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## CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2023

(7.16 pm - 8.07 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Ross Garrod (in the Chair), Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Billy Christie, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Andrew Judge, Councillor Sally Kenny and Councillor Peter McCabe

ALSO PRESENT Hannah Doody (Chief Executive), Polly Cziok (Executive Director of Innovation & Change), Dan Jones (Executive Director, Environment, Civic Pride & Climate), Roger Kershaw (Assistant Director Finance and Digital), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), John Morgan (Executive Director, Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health), Lucy Owen (Executive Director of Housing & Sustainable Development), John Scarborough (Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership), Zara Bishop (Communications Manager) and Amy Dumitrescu (Democracy Services Manager)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Irons.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023 are agreed as an accurate record.

### 4 BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2028 (Agenda Item 4)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services presented the report, thanking officers for their work. The proposals projected a balanced budget for next year and the papers would be considered by the Scrutiny panels later in the month.

The Cabinet Members for Housing and Sustainable Development commented on the report noting the difficult budget process for the area and that £377k of savings had been proposed and having to find an additional £185k of income. £375k had been proposed for the next year to help with the empty homes strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Transport commented on the report noting that the growth bids proposed would enable delivery of plans and that external funding would continue to be sought.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet considered and agreed the new capital proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the draft Capital Programme 2024-2028 (Appendix 1) and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
2. That Cabinet agreed the approach to setting a balanced budget outlined in the report
3. That Cabinet agreed the financial timetable for the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28 (Appendix 5)
4. That Cabinet considered and agreed the draft growth proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 2) put forward by officers and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
5. That Cabinet considered and agreed the new savings proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 3) and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
6. That Cabinet considered and agreed the Equalities Impact Assessments for each saving, where applicable, and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.(Appendix 3)

5 QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

6 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25 (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services presented the report which recommended the same level of support as previously.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member responded that this year the scheme was expected to benefit just over 9800 households within the Borough. It was noted that, if agreed the scheme would then be considered by Full Council in February 2024.

RESOLVED:

1. That the updating revisions for the 2024/25 council tax support scheme detailed in the report be agreed, in order to maintain low council tax charges for those on lower incomes and other vulnerable residents.
2. That Cabinet agreed the proposed revisions to the 2024/25 scheme

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2023/24  
(Agenda Item 7)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services presented the report noting that all activities were within the parameters of the strategy and a refreshed strategy would come to Budget Council in March 2024.

RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet noted the update on Treasury Management performance for the half year to 30 September 2023 and agrees to submit this update to Full Council
- B. That Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council that it delegates authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Digital (S151 officer) to make short term treasury investment decisions not otherwise currently authorised by the Council's Treasury Management Strategy based on current market conditions/interest rates movements and funds availability to maximise the investment returns. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy for FY2024/25 will be presented to the Council in March 2024.

## 8 COUNCIL HOUSING DELIVERY UPDATE AND PIPELINE (Agenda Item 8)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development presented the report, thanking officers for their report, noting that the report had identified the next tranches of sites and agreement was now sought to progress those. The Cabinet Member gave an overview of the tranches and the proposals. The Cabinet Member outlined proposals for a New Homes Steering Group which would guide decisions which would then go to Cabinet and Council and a Merton New Homes Board which would include officers from the legal, finance and others.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member responded that the decision on who would be responsible for managing the homes would be for a future date, likely in 12-18 months time.

RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet noted the update and recommendations arising from the externally led asset review on how the Council's ambition to deliver 400 new council homes can be met.
- B. That Cabinet agreed not to dispose of the next tranche of sites, as previously agreed, and instead allocates the sites for the affordable homes programme either through Council led delivery or development partnership.
- C. That Cabinet approved design and viability work to being on the following three sites: Worsfold House, Chaucer Centre and Gifford House.
- D. That Cabinet approve the commencement of soft market testing with the private sector on a partnership arrangement to deliver homes at the land at Battle Close.
- E. That Cabinet approved the allocation of the expected capital receipt from the sale of the land at St George's Rd to support the design work for the three sites highlighted above in C, and to support procurement for development through a partnership for the land at Battle Close, if soft market testing is positive.
- F. That the land at 111-127 The Broadway SW19 (also known as P4) be brought to the market and that the Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development, be authorised to agree terms for a disposal.

