

# MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 28 February 2024 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Tauseef Anwar (Chair), Yemisi Anifowose, Dawn Atkinson, Chris Barnham, Paul Bell, Chris Best, Andre Bourne, Bill Brown, Suzannah Clarke, Will Cooper, Liam Curran, Laura Cunningham, Brenda Dacres, Sophie Davis, Amanda De Ryk, Sian Eiles, Ese Erheriene, Billy Harding, Edison Huynh, Coral Howard, Mark Ingleby, Mark Jackson, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Eva Kestner, Louise Krupski, Jack Lavery, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, John Muldoon, Oana Olaru, Rachel Onikosi, Rosie Parry, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, Kim Powell, James Rathbone, 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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Bernards, Councillor Natasha Burgess, Councillor Juliet Campbell, Councillor Ayesha Lahai-Taylor, Councillor Aisha Malik-Smith and Councillor James Royston.

## 1. Minutes

The Speaker of the Council MOVED, the Deputy Speaker SECONDED and it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 January 2024 be confirmed and signed as a true and accurate record.

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## 2. Declaration of Interests

None.

## 3. Announcements or Communications

The Speaker said that the London Mayor's Association required him to record in the minutes that his consort for 2020-21 was Tayyiba Zia and for 2021-22 it was Ismaeel Tauseef.

## 4. Petitions

There were no petitions.

## 5. Public Questions

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

### **Supplementary question to PQ3 to Deputy Mayor Dacres (Acting as Mayor)**

Q: Does Lewisham Council have humanity?

A: Within all of us we have humanity.

**Supplementary question to PQ20 Councillor Schmidt**

Q: Do you think that overview and scrutiny has a role in ensuring that consultation for CPZs are run in an ethical and competent manner?

A: Yes consultations should be done in an ethical manner. At the beginning of the municipal year, chairs of scrutiny committees decide on their work programmes. If they believe that consultation should be part of the work programmes, they will bring them to the appropriate committee.

**Supplementary question to PQ21 to Councillor Cooper.**

Q: What does mobilising a stock condition survey mean? Earlier this year, the Council announced an increase to the hosing repair budget specifically for damp/mould related problems. How much of that has been spent and on what.

A: Mobilising stock condition survey is when officers go into properties and decide whether they meet the decent homes standard. In this financial year, Lewisham dealt with 292 damp and mould cases at a cost of £421k. More financial information would be provided when the new repairs system and the computer system across the housing department was up and running.

**Supplementary question to PQ36 to Councillor Barnham.**

Q: Should this Council be lobbying the government for more support for schools, particularly in deprived areas? Allowing schools to run slightly smaller class sizes until numbers pick up again or challenging the pupil premium equation.

A: I am proud of the achievements of Lewisham Schools, 99% are good or outstanding. Falling rolls and financial constraints that come with it, is a challenge to all schools. Lewisham lobby government about school funding. Last month London Councils published a report on falling roles in London with specific recommendations for central government and local authorities. This included recommendations for more flexible funding from the DfE to help protect London schools in the future, to ensure that academies were part of local planning to better manage pressure and to work with local authorities to ensure that children with special educational needs are properly supported in mainstream education. This work would continue. Lewisham understands the pressure faced by schools and intended to support them in every way possible.

**Supplementary question to PQ37 to Deputy Mayor Dacres (Acting as Mayor)**

Q: Will the Mayor provide details of what efforts Lewisham have undertaken in support of Palestinian residents, including discussions on the importance of the Council calling for full ceasefire and divesting from companies complicit with genocide.

A: The website has been updated so that help and support can be offered to anyone, particularly from that region, who have been affected by the conflict and hate crimes. I want to ensure that Lewisham remains a borough that the

community can reach out to. I am proud that Lewisham is a borough of culture and welcomes those who are fleeing atrocities.

**Supplementary question to 43 to Deputy Mayor Dacres (Acting as Mayor)**

Q: Will this Council acknowledge that there are war crimes and call for a full ceasefire as demanded by 1000 Lewisham residents.

A: We are in a politically restricted period, so I cannot answer politically. However, I refer you back to my previous response and the one at the January Council meeting.

**Supplementary question to PQ1 to Councillor Walsh.**

Q: The money allocated to LGBT+ community activities was low. What did the cabinet member intend to do about it?

A: I am proud that this Council has opened an LGBT cultural centre in Deptford. Other LGBT spaces have opened across the borough over the last 3 years. Hate crime against LGBT people is rising. As an authority, we will do all we can. I am an LGBT activist, and I invite the resident to join with me in pushing forward the LGBT agenda.

