

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

HELD AT 5.35 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2021

**C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present in person:

Mayor John Biggs
Councillor Rachel Blake (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing)
Councillor Candida Ronald (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion – (Job Share post as part of Social Inclusion and Public Realm portfolio)

Members In Attendance remotely:

Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Sports)
Councillor Asma Begum (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services, Education and Equalities)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion (Job Share) – as part of wider Social Inclusion and Public Realm Portfolio)
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury (Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Highways (Job Share) – as part of wider Social Inclusion and Public Realm portfolio)
Councillor Asma Islam (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)
Councillor Sirajul Islam (Cabinet Member for Community Safety)
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman (Cabinet Member for Work, Economic Growth and Faith)

Other Councillors Present in person:

Councillor Peter Golds (Leader of the Conservative Group)

Other Councillors In Attendance remotely:

Councillor Mohammed Pappu (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Officers Present in person:

Stephen Bramah (Deputy Head of the Mayor's office)
Janet Fasan (Director of Legal & Monitoring Officer)

James Thomas	(Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services, Governance)

Officers Present in person:

Rupert Brandon	Interim Head of Housing Supply
Mohammed Chibou	(Principal Transport Planner)
Thorsten Dreyer	(Head of Intelligence and Performance)
Sharon Godman	(Director, Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Hitesh Jolapara	(Interim Divisional Director, Finance, Procurement & Audit)
Dan Jones	(Divisional Director, Public Realm)
Daniel Kerr	(Strategy and Policy Manager)
Steve Nyakatawa	(Director of Education)
Denise Radley	(Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community)
Robin Sager	(Regeneration Schemes Co-ordinator)
Mariana Schiller	(Central Area Design Guidance Project Manager, Planning and Building Control)
Stephen Shapiro	(Interim Head of Asset Management)
Joanne Starkie	(Head of Strategy and Policy - Health Adults and Communities)
Warwick Tomsett	Joint Director, Integrated Commissioning
Matthew Vaughan	(Political Advisor to the Conservative Group, Democratic Services, LPG)
Frances Winter	(Strategy & Policy Manager, Children & Culture)

AGENDA ORDER

Due to technical connection issues, the Mayor agreed to change the order of business so that Agenda Item 6.9 (Lease Renewal at Sutton Street Depot) was taken before Item 6.8 (Affordable Self-Build on Council Owned Land). For clarity, the minutes are presented in the order the items appeared on the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Kevin Bartle (Interim Corporate Director, Resources) for whom Kitesh Jolapara (Interim Director of Finance, Procurement and Audit) deputised.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

1. To approve the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 8 September 2021 and that they be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor announced:

- The Council was responding to the Afghan crisis and was supporting some Afghan families in the borough.
- There had been recent incidents of knife crime in the area and the borough was working hard with police and local partners to support residents and discourage dangerous activities. At present there did not appear to be links between the incidents which had taken place.
- He had visited a school today for a school lunch and it was great to see the kids back at school receiving a full education after the pandemic disruption.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were tabled on the following Agenda Items:

- 6.1 Understanding the Impact of Covid-19
- 6.2 Tower Hamlets Poverty Review
- 6.5 New Electric Vehicle Charging Delivery Plan
- 6.9 Lease Renewal at Sutton Street Depot

These were considered during discussion of the relevant Agenda Items.

In addition, Councillor Mohammed Pappu, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, provided an update on the work of the Committee. In particular he reported that at their meeting the previous Monday, they looked in depth at the strategic performance and budget monitoring reports. In particular the Committee were pleased to see that the Council was working to minimise the impact of the pandemic. The Committee has requested a written response to its suggested actions from its July session.

The Mayor thanked him for his presentation.

5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nil items.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Understanding the impact of Covid-19 in Tower Hamlets – follow-up

The Mayor introduced the report on understanding the impact of Covid-19 on Tower Hamlets as a borough. The report was also looking to try and anticipate future problems created by the pandemic.

The Mayor highlighted that a PowerPoint slide pack was available in the Cabinet agenda pack. It looked at many areas including; crime, domestic abuse, social care, economic issues and education.

The intention was also that the report could also help set out how the borough had changed and how the council could react to that.

The Cabinet then heard a number of contributions from Cabinet Members and others noting issues such as:

- The increasing demand for mental health services being seen by the Council and its partners.
- The impact of the pandemic recession and the changes in how people work and shop.
- The impact on levels of rough-sleeping and the support the Council can provide.
- The support the Council was providing for those who needed help due to domestic abuse.
- How the pandemic had impacted children through missing education and also to their general mental health and wellbeing.
- The significant costs being met by the Council, and the government funding that had been provided to date, but that future funding and cost levels were uncertain.
- How well the Tower Hamlets community had worked to support each other.
- The need to improve the conditions for care workers and noting their efforts during the pandemic.

