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MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 17 January 2024 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Tauseef Anwar (Chair), Yemisi Anifowose, Atkinson, Chris Barnham, Paul Bell, Peter Bernards, Chris Best, Andre Bourne, Bill Brown, Juliet Campbell, Suzannah Clarke, Will Cooper, Liam Curran, Laura Cunningham, Brenda Dacres, Amanda De Ryk, Sian Eiles, Ese Erheriene, Billy Harding, Coral Howard, Edison Huynh, Mark Ingleby, Mark Jackson, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Eva Kestner, Louise Krupski, Jack Lavery, Aisha Malik-Smith, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, John Muldoon, Oana Olaru, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, Kim Powell, James Rathbone, James Royston, Sakina Sheikh, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski, Rudi Schmidt, Aliya Sheikh, Liam Shrivastava, Hau-Yu Tam, James-J Walsh, Luke Warner, Carol Webley-Brown and Susan Wise

ALSO PRESENT: Jennifer Daothong, Jeremy Chambers and Emma Campbell Smith

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Natasha Burgess, Councillor Ayesha Lahai-Taylor and Councillor Rosie Parry

1. Minutes

MOVED by the Speaker, SECONDED by the Deputy Speaker and RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 November be agreed as a true record.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Young Mayor's Budget

The Speaker welcomed the Young Mayor, Gentai Gen-One, and his Advisors Llywella Paige-Hoban, Morgan Seward, Micah Spence, Kehinde Onasanya, Marvin Gordon, Gideon Ofori-Owusu and Jacob Nick.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People addressed the Council and highlighted the success of Lewisham's Young Mayor's programme, which was in its 18th year.

The Young Mayor and Advisors gave a presentation. The slides are appended to the minutes.

4. Announcements or Communications

There were 4 announcements.

The Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor) Cllr Dacres announced that the former Mayor, Damien Egan had resigned on 10 January following his selection by the Labour Party to fight the Kingswood byelection in Bristol. She shared some of the highlights of his 14 years at Lewisham, first as a councillor and later as Mayor.

On behalf of the borough, the Deputy Mayor thanked the former Mayor (who was not present at the meeting) and wished him every success in the Kingswood byelection. She informed the council that donations would continue to be made to the Lewisham Foodbank, the Mayor's Charity for 23/24, until the mayoral byelection.

The second announcement concerned the 43rd anniversary of the New Cross fire. The Deputy Mayor informed the Council that a memorial service for the 14 young people who perished in the fire would take place at St Andrew's Church in Brockley at 10:30am on 18 January 2024. The service would be live streamed.

Cllr Cooper, Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Homelessness, announced an additional landlord licensing scheme designed to empower the council to tackle landlords that do not meet their responsibilities, and to speed up enforcement action.

The Speaker announced that 27 January would be Holocaust Memorial Day and the Council stood to observe a minute's silence.

5. Petitions

None.

6. Public Questions

Supplementary questions were asked and answered as follows (paraphrased):

Supplementary question to PQ32 to Cllr Campbell

The Cabinet Member declined to answer as it did not arise from the original question.

Supplementary question to PQ33 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

Q: Will you to commit to giving a proper answer rather than a blanket answer to the public questions relating to the conflict in Gaza, and explain why didn't this time?

A: The fairest way to respond to all questioners asking about the same subject was to provide the same answer. I want the government to find a peaceful solution. The role of the council was to ensure that residents in the borough, who were affected by conflict, were supported.

Supplementary question to PQ34 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

Q: Does the deputy mayor believe that Israel's acts are self defence?

A: We are all horrified by the killings and hope for a sustained ceasefire, but our role is to support local residents. It is important to distinguish between the government's role and what the council can do.

Supplementary question to PQ35 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

Q: Will the council take political leadership to call for a ceasefire now?

A: We all horrified and I, like many others, want the government to work towards a sustained ceasefire.

Supplementary question to PQ36 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

Q: How will the council ensure local pension funds aren't supporting Israeli occupation.

A: I would urge you to consider what the role of the council is and what the role of central government is, and push for a Labour government as soon as possible.

Supplementary question to PQ37 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

Q: When will the council make a statement in support of ceasefire and divest pension funds in cos supporting war crimes.

A: Reiterated the points previously made.

Supplementary question to PQ39 to the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor)

The Deputy Mayor declined to answer as it did not arise from the original question.

Supplementary question to PQ40 to Cllr Campbell

The Cabinet Member declined to answer as it did not arise from the original question.

Supplementary question to PQ42 to Cllr Campbell

The Cabinet Member declined to answer as it did not arise from the original question.

