

Minutes of an Informal Meeting of the Executive

Tuesday 18th January 2022 09:30 am

Cllr Georgia Gould was in the chair

Present

Member	Position
Cllr Georgia Gould	Chair
Cllr Darren Rodwell	Deputy Chair
Cllr Muhammed Butt	
Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE	Vice Chair
Cllr Danny Thorpe	
Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE	Vice Chair
Cllr Damian White	
Mayor Phillip Glanville	
Cllr Jas Athwal	
Cllr Elizabeth Campbell	
Catherine McGuinness	Vice Chair

London Councils officers were in attendance.

1. Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies for absence and announcement of deputies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Nesil Caliskan

3. Minutes of the informal Executive Meeting held on held on 9th November 2021 – to note

The minutes of the informal Executive meeting held on 9th November 2021 were noted subject to the amendment of noting that Cllr Damian White was in attendance.

4. Review of Scale of Election Fees 2022/23

The Chair invited Andrew Robertson, Head of Democracy and Electoral Services, London Borough of Merton, to introduce the report.

Mr Robertson informed members that the report covered the scale of fees and expenses to be applied in respect of elections for 2022/23; also that the scale was reviewed annually, prepared by the London branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators. It was practice for London Councils to receive the report and then recommend the London wide scale of fees for adoption by individual boroughs, with effect from 1st April 2022.

He reported that all fees were revised in accordance with the previous year's local government pay increase; although the most recent pay offer had not yet been agreed, in that the present employer's offer of 1.75% was the most recent one, fees for 2022/23 had accordingly been increased by 1.75%.

Members noted the report and commended the proposed scale of fees and expenses, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, as guidance for the London boroughs, with effect from 1 April 2022.

5. 2022-23 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement Outcome

The Interim Director: Local Government Finance & Improvement introduced the report and presented slides summarising both the current position and findings in addition to the original report. Members were informed that:

- Core Spending Power was to increase by 6.7% across London (equating to about £500m), the biggest increase in cash terms since 2010, but still over 20% below the 2010 position in real terms, with further CSP cuts to follow
- London would receive 16% of the £1.5b grant funding (although excluding the New Homes Bonus this reduced to percentage to 13%) and 18% of a one off national 'services grant'

- £25m would be made available in London for adult social care reform funding, to prepare markets for reform and to begin delivering the fair cost of care reforms, with a further £600m nationally for years 2 and 3
- outside of the settlement, announcements on Public Health Grant and the Independent Living Fund were still awaited
- overall, prior to the Spending Review, it was calculated that £1.5 – 2b funding was needed (equivalent to a 5% increase per annum). Once social care reform funding was removed from the figures, the settlement equated to 3.5% in year 1, and below 1% in the next two years (on the assumption that Council Taxes would increase).

In terms of the consultation response:

- while the new funding was welcomed, key financial pressures, including inflation, the increase in NI contributions plus ongoing Pandemic losses (calculated at £1b last year, with £700m assumed this year) and the ongoing impacts both of lost tax income and risk of adult social care reforms, meant that up to £400m of savings would be needed in the next year
- other concerns were: the late timing of the settlement in terms of budget setting; the uncertainty of only having a single year settlement; the Government's assumptions within Core Spending Power tending to overstate the level of resources available; and the approach to distributing Social Care grant, which relies entirely on adult social care relative needs, whereas if adult and children's social care needs were taken into account equally, London would receive more than £200m more in funding
- while the Government had confirmed that they were to undertake a review of needs and resources associated with the reforms, beyond the commitment to consult in the coming months there were no further details.

In terms of future lobbying, the following priorities were confirmed:

- the need to ensure that London's housing pressures were reflected in measures of deprivation

- a requirement that population projections were accurate – following the short-term fall in London's population at Census 2021
- an assurance that any measures of need were up-to-date in light of the pandemic
- any changes in area costs should reflect London wide property and labour costs.

Members thanked London Councils for the presentation; it was agreed that the slides would be shared with members. The following points were made in response to the presentation:

- there was a need to be clear about the London impact of the various financial pressures eg adult social care integration, to help members lobby and influence within the funding review. It would be useful to have a list of the financial implications, London's lobbying position and the consequences for the capital if the asks were not achieved
- members should seek a meeting with Ministers at the point where a submission was to be made, and to concentrate on key issues when lobbying. There was concern that the lobbying around London being the 'engine' for the UK economy had yet to be fully delivered. There was also a need to consider other lobbying avenues such as Team London, and to ensure that the evidence provided was clear and accurate
- in considering higher living costs in the capital, the definition should include travel and child care costs, not just housing
- it would be useful to construct a policy paper which connected all the sectors, detailing London's position, on the basis that it was not helpful to see London boroughs' issues in isolation.

In response to members' comments, it was noted that the finance reforms and any changes to distribution change would impact on different areas of London in different ways, and would be focused on the distribution of core funding; as such the methodology was likely to have a narrow scope focused on the drivers of need spend, but it would be possible to focus on those wider issues around London's contribution to the economy in any future Ministerial meetings.

Members noted the contents of the report.

