

# LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Executive - 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Report from the Chief Executive

For action

Wards affected: all wards

## A Civic Centre for Brent

Forward Plan Ref: Cor-05/06-01

### 1.0 Summary

1.1 This report represents the third in a series of feasibility reports. It sets out the work to date on financial modelling, property, architecture and service issues and concludes that the arguments for proceeding are stronger than ever. This report asks members, on the basis of the work undertaken so far, to agree that officers undertake a final set of feasibility work with a view to bringing forward definitive options and recommendations next year.

### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 that Members note the considerable progress made on this project since the meeting of the Executive in December 2004.

2.2 that Members confirm their earlier decision in principle to proceed with a new civic centre for Brent located within the Wembley regeneration area.

2.3 that Members instruct officers to develop proposals for promoting neighbourhood working across the borough and that the property implications of these proposals are considered in tandem with the proposals for a new Civic Centre.

2.4 that Members agree the project execution plan in Section 10 of this report and instruct officers to take the Civic Centre project to the next stage by:

- defining the professional tasks and assistance required in order to take the project to the next stage
- developing a definitive specification which incorporates:
  - an operational policy for the disposition of administrative service resources across the borough;
  - an identifiable and sustainable business case supporting all key public elements of the civic centre;
  - a definition of the quality of accommodation to be specified which meets affordability and value for money criteria
- identifying a preferred procurement route through assessment of the most appropriate allocation of risks and continued discussions with landowners.
- further analysis of suitable sites as the accommodation brief develops. The focus will be on the three or four short listed sites recommended in this report, if accepted by members, but may potentially extend to additional options which present themselves as having the potential to satisfy the civic centre brief. This could include York House.
- identifying a short short list of acceptable sites with which the council can proceed to its final tender process including, if possible, a preferred site.

2.5 that Members note the approach to the procurement process for consultants for the next stage.

2.6 that further reports be brought to the Executive in due course in line with the project execution plan.

2.7 that a cross-party Member steering group is set up to oversee the project to the next stage.

3.0 Introduction

3.1 In November 2002 the Leader of Brent Council together with the Mayor of London launched 'Our Vision for a New Wembley'. The vision document describes how the council has a once in a lifetime opportunity to maximise the national stadium's impact as a catalyst for regeneration of the area. At the core of and integral to this vision is a new civic building to be the centrepiece of the community in Brent. A new "heart" for Brent. A building that should have exceptional levels of public access to a wide range of public services, including council services, and that blurs the boundaries of public and private space. A building that will be state of the art for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that will be a community asset to the residents of Brent for decades to come.

- 3.2 In August 2002 Brent Council officers started to consider a new civic facility for Brent in the area close to Wembley Stadium. This was supported by the Best Value review into Property Services, Asset Management and Facilities Management taking place at that time and finishing in August 2003. Following a competitive tender consultants Jonathan Edwards Consulting were appointed to assess the viability of such a facility and to look at ownership options and suitable sites.
- 3.3 In April 2003, the Executive agreed to commission feasibility studies to examine the viability of a new Civic Centre for Brent. Two independent financial appraisals were carried out and a firm of architects was commissioned to investigate best practice in Europe and to suggest some concept ideas regarding what a new civic centre in Brent could look like. Work was also undertaken consulting staff and researching the experiences of other organisations in the United Kingdom which had commissioned new, well designed, larger premises. Discussions took place with the Property Director of Quintain Estates and Development plc, the company developing the area around Wembley Stadium, CLS Holdings plc, the owners of the Brent House site, Brent Primary Care Trust, the College of North West London, Job Centre Plus, London Metropolitan University, Thames Valley University and the University of Westminster.
- 3.4 The resulting report submitted to the Executive in December 2004 suggested that it is not a question of whether the Council should take the step of rationalising and redeveloping its physical location and offer to local people, but how and when these things should happen. The two independent financial appraisals offered members a choice of:
- to continue to invest in an inappropriate and ageing portfolio which provides an increasingly poor service to local people and is a barrier to performance improvements, or
  - to invest in a new purpose built home for the council and some of its public sector partners which serves the public better, provides a showcase for local democracy and improves collaboration and performance improvement across key public services.
- 3.5 The report showed that major expenditure on the current property portfolio is unavoidable. The choice members face is whether this is invested in keeping going buildings which drain expenditure but provide decreasing value to the public or whether it is invested in something with a long term value and benefit.
- 3.6 The case for a new Civic Centre however went beyond the arguments of cost and value for money. The civic centre would in fact be a real statement of the strategic intent of the council:
- To actively lead in regenerating the borough;
  - To provide excellent services;
  - To provide joined up public services;

- To provide new facilities such as a state-of-the-art central library that truly enhances the lives of ordinary citizens;
  - To put the operation of local democracy where it belongs, in a quality and accessible setting; and
  - To show community leadership.
- 3.7 At Executive on 13th December 2004 Members agreed in principle to proceed with a new civic centre for Brent to be located in or near the Wembley regeneration area. Members instructed officers to take the project to the next stage by carrying out further work to develop the options and to bring a report to Executive within six months.
- 3.8 A project team, working with the Civic Centre Project Director, was appointed with Donaldsons as real estate and project management consultants, Deloitte Touche LLP for financial and procurement advice and Witherford Watson Mann (WWM) as architects. The brief was:
- to advise on the type of facility which the council could afford and which represents good value for money
  - to open discussions with a number of site owners and to identify a small number of possible sites which would meet the needs of the council's accommodation brief and its criteria for location.
  - to identify the procurement and commercial strategy options available to the council.
  - to set out a methodology, timescale and budget to advance pre contract commitment work on the civic centre.
- 3.9 A considerable amount of work has been undertaken by the team and is described in detail in following sections of this report.
- 3.10 While the team has been focussing on a new Civic Centre for Brent their work has to support the Council's Corporate Strategy; its approach to new neighbourhood working where decisions and services are brought closer to local people. Management systems and a property strategy are being developed to underpin this approach. The property strategy being developed by the Council's Core Property Service looks at the buildings being retained alongside the new Civic Centre proposal. The strategy also ensures the availability of appropriate offices around the borough to support the provision of services locally. It is proposed that these issues are considered in tandem with the proposals for the new Civic Centre and are reported back to Executive by July 2006.
- 4.0 Rationale for Action
- 4.1 In previous reports the arguments were put forward that there existed a convergence of need with the deterioration of the current fragmented property portfolio and opportunity in the major developments being undertaken in the Wembley area. This convergence pointed to a radical solution of a new civic facility which would go beyond the model

of a traditional Town Hall and would act as a new service centre. This would improve immeasurably the quality of service offered to local people, would renew public interest and confidence in democratic local governance and would provide a set of additional services to citizens that would act as a counterweight to the purely commercial nature of much of the rest of the Wembley development.

- 4.2 A critical argument for proceeding has been increasing the accessibility and transparency of the local council something that is currently hampered by the physical disposition of the accommodation. Another critical issue has been the opportunity to deliver services in partnership with other public service providers and the voluntary and community sector which the myriad of different physical locations is currently constrains. A new Civic Centre would reforge a direct link between elected representation and the broad spread of services people use.
- 4.3 Given that the possibilities and options presented by the new Civic Centre have already been detailed in previous reports, they are not re-stated here. However, one really crucial reason for proceeding with this project has become increasingly apparent as work has proceeded.
- 4.4 The delivery of the Corporate Strategy the “Next Four Years” management blueprint of the Chief Executive, the Gershon efficiency agenda, the CPA process and preparations for the Local Area Agreement have all pushed the new management agenda much harder and have made it crystal clear that to deliver excellent services across the piece, the Council must act as one entity. The days of individual services working in silos are a thing of the past and a new Civic Centre offers us the possibility to dramatically and fundamentally improve cross-service (and cross-partner) working by physical co-location.
- 4.5 The move to pull together all the “headquarters” functions of the council now has a managerial imperative if we are to deliver more efficient services that are joined up and focussed. Local people are not greatly impressed by the tyranny of service silos and restrictive professionalism. As the Council is clearly on an improvement trajectory, the new Civic Centre will become the physical embodiment of this change. Not only will a new centre allow us to work more effectively together, it will allow us to apply a more imaginative approach, looking again at the merging of back and front office functions and delivering seamless services with partners such as the Brent Primary Care Trust. The philosophy that will transform our approach to service delivery is firmly rooted in integration rather than centralisation and collaboration not command and control.
- 4.6 The focus on a new Civic Centre fits in with our approach to new neighbourhood working and subsidiarity– that decisions and services are made as close as possible to local people. Alongside our focus on the Wembley development, we are also developing management systems and a property strategy to underpin them, that delivers

services with a more local focus. What we are looking at is ensuring that services that people want such as libraries and sports centres and one stop shops will be accessible across the borough delivering services closest to people. What we are not looking at is the sterile and failed approach of Islington and Tower Hamlets in the 1980s with a set of mini-town halls that merely created new silos and further fragmented service provision. For the vast majority of local people, it is irrelevant where most Council officers are based, what is relevant is that appropriate services are provided to every ward. Our approach to the street scene, with ward based officers and ward working with Councillors and officers working together, is our new and focussed way of working. An efficient, effective and integrated Civic Centre can only enhance this approach.

