finance to support the services that local people relied upon.

The Director of Finance, Christina Thompson, then provided the following information to the committee:

- The General Election in June had appeared to have an impact on the Government's legislative agenda. For example, the Government had seemingly backtracked on its previous commitment for local government to be fully funded by local business rates from 2019/20.
- There were increased pressure on the Council's Budget, with a further £11.5m of additional savings required.
- There would be a refreshed financial planning report brought to Cabinet in November 2017. Officers hoped for further information about the future of local government funding by this time.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care asked for clarification about last year's over-spend before highlighting the increased costs and complex needs which made the delivery of adult social care ever more difficult. The Director of Finance explained that the amount of over-spend on adult social care was calculated once balanced against the under-spend in senior management, strategic commissioning and public health. She also confirmed that there was, as yet, no formal indication that Government had reconsidered the school funding formula.

RESOLVED:

1. To re-affirm the Council's commitment to delivering the agreed revenue savings planned for 2017/18 (£16.861m) and 2018/19 to 2019/20 of (£29.756m), as set out in Table 1 of the report.

2. To approve the revised cash limit for 2017/18 to 2019/20 as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report.
3. To note the key risks set out in paragraphs 2.23 to 2.49 of the report.
4. To approve the change to the funding deficit as set out in Table 1 and the consequent amendment to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
5. To note the update on the Council adopting the arrangements for flexible use of capital receipts to support investment intended to generate savings as detailed in paragraphs 3.20-3.21 of the report.
6. To note the 2016/17 General Fund outturn of £281.814m against a budget of £281.902m in Table 3 paragraph 2.59.
7. To note the 2016/17 outturn for the HRA of a breakeven position in Table 4.
8. To note the capital investment outturn of £222m against the 2016/17 budget of £287m as detailed in paragraphs 3.1-3.2 of the report.
9. To note the proposed three year Capital Investment Programme for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20 of £294.6m as described in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.9 and summarised in Appendix 1.
10. To note the changes to the Capital Investment Programme for 2017/18 as set out in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.10.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT - Q4 2016/17

The Deputy Leader of the Council (Finance & Resources), Councillor Imogen Walker, introduced the report and noted that it very clearly set out the Council's performance and direction of travel. Whilst there were some areas of concern that required improvement, generally performance had been good overall.

The Head of Performance & Service Improvement, Tim Weetman, highlighted the performance against outcome indicators and service indicators that had worsened since the previous quarters. In some cases performance had dropped since the last quarter but was still up on the performance 12 months previously.

In response to questions from members, officers stated that the decrease in the number of children being adopted was symptomatic of national trends. Courts had become more inclined to issue Special Guardianship Orders than adoptions. Compared to other London boroughs, Lambeth had the second highest adoption placement rate.

The Chair thanked officers for their comprehensive report.

RESOLVED:

1. To endorse the conclusions and recommendations for improvement activity.

The meeting ended at 18:35.

CHAIR
CABINET
Monday 2 October 2017

Date of Despatch: Friday 7 July 2017
Call-in Date: Friday 14 July 2017
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