

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET  
MONDAY 11 DECEMBER**

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, HACKNEY TOWN HALL,  
MARE STREET, LONDON, E8 1EA**

- Councillors Present:** Mayor Caroline Woodley in the Chair
- Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble (Vice-Chair) (Part), Cllr Robert Chapman, Cllr Mete Coban (Part), Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas, Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cllr Guy Nicholson, Cllr Carole Williams (Part), and Cllr Sade Etti
- Apologies:** Cllr Sem Moema
- Officers in Attendance:** Mark Agnew, Governance Officer  
Lucinda Bell, Education Lawyer  
Lolita Brown, HR operations Lead  
Dawn Carter-McDonald, Interim Chief Executive  
David Court, Interim Assistant Director, School Estate Strategy  
Louise Humphreys, Acting Director of Legal, Democratic & Electoral Services  
Jason Marantz, Assistant Director, School Standards and Improvement  
Tessa Mitchell, Team Leader, Governance Services  
Jackie Moylan, Interim Group Director, Finance  
Meghan Nice, Improvement Programme Manager  
Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education and Inclusion  
Brindusa Stamata, Senior Communications Officer  
Natalie Williams, Senior Governance Officer
- Also in Attendance:** Cllr Zoë Garbett  
Hannah Boyde  
Tony Brown  
Georgia Carey  
Hazel Cooper  
Mike Cooter  
Christopher Davis  
Hendrick Elstein  
Dorothea Kenellopoulou  
Carine Lucchese  
Becky McKenzie  
Jo Riley

**1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Sem Moema.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Urgent Unrestricted Business**

3.1 There was no urgent business for consideration.

**4 Notice of Intention to Conduct Business in Private, Any Representations Received and the Response to Such Representations**

4.1 There were exempt appendices for agenda item 9, F S208 Capital Update and Property Disposals and Acquisitions Report, and an exempt appendix for agenda item 10, CHE S224 Education Sufficiency and Estate Strategy. In addition, an urgent and exempt report, AHI S225 Adult Social Care Transformation Contract, was considered at agenda item 17, New Items of Exempt Urgent Business.

**5 Questions/Deputations**

5.1 Two questions submitted by members of the public were approved by the Monitoring Officer for inclusion at this meeting, and both were taken at agenda item 11, CHE S224 Hackney Central & Pembury Circus Green Corridor. In addition, using her discretion as Chair of Cabinet, the Mayor allocated dedicated time for questions from the public at agenda item 10, CE S283 Education Sufficiency and Estate Strategy.

5.2 Questions were also submitted by Cllr Zoë Garbett relating to agenda item 9, F S208 Capital Update and Property Disposals And Acquisitions Report, agenda item 10, CE S283 Education Sufficiency and Estate Strategy, agenda item 11, CHE S224 Hackney Central & Pembury Circus Green Corridor, agenda item 12, AHI S280 Confirmation of Arrangements for the Operations of the Public Mortuary, and agenda item 13, FCR S254 Proposed Changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. All questions were considered during the relevant agenda items.

**6 Unrestricted Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Cabinet**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 November 2023 be agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**7 Unrestricted Minutes of the Cabinet Procurement and Insourcing Committee**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet Procurement Insourcing Committee held on 23 October 2023 be noted.

**8 F S209 2023/24 Overall Financial Position Report - October 2023**

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- 8.1 Mayor Caroline Woodley restated the commitment of the Cabinet, members of the Scrutiny commissions, and Officers to balance the budget and get maximum value for money for residents, and confirmed that the Government's Autumn Statement had failed to recognise the severe challenges faced by Local Government.
- 8.2 Introducing the report, Cllr Robert Chapman, Cabinet Member for Finance, Insourcing and Customer Service, noted the increase in the overspend as a result of the financial pressures facing local authorities, and highlighted the impact on adult and children's social care, and the increased cost of preventing homelessness.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To approve the savings summarised at paragraph 2.9 of this report and set out in detail at Appendix.**
- 2. Approve the acceptance of the grant of £2,938,093 from the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero's Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF) managed by Triple Point to support decarbonisation of the Colville and Britannia Heat Network and agree to enter into a grant agreement and associated documents with the applicable parties in respect of such funding.**
- 3. To note the overall financial position of the Council as at October 2023 as set out in this report.**

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

To facilitate financial management and control of the Council's finances and to approve the 5 savings schemes and the acceptance of the GHNF grant allocation

**DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

This budget monitoring report is primarily an update on the Council's financial position. On the proposal to accept £2,938,093 of funding from the Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF), the alternative is not to accept this grant. This would mean missing out on this opportunity, and the Colville and Britannia Heat Network would either not go ahead as planned or we would need to reprioritise and displace existing projects on the capital programme. The savings listed at 2.9 are necessary to achieve a balanced budget in 2024-25

**9 F S208 Capital Update and Property Disposals And Acquisitions Report**

- 9.1 Mayor Woodley welcomed the report's support for Hackney's culture and heritage sector but also noted that inflation and cost pressures meant that works were more expensive than they had been before.
- 9.2 Cllr Chapman highlighted the investment into the Care Leavers Hub, the funding of CCTV installation and repairs work at the Ferncliff Family Centre, the proposed investment into a new play hut for Shoreditch Park, and the new leasing arrangement at Shoreditch Town Hall.

- 9.3 Cllr Zoë Garbett asked Cabinet whether the Council had an estimate of how much profit The Office Group hoped to make from Shoreditch Town Hall, and what conditions would be attached to the works in relation to retrofit and installation.
- 9.4 In response, Cllr Chapman confirmed that
- the Council had scrutinised the additional value that would be created for The Office Group, which had been reflected in the substantially higher premium that they would have to pay. External advice had been received that the premium represented good value.
  - the Council would not impose any specific conditions on retrofitting or installation.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the scheme for Childrens and Education Directorate as set out in section 11 be given approval as follows:

**Care Leavers Hub (Relocation):** Resource and spend approval of **£300k (£15k in 2023/24 and £285k in 2024/25)** is requested to enable Council Officers to develop a Hackney Care Leavers Hub, which will provide a physical space in the borough for Hackney Care Leavers to come together and access support.

**Ferncliff Family Centre CCTV Installation and Repairs Work:** Resource and spend approval of **£82k in 2023/24** is requested to re-establish a secure CCTV system and remedial works at the site which will allow the Ferncliffe Family Centre to maintain a secure and safe area for its service users and for the security of the building in general.

**Shoreditch Park New Play Hut:** Resource and spend approval of **£223k in 2024/25** is requested to enable the Council's Officers to appoint a contractor to carry out the construction works of a new play hut at Shoreditch Adventure Playground and the demolition of the existing play hut.

2. That the scheme for Finance and Corporate Resources Directorate as set out in section 11 be given approval as follows:

**40-43 Andrews Road (Rerouting of Existing Electrical Intake Supply):** Resource and spend approval of **£72k (£58k in 2023/24 and £13k in 2024/25)** is requested to enable Council Officers to progress the urgent health and safety works of re-routing of existing electrical intake supply at this site.

3. That the scheme for Climate, Homes & Economy Directorate as set out in section 11 be given approval as follows:

**Millfields Depot (Electrification Feasibility and Replacing Obsolete Charging Infrastructure):** Resource and spend approval of **£120k in 2023/24** is requested to enable Council Officers to replace the obsolete charging infrastructure and to engage UK Power Network Services to conduct a feasibility study which will identify potential strategies to successfully deliver the long term ambition to electrify Hackney's fleet of vehicles.

4. That the s106 Capital scheme summarised below and set out in section 11 be approved:

S106	2024/25 £'000
Capital	126
<b>Total S106 Capital for Approval</b>	<b>126</b>

5. That the schemes outlined in section 12 to be noted.
6. Authorise (1) the surrender of the head lease to Shoreditch Town Hall Trust of the land under title number EGL446822 shown for identification purposes edged red on the plan at Appendix 1; (2) the simultaneous regrant of a superior lease of the Annexe for 150 years to Shoreditch Town Hall Trust; (3) the simultaneous regrant of a superior lease of the Car Park Site for further 78 years to Shoreditch Town Hall Trust and (4) approval of a new sublease to be granted by Shoreditch Town Hall Trust to The Office Group for 150 years.
7. To authorise the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services and the Director of Strategic Property Services to agree all commercial terms of the transactions.
8. To delegate authority to the Interim Group Director of Finance and the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services to agree to all other terms and documentation.
9. Reason(s) for the recommendations:
- 9.1 Proposed Disposal of Shoreditch Town Hall Annexe and Car Park Site, Rivington Place, London, EC2A 3BA: The proposed set of transactions will be subject to the receipt of a premium paid by The Office Group. This amount will be subject to a fair and reasonable split between the Council and Shoreditch Town Hall Trust.
- 9.2 The capital receipt by Shoreditch Town Hall Trust will assist the organisation in funding essential works that it is required to carry out to the building under the terms of its long leasehold interest from the Council.
- 9.3 This proposed transaction, which exceeds the Council's current freehold value, has the potential to unlock a significantly higher marriage value and provide a substantial capital receipt for the Council, as well as Shoreditch Town Hall Trust.