## 5. The Specification for the new Civic Centre.

### Vision.

5.1 Brent Council's Executive decision in December 2004 to proceed with a feasibility study for the Civic Centre was informed in part by a report prepared by Witherford Watson Mann Architects (WWM) in August 2004, entitled 'Brent Civic Centre , A Position Paper on its Context, Identity and Location'. The report drew on examples, many in Northern Europe, of attempts to locate civic administrations and political debate in the active heart of the city and identified the following considerations:

- Civic Centres in London are now network centres. Is this new identity appropriately expressed in one large building or adjoining buildings which separate the administrative from the democratic and public activities?
- The relative proportions of public, democratic and administrative uses are as important in determining the character of the building as their actual quality
- The informal public spaces outside and inside the civic centre affect the perception and the reality of access: they are the places where an exchange between different social groups takes places
- The Wembley regeneration area is well suited as a location for Brent's Civic Centre
- The most appropriate model for the Civic Centre will to a large extent determine the location

5.1.2 A new Civic Centre will be the physical manifestation of the organisation and support the way in which Brent carries out its activities. As has already been identified, the facilities and design of the Civic Centre must improve opportunities for people to access local services, establish accountability for services and facilitate delivery on local areas. These issues are reflected in the three core components of

the Civic Centre, Public, Democratic and Administrative, which are described in more detail below.

5.1.3 WWM's study identified three models for building with these elements, an All In One, a House of Democracy and civic centre offices and a campus. These models are still being considered although it seems likely that the 'campus' model will not be appropriate for their vision and the available sites. This will be discussed in more detail when the matter is next reported to members.

## 5.2 Getting the specification right.

5.2.1 Significant progress has taken place this year in the development of a better understanding of the council's accommodation needs and the constituent parts of the specification for a civic centre.

5.2.2 Various strands of work have been carried out to define the democratic and community-facing elements of the Council's operations, together with further consultation on service departments' administrative working patterns and potential future needs.

5.2.3 Democratic and public-facing activities were explored more fully, including a more flexible approach for public access to the council's committee and other public meeting functions, the provision of appropriate community assembly and meetings rooms, an informal but efficient planned use of space for a one stop shop facility and an allowance for a new state-of-the-art central library for the borough.

5.2.4 A questionnaire was sent out to departmental heads requesting feedback in a number of areas. Subject areas where feedback was requested included information on departmental working and occupancy patterns, forecasts on the profile of departmental services in the future and views on the possible trend towards a consolidated or dispersed model of operation.

5.2.5 Supporting report matter on the product of this consultative work is available.

5.2.6 As a result of this work, the project team has begun considering two possible models for a specification for the Civic Centre:

- a consolidated model based upon a comprehensive set of democratic and community related facilities and integrated service delivery that meets the vision for the new Civic Centre;
- a model as above that continues to meet the vision but which assumes that some of the Council's administrative functions are more widely dispersed across the borough therefore offices and other related areas would be smaller.

- 5.2.7 The consolidated model for a Civic Centre is currently generating some 29,000 nett square metres (about 37,700 gross square metres) of accommodation whereas the neighbourhood model creates a Civic Centre of some 20,400 nett square metres (about 26,900 gross square metres). Both models provide a practical and efficient solution to the council's needs, although the neighbourhood model will require a more significant and complementary accommodation strategy for departmental services in neighbourhood locations.
- 5.2.8 It is recommended that all aspects of the Council's accommodation need to be further refined in the coming months to arrive at a properly balanced model, suitable for the long term future of the council's service profile. It is anticipated that there exist a number of opportunities to drive a final brief towards the lower end of this size range as a better understanding is reached on the potential for sharing space without compromising operational effectiveness.
- 5.2.9 It should also be fully recognised that a Civic Centre specification based purely upon the council's needs today is unlikely to reflect its needs in 5, 10 or 15 years' time. For this reason, it will be important to ensure that the accommodation has a sustainable design character with the flexibility to accommodate change into the future.

### 5.3 Core facilities – A better Town Hall

#### 5.3.1 The Civic Centre will house three core types of facility:

Public functions	This type of accommodation comprises suites of multi-purpose meeting, training, conference and assembly room spaces and also comprises more community facing service spaces, such as the One Stop Shop, central library and registrars service.
Democratic functions	This type of accommodation will comprise Members' accommodation, Mayoral and Leader's offices and political group offices. The Council chamber and committee rooms are also classifiable under this category.
Administrative	This type of accommodation will include departmental office areas, meeting rooms and areas and other ancillary administrative ancillary functions.



5.3.2 Each of these core facilities is explored in more detail in Sections 5.5, together with a more detailed commentary on the differences in accommodation make up between the larger and smaller sized models. A summary schedule of accommodation for the integrated and neighbourhood civic centre models is attached in Appendix 1.

#### 5.4 Additional facilities – A Civic Centre for Brent

5.4.1 The vision is clear that a new Civic Centre should be capable of housing a number of additional facilities which have a more social, leisure and recreational flavour to them and which would be largely self-sustainable financially. Such facilities should include performance space, a voluntary sector resource centre and public exhibition space. These spaces together have the potential of increasing the size of the Civic Centre by between 5,000 and 10,000 nett square metres.

5.4.2 Our vision for the new Civic Centre envisages the blurring of public and private space. That means shops and cafes for our residents to use as part of their visit to the Civic Centre. Donaldsons initial estimate is that some 150 to 200 nett square metres of space could be taken up by retail and other service unit businesses. This will depend on the site selected and its proximity to other commercial and retail uses in the immediate vicinity.

5.4.3 At this stage, such potential additional facilities have not been incorporated into the accommodation requirements quoted in the report. However, such facilities would need in the first instance to be treated on a cost neutral basis.

#### 5.5 Making the Civic Centre work.

The Civic Centre professional team has been examining the content of the core facilities as part of its feasibility study. The architects, Witherford Watson Mann, have focused their time on the public and democratic functions. Donaldsons and the Council's own management have together focused on obtaining a better definition of the Council staffing numbers to be accommodated in the Civic Centre.

A series of meetings has taken place with many of the Council's departmental management teams, with key Council services, such as the library service, registrar functions, democratic process and the one stop shop service and with other specialist functions such as town planning.

A number of important themes have emerged as a result of this process of consultation. These are set out below.

##### 5.5.1 *Making it work for the Public*

“We are not designing a Civic Centre because people have to come. We are designing a Civic Centre because people want to come.” (Marianne Locke – Assistant Director Lifelong Learning and Cultural Services.)

The public section of the building must facilitate, unchallenged access and face-to-face contact with the council. This part of the Civic Centre might comprise: the new central library, local history archive, general information point, registrar and associated garden, one stop shop, community performance space, restaurant/cafe and their associated foyers and circulation space. By delivering these services effectively in environments that are congenial and without strong representations of authority, the Council can help build a sense of trust and ownership amongst its citizens.

The public section of the building supports the core democratic services. In new Civic Centres the inclusion of everyday public uses can bring a more diverse range of people into contact with local government, adding vitality to the building. Such informal use of the building on an everyday level can serve to reduce people’s perception of local government as something that is distanced and inaccessible to them. These ‘softer’ services in close proximity to the democratic activities taking place in the committee rooms and council chamber may increase the opportunity for the public to find out about and engage with Brent’s decision making processes.

Public activities need to be located at or as close to the active public ground level as possible. This will translate into a significantly greater ground floor ‘footprint’ for the Civic Centre than would be the case for a council office building. The reasonable minimum ground floor area we have calculated is 6690 nett square metres (7737 gross square metres). This compares to the existing Town Hall built footprint of approx 3600 gross square metres, therefore requiring an increase of approx 115%. (Witherford Watson Mann Appendix 2)

#### 5.5.2 New State-of-the-Art Central Library.

A significant opportunity for the new Civic Centre is to establish a state of the art central library on the site. There is no such facility in the Borough and other authorities have developed highly regarded buildings, which provide a wide range of services and attract large numbers of residents and visitors. The use of space will need to be flexible to meet changing needs but it is envisaged that the library would include a children’s library; a young people’s area; study space; an ICT learning area where classes could be provided; a family and local history section; self-service terminals and various other shared spaces. It is anticipated that the library would also be closely linked to café/eating facilities.

Some initial design work has been undertaken which suggests that such a facility could be up to 2,500 nett square metres in size. (The current Willesden Green Library Centre is 1,800 nett square metres). This has obvious implications for the construction costs of the overall Civic Centre, where a smaller library was originally envisaged in the initial costings. There are also the on-going running costs to consider. However, there are recent indications that the Government may agree Big Lottery Funding to be available for such projects and this will be pursued along with other external funding options over the next phase of this project. Similarly consideration will be given to the overall strategy and service needs for all libraries across the Borough linked to the whole neighbourhood agenda (see section 4).

### 5.5.3 Registrar

This activity is a key service provided by the Council and one that can be seen to be a universal one. As every constituent at some point has some contact or experience of births, deaths and marriages, this service intricately relates the experience of the Civic Centre to the life of the community. It can provide a celebratory aspect to the daily life of the Civic Centre if marriage and citizenship ceremonies have some sort of significant relationship to the activities of the centre: either by bringing life to the garden, as is currently the case in the existing Town Hall, or by the location of the wedding/ civic room itself.

