

Minutes of a meeting of the Leadership Team (the executive) held in Committee Room 1, Kensington Town Hall, London W8 7NX at 6.30pm on 22 March 2018

PRESENT

Lead Members

Cllr. Elizabeth Campbell (Leader of the Council), Chairman

Cllr. Will Pascall (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Environmental Health, Leisure and Residents' Services)

Cllr. Kim Taylor-Smith (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Grenfell Recovery, Housing and Property)

Cllr. David Lindsay (Lead Member for Finance and Corporate Services)

Cllr. Mary Weale (Lead Member for Communities)

Cllr. Emma Will (Lead Member for Family Services and Education)

Cllr. Charles Williams (Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health)

Other Councillors

Cllr. Malcolm Spalding (Chairman of Public Realm Scrutiny Committee)

Cllr. Pat Mason (Chairman of Executive and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee)

Officers

Steven Falvey (Strategic Transformation and Development Manager)

Sue Harris (Executive Director Environment, Leisure and Resident Services)

Anita Murray (Head of Business Rates and Recovery)

LeVerne Parker (Chief Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)

Barry Quirk (Chief Executive)

Tasnim Shawkat (Director of Law)

Heather Wills (Director of Local Services)

Anna Geenty (Governance Administrator)

PART A (PUBLIC) MINUTES

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Cllr Elizabeth Campbell opened proceedings by welcoming members of the public and the local community who had come to the meeting.

In view of the level of interest in item A6 on legal fees for the Public Inquiry and the Operation Northleigh investigation, the Leadership Team resolved to take item A6 before item A5.

The Leadership Team further resolved to take any business under the private part of the agenda (A3), which would involve exclusion of the press and public, at the end of the public agenda.

A1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Gerard Hargreaves.

A2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

A4. MINUTES OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

A6. LEGAL FEES FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY AND OPERATION NORTHLEIGH INVESTIGATION (Key Decision ref: 05212)

Cllr David Lindsay and Tasnim Shawkat (Director of Law) introduced the report.

The Leadership Team heard about the importance of providing documents to the Public Inquiry and the Police investigation, following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, quickly and to deadlines set by the Public Inquiry Legal Team. They noted that significant expenditure was incurred undertaking the document discovery, categorisation and disclosure work. They asked about the effect of reducing the sum of money available and how value for money was ensured. Cllr Mary Weale suggested exploring whether any costs could be recovered from central government. Cllr Elizabeth Campbell sought assurance that the process was transparent and provided all the documents the Inquiry and investigation needed.

Cllr Pat Mason sought clarification of the number of documents already provided and questioned the cost of the IT package.

Cllr Elizabeth Campbell gave members of the public an opportunity to comment. A number of those present asked questions and raised points including:

- Costs were considered excessive and disproportionate.
- A search and indexing system could be provided more simply and cheaply.
- Could the IT specification be made available?
- Was the Director of Law aware of the BSI standards on information storage and disclosure?
- Was there a conflict of interest for the Council's legal officers?
- Were the services put out to tender and was value for money checked, particularly in comparison with rates paid for legal aid work?

Officers responded:

- The IT system had captured 14 million documents. Teams of people went through the documents to categorise and provide them in coherent bundles to assist and expedite the investigations. Significant amounts of documents have been disclosed to the Police and Public Inquiry.
- Reducing the sum of money available to spend now would significantly extend the time taken to provide the documents. The Public Inquiry is due to start much sooner than is usual for such complex matters.
- Value for money was ensured by using junior or trainee barristers (with appropriate supervision) to check documents, and solicitors based outside London where hourly rates were lower. Travel and accommodation expenses have not been allowed.
- The specialist IT system was put in place within days of the tragic fire. It was critical to capture data at the earliest stage so there was no time for a full tender exercise. Only a couple of systems were available which could provide the necessary service to support the Public Inquiry, guarantee the integrity of the data and provide independence from the Council's normal systems. The Police were happy with the integrity of the Council's document capture on the system.
- There was no conflict of interest for the Council's legal officers as external legal advisers were used. Legal advice was provided to the Council as a corporate entity.