- G. That the capital receipt from the sale of the land at 111-127 The Broadway SW19 is ringfenced to support the delivery of the Council's affordable homes programme.
- H. That Cabinet noted the finance, timescale and officer resource implications for the continuing programme, including the conclusions from a report into the viability and timing of setting up a new Council Housing Revenue Account
- I. That Cabinet noted the proposed Governance arrangements for ensuring oversight of the housing programme moving forward

## 9 EXPANSION OF COST OF LIVING FUND (Agenda Item 9)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services presented the report, following a Cost of Living Emergency declared by the Council in 2022 and the creation of a £2m emergency fund and Cost of Living Strategy and Action Plan. The Cabinet Member advised that the report recommended an additional £1m be added to the fund to provide more help to residents and businesses, with the report outlining what would be done with the funding, including expanding the young savers scheme. The Cabinet Member thanked officers for their work.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member responded that the intention was to continue to hold Cost of Living Advice days as these had been very well attended and had received positive feedback.

### RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet noted progress in delivering the Merton Council Cost of Living Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2025.
- B. That Cabinet agreed to further expand the Merton Council Cost of Living Fund by allocating a further £1million, to be funded from the Strategic Priorities Fund reserve, in recognition of the ongoing challenges faced by local residents and businesses as a consequence of the cost of living emergency.
- C. That Cabinet agreed the five broad areas of focus identified in the report against which the additional funds will be allocated.
- D. That Cabinet delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team, to agree the financial allocations against each of the five broad areas of focus along with a detailed delivery plan

## 10 ST HELIER & NEW HOSPITAL PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 10)

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care presented the report, thanking officers for their work and gave an overview of the contents. The Cabinet Member also noted the report produced by the National Audit Office on the New Hospitals Programme and its contents.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet member responded that journey times for those within Ravensbury, St Helier and Cricket Green wards would significantly increase.

RESOLVED :

A. That Cabinet noted the content of the report and associated appendices, documenting the independent analysis undertaken by Newton Europe on behalf of the Council

#### 11 LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE BID (Agenda Item 11)

The Cabinet Member for Civic Pride presented the report noting that Merton was applying for the 2027 bid, the paper outlined the ambitions around this particularly around sporting heritage. The Cabinet Member thanked officers for their work and noted that the bid used the theme of connection. The bid would be submitted later in the month, and would be advised in the new year if the bid was progressing to further stages.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member stated that the consultation had tried to involve as wide a range of voices as possible including charities, heritage organisations, businesses and others. If the bid was successful, the Council would work further with communities to ensure it was accessible and attractive to all.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their work.

RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet noted the progress in developing the bid for Merton to become the London Borough of Culture in 2027.

B. That Cabinet reviewed the emerging themes and agree the direction of travel for the bid to be submitted to the Greater London Authority (GLA) by 30 November 2023 deadline

#### 12 PROVISION OF EXTRA CARE AND HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES AT PANTILES HOUSE AND TRELIS HOUSE (Agenda Item 12)

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care presented an overview of the report and noted that the proposal was to ensure that providers would pay the London Living Wage.

RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet approved re-tendering Extra Care and Housing Related Support Services at Pantiles House and Trellis House for a period of 5 years at an estimated total cost of £5,748,780 without the option to extend.

B. That the new service is commissioned under the light touch regime in a one stage procurement process. The tender opportunity will be advertised on Find a Tender, Contracts Finder, and the Council's e-tendering system (London Tenders Portal). The process will widen competition and ensure that the Council gets best value for money for this service.

C. That Cabinet delegated authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, the award of contracts to the successful bidders at the conclusion of the tender process

### 13 CASHLESS PARKING SOLUTION (Agenda Item 13)

The Cabinet Member for Transport presented the report, thanking officers for their work.

#### RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet approved the award of a contract for the provision of Cashless Parking Solution to RingGo Ltd (our incumbent supplier of the cashless parking service), by a 'Call-off without Competition' (Direct Award) for a 5 year period with a no fault break clause from year 3.

### 14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 14)

The meeting proceeded entirely in public and therefore this item was not required.