The wedding garden is a core factor in the success of the current wedding services offered at Brent Town Hall and a space equal to this must be offered in the new Civic Centre.

Civic activities such as Citizenship Ceremonies provide an opportunity to 'capture' people's longer term interest in democratic activities by virtue of their 'special' personal contact, and heightened collective awareness, throughout the ceremony process.

The new civic centre will support new methods of service delivery in a number of possible ways. It will allow all of the registry services staff to be on site possibly improving the internal efficiency of the registry (there is currently a back of house operation at Kingsbury). It will also encourage greater links with both the library and the one stop shop, allowing efficiencies resulting from the sharing of ancillary spaces and the provision of joined up services where possible.

### 5.5.4 One Stop Shop – face-to-face contact.

The One Stop Shop is the point of contact between the services provided by the council and the public. In the new Civic Centre, it will reflect the increased use in the future of call centres and the internet. It is likely that those people that will be using the One Stop Shop will be the cases that are not able to access service through these means, either through poverty, language difficulties or other special needs or

perhaps people who just want to speak to a human being. The aim of the service is empathy as well as efficiency.

#### 5.5.5 Assembly / performance hall for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

As one of the 'soft spaces' in the new Civic Centre, it provides a level of community involvement/ attachment to the civic centre and the possibility of engagement with the political activities going on within it. It is also important for the Council to provide a place in which large groups from within the local community can gather for major festivals, events, or family/community gatherings.

The current Paul Daisley Hall is fully booked for months ahead. The large hall can provide a degree of activity and vitality to the Civic Centre.

The 500 -1000 person hall would need to be on the ground floor to manage the movement of people that would result from the activities that might take place there. It would need to be both visible and highly accessible from the public realm of the Civic Centre. If the performance spaces are to be included in the civic centre then it would be sensible for the large hall to share ancillary spaces and, most likely, management with the performance venue.

#### 5.5.6 First Impressions – more than just a public foyer

Approximately 1700 members of the public will enter the civic centre each day, based on an estimate of 600,000 a year. This figure includes the current library in the Town Hall. A new central library without doubt would considerably increase these figures. This will be combined with all of the staff who work in the building. It should be an easy threshold to cross and the place in which Brent Council 'hosts' the public's engagement with services and events and as such should be a welcoming place and not a representation of power and control.

It is necessary to provide a public foyer for the Civic Centre to operate, but with a sensible increase in the floor area of this space a significantly greater degree of participation may be encouraged. We have estimated that a foyer of approximately 30% of the ground floor will be required.

Size is not the only important factor in achieving greater public participation. The carefully judged relationship between the foyer, the adjacent public uses and the active external public spaces will help support the more diverse use of the building and create a place "that engenders an exchange of views and ideas – a dialogue" (Phil Newby – Director of Policy and Regeneration.)

The public foyer should be programmed, managed, and probably subsidised to establish the conditions that actively cultivate the public's engagement rather than simply waiting for things to happen.

#### 5.5.7 Local Democracy at its core

“more ambitious local authorities want to be more accountable for delivery of services and commissioning of services” (Phil Newby – Director of Policy and Regeneration)

The democratic section of the building is its core; without it the Civic Centre is little more than council offices with a weaker sense of public “ownership”. This part of the civic centre comprise: the Council Chamber, the committee rooms, the political offices, the civic room, and their associated foyers and circulation space.

The change to the executive/committee system must be accommodated. This translates as more committee rooms, in a more equal relationship to the full council chamber than previously. The public must be given place as participants rather than spectators in the council chamber and committee rooms, the rooms therefore need to be larger, with different layouts. They require ease of access, avoiding monumentality and formality while respecting the dignity of the space.

#### 5.5.8 Committee Rooms

The new Civic Centre provides an opportunity to reconfigure the committee rooms in recognition of the new cabinet model of local government accountability, which in Brent also includes a Mayor and overview and scrutiny functions, and encourage a greater public participation in this process. The committee, witnesses and public should be organised in an informal triangular relationship.

The committee rooms need to be easily accessible from the major public space of the civic centre. They also require close proximity to both the political offices of the members and the committee rooms. The possibility of overlaps with the meeting spaces required by the officers and for training would also suggest that reasonable proximity to the administrative area of the building would be required. Meeting rooms and spaces as well as training rooms have also been factored into the administrative section and into the central library.

#### 5.5.9 Council Chamber

Like the committee rooms, the council chamber should be designed to accommodate the new cabinet based system of local government accountability and encourage a greater public participation in this process. These changes can be seen in an analysis of two possible models for the council chamber set out in the appended report by

Wetherford Watson Mann Architects. One model is a traditional arrangement where councillors face the Mayor, with the public seated behind. The second model is the tri-partite model where there is more equality between the councilors, witnesses (e.g. officers) and the public where all parties face one-another during debate.

The council chamber needs to be easily accessible/ visible from the major public space of the Civic Centre. As discussed in our earlier report on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2002, it does not have to be on the ground floor. The first floor seems to be a more suitable location for this use.

The chamber requires close proximity to both the political offices of the members and the committee rooms. The degree of separation between the public, the members and the council officers for security reasons may also be an issue for the Civic Centre.

A civic room with a level floor could provide an alternative to building a council chamber. The room could be set up ten times a year for a full Council meeting, but provide the flexibility to be used all year to accommodate civic receptions, presentations and ceremonies.

Taken together, the proposed total democratic suite of rooms (council chamber, committee rooms, informal circulation/lobby spaces, political offices), equate to approx 1955 nett square metres. This compares to an existing provision of 786 nett square metres.

#### 5.5.10 Staff – providing the service

5.5.11 The staff offices of the Council currently occupy approximately 28,500 nett square metres of space in the Borough, housing some 2600 workstations in 25 buildings. This produces an existing desk density of around 10.4 square metres per workstation and, for the most part, each council employee has their own permanently allocated desk.

5.5.12 Under the assumptions for the consolidated Civic Centre model, it is envisaged that around 70 % of the current accommodation for staff would be consolidated into the civic centre, leaving a balance of existing neighbourhood satellite property to house the balance of staff and services. The figure of 70% equates to the number of staff currently working in the Wembley buildings that will be vacated following the building of a new Civic Centre. The only significant retained building in the consolidated model in Wembley would be Mahatma Gandhi House and the table below lists out the proposed key properties to be retained and vacated.

Property	Size ( Sq m gross)	Staff	Tenure	Status
Brent House	5890	612	Leased	Vacate
Brent House Annexe	987	114	Leased	Vacate
Chesterfield House	2180	223	Leased	Vacate
Cottrell House	807	87	Leased	Vacate
Elizabeth House	948	57	Leased	Vacate
London Road Wembley	1168	136	Leased	Vacate
Pyramid House	561	20	Leased	Vacate
Town Hall & Annexe	6365	326	Owned	Vacate
Triangle House	370	61	Leased	Vacate
Quality House, Willesden	1173	75	Owned	Vacate
Brondesbury Road	1194	104	Owned	Retain
Mahatma Gandhi House	4125	296	Leased	Retain
Gwenneth Rickus	2144	104	Owned	Retain
Challenge House	458	21	Owned	Retain
Craven Park, Harlesden	279	20	Leased	Retain
Park House, Harlesden	412	17	Leased	Retain
Courtyard, Harlesden	232	37	Leased	Retain
Hampton House	1068	8	Leased	Retain
Kingsbury OSS	285	15	Leased	Retain
Bridge Park	713	50	Owned	Retain
Douglas Resource Centre	193	17	Owned	Retain
Grange Rd, Willesden	147	13	Owned	Retain
Cobbold Rd, Willesden	135	13	Owned	Retain

A full schedule of the council's total current property portfolio is included at Appendix 3

5.5.13 Using an assumption of 70% of staff equates to 1800 staff the final area sizing takes two further factors into account:

- a modest element of desk sharing has been incorporated, to the tune of 11%;
- space standards have been slightly adjusted to provide overall office accommodation (including circulation, meeting rooms and so on) at the rate of 11nett square metres per desk.

Such assumptions are in line with modern office practices that have emerged over the past ten years where organisations acknowledge staff needs for flexible working and where modern information and communications technology (ICT) permits more efficient working arrangements to be used.

Further work is required to further analyse these numbers taking into account the parallel work to be done over the next year to develop proposals for promoting neighbourhood working across the borough.

5.5.14 As described in paragraph 5.2.6 above some assumptions have been made that reduce staff numbers in the neighbourhood Civic Centre model. It is envisaged that around half of the current accommodation for administrative functions would be housed in the civic centre, leaving a significant balance of existing neighbourhood satellite property to accommodate neighbourhood facing resources. This model requires further analysis of the council's existing property portfolio and the development of a strategy of neighbourhood accommodation.

