



# Brent

## Cabinet

**Monday 8 March 2021 at 10.00 am**

This will be held as an online virtual meeting.

The link to view the meeting is available by clicking [here](#).

### Membership:

#### Lead Member Councillors:

#### Portfolio

M Butt (Chair)	Leader of the Council
McLennan (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Resources
Farah	Lead Member for Adult Social Care
Knight	Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement
Nerva	Lead Member for Public Health, Culture & Leisure
M Patel	Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care
Krupa Sheth	Lead Member for Environment
Stephens	Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills
Southwood	Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform
Tatler	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning

**For further information contact:** James Kinsella, Governance Manager, Tel: 020 8937 2063; Email: [james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk](mailto:james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk)

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **[democracy.brent.gov.uk](https://democracy.brent.gov.uk)**

**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting as an online virtual meeting. The link to attend and view the meeting is available [here](#).**

### **Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:**

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest\*\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

### **\*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

### **\*\*Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).

(b) The interests of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
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<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
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<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
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Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, the nature and existence of any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.

<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	1 - 10
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To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 8 February 2021 as a correct record.

<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising (if any)</b>	
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To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

<b>5</b>	<b>Petitions (if any)</b>	
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To discuss any petitions from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

<b>6</b>	<b>Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)</b>	
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There are no items to be considered at this meeting.

## Digital and Customer Services reports

<b>7</b>	<b>Resident Support Fund</b>	11 - 20
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Since April 2013, Brent has operated a Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWA) to support residents experiencing short-term emergency financial hardship or unexpected expenditure. This fund was complemented in August 2020 by the Resident Support Fund, the initial funding for which was provided to support residents specifically affected by the Covid virus outbreak and subsequent lockdowns.

This report outlines a proposal to bring the current LWA scheme to a close, and merge and integrate those parts of the LWA that are not currently offered within the Resident Support Fund.

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Lead Member:** Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)  
**Contact Officer:** Asha Vyas, Head of Customer Access, Management (Customer Services)  
Tel: 020 8937 2705  
[asha.vyas@brent.gov.uk](mailto:asha.vyas@brent.gov.uk)

## Regeneration and Environment Reports

### 8 Special Needs Transport Managed Service - Contract Renewal 21 - 24

This report presents the outcome and cost options from a commissioning exercise undertaken on behalf of Brent by Harrow Council. These outcomes relate to a re-procurement of the managed personnel contract that provides drivers and assistants for the shared Special Needs Transport (SNT) service. The report seeks a specific decision in relation to the payment of London Living Wage (LLW) to staff employed through the contract.

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Lead Member:** Lead Member for Environment (Councillor Krupa Sheth)  
**Contact Officer:** Chris Whyte, Operational Director, Environmental and Employment Services  
Tel: 020 8937 5342  
[chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk](mailto:chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk)

### 9 Purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive for rough sleepers accommodation 25 - 34

This report sets out the details of the freehold purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive from the market through the Housing General Fund to increase the supply of supported housing for people who have been sleeping rough and to help reduce the use and cost of temporary accommodation.

**Ward Affected:**  
Preston

**Lead Member:** Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler) & Lead member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood).  
**Contact Officer:** Denish Patel, Property and Projects  
Tel: 020 8937 2529  
[denish.patel@brent.gov.uk](mailto:denish.patel@brent.gov.uk)

### 10 Exclusion of Press and Public

The following item is not for publication as it relates to the following category of exempt information as specified under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: "Information

relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)"

Item 9: Purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive for rough sleeper accommodation - Appendix 1 (Valuation)

## **11 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting. Any decisions taken urgently under this heading must comply with the provisions outlined in paragraph's 12 and 39 of the Council's Access to Information Rules (Part 2 of the Constitution).

**Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 6 April 2021**

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## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

### MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held as an online virtual meeting on Monday 8 February 2021 at 10.00 am

PRESENT (all in remote attendance): Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Southwood, Stephens, Nerva, M Patel, Krupa Sheth, Tatler, Knight and Farah.

Also present: Councillor Mashari (for Agenda Item 7, as Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Task Group)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

None.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

It was noted that Peter Gadsdon, Strategic Director Customer & Digital Services and Gail Tolley, Strategic Director Children & Young People both had personal (non-pecuniary) interests in relation to Items 9 and 10 as Council appointed representatives on the i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd Boards.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 January 2021 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. **Matters Arising (if any)**

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

None.

6. **Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)**

None.

7. **Budget and Council Tax 2021/22**

Prior to consideration of the main report Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council, invited Councillor Mashari as Chair of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Task Group to introduce the Budget Scrutiny Task Group report, which had been included as an appendix to the Budget and Council Tax 2021/22 report. Councillor Mashari began by advising that whilst supportive of

the overall budget proposals the Budget Scrutiny Task Group had, as part of their review of the proposals, identified a number of key findings and recommendations. These included what the Task Group had considered to be a need:

- to more clearly demonstrate within the budget how funding followed the democratically agreed strategic priorities for the borough;
- to outline how the £1m funding allocated for implementation of the Borough Plan objectives would be spent;
- to ensure a cumulative equality impact assessment of the final decisions made within the budget was undertaken reflecting the severe impact of the covid pandemic;
- for an in-depth analysis and modelling to be undertaken in order to identify the impact of the UK leaving the EU on residents, funding streams and the local economy; and
- to undertake a full and independent economic analysis of the borough ahead of future budget setting processes in order to better inform decisions.

In summing up, Councillor Mashari thanked the members and officers who had been engaged in the review process. In response, Councillor M Butt expressed his own gratitude for the hard work of members and officers in producing the report and highlighted its importance to the overall budget setting process.

Councillor M Butt then welcomed Paul Lorber to the meeting who he advised had requested to speak on the Budget and Council Tax 2021/22 report. In addressing Cabinet, Paul Lorber recognised the various elements that contributed to the budget and in particular the different elements of Council Tax. He felt it important to ensure there was no duplication in the way certain proposals within the budget were funded in order to mitigate the impact of any Council Tax increase on residents. As specific examples, he referred to the proposals for an additional payment to staff, to pursue the London Living Wage (LLW) as standard within Council contracts and to provide £1 million as an additional growth pressure identified as an allowance for uncertainty. In reference to the overall level of reserves being held, he urged the Council to consider funding these proposals from reserves rather than as an additional charge against the base budget.

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources then introduced the report which set out the Council's budget proposals for 2021/22 and 2022/33. The report also set out the results of the budget consultation, scrutiny and equality processes and the overall financial position facing the Council for the medium-term.