#### REASONS FOR DECISION

The decisions required are necessary in order that the schemes within the Council's approved Capital programme can be delivered and to approve the property proposals as set out in this report.

In most cases, resources have already been allocated to the schemes as part of the budget setting exercise but spending approval is required in order for the scheme to proceed. Where, however, resources have not previously been allocated, resource approval is requested in this report.

To facilitate financial management and control of the Council's finances.

## DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

**Proposed Disposal of Shoreditch Town Hall Annexe and Car Park Site, Rivington Place, London, EC2A 3BA:** The alternative option for the Council is to reject the proposal. This would mean that the existing lease arrangements remain in place with expiries in 2101.

This option has been considered but rejected because both the Council and Shoreditch Town Hall Trust stand to benefit from the transaction by way of a capital receipt. The Office Group is a special purchaser that may not be willing to pay such a sum or proceed with the transaction at all at a later date. If the Council does not take the opportunity now, it may not be available again in the future.

Shoreditch Town Hall Trust will use its share of the receipt to invest in essential works to the building. The business plan attached to this report sets out the necessity and benefits of these works. Shoreditch Town Hall Trust has made clear the difficulties it has had in obtaining alternative funding sources and it could potentially rely heavily on the receipt from this proposed transaction. The fair and reasonable allocation to Shoreditch Town Hall Trust will not cover all of the proposed works but it will allow Shoreditch Town Hall Trust to at least consider and undertake works that it considers to be a priority.

### **10 CE S283 Education Sufficiency and Estate Strategy**

- 10.1 Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care, thanked parents, carers, headteachers, Union representatives, Officers, and Cabinet colleagues for their engagement with the process that had led to the consideration of this report. The Deputy Mayor also restated the important role that schools play in Hackney, which are often at the heart of our communities, explaining that the proposed decisions were difficult to make and had not been approached lightly.
- 10.2 Technical issues interrupted Deputy Mayor Bramble's introduction, but when it continued the Deputy Mayor reminded attendees of the high standard of education that Hackney's family of schools maintained, and that the proposed decisions were not the fault of individual schools or individual school leaders, but were the result of a drop in birth-rate, the impact of Brexit, the cost of living crisis, and the competition from Free Schools which had created a surplus of 21% of school places, amounting to c600 unfilled places across all schools.
- 10.3 Using her discretion as Chair of Cabinet, the Mayor reconfirmed that 30 minutes had been allocated to receive questions from members of the public. Cabinet were asked whether the closure of four schools would cut provision too deep in one part of the Borough; about the changing language relating to mergers and closures; about the possible interest in co-location from a Independent School Organisation (ISO); about the legitimacy of the consultation process; whether Colvestone might have been undermined by the consultation process; whether the Council was ignoring the findings of the Dalston Plan; and, why the Council would not consider the possible amalgamation of De Beauvoir and Colvestone.

- 10.4 In response Deputy Mayor Bramble confirmed that;
- cappings were unofficial reductions to school intakes and did not form the basis of school place planning;
  - despite the proposed closures there would still be availability in other schools in the area;
  - the Council had acknowledged the potential for the terminology associated with school organisation changes to cause confusion amongst parents and staff, and had responded by making the impact of the proposals clear in the September Cabinet report and statutory notices;
  - the Council had been approached by an ISO, but that Colvestone would have only interested them if the existing school was closed;
  - the Council had sought legal advice and followed the guidance, and considered that it had consulted lawfully;
  - parents may have taken notice of the consultation, but even before the start of that process vacancies were present and application numbers were low, and the Council had not actively discouraged or encouraged applications to any schools in scope;
  - despite Hackney building new homes the numbers of children would still be insufficient to have any significant impact on the proposals in the report;
  - and, merging De Beaviour and Colvestone on the Colvestone site was considered; however, based on pupil numbers at the time, Colvestone appeared unable to accommodate all the children from De Beauvoir. The subsequent drop in pupil numbers at both schools made this option feasible in terms of pupil numbers, however this had not been favoured due to Colvestone's financial position.
- 10.5 Cllr Garbett asked the Cabinet what might happen if children going to new schools found themselves in a similar situation again, and about the deeds for Colvestone Primary School. In response, Deputy Mayor Bramble confirmed that school leaders would be trying all they could to make sure that Hackney's schools would remain viable and successful, but could not predict what changes might impact London, and the full search for the deeds for Covestone had not been able to locate them.