5.5.15 Using an assumption of 50% consolidation of staff generates a requirement to accommodate some 1250 staff although the final area sizing takes two further factors into account:

- an average element of desk sharing of up to 20% has been incorporated;
- space standards have been further adjusted to provide overall office accommodation (including circulation, meeting rooms and so on) at the rate of 11.5 nett square metres per desk. This permits a better policy towards personal file and storage space to be adopted in conjunction with flexibility of movement of staff.

5.5.16 Irrespective of the model adopted finally, the project team is seeking to provide office accommodation that will afford flexibility, freshness and a sense of pride in the working environment for team spaces, meeting and quiet rooms and other informal areas. A critical factor of the success of new accommodation will be its ability to promote interaction and a sense of quality and wellbeing in the workplace.

#### 5.5.17 *Car parking*

The project team has taken account of the Council's guideline policies for car parking in defining a reasonable basis for the provision of car parking in the Civic Centre. For the feasibility study, a total of 130 car spaces has been allowed for in the consolidated model, made up of a mix of administrative, visitor, operational and leisure spaces. The location of the new Civic Centre in the Wembley regeneration area will allow access to the considerable parking provision in the area that supports the new national stadium as well as the Quintain development. It is essential however that the Civic Centre is easily accessible by public transport.

#### 5.18 Summary

Whilst the basis for the specification of the new Civic Centre has been set out clearly above, the final approach which the council adopts to each of the key variables will significantly determine the size and hence the cost of the civic centre. The team recommends continuing



examination of the Council's accommodation requirements as part of the next stage of the Civic Centre's procurement.

However, one can draw the following conclusions from this phase of work:

- a new Civic Centre for Brent will drive significant economic and democratic benefits and better service delivery for the residents of the borough;
- through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, significant progress has been made by the project team in the last six months to develop the parameters of a specification for the public, democratic and administrative functions in the Civic Centre;
- reasonable bases for the definition of two alternative models of accommodation have been identified to assist in further discussions on the optimum operating, affordability and value for money solution for the council;
- the resolution of a robust and credible brief of requirements for the Civic Centre is a prerequisite to engaging with the marketplace and to seeking commercial proposals
- further work is now required by the Council to develop its neighbourhood strategy and to define its optimum operational model for the future delivery of services; this will help determine how many staff would be housed in the new Civic Centre;
- the Council also needs to move its partners from 'in principle' interest in being part of the new Civic Centre to a clear commitment and definition of their requirements;

The Council is advised to establish a Member-level working group with a clear mandate to resolve these significant issues within a clear timeframe

#### 6.0 Not just the Council but Partners.

6.1 A critical factor for the new Civic Centre as argued in section 4 of this report is the opportunity to deliver services in partnership with other public service sector providers and the voluntary and community sector. Their presence in the new Civic Centre would dramatically improve cross – partner working.

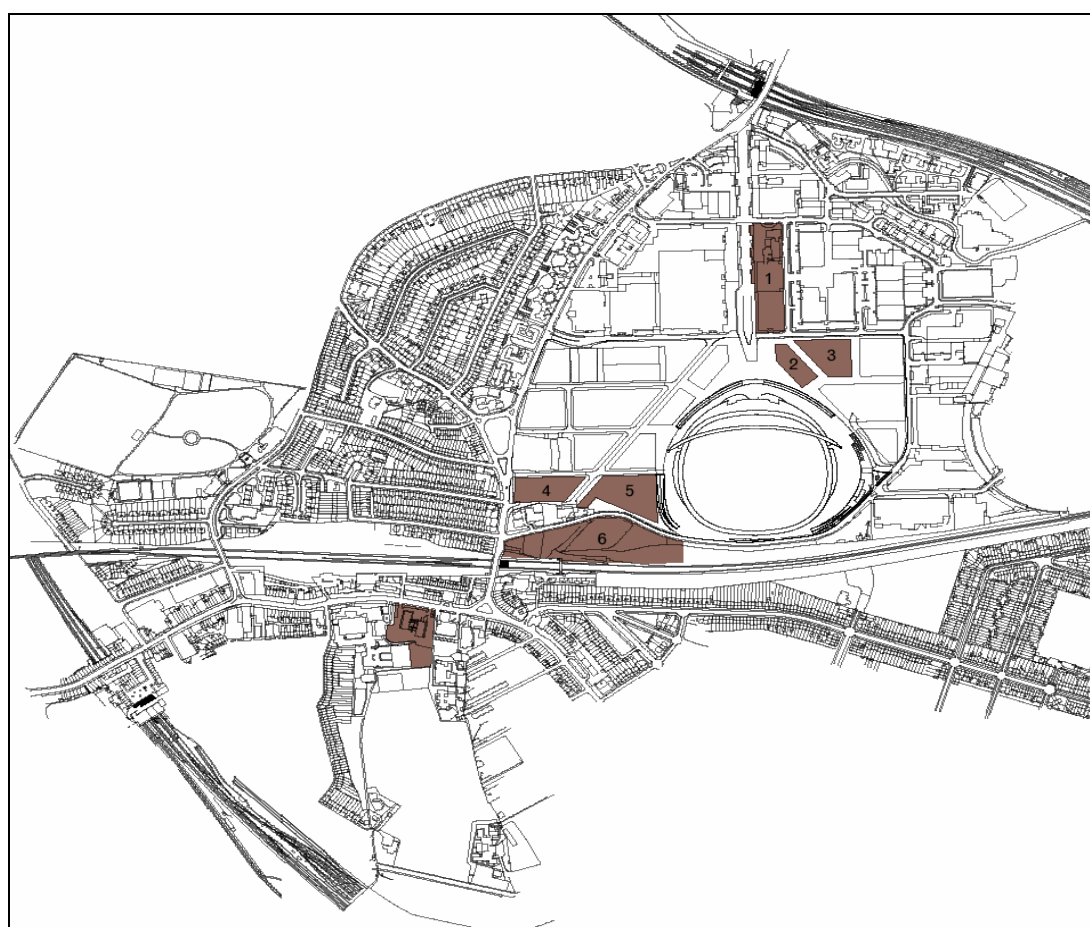
6.2 We have written a formal letter to partner agencies including the Brent PCT, North West London Hospitals Trust, College of North West London, Job Centre Plus, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, Universities inviting them to join the Council. All responded with varying degrees of interest. Some would like to co-locate, some wish to

have a presence, others would use and pay for space to hold events or exhibitions.

- 6.2 The Brent Primary Care Trust (PCT) wants to be a partner and is taking a proposal to co-locate to its Board for approval. The PCT has given an initial indication of its space requirement. Co-location will be beneficial to the Council and the PCT both in terms of efficiency, the way we do business and in the co-ordinated service we will be able to provide to our residents. This is very much in line with the expectations set out in the recent Public Health White paper and the Adult Social Care Green paper.
- 6.3 Thames Valley University are also very keen to work with the council and Quintain Estates and Development plc to co-locate a Community College with the new Civic Centre.
- 6.3 Discussions are continuing with various partner agencies to ascertain their exact needs in terms of space and methods of working. Any co-location of partners would be cost neutral to the council.
- 7.0 Identifying the appropriate site – the work so far.
- 7.1 The initial feasibility study delivered to Members in February 2004 identified five potential sites for the civic centre within the Wembley area. In the Chief Executive's subsequent report to the Executive in December 2004 two of these sites (Chesterfield House and Ealing Road) were discounted in as being too far from the regeneration area. It was also established that a third (the former Palace of Industry site within Quintain's land holding around the new stadium) was to be considered by the owner as a possible site for a significant casino/hotel development and was therefore no longer available to the council.
- 7.2 In the last six months, the professional team has worked with the council to identify and appraise further site options including a more detailed investigation of opportunities within Quintain's land holding and other sites which have since come to the fore.
- 7.3 Meetings have been held with site owners to convey the council's commitment to driving forward the civic centre project, to establish their current strategy for the sites and to explore on a preliminary basis the procurement routes that might be open to the council. A questionnaire has been issued to all site owners to clarify practical information on the sites, boundaries, tenancies etc. and to crystallise the feedback from the preliminary meetings.
- 7.4 Concurrent with this, Witherford Watson Mann architects have undertaken a preliminary exercise to establish the massing potential of the sites and their basic ability to accommodate the civic centre within reasonable town planning and design parameters.

7.5 An interim report was submitted to the Civic Centre Steering Group in mid April 2005 which identified seven prospective site options:

	Address	Owner
Site 1	Olympic Office Centre	Insight Investments
Site 2	Site E02	Quintain
Site 3	Site E03	Quintain
Site 4	Site W09 ( Wembley Plaza Hotel)	Hilton Hotels
Site 5	Site W10	Quintain
Site 6	South Way	LDA/Quintain
Site 7	Brent House	CLS Holdings



The criteria used by officers to establish the shortlist of sites recommended in this report were access and visibility to the local community, site configuration and aspect, land tenure and flexibility on the methods of finance, procurement and project control. A detailed appraisal of these sites was presented to the Steering Group and a summary is contained in a table in Appendix 4.

7.6 It was considered at this meeting that sites 2 and 3 to the north east of the new stadium would not taken forward for further consideration on

the grounds that they were too small to accommodate the brief, lacking sufficient prominence and proximity to open public space and within an area that was unlikely to be brought forward for development within the council's desired timeframe.