**Supplementary question to PQ5 to Councillor Bell.**

Q: Councillor Bell has a direct interest as cabinet member for adult social care and health and the NHS more widely. According to new government guidance on health scrutiny, cabinet members who hold executive responsibility for the NHS should not Chair health scrutiny panels. Please could this be considered seriously.

A: There is no conflict of interest because I do not Chair these panels. If I had executive oversight of decision making in the NHS, different decisions may be made. The main point in the answer is that the healthier communities Select Committee no longer has the power for a formal call in from the Secretary of State.

**6. Member Questions**

There were no member questions.

**7. Council Budget 2024/25**

The Budget was MOVED by Councillor De Ryk and SECONDED by Councillor Rathbone.

Under the provisions of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was required.

It was moved by the Speaker and seconded by the Deputy Speaker and RESOLVED that a roll call be conducted on this item. The result was as follows: For (49) Councillors Anifowose, Anwar, Atkinson, Barnham, Bell, Best, Bourne, Brown, Clarke, Cooper, Cunningham, Curran, Dacres, Davis, De Ryk, Eiles, Erheriene, Harding, Howard, Ingleby, Jackson, Johnston-Franklin, Kestner, Krupski, Lavery, Millbank, Moore, Muldoon, Olaru, Onikosi, Parry, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Penfold, Powell, Rathbone, Schmidt, Aliya Sheikh, Sakina

Sheikh, Shrivastava, Sorba, Stamirowski, Tam, Walsh, Warner, Webley-Brown and Wise.

Against (0) Nil

Abstention (0) Nil

RESOLVED that, having considered the views of those consulted on the budget, and subject to proper process as required, Council agreed to:

General Fund Revenue Budget

1. note the 2023/24 forecast projected overall variance of £19.9m, after the use of corporate provisions and reserves, or 7.5% of the agreed budget of £263.680m as set out in Section 6 of the report and that this year-end overspend will be met from corporate provisions and reserves;

2. endorse the budget cut reduction measures of £2.315m and £8.423m, with an anticipated assumed minimum delivery of £5.6m in 2024/25, as set out in Section 6 of the report and summarised in Appendix Y1 and Y2a and Y2b;

3. agree the allocation of £54.277m of resources from; the corporate risks and pressures, adult social care precept, new homes bonus, social care grant, ASC market sustainability and improvement fund, discharge grant, New Homes Bonus and Services Grant in 2024/25 to be invested in funding quantified budget pressures and opportunities, both recurring and once-off, as set out in Section 6;

4. agree a General Fund Budget Requirement of £293.838m for 2024/25 be approved;

5. agree to a 4.99% increase in Lewisham's Council Tax element. This will result in a Band D equivalent Council Tax level of £1,566.58 for Lewisham's services and £2,037.98 overall. This represents an overall increase in Council Tax for 2024/25 of 5.8% and is subject to the GLA precept for 2024/25 being increased by £37.26 (i.e. 8.58%) from £434.14 to £471.4, in line with the GLA's draft budget proposals;

6. note the Council Tax Ready Reckoner which, for illustrative purposes, sets out the Band D equivalent Council Tax at various levels of increase. This is explained in Section 6 of the report with more detail in Appendix Y4;

7. consider the Section 25 Statement from the Chief Finance Officer, the Executive Director for Corporate Resources. This was attached at Appendix Y5;

8. agree the draft statutory calculations for 2024/25 as set out at Appendix Y6;

9. note the prospects for the revenue budget for 2024/25 and future years as set out in Sections 6 and 7;

10. agree and ask officers to continue to develop firm proposals to redesign and transform services and inform the capital strategy by bringing them forward in good time to support the work towards a savings and investment round to help plan early to meet the future forecast medium term finance strategy objectives;

Other Grants (within the General Fund)

11. note the adjustments to and impact of various specific grants for 2024/25 on the General Fund as set out in Section 6 of this report; Dedicated Schools Grant and Pupil Premium Schools Block

12. note the provisional gross Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation of £363.126m before the Department's adjustments to fund Academy schools;

13. note the provisional DSG allocation for £240.662m be the Schools' Budget (Schools Block) for 2024/25 covering both maintained schools and academies, and that this includes £7.5m of funding that schools currently receive via the Mainstream Additional Grant;

