

Minutes

CABINET

Thursday, 14 December 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



Published on: 15 December 2023

Decisions come into effect from 5pm, 22 December 2023

Cabinet Members Present:

Ian Edwards (Chair)

Douglas Mills

Susan O'Brien

Jane Palmer

Eddie Lavery

Members also Present:

Pete Curling

Stuart Mathers

Jan Sweeting

Scott Farley

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Bianco and Councillor Goddard.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS BEFORE THIS MEETING

No interests were declared by Members present.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST CABINET MEETING

The decisions and minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4. TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED PART 2 IN PRIVATE

This was confirmed.

5. THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST 2024/25 - 2028/29

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approve the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets and capital programme proposals for 2024/25 (as detailed in Appendices A and B) and beyond as the basis for consultation with Select Committees and other stakeholders.**
- 2) Approve the proposed amendments to fees and charges to take effect in 2024/25 included in Appendix C, as the basis for consultation with Select Committees and other stakeholders.**
- 3) Request the comments of individual Select Committees on the draft budget proposals relating to their areas of responsibility.**
- 4) Note that Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is awaited from HM Government and the output from these will be factored into the final 2024/25 budget proposals to be considered by Cabinet in February 2024.**
- 5) Authorise the Corporate Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to respond on behalf of the Council to the consultation on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and to the Mayor of London's budget consultation.**

Reasons for decision

Cabinet put forward its budget proposals for public consultation. This included the Council's Medium-Term Financial Forecast, the draft General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25 along with projections for future years, the Housing Revenue Account proposed budget, updated fees and charges proposals and the draft capital programme for 2024/25 and beyond.

The Leader of the Council read a statement from the Cabinet Member for Finance on the budget proposals, who had sent his apologies. In the statement, the challenging economic environment was acknowledged, marked by higher-than-predicted inflation rates and increased interest rates, affecting families, businesses, and local authorities.

Services, particularly in social care, housing, and homelessness, were experiencing heightened demand. Notably, national government funding to local authorities was not keeping pace with inflation.

Despite the uncertainties, a 2.99% increase in core Council Tax and a 2% increase in social care precept for 2024-2025 were proposed. It was emphasised that even

with these increases, that Hillingdon's Council Tax rates would remain among the lowest in London. Fees and charges were proposed to be adjusted to a 5% increase, aligning with the consumer prices index and modest with neighbouring authorities.

The Statement from the Cabinet Member stated that inflation and demand-led growth were expected to add significantly to the Council's cost base next year. Notably, the provisional budget gaps in later years were attributed to the assumption that funding for adult social care would not continue beyond 2025.

A savings program, incorporating technology, invest to save measures, and service transformation, aimed to yield £33.4 million in savings over the five year period. The capital expenditure budget was proposed at £217.8 million, with affordable levels of external debt. Earmark reserves were expected to strengthen, resulting in a balanced budget for 2024-2025 and the expected potential to balance for future years.

On the Housing Revenue Account, the statement by the Cabinet Member noted that rents were to increase by 7.7%, following the Government CPI plus 1%. Capital expenditure of £441.8 million was also planned for the next five years.

In summing up, the statement from the Cabinet Member acknowledged the diligence and hard work required to realise the full value of the savings program in the 2024-2025 budget, but notwithstanding that, commended the Cabinet's budget proposals as robust, grounded in the reality of the current environment for local authorities.

The Leader moved the budget proposals for approval and consultation, which Cabinet agreed.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Cabinet could have chosen to vary other proposals in its budget before consultation. However, to comply with the Budget and Policy Framework, the Cabinet was required to publish a draft budget for consultation at the meeting.