Councillor McLennan also took the opportunity to thank all officers and members who had been involved in the budget setting process, including those members involved in the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. She highlighted the impact that the pandemic had had on the Council's income and expenditure, which had required additional savings to be identified over the next two financial years. Despite central government promising to cover the costs of the pandemic, much of the funding received had fallen short of covering the resultant expenditure and loss of income. Looking to the future, Councillor McLennan drew members' attention to what the Council aimed to achieve over the next year, as set out in the draft Borough Plan. She also commented on the proposed 4.99% increase in Council Tax, which included the full 3% precept permitted for Adult Social Care, which had been



identified as required to continue providing support for residents as the borough moved forward in response to the pandemic. Members were assured that the Council would continue to push for a fairer Council Tax system in the future, with the Council continuing to fund and provide support through its Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme.

In response to the comments raised at the start of the item regarding the proposed increase to the Council Tax, Councillor M Butt advised that he fully supported the proposals for an additional payment to staff who had worked so tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support local residents and who had had their wages frozen by central government for 2021/22. In regard to the LLW, he felt it would be hard not to support proposals to pursue it as standard within Council contracts considering the levels of poverty within the borough. Councillor M Butt once again thanked members and officers for their hard work in ensuring the best possible level of service was provided to residents over the forthcoming years.

In supporting the budget proposals, Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning thanked officers for their tireless work in producing the budget for 2021/22, and more widely those officers who had been working under difficult circumstances throughout the pandemic. She brought members' attention to the continued underfunding of local services by central government and despite recognising the need to consider the proposals within this context, commended the proposals for delivering another balanced budget that would allow the Council to continue fulfilling their strategic aims. As specific examples, she referred to the Council's continued support for education settings, affordable housing initiatives, tree planting, health centres and town centres and local businesses as well as the New Council Home Programme (NCHP), Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy Programme and new adult education centre in Stonebridge. Councillor Tatler also echoed Councillor M Butt's comments regarding the LLW and gave her support to proposals to pursue it as standard within Council contracts.

Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement gave her support to the budget proposals and thanked officers for their hard work in bringing the proposals forward. She felt that the proposals mitigated against any perceived risks in terms of the work being undertaken by the Community Protection and Enforcement Teams. She was also pleased, in light of the work that the Regulatory Support and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams had undertaken during the pandemic to keep residents safe, that no reductions had been proposed in this area.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment expressed her gratitude for the hard work of the Environment Team over the past year despite the challenging circumstances brought about by the pandemic. A number of initiatives were highlighted, including the work to provide emergency mortuary capacity, ongoing levels of enforcement activity and continued delivery of the footway programme.

In commending the budget proposals, Councillor Mili Patel recognised the difficulties that officers faced when looking to ensure children in the borough remained protected, whilst looking at ways in which expenditure across the service could be managed. She assured members that the budget proposals would ensure efficiency across the service in terms integration with health partners, and was also keen to highlight the provision made for plans to implement proposals for use of the

Gordon Brown Centre. Councillor Mili Patel thanked all officers across the service for their hard work in preparing the budget proposals and over the past year more generally, and felt encouraged by the high level of public engagement in the budget process.

Councillor Stephens, Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills praised the budget proposals and felt that they showed the Council was committed to supporting its residents. He highlighted the range of employment support proposed, especially in the context of the pandemic recovery and made particular reference to Brent Work, the impact which the creation of a new state of the art education centre would have on the support available from Brent Starts as well as the continued investment that the Council continued to provide to support local schools and Special Educational Needs provision.

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, thanked all officers for the hard work during the pandemic especially those on the frontline. She felt that the Council had responded well to the pandemic, and that the budget proposals set out a clear vision for recovery. With regard to the proposed increase in Council Tax, she reminded members that central government had encouraged this increase as part of their Annual Spending Review and that, in spite of this, the Council would continue to resource its CTS scheme so that the most vulnerable residents were protected. Councillor Southwood also assured members of the sustainable support the Council were looking to provide through the Resident Support Fund, which had provided hardship support to residents throughout the pandemic.

Councillor Nerva, Lead Member for Public Health, Culture and Leisure also endorsed the budget proposals and thanked all officers, particularly those working within public health, for their response to the pandemic. He was pleased that, despite the budget pressures the Council had secured funding for the provision of Health Champions who would work directly with communities to alleviate health inequalities and had put over £1 million into the boroughs cultural legacy resulting from the Borough of Culture programme including support for Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) across the borough.

In summing up, Councillor M Butt highlighted the challenging nature of the budget setting process given the ongoing impact of the pandemic and central government's continued underfunding of local authorities. He felt it was important to recognise that members and officers had looked at every aspect of their services to ensure budgets could be managed whilst delivering key strategic priorities and protecting the most vulnerable residents in the borough. He highlighted the use of the CTS scheme to mitigate against the impact of the proposed Council Tax increase; the Resident Support Fund to support those residents in hardship during the pandemic; the NCHP; the Climate Emergency Strategy; proposals to ensure digital inclusion across the borough and the range of regeneration and environmental infrastructure projects underway. Councillor M Butt also commended the transparency and accessibility of the budget setting process, ensuring residents were engaged and the Council were accountable for their actions.

Having noted the comments provided, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1)** To recommend to full Council an overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2021/22, with 3% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 1.99% general increase.
- (2)** To recommend to full Council the General Fund revenue budget for 2021/22, as summarised in Appendix A of the report.
- (3)** To recommend to full Council the cost pressures and technical adjustments detailed in Appendix B of the report.
- (4)** To recommend to full Council the budget savings proposals detailed in Appendix C of the report.
- (5)** To note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel, as set out in Appendix D of the report.
- (6)** To recommend to full Council the HRA budget for 2021/22, as set out in Section 7 of the report.
- (7)** To agree the HRA rents for council dwellings, tenant service charges and garages, as set out in Section 7 of the report.
- (8)** To agree the rents set under the Housing General Fund for Brent Housing PFI and traveller's site pitches and to note the rents for Hillside dwellings as set out in Section 7 of the report.
- (9)** To note the Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in Section 8 of the report.
- (10)** To agree to refinance the loan for First Wave Housing, as set out in Section 10 of the report.
- (11)** To agree to recommend to full Council the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix E of the report.
- (12)** To agree to recommend to full Council the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendices G, H, I and J of the report.
- (13)** To agree to recommend to full Council the schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendix K of the report.
- (14)** To agree, and where relevant agree to recommend to full Council, the schedule of fees and charges set out at in Appendix L of the report.
- (15)** To note the results of the budget consultation as set out in Section 6 and detailed in Appendix M of the report.
- (16)** To note the advice of the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations as set out in Appendix N of the report.
- (17)** To note and approve the specific recommendations identified for consideration by Full Council as detailed in section 2.17 – 2.36 of the report.