14. agree, as recommended by Schools Forum, the once-off transfer of circa £0.7m of Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block; Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)
15. note the construct and allocation of £3.014m for the CSSB block allocation for 2024/25, a reduction of circa £0.295m from the £3.309m 2023/24 allocation; High Needs Block (HNB)
16. note the provisional HNB £79.225m to support the Council's statutory duty with regards to Special Education Needs (SEN), a net increase of £2.373m relative to 2023/24. And that the HNB will be finalised in March for deductions arising for institutions funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA); Early Years Block (EYB)
17. note the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation to the EYB of £40.225m;
18. note that the Department for Education has increased hourly funding for 3 and 4 year olds from £6.33 to £7.24 (14.4%) and with respect to 2 year old disadvantaged funding, the hourly rate has increased from £7.52 to £10.64 (41.5%);
19. note the introduction of new funding from 1 April 2024 for 2 year old working parent entitlement of £10.64 per hour and new funding for under 2 year olds from 1 September 2024 at £14.52 per hour; Pupil Premium
20. note that the pupil premium will continue in 2024/25, that the per-pupil funding is expected to increase by 1% for primary and 2% for secondary, with the total quantum confirmed in summer 2024; Housing Revenue Account
21. note the consultation report on proposed service charge increases to tenants and leaseholders in the Brockley area, presented to tenants and leaseholders on 2 November 2023, as attached at Appendix X2a and X2b;
22. note the consultation report on proposed service charge increases to tenants and leaseholders presented to the remaining tenants and leaseholders on 13 November 2023 as attached at Appendix X3.
23. agree to set an increase in dwelling rents of 7.7% (an average of £8.57 per week) – as per the Governments formula rent increases to be applied to rents for 2024/25 and as outlined in section 9 of this report;
24. agree to set an increase in the hostels accommodation charge by 7.7% (or £3.10 per week), in accordance with Governments direction for formula rent increases to be applied to rents for 2024/25;
25. approve the following average weekly increases/decreases for dwellings for:
- 25.1 service charges to PFI managed dwellings (Brockley) to ensure full cost recovery and 9.9% inflationary uplift for 2024/25;
- caretaking 9.9% (£0.35)
  - grounds 9.9% (£0.21)
  - communal lighting 9.9% (£0.01)
  - bulk waste collection 9.9% (£0.15)
  - window cleaning 9.9% (£0.00)
  - tenants' levy 0.00% (£0.00)
- 25.2 service charges to Council managed dwellings:
- caretaking 7.70% (£0.59)
  - grounds 7.70% (£0.10)
  - window cleaning 7.70% (£0.03)
  - communal lighting 7.70% (£0.10)
  - block pest control 7.00% (£1.80)
  - waste collection 7.70% (£0.07)

- heating & hot water 7.70% (£1.23)
- tenants' levy 0.00% (£0.00)
- bulk waste disposal 7.70% (£0.05)
- sheltered housing 0.00% (£0.00)

25.3 the following average weekly percentage changes for hostels and shared temporary units for; • service charges (hostels) – caretaking etc.; 7.70% or £5.92pw energy cost increases for heat, light & power; 10.0% or £0.71pw;

- water charges increase; 7.70% or £0.02pw;

26. approve an increase in garage rents by 8.90% (£1.58 per week) for Brockley PFI and Council residents as outlined in Appendix X4;

27. note that the budgeted expenditure for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2024/25 is £224.3m, split £111.5m revenue and £112.8m capital, which includes the decent homes and new build programmes; Treasury Management Strategy

28. approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 including the prudential indicators and treasury indicators;

29 approve the Annual Investment Strategy and Creditworthiness Policy, set out in further detail at Appendix Z2;

30. approve the Investment Strategy as set out in Section 10 of this report, along with the operational boundary & authorised limit for the year as set out in tables D4 and D5 in this report;

31. approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy as set out in Section 10.27 of this report;

32. agree to delegate to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources the authority during 2024/25 to make amendments to borrowing and investment limits provided they are consistent with the strategy and there is no change to the Council's authorised limit for borrowing;

33. approve the overall credit and counterparty risk management criteria, as set out at Appendix Z2, the proposed countries for investment at Appendix Z5, and that it formally delegates responsibility for managing transactions with those institutions meeting the criteria to the Executive Director for Corporate Resources. Capital Programme

34. approve the 2024/25 to 2027/28 Capital Programme of £558.0m as set out in Section 11 of this report and Appendix W1;

35. agree to delegate to the Executive Director for Corporate Resources authority to amend the scheme mix within the Capital programme to respond to the risks as set out as long as this is done within the total programme parameters approved and that regular updates on the capital programme, reflecting any changes, are regularly reported back to Mayor & Cabinet.

## **8. Scrutiny date changes**

It was MOVED by Cllr Schmidt and SECONDED by Cllr Erheriene and then RESOLVED that it be noted that

(i) the Select Committee meetings due to take place on 5, 7 and 20 March and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting due to take place on 6 February will no longer take place.

(ii) the Select Committee meetings will instead take place on 12, 13 and 14 March and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will meet on 18 March.

## **9. Motions**

There were no motions.