Relevant Select Committee	All
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	N/A - this is not for call-in, as the decisions are reserved to the full Council which will consider the Council's budget at its meeting on 22 February 2024. Select Committees will be able to comment on the budget proposals during January and February 2024.
Officer(s) to action	Andy Evans
Directorate	Resources
Classification	Public
	<i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

6. DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM FOR ALTERNATIVE PROVISION - EDUCATION AND SEND

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the implementation of the Dynamic Purchasing System for Alternative Provision to enable services within Education to effectively manage their significant procurement activity over the next 7 years commencing in 2024, ensuring that children and young people are able to receive appropriate education to meet their needs.**
- 2. Note the existing delegated authority to officers to approve Education placements at relevant establishments, under any new Dynamic Purchasing System.**
- 3. Instruct officers to provide regular monitoring of such expenditure to the Cabinet Member in pursuit of the Council's objectives.**

Reasons for decision

Cabinet received a report to agree a new procurement approach to securing alternative education provision for those children outside a mainstream or specialist school setting for children.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education explained that this would be a flexible procurement approach, enabling a competitive environment and pool of providers to ensure best value in alternative education provision. It was noted that this would be for a small proportion of children in the Borough that require such specialist education outside a mainstream setting, and importantly would enable them to progress in their learning and into a settled adulthood.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Cabinet could have continued with the current process commissioning from the market, or a 'closed framework' but considered these to not provide the compliance required or less flexible in approach.

Relevant Select Committee	Children, Families & Education
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of councillors on the above select committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Kathryn Angelini
Directorate	Children's Services
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

7. LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to be published for public consultation and;
- 2) Approves the 6 week consultation to be carried out in accordance with the Consultation Strategy.

Reasons for decision

Cabinet noted that the Council was designated a Lead Local Flood Authority and agreed to consult on a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy setting out how the Council would manage flood risk at a local level.

The Cabinet Member for Residents' Services explained the background to the development of the strategy and how this would become a living document, one that could be updated over time.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None, as the Strategy is a statutory requirement.

Relevant Select Committee	Residents' Services
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of councillors on the above select committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Ian Thynne
Directorate	Central Services
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

8. CARERS STRATEGY UPDATE

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes highlights against the Carers' Strategy delivery plan activity for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and the work that the Council and its partners does to support those with caring responsibilities in the Borough.
2. Provides any feedback on the draft 2023 – 2028 Joint Carers Strategy and delegates authority to the Cabinet Members for Health & Social Care and Children, Families & Education to agree the final Strategy after consultation.

Reasons for decision

Cabinet received an update on the key developments in delivering the current Carers Strategy Delivery Plans and noted the consultation on the draft 2023 to 2028 Joint Carers Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care highlighted how national data showed that Hillingdon had the highest proportion of adult carers who found it easy to find support out of all of the eight North West London boroughs.

The Cabinet Member outlined a number of good practices and the excellent progress that had been made on the Strategy, including how schools were supporting young carers, support groups for bereaved carers, short breaks, outreach events and dementia cafes. It was explained, concerningly, that nearly 76% of assessments for support were refused by carers themselves, highlighted by the Select Committee, which would be taken by through the Borough's Health & Wellbeing Board to investigate further.

The Leader of the Council expressed the Council's gratitude for carers and how the Council would continue to support them.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None.

Relevant Select Committee	Health & Social Care
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of councillors on the above select committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Gary Collier
Directorate	Adult Services and Health
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

9. PARKING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1) **Agrees to change the observation times before a Penalty Charge Notice is issued as per Appendix 1: Observation Times.**
- 2) **Agrees to implement the enforcement of Vehicle Drive Away and Prevented from Issue Penalty Charge Notices, permitted under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (as amended).**

Reasons for decision

Cabinet agreed to enhance the enforcement of traffic management regulations and change observation times for fines to further encourage drivers to park legally.

The Cabinet Member for Residents' Services explained the background to the report, following a review of observation periods. It was noted that those the observation periods in resident parking zones would remain unchanged. The Cabinet Member highlighted the introduction of issuing penalty charge notices without affixing the notice directly on the car, and issuing the fines by post.

The Leader of the Council sought clarification on whether there would be a public awareness campaign before these changes take effect, which was confirmed by the Cabinet Member.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Cabinet could have decided to keep the current observation times in effect, but it was considered this would not enhance compliance by motorists.