Deputy Mayor Bramble left the meeting after the conclusion of the voting.

**RESOLVED:**

**Cabinet agree to:**

- 3.1 close (discontinue) De Beauvoir Primary School from September 2024**
- 3.2 close (discontinue) Randal Cremer Primary School from September 2024.**
- 3.3 close (discontinue) Colvestone Primary School from September 2024, guaranteeing all children a place at Princess May Primary School if they want it.**
- 3.4 close (discontinue) Baden Powell Primary School from September 2024, guaranteeing all children a place at Nightingale Primary School if they want it.**

**3.5 increase the published admission number of Nightingale Primary School by adding an additional form of entry to all year groups. This proposal is related to the recommendation at 3.4.**

REASONS FOR DECISION

The reasons for the decision were included in the printed decisions, published on the 11 December 2023, and can be [found here](#).

DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

**Option 1 - No action**

The Council has a duty to manage school places effectively, and to ensure that schools provide high quality education for children, and deliver Best Value, and continuous improvement through the efficient, effective and economic management of our school estate.

The Council is ambitious for Hackney children; our schools achieve excellent results and we want to ensure they remain among the very best in the country.

If no action is taken it is inevitable that quality of education and outcomes for Hackney children are at risk and the Council will be liable for the costs of schools worst affected by falling rolls as they move into debt or increase their deficit and eventually close for financial reasons.

As outlined in section 5.4 to 5.10, the operational and financial challenges affecting schools with falling rolls will continue to increase with a negative impact on pupils and the Council's financial position. Taking no action to the issues affecting schools with falling rolls is not an acceptable option available to the Council.

**Option 2 - Phased implementation of the current proposals over 2 or more years**

This option was rejected as there is an urgent need to take action and any delay is very likely to result in increased financial liability for the council as schools at risk move toward or increase their deficit position.

Additionally, further measures to address falling rolls are likely to be required in the coming years to bring the primary school estate in line with current and projected demand. If taken forward, the proposals outlined in this report would begin to address the issue of falling rolls by removing 105 reception places; however, in isolation, this is unlikely to resolve the problem and, based on current projections, further action to bring surplus reception places under 10% is likely.

**Option 3: Close/merge more schools than those currently proposed.**

Further measures to address falling rolls, over and above those proposed in this paper, are likely to be required in the coming years to bring the primary school estate in line with current and projected demand.

Action to address falling rolls that involve more schools than the six that would potentially be affected by the current proposals was considered. This option might be



considered by some to be favourable because it could provide greater reassurance that children, forced to move school as a result of their school closing, would be less likely to have to move primary school again if further action is required in the future.

This option was not preferred due to limited resourcing and capacity to effectively manage and mitigate impact of a greater number of closures/mergers.

#### **Option 4: Alternative options for De Beauvoir primary**

Alternative pairings for the proposals were considered and detailed in the May Cabinet report, additional suggestions have been put forward in the consultation summarised below:

Merging De Beauvoir and Randal Cremer on either site was suggested however it was not considered a feasible option for all families as the schools are 1.1 miles apart, walking distance which is a 25 minute walk, and the distance would be a barrier for those living for example, north of De Beauvoir or south of Randal Cremer.

Merging De Beauvoir and Princess May on either site was suggested however it was not considered a viable option as it was considered unlikely to lead to sufficiently stabilising numbers of pupils at either school. Although a merger with Princess May was not proposed, at 16 minute walk (0.7 miles away) it is likely the school will have capacity to accommodate any families from De Beauvoir if that is what they want. Colvestone was considered a better school to merge being 0.4 miles and 8 minute walk away from Princess May.

#### **Option 5: Alternative options for Colvestone primary**

Merging Colvestone and Princess May on the Colvestone site was suggested however this option was considered infeasible as the Colvestone site is unable to accommodate all the children from Princess May. The decision to propose a merger onto the Princess May site may positively impact that schools' falling roll and unused capacity.

Merging Colvestone with other schools in the Blossom Federation was suggested however these options were considered unsuitable due to the distance between Colvestone and other schools in the federation.

