

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 15th January, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Bedi, Kelly, Manku, Muvvala and Wright

Also present:- Councillor Iftakhar

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

82. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

83. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th December 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

84. Quarterly Improvement & Recovery Progress Report

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that provided the quarterly update to Cabinet on progress being made against the Secretary of State Directions issued in December 2021 and the overall Council recovery plan.

Progress had been made in a number of areas including recruitment to key posts following the agreement of the senior management restructure by Council in November 2023; indications that the improvement of SEND services was moving in the right direction following the most recent review by the Department for Education; and a report from the Department for Health & Social Care that found the quality of the Council's data was excellent.

The Commissioners 4th report on the progress the Council was making was due. The Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation stated that there had been discussions with Commissioners at the Improvement & Recovery Board on a potential revised model of intervention and the style of reporting. The Cabinet and Council would continue to receive regular updates and the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee had been asked to provide views on the type of reporting that would be helpful.

The Cabinet noted that update and agreed the importance of continuing to deliver the improvement plans at pace.

Resolved –

- (a) That the progress made by the Council since the previous report in addressing the Directions of the Secretary of State be noted;

- (b) That the next steps to deliver improvement as set out in the action plans and other workstreams that had been developed to address the Directions be agreed.

85. Corporate Performance Report - October 2023

The Cabinet considered the latest Corporate Performance Report which detailed the current position on a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) and the mitigating actions being taken to improve performance. The report was to October 2023 and it would be updated and provided to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

The report showed that performance overall was variable with 16% of the KPIs performing either at or better than target; 19% marginally worse than target; and 35% below the red KPI threshold. The remaining 30% of indicators were monitored for trends. Compared to the previous month performance had improved for 42% of the 43 KPIs, remained the same for 14% and declined for 44%.

The Cabinet noted several areas where performance had improved including reduced processing times for housing benefit claims; an improvement in call centre wait times; increase in the number of adults aged between 40-74 offered a health check; and continued high performance in relation to planning application decisions being made within the required timescales. There had also been an improvement in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks, which was a priority in the SEND improvement plan.

Lead Members asked a number of questions about areas where performance had deteriorated or was below target and asked how underperformance was being managed. It was responded that each indicator had an 'owner' and Executive Directors were responsible for addressing underperformance on any indicators they were assigned. The Chief Executive highlighted that performance reporting should be viewed in the context of a Council that was downsizing and needing to 'live within its means', therefore tough decisions would be required on priorities about where the Council wanted to particularly perform well.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet agreed the importance of continuing to transparently report progress on the performance indicators and to use the information to work with their Executive Directors to improve performance. The report was noted.

Resolved – That the Council's current performance and mitigating actions as measured by the key performance indicators within the corporate management information report and scorecard be noted.

86. HRA Rents and Services Charges for 2024/25

The Lead Member for Highways, Housing & Transport introduced a report that set out the proposed changes to social housing rents and service charges for 2024/25. This included approval for the proposed increases to both Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwelling rents, affordable housing rents, garage rents and tenant service charges from 1st April 2024.

A dwelling rent increase of 7.7% was proposed for 2024/25, plus 7.7% for non-dwelling rents and service charges based on the September CPI plus 1%, which was the government rent formula direction. The Executive Director highlighted that the increase equated to an average increase of £9 per week and followed a period between 2015-19 of a 1% rise per year which was in effect a real terms rent reduction. The proposed dwelling rent increases were in line with the governments current rent regulations and the increase was necessary to ensure there were adequate funds to run the services. During discussion on the report Lead Members commented on the importance of ensuring the necessary support was in place for vulnerable tenants.

The Cabinet approved the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That social & affordable housing dwelling rent increase by 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with current national rent setting formula.
- (b) That tenant service charges increase by 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with inflation and support the proposal to recover the additional costs currently being incurred by the HRA in respect of actual costs of services and income received.
- (c) That garage rents for council & private tenants and leaseholders increase by 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with inflation.
- (d) That it be noted that the HRA 30yr Business Plan & medium term revenue & capital budgets for 2024/25 will be considered by cabinet in February 2024.

87. Procurement of a managed IT cloud-based back-up and disaster recovery solution

The Lead Member for Customer Service, Resident Engagement, Digital, Data and Technology introduced a report on the proposed procurement of a solution for the IT back-up and disaster recovery capability. This followed three audits in 2022 of the Council's cyber security and resilience capability that highlighted that should the Council undergo a cyber-attack the risk of loss of service or data would be high.

After consideration of the options to address that risk the proposed approach was to engage a specialist partner to provide a managed service. The

Cabinet - 15.01.24

Council would undertake a procurement exercise using an existing Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement to identify an appropriate provider and contract with the supplier for a maximum period of four years (three years plus an option for a one year extension). The likely cost of the service was between £1.3m to £1.5m over the four year term.

The Cabinet recognised the importance of data security and resilience and agreed the investment was therefore overdue. Business continuity was vital to enable the Council to continue to provide essential services in the event of any incident. The recommendations were therefore approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the commencement of a procurement exercise using an existing Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement for the provision of a cloud-based IT back-up and disaster recovery solution by a specialist service provider be approved; and,
- (b) That delegated authority to award and enter into the contract be given to the Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement in consultation with the Cabinet Member for customer service, resident engagement, digital, data and technology.

88. References from Scrutiny

There were no references from scrutiny.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.06 pm)