## 8. **Borough Plan 2021-2022**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report setting out the vision, strategic priorities and action within a refresh of the Borough Plan for 2021/22.

Members noted that the refresh of the Borough Plan 2021/22 set out how the Council would take forward the delivery of the five key strategic priority areas over the final year of the current Administration. It included refocussed actions against each priority reflecting work since the adoption of the previous version of the Plan and drawing on the experience of the pandemic. As specific examples, Councillor McLennan referred to proposed actions to tackle homelessness, reduce health inequalities, provide youth opportunities, tackle the climate emergency and deliver employment and training support as well as the Black Community Action Plan. It was also noted that the draft Plan reflected the Council's Equality Strategy 2019-23, ensuring equitable access to public functions, employment and work, goods and services, premises, associations, transport and education.

Having considered the draft Borough Plan 2021/22, it was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Agree the draft Borough Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and draft Equality Strategy Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, and refer them to Full Council for adoption on 22 February 2021.
- (2) Agree to continue monitoring implementation of the Borough Plan.

## 9. **i4B Business Plan 2021-22**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report on the draft i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B) Business Plan 2021/22.

Members noted that i4B had been set up to own and manage private rented sector properties, in order to support the Council in tackling homelessness and provide safe and secure housing. Members were also reminded that the company was set up strictly for the borough's housing needs and that the Council was its sole shareholder. As sole shareholder, the Council provided significant scrutiny of the company.

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform thanked those involved in the running of i4B, which formed an important element of the Council's response to tackling the homelessness agenda by providing safe and secure housing which was closely aligned with the needs of residents.

Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council drew specific attention to the purchase of the block of 153 units in Wembley Park which would be let to key workers. He felt that this demonstrated the Council's commitment to increasing the amount of affordable housing and supporting other public sector organisations to recruit and train employees in the borough.

Members fully supported the recommendations contained in the report and noted that i4B was expected to generate its first surplus earlier than expected in the forthcoming year, acknowledging the hard work of all those involved in the running of the company.

In considering the recommendations, Cabinet noted the information provided within the exempt appendices accompanying the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Approve the proposals within the 2021/22 Business Plan.
- (2) Approve the content and proposed strategic priorities of i4B's 2021/22 Business Plan.
- (3) Approve the updated financial model contained within the 2021/22 Business Plan.

#### 10. **FWH Business Plan 2021-22**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report on the draft First Wave Housing Ltd (FWH) Business Plan 2021/22.

Members attention was drawn to the company's void performance, which it was noted had not been in line with business plan targets. As a result FWH were reviewing options with the Council's Housing Management team to improve performance. It was also recognised that capital investment works in relation to eight of the company's blocks in South Kilburn, which were taken over from Brent Housing Partnership, had taken longer than expected. Members were assured that the company's main priority for the forthcoming year was to identify a safe, viable and affordable way of improving the condition of these blocks.

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform recognised, as previously highlighted, the improvements that needed to be made in the service provided to FWH over the forthcoming year. It was noted that significant capital investment was required in its stock, and that the scale of the investment remained to be quantified. Members were assured that actions had been identified to address these issues on which further updates would be provided as the final position was clarified.

Having considered the update provided, it was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Approve the proposals within the 2021/22 Business Plan.
- (2) Approve the content and proposed strategic priorities of FWH's 2021/22 Business Plan.

#### 11. **Meanwhile Use Strategy & Action Plan**

Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning introduced a report on the Meanwhile Use Strategy and Action Plan, which was part of a wider agenda to support local businesses and high streets.

Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council highlighted the positive feedback that he and other Lead Members had received regarding the strategy, which it was felt would provide a strong way forward over the long-term.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet approve the Meanwhile Use Strategy & Action Plan.

## 12. **Recommissioning of Housing Related Support (HRS) Services**

Councillor Farah, Lead Member for Adult Social Care introduced a report on the re-procurement of Housing Related Support (HRS). Members noted the changes identified to the level of HRS services being procured, which it was reported had been due to reduced demand rather than the need for budget reductions.

In supporting the recommendations, Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform acknowledged the clarity provided regarding the changes to the level of HRS services, and highlighted the importance of ensuring that services responded to the needs of residents.

Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement thanked the Lead Member and officers for the increased level of support for Domestic Abuse Services and the Single Women with Complex Support Needs Service, especially in light of the increase in levels of domestic violence identified during the pandemic.

In summing up, Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council praised the level of support available to residents through HRS services, in particular homelessness and ex-offender provision, as well as the proposal to ensure all contracts were tendered at London Living Wage levels.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Approve inviting tenders for Housing Related Support (HRS) for Homelessness services (including ex-offenders); Mental Health services; Young Persons Services; Domestic Abuse Refuges and Complex Women's service; Generic Floating Support service, Older Persons Floating Support service and Handy Person service to be procured as seven separate contracts on the basis of the pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.19 of the report for initial contract term of three years with two plus 1 year options to extend (5 years in total). The anticipated commencement date would be 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 and a total contract value of £15,189,940.
- (2) Approve Officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (1) on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in paragraph 3.19 of the report.
- (3) Agree that contracts are tendered at London Living Wage (LLW) levels under the new proposed HRS service contracts as set out in Section 4 of the report.

- (4) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Community and Wellbeing in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care to award the contract for HRS services as detailed in the report.

13. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

14. **Any other urgent business**


None.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT  
Chair

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 <b>Brent</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cabinet</b> 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021</p>
<b>Resident Support Fund</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Asha Vyas  Head of Customer Access  020 8937 2705  <a href="mailto:Asha.Vyas@brent.gov.uk">Asha.Vyas@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Leigh Wood  Service Manager Benefits Subsidy and Policy  020 8937 1948  <a href="mailto:Leigh.Wood@brent.gov.uk">Leigh.Wood@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Since April 2013, Brent has operated a Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWA) to support residents experiencing short-term emergency financial hardship or unexpected expenditure. This fund was complemented in August 2020 by the Resident Support Fund (RSF), the initial funding for which was to support residents specifically affected by the Covid virus outbreak and subsequent lockdowns.
- 1.2 This report outlines a proposal to bring the current LWA scheme to a close, and merge and integrate those parts of the LWA that are not currently offered by the RSF.
- 1.3 The current funding arrangements for the RSF scheme will end on 31 March 2021, the total funds of £2.6m will be spent by this date on a combination of grants, loans, digital inclusion and 13A Hardship payments for Council tax Support working age residents.

