

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **RESOURCES AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors Chung (Chair), Rebecca Filer, Edmund Frondigoun, Liam Martin-Lane, Andrew Parkinson, Will Prince, Jonathan Simpson and James Slater

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillors

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillors

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS**

#### **RESOLVED**

THAT the guidance on hybrid meetings be noted.

#### **2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Liam Martin-Lane.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

No declarations were made.

#### **4. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Broadcast of the meeting**

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available upon request.

Those who had asked to address the meeting were deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

### **Change of order to the agenda**

The Chair proposed a change to the running order of the meeting, to take item 10 first, in order to efficiently use the presenters time. This was agreed by the Committee.

### **6. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no deputations.

### **7. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 be agreed.

### **8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND COST OF LIVING**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living, who introduced the report.

The Committee made the following key comments in discussion of the report:

- A Member asked what more could be done with the voluntary sector and Ward Councillors around the cost of living, to support the work being done by Camden. The Cabinet Member responded that a priority was to get information of support into communities.
- Members were pleased with the improvements to waiting times made by the switchboard.
- In response to a question from a Member on funding from government and whether that was received, the Cabinet Member said that they had been misled with government funding of the COVID-19 pandemic response, as a result Camden carried a financial burden of around £20 million. The Executive Director Corporate services commented that Camden continue to work with London Councils and the LGA for funding reform.
- The committee discussed the impact of the cost of living crisis on those in the private rented sector. The cabinet Member identified that those in the private rented sector did not have the same number of contact points with the Council, it was important to find ways of communicating the available support with these residents.
- A Member asked about apprenticeships and whether there had been an improvement on figures from previous years. The cabinet member responded that there had been challenges with apprenticeships for a

number of reasons including financial and pressures around COVID-19. The Executive Director Corporate Services acknowledged that there had been a decrease in the number of apprenticeships over the past couple of years but reassured members that there had been renewed thinking and an organisational push to increase the figures.

- In response to a member question, the Cabinet Member said that Camden were aiming to have services move back into the Town Hall in the Spring and that a decision had not been made as to future use of the Crowndale centre. Any decision would need to factor in changes to work practices and the use of spaces.
- Commenting on the delay to refurbishment works caused by flooding, the Executive Director said that this was claimed on the project insurance with no additional financial burden being placed on Camden.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

### **9. REVIEW OF THE CAMDEN MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living, who introduced the report.

The Committee made the following comments in their discussion of the report:

- In regard to licensing efficiencies, a Member asked if the Evening and Night Time Economy review could be used as way of informing how those efficiencies are implemented. The Cabinet Member agreed to this approach.
- With reference to the recent joint DMC meeting and resident feedback, a Member asked about whether further increasing garage rents could be used as a way of increasing revenue. The Director of Finance responded that conversations were being had to explore whether this was an option that could be taken forward.
- Members asked if there would be any negative aspects to holding a vacancy factor. The Director of Finance said the there would be minimal negative implications to this approach and, where needed, exceptions would be made.
- A Member commented about the level of detail given for individual projects in the report. The Executive Director reassured the Committee that each proposed project had been checked and examined by Camden's legal team.
- In response to a Member question, the Head of Finance commented that tracking business rates was difficult as there had been a change to the pattern of payments. Whilst Camden were behind with the patterns

of payments, due to government rate relief for businesses, they had actually already collected more than in previous years.

- Members were concerned with the future financial climate and the impact this could have on Camden. The Cabinet Member said that the Camden had a good track record of meeting their savings goals, however, the Council's financial reserves were at the lower end of what they are comfortable with and so there was a drive to increase reserves.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (CIP) – RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Development which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment before opening for questions.

A Member commented that it was disappointing that none for the Panel's recommendations around transparency of process and updated information on the status of schemes had been accepted. The Cabinet Member responded that they thought the process was transparent, with not only the annual report going to multiple scrutiny committees but reports for individuals schemes as well. There had been engagement with residents to ensure they had the information they need. The Cabinet Member agreed to look at ways to more clearly link the Annual Community Investment Programme (CIP) report on the CIP part of the website.

**Action by: Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment.**

In response to questions from a Member on more deeply reporting the neighbourhood and societal implications of projects, the Cabinet Member said that whilst elements like environmental implications were reported, benefits to communities were not objective and easy to measure. They were open to any suggestions the Committee may have about metrics that could be measured to show community benefits.

Another Member of the Committee commented that some residents seemed to be more frustrated that projects could not happen quicker than with the level of engagement over schemes. They said this was a sign of Camden taking their commitment to listen to residents seriously. The Member also suggested that Camden were quite modest in monitoring social value and by

including elements like youth apprenticeships there was an opportunity to be bolder.

A Member questioned recommendation 17 of the Scrutiny Panel, they said that it was important to build more social rent homes but not as a trade-off to other community elements. Neighbourhoods needed both housing and community infrastructure, they asked how the strategy to balance these needs was reviewed. In response to this, the Director of Development said that the Annual report and specific scheme reports goes through Scrutiny, they hoped to use these discussions to review the balance of priorities.

With regard to the metrics used when comparing Camden to other local authorities with the rolling out of CIP, a Member asked if information could be shared about what those metrics would be so that a consistent approach could be taken. The Cabinet Member commented that benchmarking work was helpful, though there were difficulties comparing with other authorities due to borough specific factors.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**11. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2022-23**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Directors of Supporting People, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**12. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 AND ACTION TRACKER**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Corporate Services. The report was presented by the Head of Corporate Strategy.

In response to a Member question about projected purchase costs of energy and what officers expected in the next year, the Executive Director Corporate Services agreed to circulate some information to the Committee.

**Action by: the Executive Director Corporate Services.**

A Member raised that they would be interested in partnership engagement, and whether there would be anything the Committee could look at from a corporate perspective to see if Thames Water were meeting their responsibilities in the Borough.

**RESOLVED -**

THAT the report be noted.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no such business.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

**CHAIR**

**Contact Officer: Ben Lynn**

**Telephone No: 020 7974 5653**

**E-Mail: ben.lynn@camden.gov.uk**

**MINUTES END**