



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 17 June 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor M Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Farah, Grahl, Knight, Nerva and Rubin.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (Cabinet Member for Resident Support & Culture), Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement) and Councillor Tatler (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The following personal interests were declared by members in relation to Agenda Item 9 (Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy):

- Councillor Grahl and Councillor Nerva – as leaseholders within the borough.
- Councillor Farah – as a member of his family was a tenant within the borough.

No other declarations of interest were made during the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 28 May 2024, be approved as a correct record.

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

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

No petitions were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

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

There were no references from the Community & Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees submitted for consideration at the meeting.

7. **Appointment of Cabinet Sub Committee**

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to confirm the following appointments to the Barham Park Trust Committee for the 2024-25 Municipal Year:

Councillors M.Butt (Chair), Mili Patel (Vice-Chair), Donnelly-Jackson, Farah and Krupa Sheth.

8. **Vale Farm Leisure Centre Procurement Options**

Councillor Nerva (Cabinet Member for Community Health & Wellbeing) introduced a report presenting the outcome of an options appraisal exercise undertaken in relation to the procurement of future leisure service provision and operation of Vale Farm Leisure Centre from September 2025 onwards.

In introducing the report, Councillor Nerva began by outlining the current operational arrangements for the three Leisure Centres managed by the Council which involved in-house delivery at Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre (CLC) and was due to form part of the wider planned redevelopment of the area, the management of Willesden Leisure Centre through a PFI contract running until 2031 and delivery of provision at Vale Farm Leisure Centre through a Tri-borough contract with Harrow and Ealing Councils operated by Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (Everyone Active).

Members were advised that neither the contract, PFI end date or timeline for the redevelopment of Bridge Park CLC currently aligned in terms of seeking a combined management arrangement so, following a decision to vary and extend the existing Tri-borough Leisure contract for Vale Farm Sports Centre to August 2025, a full options appraisal process had been undertaken to consider the different management options available for that specific Centre. This had included the potential for in-house provision, creation of a LATCO (Local Authority Trading Company), procurement by Brent alone and continuation of a Tri-borough procurement with Ealing and Harrow, details of which had been outlined in Appendix 3 of the report. It was noted the appraisal had identified a Tri-borough procurement as the favoured option in terms of not only affordability but also market testing and service offer.

In considering the outcome of the appraisal process, Members noted not only the financial benefits which had been delivered through the current Tri-borough approach in terms of wider economies of scale and market appeal beyond offering Vale Farm as a standalone management contract but also (from a non-financial perspective) in relation to the shared contract management and knowledge sharing arrangements across the three boroughs. The proposed arrangements would also be expected to deliver increased opportunities for career development for leisure staff, with London living wage compliance also a requirement, alongside the potential to explore the development of an employment charter. Members also noted the inclusion within the proposed specification for the new service of a requirement on the provider to respond to the diversity of resident needs in support of development of the Council's wider vision for active leisure as a means to improve health and address health inequalities. This included the aspiration to provide a more equitable and inclusive offer for all residents and all parts of the borough working in partnership with the Council, community and voluntary organisations, sports clubs, and other bodies. In concluding the introduction members were advised that whilst the Council's other two leisure facilities fell

outside of the scope of the current contract the ambition still remained to align the management of the three facilities in the future, with officers continuing to explore options that the Council may be able exercise alongside the potential to introduce a break clause in any new contractual arrangement in order to facilitate such an alignment.

Whilst supportive of the approach outlined, recognising the extensive nature of the options appraisal process undertaken, Cabinet advised they remained keen, whilst noting the challenges identified, to explore the potential to align management of all three Leisure Centres including the option for in-house provision. In the meantime, however, members welcomed the benefits identified through the proposed tri-borough procurement option given the ability to continue supporting the delivery of more holistic leisure provision as part of the wider Health & Wellbeing Strategy across the borough.

Cabinet thanked all those involved in the option appraisal process and development of the proposals outlined in the report and, having noted the information contained within the exempt appendices included as part of the report, **RESOLVED:**

- (1) Note that the Council's current Tri-borough contract in respect of Vale Farm Leisure Centre with Sport & Leisure Management Limited (SLM) ended in August 2025.
- (2) Approve the undertaking of a Tri-borough procurement with the London Boroughs of Ealing and Harrow to deliver leisure service provision at Vale Farm Leisure Centre, such procurement to be led by the London Borough of Harrow.
- (3) Approve the use of the London Borough of Harrow's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in the procurement of the contract referred to in (2) above.
- (4) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing to approve steps in the procurement of the contract referred to in (2) above as are necessary and consistent with the content of this report.
- (5) Note that following the procurement of the Contract referred to in (2) above officers will report back to Cabinet to seek approval to award the Contract.