Merging De Beauvoir and Colvestone on the Colvestone site was suggested however, based on pupil numbers at the time, Colvestone appeared unable to accommodate all the children from De Beauvoir. The subsequent drop in pupil numbers at both schools makes this option feasible in terms of pupil numbers, however this is not favoured due to Colvestone's financial position. Amalgamating into a one form entry school is not financially preferable.

It has also been proposed by those in support of Colvestone remaining open, that it could be a school for pupils with SEND. However in the short term this option is unfeasible because the school would need to be closed while building modifications and arrangements were made requiring all children to move to other schools. However all options regarding future use will be considered for medium to long term should the school close as a result of these proposals.

#### **Option 6: Alternative options for Randal Cremer Primary**

Options for merging the school were considered but there was no single school located near enough with the sufficient places to accommodate all of the pupils. However, there are sufficient schools nearby with surplus places that could accommodate the pupils from Randal Cremer. Hoxton Garden, Sebright, St Monica's and St John the Baptist are likely alternative schools and all rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

### **Option 7: Alternative options considered for Baden Powell Primary School**

Options to merge Nightingale and other schools with surplus places rather than Baden Powell, were considered. This option was not progressed primarily because Nightingale did not have capacity to guarantee all children at neighbouring schools with surplus capacity a place, based on pupil roll data at the time, and because the distance between these other schools was less optimal than between Baden Powell and Nightingale.

### **The Councils powers in relation to falling rolls**

The limiting factors at play in our options; The Council has to make arrangements for enabling parents to express a preference for their child's school. The Council does all it can to accommodate parental preference for a school. It is of course limited in this when a school is oversubscribed. It can no longer open a new school, as mentioned elsewhere in this report. It has the power to close a school it maintained, but no such power in relation to an academy or free school. Options available to it in taking action to reduce the issues it faces with falling rolls are limited to closure and amalgamating maintained schools. Continuing with current and projected levels of deficit in the circumstances of significantly reduced pupil numbers would be irresponsible.

## **11 CHE S224 Hackney Central & Pembury Circus Green Corridor**

11.1 Mayor Woodley thanked Officers for their work in securing funding from the Levelling Up Fund, and confirmed that any proposed changes would be developed in consultation with local people.

11.2 Cllr Mete Coban, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, introduced the report and reminded attendees that Amhurst Road was one of Hackney's most polluted and that issues relating to traffic had a serious impact on residents. The report highlighted the work the Council would undertake which included delivering new work space, improving public transport accessibility, and significant improvements to the public realm to deal with issues around the Pembury Junction. All the work would be designed in conjunction with residents.

11.3 To the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport from Georgia Carey

*To mitigate the funding risks, poor economic forecast and likely change of government during this project schedule; will the council please commit to prioritising the delivery of fundamental improvements to the safety of Pembury Circus junction and pedestrian crossings before end-March 2025; ahead of any planting on Amhurst Road?*

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- 11.4 In response, Cllr Coban confirmed that the funding of £19m was secured and that the process would start with consultation. The funding would be utilised by the Council and Cllr Coban envisaged the project starting in 2024.
- 11.5 As a follow-up question Ms Carey asked if the money was not spent by March 2025 whether the Council would pay for any remaining work to ensure the completion of Pembury Junction works. Cllr Coban clarified that, unlike the proposals in 2019, the funding that had been secured came with a commitment from the Government and would be ring fenced by the Council. In addition, the report committed the Council to full delivery of the proposals.
- 11.6 To the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport from George Townsend

*The Council's plans for Pembury Circus junction, the Green Corridor, Pembury Road and Hackney Downs station demonstrate consideration of 4 arms of Pembury Circus but neglect the west arm of Amhurst Road. Can the council commit to including pedestrian safety improvements to the west arm of Amhurst Road in the scheme.*

- 11.7 Cllr Coban responded highlighting that all the proposed schemes were part of the Council's wider low traffic implementation plan, which included another scheme at the other end of Amhurst Road connected to the Dalston Low Traffic Neighbourhood. In addition, the report proposed £872k of s106 funding committed to the Pembury Junction to introduce a green corridor to improve the western arm of Amhurst Road.
- 11.8 Cllr Garbett noted the consultations that would take place and asked whether the proposals would result in a reduction in car park spaces. In response, Cllr Coban reminded attendees to view these proposals in the context of the wider work the Council is undertaking.

