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CABINET

18 DECEMBER 2023

(7.15 pm - 7.33 pm)

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

ALSO PRESENT Hannah Doody (Chief Executive), John Morgan (Executive Director Adult Social Care, Integrated Care & Public Health), Polly Cziok (Executive Director Innovation and Change), Lucy Owen (Executive Director Housing and Sustainable Development), Asad Mushtaq (Executive Director Finance and Digital), John Scarborough (Managing Director South London Legal Partnership), James McGinlay (Head of Regeneration), Lewis Addlington-Lee (Head of Leaders Office), Zara Bishop (Communications Manager) and Amy Dumitrescu (Democracy Services Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Cooper-Marbiah.

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 November 2023 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 REFERENCE FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - TASK GROUP REVIEW OF EATING DISORDERS AND SELF HARM AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chair of the Task Group, Councillor Kirby addressed the meeting to present the reference, noting that members were concerned about the issue and whilst a lot was being doing, there was more work to do, advising that mental health in young people was declining and that eating disorders can be fatal. Councillor Kirby spoke on the moving evidence they had heard as part of the task group work and gave an overview of the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services spoke to thank Councillor Kirby and the task group for their work and advised that the reference would be addressed with a formal response in due course.

RESOLVED:

- A. The Cabinet noted the Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task Group’s report and would respond to the recommendations within two months.

5 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL’S CHARGING SCHEME FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE (Agenda Item 5)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development presented the report and gave an overview of the principle recommendations within the report. The Cabinet Member noted that the fees would, if the report was approved, increase each April in line with inflation, having not increased fees for 12 years. It was noted that the Council had fallen with fee levels behind in relation to other Boroughs and fees needed to cover costs. The report described present charging arrangements and comparative data from other Local Authorities. The report also outlined recommended changes to the Design Review Panel.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member advised that evidence suggests that good pre-application advice leads to a higher quality of submissions including s106 terms and leads to reduction in time taken for determination. The Council had benchmarked and these were set out within the report, noting where our current fees differed from nearby Boroughs and this data had been taken into account when assessing the levels of the new fees.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Cabinet agreed to the adoption and implementation of the changes to the pre application fees system as set out in this report and based on inflation since the last increase with effect from 1st January 2024.
- b) That Cabinet agreed to the proposed charging and remuneration proposals, and the code of conduct and process changes for Merton’s Design Review Panel.
- c) That charges and fees are increased each April in line with the annual rate of inflation

6 HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY LOAN (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate Change presented the report noting that the paper outlined the process to find a service to administer the scheme and if agreed this would be planned to be running by the end of February 2024. The scheme would help with upfront retrofit costs on homes taking steps to reduce carbon emissions.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member responded that in order to become a net zero Borough by 2050, this would rely on retrofitting private

homes and the scheme would assist with the initial cost barriers on those. More support to retrofit homes would help residents save on energy bills and a number of other authorities across the Country had similar schemes in place.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Award a new contract to Bidder A for the provision of loan brokerage service to administer an energy efficiency loan to Merton homeowners

7 FINANCIAL APPROVALS - DECEMBER (Agenda Item 7)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services presented the report.

RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet approve £1,126,319 draw down from the Balancing the Budget Reserve to Finance and Digital to fund the Dark Fibre programme of works. The Council was awarded a grant to provide fibre in the borough to CCTV camera and Council buildings. The grant only covered certain areas and additional funding is required to rollout to the other areas. Work has started using the grant but the additional funding is now required to commission the other work.
- B. That Cabinet note the contents of Section 5 and appendices 5a to 5c and approve the adjustments to the Capital Programme in the 4 Tables below:

Cost Centre Narrative	Budget 2023-24 £	Budget 2024-25 £	Budget 2025-26 £	Explanation for the Budgetary Change
Finance & Digital				
Planned Replacement Programme	(600,000)	600,000	0	SAN Reprocurement will now be in early 2024-25
Social Care IT System - Replacement SC System	(636,930)	636,930	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Business Systems - Parking System	0	(60,110)	0	Funding moved to Revenue
Finance & Digital	(1,236,930)	1,176,820	0	