7.7 Following further review and analysis of these sites and meetings with the owners since this interim report was presented, the recommendation of the team is that three principal options be taken forward into the pre procurement phase of this project:

- Site One – The Olympic Office Centre on Olympic Way is owned by Insight Investments. The 3 acre site currently comprises a multi tenanted building of c. 7,000 sq meters and adjoining car parking
- Site Six – the Quintain/LDA site and other options around the southern end of the new Wembley Boulevard, including possibly, Mahatma Gandhi House, York House and other land within Quintain's ownership.
- Site Seven – Brent House, Wembley High Road was highlighted in the original feasibility study. This comprises an office building of c 10,000 sq metres, the majority of which is let to the Council

The recommendation in respect of Site One is qualified in that the New Wembley Masterplan does present potential constraints to future development but all three of these options lie within the Wembley Regeneration Area with good public transport communications and all are capable *prima facie* of meeting the Council's accommodation requirements within the size range currently identified. Discussions with site owners have established that each potentially offers the council a range of procurement options including leasing, land purchase or some form of public/private partnership. In Appendix 5 more detailed commentary on these sites is provided by Donaldsons together with a statement on planning merits from Brent Planning officers at Appendix 5a

7.8 It is also recommended that sites Four and Five should be reserved as secondary options. Both sites have outline planning consent for high density mixed uses including residential, retail and leisure and there are justifiable concerns that the council would be unable to secure them on reasonable commercial terms. Site Four currently houses the Wembley Plaza Hotel and whilst a sale of the site to Quintain is thought likely in the near future, redevelopment may not happen within a timeframe that meets the council's aspirations.

8.0 New Ways of Working – HR and IT.

8.1 The new civic centre provides a unique opportunity to provide state of the art technology and accommodation for the Council and its staff. In

many cases current council accommodation and equipment is not fit for purpose (see Appendix 6) and research shows that working environment is a key factor in recruitment and retention and that highly motivated and happy staff provide better services.

- 8.2 Redesigned service provision aimed at providing locally based information and services to residents in new and improved ways, together with extended access to services, reinforces the need for flexibility within the workforce. Whilst the advent of new technology supports more creativity in the way work is completed and delivered equally changes in family life and the requirements of employees to manage that work/life balance identify a need to rethink the way we work.
- 8.3 Revised ways of working could include home or remote working at more convenient work locations. Thereby, minimising the amount of time staff spend in travelling to/from work. Flexible desking and shared office space and staggered working hours to meet service delivery/personal need are likely to feature in the future. Together with self rostering where teams and individuals are empowered to determine their own working hours within a framework which outlines the cover and opening hours required by the department. The introduction of new technology will allow remote access to systems, video conferencing, ensuring that staff can work efficiently regardless of where they are based. However, these new arrangements will place a greater emphasis on the need for identified breakout areas for coffee and networking to take place, this is particularly important for those staff who will be infrequent office users. In addition it will be important to have in place facilities for ensuring staff health and welfare, either for when they feel unwell or to maintain health and fitness. Therefore, access to locally based leisure facilities together with easy access to crèche facilities, will play a key role in ensuring the council is seen as an excellent employer.
- 8.4 The new facility will not only revolutionise service delivery and provide a civic centre that the residents of Brent can be proud of, but also provide a modern working environment for an excellent organisation which staff will aspire to work in.

## **9.0 Financial issues**

### Factors for consideration

- 9.1 Earlier sections of this report have explained how a new Civic Centre will ensure that the Council can adapt to meet the challenges of integrated service provision alongside the delivery of the neighbourhood agenda.
- 9.2 But the council has made clear that it will only proceed with the Civic Centre if the financial case, as well as the service case, stacks up. The

council has to balance its ambitions for the new Civic Centre against the need to demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the costs and the impact on the council's finances.

- 9.3 There are two key questions that the Council has to address:
1. Does the proposed Civic Centre provide value for money?
  2. Can the council afford to pay for the Civic Centre?
- 9.4 Work carried out at the latter end of 2004, which informed the December 2004 report to the Executive, has been up-dated to reflect subsequent work on the specification and up-dated cost information. This section of the report details the results of this further work on value for money and affordability of the Civic Centre.
- 9.5 This section also considers the issues the Council will need to address when deciding which procurement route to pursue. The costs that the analysis in this section is based on reflect best information on current construction costs. In practice the cost of providing a building will depend on the procurement route chosen plus the state of the market at the time the building is procured.

#### Options considered

- 9.6 The value for money and affordability assessments in this section consider four different options for the Civic Centre, as follows:

Option 1: This is the consolidated option referred to earlier in the report. The gross area of the Civic Centre would be 37,700 sq m and nett area 29,000 sq m. It assumes the public space (ie non-office space) would be of a higher standard than the office space to reflect the iconic nature of the building. This is the highest cost option.

Option 2: This is the same as Option 1 but assumes the public space will be built to the same standard as the office space. This is the second highest cost option.

Option 3: This is the neighbourhood option referred to earlier in the report. The gross area of the Civic Centre would be 26,900 sq m and nett area 20,400 sq m. Costs recognise the need to continue to provide additional office space away from the Civic Centre. It assumes the public space (ie non-office space) would be of a higher standard than the office space to reflect the iconic nature of the building. This is the third highest cost option.

Option 4: This is the same as Option 3 but assumes the public space will be built to the same standard as the office space. This is the lowest cost option.

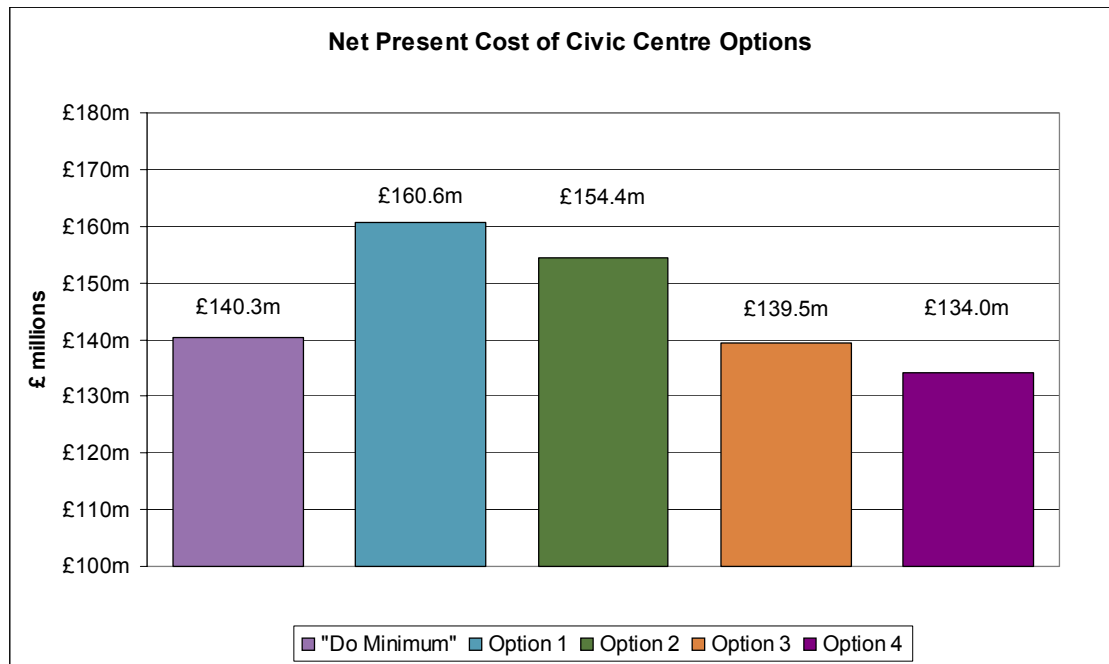
In all four options it is assumed that the cost of providing library space beyond a replacement for the existing Town Hall library would be met from external contributions, for example, lottery funding or developer contributions.

- 9.7 Further work needs to be done on establishing the impact on provision of services – including efficiency of service provision – of the Civic Centre. Whilst the value for money calculations have taken into account, to some extent, the non-financial benefits from provision of the Civic Centre, the affordability calculations have not. The Civic Centre will allow the council to take advantage of savings from more streamlined working which the current office accommodation arrangements do not permit.

#### Value for money assessment

- 9.8 The last report on the proposed Civic Centre to the Executive in December set out a number of strong reasons why it would provide better value for money for the council than the current portfolio. These included:
- (i) Current services being delivered from over 20 buildings and in need of on-going substantial maintenance just to keep them functioning, given the lack of investment in previous years.
  - (ii) A number of the buildings are not fit for purposes for delivering the services required in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and significant conversion and modernisation costs were needed.
  - (iii) A new building would allow advantage to be taken of the latest technology and design principles to achieve efficiencies in both running costs and working practices. This mirrors the requirements of the Gershon efficiency agenda.
- 9.9 A detailed study was undertaken by Deloitte and Touche LLP, building upon and updating the previous work by Jonathan Edwards Consulting (now part of Donaldson's), and this was included in the previous report. Both studies concluded that there were strong VFM grounds to proceed to the next stage of the project.
- 9.10 Deloitte and Touche LLP have been retained to ensure that as elements of the scheme are developed and changed the VFM case remains positive for a new Civic Centre. They have up-dated the VFM model to take account of the four options set out above and changes to cost estimates since work was done before. The results are set out in Graph 1 below. This shows that the net present cost of both Options 3 and 4 is less than the 'do minimum' option. The net present cost of Options 1 and 2 is significantly above the 'do minimum' option and therefore these options do not on current assumptions deliver value for money.

