

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **JOINT CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 7TH OCTOBER 2010** at 6.30 p.m. in the Committee Room 2, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Meric Apak (Chair)
Councillor John Bryant
Councillor Lorraine Revah
Councillor Don Williams

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Nash Ali – Leader of the Council
Councillor Angela Mason – 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.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED –

THAT Councillor Meric Apak be elected as Chair of the Committee for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Councillor Sean Birch and Councillor John Bryant for lateness. Councillor Angela Mason apologised as she had to leave the meeting early.

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

There were none.

4. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There was none.

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

There was none.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE JOINT CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED –

THAT the Terms of Reference of the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny Committee be noted.

8. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2009 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 28th June 2010, and added the following key points:

- The council had now ended the sale of council homes to private speculators.
- A new approach would be taken by the authority in considering applying the London Living Wage when a new contract was awarded, if appropriate.
- A successful Green Summit had been held on 17th July 2010, which announced the provision of a green communities fund to help communities to take action to deliver environmental sustainable projects and to work with the council on these matters.
- Restored the funding for UK on line which would help people gain better and simpler access to council services on line.
- The authority was one of the first in the country to place a record of all of its expenditure over £500 on line so this information could be viewed by anyone.
- Members had started looking into the groundbreaking approach of possibly sharing the council's Chief Executive, a senior management team, and services with the London Borough of Islington.
- Arising from the Government's proposed public spending cuts, the authority had started the process of considering how it would reduce its public expenditure and service provision by approximately £80 -100 Million. This would be done through a process of building partnerships with colleagues across the public and private sector and a constructive dialogue with the people of Camden. The council would ensure it sought to follow the guiding principles of protecting front line services; protecting Camden's social mix and

community diversity: protecting the most vulnerable members of the community; and preserving the environment and the core entitlements relating to housing, education, care and employment.

- The authority would have to consider the impact that the changes to housing and child benefit would have on the people of Camden along with the effect on the borough's service provision.
- The council would have to look at the impact of the Government's cut in the funding of the council's Building Schools for the Future programme on the boroughs schools infrastructure.

Councillors Nash Ali and Angela Mason gave the following responses to Members questions:

- The Green Summit had been a very successful event with over a 100 Camden residents and representatives from community groups and organisations participating in interactive workshops and group based discussions. The summit had resulted in the establishment of the Green Community Fund with a budget of £50,000; made proposals to the Local Strategic Partnership to create a sustainability sub-group comprising public, private and third sector partners, to focus on our key strategic sustainability priorities; and to hold a second Green Summit in January 2011 to update and share ideas about developing vision for a sustainable, low carbon borough for Camden.
- The council was also considering the Friends of the Earth target of reducing borough-wide carbon emissions by at least 40% by 2020 and had commissioned a carbon reduction study into the feasibility and implications.
- The ideas from the summit along with the findings from the 40% feasibility study would be considered as part of the revision of Camden's environmental sustainability delivery plan, which would be considered at the second Green Summit in January 2011.
- The council was looking at the options available to it regarding the insulation of its housing stock through the findings of a feasibility study. Resources were not available to extend scheme to private sector dwellings.
- The council would look at achieving the London Living Wage through its contract provision process only on a case by case basis, as legally no such blanket policy could be applied. The Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority both supported the principle of the London Living Wage, though members recognised that they would only move forward on this should it be in the best interests of the borough.
- The council was currently undertaking a joint procurement for its school meals contract with the London Borough of Islington. The impact of applying the London Living Wage to this contract would now be considered, though it was anticipated that by undertaking a joint borough procurement process the cost of the contract to each borough would be less than the existing contract.
- The cabinet would look at a number of different approaches in the way it will need to adjust its expenditure arising from the Government's cuts. This would include undertaking the planned efficiency measures already identified, re-thinking the way services are delivered and the sharing of services with other public sector bodies.

- The savings arising out of the possible sharing of senior managers and services with the London Borough of Islington would take time to be achieved as this was a complicated and sensitive process. A report would be submitted to the cabinet on 20th October that would outline the initial issues that had been identified, with a further report being considered by the cabinet in January 2011 which would contain more detail regarding the way forward. It was hoped that at this stage more information would be available regarding the possible savings that could be made over the next 4 years by undertaking this approach, along with the risks and exit strategy should such an approach be required.
- The final decision on whether or not to proceed with the approach of sharing senior managers and services would only be progressed if it was in the best interests of both Camden and Islington.
- The joint arrangement with the London Borough of Islington was being considered because it offered an opportunity to save resources. The cabinet would look at any such options of working with other public sector agencies that could assist in making savings.
- If such an approach was to be taken forward then senior managers would still be expected to have a clear understanding of the local communities that they serve and local councillors would continue to play a vital role in holding them to account.
- A special joint scrutiny committee meeting would take place on 30th November 2010, when all the scrutiny committees would be able to consider the budget and its implications in detail. The scrutiny committees would have a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Director of Finance, members would be able to question them, have a joint discussion before either individually or collectively putting forward comments for the cabinet to consider.
- The Leader agreed to look into whether a health impact assessment should be undertaken as part of the budget making process and would share his views with Members.

ACTION BY: Leader of the Council

- The Leader would discuss with Councillor Pat Callaghan, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, the progression of the Camden Care Forum and would share his views with Members.

ACTION BY: Leader of the Council

- The cabinet had already started a process of engaging with voluntary sector groups regarding the scale of the possible impact of the required savings. Councillors would play a very active role in helping to get the message about the financial challenge into the community, along with seeking the views of people regarding efficiency measures and where savings could be made. The councils Area Action Groups would play a very important role in helping set up these types of discussions.
- The council would also use the internet as a means of sharing information with the public about what the Government cuts would mean for the Borough.

The Leader would be speaking to people and listening to their views on the way forward for Camden.

- The Leader expressed his concerns regarding the Government’s proposals to cut housing benefit levels and the impact that this would have on the people in receipt of benefit living in Camden. The Council had already made a formal response to the Parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee on this matter. Should the proposals be taken forward then it was likely that some Camden residents would be forced out of the borough, as the price of accommodation in Camden was considerably higher than the proposed level of housing benefit. The people directly affected by these proposals tended to be the most vulnerable members of the community.
- Further work was being done regarding the numbers of people that would be directly affected by the proposals and this information would be shared with Members.

ACTION BY: Finneguela O’Brien

- London Council’s were making representations to the Government to argue for London to be made a special case.
- The Local Strategic Partnership had a role to play in helping shape the delivery of services in the borough.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END