

# LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CABINET

Tuesday 21 September 2004

7.30 p.m-8.45 p.m

### PRESENT:

|        |                           |                                                                     |
|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair: | Councillor Clyde Loakes   | Council Leader                                                      |
|        | Councillor Keith Rayner   | Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder,<br>Corporate Services           |
|        | Councillor Liaquat Ali    | Portfolio Holder, Community<br>Engagement and Equalities            |
|        | Councillor David Blunt    | Portfolio Holder, Environment                                       |
|        | Councillor Jenny Gray     | Portfolio Holder, Strategic Innovation,<br>Performance and Learning |
|        | Councillor Loretta Hodges | Portfolio Holder, Housing                                           |
|        | Councillor Chris Robbins  | Portfolio Holder, Culture, Learning<br>and Leisure.                 |
|        | Councillor Barry Smith    | Portfolio Holder, Community Safety<br>and Protection                |
|        | Councillor Graham Smith   | Portfolio Holder, Health and Social<br>Care                         |
|        | Councillor Simon Wright   | Portfolio Holder, Regeneration                                      |

### 41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Liaquat Ali and from Jan Wickham, Interim Deputy Chief Executive.

### 42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 43 MINUTES OF CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2004 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Special Cabinet meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2004 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

#### **44 REFERENCES FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

##### **a) LEYTONSTONE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Mr Hopson addressed Cabinet on behalf of Bushwood Area Residents' Association (BARA) and expressed the opposition of his organisation to the suggestion of a return to two-way traffic at the northern end of the High Road.

Cllr Matharoo, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission presented the Commission's recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised Cabinet of a number of schemes currently in the pipeline relating to traffic management in this area and a that a review will be undertaken during 2005 when the effects of those schemes can be assessed.

##### **CABINET DECISION**

To note that the Traffic Management arrangements in Leytonstone will be reviewed in 2005.

##### **b) FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES IN WALTHAM FOREST**

Cllr Bean, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Social Services Panel addressed the meeting.

Cabinet noted additional funding has already been made available to increase payments to Foster Carers and Kinship Carers.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care informed Cabinet that carers would be notified that week of the significant allowance increases.

Cabinet also heard that an event is planned for Gilwell Park on 10 October for looked after children. The Leader asked that all Councillors be informed in view of their shared Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

##### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted the actions already taken, and that the outcome of the Strategic Review of Children's Placements is to be presented to Cabinet in November 2004.

#### **45 FORWARD PLAN**

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004 - 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

#### **46 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT – 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 2004/05**

This report set out the first quarter of performance management data for the financial year 2004/05.

The following achievements were highlighted by Members in particular:

- The improvement in the number of women and minority ethnic employees in the top 5% of earners.
- That 100% of care leavers are engaged in education, training or employment on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The improved performance in visitor numbers to libraries in the Borough.
- No schools in the Borough are currently subject to special measures.
- GCSE results in the Borough have improved for the second year running.

The Leader also drew attention to the performance in respect of excluded pupils who have at least 20 hours of tuition per week, and commented that although the figure has improved, further progress needs to be made.

#### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted the report.

#### **47 ICT STRATEGY**

The report outlined a number of issues concerning the Council's ICT provision, and the work underway to address these issues and to create an ICT infrastructure that will meet the Council's business needs.

#### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted the proposed ICT strategy.

#### **48 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - MONTH 5 (AUGUST)**

Cabinet received a report on expenditure up to the end of August. Members noted in particular the success in reducing the costs of externally provided placements in the Children's and Families Service.

#### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted this report.

#### **49 IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT**

The report gave an overview of progress against Key Improvement priorities.

The Leader reported on the recent IDeA Peer Review exercise which was felt to have been helpful to the Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised that the Key Milestone to introduce a longer sweeping day in order to improve street cleansing has now been achieved.

## **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted the report.

### **50 PROPERTY PERFORMANCE**

The report outlined the performance of the Council's Corporate Portfolio over the financial year 2003/04, and set out Corporate and Service property targets for 2004/05.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services in particular referred to the Council's success in reducing energy costs and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

#### **Reason For Decision**

The implementation of the Corporate Asset Management Plan is key to the Council's change programme set out in the Improvement Plan.

## **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted the 2004/2005 property performance targets and action to support their achievement.

### **51 THE NORTH LONDON WASTE STRATEGY**

The London Boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest and the North London Waste Authority have worked in partnership to develop a North London Joint Waste Strategy. Members noted in particular the steps being taken to increase the amount of material recycled.

#### **Reason For Decision**

The strategy aims to deliver more sustainable waste management arrangements for North London.

## **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet agreed to adopt 'The North London Joint Waste Strategy 2003 – 2020'.

### **52 WALTHAM FOREST DIRECT SHOP PILOT REVIEW**

Cabinet was informed that the new Waltham Forest Direct (WFD) shop in Leyton, which opened in May 2004, has been received with compliments and praise for its design and practicality from customers and other organisations. The target date for building completions and opening to the public was met and the target of delivering 50% of all Council Services in the first quarter has been exceeded. The targets for meeting customer needs and ensuring customer satisfaction have also been met.