Cost Centre Narrative	Budget 2023-24 £	Budget 2024-25 £	Budget 2025-26 £	Explanation for the Budgetary Change
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families				
Cricket Green Expansion	(39,040)			Reprofiling and Virement to Perseid Lower Expansion
Perseid Lower Expansion		96,700		
Perseid Upper Expansion	(9,130)			
West Wimbledon ARP	(34,220)			
Hatfeild ARP	(14,310)			
Children's Centres - Family Hubs	167,000	0	0	Second Tranche of Grant
Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	70,300	96,700	0	

Cost Centre Narrative	Budget 2023-24 £	Budget 2024-25 £	Budget 2025-26 £	Explanation for the Budgetary Change

Environment, Civic Pride & Climate				
Raynes Park Area Roads - Raynes Park Station Public Realm	1,760	0	0	Additional S106 Funding
Off Street Parking - P&D - Peel House Carpark	(200,000)	200,000	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Fleet Vehicles - Fleet De-carbonisation Infrastructure	0	300,000	0	Funded by Climate Change Reserve
Highways and Footways - Highway Bridges and Structures	14,170	0	0	Additional Section 106 Grant
Sports Facilities - Leisure Centre Plant & Machine	(150,000)	150,000	0	Soft Play Equipment Madiera Hall spend projected in 24-25
Parks - Green Spaces Bridges	23,000	(23,000)	0	To cover the costs of Ravensbury Bridge of £115k
Major Library Projects - Library Video	24,500			New Grant Funding
Climate Change Initiatives - Community Retrofit Loan	214,000	(140,000)	(100,000)	Budget to be paid to contractor in 2023-24
Total Environment, Civic Pride & Climate	(72,570)	487,000	(100,000)	

Cost Centre Narrative	Budget 2023-24 £	Budget 2024-25 £	Budget 2025-26 £	Explanation for the Budgetary Change
Housing & Sustainable Development				
Mitcham Area Regeneration - New Horizon Centre	(21,610)	0	0	Reduction in Civic Pride NCIL Funding
Wimbledon Area Regeneration - Haydons Road Public Realm	(327,060)	327,060	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Wimbledon Area Regeneration - Wimb. Village Heritage Led Public Realm	(50,000)	50,000	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Morden Area Regeneration - Morden Town Centre	(100,000)	100,000	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Civic Centre - Civic Centre Boilers	(1,884,080)	1,884,080	0	Reprofiled in line with projected spend
Civic Centre - Civic Centre Lighting Upgrade	90,010	205,000	0	Sub scheme separated and progressed separately
Civic Centre - Workplace Design	(295,010)		0	Sub scheme separated and progressed separately
Total Housing & Sustainable Development	(2,587,750)	2,566,140	0	
Overall Total	(3,826,950)	4,326,660	(100,000)	

C. That Cabinet note the adjustments to the Capital Programme in the Table below:

Cost Centre Narrative	Budget 2023-24 £	Budget 2024-25 £	Budget 2025-26 £	Explanation for the Budgetary Change
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families				
Hollymount - Capital Maintenance	(38,740)	0	0	Required adjustments to the approved programme for the capital maintenance of schools - these schemes are all funded by government grant and are treated as one budget within the capital programme.
Hillcross - Capital Maintenance	14,000	0	0	
Bond - Capital Maintenance	0	40,000	0	
Singlegate - Capital Maintenance	11,000	0	0	
St Marks - Capital Maintenance	1,590	0	0	
Unallocated - Capital Maintenance	(50,000)	22,150	0	
Melrose - Capital Maintenance	(12,970)	12,970	0	
Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	(75,120)	75,120	0	

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 8)

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