6. Health and Care Integration

London Councils' Strategic Lead for Health & Social Care presented a set of slides which reviewed the major changes regarding integrated care and also contained timescales for the new ICS arrangements and examples of collaboration between health and local government.

Members were informed that:

- the NHS aims for the creation of ICS structures were, in part, to improve cross-organisational arrangements and to deliver preventative care using community-based and home-based services
- the three elements of integration were the ICS structures, Place (ie boroughs) and Primary Care networks, but Place received less focus within the overall subject area
- in 2021 Leaders' Committee endorsed a set of six high level policy aims and aspirations. Progress had been made regarding out of hospital and community care, which was seen as vital in planning terms, Pandemic learning and Place level leadership
- in terms of more progress needing to be made, discharge arrangements, financial pooling at a borough level, the relationship between Place and the Health and Wellbeing Boards and the Primary care networks continued to require more work
- there were opportunities for boroughs to positively contribute to responding to ill health and health inequalities and to concentrate future planning within preventative community-based services, acknowledging the importance of governance and decision making models
- in terms of timescales, the introduction of the new legal structures had been moved to 1 July
- some examples of active Place based health partnerships were shared, namely: Harrow Place Partnership (which had addressed health inequalities, the need for multi-disciplinary care models and strong governance); the SE London ICS which was pursuing a preventative

approach, joining up across health and other public services to support its objectives; and Greater Manchester, where resources were being allocated from a single pot, developing Neighbourhood models of working together which had enabled the empowerment of teams to work across boundaries and give clarity on delegation of budgets.

Members made the following points:

- in terms of ICS Governance the NHS was of the view that elected members may not sit on the Board. It was felt that further lobbying was required on this issue. LGA legal advice had been provided stating that elected officers were able to sit on the ICB. It was felt that legal advice needed to be obtained in London, with a view to revisiting the issue at the March London Health Board meeting
- discharge issues were a key concern, in that the service should be personalised. The benefit that boroughs brought to the table was a person centred approach, which minimised delays and was also financially beneficial
- in that the arrangements at a borough level were only effective if there was integration at Place level, it was recognised that not all boroughs had strong partnerships and as such there was potentially a role for London Councils to identify where support needed to be given
- it was important not to sideline Health and Wellbeing Boards and decisions should be informed by Place based discussions.

The Strategic Lead for Health & Social Care thanked members for their comments, agreeing that the person centred approach to care was essential; also that he would gather learning regarding the Health and Wellbeing Boards, and consider further the assistance that could be provided to boroughs whose Place arrangements needed support. Finally, he would do some work on the different ICS models, recognising that although ICS models may differ a general position for London could be agreed, with the support of the CE leads.

Members thanked London Councils for the presentation and noted the contents of the report.

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7. Personal Safety for Councilors

The Head of Governance introduced the report and made the following points:

- due to ongoing concerns about personal safety of members, London Councils had been asked to look at developing some pan London approaches to the issue in terms of support and guidance
- a report had now been prepared, with members' comments invited prior to the report being considered at the next meeting of the Leaders' Committee
- the work had highlighted that harassment and intimidation were significant reasons why people considering standing as candidates for election might change their minds
- in preparing the report, members' concerns about the safety implications of their home addresses being made public had been factored in; boroughs had been surveyed about guidance and training provided to members in this area. In response 19 boroughs had returned surveys, which showed that 8 had, in full or in part, removed members' addresses; the other 11 boroughs considered the issue on a case by case basis. 11 boroughs had provided guidance or training on the subject. Boroughs had to agree to sharing published guidance
- members were also asked in the report whether they would be happy to sign up to lobbying for a potential change in legislation regarding address removal; they were also informed that, as the research had shown a range of responses by the police in this area, work should be done to achieve a consistent approach by the police when supporting members

London Councils officers were thanked for the report, and members made the following points:

- in terms of the different approaches by the police when providing support to Councillors compared to, for example, MPs, and the current position whereby members subject to harassment were required to take their own private action, it was hoped that boroughs might be able to directly access

Government social media liaison teams to develop a collective duty of care to members

- one borough had developed a partnership with YouTube whereby a named officer was classified as a 'trusted reporter' to escalate issues with the social media provider if they occurred
- appropriate training for new Councillors, and a clearer definition of 'vexatiousness' should both be developed
- practical guidance for members, including the various parts of legislation available to them where there were personal safety concerns, and the support to be provided by boroughs, was essential
- as well as the support and guidance, it was also felt important that boroughs should be clearer about communicating the respect required of those taking public service
- members generally agreed with the policy of removing their home addresses from information in the public domain, and to help lobby for this change.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions, and members noted the report.

8. Audited Accounts 2020/21

Members received the audited statement of accounts for 2020/21 and the comparison results to the pre-audited position reported to the Executive at its meeting held on 22 June 2021.

Members noted the report.

9. Nominations to Outside Bodies

The Director of Corporate Governance informed members that the report provided the Executive in its capacity as the Appointments Panel, with details of London Councils' nominations/appointments recently made to outside bodies.

Members noted the nominations/appointments made by the Chief Executive on behalf of London Councils.

The meeting ended at 11:10