The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted. Finally, the Mayor thanked Joanne Starkie (Head of Strategy and Policy – Health, Adults and Community) and other officers for their hard work in preparing this report.

The Mayor proposed the recommendation as set out. This was approved unanimously by the Cabinet Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.

6.2 LB Tower Hamlets Poverty Review

Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion (Job Share) (as part of the wider Social Inclusion and Public Realm portfolio), introduced the report. She highlighted the high level of poverty, particularly child poverty, across the country and that a number of government policies were making this worse. She stated that supporting people in poverty was of critical importance and that the borough has some of the highest levels of poverty in the country.

She took the Cabinet through the report including setting out the many ways that the Council, its partners and the wider community offered support to residents. It was essential to ensure that all residents applied for the support that was available to them.

The Mayor welcomed the report. He highlighted that he would like the Council to undertake more work on older people in poverty. He noted the suggestion that Overview and Scrutiny could have a role to play as this work developed.

Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group, highlighted the critical issue of loneliness among older people, particularly for the very old.

The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted.

The Mayor proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. These were agreed unanimously by the Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the review report and findings, and agree the recommendations set out in the report.
2. To agree an annual report to Cabinet outlining the progress made implementing the recommendations including our work with partners.
3. To note the equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report.

6.3 Strategic delivery and performance reporting – Q1 2021/22

The Mayor introduced the regular update report setting out the Council's performance against key performance measures. He highlighted the many areas of good performance but also highlighted areas where there were issues, some of which would have been at least partly caused by the Covid-19 pandemic such as around access to employment and school attendance statistics. He had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the week to explore the report in depth.

The Mayor proposed the recommendations as set out and they were agreed unanimously by those Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the strategic delivery and performance report for quarter 1 of 2021/22;
2. To note that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on service delivery in some parts of the council;
3. To note the performance of the strategic measures, including those measures where the minimum expectation has been missed.

6.4 Budget monitoring report 2021-22 as at 30th June 2021 (period 3)

Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector, introduced the regular update report setting out the Council's performance against its budget targets up to 30 June 2021.

The Council's budget was hugely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional government grants and use of reserves were covering this in the short-term but there were serious issues about how the Council manages potential ongoing expenditure once government grants ended.

Two risk areas were around issues with collecting council tax and business rates and these major concerns were being monitored. Most planned savings were on track whilst £1.2 million had been identified as not achievable. Capital budgets were being re-profiled to make sure the timetables for spending were correct.

Budgeting for the Covid impact showed expenditure of £38.1million with £39.6million of grants and use of reserves leaving a small surplus of £1.5million which was expected to be used up quickly during the current financial year.

The Mayor noted the presentation and in particular the continued pressures on local government spending from national funding decisions and the pandemic. He proposed the recommendations as set out, these were unanimously approved by the Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the Council's projected outturn position against General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget, Housing Revenue Account and earmarked reserves for 2021-22, based on forecasts as at 30th June 2021;
2. To note the reserves position of the Council is uncertain pending the closure of the statement of accounts for the period 2016 – 2021;
3. To note the Council's projected outturn position against General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programme approved budgets, based on forecasts as at 30th June 2021;
4. To note that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from this report, as set out in Section 4.

6.5 New Electric Vehicle Charging Delivery Plan 2021-2025 and funding towards new public charging points.

Councillor Kahar Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Highways (Job Share as part of the wider Social Inclusion and Public Realm Portfolio), introduced the report setting out a plan for the delivery of electric vehicle charging points.

He highlighted the growth projections for use of electric vehicles. Encouraging electric vehicles was important for the Council's air quality and climate change actions. The report set out how the Council would retain a level of control of the charging points and how the Council would be able to receive income from the use of the points.

The Mayor welcomed the report although he noted that a more active second-hand market would be important for the wider rollout of electric vehicles.

Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group, welcomed the report but highlighted the importance of making use of planning gains to fund charging points to speed up rollout.