**RESOLVED:**

**For the reasons set out in this report it is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 1. Approve the recommendation to conduct a further non-statutory consultation relating to the proposals described in section 8 of this report to redesign Pembury Circus Junction and implement a green corridor on Amhurst Road and Mare Street between Reading Lane and Pembury Circus.**
- 2. Approve implementation of the proposals described in section 8 of this report, subject to detailed design to be informed by further non-statutory consultation and for the Assistant Director, Streetscene (formerly titled Head of Streetscene) to use his delegated powers to decide on the detailed design.**
- 3. Authorise the Assistant Director, Streetscene to make and implement the necessary Traffic Orders, subject to the requirements of Local Authorities' Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996; and following the relevant statutory consultation with all objections/responses received to be considered, recorded in writing, and**

signed by the Assistant Director, Streetscene in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport.

## REASONS FOR DECISION

This report recommends taking forward major improvements to one of the most dangerous junctions on a Hackney borough road currently suffering from excessive traffic causing congestion to essential users and creating pollution. Despite testing many options it has been found impractical to improve this junction significantly without reducing traffic on at least one arm, and the Amhurst Road approach offers the most benefits to pedestrians and bus users.

A bus gate is proposed because it will prioritise bus and rail users, pedestrians and cyclists. This will improve the environment and road safety. It will also enable a major improvement in the form of a Green Corridor, which will be a significant asset to the area. This will add to the visitor experience which can lead to increased dwell time to appreciate local green spaces and make use of local shops and facilities.

Our experience with other modal filters is that they can produce an overall reduction in traffic. This scheme therefore represents a continuing evolution of a Hackney road network in which non-essential traffic is discouraged. Longer journeys will be encouraged to stay out of the Borough altogether and many short trips will shift to walking, cycling or public transport.

These proposals are consistent with the requirements of the Levelling Up Fund, as issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on behalf of HM Government, and are consistent with the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy. They are also consistent with the Council's Transport Strategy.

## DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

**A. Do Nothing:** This option was rejected on the grounds that it would allow the continuation of poor road safety and high pollution levels in the area.

**B. Do minimum:** Standard footpath repairs, parking controls and signal timing adjustments also represent an option but again would not produce the level of improvement required, nor meet the requirements set for Levelling Up Funding.

**C. Re-construction of Pembury Circus without a bus gate.** The magnitude of the difficulties at Pembury Circus justify a major re-design of the junction. This option was studied in detail using computer simulation. This showed that because of the number of conflicting demands on the junction there is no option that can cater for all movements and that at least one junction approach needs to be constrained. The restriction at Amhurst is the one that appears to have the most complementary benefits, such as improving conditions for pedestrians and bus users.

**D. Alternatives to a Bus Gate.** The use of strategic sections of one-way restrictions could, in part, reduce traffic on Amhurst Road. It would also, in theory, be possible to restrict turning movements at Pembury Circus in such a way that traffic is reduced. These would benefit a minority of motor vehicle users. The use of turn bans and one-way systems, however, does not allow for permit holders to be exempt. This would disadvantage Blue Badge holders. Overall levels of traffic reduction would still not be low enough to allow an optimal design of Pembury Circus.

**E. Alternative locations and timings for the Bus Gate.** A total of 4 alternative bus gate locations were analysed including:

Option (a): Mare Street between the junction with Graham Road and the junction with Amhurst Road

Option (b): Mare Street, between the junction with Amhurst Road and the loading bay outside Iceland

Option (c): Amhurst Road between the junction with Brett Road and the junction with Mare Street

Option (d): Amhurst Road and Mare Street between the junction with Brett Road and the junction with Graham Road

One critical consideration was the need to allow for access to Bohemia Place, the bus garage and the Iceland loading bay. So option (d) was taken forward as the preferred option.

## **12 AHI S280 Confirmation of Arrangements for the Operations of the Public Mortuary**

12.1 Mayor Woodley noted that new investment would ensure both legal compliance and capacity, and bring peace of mind to family and loved ones.

12.2 Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture, thanked Cabinet for previously agreeing nearly £2m of capital expenditure on Hackney's mortuary to complete necessary works, but confirmed that the decision Cabinet was being asked to make was to agree to the proposals for temporary operations of the mortuary to be relocated to St Pancras and for the frozen storage requirements to be relocated to Jackson's hub. Since the key decision report was published Logan Construction had withdrawn as the contractors to undertake the work and discussions were underway with an alternative contractor to undertake the renovation work. A key decision was still required as the mortuary was still planned to close in January/February 2024 and reopen once renovation work had been undertaken before the year end of 2024. Though the name of the contractor would change, Cllr Kennedy was still inviting Cabinet to approve the recommendations.

