

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CABINET

Tuesday, 22 June 2004

7.30pm to 8.30pm

PRESENT:

Chair: Councillor Clyde Loakes

Council Leader

Councillor Keith Rayner	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder, Corporate Services
Councillor David Blunt	Portfolio Holder, Environment
Councillor Jenny Gray	Portfolio Holder, Strategic Innovation, Performance and Learning
Councillor Loretta Hodges	Portfolio Holder, Housing
Councillor Chris Robbins	Portfolio Holder, Culture, Learning and Leisure
Councillor Barry Smith	Portfolio Holder, Community Safety
Councillor Graham Smith	Portfolio Holder, Health and Social Care
Councillor Simon Wright	Portfolio Holder, Regeneration

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received from Councillor Ali, Community Engagement and Equalities Portfolio Holder.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Smith and Councillor J Gray each declared an interest in relation to paragraph 2.3 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2004/05 report as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

3. MINUTES OF CABINET

The minutes of the Cabinet on 19 May 2004 were agreed.

4. CALL - IN REQUESTS

No items had been called in for pre-decision scrutiny.

5. FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan for the period June to September 2004.

6. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Learning and Leisure informed that Cabinet that there will be an Ofsted Inspection of the Education Service next spring, and that a Lottery Fund grant of £270,000.00 has been received for the extension of schools.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety noted that there has been a huge improvement in the crime and disorder partnership.

The Leader informed the Cabinet that the Government Monitoring report had concluded that the Council had been too self-critical in its recent self assessment and that the picture was encouraging. Positive comments had been made about the efforts of Cabinet and Management Board to address the borough's problem areas.

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet noted the report.

7. MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT

The Head of Strategic Finance informed the Cabinet that it was the 3rd year in a row that all services had come in on or under budget. This was a significant achievement, in particular Social Services which had been in difficulty earlier in the year. He noted also that officers were working hard to improve performance in relation to collection of the Council Tax.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care reported that the Executive Director for Social Services and he were continuing to monitor closely the Social Services' budget.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

It is best practice for Members to monitor the Council's budget, focusing on high risk areas on an exception basis.

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet noted the report.

8. VISION AND VALUES FOR WALTHAM FOREST

The Chief Executive commented on the high level of staff participation. The next step will be to launch the initiative with staff and the Vision and Values 2012 will

then be formally launched within the borough with the Arts Exhibition.

With regard to local employment opportunities, particularly for young people, Councillor Robbins, the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Learning and Leisure reported on an initiative being discussed concerning local construction projects.

Councillor B. Smith the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety commented with regard to the vision for community safety that he wanted Waltham Forest to be the borough with the most active involvement by citizens in the prevention of crime. It was agreed that this sentiment be incorporated into the vision statement.

REASON FOR DECISION

The adoption of the Vision and Values is a corporate issue and a key strategic priority for the Council.

CABINET DECISION

- (a) Subject to the above amendment relating to Community Safety, to adopt the Vision for Waltham Forest 2012, with the concept of an Annual Review;
- (b) To adopt the Values matrix and Waltham Forest Council Culture Statement.

9. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2004/05

The Head of Strategic Finance informed the Cabinet that the proposed financial strategy would require the Council to identify £5-6 million of revenue savings per year for the next three years, which would involve making difficult decisions. It also proposed a well-timed disposal of surplus assets to finance improvements in service infrastructure.

The Leader noted that one key area where savings should be made is to increase recycling in the borough as waste removal costs will increase next year. Another pressure is the need to increase the Employer's contributions to the Pension Scheme.

REASON FOR DECISION

Agreement of a financial strategy will enable the Council to take the necessary action at an early stage in order to achieve its targets.

CABINET DECISION

- (a) To recommend Council to agree the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2004/08 as set out in appendix B of the report which will involve drawing up a disposal plan for surplus property;

- (b) To recommend to Council that the Prudential Indicators agreed on 26 February 2004 for the next three financial years are amended to take account Building Schools for the Future, replacing further leasing at a cost of £2m and increased housing capital spending funded by larger receipts than anticipated;
- (c) To note that the Council's employer's pension contributions are likely to rise by around 2% per annum in each of the next 3 years and to agree the draft response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in respect of proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, as set out in appendix C of the report;
- (d) To note and confirm the Council's stance in respect of employees between the ages of 50 and 60 – that the conditions under which an election (to retire early) will be accepted are that the retirement will be in the best interests of the Council;
- (e) To agree the suggested target budget reductions of £7 million for 2005/06 and the areas for detailed work on savings proposals during the summer as set out in appendix D of the report.

10. CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care referred to the role of Members in promoting the borough and communicating with residents.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration noted that it is important for the Council to ensure that good use is made of E-Governance and E-Communication. The Leader referred to the ALG project to promote Councillors having their own web sites to aid communication with the public.

REASON FOR DECISION

Implementation of a new corporate communications strategy is a requirement under the Council's Improvement Plan. The strategy is a corporate matter with significant implications for the way the Council communicates with all its stakeholders.

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet agreed the corporate communications strategy.