Graph 1: Assessment of the net present cost of the 4 options set out above and the 'do minimum' scenario



Affordability assessment

- 9.11 The council also has to assess whether the Civic Centre is affordable in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which was reported to Council as part of the 2005/06 budget report on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- 9.12 In order to do this, Deloitte and Touche LLP have developed a financial model which compares the cost of each of the options in paragraph 9.6 above, assuming particular financing options, against the budget provision within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (rolled forward to 2034/35).
- 9.13 Crucially, the measures of cost of the provision of a Civic Centre do not build in efficiency savings that will arise from collocating in a single modern office (other than more efficient use of space). These efficiencies are not quantifiable at the moment but will result in costs of the new Civic Centre coming down as efficiencies are delivered.
- 9.14 The graphs below (Graphs 2A to 2D) each show:
  - *Provision within the budget strategy.* This is the budget the council has allowed in its Medium Term Financial Strategy for accommodation. It includes the base amount within the council's budget together with growth needed to maintain the existing office accommodation portfolio in a usable state. The provision within the budget strategy is the same in all four graphs.



- *The cost of a new facility using prudential borrowing powers<sup>1</sup>.* This is based on space requirements and unit costs of building and running the new facility as estimated by the council's professional advisers. It assumes the council will fund the building costs using its affordable borrowing limit and smoothing the profile of payments over 60 years. The cost of the new facility depends on both the space provided and the extent to which allowance is made for additional costs of public space. The costs are highest in Graph 2A (37,700 gross square metres with additional costs to provide high quality public space) and lowest in Graph 2D (26,900 gross square metres with no public space costs the same as office accommodation costs).
- *The cost of a new facility using PFI.* This is as above but using a Private Finance Initiative to fund the development. The costs are significantly higher than under the prudential borrowing option because (1) the facility is fully paid for over the 25 years of the PFI; and (2) risks are transferred to the private sector partner which is reflected in the profit margin and the interest rate at which funds can be borrowed.

9.15 The result of the analysis in the graphs is as follows:

- Option 1 (Graph 2A) – 37,700 gross square metre building, with higher cost public space. Costs, using prudential borrowing, are £3.8m above budget provision in 2011/12. The costs gradually come closer into line with budget but remain above budget for the whole period covered by the analysis (ie up to 2034).
- Option 2 (Graph 2B) – 37,700 gross square metre building, with cost of public space equal to cost of office space. Costs, using prudential borrowing, are £3.0m above budget provision in 2011/12. The costs gradually come closer into line with budget but remain above budget for the whole period covered by the analysis (ie up to 2034).
- Option 3 (Graph 2C) – 26,900 gross square metre building, with higher cost public space. Costs, using prudential borrowing, are £1.2m above budget provision in 2011/12. They gradually come into line with budget and from 2016/17 are below budget provision.
- Option 4 (Graph 2D) – 26,900 gross square metre building, with cost of public space equal to cost of office space. Costs, using

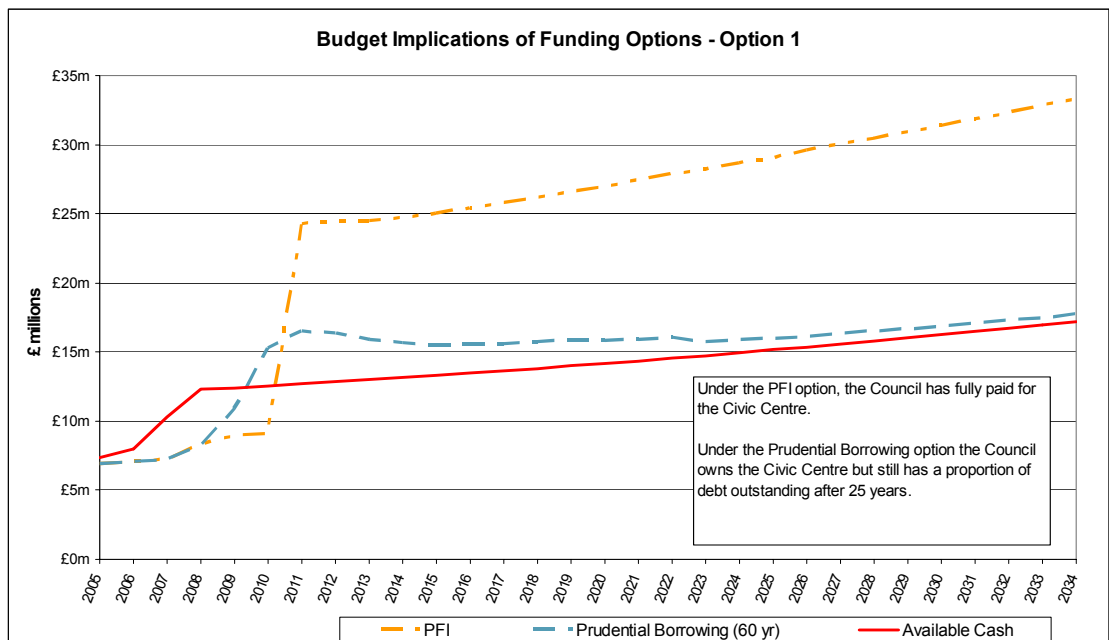
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<sup>1</sup> This would involve using the prudential borrowing powers in the 2003 Local Government Act. The council would have to be able to demonstrate that the costs were affordable within the council's overall budget forecasts. On the basis of present funding arrangements, councils have to pay interest on the amount borrowed together with a 4% repayment of principal. This leads to a distorted funding profile with costs significantly higher in earlier years, and reducing in subsequent years as the principal is paid off. There are proposals for a move to depreciation accounting which, rather than requiring councils to pay off an element of principal each year, would require adequate provision for depreciation. This would allow the council to look at a variety of profiles for paying off the debt on the building and allow costs to be smoother over the period of use of the facility.

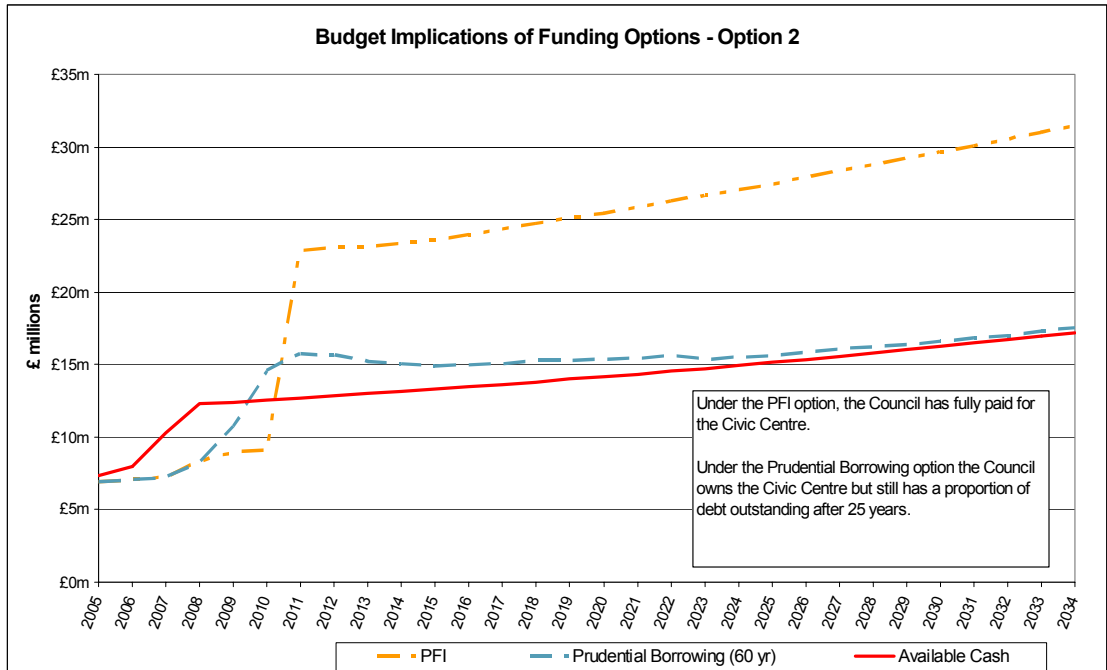
prudential borrowing, are up £0.6m above budget provision in 2011/12. They gradually come into line with budget and from 2013/14 are below budget provision.

9.16 The forecasts of costs of the new Civic Centre do not however take account of efficiency savings (other than directly quantifiable transport savings) that would arise from bringing strategic and other functions of the authority together in one building. In the case of lower cost options, efficiency savings that at least matched the gap between costs of the new Civic Centre and the budget are expected to be achievable. It would be more difficult to achieve sufficient efficiency savings to bring costs into line with budget in the higher cost options, and as a result these options might require funds to be redirected from other Council budgets.