#### **Reason For Decision**

Improving services to customers is a key objective of the Council and as such is included in its Improvement Plan.

## **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted:

- a) the successful implementation of WFD shop at Leyton;
- b) the intention to provide an integrated customer service through joint service centres as they are developed and/or new and refurbished libraries.

Cabinet agreed:

- a) the implementation of three more outlets across the borough; these will be sited within the locations of Walthamstow, Leytonstone and Chingford as agreed by Cabinet in October 2003.
- b) the new design of the WFD Shop, in accordance with the Leyton pilot, as basis for all of the future outlets within the borough.
- c) the proposed location of the Walthamstow outlet is at 10 Central Parade as outlined in the report.
- d) an options appraisal being undertaken into the location of a possible Joint Service Centre in the Chingford area, of which, a WFD shop will be an integral part.
- e) the proposal to progress the WFD outlet at the Church Lane site in Leytonstone, as part of the library development.

## **53 ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY - HQ OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

The report made recommendations about the future location of Council services and the sites that should be disposed of as surplus to the Council's needs.

Cllr Matharoo, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, presented to Cabinet the recommendations of the Commission.

In response, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services gave assurances that:

- a) Medium term risk assessment has been built into the Review and is continuing;
- b) Health and Safety aspects of introducing home working for staff would be fully considered;
- c) A revised timetable will be produced relating to the Accommodation Strategy;
- d) Human resource implications of the Accommodation Strategy will be considered, in particular with regard to changing people's working conditions.

Cllr Matharoo also referred to a letter from UNISON, of which he had received a copy. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services had not received a copy of the letter, but undertook to ensure that a reply is sent to UNISON.

### **Reason For Decision**

The office accommodation strategy is the catalyst to deliver the Council's ambitious customer care vision and objectives – to provide top quality customer care at every point of contact with the Council.

### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet agreed:

- (a) That Option 4, the current option, be progressed as it releases additional resources and reduces the number of offices used in the shortest timescale
- (b) The Alternative Working Policy attached at Appendix 2 to the report
- (c) That in future accommodation will not be provided for services subject to outsourcing and/or partnership arrangements, other than in exceptional circumstances agreed with Members
- (d) That it is no longer Council policy to operate one desk per person standard of office accommodation
- (e) To rename 221 Hoe Street as Juniper House.

Cabinet noted:

- (a) The financial profile attached at Appendix 3, and
- (b) The programme of moves set out in Appendix 4.

## **54 REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE - EFFICIENCY REVIEW**

An efficiency had been undertaken to determine the resource needs of the Revenues and Benefits Service, to streamline processes and procedures and to identify opportunities for joint working in order to improve services to customers. The Report outlined the conclusions of the Review and made recommendations on the way forward.

A letter from UNISON on this report was circulated at the meeting and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services gave an assurance that a reply would be sent.

The Deputy Leader further advised Cabinet that he would be undertaking more detailed monitoring of performance management within the service and budgetary control; and asked that Cabinet did not agree to recommendation 2.1.2 in the report.

With regard to the introduction of arrangements for payment by credit card for Council Tax and Business Rates, Cabinet indicated that charges for that form of payment should not be borne by the cardholder.

### **Reasons For Decision**

Revenues and Benefits is a key front line service that is important for both revenue generation and for fulfilling the Council's social inclusion objectives.

### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet noted:

- (a) the recommendations of the review and actions being taken, and
- (b) the budgetary issues facing the service

Cabinet agreed:

That the Revenues Service begin offering a credit card payment option for Council tax and Business Rates as soon as possible, but that the credit charge should not be borne by the cardholder.

## **55 REDUCTION IN TRADING DAYS FOR STREET TRADING PURPOSES IN HIGH STREET E17**

The report informed Cabinet of the consultation results of the proposal to close Walthamstow Market on Mondays with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. The final decision on the variation of the standard conditions attached to street trading licenses is a matter for full Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment confirmed that arrangements will be made for the Market area to be thoroughly cleaned on Mondays when the Market is closed.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration reaffirmed the Council's commitment to retaining the Market in Walthamstow Town Centre.

### **Reason For Decision**

The High Street Market is a major element of the regeneration aspirations of the Council. One of the number of measures proposed to improve the Market is to cease trading on one weekday. It is considered that this will improve trading on the remaining days, and result in other benefits.

### **CABINET DECISION**

Cabinet agreed to recommend Full Council to approve amending the standard conditions attached to street trading licences, namely to stop street trading on Mondays in High St E17 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

## 56 REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Cabinet received reports from the following Portfolio Holders:

- a) Leader's report
- b) Deputy Leader and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder report
- c) Community Engagement and Equalities Portfolio Holder report
- d) Environment Portfolio Holder report
- e) Strategic Innovation, Performance and Learning Portfolio Holder report
- f) Housing Portfolio Holder report
- g) Culture, Learning and Leisure Portfolio Holder report
- h) Community Safety and Protection Portfolio Holder report
- i) Health and Social Care Portfolio Holder report
- j) Regeneration Portfolio Holder report

The Leader referred to the recent death of former Councillor John Walsh. Members observed a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of Mr Walsh.

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(Chair)

Minutes Published: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004