

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **RESOURCES AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 3, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

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

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

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

Councillors Andrew Parkinson

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillors Danny Beales and Richard Olszewski

**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 absence were received from Councillor Andrew Parkinson and apologies lateness were received from Councillor Jonathan Simpson.

#### **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.

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

There were no deputations.

## **7. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 had been circulated to the Committee ahead of this meeting. The Committee noted the minutes to be formally agreed at the next meeting.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2022 be agreed.

## **8. 2023/24 REVENUE ESTIMATES AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING**

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

The Committee asked of the challenges caused by the government announcing local authority funding on an annual basis, with one-year settlements. The Cabinet Member said that adjustments had been made in order to continue to provide services regardless of budget cuts. The Head of Finance, Corporate Services commented that with the lack of information given by government on future funding, a number of assumptions needed to be made in order to plan for service budgets. It was also necessary for Camden to be flexible and respond to information as it emerged.

In response to a question from the Committee about the proposal to increase financial reserves and whether this was the correct approach, the Head of Finance said that many of the high-profile failures in other authorities has been cause by a lack of reserves and financial resilience. As the future funding and the financial

climate was uncertain, it was right for the Council to look at increasing its reserves, though this approach would be reviewed frequently.

A member asked why there had been no feedback on the consultation with non-domestic rate payers and the Equalities Impact Assessment, the Head of Finance said it was rare for business rate account holders to feedback, but Camden would look at new ways to engage with them. The Cabinet Member commented that businesses engaged with the Council through many other avenues.

Members praised the decision to provide funding at a ward level, to help engage with people around the cost of living and support available. They asked in terms of the cost of living outreach bus and other advice giving organisations such as the Mary Ward Centre and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, whether people who did not speak English could access information. The Director of Customer Services said that officers working on the bus spoke a range of languages and that written information was available in many languages. The Director went on to say that other advice-giving organisations were working with local voluntary sector groups to utilise skillsets and create a network to reach a variety of groups. Where organisations like the Mary Ward Centre could provide professional cost of living advice and the voluntary sector organisations could bring their knowledge of the community.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living said they would feed back to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Equalities and Cohesion a point raised by Committee Members around the importance of benchmarking cost of sports facilities and gyms against the private sector to ensure a competitive offer.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

## **9. IMPROVING THE CITIZEN EXPERIENCE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Customer Services, who introduced the report. The Director of Customer Services and the Head of Customer and Registration Services gave the following responses to questions from the Committee:

Referring to the customer satisfaction rates from post-call, text message surveys, Members asked whether the opinions of residents who use landline telephones were being captured. The Head of Customer and Registration Services said that Camden had gained qualitative feedback from residents in that group through engagement with Age UK. The Head of Customer and Registration Services also explained that text message surveys was just one of the methods used for getting resident feedback and that email surveys were often used.

In response to a Member question around failure demand, the Head of Customer and Registration Services explained that the highest rates were seen in areas where the majority of the process happened outside of the contact centre. Failure demand usually occurred when an issue needed to be sent to different teams for response.

Members were interested in the tests that were underway in some areas of the Camden website. The Director of Customer Services explained that the Council Tax section had beta pages that could be tested as part of a larger, longer-term project to update and rationalise information on the website. The beta pages went live a week ago and so there were not any statistics available to consider.

The Committee asked about any initial figures for savings that would happen because of the transformation of resident contact and the move to allow more functions to happen digitally. The Director of Customer Services said that she was cautious to predict figures of the savings before the transformation work was complete, taking out savings from a service before the completion of the work could result in a poorer service.

Speaking on the work Camden was doing to learn and understand more about citizen interaction, the Director of Customer Services explained the offer for Councillors to have one to one conversations with the design team for them to share insights into the resident journey within the Contact Centre. She agreed to circulate information on this offer to all Members.

**Action by: the Director of Customer Services**

A member of the committee asked about having cash payments as an option for residents receiving cost of living support as some may not be able to use a cashless method of payment. The Director of Customer services reassured members that Camden were committed to keeping post offices as route for residents to receive support. There were a range of ways to pay out the cost of living support including pay point, post offices and directly into bank accounts. Camden were also exploring a new provider that could send code to people that they could use at cash points to receive one-off cash payments.

Members asked about the conversations between Camden and voluntary care sector partners across the borough around citizen interaction with the council. The Director of Customer Services said that they had already engaged with Camden Advice Network as part of the process. Often partner organisations would refer residents on to the Council and act as one of the routes for residents to engage with Camden. From the engagement with community partners an increasing issue identified was around the complexity of need for certain residents. It was important to support residents and look to make complex case resolution work efficiently.

In response to a Member question about career development opportunities within the Contact Centre, the Director of Customer Services said that the Contact Centre was often used as an entry level route into the organisation. Working in the call centre

was hard work but could be rewarding and could act as a great step in a career, with the right support.

A Member asked what groups the Council had engaged with as part of the citizen interaction work. The Director of Customer Services explained that Camden were seeking to ensure the experience of all groups with accessibility needs had been captured. Whether that be the deaf community, residents with learning difficulties and autism or those with other language needs.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (CIP) – CIP ANNUAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Development. The Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment introduced the report and, along with the Director of Development, made the following comments to questions raised by the Committee:

Members were pleased with the level of engagement with residents. They agreed that there were many positive aspects of the CIP projects, such as the scheme to encourage women into construction careers, as well as the wider community benefits. A Member suggested that further work could be done with organisations to develop schemes for groups to get into work such as Building Heroes, an organisation that works with veterans coming out of the armed services.

A Member asked about the flexibility of projects and the programme's ability to adjust to funding situations as they emerge. In their response, the Cabinet Member said that there was a multi-phased, long-term approach to developments, which allowed Camden to respond to market pressures and be more flexible with delivery.

The Committee asked about possible funding streams for projects. Camden Living was a registered housing provider separate to the Council and Members were interested to know whether there was funding that it would qualify for outside on the usual Council gained grants. The Cabinet Member commented that there were currently no additional funding streams that Camden Living could apply for outside of those already applied for by the Council. Camden were continually looking for new applicable grants and funding sources. The Director of Development informed the Committee that all funding was currently gained through the Greater London Authority (GLA).

In response to a member question about sales performance, the Director of Development said that sales performance outperformed what was predicted last year. This was not measured in sales values but in the pace of sales. The Cabinet

Member commented that the sales data would be helpful for future phases and might enable Camden to move on with projects more quickly.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**11. WE MAKE CAMDEN: STATE OF THE BOROUGH REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Strategy and Policy Design. The report was introduced by the Portfolio Lead.

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

- The scale used in the displaying of data made it challenging to understand the details of issues. In future reports it would be helpful to have data at a ward level.
- Anecdotally, incidents of homophobic hate crime had increased quite substantially though this was not reflected in the report. Members asked that Camden consider that the impacts of hate crime continue after the event itself. Many residents who have experienced a hate crime outside of Camden will still be impacted by it whilst in the Borough.
- Members were interested in data of people visiting gyms in relation to figures around obesity. They asked if data sets around gym visits could be incorporated into future reports, if available.

The Portfolio explained that some of the data Camden had on certain issues did not go to ward-level of granularity and some data sets would not be available for the Council to access, he noted the comments made by the Committee and said they would be considered in future iterations of the report.

**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.

In their discussion of the Action Tracker, Members asked on the progress of the agreement from officers to provide a briefing on LASER. The Head of Corporate Strategy said that a report would be brought to the Committee in the future.

Members also asked that a report on the Digital Strategy be added to the work programme.

**Action by: Head of Corporate Strategy**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

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

There was no such business.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**