

COUNCIL

Monday 18 December 2017 at 5.30 pm

MINUTES

The Worshipful the Mayor in the Chair

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Councillors Councillor Danial Adilypour, Councillor Michelle Agdomar, Councillor Scott Ainslie, Councillor David Amos, Councillor Donatus Anyanwu, Councillor Liz Atkins, Councillor Mary Atkins, Councillor Matthew Bennett, Councillor Anna Birley, Councillor Jennifer Brathwaite, Councillor Linda Bray, Councillor Tim Briggs, Mayor Marcia Cameron, Councillor Rezina Chowdhury, Councillor Malcolm Clark, Councillor Kevin Craig, Councillor Edward Davie, Councillor Jim Dickson, Councillor Max Deckers Dowber, Councillor Jane Edbrooke, Councillor Paul Gadsby, Councillor Adrian Garden, Councillor Bernard Gentry, Councillor Nigel Haselden, Councillor Rachel Heywood, Councillor Robert Hill, Councillor Jack Holborn, Councillor Claire Holland, Councillor Jack Hopkins, Councillor John Kazantzis, Councillor Ben Kind, Councillor Vaila McClure, Councillor Paul McGlone, Councillor Jackie Meldrum, Councillor Diana Morris, Councillor Luke Murphy, Councillor Louise Nathanson, Councillor Matt Parr, Councillor Lib Peck, Councillor Jane Pickard, Councillor Sally Prentice, Deputy Mayor Guilherme Rosa, Councillor Neil Sabharwal, Councillor Mohammed Seedat, Councillor Joanne Simpson, Councillor Martin Tiedemann, Councillor Imogen Walker, Councillor Christopher Wellbelove, Councillor Clair Wilcox, Councillor Andrew Wilson and Councillor Sonia Winifred

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Adedamola Aminu, Councillor Alex Bigham, Councillor Marsha de Cordova, Councillor Fred Cowell, Councillor Jacqui Dyer, Councillor Florence Eshalomi, Councillor Annie Gallop, Councillor Saleha Jaffer, Councillor Jennie Mosley, Councillor Iain Simpson, Councillor Amélie Treppass and Councillor Christiana Valcarcel

ABSENT:

1. MEETING ADJOURNED

The start of the meeting was delayed due to concerns about disorder from members

of the public. When the meeting began at 17:54, the Chair warned the public that if interruptions continued, the meeting would need to be adjourned.

Due to persistent and considerable general disturbance from the public gallery, Council business could not be reasonably conducted and Mayor adjourned the meeting for a period of 10 minutes.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Mayor was of the opinion that in anticipation of further disorder, and in order for Council business to be properly considered, the public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting. The Press were permitted to remain.

3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were none.

4. REPORTS

5. LAMBETH CHILDREN'S HOMES REDRESS SCHEME - BUDGET

The Mayor stated that the Redress Scheme ('the Scheme') had been considered in depth at the preceding meeting of Cabinet. A broad discussion had taken place with contributions from councillors and from the Shirley Oaks Survivor Association (SOSA) who had set out why they felt unable to endorse the scheme. The Scheme had received positive comment from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and from the London Victims Commissioner. The report and decision under consideration by Council was solely in relation to the funding of the Scheme, and councillors were invited to provide comments.

Councillor Imogen Walker, Deputy Leader of the Council (Finance and Resources), introduced the report and noted:

- Cabinet had agreed the Redress Scheme to support the survivors of child abuse, and heard representations from survivors and opposition councillors, as well as the specifics of the Scheme and how it would operate.
- The report was asking Full Council to support the financial measures.
- It was not possible to right the wrongs of the past, but the Scheme endeavoured to make it as easy as possible for survivors to get help, initially amounting to £100m on the advice of officers and the Actuary report. This also included provision for £2m in the 2017/18 and a further £5m in 2018/19 budgets, with full repayments spread out over 50 years.
- The Council would continue to press Government to fund the Scheme directly.
- There had been a long period of historic failing from the Council, whose complexity meant that Lambeth could not rely on insurers.
- This scheme was the right approach, not forcing survivors to go through the courts incurring large legal costs or to relive the trauma of their experiences, and was financially prudent.
- What happened to children in the Council's care should not have happened and the Council would not shirk its responsibility nor obligations to those let down so badly.

Councillor Tim Briggs, Leader of the Opposition, addressed Council and advised that:

- The historic failings of Lambeth to children in its care reflected on the need for

effective opposition; and clarity, openness, and transparency.

- Labour colleagues had offered this Scheme with the best intentions, but it was not possible to truly compensate the victims.
- The funding required for the Scheme would need to be repaid to Lambeth residents over many years.
- Abuse had happened in other councils, but in Lambeth it occurred over a long time, with no information forthcoming about these failings, whether covered up or ignored.
- Labour councillors often blamed central government for their failures, but the blurred responsibility, overlapping portfolios and confused management structure were equally to blame. This also promoted waste and dysfunction, and the Conservative alternative budget would stop this, whilst providing for reform, value for money, and control of spending, which went hand in hand with transparency, otherwise it was felt these problems would repeat.
- He noted that six months of complaints from parents were lost one year ago, and represented a further risk and failing from the Council in relation to children in its care.
- All councillors were heartbroken at these heinous crimes and the Conservative Group would vote for the Redress Scheme, but urged those present not to repeat this, but to bring Lambeth into the future.

Councillor Scott Ainslie, noted:

- A redress scheme should be swift and fair, without the need for lawyers or legal fees, but this was not fit for purpose, and the survivors did not have faith in it.
- He did not have confidence that it would deliver the value for money claimed.
- The success of any redress scheme was a reduction in court costs, but many survivors would still pursue this option since the Council had refused to listen to their demands. This would increase their financial and emotional costs, costs to taxpayers and further damage the Council's reputation.
- For these reasons, he was not able to support the proposals.

Councillor Louise Nathanson, noted:

- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) would review the Council in 2019, later than expected. She asked whether this investigation would warrant further spending over the £100m set aside for the Scheme and requested that the Council properly consider this eventuality.
- While the budgeting was correct, the Council should continue working with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to try and secure funding without the full cost falling to Lambeth residents.

Councillor Andy Wilson, added:

- He acknowledged the Conservative opposition transcending party politics to stand with their colleagues, noting that this was the responsibility of all, past and present. It was regrettable that there was no national redress scheme, but it was hoped the approved Scheme would go some way towards securing justice for survivors.
- The Leader of the Council had apologised and the Council had accepted

responsibility.

- This proposal would have no exorbitant legal fees, and noted the success of the Leader to get Government support in the current political climate, especially since there was currently no national redress scheme.
- It was necessary to monitor the conditions of the capitalisation order, and ensure that the Scheme was financial adequate and working for survivors.
- There was approximately a £5m repayment each year, but this represented money spent righting the wrongs of the past, and it was sadly right to commit the future resources of residents when there was no national redress scheme and survivors had already been waiting for too long for justice.

Voting:

For	48
Against	1
Abstain	1

RESOLVED:

1. That the estimated cost of the Redress Scheme be noted.
2. That the value for money offered by the Scheme over a conventional litigation route be noted.
3. That the capitalisation direction received from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) be noted.
4. That the budget for the Redress Scheme as set out in this report. (Paragraph 2.8), be approved.

The meeting ended at 6.27 pm

MAYOR
Wednesday 24 January 2018

Date of Despatch: Wednesday 20th December
2017 Contact for Enquiries: Wayne Chandai

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