11 LOCAL AUTHORITY GOLD RESOLUTION

It was recommended that Cabinet agree the co-ordination of London local authorities' emergency powers in the event of a catastrophic event. This involves a 'Gold' Chief Executive being vested to act on behalf of all London local authorities.

REASON FOR DECISION

Although, the Council's constitution provides the Chief Executive with delegated authority to exercise Council's powers in response to an emergency or disaster in the Borough, only the Council may delegate these functions to another authority, and the 'Gold' Chief Executive.

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet agreed the Local Authority Gold Resolution proposed by the Association of London Government and supported by the Minister for Local Government as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

12 CENTRAL ARTS PROJECT - PROGRESS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Cabinet deferred this report to its October meeting so that full consultation and investigation into available funds can be undertaken.

13 WASTE MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Environment informed the Cabinet of improvements in Waste Management over the past few months. It was noted that by not outsourcing street cleansing there is now £500,000 which has been allocated to increasing the number of front line staff and increasing recycling measures.

The Leader impressed upon the Cabinet that the general cleanliness of the borough was key to public perception of the Council.

The Executive Director of Environmental Services informed the Cabinet that ECT Recycling achieved a 50% recycling rate in the first 2 weeks of operation.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety noted that graffiti and fly posting should also be targeted in the process of improving the appearance of the borough.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The refuse, street cleansing and recycling services are key functions of the Council and their improvement is central to the Council's overall Improvement Plan.

The Waste Management Improvement Plan proposals detailed how the additional funding of £500k previously approved will be used.

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet agreed the Improvement Plan proposals contained in Appendices 1 to 4 and the funding implications of these proposals that are outlined in section 7.1 of the report. The £500k refuse collection and street cleansing contingency estimate, agreed at the Cabinet meeting of the 20th January 2004, will be moved into the Street Services budget for 2004/05.

14. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Cabinet received reports from the following Portfolio Holders:

- (a) Deputy Leader and Lead member for Corporate Services
- (b) Community Safety
- (c) Housing
- (d) Culture, Learning and Leisure
- (e) Regeneration
- (f) Health and Social Care
- (g) Leader

Further to his report, the Leader expressed thanks to former Cabinet members for all their hard work during 2003/04.

Congratulations were extended to Councillor Nasim for being awarded an MBE in the Queens Birthday Honours for his work in the community and to Hasim Choudhury, Head Teacher of Edinburgh Primary School who recently received an OBE.

Congratulations were also extended to those who worked on the opening of the new bus station at Walthamstow Central, in particular thanks to Tony Barrett, the Head of Building Services, for his efforts in procurement.

The leader expressed his thanks to David Boote, the Waltham Forest Civic Society and the Agenda 21 Open Spaces Group; all 'unsung heroes' involved in the Leyton Loop Walk.

15. OTHER BUSINESS – COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Leader called for volunteers to represent the Cabinet on each of the Community Councils. The following appointments were agreed:

North Chingford - Councillor C. Loakes
West Walthamstow – Councillor C Robbins
South Chingford – Councillor B. Smith
Leytonstone – Councillor D. Blunt
Leyton and Whips Cross – Councillor S. Wright
Walthamstow and Lea Bridge – Councillor K. Rayner

Reserves – Councillors G. Smith, L. Ali and J Gray

Requests were made for the Community Council meetings not to be scheduled on the same dates as Top Team Briefings.

16. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE PRESS AND PUBLIC

CABINET DECISION

To resolve to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during the consideration of the report concerning the Higham Hill Services Centre Options Appraisal / Feasibility Study, in accordance with Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 and 9 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

17. HIGHAM HILL SERVICES CENTRE - OPTIONS APPRAISAL / FEASIBILITY STUDY

With regard to the proposed sale of McEntee Lodge and Unity Hall, the Portfolio Holder for Housing commented that there are a number of user groups currently using the facilities. She expressed the hope that if sales did proceed, users would be able to continue their operations in the new Joint Services Centre, at the same subsidised rent currently charged.

Cabinet noted that further consultation is required, in particular with the users of McEntee Lodge and Unity Hall, prior to a final decision in respect of those properties.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The proposal for a Joint Service Centre would help to 'join-up' Council and other local organisations' services, and make them more accessible.

DECISION

- a. To approve the proposal to develop a new Joint Services Centre (JSC) on the Essex Hall/Billet Road site.
- b. To approve the new build development is procured as part of the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) initiative and, if necessary, agree that the Strategic partnering Agreement with LIFT includes the right for the Council and LIFT Company to enter into the joint working agreement as proposed in this report.
- c. To approve the properties listed below being declared as surplus to the Council's requirements and sold in accordance with the Council's Property Procedure Rule (subject to further consultation with users in respect of McEntee Lodge and Unity Hall):

- Half an acre of the Essex Hall/Billet Road site (as shown by bold black line on scoping drawing Appendix 2 to the report).
 - The Amber House site
 - The Unity Hall site and
 - The McEntee Lodge site.
- d. To agree that if the disposals are progressed, the capital receipts are ring fenced to the JSC build costs.

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Chair

Minutes Published: 30 June 2004
Call-in Date: 7 July 2004