Cllr Elizabeth Campbell summed up. She noted the concern about the costs but emphasised the Council's responsibility as a public authority to make all the necessary information available, with full disclosure, to the Public Inquiry and the Police investigation so that they could reach the truth.

Officers undertook to make information on the IT package available; to report back on expenditure on a regular basis, and to make this information available in the public domain.

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out at paragraph 3.1 and elsewhere within the report –

That the recommendations at paragraphs 2.1 – 2.3 be adopted.

Action by: Tasnim Shawkat (Director of Law)

A5. LOCAL DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2018-19 (Key Decision ref: 05201)

The Leadership Team heard that this scheme focused on small and medium sized properties with rateable values up to £100,000: these were most likely to be local businesses rather than larger chains. Cllr Weale sought assurance that all those entitled to the rate relief would be captured. Officers responded that this would be the case as the Council held the necessary records to identify eligible businesses.

A member of the public asked whether part of the fund could be ring-fenced for businesses affected by the Grenfell tragedy. It was explained that this was a specific rate relief scheme relating to increases resulting from revaluation. However other support had been put in place for businesses in the Grenfell area.

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out at paragraph 3.1 and elsewhere within the report -

That the recommendations at paragraph 2.1 be adopted.

Action by: Ray Brown (Director of Customer Access)

A7. FUNDING FOR CARNIVAL VILLAGE TRUST AT THE TABERNACLE
(Key Decision ref: 05226)

Members of the public asked whether the Council planned to move Carnival from its current location. Cllr Mary Weale responded that the Council did not run the Carnival and moving it to a different location had never been Council policy.

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out at paragraph 3.1 and elsewhere within the report -

That the recommendations at paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 be adopted.

Action by: Sue Harris (Executive Director Environment, Leisure and Resident Services)

A8. CONTRACT AWARD FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION STREET OUTREACH SERVICE (Key Decision ref: 05202)

The Leadership Team heard that this work was funded by a grant from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). Tenders had been invited and a contract award to St Giles Trust was recommended. They noted comments from members of the public who had not heard of St Giles Trust and asked officers to provide more information about the organisation.

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out at paragraphs 3.1 – 3.6 and elsewhere within the report and the Part B (confidential/exempt) appendix -

That the recommendations at paragraph 2.1 be adopted.

Action by: Heather Wills (Director of Local Services)

A9. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS FOR CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES (Key Decision ref: 05186)

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out at paragraphs 3.1 – 3.6 and elsewhere within the report and the Part B (confidential/exempt) appendix -

That the recommendations at paragraphs 2.1 – 2.3 be adopted.

Action by: Sheila Durr (Director for Communities and People)

A10. FINAL REPORT OF THE SHORT-TERM HOLIDAY LETTINGS WORKING GROUP

Cllr Malcolm Spalding, Chairman of the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report. He noted that there had been extensive consultation with residents and that this was a unanimous cross-party report. He drew attention to the effect of short-term holiday lettings on reducing the supply of accommodation available to local people and to the adverse effects on residents, the wider neighbourhood and the local economy.

A member of the public asked about the definition of short-term lettings, particularly the difference between properties that can be let for a maximum of 90 days per year and short-term lets of up to six months. Cllr Will Pascall suggested that the Director of Environment, Leisure and Residents' Services clarify this when reporting back to the Leadership Team with an action plan.

The Leadership Team commended the work of the Short-term Lettings Working Group. They welcomed its final report and recommendations.

RESOLVED, on the basis of the reasons set out in the report -

That the recommendations at paragraph 2.1 of the covering report be adopted and that the Director of Environment, Leisure and Residents' Services bring a detailed action plan to a future meeting of the Leadership Team.

Action by: Sue Harris (Executive Director Environment, Leisure and Residents' Services)

A11. ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN PUBLIC ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

No further matters were considered under the public or private parts of the agenda.

A3. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

No such resolution was required as no business was considered under the private part of the agenda.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

Chairman