## 2.0 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Agree to discontinue the current LWA scheme;

- 2.2 Approve the revision of the Resident Support Fund to begin 1 April 2021 as set out in section 5;
- 2.3 Delegate to the Strategic Director for Customer and Digital Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, authority to agree eligibility criteria for the new Resident Support Fund from 1 April 2021 to administer and award grants and loans;
- 2.4 Approve the continuation of an interest free loan arrangement as set out in section 7 of the report;
- 2.5 Approve payment to the Credit Union of such sums remaining in the Council Tax – Covid – 19 Hardship Fund 2020 – 21 and at such frequency as the Director of Finance considers appropriate from which Covid-19 Support Fund Loans will be made and delegates to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations authority to finalise the terms of the investment;
- 2.6 Agree to transfer all remaining funds from the existing LWA scheme to the RSF scheme.

### **3.0 Background on Financial Inclusion**

- 3.1 The overarching aim of our approach to financial inclusion is to ensure as a Council we provide tools and mechanisms for residents to support themselves economically and socially. Whilst the current welfare benefit system seeks to ensure that most people are supported, the Council recognises the need to support those on the borderline or left out of the Welfare system are more likely to be subject to poverty and low standard of living and social and economic deprivation in general.
- 3.2 In order to better support residents in financial hardship there are a number of areas that we can track that help highlight levels of social and economic deprivation. Some of the key ones are: unemployment, child poverty, homelessness, debt, welfare benefits and pay inequality.
- 3.3 The overarching aim of Brent's approach to financial inclusion is to maximise resident's life chances; by maximising their income to help give financial stability, housing sustainability and good health and well-being. Hence, we want to develop a holistic model where the core functions and support provision include budgeting support, income maximisation, debt management, employment support and support in finding affordable homes.
- 3.4 A focal point of the Council's approach to supporting residents who are experiencing financial hardship is our network of Community Hubs and our newly created Resident Support Team within Customer Access. The Hubs Team is well embedded within our communities and is supporting residents. The Resident Support Team considers RSF applications and makes awards.
- 3.5 Our holistic approach to financial inclusion will be supported by our work within debt recovery. This includes our approach with the Ethical Debt policy and our debt write off policy to ensure no resident is left with multiple debts that they cannot cope with, but also as a Council to ensure we have taken every step to support the resident with payment and proper recovery procedures.

- 3.6 In addition, the new Breathing Space legislation that will come into effect from 4 May 2021 will impact the way in which service areas across the Council can collect income and debt too. Residents with existing debt will, from 4 May 2021, be able to apply for 'Breathing Space'. If granted, the individual will then be given a 60-day 'Breathing Space' period, during which all recovery and enforcement action is halted while they receive professional debt advice to find solutions to their financial difficulties.
- 3.7 As part of the approach we will work closely with Citizens Advice, third sector partners and Credit Unions ensure we support residents who find themselves in difficulty.
- 3.8 To support the building blocks the Council has in place to help residents in financial difficulty the Resident Support Fund will help residents in such emergencies, crisis and meet their urgent need. The fund will tie over the gap caused in social and economic sustainability for that resident.

#### **4.0 Current Financial Context**

- 4.1 The economic impact of the Covid 19 virus outbreak is going to be felt by our residents for many months after normalcy returns. This is in spite of the financial support schemes that have been made available locally and nationally since April 2020.
- 4.2 The national unemployment rate in January 2021 is 6.3% compared to 4.8% in September 2020 (Office for National Statistics).
- 4.3 Since the lockdown in March 2020, there has been a significant increase in the households receiving Universal Credit in the borough:

<b>1<sup>st</sup> January 2020</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2020</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> August 2020</b>
12,303	21,767	32,320

- 4.4 According to data released by HMRC in London there were 431,200 employments furloughed at 31 October. This increased to 641,200 employments furloughed at 31 December 2020. Of these 29,200 are Brent residents that are currently on furlough.
- 4.5 The support measures such as the furlough scheme, Self-Isolation Payment and the increase in Working Tax Credit of £20 per week are due to end on the 1 April 2021
- 4.6 Current RSF: 3390 applications received as at February 2021. Expected spend at the end of March 2021 is £2.6m with a combination of loans, grants and 13A Hardship payments for Council tax Support working age residents

RSF breakdown with current residents supported:

Type of support	Residents supported
Grant applications accepted	401
Loans applications accepted	8
13A Council Tax payments	10241
Rent arrears (Council tenants)	600* ( <i>final list tbc</i> )
Digital applications accepted	147

- 4.7 The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme's primary objective is to support residents in short term need because of crisis or emergency, support residents experiencing financial hardship and ease exceptional pressures on families.
- 4.8 Crisis payments are made for expenses incurred to help with disaster situations like fires and flood or community payments to help vulnerable residents to live an independent life in the community. These are generally made to cover the costs of furniture and white goods, connection and removal costs, minor repairs in certain accommodation and travel costs and essential clothing and footwear.
- 4.9 The table shows the decreasing number of awards to the LWA scheme from 2013 to date:

Year	Number of awards
2013/14	1,015
2014/15	1,202
2015/16	1,413
2016/17	1,080
2017/18	1,043
2018/19	517
2019/20	200

## 5.0 Grants Proposal

- 5.1 Feedback was sought from the Poverty Commission about the existing Resident Support Fund and they were positive about the approach we took.
- 5.2 Colleagues across Brent were widely consulted on how the fund will help residents where current support mechanisms fall short of remedying the fundamental issues they are facing.
- 5.3 There are elements of the existing LWA scheme which have proved to offer meaningful support to residents such as the provision of white goods for new tenancies or replacing broken white goods for households with a low income. It is proposed to retain this from the LWA scheme. All other elements already exist within the current RSF.
- 5.4 An increase in our use of food bank referrals is expected and direct grants to Food Banks are proposed to support households experiencing food poverty.
- 5.5 It is proposed to enhanced use of mutual aid groups to make referrals and recommendations on behalf of residents and communities for us to support residents at grass root level.

