

Minutes & Decisions

CABINET

7pm, Thursday, 20 February 2025

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



Decisions Published on: 21 February 2025

Decisions come into effect on: As stated or from 5pm, 28 February 2025

Cabinet Members Present:

Ian Edwards (Chair)
Jonathan Bianco (Vice-Chair)
Martin Goddard
Susan O'Brien
Jane Palmer
Eddie Lavery
Steve Tuckwell

Members also Present:

Peter Curling
Scott Farley
Sital Punja
Tony Gill
Jan Sweeting
June Nelson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Cabinet Members were present.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS BEFORE THIS MEETING

No interests were declared by Cabinet Members present.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST CABINET MEETING

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

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

It was confirmed that all reports would be considered in public.

5. 2025/26 BUDGET AND FUTURE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY & BUDGET MONITORING

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet approves for recommendation to Council:

- 1) The General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets and Capital Programme proposals for 2025/26 (as detailed in Appendices A, B and C) and beyond, having taken the consultation responses and select committees' comments conscientiously into account outlined in Appendix F Budget Consultation Feedback.**
- 2) The Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy, and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2024/25 to 2029/30 as detailed at Appendix D.**
- 3) The proposed London Borough of Hillingdon Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26 set out at Appendix E.**

That Cabinet:

- 4) Request the Corporate Director of Finance to bring in capacity and capability to create and deliver a Financial Improvement Plan [*FIP*] with support from CIPFA, as outlined in paragraph 13.14, and to report back to Cabinet on progress on a quarterly basis.**
- 5) Approves the land and property disposals target of £17m of Capital Receipts for 2025/26 to be used for transformation.**
- 6) Approve the transformation plan, as set out in Section 12, and the use of £17m of capital receipts for this purpose, subject to Government confirmation on utilising receipts for this purpose for a further year.**
- 7) Authorise the Corporate Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation, to respond on behalf of the Council to the consultation on the Mayor of London's budget consultation.**
- 8) Authorise the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation to authorise all invest-to-save schemes as set out in Appendix A8i and other additions to the Capital Programme under the advice of the Corporate Director of Finance.**
- 9) Note the Period 9 (December) monthly monitoring forecast, as set out in Section 3.**
- 10) Agrees that all drawdowns from General Contingency, Contract Risk Contingency, Risk Provision against Savings Delivery or Reserves will require Cabinet approval under the advice of the Corporate Director of Finance.**
- 11) Agrees the introduction of a new fee as part of the recent implementation of the Border Target Operating Model.**
- 12) Approves acceptance of gift funding in relation to a Planning Performance Agreement in accordance with the provisions of Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 for**
 - i. Colt Campus - £142,750**
 - ii. Colt Public Artwork - £12,500**

- iii. **Rainbow and Kirby Industrial Estate - £96,000**
 - iv. **Hyde Park Hayes - £66,200**
 - v. **Unit 4 Silverdale - £28,500**
 - vi. **Land off Long Drive - £39,700**
 - vii. **Nestle Landscaping - £19,200**
- 13) Accepts a grant of £934,446 from North West London Integrated Care Board to fund initiatives to support hospital discharge.**
- 14) Agree that proposals to charge for green waste collection (provisionally included in the schedule of savings) be subject to consultation and authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Community & Environment, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation, to decide on such matters after considering the outcome of that consultation.**

Reasons for decision

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation introduced the budget proposals for the financial year 2025/26 and the medium-term financial strategy for the five-year period ending 2029/30. It was noted that the report also addressed budget monitoring for Month 9 of the current financial year, noting an overspend of £1.2 million since month 7, leading to a projected aggregate overspend of £10.1 million for the full year 2024/25. The Cabinet Member explained that the overspend was attributed to increased costs in adult social care placements and children's social care costs, partially offset by maximisation of funding for corporate services costs.

Going forward, the Cabinet Member outlined that the budget gap for 2025/26 was initially £6.4 million but was reduced to £4.2 million due to increased grant funding confirmed in the final settlement, an increase in payroll costs, and other adjustments. It was noted that the medium-term outlook for grants was less encouraging, with static levels of business rates income expected. The Cabinet Member highlighted the need for a new national system of taxation to replace business rates and address financial pressures.

The Cabinet Member outlined that budget proposals and forecasts included measures to strengthen reserves, projected to more than double from £20.3 million to £43.7 million over the next five years. This was largely due to savings identified through transformation programmes, amounting to £66.6 million across the five years, with £34 million of those savings falling within 2025/26. The Cabinet Member raised impact of inflation, increased demand for services, and the need for cost savings and income improvement.

The Cabinet Member drew to Cabinet's attention to the proposed financial improvement plan and resident consultation on green waste charges. The meeting concluded with thanks to the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Section 151 Officer, and their teams for their extensive work on the budget and forecasts.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the difficulty of the budget and expressed regret over the need to consult on green waste charges. He explained that the

necessity was attributed to the Government's failure to fully fund the employers' National Insurance contribution and the worsening inflationary outlook reported by the Bank of England, and that these issues had delayed the final budget and required changes. The Leader commended the Cabinet Member and the officer team for their exceptional work in developing a savings programme that sought to ensure sustainability, growth in reserves and continued quality services for residents.

