

Minutes

PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

20 September 2022



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Keith Burrows (Chairman) Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Elizabeth Garelick Peter Money (Opposition Lead) Philip Corthorne Jas Dhot</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Iain Watters, Director – Strategic and Operational Finance Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer</p>
19.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bennett, Chapman and Kaur. Councillors Corthorne and Dhot were present as substitutes for Councillors Bennett and Kaur respectively.</p>
20.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
21.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 20 September be approved as a correct record.</p>
22.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were marked Part 1 and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
23.	<p>2023/24 BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman introduced the item and welcomed Iain Watters, the Council's Director of Strategic and Operational Finance, to the meeting for this item. Officers gave a summary of the report highlighting that this was the first of two budget reports that</p>

would be coming to the Select Committee in the 2022/23 municipal year. The scope of this report was to give strategic context to the budget setting process; later in the municipal year, the Committee would be receiving the detailed budget proposals for 2023/24.

It was highlighted by officers that the legacy impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was a prominent factor of the 2023/24 budget setting process; this could be seen in areas such as parking charges where there had been an initial projection of a return to 90% of pre-pandemic levels of income from car parks, where it was currently operating in the region of 80% of pre-pandemic levels. It was noted that the emergence from a global pandemic remained uncharted territory, but officers were confident that Covid-19 related pressures were being accounted for appropriately in the budget setting process. With regard to parking habits, Members commented that this may have changed permanently due to the move towards more home working following the pandemic resulting in lower commuting levels.

Another prominent pressure on the budget setting process surrounded inflation. When the initial budget setting process began in February 2022, officers were predicting an inflation rate of around 5%; however, this figure had increased significantly, passing 10% in July and steadily increasing. On matters of inflation, it was highlighted that officers from all departments would need to keep close engagement with suppliers in order to understand the cost base and pick up the impacts of inflation in a sustainable way. The Council was also making use of the earmarked reserves that had been built up over the years in order to mitigate these emerging risks. On forward inflation projections, the Committee queried what preparations were being made in case inflation rates rose at a pace above what was currently projected, to which officers highlighted that, above a certain threshold of sustained increases in inflation, the Council would expect a level of intervention and funding support from central government.

The Committee were informed that officers were continuing to review scope for efficiencies in the organisation, spanning the usual areas for investigation such as service transformation, continuing to review procurement and commissioning arrangements, and not building unnecessary headroom into future budgets. On a related note, Members highlighted key areas in which the Council could easily make efficiency savings, namely that the cost of energy had dramatically increased in 2022 and an emphasis was placed on ensuring that the Civic Centre, as the Council's largest built asset, was as energy efficient as possible.

Members noted that the pandemic had a significant impact on the finances of Transport for London and that this impact was ongoing however, they sought to query whether officers had any indication of what level of funding would be received from Transport for London for 2023/24. Officers noted that TfL's own funding position was being updated regularly in the wake of the pandemic however it was not yet known what kind of funding settlement the Council would be receiving from TfL. It was also highlighted that, where TfL had previously offered annual spending submissions, there were now appearing to be shorter term temporary spending submissions coming through. Officers were keeping this under review and hoped to bring further information back to the Committee in the January 2023 meeting.

The Committee thanked officers for their report and commended them on their continued hard work through difficult times. Members looked forward to the second budget setting report that would be coming to the Committee in January 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the financial context in which the 2023/24 budget setting process will take place in advance of detailed savings proposals being developed and approved at Cabinet in December 2022.

24. **SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW: FOOTWAYS RESURFACING - SCOPING REPORT**
(Agenda Item 6)

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item noting that the Committee had shortlisted a number of potential review topics at July's Select Committee meeting. Following this, a feasibility exercise was undertaken on the shortlisted topics with one topic being chosen for a full scoping report. The topic chosen was a prospective review into how the Council can obtain best value and practice through its pavements and footways reconstruction and resurfacing programme. A scoping report had been prepared and was included in the agenda papers, the Committee were welcomed to make any amendments and comments they saw fit and to formally begin the review.

The Committee were encouraged by the scoping report and discussed a number of potential lines of enquiry that could assist with the review, these included:

- How the Council could focus on the prevention of damage to footways. It was noted that incidents occurred regularly whereby damage was caused to footways by individuals and businesses.
- How the Council was maximising the economies of scale through procurement of resurfacing services.
- How resident feedback fed into the process by which the Council assesses the condition of footways and their priority for repair.
- What were the minimum thresholds for footways defects to be investigated by the Council.
- How the Council were ensuring that information regarding planned resurfacing works were transparent and available to the public. It was also noted that this would likely only apply to planned works and not emergency works.
- Although the Council were not responsible for the maintenance of a number of prominent highways in the Borough, Members sought to understand what the Council could do to chase up the relevant authorities when these highways deteriorated. Additionally, if the Council was required to perform maintenance on these highways, what process was in place to ensure the funds were recovered from the relevant authority.

The Committee discussed the importance of communication with all stakeholders, including residents, in avoiding disturbances for residents as a result of resurfacing works. Whilst it was noted that communication of the Council's own planned resurfacing programme could be effectively communicated, issues would arise when statutory utility companies were required to undertake emergency works at short notice.

With regard to the scope of the review, Members discussed expanding this to included roadways in addition to footways as the two were so closely related. The Committee agreed that the remit of the review be expanded to include both footways and roadways resurfacing.

The Chairman emphasised that this would be a productive review not just in terms of information being made available to the public but in providing positive changes to the

	<p>way in which the Council approached its resurfacing programme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee commented on and considered the scoping report to initiate a major review into obtaining best value and practice for the Council’s Highways Resurfacing Programme.</p>
25.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and opened the floor for any comments. Members requested information regarding the Battle of Britain Bunker Phase 2 – Water Ingress item scheduled for October’s Cabinet meeting; Members sought assurance that the drainage mitigation measures were not associated with the relatively new visitors centre built on the site.</p> <p>With regard to the Transport for London Local Implementation Plan – Annual Spending Submission, scheduled for December’s Cabinet meeting, the Committee requested to see specifically what level of funding the Council was going to receive from TfL, once this information was known.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that they would investigate both requests and report back to Members.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
26.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Committee noted the work programme and officers highlighted that, following the Committee’s choice to pursue a major review into Highways Resurfacing, the shortlisted topics that were discussed as other potential major review topics at the Committee’s previous meeting had been added to the work programme as future one-off monitoring items. These items included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traffic Calming Measures Information Report - Crossrail: Experienced and Expected Parking Pressures around West Drayton and Hayes & Harlington Stations - Renewals/Repairs for Social Housing Units <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Committee’s work programme.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.44 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Clarke on 01895 250636. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.