12.3 Cllr Garbett asked whether there would be an opportunity to decarbonise and assess potential for solar panels, insulation and heat pumps. Cllr Kennedy confirmed that this would be considered, and part of the process had involved looking at reusing and recycling building materials, increasing the energy efficiency of the building, installing more energy efficient fridges and freezers, and the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels, though PV panels may require separate planning permission as the mortuary is a listed building.

Cllr Williams left the meeting before the vote and returned for agenda item 13.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To agree to the proposals for the temporary operations of the public mortuary to be relocated to St Pancras for the duration of the rebuild.
2. To agree to the frozen storage requirements of the deceased to be stored at Jacksons facility as agreed with the Human Tissues Authority.

#### REASONS FOR DECISION

The current facilities at Hackney Mortuary are beyond their lifespan and need expansion and modernisation

The extensive renovation work required would not be possible without closing and temporarily relocating the mortuary.

#### DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

To maintain the mortuary at another location in Hackney- no such facility exists.

To undertake the improvement work whilst the mortuary continued to operate- the nature of the required work is very extensive and it would not be possible to maintain the mortuary within the building whilst renovation work was carried out.

For the deceased who need to be frozen to be stored at St Pancras or another London facility- we were unable to identify another suitable alternative at a price that provided best value to the Council.

### **13 FCR S254 Proposed Changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

- 13.1 Mayor Woodley highlighted that the proposed decision would reduce the minimum contribution which all working age CTRS claimants would have to pay, from 15% to 10% of their Council Tax liability from 01 April 2024.
- 13.2 Cllr Chapman introduced the report and confirmed that whilst the Council had had to increase Council Tax due to the lack of suitable funding from the Government, everytime the Council did this it also gave low income households a bigger discount on their Council Tax bill. The ambition was to provide low income households with a 90% discount on their Council Tax liability by 2026 and a 100% discount by 2030.
- 13.3 Cllr Garbett asked Cabinet whether there had been any consideration of trying to achieve the 2030 ambition quicker, and what was being done to support residents who had been impacted by the cyberattack, received late bills, and were now unable to access the CTRS.
- 13.4 In response, Cllr Chapman confirmed that;
  - cuts in external financial support from the Government since 2010 now amounted to £150m per year;
  - in real terms Hackney's Council Tax was 40% higher as a result;
  - the Council was committed to helping tackle the cost of living crisis, and was looking at a number of ways to provide support;
  - the 2030 100% target was the political aim of the administration and a Council commitment, but would currently be unaffordable;

- he would look into the impact that the cyberattack might have on potential CTRS applicants.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That Cabinet and full Council note the contents of the report and the financial implications outlined within the report and that the report be referred to full Council.**
- 2. That Cabinet recommend to full Council that Members, recognising both the ongoing cost of living crisis in Hackney and the financial constraints placed on the Council, agree to revise the Council's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme by reducing the minimum contribution which all working age CTRS claimants have to pay from 15% to 10% of their Council Tax liability from the 1 April 2024.**

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

When the Council last agreed to amend the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2020, it also committed officers to undertake a review of the revised scheme and further reduce the maximum contribution to 10% by 2025/26 and move to a fully funded scheme by 2030.

Whilst seeking to provide additional financial support to low income households the scope for amending the scheme is constrained by the need to manage ongoing reductions in Central Government funding. Over the period 2010-11 to 2023-24, the Council has suffered a £150m real terms reduction in its Spending Power which is equivalent to 33%. The Council therefore needs to strike a balance between the need to provide extra support to residents who we think need it, while maintaining a scheme that is financially sustainable for the Council's wider budget and limits the impact on our ability to deliver essential front line services that residents depend on.

The option of decreasing minimum contributions from 15% to 10% balances both the increasing financial pressures that our low income households face, against the ongoing cuts in government funding. The change will affect working age households only as the Council is legally prevented from making any changes to the scheme that will reduce the level of support payable to a pensioner household.

**DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

As part of the review process, the Benefits & Housing Needs Service commissioned external consultants, Policy in Practice, to carry out the analytical assessment of the revised scheme and to model the financial impact on the Council and on residents.

