



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 25 January 2022 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)  
Councillor Victor Chamberlain (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Humaira Ali  
Councillor Peter Babudu  
Councillor Jack Buck  
Councillor Eleanor Kerslake (Reserve)  
Councillor Sarah King  
Councillor Richard Livingstone (Reserve)  
Councillor Margy Newens  
Councillor David Noakes (Reserve)  
Councillor Leanne Werner  
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted Member)  
Marcin Jagodzinski (Co-opted Member)

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Norman Coombe, Deputy Head of Law  
Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gavin Edwards, Councillor Victoria Olisa and Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall.

### 2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were no additional late items. The chair informed the meeting that information relating to Item 7, Local Funds Expenditure had been circulated in Supplemental Agendas No. 1, 2 and 3.

The following information was circulated at the meeting:

- Budget contextual information
- Events Budget information

### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

It was reported that the outstanding minutes would be included on the next meeting agenda for approval.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Under Item 8 - The inclusion of Councillor Victor Chamberlain's request for his vote in favour of the amendment to be recorded.

### **5. POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2022-23**

The policy and resources strategy 2022-23 report was included with the agenda for information.

### **6. FORMULATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

The committee heard further from Duncan Whitfield, Strategic Director of Finance and Governance.

The committee discussed the evidence gathered from the preceding day's scrutiny meeting, had regard to the comments and advice from the Strategic Director of Finance and Governance and formulated their recommendations to be submitted to cabinet on the proposed policy and resources strategy.

#### **RESOLVED:**

Recommendations relating to the budget scrutiny process

1. OSC recognises the extensive work undertaken by the Cabinet on the budget in face of rising inflation, rising food and energy prices, the impact of Brexit and the changing needs of our residents as the economy and society

recovers from the pandemic. All of these factors put pressure on the Council's budget, our ability to deliver the services our residents need and the household budgets of our residents. Given the high levels of uncertainty, OSC want to reassess the progress made on the proposed savings, efficiencies and new commitments in six months' time.

2. Due to the significance of the capital programme for climate change projects and due to the importance of climate change in council policy, OSC recommends that an update on climate change spend from the capital programme is provided for next year's budget scrutiny process. This to include a briefing on what future commitments have been made, and what targets have been met, in order to allow for full scrutiny. OSC also recommends publishing this year's targets for climate change spend from the capital programme before the May elections.
3. That in future cabinet provide a single annual report that considers both the revenue budget and capital report together.
4. OSC recommends that the budget report clearly states what is being delivered by portfolio area for the allocated budget. A clear high level P&L table should be appended to encompass business as usual vs project work with clear outcomes for the public.
5. OSC recommends that in the savings appendix that there is a clear marker indicating if funding will be provided in part or full from elsewhere in the budget or from government/GLA funding.
6. OSC recognises that this is the first year officers have attempted to create a climate impact assessment for the revenue budget. However, the assessment which has been made does not meet the standard required for the committee to scrutinise any climate impacts which may be present in the budget. OSC therefore recommend that for next year's budget a more holistic approach is completed, similar to the line-by-line process for EQIA's, which seeks to quantify the climate impact of each budget measure (where appropriate).
7. In next year's budget it would be helpful to list the total amount of Cleaner Greener, Safer (CGS), Neighbourhood and Highways funds allocated and spent per year per ward and the overall totals.
8. That in future years the policy and resources report include a summary of current and proposed budgets by department.
9. Given the opportunities presented to the council by reducing its office space and to save costs through integrating the use of hybrid and flexible working patterns adopted during the pandemic, the committee recommends that cabinet consider more IT resourcing and staff training investment in this year's budget.