Relevant Select Committee	Residents' Services
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of councillors on the above select committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Beth Rutherford
Directorate	Place Directorate
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

10. MONTHLY COUNCIL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1) Note the budget monitoring position and treasury management update as at October 2023 (Month 7), noting the actions proposed by officers as outlined in Part A of this report.
- 2) Approve the financial recommendations set out in Part B of this report below:
 - a) Accepts a grant of £153,440 from the North West London Integrated Care Board to fund the development of an evidence base to support the health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.
 - b) Accepts a grant of £1,583,351 from the Department of Health and Social Care's Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) Workforce Fund to address adult social care workforce pressures during the winter period to 31 March 2024.
 - c) Accepts a grant of £163,419 from the North West London Integrated Care Board to fund two staffing posts to support the implementation of Population Health Management.
 - d) Approve the acceptance of a grant of £34.7k from Groundwork London in respect of the Crane Valley Project Fund.
 - e) Approve the acceptance of additional grant of £445k from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for Disabled Facilities Adaptations.
 - f) Approve the acceptance of a grant of £10.2k from Arts Council England LibraryOn Grant Programme for the creation of bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries.
 - g) Approve a budget virement from the general fund capital risk and contingency budget for £300k to the ICT Corporate Technology & Innovation budget for the Oracle Fusion Cloud upgrade / implementation project.
 - h) Approve a budget virement from the general fund capital risk and contingency budget for £74k to the Cranford Park project budget for sewer treatment plant works.
 - i) Approve the commissioning of Grant Thornton to undertake an accelerated process, working in collaboration with Officers and Members, to deliver a zero-based budget plan to support and inform the Councils MTF process for 2024/25 and beyond. This will provide a detailed analysis of opportunities for efficiencies and savings within services. The cost of this work is £238,213 plus VAT. This work will also support the Council's continuing Transformation programme.
 - j) Notes the £420k increase in insurance premiums as part of the annual premium's renewal process from £1,419k to £1,839k (29.5%), and increase in insurance excesses from £100k to £500k for Property claims.

Reasons for decision

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, delivering a statement from the Cabinet Member for Finance, who had sent his apologies. The statement noted the financial landscape for local authorities remained challenging, characterised by stagnant levels of central Government grant funding, juxtaposed with persistent inflation and growing demand for essential statutory services.

Hillingdon's response to these financial challenges was described as realistic and robust. The Council managed costs through budgetary controls, maintaining debt at modest and sustainable levels. Despite the difficulties, the Council demonstrated resilience in addressing financial pressures.

Exceptional costs, including the staff pay settlement and the use of earmarked reserves for items like COVID-related pressures, core inflation, and the older persons discount, were noted. The projected year-end position for earmark reserves in the 2023-2024 financial year was £13.9 million, with an additional £26.8 million in unallocated general balances, resulting in a total projected reserve of £41 million.

The objective to retain and build reserves in the face of the ongoing challenging economic environment was reiterated. It was noted that the savings target for the current year of £22.8 million was on track.

The statement noted that there had been investigations into placement costs within the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant, which suggested a projected deficit of £26.5 million at the end of March 2024.

The Leader of the Council moved the recommendations outlined in the report, including a number of financially oriented recommendations, such as the acceptance of various strands of grant funding.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None.

Relevant Select Committee	Finance and Corporate Services
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	Cabinet's decisions 2 (a-i) only can be called-in by a majority of councillors on the above select committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Any Evans
Directorate	Resources
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

11. PUBLIC PREVIEW OF MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the reports to be considered later in private and Part 2 of the Cabinet agenda and comment on them as appropriate for public information purposes.

Reasons for decision

The Leader introduced the report which provided a public summary of the matters to be discussed in the private part of the Cabinet meeting later, increasing the Council's transparency.

Alternative options considered and rejected

These were set out in the public Cabinet report.

