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CABINET

19 SEPTEMBER 2019

(7.15 pm - 7.53 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Stephen Alambritis (in the Chair), Mark Allison, Laxmi Attawar, Kelly Braund, Tobin Byers, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Edith Macauley MBE, Eleanor Stringer and Martin Whelton

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Nick McLean (Leader of the Conservative Group) and Najeeb Latif

Ged Curran (Chief Executive), Hannah Doody (Director of Community and Housing), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Rachael Wardell (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department), Fiona Thomsen (Head of shared legal services), Zara Bishop (Communications Manager) and Octavia Lamb (Policy and Research Officer (Labour Group))
Louise Fleming (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for lateness were received from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport.

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 15 July 2019 are agreed as an accurate record.

The Chair advised that the order of the agenda would be altered to take Item 5 first, to allow the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport to present his item when he arrived. For ease of reference, the minutes are listed below as they appear in the agenda.

4 6 WEEKS CONSULTATION ON A DRAFT SOUTH LONDON WASTE PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport presented the report which set out proposals for a consultation on the next South London Waste Plan. The Waste Plan would form part of the Merton Local Development Scheme, which had been agreed at the Council meeting the previous night. He clarified that the

report did not relate to waste collection, but a supplementary planning document for waste management sites in the area covered by the plan.

The Cabinet Member advised that one of the sites being recommended to cease operation as a waste management site was Benedict Wharf in Mitcham. This was to be welcomed as the site had the potential for housing provision of over 600 new homes, and it was hoped that Mayor of London approve the re-designation of the site.

The Cabinet Member thanked the work of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee for scrutinising the document and it was noted that the Committee was content with the document. The consultation period set out in the report reflected that the document had to be approved by each of the participating borough's executive bodies. It was noted that the Council was on target for having zero biodegradable and recyclable waste going to landfill, with only a very small amount of non-recyclable waste being sent. It was also noted that the following week would be the national Recycling Week for 2019 and the South London Waste Partnership would be publishing a video on recycling across its communications channels showing how waste and recycling is managed.

RESOLVED

1. That the six week consultation on the draft South London Waste Plan, to run for six weeks between October and December 2019, be approved.
2. That approval for the final consultation documents be delegated to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing.

5 PREPARING THE COUNCIL FOR THE UK'S EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION (Agenda Item 5)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report which had also been considered at the Council meeting on 18 September. He took the opportunity to thank all those involved for their work on identifying and mitigating the potential impact on residents and businesses and welcomed the opportunity for Cabinet to ask more questions of officers than in the formal Council meeting setting.

The Cabinet Member outlined some of the actions which had been taken to build resilience, for example the funding of a post at the Merton Citizens Advice Bureau to provide advice and assistance for residents, particularly those from the EU to apply for settled status. The Cabinet had concerns over the relatively small number of applications for settled status being approved, both locally and nationally, and it was recognised that some residents would find it more difficult to produce the paperwork required to demonstrate their status. He welcomed Merton's two Members of Parliament voting to publish the Government's Operation Yellow Hammer report setting out the risks of leaving the EU with no deal, and highlighted the risk to the supply of fresh food and medicines. The Council had been using its experience in emergency planning in Merton to prepare for a no deal exit from the EU.

The Director of Corporate Services and Merton's Lead Officer on Brexit, advised that a meeting had taken place that week for London representatives, including some Chief Executives, to discuss preparations for the 31 October deadline, the risks and the mitigations in place. Further work would be required on unintended consequences and the Cabinet report would not include everything as new risks were emerging as time went on. Approximately 8000 residents had been identified as requiring settled status and support would be provided to those residents, particularly to ensure vulnerable adults and care leavers achieve settled status. The Director gave an overview of other work being carried out, including work being led on by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and working with the Council's major contractors to identify those with EU staff and supply chains and ensuring business continuity plans were updated.

Cabinet Members welcomed the work which had been undertaken, including the proactive work across London boroughs and its partners; and asked a number of questions and the officers advised as follows:

- It was not currently known how many referrals had been made to the Citizens Advice Bureau, however the adviser had been in post since July and the Council was in the process of collecting the data to report back to Members in due course.
- The Council would be seeking settled status on behalf of those looked after children for whom it had parental responsibility. For those looked after children under S20 of the Children Act, the parents would be responsible for applying for settled status.
- It was not currently possible to compare the Council's progress to other London boroughs as the situation was a new one and developing at a pace, however data was being passed to the MHCLG and it would eventually be possible to have a London-wide picture.
- The biggest impact on Adult Social Care would be on staffing and a London-wide survey had been launched to get an overall picture, and this data would be fed back to the MCHLG. There had been early engagement with care home providers to understand their challenges and officers had been working closely with NHS, sharing data on beds and care home places. The Council was working with leads in the sector to make a case for reducing the salary cap of £30,000 as many care home workers earned less than this figure.
- There was a concern over a shortage of labour in the result of a no deal Brexit and raise in construction costs, as this could impact on the regeneration of Morden Town Centre and other schemes in the Borough. The Council would need to consider the impacts and keep under close review. There would also be an impact on larger schemes beyond the Council's control such as Crossrail2.
- The Council's HR department was providing support and advice to affected staff from the EU, who had been identified through the staff survey. There was a concern across London that emergency planning function works on the basis that London councils will provide assistance to their neighbours in a time of crisis. The risk is that if every borough is in the same situation, there will not be the same capacity and resources available to deal with the impacts, and this was

the case for some of the Council's partners who had also experienced cuts to resources in recent years.

The Chair echoed the concerns raised by the Cabinet over a potential no deal Brexit and thanked the officers for their impressive work and all the contributions from Cabinet members. He welcomed both the service being offered to staff and residents at the Citizens Advice Bureau and the features in MyMerton to advise residents.

RESOLVED

1. That the possible impact on the council, residents and businesses of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and the work that the council and its partners is doing to prepare for potential scenarios post departure be noted.

6 FINANCIAL MONITORING JUNE 2019 (Agenda Item 6)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented both items 6 and 7 together. For ease of reference the resolutions are set out under the item to which they relate.

The Cabinet Member thanked all who contributed to the reports and to the financial management of the Council. It was important to monitor the financial position on a month by month basis, to ensure the Council was close to budget to avoid having to make further cuts to services in response to the Government's austerity cuts in funding. Although relatively early in the financial year, the Council was currently very close to, within £0.2m of, budget. However, services had lost funding to such an extent that it was now making it very difficult to provide those services. It was important to consider the constraints on services as a result of the government's cuts, and this would be monitored closely as significant further savings would be required in future years.

The Chair expressed concern that the Government's cancellation of the business rate retention scheme would potentially cost the Council approximately £1.5m.

The Director of Corporate Services drew Members attention to the month 3 report which had been reported to the Financial Monitoring Task Group, with some updates on income and savings. The month 4 report included some adjustments for Cabinet's consideration and a scheme was included which required Council approval, to carry out safety works on the Wimbledon Park lake. The deficit in the Dedicated School Grant had increased to £1.2m in-year and officers were working with the Director of Children, Schools and Families to mitigate the impact and lobby the Department for Education for increased funding.

RESOLVED

1. That the financial reporting data relating to revenue budgetary control, showing a forecast net overspend at year end of £0.708 million, 0.13% of gross budget, be noted.

2. That the contents of Section 4 of the report be noted.

7 FINANCIAL MONITORING JULY 2019 (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED

A. That financial reporting data relating to revenue budgetary control, showing a forecast net overspend at year end of £0.2 million, 0.04% of gross budget be noted.

B. That the contents of Section 4 of the report be noted and the amendments below be approved:

Scheme	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	Narrative
Corporate Services			
Revenues and Benefits	(400,000)	400,000	Re-profile from 2019/20 to 2020/21
Planning and Public Protection	(199,950)	199,950	Re-profile from 2019/20 to 2020/21
Housing Company	(20,000,000)	20,000,000	Re-profiling of Housing Company projected spend
Customer Contact	(1,200,000)	1,200,000	Re-profiling in accordance with projected spend
Children, Schools and Families			
Perseid Capital Maintenance	(177,000)		Virement to cover projected higher cost of scheme
Further unallocated SEN budget	(188,020)	188,020	Re-profiled in accordance with spend
Environment and Regeneration			
Haydons Road Shop Front Improvement	224,000		Neighbourhood CIL funded scheme
Mitcham Town Centre	(430,620)	425,000	£425k re-profiled to 19-20, £5.6k LIP Funding Relinquished
Sports facilities – Wimbledon Park	(1,393,160)		Money being vired to cover

Lake de-silting			priority scheme on the lake
Sports facilities – Wimbledon Park Lake reservoir safety*	1,393,160		Money required to cover statutory obligations
Total	(22,371,590)	22,412,970	

*The Wimbledon Park Lake Reservoir Safety scheme will require Council Approval

C. That £170,860 from the Outstanding Council Programme Board (OCPB) Reserve be approved for further integration work between the Council's CRM system and the Council's street cleansing and waste collection provider's system (ECHO).