## Recommendations relating to budget proposals

10. Following advice from officers, OSC believes that the Council can make more efficient use of existing council buildings and that there is greater potential for income generation. OSC calls on cabinet to review how Tooley Street and other council-owned buildings can be better used for income generation.
11. Line 111 - OSC seeks a further response and reassurance about the wider future and model of day care centre provision in regards to supporting some of the most vulnerable adults in our borough and the impacts on not only service users themselves but also on families and carers.
12. Lines 127 and 128 - OSC is concerned that both these items could adversely affect Young People and Care Leavers with protected characteristics. OSC asks for further information about these items and for Cabinet to consider how the budget can mitigate impacts.
13. Line 133 - OSC recommends that the potential for all envisaged and additional savings to grounds maintenance costs be explored in the context of wherever possible reducing intervention, and therefore, costs in the interests of improving biodiversity. Policy changes must be shaped/reviewed by the council's ecology officer(s) in order to maximise ecological benefit.
14. Line 201 - It is requested that the cabinet member for regeneration reports to OSC prior to the planned cabinet report on the state of the Council's commercial property estate. The report to include a forecast increase in revenue from the commercial property estate and how this revenue figure has been reached. Consideration should also be given to any potential new commercial property opportunities for the council, including changes in its own office space.
15. Line 204 - Given the need for the council to maximise its income generation, OSC recommends a revenue raising target be set in relation to large scale negotiated events within our parks which increases on the current surplus targets.
16. Lines 302 and 303 - OSC recommends the removal of these lines from the proposed savings.
17. Lines 309, 310, 311 and 312 - The impact from an equalities perspective for SEND and Early Years would be significant, OSC therefore recommends that funding is found immediately from elsewhere in the budget. Additionally that OSC review the situation within 6 months to understand the state of the service and budgetary impact.
18. Line 332 - That the item listed as a saving impacting on service delivery be moved to an efficiency, given assurances from officers and cabinet that the

saving is being made due to a reduction in budget demand for the NRPF service. Should the savings not be realised OSC is satisfied the council will meet its statutory obligations to NRPF residents through contingencies and reserves.

19. Line 335 - OSC recommends that the Council reviews its proposal to rationalise staff structure in the procurement team by not filling two empty roles. OSC notes that the Procurement Team has been struggling to support departmental teams to effectively implement the Fairer Futures Procurement Framework and recommends that alternative routes to securing the additional expertise and capacity are pursued to ensure that the Council can fully implement the Framework, including improving performance in relation to:
  - Data collection,
  - Accessibility to smaller businesses, and
  - Social value practice
20. Line 419 - OSC recommends that cabinet consider a policy of direct offers being given to current (not new) temporary accommodation residents in the event the budget allocation for this area becomes insufficient in the face of rising demand in-year. This direct offers amendment would only be introduced as a temporary and emergency measure designed to protect council services and our strategic reserves in the event of ever increasing demand. The committee recommends the policy should not result in TA residents who refuse direct offers being deemed as intentionally homeless, but it should be made clear to them that they face longer wait times for a permanent offer should they refuse.
21. That OSC receives a report on the budget recovery board's actions on the temporary accommodation budget overspend, including recommendations for reducing expenditure, at the earliest opportunity.
22. That the cabinet member reports to every meeting of the housing scrutiny commission on (i) the current spend on temporary accommodation, (ii) whether this spend exceeds forecasts; and (iii) progress of saving measures recommended by the Budget Recovery Board.
23. Pest control charges - OSC recommends that officers be asked to provide clarification on whether the proposed increases on 'inspection of premises for infestation' will impact on council tenants and other low income residents, and if they do, to consider a reduced rate or discount that protects low income families.
24. Parking charges - In accordance with our ambition to tackle the climate emergency and create Streets for People, OSC recommends that vehicle size and /or weight is incorporated into the criteria determining the cost of a resident parking permit. This is in order to increase revenue from larger/heavier vehicles which take up more space and have a greater

negative impact on our roads and public spaces.

## **7. EXPENDITURE OF LOCAL FUNDS**

The committee heard from Rob Woollatt, Departmental Finance Manager and Jessica Leech, Community Engagement Manager in relation to local funds expenditure item contained on the agenda, and the grant and commissioning review report which was due to be considered by cabinet on 1 February 2022.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further scrutiny on local funds expenditure be added to the committees work programme for 2022/23.

## **8. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF REGENERATION - DRAFT REPORT**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the work programme as at 25 January 2022 be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.58pm

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**