Supplementary question to PQ41 to Cllr Campbell

The question was disallowed as it did not arise from the original question.

This item was disrupted due to a protest in the public gallery. The Speaker repeatedly asked protesters to keep the noise down to enable the meeting to go ahead.

Cllr Barnham, having sought advice from the Monitoring Officer, MOVED a motion without notice in accordance with [relevant section] of the constitution, Cllr Campbell SECONDED and it was RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 20:37. Councillors left the Chamber.

Once the public gallery had been cleared, Councillors returned to the Chamber and the Speaker resumed the meeting at 20:50.

7. Member Questions

8. Council Tax Base Report 2024/25

MOVED by Cllr De Ryk, SECONDED by Cllr Rathbone and RESOLVED that the Council:

1. note the Council Tax Base calculation for 2024/25, as set out in the annual Council Tax Base government return, attached at Appendix A;
2. agree a Council Tax Base of 90,414.0 Band D equivalent properties for 2024/25;
3. agree a budgeted Council Tax collection rate of 95.0%;
4. agree no changes be made to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25, that eligible claimants make a minimum contribution of 25% towards their council tax;
5. agree the continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount of 100% for care leavers up to the age of 25, as set out in section five of this report;
6. agree that the existing policy of a 0% discount for second homes be continued for 2024/25, as set out in section five of this report;
7. agree that from 2025/26 a 100% premium be applied to second homes, as set out in section five of this report;
8. agree that the existing policy of a 0% discount for empty homes Class A (an empty property undergoing structural alteration or major repair to make it habitable) be continued, as set out in section five of this report;
9. agree that the existing policy of a 0% discount applied immediately for empty homes – Class C (a substantially empty and unfurnished property) be continued, as set out in section five of this report;
10. agree that the existing Long Term Empty Property homes premium of: 100% for properties empty between two and five years, 200% for those empty for over five years, and 300% for properties that remain empty for 10 years or more continues, as set out in section five of this report;
11. agree that as per Clause 76(1) of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill 2022-23, from the 1 April 2025, the definition of a Long Term Empty Property home be amended to a dwelling which has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of one year (currently two years), as set out in section five of this report;
12. agree that from 1 April 2025 the 100% premium applied to Long Term Empty Property be applied to properties which have remained empty for at least one year, as set out in section five of this report;
13. agree the continuation of the existing policy of a 25% 'sanctuary' discount to ensure residents eligible for a single person discount are not financially worse off as a result of housing a refugee, as set out in section five of this report;
14. agree the continuation of the discretionary War Disablement Pensions and War Widow Pensions scheme discount as set out in section five of this report;
15. note the proposed 2024/25 National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) estimated net yield of £58m, based on current information available.
16. agree to delegate the approval of the final 2024/25 NNDR1 form to the Acting Executive Director for Corporate Resources for submission by the deadline of 31 January 2024.

9. Review of the Statutory Statement of Principles for Gambling

MOVED by Cllr Powell, SECONDED by Cllr Wise and RESOLVED that the draft Statement of Principles for Gambling for 2023-2026 at Appendix 1 be approved and published with immediate effect.

10. Scrutiny Meeting Date Change

Cllr Schmidt amended the recommendations that were set out in the published papers.

It was then MOVED by Cllr Schmidt, SECONDED by Cllr Erheriene and RESOLVED that:

- There will not be an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2024
- The meeting of the Public Accounts Select Committee scheduled for 23 January 2024 will move to 29 January 2024.
- The business for the OSC meeting on 23 January will be merged into the PASC agenda for consideration on 29 January.
- The meeting of Sustainable Development Select Committee scheduled for 29 February 2024 will move to 13 March 2024.

11. Appointment of a Trustee to Deptford St Paul Charity

MOVED by the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor) Cllr Dacres, SECONDED by Cllr Atkinson and RESOLVED to appoint Josie Ashdown as a nominative trustee to the Deptford St Paul Charity, with immediate effect.

12. Motions

None

13. Appointment of the Chief Executive

The Acting Chief Executive, Jennifer Daothong, left the Chamber.

The Speaker informed the Council that this item appeared on a supplementary agenda which had been published a day late because the report was with the Monitoring Officer at the time of publication.

In accordance with S100B Local Government Act 1972, the Speaker declared that, in his opinion, the item of business was urgent and had to be decided at this meeting.

It was MOVED by the Deputy Mayor (Acting as Mayor) Cllr Dacres, SECONDED by Cllr Schmidt and RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Jennifer Daothong, Acting Chief Executive as Chief Executive, including designation as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer, and Electoral Registration Officer.