Relevant Select Committee	As set out in the report
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	Not for call-in.
Officer(s) to action	Mark Braddock
Directorate	Central Services
Classification	Public - <i>The report and any background papers relating to this decision by the Cabinet are available to view on the Council's website or by visiting the Civic Centre, Uxbridge.</i>

12. REVENUES & BENEFITS CONTRACT AWARD

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Accept the tender from Capita Business Services Ltd for the provision of Revenues and Benefits Business Services to the London Borough of Hillingdon for a 3-year period from 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2027 and at the estimated value of £4,572,920.
2. Furthermore, that this includes the provision to extend the contract for a 3-year period followed by a further 3-year period, subject to the approval of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with the Director of Strategic and Operational Finance.

Reasons for decision

Cabinet agreed the appointment of a delivery partner for elements of the Council's Revenues & Benefits service from 1 June 2024.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options were set out in the confidential Cabinet report.

Relevant Select Committee	Finance & Corporate Services
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of Members on the Select Committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Iain Watters / Tiffany Boreham
Directorate	Resources
Classification	Private - <i>Whilst the Cabinet's decisions above are always made public, the officer report relating to this matter is not because it was considered in the private part of the meeting and contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing it in accordance with Section 100(A) and paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</i>

13. GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONTRACT AWARD

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1) **Accept the direct award to Esri UK Limited (via the Vertical Application Solutions Framework) for the provision of licences and software support, and maintenance and project enhancements of the Council's Corporate Geographical Information System (GIS) to the London Borough of Hillingdon for a 3-year period from 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2027.**
- 2) **Furthermore, agree that this includes the provision to extend the contract for two 1-year periods, delegating approval of any extension to the Chief Information and Digital Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, noting that the total value including any extensions would be £510,000.**
- 3) **Agree to vary the current contract with Esri UK Ltd for the implementation and provision of GIS Sweet planning plotter application to the London Borough of Hillingdon at a cost of £80,098 to be funded from the ICT revenue budget and a £26k contribution from external grant funding.**

Reasons for decision

Cabinet agreed contractual arrangements for the provision of licences, software support, and maintenance and enhancement of the Corporate Geographical Information System (GIS) Solution, and the provision of GIS Sweet planning plotter application.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options were set out in the confidential Cabinet report.

Relevant Select Committee	Finance & Corporate Services
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	These decisions can be called-in by a majority of Members on the Select Committee by 5pm, 22 December 2023
Officer(s) to action	Helen Vincent / Matthew Wallbridge
Directorate	Digital & Intelligence
Classification	Private - <i>Whilst the Cabinet's decisions above are always made public, the officer report relating to this matter is not because it was considered in the private part of the meeting and contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing it in accordance with Section 100(A) and paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</i>

14. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN AGREES ARE RELEVANT OR URGENT

No additional items were considered by the Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 7:24pm.

Internal Use only*	Implementation of decisions & scrutiny call-in
When can these decisions be implemented by officers?	<p>Officers can implement Cabinet's decisions in these minutes only from the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period, unless otherwise stated above, which is:</p> <p>5pm, Friday 22 December 2023</p> <p>However, this is subject to the decision not being called in by Councillors on the relevant Select Committee. Upon receipt of a valid call-in request, Democratic Services will immediately advise the relevant officer(s) and the Cabinet decision must then be put on hold.</p>
Councillor scrutiny	Councillors on the relevant Select Committee shown in

call-in of these decisions

these minutes for the relevant decision made may request to call-in that decision. The call-in request must be before the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period above.

Councillors should use the Scrutiny Call-in App (link below) on their devices to initiate any call-in request. Further advice can be sought from Democratic Services if required:

[Scrutiny Call-In - Power Apps](#) (secure)

Notice

These decisions have been taken under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This Cabinet meeting was also broadcast live on the Council's YouTube channel [here](#) for wider resident engagement.

Please note that these minutes and decisions are the definitive record of proceedings by the Council of this meeting.

If you would like further information about the decisions of the Cabinet, please contact the Council below:

democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk

Democratic Services: 01895 250636

Media enquiries: 01895 250403