- 5.7 Throughout the pandemic the Council has supported residents with emergency food and fuel vouchers through our Hubs and Customer Access points. We want to be able to support our residents beyond this from April 2021.
- 5.8 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): We project to spend in excess of £750k over our DHP allocation this year. Instead of having to make decisions based on current allocated budget from DWP, as a Council we can support residents who are on Housing Benefits or Universal Credit through the Resident Support Fund.
- 5.9 As well as these new initiatives, it is proposed to retain the following from the current RSF scheme.
- 5.10 Parachute payments: We propose a one off payment to help residents with their financial situation to get them back on track with stability.
- 5.11 Recently unemployed residents may have been able to comfortably afford their expenditure while in secure work, but are no longer able to make ends meet. Such unemployed residents looking for work will receive a payment to ease their financial stress while they are waiting for their first Universal Credit payment or in the event that their first Universal Credit payment is insufficient for all reasonable bills to be paid.
- 5.12 Although the help we would be able to give would be for a limited time, we propose supporting those residents who have practical prospects of returning to normalcy in the near future, so as to avoid their situation spiralling out of control and they potentially being registered as Homeless and claiming other expensive support.
- 5.13 Residents put out of work may need help with retraining to either refresh their skills or learn new ones.
- 5.14 With some forecasts suggesting the possibility of the economic downturn not remedying itself until 2024, the process of supporting residents to gain new skills to improve their chances of finding employment will in the long run increase their ability to pay Council Tax and avoid potential homelessness.
- 5.15 Brent Works job and apprenticeship brokerage is working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the United Colleges Group to engage employers that are recruiting and to develop a responsive set of courses that help people to re-train and access these opportunities. It is likely that some qualifications will need to be paid for by the job seekers, in which case access to funding for training could be vital to enable them to access work. Support will be offered for unemployed residents as well as those that are under-employed requiring more hours, as well as people seeking to increase their income through better quality employment.
- 5.16 Funds will be made available to support individual's access to new qualifications that may arise because of COVID-19. For example, training for those in the beauty industry to update their skills and practise in accordance with government guidelines on health and safety.
- 5.17 Rent arrears: The Council has the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme to support Housing Benefit claimants with rent costs above their benefit

entitlement. However, colleagues in Housing have given examples of rent arrears building up over the last few months – for both those entitled to benefits and those who are not.

If someone had fallen into rent arrears because of the pandemic situation, an award will be made to cover that as well as looking at the wider circumstances to see if there was any training or apprenticeships the fund will be used to pay for to improve the prospects of that person.

- 5.18 The rent arrears caused by the virus outbreak are being worked through to be met by the current RSF scheme, but we believe the effects of the situation may extend beyond March 2021.
- 5.19 The grant will incorporate emergency help with white goods and essential furniture for residents.
- 5.20 Supporting Digital Inclusion: From work with the Community and Voluntary Sector and officers' own interactions with residents, officers already know that the restrictions in place around COVID-19 are magnifying the impacts of digital exclusion. Work with the Young Brent Foundation and Age UK Brent has highlighted that the impact is being felt across generations.
- 5.21 Social isolation has been a problem for both younger and older people because of the social-distancing restrictions in place to help manage the COVID-19 outbreak. School closures mean that much learning and support for young people has shifted online. Research has shown that access to a suitable broadband connection can be problematic. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, many young people accessed free Wi-Fi in libraries and cafes for example, to do their homework. These options are currently not available to them. Where broadband is available in the home, it needs to be reasonably high speed to support streaming of educational materials, often via video streaming for example, particularly where a number of young people are accessing it at the same time and where parents may also be working from home.
- 5.22 A similar need exists amongst our elderly residents. Many of these residents have been largely confined to their homes since mid-March. It is envisaged they will be one of the last cohorts to be released from lockdown. Digital exclusion is high amongst older people in normal circumstances. Online access and training could enable excluded and isolated older people to connect with their family and friends. Older people would also be able to access online exercise groups, maintaining their physical health and psychological wellbeing.
- 5.23 There is an increasing demand for Council services to replace many face-face interactions with online ones. For example, consultation and action planning events are taking place via Zoom. Some services that might have been accessed in the Customer Service Centre, or by some residents at one of the Hubs, are available online. Brent Start has been offering some of its courses online.
- 5.24 As the furlough scheme winds down the impact on employment is already being felt. Residents finding themselves newly unemployed will need online access to apply for jobs, participate in online interviews and upskill online.