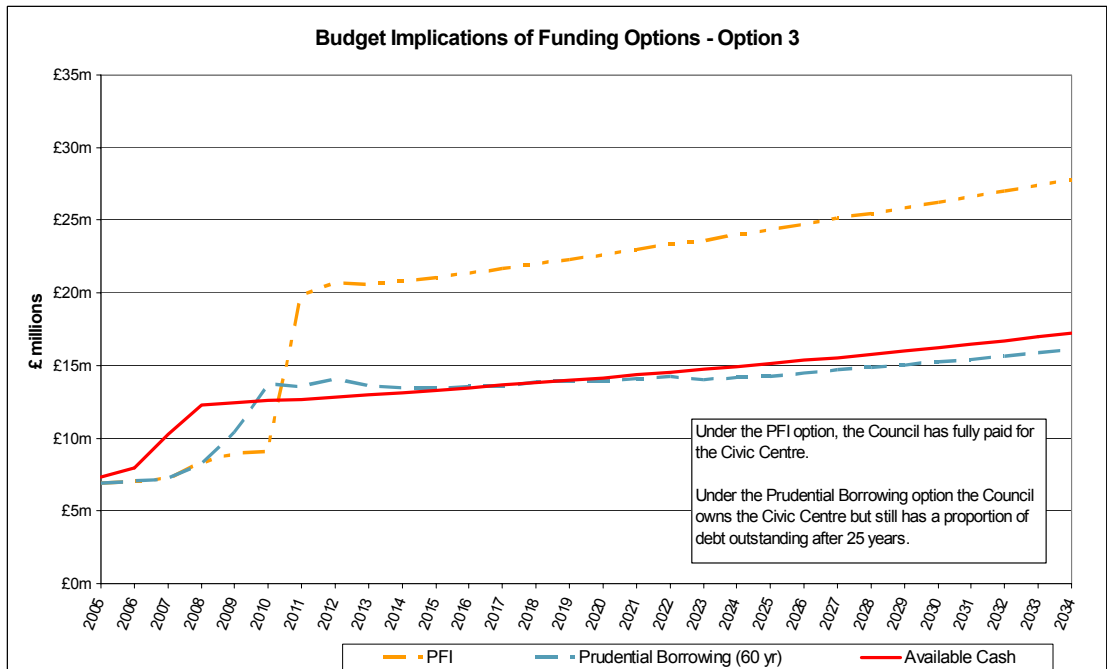
**Graph 2 A: Budget projections – 37,700 gross square metre building (higher cost public space)**



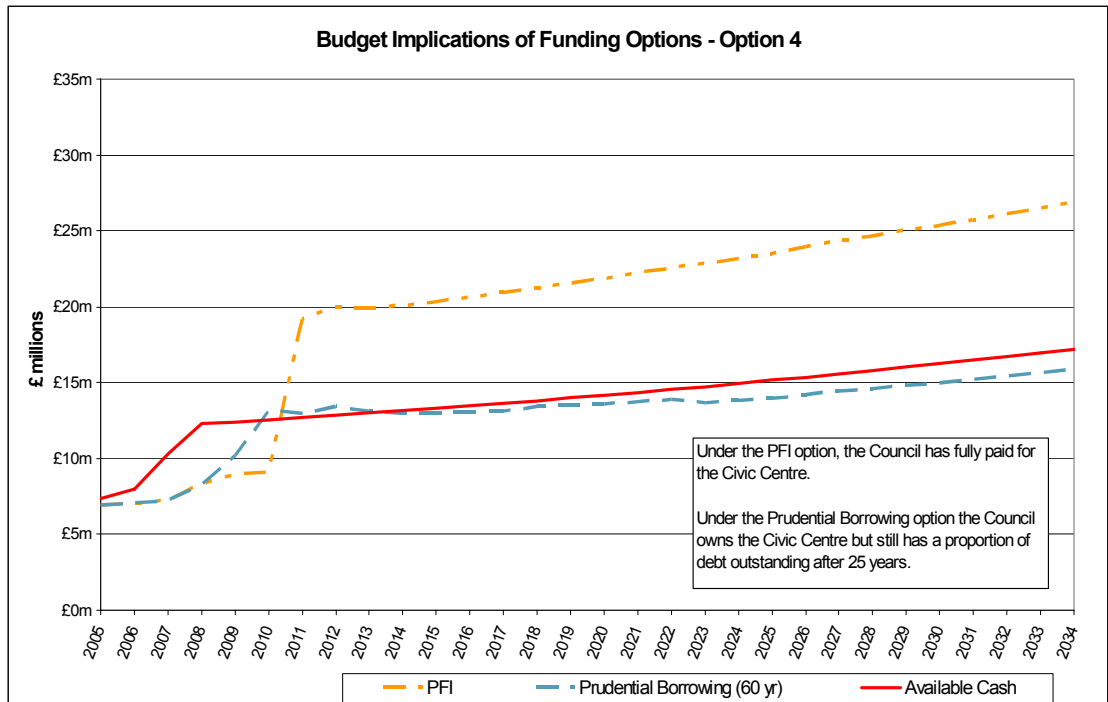
**Graph 2 B: Budget projections – 37,700 gross square metre building (public space same cost as office space)**



**Graph 2 C: Budget projections – 26,900 gross square metre building (higher cost public space)**



**Graph 2 D: Budget projections – 26,900 gross square metre building (public space same cost as office space)**



**Financing routes**

9.19 The other principal issue that the council needs to consider is the financing route for the Civic Centre. As the graphs above demonstrate there can be considerable differences between the impact of different financing routes on the costs of the scheme over the next 25 years and the longer term.

9.20 The report to the Executive in December 2004 reviewed procurement and funding routes. The analysis covered:

- Traditional Procurement;
- Private Finance Option (PFO); and
- Leasing Option.

9.21 The December report concluded that within each of these three options, there are many sub-options and the preferred option for the Council will depend on many factors such as affordability, ownership of asset, location, negotiating position with land owner, type of building/services required and market appetite for the project.

9.22 During the current year, the Project Team has continued to explore financing and procurement routes. The optimal package will be recommended once the scope of the deal is better understood, and once the Council's negotiating stance with landowners has been further developed.

- 9.23 The key financing principles that will underlie consideration of the procurement route to be chosen are as follows:
- The project scope will be defined to achieve whole life value for money, at a cost which is affordable year on year;
  - Private finance will be considered where this delivers value or where a publicly financed option is not available.
- 9.24 Whilst the project scope continues to evolve, and negotiations with landlords are still at an early stage, it is not possible to determine the optimal deal structure. Instead, at this stage, the project team aims to keep its options open, whilst developing a strategic response so that the Council is able to respond flexibly once the parameters of the deal become more certain. Table X below sets out the procurement issues that will need to be managed to get the best outcome from the project, and the ways in which the project team proposes to respond to these.

**Table X: Procurement issues and proposed responses**

Issue	Impact	Proposed response
Firm up requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship between Civic Centre and Neighbourhood Offices</li> <li>• Participation of partners</li> <li>• Requirement for future flexibility</li> </ul>	This will determine the size of the facility required, and the operational model that will best support the Council in delivering services in the future	The project team will define the requirement before launching the procurement
Confirm preferred commercial model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PFI-style (building + services)</li> <li>• Standard lease (building only)</li> </ul>	This will determine whether Brent seeks a solution where the contractor/landlord takes full responsibility for the provision of serviced accommodation, or whether the Council will bear responsibility for on-going management and maintenance. The decision will influence the extent of risk transfer, and the need to control building quality.	The decision will, in part, be driven by site selection considerations, and the appetite / capacity of the land owner to offer cost effective serviced accommodation. The project team will evaluate this potential as part of its recommendation on procurement strategy.
Building specification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input specification – Brent decides on the design and finishes</li> <li>• Loose specification – (eg provide for 1600 people at a cost less</li> </ul>	This model ensures the Council gets exactly what it pays for. There is a higher risk of cost overruns This model runs the risk of a cheap building with	The decision on the preferred commercial model (see above) will strongly influence the approach to building specification. The project team and its advisers have experience in

<p>than £X)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output specification – Brent defines the required accommodation standards over the long term</li> </ul>	<p>high maintenance obligations</p> <p>This model integrates the cost of building and maintaining the facility with its residual value – but may cost more than current costs</p>	<p>ensuring that the most appropriate form of specification is carried forward into a successful procurement.</p>
<p>Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate with all 3 land owners</li> <li>• Select preferred site and negotiate with 1 owner</li> </ul>	<p>Sustaining competition is at the heart of achieving best value.</p>	<p>The project team will explore ways of sustaining competition including acquiring the preferred site, and running a competition; negotiating with up to 3 land owners; or, if there is no alternative, policing the negotiations with a single bidder.</p>

## 10. Next steps: Project and Risk Management

### 10.1 A project execution plan

Once the council is satisfied that affordability and value for money criteria for a new civic centre can be met, it may then elect to commission more detailed design and procurement work across a number of fronts in the coming year. Such work would place the council in a strong position, following the local elections in May 2006, to proceed with final commercial arrangements and contract commitment to secure the optimum site and procurement solution for the civic centre.

