

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS** held on **THURSDAY, 28TH JULY, 2011** at 6.00 pm in the Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

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

Councillors Meric Apak, John Bryant, Jenny Headlam-Wells, Jonathan Simpson and Don Williams

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Nash Ali – Leader of the Council  
Councillor Sue Vincent – Deputy Leader of the Council

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

##### **RESOLVED –**

THAT Councillor J Simpson be elected as Chair of the Committee for the meeting.

#### **2. APOLOGIES**

Councillor John Bryant apologies for lateness.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were none.

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

There were none.

#### **5. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

There were none.

#### **6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

There were none.

## **7. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **RESOLVED –**

**THAT the Terms of Reference of the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny Committee as stated below be noted.**

‘To discuss the Leader’s annual statement to the Council and other relevant cross cutting matters arising from the business of the Cabinet’

## **8. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 be agreed.

## **9. THE LEADER'S ANNUAL STATEMENT TO FULL COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Nash Ali, Leader of the Council, directed the Committee to the contents of his annual statement, made to Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

The Leader and Deputy Leader gave the following responses to Members questions:-

- The Leader agreed that the Community Investment Programme was an ambitious programme but there is a need to address the funding gap of £400m in capital. There would be an impact on the schools and decent homes programmes but it was noted that £100m had been allocated for schools and £135m for the better homes programme. The Council were intending to work with schools to explore self financing of projects and working to improve community facilities. There were issues in terms of housing waiting lists and maintenance that needed to be addressed. The Deputy Leader added that there was a need to strongly consider options in respect of the Council’s land / building assets including an investment programme for the Town Hall extension and a consolidation of buildings over a 3 – 10 year period. The primary investment was to be in housing and schools.
- In response to a member’s concern in respect of targets for savings not being achieved, it was considered appropriate to raise these concerns but members had received officers’ expert advice and many assets had been valued cautiously due to the current unpredictable financial climate. However, Camden was currently forecast for growth and land values remained at a strong level.

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- The Leader confirmed that the Education Commission had been an exciting development for Camden and the success of this would be achieved through various ongoing meetings to work closely with schools to progress this innovative approach. The Deputy Leader added that it was important for timely information to councillors be maintained and that a formal report on the progress of the Education Commission would be available in September.

Cllr Bryant arrived at 6.25pm.

- The Leader clarified that although in respect of Culture & Environment projections the main focus was on libraries it was noted that there was also funding for 90 events / festivals to continue the vibrant atmosphere of Camden. Council officers were continually working with organisers at various locations and working on capacity building to provide sustainable support. The Deputy Leader agreed that it would be a very difficult time but the Council would aim to support as many arts programmes as possible and while there may be the opportunity of national funding for some organisations there was a need to focus support on local venues and groups too. It was noted that capacity building of smaller venues was important.
- There were concerns raised in respect of potential risks in relation to the future of the NLWA inter-authority agreement. The Deputy Leader confirmed that this was an extensive project and as with any large project there were always potential risks but there was continual liaison with all local authorities involved and experienced officers were assisting the NLWA Board to monitor progress. The NLWA agreement presented opportunities to the Boroughs involved due to increased tonnage for recycling and therefore increased funding to the Boroughs.
- The Deputy Leader confirmed that the Council were progressing the advantages of introducing cashless parking resulting in significant savings and the de-cluttering of signage from streets.
- The Leader confirmed that Camden Council were intending to launch a Health & Well-Being Board in Autumn 2011. The Cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Health with the assistance of relevant officers was liaising with relevant organizations to progress the formation of the Health & Well-Being Board. Issues in relation to appropriate training for members involved with the Board and capacity issues, in relation to available health representatives within the Borough were being taken into consideration. It was noted that the Scrutiny Chair for Health would also liaise with relevant members if any concerns were raised or identified by his Scrutiny Committee.
- The Leader explained that in relation to forthcoming regeneration projects it was important for ward members to be involved in consultation on key issues for such projects to consider benefits and priorities with the reassurance that Councillors want to do what is best for the community

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- The Deputy Leader advised that planning consultation had been reduced and residents were being encouraged to sign up for email / text alerts and there were discussions on how to make improvements on access to information for residents.
- The Leader confirmed that Camden Council had a good working relationship with the Borough Commander and the Cabinet Member for community safety was working closely with the police to develop a criteria to identify which wards have shared sergeants. The Leader noted concerns from members in respect of community policing potential reductions which would continue to be discussed with the police.
- The Leader confirmed that Cllr Callaghan was taking a lead role in relation to the liaison of health related issues for the Council with key partners, but the Leader and Deputy Leader maintained a regular brief of key areas in relation to health.
- The Local Strategic Partnership continued to meet on a quarterly basis with a current focus on themed meetings and members would be kept informed of discussions.
- The Deputy Leader informed scrutiny chairs of the potential impact of changes due to the Localism Bill and in particular the impact on planning issues. She also reported that if central government was intending to provide funding for High Speed 2 then there was a case for upgrading the underground infrastructure on particular lines including improvements to the bus service. King's Cross was changing and the bus hub may have a potential impact on air quality which needed to be addressed.
- The Leader explained that the Resource Review was a key issue for councils in relation to business rates and Camden Council were working with London Councils to develop a London model. The Deputy Leader added that it was important to look at London as a whole rather than individual boroughs.

Cllr Blackwell arrived at meeting 7.20pm

**ACTION BY: Leader of the Council**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT the report be noted.

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

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There was none.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**