- 5.25 Brent Start has an extensive digital skills offer that can be provided virtually or in the community when the service re-opens classes from September 2020 (based on current plans and adhering to social distancing guidelines). Residents should be encouraged to utilise this. For those claiming out of work benefits such as Universal Credit, this will be free.
- 5.26 All of these uses demand fast and robust connections without data limits. For example, an hour's call on Zoom uses 1GB of data. Brent's Digital Strategy outlines the Council's commitment to improving the Borough's digital infrastructure. Use of some of the Resident Support Fund to support residents with online access presents a real opportunity to accelerate this work in some of the most digitally excluded areas of the Borough.
- 5.27 The Children and Young People directorate is already working with schools in Brent to identify families with school-aged children without a broadband connection. This is to allow them to benefit from the new partnership between the Department of Education and BT, which will provide eligible households with a free internet connection for six months. Data will be shared with CYP to avoid duplication.
- 5.28 Respite/Support for Young Carers: Young Carers, already under pressure in normal times, have had to spend 24/7 caring for family members without the option for respite or support. A payment could be made to such a person should they be able to arrange respite care, for days out or other expenditure relating to their own well-being.
- 5.29 Mortgage support: Universal Credit does not support customers with mortgage payments, unlike the legacy scheme whereby the interest on a mortgage could be paid by Job Seekers Allowance. Support towards the interest on repayments will be given.
- 5.30 Counselling, Mental Health and Well-being: The future fund will enhance measures required by some of our residents to support to limit the long-term impact on an individual's mental health, increase confidence in money management, and aid the overall financial recovery of individuals. Referrals will be made to support an individual regarding their mental health and psychological wellbeing.
- 5.31 Costs of bereavement counselling will be partly or fully met: The pandemic has shown an increase in number of deaths and unplanned funeral costs which has hit families the hardest. We want to ensure that any such costs especially with multiple funerals in same family are supported by us through RSF.
- 5.32 Delegated authority is sought for the Strategic Director for Customer and Digital Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform authority to agree eligibility criteria. However given the range of situations it is envisaged the Covid-19 Support Fund Grant will assist going forward. The delegated authority is sought for the Strategic Director for Customer Services, to review and agree revised eligibility criteria as and when required.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There is £90,000 remaining in the existing LWA scheme, which is held in an earmarked reserve.
- 6.2 The existing RSF is funded from the COVID-19 Hardship Grant awarded to the Council. The 2020/21 allocation to RSF in 2020/21 is £2.6m and must be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- 6.3 For 2021/22, members agreed to allocate a further £3 million to RSF, which will be funded from an earmarked reserve set aside to address pressures arising from COVID-19.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The Strategic Director for Customer and Digital Services under the delegations mentioned in paragraph 2.3 to 2.5 above will make arrangements to administer the grants in respect of Resident Support Fund and administer the loans in association with the Credit Union.
- 7.2 The Council has powers to administer and distribute grant funding and implement the proposals to provide grants under its new Resident Support Fund scheme pursuant to the general power of competence as set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Any distribution of grant funding will need to be in accordance with delegated powers in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. There will need to be an agreement between the Council and the recipient to govern the terms and conditions of the grant.
- 7.3 With regard to the recommendation to make interest free loans, the selection of a Credit Union for processing loans would be classed as a procurement. Based on the estimated value of 25000 for the delivery of the service, the value of the contract for the purposes of the Council's Constitution will be classified as a "Low Value Contract". Contracts valued between £25,000 and £189,330 are classed as "Low Value Contracts" under the Council's constitution. Pursuant to Contract Standing Order 86 (c) of Part 2 of the Council's Constitution no formal tendering procedures apply to Low Value Contracts, except that at least three (3) written quotes must be sought and the quotes sought and/or obtained shall be recorded or alternatively the contract is procured through the Online Market Place. Where quotes are sought, advice must be sought from the Council's procurement officers about how to select the three organisations to be invited to quote and how to structure the quotation process. Unless the Council's procurement officers advise that it is not necessary or appropriate, all quotes shall be sought using the Electronic Tender Facility and at least one of the quotes shall be sought from a Local Brent provider.
- 7.4 Consideration will also need to be given to ensuring that such arrangements for capital funding are state aid compliant. Given the purpose of the funding, it is likely to satisfy the requirements of the Services of General Economic Interest Block Exemption.
- 7.5 There will need to be an agreement between the Council and Credit Union to govern the contractual relationship between the parties and to ensure that any monies invested are ring-fenced for the categories of borrowers identified. The



Council will also need to approve any loan template between the Credit Union and the individual borrowers.

- 7.6 Details regarding the amendments to the Council's Ethical Debt Policy and the implications of the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space Moratorium and Mental Health Crisis Moratorium) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which will come into force in May 2021, will be set out in the report on the Council's Debt Write-Off Update and Procedure which will go to Cabinet for consideration on 6 April 2020.

## **8.0 Equality Implications**

- 8.1 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 8.3 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.
- 8.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not to date been carried out. However, this scheme will benefit all residents in Brent affected by the virus-outbreak and beyond. It will be available to all eligible residents, including those in one of the 9 protected groups.
- 8.5 We will be advertising the fund through our partners in the charity sector and would expect them to help us reach their clients and patrons to make sure they are applying for this additional support.
- 8.6 No resident will be worse off because of these proposals.

## **9.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

- 9.1 A Member briefing session took place on 15 December 2020. Furthermore, we have engaged with Citizens Advice, the Brent Poverty Commission, Mutual aid Groups, Voluntary organisations, Faith and Community groups and internal stakeholders to finalise proposals.


## **Related Documents**

Cabinet Report – July 2020 Resident Support Fund

### **Report sign off:**

**Peter Gadsdon**

Strategic Director Customer and  
Digital Services

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</b>
<b>Special Needs Transport Managed Service - Contract Renewal</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Chris Whyte Operational Director, Environmental Services Regeneration and Environment 020 8937 5342 <a href="mailto:Chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk">Chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk</a>

## Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the outcome and cost options from a commissioning exercise undertaken on behalf of Brent by Harrow Council. These costs relate to a re-procurement of the managed personnel contract that provides drivers and assistants for the shared Special Needs Transport (SNT) service.

- 1.2 The report seeks a specific decision in relation to the payment of London Living Wage (LLW) to staff employed through the contract.

## 1.0 Recommendation:

That Cabinet agrees to:

- 2.1 An uplift in payment in line with LLW which draws from the Council's reserves in 2021/22, but which is included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2022/23 onwards.

## 2.0 Detail

- 2.1 Since August 2016, Brent and Harrow councils have operated a shared special needs transport service which is managed on a day to day basis by Harrow

Council from their Forward Drive depot. The service currently provides transport for 1144 children and 131 adults to schools, colleges and day centres. The budget for this service in 2020/21 was £10.9m.

- 2.2 The merger presented a business opportunity for both councils to gain the benefits of economies of scale, greater efficiencies in operational front line staffing (drivers and assistants), shared policies from cross working with seconded staff, route sharing and rationalisation, and systems and processes. It also provided the opportunity for better utilisation of Harrow's premises to reduce the operational costs of the combined service. The merged service also seeks to deliver cost reductions in relation to contractual arrangements.
- 2.3 One such contract is the Labour Supply Managed Contract which was set up when the shared service commenced in 2016. It is primarily used to provide drivers and assistants on buses that serve Brent Council. Harrow's requirement is less because they mainly use staff who are directly employed by them. The call on the contract by Brent and Harrow is approximately 85% and 15% respectively. It expires this year and has now been subject to a Harrow-led re-procurement exercise.
- 2.4 A key consideration that has emerged from this exercise is how the contracted staff are remunerated. The current contract has paid staff below LLW. This exercise now provides an opportunity to review that. The current rates vs LLW are shown below:

Category of Staff	Pay Rate per hour ('as is')	Pay Rate per hour (LLW)
Driver PCV	£10.00	£10.86
Driver D1	£9.50	£10.86
Passenger Assistant	£8.72	£10.86
Specialist/Medical	£10.00	£10.86

