

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **RESOURCES AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 10TH JULY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

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

Councillors Linda Chung (Chair), Rebecca Filer, Edmund Frondigoun, Liam Martin-Lane and James Slater

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

Councillors Jenny Mulholland, Andrew Parkinson and Jonathan Simpson

**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. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jenny Mulholland and Jonathan Simpson.

#### **2. 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.

#### **3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the Terms of Reference for the committee be noted

#### **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.

**5. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no deputations.

**6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no such business.

**7. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 16 January 2023 and 21 February 2023 be agreed.

**8. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4/END OF YEAR 2022-23**

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

The report was introduced by the Head of Corporate Strategy who, along with the Executive Director Corporate Services made the following comments during the Committee's discussion of the report:

Members asked about the number of places registered with the warm spaces campaign. The Head of Corporate strategy said that the figures in the report were collected in March 2023 and had remained broadly stable.

The slight increase seen in recruitment could be attributed to the separation of Camden and Islington's shared public health service.

Members were interested in the number of apprentices and any targets that Camden had for apprenticeships. The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment commented that despite the discontinuation of Government targets, Camden had

committed to the aim of having 20 apprentices in each directorate as a base level from which to expand.

In response to a member question around the higher number of disciplinaries, the Executive Director said that there was an ebb and flow to these things, the high level could be caused by a backlog post pandemic and the current environment of a cost of living crisis. He said that Camden had a focus on supporting staff and their wellbeing.

A Member asked about staff performance data and why there had been an increase in underperformance. The Executive Director said that this may be a 'false increase' as managers tended to have performance discussions with people in the final quarter of the financial year. He confirmed with Members that performance data was collected prior to this year and that it had not been included due to a system error. The Executive Director agreed to provide Members with performance data from previous years.

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

Members also asked for a briefing on disciplinaries and grievances data.

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

The Committee noted the increase in the number of customer services calls taken in the past quarter and the increase to waiting times it had caused. They asked if there was available data that differentiated queries related to council tax. The Executive Director agreed to bring back information to provide more detail.

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

Members discussed complaints and asked officers if data for complaints could separate housing complaints so that greater detail around different service areas could be seen. The Executive Director explained that the Annual Complaints Report was being written and separate data could be included.

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

Members noted that the by-election in South Hampstead was the first time voter ID had been used in Camden, they asked if data was available around the number of people turned away or who did not have the correct ID with them.

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

The Committee commented that they would like to receive complaints data and information more frequently and in a more targeted way. They were concerned that receiving data once a year made it difficult to identify important elements.

**Action by: the Head of Corporate Strategy.**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**9. AN UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WORK TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living. The report was introduced by the Head of Corporate Strategy.

In their discussion of the report, the Committee made the following comments:

The cost of living crisis was also impacting businesses and the report mentioned that Camden were working with local business. Member asked for future update reports around the cost of living include more information about this work. The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment agreed to include in future updates more detail around the support, advice and signposting offered to businesses.

**Action by: the Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment**

In response to a question around the Cost of Living Crisis Response Group, the Head of Corporate Strategy said that they had understood all of the funding requests from the ward councillor meetings to have been allocated. They agreed to confirm whether the full budget had been allocated and respond to the Committee.

**Action by: the Head of Corporate Strategy**

The Committee asked about the Universal Basic Services Pilot and whether there was any more information. The Head of Corporate Strategy said that Camden continued to work with the Institute for Global Prosperity at UCL to look at potential work and what universal basic services might look like in different place setting. They agreed to circulate an update

**Action by: the Head of Corporate Strategy**

In response to a member question around the school clothing support, the Head of Corporate Strategy commented that funding could be used to grow existing clothing swap schemes. Camden were keen not to step in front of schools and parent volunteers and so the primary support the Council provided was through cash grants.

A Member asked about the resource implications and future resources for projects. The Head of Corporate Strategy said that future resource allocation for any projects would be decided when the budget is agreed at full Council.

The Committee discussed Camden's debt advisory services, they thought it would be helpful and necessary to work with organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Head of Corporate Strategy confirmed that Camden were including external advice services in discussions on debt advisory work.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

## **10. CREATING A COMMUNITY WEALTH FUND**

Consideration was given to the report of the Leader of the Council. The report was introduced by the Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment.

In response to a question from Members, the Director explained that the finance model in the report was a stress test model and not a proposed model of how the scheme would operate. The fund requests would likely be from a larger amount of smaller investments.

Members asked about risk management and whether Camden would secure against what was being loaned. The Director said that with each loan application there would be security stages involved in the process. Camden would benchmark their risk portfolio to balance out the risks of projects using an external risk benchmark provider.

The Committee asked about the other resource support involved in co-investment. They commented that support such as mentoring and business support was just as helpful to businesses as financial assistance.

In response to a member question about the governance structure and whether there was a stop gap, the Director said that before the launch, the decision would need to go through Executive Directors and the Cabinet. There would need to be regular reporting of the scheme upon which future decisions could be made.

The Director said that should the scheme not go ahead, the main loss would be the officer time that had been used. He said, should this happen, it would not be wasted work as it could be used as an option for future schemes.

Members were keen to know of other authorities that had used similar schemes of lending, the Director said that benchmarking had been carried out for this type of lending, though not for the same model.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

## **11. 2023/24 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cost of Living. The report was introduced by the Head of Finance, Corporate Services.

In their discussion of the report, Members and officers made the following comments:

Responding to a member question, the Head of Finance said that the major repairs reserve was funded directly from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The reason for the £80 million uplift was because Camden had extended the capital programme for an additional couple of years.

Members noted that the Right to Buy sales had increase and discussed that it might be helpful to explore the impact that this might have on the sales of Community Investment Programme properties, which were slower than anticipated.

The Committee asked about the stage that Camden was at with energy procurement. The Director of Finance said that energy is procured in advance and results would be expected in the Autumn. There would be a more information on this cycle of energy procurement in the next update report, expected to be brought to the Committee at the meeting in December.

In response to a member question around the HRA overspend, the Head of Finance said that the plan was to come in on budget, part of the MTFs involved savings across the HRA to deal with additional cost pressures and that it was kept under constant review.

The Executive Director Corporate Services explained to members that the pressures Camden had on the HRA were being felt across London. More conversations were happening with government at a pan-London level to articulate the pressure on the HRA.

Responding to a question from members about the forecasting of rent default rates, the Head of Finance agreed to provide an update.

**Action by: the Head of Finance, Corporate Services**

When asked about the retendering of schemes such as the hostel at Camden Road, the people waiting to be housed would be managed through the homeless provision service. He agreed to provide information, including timescales for the retendering of the hostel.

**Action by: the Head of Finance, Corporate Services**

A member asked about the overspend on the Chalcots, where the money was going to come from and whether it could have been avoided. The Head of Finance said that the money would be sought from government and the nature of the overspend is that it came from emerging unforeseen costs.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**12. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 AND ACTION TRACKER**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the work programme be noted.

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

There was no such business.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**