**Do nothing** - Policy in Practice modelling indicates that if we retain the current CTRS scheme into 2024/25 there will still be a cost increase in delivering the scheme as a consequence of increased Council Tax charges and the uprating of applicable amounts. For modelling purposes only a maximum 4.99% increase in Council Tax liability has been assumed along with a benefit uprating of 5.4% (based on projected CPI inflation figures), recognising the Council has yet to make a decision on the actual Council Tax increase for 2024/25. If we make no changes to the scheme costs of the scheme are estimated to rise from £29.32m to £31.01m, an increase of £1.69m or 5.78%.

Although the Council's previous commitment was to bring forward a reduction in the maximum contribution to 10% by 2025/26, it was considered appropriate to implement this change earlier, given the depth of the cost of living crisis and the impact on low income residents.

Policy in Practice were also asked to model the impact of additional changes to the scheme administration intended to make the scheme more straightforward and reduce the administrative burden on the Council, through simplification of the application process and simplifying the rules related to both earnings disregards (i.e. the amount of earned income taken into account) and non-dependant deductions (i.e. the assumed contribution of other adults living in the household). These changes would increase the total scheme costs by an additional £1.00m in comparison to estimated costs set out in para 1.11.

As these additional changes would potentially have significant additional cost increases to the scheme as well as the potential for unintended adverse impacts on groups of residents (e.g. reducing support for larger families), we propose to carry out further modelling and consultation and consider these as part of future changes for implementation at a later date.

#### **14 F S255 The Hackney Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 -26**

14.1 Mayor Woodley reported on the recent rough sleeper count and welcomed the strategy that was being proposed.

14.2 Cllr Guy Nicholson, Deputy Mayor for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration, introduced Cllr Sade Etti, Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing Needs and Homelessness who highlighted that Hackney has had a regularly updated strategy since 2002, and thanked Officers from the Benefits and Housing Needs team, the Homelessness Partnership Board, and wider Cabinet Members and Officers for their contributions.

Cllr Coban left the meeting before the vote.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That Cabinet approves the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 25.**

#### **REASONS FOR DECISION**

The Homeless Act 2002 places an overriding statutory duty on all housing authorities to review homelessness trends in their area on an at least 5 yearly basis, and produce an overriding strategic homeless strategy which reflects the results of that review.

Statutory guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) requires Housing Authorities to ensure that strategies are compliant with and take into account the duties introduced by Homeless Reduction Act in 2018.



Additionally in 2018 Central Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy, which requires Councils to update their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategies to include a focus on Rough Sleeping.

The Council's current homeless strategy is now out of date. Given significant and fast moving changes in the local housing market and the introduction of new legislation and duties under the Homeless Reduction Act, it is necessary for the Council to produce a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

This strategy reflects the latest trends in homelessness, follows best practice and is compliant with current legislation.

The Strategy deliberately covers a shorter period than before to reflect the fast paced changes we have recently seen in housing and the wider economy, and the uncertainty of Government policy beyond the general election due no later than January 2025.

## **DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The publication of a homelessness strategy is a statutory requirement as set out by the Homeless Act 2002 which has been subsequently reinforced by Government guidance. All Housing authorities are required under Section 1(4) of the Homeless Act to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.

Not having an up to date strategy will make the Council non-compliant with legislation and would place the authority at risk of Government action, which would potentially have an adverse impact on any future funding.

Given the current pressures placed on Council services as a consequence of the level of homelessness in the borough, an up to date homelessness strategy that includes a strategic framework that reflects the current market conditions and operating climate is essential if the Council is to respond effectively.

A basic refresh of the existing strategy was considered, but given the significant changes in the housing landscape and implications of delivering the Homeless Reduction Act a new strategy was considered to be more appropriate. It was also an opportunity to combine the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies into a single coordinated document.

By not introducing a new Homeless Strategy the Council is in danger of being less effective in both tackling the current levels of homelessness and rough sleeping and in preventing homelessness in the future.

### **15 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

15.1 Cabinet agreed to exclude the press and public and consider the remaining agenda items in private session.

### **16 Exempt Appendices**

16.1 Cabinet agreed that no further consideration of the exempt appendices in relation to agenda items 9 and 10 was required.

**17 Urgent Exempt Business**

- 17.1 Cabinet considered the admission of a late Urgent Exempt item, AHI S225 Adult Social Care Transformation Contract, and approved the recommendations.

**Duration of the meeting:** 5.08 - 6.45 pm