The Mayor noted that the Council worked hard to ensure new developments included relevant measures such as charging points and cycling storage. He also highlighted the importance of encouraging changes of behaviour. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses. He then moved the recommendations as set out in the report, these were unanimously approved by the Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Electric Vehicle Charging Delivery Plan and targets for delivery by 2025.
2. To adopt a capital estimate of £329,840 to be included in the capital Programme 2021/22, and earmark £82,000 from the Transportation Service Streetscene Enhancement Revenue budget to deliver 150 Street Lighting Column Electric Vehicle Charge Points by 31 March 2022.
3. To approve £500,000 of CIL funding as a match contribution towards a bid for £1,500,000 which will be released subject to the bid being successful.
4. To approve the use of the available procurement channels to procure 150 slow charge lamp column charging points and 250 fast chargers.

6.6 AHSCS5019 Domiciliary and Personal Care Contracts Extension

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report proposing extensions to domiciliary and personal care provision contracts. She reported that 2174 service users were being supported through these contracts. Work is underway to procure the new improved contract arrangements and this extension request is to ensure that work can be completed effectively.

The Mayor welcomed the report and proposed the recommendation as set out in the report. This was unanimously approved by the Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To approve the extension of the current Adult and Children Domiciliary and Personal Care contracts for a period of 6 months.

6.7 Outcome of public representations to the statutory Notice on the proposal to amalgamate Harry Roberts Nursery and Ben Jonson Primary School

Councillor Asma Begum, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Education, Youth Services and Equalities, introduced the report on the proposed merger of Ben Jonson Primary and Harry Roberts Nursery Schools to provide an integrated 3-11 years education service. It will improve the provision to all the children and generally benefit their education.

The report set out the generally positive feedback from the consultation exercise. It will be implemented from 1 January 2022 if it is agreed.

The Mayor welcomed the report as a practical solution to challenges in nursery funding. He proposed the recommendations as set out in the report, these were unanimously agreed by the Members present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the report and its supporting documents, particularly the statutory notice (Appendix 1 to the report) and the Equality Assessment (Appendix 2 to the report), along with comments made by respondents to the Statutory Notice.
2. To agree to the amalgamation (merger) of Ben Jonson Primary and Harry Roberts Nursery schools to form an all-through 3 to 11 years' primary school, taking effect from 1st January 2022.

6.8 Affordable Self-Build on Council Owned Land – Disposal and marketing of sites

Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report. He explained that the report set out the Council's approach to self-build projects and proposed some small disposals of land to support this, in particular two sites. Two further sites were noted for potential future disposal and there may be other later opportunities.

S106 agreements restrict use of the site to self-build and also provide rules about future sale of the properties built.

The Mayor welcomed the report, thanked officers for their work and proposed the recommendations set out in the report. These were unanimously agreed by the Members present, and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To approve disposal of Christian Street and Lark Row to preferred bidders selected by assessment panel, on a 250-year lease in accordance with the previously approved Self-Build Policy and Guidance.
2. To approve marketing and disposal of Pigott Street and Smythe Street under the Self-Build Programme, in accordance with the process undertaken for Christian Street and Lark Row.
3. To note that more sites will be added to the Self-Build Programme. Should suitable sites be identified, Cabinet will be asked to approve the inclusion of these into the programme.
4. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place to market and dispose of any future sites added to the Self-Build programme in line with the process set out in this report once Cabinet has approved inclusion of any site into the Self-Build Programme.

6.9 Lease Renewal at Sutton Street Depot, 6 Sutton Street, London, E1 0AY

Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion (Job Share as part of wider Social Inclusion and Public Realm Portfolio), introduced the report proposing a lease renewal at Sutton Street Depot. The longer term aim was to develop the site and so it was proposed for the short term to rent out use of the site. The new lease required the leaseholder to undertake improvement works on the building.

Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group, highlighted that the site had been unused for a number of years and it was important to ensure the site could be secured from the current tenant at the point of redevelopment.

Officers confirmed that the tenant will not have rights to the property at the point where the Council wishes to reclaim the site.

The Mayor welcomed the report but also highlighted that he was looking forward to the opportunities that would arise once the site was ready for redevelopment. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses. Finally, he noted that the proper processes had been undertaken in preparing the proposals listed in the report and he stated that he welcomed any scrutiny on this matter. He proposed the recommendations as set out in the report and these were unanimously approved by those present and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To grant a new 3-year lease, excluding security of tenure, to the existing occupier of 6 Sutton Street at a rent of £125,000 per annum, subject to an initial 12 month rent free period.
2. To approve the repayment of £80,000 in arrears by virtue of an up-front payment of £40,000 with the balance payable after 3 months after completion of the lease.
3. To agree a Schedule of Works with the tenant to be appended to the lease and to be completed within 6-months of completion. These works are appended at Appendix 1 to the report.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Nil items.

9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business

Nil items.

10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nil items.

11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items.

12. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

MAYOR JOHN BIGGS