### 10.2 Accordingly, the project team envisages two principal parts to the design evolution and procurement progress of the civic centre which will enable the council to commit to its delivery thereafter with confidence:

Part 1 (July 2005 to April 2006): a succinct definition of the civic centre accommodation brief, to enable its size to be determined;

an outline performance specification of the shell and core of the building, to enable its character to be described and its cost better estimated;

continued technical discussions and a preliminary commercial tender

amongst potential site options to achieve better definition of the most appropriate procurement route to match market capability with the council's affordability, value for money and financing criteria

Part 2 (July 2006 to mid 2007): the refinement of the brief of accommodation to absorb relevant operating conditions for the future:

a detailed specification of the base building and fitting out elements for the civic centre;

a final tendering period to select the most appropriate site for location and development of the council's civic centre

### 10.3 *Risk Management*

The optimum allocation of risks relating to alternative procurement routes, methods of delivery, and future tenure will be the subject of further discussion and consultation with the Council during the next stages of the project.

For now, the team has confined its assessment of risks to those areas in which the council is exposed in moving the project forward to the point of entering into a binding agreement to acquire land or a new building. Appendix 7 summarises the areas of risk and the means by which the team anticipates they will be mitigated over the course of the project.

### 11.0 Communications and consultation

11.1 A strategy for communication and consultation with staff, stakeholders, residents and the media is taking shape and is attached at Appendix 8. Staff seminars and consultations have begun. Focus groups that will include staff representatives will take place over the next phase of the project and regular bulletins will be produced. Intranet pages are being developed that will include a discussion forum for staff.

11.2 The new civic centre will give residents a meaningful physical stake in the regeneration of Wembley. It also gives an unprecedented opportunity to involve and engage especially younger residents of Brent in the democratic process. Starting with the council's Respect Festival in July, other initiatives will follow, for example, schools working with architects to design a civic centre.

## 12.0 *Financial Implications*

12.1 Financial issues associated with the value for money, affordability, and procurement of the Civic Centre have been dealt with in Section 9 above. This section deals with financial provision that will need to be made for the next phase of the project.

12.2 If Members agree the recommendations in the report this will move the project on to the next phase. There are two immediate consequences of this:

(i) Major upgrades and refurbishments to the buildings, that are planned to be vacated when the civic centre is available, will not be undertaken unless there is a strong business case to justify expenditure based on a time horizon up to 2010. Health and Safety work and on-going minor maintenance will continue to be carried out.

(ii) Resources will need to be directed to support the project. Full Council when considering the 2005/2006 revenue budget agreed a sum of £523k for the dual purpose of beginning to address the backlog of major repairs to municipal buildings and to proceed with developing the plans for the Civic Centre. More significant sums (£1.2m in 2006/07) have been assumed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for future years. The allocation of this sum between the two elements was to be partly dependent on decisions taken in this report.

12.3 The report sets out the procurement requirements for the consultancy support, required for the next phase of the project which is anticipated to last around 1 year. This period will cover two financial years. Salaries and other costs of staff within the Council working on the project, amount to an estimated £135k in a full financial year.

The amount required for the external support will depend on the results of the tendering process. Costs will need to be contained within available budgets. Further details will be reported when the process is more advanced.

12.4 A small team of consultants have given professional advice to the project up to this point in the project. Donaldsons were commissioned as real estate and project management consultants. Witherford Watson Mann were commissioned as architects to test the sites under consideration for size and undertake some qualitative analysis of the Civic Centre core and additional requirements. The Project Director feels that the role Donaldsons have undertaken is vital for the next stage of the project. A tendering process may have to be undertaken for the next stage. A report will be brought to Executive at its next



meeting in August to ask for authority to tender. It is likely that a small amount of work may also have to be undertaken by architects for the next stage.

- 12.5 Deloittes and Touche have been utilised by the Council up to this point in the project, primarily to advise on the value for money and affordability of the proposed Civic Centre, and on the various procurement and financing routes available. The Director of Finance feels that this role and associated expertise, will remain vital as the full business case is developed.

It is however, intended that a new specification is developed for the next phase of the work. This is anticipated to be a low value contract as defined by section 82 of standing orders and on that basis at least three written quotes will be sought and addressed before any award of a contract for this work.

### *13.0 Legal Implications*

- 13.1 The Council has power to provide offices and other civic spaces and to acquire land for that purpose. The funding and procurement options and legal implications attaching to the various options will be addressed in the next report.
- 13.2 The council currently holds the leasehold and freehold interest in a number of sites and the title will need to be considered in detail now.
- 13.3 The Executive cannot take any decision which is outside the budget and so a decision of Full council will also be needed at a future date.
- 13.4 A further report will be brought before Members shortly to seek approval to tender for consultants to act on the project. This procurement will be conducted in accordance with Standing Orders and the EU procurement rules.

### *14.0 Diversity Implications*

- 14.1 This report describes how a new civic centre will improve and enhance services to local people both by facilitating the integration of the council and its partners and by providing more joined up and focussed services at local and neighbourhood level.
- 14.2 Both before and during the building design stage extensive consultation will take place, with the council seeking the views of both Brent's residents and its own staff. Brent is a diverse borough, the majority of its residents are women, 13.29% are disabled and 53.14% are from BME groups. The council seeks to reflect the diversity of its local population at all levels in its workforce, which is currently predominantly female. The proposed changes are intended to impact positively on the experience of local residents from all backgrounds.

Fundamental to the design of the new civic centre and of key importance to the council, its residents and staff will be access to and management of the new facility. A facility which is a safe and secure environment in which to work and transact business designed to accommodate the needs of both disabled and able bodied staff and visitors. Reflecting the diverse culture and backgrounds within the borough.

- 14.3 At this stage no negative diversity issues have been identified. As work progresses, diversity issues will be considered at every stage and monitored via the project management process. It is envisaged that the Director of HR and Diversity will chair a group which will have the remit of ensuring that the diverse needs of Brent's community and staff are considered throughout the project..

#### 15.0 *Staffing Implications (if appropriate)*

- 15.1 Staffing implications arising from this report are covered in detail in section 8 of this report.

#### 16.0 Conclusion and next steps

- 16.1 The council's vision of new civic building to be the centrepiece of the community in Brent remains strong. The accessibility and transparency of the council and the opportunity to deliver services in partnership with other public service providers is currently constrained by the myriad of different physical locations and poor quality buildings. A new Civic Centre would reforge a direct link between elected representation and the broad spread of services people use. The move to pull together all the "headquarters" functions of the council now has a managerial imperative if the council is to deliver services as local people would rightly wish, that is joined up and focussed
- 16.2 Significant progress has been made by the project team in last six months to develop the parameters of an accommodation brief for the public, democratic and administrative functions in the civic centre. Two alternative models of accommodation have been identified to assist in further discussions on the optimum operating, affordability and value for money solution for the council;
- 16.3 Three preferred site options have been identified that could comfortably accommodate the civic centre within the current anticipated size range and there are a number of sub/secondary options that will be need to be tested further. Discussions with site owners indicate that a range of procurement options remain open to the council
- 16.4 Further work is now required by the council to crystallise the brief for the civic centre. The key tasks are to define its operational model for

the future delivery of services and to obtain clear commitments and properly defined requirements from its partners to being part of the new civic centre. In parallel, the council needs to identify its preferred procurement route by reference to both the optimum allocation of risks and what the market is prepared and able to deliver. Only once this work has been done can commercial proposals be sought from the market.

- 16.5 Members are requested to approve the project execution plan as described in paragraph 10.2 of this report. The first stage involves the crystallisation of the brief. The second stage involves a detailed tender process to select the most appropriate site and to take the council to the point of final commitment to a new civic centre, currently anticipated around mid 2007.
- 16.6 The next stage of the project will continue to require professional support from a small team of consultants. The support required will be to finalise the civic centre core and shell size that will determine the site and the cost of the project. It may be necessary to undertake a procurement process for this stage of the work. A report will be brought to Executive at its next meeting in August to ask for authority to tender in accordance with Standing Orders.

### *Background Papers*

- Report to Executive 7<sup>th</sup> April 2003 entitled “ A New Civic Centre for Brent”
- Report to Executive 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004 entitled “Consultants’ Study on possible Civic Centre Development in Wembley”
- Report to Executive 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004 entitled “ Civic Centre for Brent”
- Best Value Review of Property Services, Asset Management and Facilities Management 2003
- Vision for a New Wembley – November 2002

### Appendices:

- Appendix 1. Integrated and Neighbourhood Accommodation Model Schemes.
- Appendix 2. Witherford Watson Mann – Brent Civic Centre Strategic Brief and Schedule of Area, June 2005.
- Appendix 3. Current Property portfolio.
- Appendix 4. Appraisal of Sites.
- Appendix 5. Detailed Commentary on the three recommended sites.
- Appendix 5a Statement of Planning merits.

- Appendix 6. Current working Conditions for staff.
- Appendix 7. Risk Management.
- Appendix 8. Civic Centre Communications and Consultation Strategy.

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