- 2.5 Another key consideration is the timing of the conclusion of this procurement exercise. It has not allowed time for a full appreciation of the costs so they could be accounted for as part of the settling of the council's revenue budget for 2021/22.
- 2.6 The new contract is for four years from August 2021, with an option to extend for a further three years.
- 2.7 The procurement process was carried out in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Harrow Council followed an OPEN Procedure. A market engagement event was held on the 9th November. The OJEU Notice and Tender documentation was published on Harrow Council's e-tendering portal on the 11th November 2020. The closing date for submissions was the 11th December at 12 noon.
- 3.8 Harrow received twenty-six expressions of interest and then received six bids on time. All six bidders passed the Selection Questionnaire Stage.
- 3.9 A further compliance check was carried out for Quality, Price and Social Value (SV). One of the bids was non-compliant. Another bid was deemed to be abnormally low, and was subsequently rejected. The remaining four bids were then evaluated and a preferred bidder was identified.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The option of paying LLW would cost £0.5m - £0.6m per annum higher than paying the 'current rates. This is equivalent to a total of £4m across the seven years of the contract.
- 4.2 This would be funded by corporate reserves in the first year (circa £0.4m) and built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2022/23 onwards.
- 4.3 The current (2020/21) BTS budget for agency staff is £3.4m per annum.
- 4.4 As part of the shared service agreement, any costs incurred on Brent's behalf are fully recovered by Harrow. This will include costs incurred for this new contract.
- 4.5 Harrow have indicated they will be guided by Brent's preference and will adopt a harmonised approach to payment across the whole contract.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The original Cabinet decision, and the Inter-Authority Agreement, allows for Harrow to undertake and lead on procurement but does not refer to any possible formal delegation of other functions to Harrow so some key decisions affecting the service, including matters relating to cost and strategic direction remain subject to scrutiny by each council's Cabinet/Executive.
- 5.2 The proposed contract is merely between Harrow and the contractor and therefore Brent is not contractually liable under it so it is not necessary to seek Brent's Cabinet's authority to award the contract.

#### **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1 Passengers are likely to have a learning or physical disability and be elderly or young. Any changes to the current service may have an impact on them. No changes are anticipated at this stage and once the new provider is installed, every effort will be made to ensure consistency in drivers and assistants and that routes remain similar to those that are operated now.

#### **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

- 7.1 None

#### **8.0 Human Resource/Property Implications**

- 8.1 The preferred bidder is not the incumbent, which means staff will be subject to a TUPE process.

**Report sign off:**

**Alan Lunt**

Strategic Director of Regeneration  
and Environment

 <b>Brent</b>	<p align="center"><b>Cabinet</b> 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Report from the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</b></p>
<p><b>Purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive, London HA9 8HE for Rough Sleepers' Accommodation</b></p>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Preston
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Part Exempt – Appendix 1 is exempt as it contains the following category of exempt information as specified in Paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)"
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Two Appendix : Valuation (exempt) Appendix 2: Red Line Plan
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Denish Patel  Head of Property  Tel: 020 8937 2529  <a href="mailto:Denish.Patel@brent.gov.uk">Denish.Patel@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Jamila Khan  Residential Manager  Tel: 020 8937 1467  <a href="mailto:Jamila.Khan@brent.gov.uk">Jamila.Khan@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>John Magness  Head of Housing Supply and Partnerships  Tel: 020 8937 3272  <a href="mailto:John.Magness@brent.gov.uk">John.Magness@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Cabinet to authorise the freehold purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive, London HA9 8HE from the market through the Housing General Fund to increase the supply of supported housing for people who have been sleeping rough and to help reduce the use and cost of temporary accommodation.
- 1.2 The property is a recently constructed purpose built block of flats comprising eight flats and six parking spaces (red line plan shown in Appendix 2). The property comprises six one-bedroom self-contained flats and two two-bedroom self-contained flats. The gross internal area for the entire block is circa 385 square meters.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

Cabinet is requested to:

- 2.1 Approve the purchase of the freehold of 83 Wembley Park Drive, London HA9 8HE with vacant possession to meet the needs of people who have been sleeping rough and rehoused through the Government's rough sleeping move-on initiatives.
- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Community Well Being, to agree the terms of the purchase and acquire the property subject to financial and legal due diligence, subject to vacant possession and subject to contract.
- 2.3 To note that completion of the property needs to take place by March 2021 in order to secure the funding arrangements and an extension is not guaranteed.

## **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Following the first lockdown in 2020, the London Mayor made available a new fund as part of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme ("RSAP") aimed at rough sleepers. This provides capital grant funding for the acquisition of self-contained accommodation with associated revenue funding for a three-year period to support the residents. The Council made a bid for funds, which was successful, and this is set out in Section 4 below. The purchase of 83 Wembley Park Drive will provide eight of the units required.
- 3.2 In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council, in partnership with the Greater London Authority ("GLA") and other charities took swift action to ensure rough sleepers were protected from the virus. The Council temporarily rehoused nearly 250 people in various types of accommodation. Many of these rough sleepers have now left the temporary accommodation ("TA") provided and there is a pressing need for longer-term accommodation. This report represents part of the Council's response to this need and the funding operates in much the same way as the much larger New Council House Programme.