Following consideration of the public consultation feedback and select committee comments, Cabinet, therefore, resolved to recommend its budget proposals to the Council meeting on 27 February 2025 for final consideration. Cabinet also made several decisions within its remit in relation to the budget.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Cabinet could have chosen to vary the proposals in its budget before recommending it to Council.

Relevant Select Committee	All
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	Cabinet's decisions recommending the budget to the full Council cannot be called-in, take immediate effect and stand referred to the Full Council to consider at its meeting on 27 February 2025.
Officer(s) to action	All remaining decisions by the Cabinet can be called-in by a majority of the relevant select committee (pertaining to the decision made under their remit) by 5pm, 28 February 2025. Richard Ennis, Matt Davis, Andy Goodwin
Directorate	Finance
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>
	<i>This item was also circulated less than 5 clear working days before the Cabinet meeting and it was considered by the Chairman to be urgent, and therefore, considered.</i>

6. THE SCHOOLS BUDGET 2025/26

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- 1) Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant budgets for 2025/26 as set out in paragraph 1.2, Table 2 below.**
- 2) Approve the Primary and Secondary schools block funding formula for 2025/26 as set out in paragraph 2.3 below.**
- 3) Note the Early Years Funding Formula allocation, for which a consultation with Early Years providers is currently underway as set out in paragraph 3.2 and 3.8 below.**
- 4) Note that the indicative budget for the High Needs block was set out in the Council's DSG Management Plan submission to the DfE and that the final 2025/26 income and expenditure budgets for the High Needs Block was dependent on the decisions taken by the DfE in relation to the School Block Transfer disapplication. This has now been updated and a revised DSG Management Plan will be updated in due course to reflect the Secretary of State's decision to award a 0.5% Schools Block Transfer as set out in Table 2 below.**
- 5) Should any further Council approval regarding the Schools Budget 2025/26 be required, agree to delegate authority for this to the Leader of the Council, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation and Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education and in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance, to determine under urgency provisions.**
- 6) Request the waiver of the scrutiny call-in period, in accordance with constitutional obligations, so that schools can be formally notified of their approved individual budgets by the 28th February 2025.**

Reasons for decision

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education introduced the Schools Budget for 2025/26, seeking Cabinet approval for block funding allocations for schools and early years provision following consultation with Hillingdon's Schools Forum. The Cabinet Member noted that the Schools Forum had rejected the Council's request to transfer 1.9% from the schools block to the high needs block for 2025/26, and this request had also been rejected by the Department for Education. Consequently, the budget had to be amended, which contributed to the deferral of the matter to this Cabinet meeting.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Council was managing significant levels of underfunded demand from central Government within the 0-25 year old education envelope and the high costs of independent and non-maintained special needs

placements, which were stated to have increased by 164% between 2014 and 2023. The Cabinet Member highlighted the Council's proactive efforts to expand in-borough special needs pupil places, reducing reliance on out-of-borough placements. This included increased primary specialist resource provision, designated unit places in secondary schools, and an expansion of post-16 places.

Regarding the early years allocation, the Council was required to pass through a minimum of 96% of funding, up from 95% last year, following the 2023 previous Government decision to expand early years and childcare entitlement for eligible working parents. The Cabinet Member advised that the early years funding group would meet at the end of February to discuss proposed changes for 2025/26, and the Cabinet was asked to agree on delegated authority to determine these changes under urgency provisions after the consultation concludes.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Cabinet Member and the education team for their work in managing support for SEND and other pupils. The Leader emphasised that the Government was not adequately funding local authorities and education, leading to a reliance on local authorities to cover deficits. With the Schools Forum not agreeing to the block transfer, the Leader advised that the Council would review service levels to balance the budget and prevent the deficit from growing further.

In considering all factors, Cabinet agreed the Schools Budget and given the urgency of ensuring school budgets were notified to schools by 28 February, requested the waiver of the scrutiny call-in period.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Cabinet could have decided to recommend that the Schools Forum reconsider the proposed funding for schools.

Relevant Select Committee	Children, Families & Education
Expiry date for any scrutiny call-in / date decision can be implemented (if no call-in)	N/A – this matter cannot be called in and takes immediate effect, as the Chair of the Children, Families & Education Committee agreed to waive the scrutiny call-in period in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
Officer(s) to action	Luisa Hansen
Directorate	Finance
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>
	<i>This item was also circulated less than 5 clear working days before the Cabinet meeting and it was considered by the Chairman to be urgent, and therefore, considered.</i>

7. **ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR AGREES ARE RELEVANT OR URGENT**

No additional items were considered by the Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 7:20pm

Internal Use only*	Implementation of decisions & scrutiny call-in
When can these decisions be implemented by officers?	<p>Most of the decisions made by Cabinet at this meeting cannot be called-in as stated in the minutes above. Where decisions can be called-in, officers can implement the decisions only upon the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period, which is:</p> <p>5pm, Friday 28 February 2025</p> <p>However, this is also 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 call-in of these decisions	<p>Councillors on the relevant Select Committee shown in these minutes for the relevant decision made may request to call-in a decision. The call-in request must be before the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period above.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>Scrutiny Call-In - Power Apps (secure)</p>
Notice	<p>These decisions have been taken under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>This Cabinet meeting was also broadcast live on the Council's YouTube channel here for wider resident engagement.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>democratic@hillington.gov.uk Democratic Services: 01895 250636 Media enquiries: 01895 250403</p>