- 3.3 One of the commitments in the Council's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is to increase the supply of and access to stable and affordable homes across the borough. The Council's intention is to deliver its own new build and purchase and repair programme, providing affordable homes across the borough that effectively meets local need. Additionally, the Council wants to minimise the use of temporary accommodation, but where this is unavoidable, work to improve the quality of accommodation offered and keep the stay as stable and as short as possible. To achieve this, the Council is working to increase the supply of council-developed temporary accommodation so that it can avoid placing households in Bed and Breakfast or other forms of nightly paid accommodation, reducing the likelihood of multiple moves and ensuring the needs of residents are adequately met. The purchase of this property goes towards fulfilling this plan.
- 3.4 The subject property will be managed directly by the Council, in the same way as other Council properties are managed and by the same team. Each resident will be appropriately assessed before they are placed and there will be appropriate support services in place, to meet any needs identified.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The GLA has awarded overall funding allocation to Brent of £2.77m to deliver 24 homes by March 2021 under the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme. The funding allocation comprises £2.34m capital funding and £0.430m revenue support funding.
- 4.2 The Council has identified and negotiated the acquisition of 83 Wembley Park Drive that will provide eight homes of the homes in the programme. The allocation of these eight units is subject to contract.
- 4.3 The purchase cost (shown in Appendix 1) will be funded by a combination of the GLA grant allocation and borrowing. The drawdown of the grant will be subject to grant conditions that are set out in the grant agreement. The property will provide eight self-contained units of accommodation through purchase and repair and grant conditions will be assessed against the property prior to completion and once all due diligence has been completed.
- 4.4 £1.040m of the £2.34m capital grant allocation will be utilised towards the proposed scheme's viability, which has been evaluated. The discounted aggregate annual rental income and associated costs shows that the scheme is financially viable and the payback period for the debt is in year 42.
- 4.5 The acquisition of the property should help reduce cost of using expensive temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast hotels to house homeless rough sleepers.
- 4.6 The Council will receive 100% Stamp Duty Land Tax ("SDLT") relief on the acquisition being a relevant housing provider and the acquisition will be partly funded by public subsidy such as the GLA grant.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that for the purposes of (a) any of the Council's functions under this or any other enactment or (b) the benefit, improvement or the development of the Council's area, the Council may acquire any land whether situated inside or outside its area.
- 5.2 Legal Services will be required to undertake the necessary legal due diligence including examining searches and the title for each property. Enquiries before contract will be raised and the purchase of each of these properties will be subject to satisfactory results of the searches, a good a marketable title and a satisfactory survey and valuation result.
- 5.3 The Council has powers to provide interim temporary accommodation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") to applicants who make homeless applications to the Council. Under section 188(1) of the 1996 Act, if the Council as a local housing authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need, the Council must secure that accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation until the homelessness application is processed and a decision is made by the Council regarding the application.
- 5.4 A local authority will accept the full homelessness duty to provide temporary accommodation if it is satisfied that the homeless applicant is homeless, eligible for assistance (this usually means not excluded on immigration grounds), in priority need of accommodation, not intentionally homeless and the applicant has a local connection with the borough (this last condition is subject to a number of exceptions).
- 5.5 The Minister for Local Government and Homelessness provided guidance to local housing authorities in a letter dated 26 March 2020 regarding the pandemic and homelessness. The Minister advised that part of the government's strategy to reduce the impact of the pandemic was to ask local authorities to accommodate all rough sleepers, and people at risk of sleeping rough, including those people with no recourse to public funds. In that letter, the Minister stated that one of the four basic principles in relation to the Government's response to COVID-19 and rough sleeping was to *"utilise alternative powers and funding to assist those with no recourse to public funds who require shelter and other forms of support due to the COVID-19 pandemic"*. It should be added that the letter from the Minister is non statutory guidance.

## **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1 The action that is proposed in this report will help to improve the housing conditions and life chances of people with protected characteristics, including homeless people, people with disabilities and families with children. They will therefore have a positive impact on Equality and Diversity.
- 6.2 Tackling homelessness and reducing the use and cost of TA are part of the Council's commitment to improving communities and our town as a place to live. In doing so, the Council will have due regard to its Public Sector Duty and

continue to work to tackle discrimination and inequality and help create a fairer society.

**7.0 Any Other Implications (HR, Property, Environmental Sustainability - where necessary)**

7.1 None identified.

**8.0 Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

8.1 N/A

**Report sign off:**

**Alan Lunt**

Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

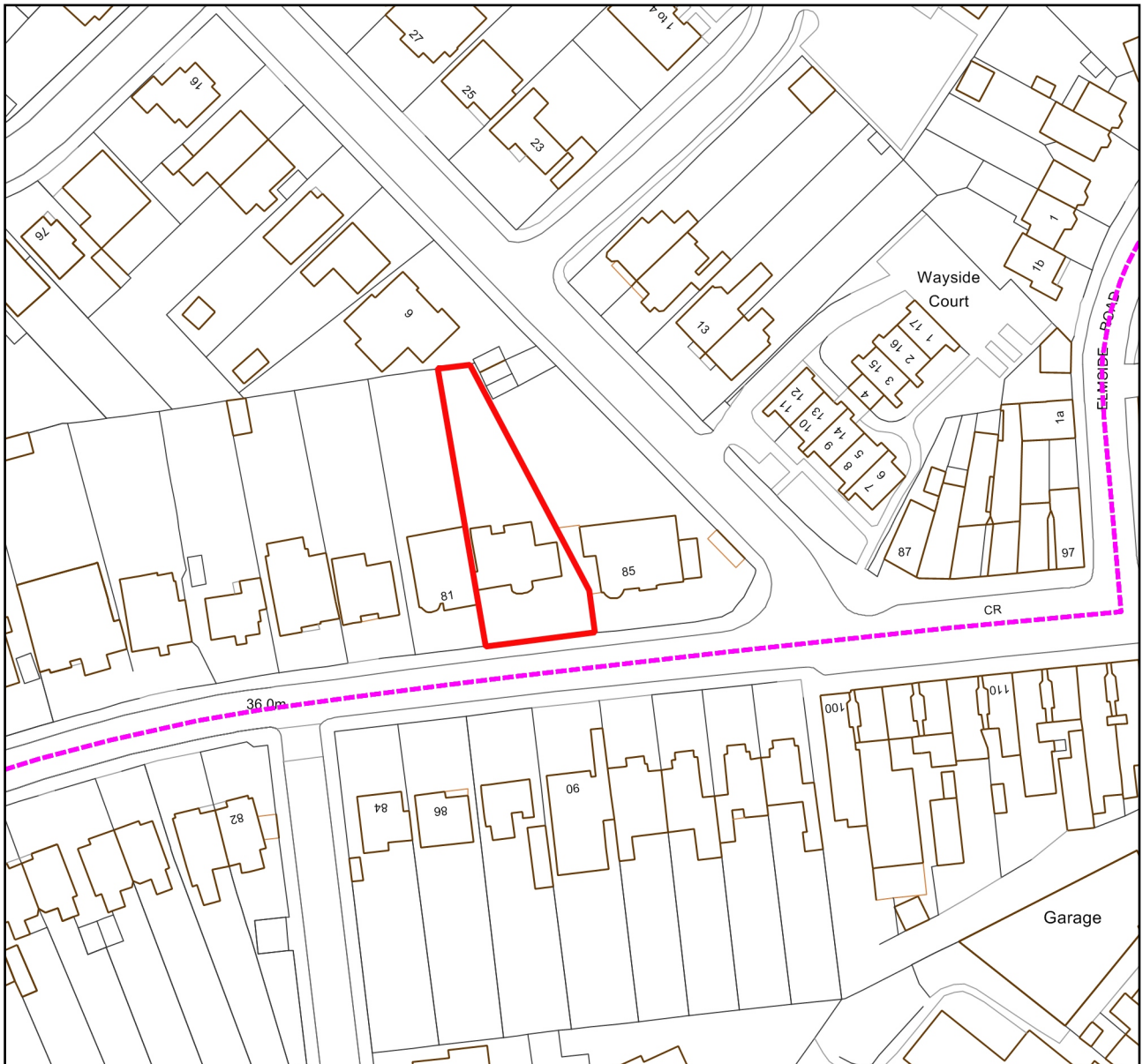
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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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