9. **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2024-2028**

Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing) introduced a report presenting the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and supporting Building Safety Engagement Strategy both of which it was reported were required in order to fulfil the Council's obligation as a social housing landlord under the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards & Building Safety Act 2022.

In presenting the report, Councillor Knight outlined the six promises contained within the Engagement Strategy which had been developed to set out how the Council would seek to listen to, and meaningfully engage with its tenants and leaseholders in order to assist in shaping the delivery of services and ensure those

living in social housing within Brent were protected and able to have their say as part of recognised good practice for social housing landlords. The promises contained within the Strategy (as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report) were all underpinned by a series of actions to support their delivery with members advised that these had been developed following an extensive process of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, as detailed within section 6 of the report. This process had included a range of activities including roadshows, a tenant and leaseholder open day and engagement event with the Housing Ombudsman, with an analysis of the consultation outcomes included in Appendix 2 of the report and the new standards developed in response designed to provide greater emphasis on treating tenants with respect, acknowledging diversity, and adapting communication styles in order to be able to work more proactively with tenants to promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing within their communities and neighbourhoods.

In addition, Cabinet noted the new requirements also outlined within the report on building owners to demonstrate their ability to identify and manage safety risks in high rise buildings. This included the need for landlords to establish an engagement strategy on how it was proposed to communicate with tenants and leaseholders in those buildings and identify their needs regarding building safety, with the resulting Building Safety Strategy detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

In commending development of both strategies and wide ranging and extensive nature of the engagement and consultation undertaken to support the process, members were keen to recognise the importance and value in ensuring that meaningful engagement with the Council's social housing tenants and leaseholders continued. This was not only as a means of empowering them to influence the way services were provided but also, given the current housing crisis and pressures on social housing, as part of a more fundamental restructure of the way housing provision overall was being delivered.

In welcoming the commitments outlined within both strategies Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Approve the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy, as presented in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (2) Note the feedback from formal consultation on the engagement strategy and how that feedback would be used, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.
- (3) Approve the Building Safety Engagement Strategy, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

10. **Private Sector Housing Strategy 2024-2029**

Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing) introduced a report providing an update on development of the new Private Sector Housing Strategy (as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report) including a summary of the responses to the consultation undertaken as part of its development.

In introducing the report, Councillor Knight began by outlining the Council's commitment to ensuring that everyone in the borough had a safe, good quality and

stable place in which to live, including those within the Private Rented Sector which it was noted currently accounted for 46% of all housing stock (approximately 58,000 properties) within the borough. Given the size of the sector, the role it played in supporting the delivery of good quality and secure housing was therefore regarded as key in terms of not only the impact on individual health and wellbeing, quality of life and life opportunities but also in supporting the wider approach in seeking to prevent and address the ongoing pressures around homelessness, tackle poverty and mitigate against climate change. Recognising these issues, members were advised that the Strategy had been designed to focus on three core commitments (as detailed within section 5 of the report) which sought to not only address poor property conditions and instability within the private rented sector but also support private rented sector tenants in understanding their rights and gaining access to relevant advice and guidance backed up with a strong inspection and enforcement regime through the landlord licensing scheme.

Members were advised that development of the strategy had been based on an extensive public consultation process which had included a wide variety of stakeholders including Crisis, Advice for Renters and the London Renters Union. The commitments within the Strategy included a number of detailed actions designed to support their delivery, the implementation of which would continue to be monitored through an action plan during the lifetime of the strategy.

In welcoming the Strategy, Cabinet thanked all those involved in its development, which it was felt represented an important commitment towards delivering the Council's vision for the private sector housing sector in Brent as a safe, stable and accessible housing option for residents. Support was also expressed for the approach adopted as part of the Strategy in seeking to disincentivise landlords in holding properties as empty and to bring empty properties back into use alongside introduction of the landlord licensing scheme as a means of maintaining high standards and property conditions across the sector. In expressing concern at what was felt to be the lack of government commitment towards the same approach, Cabinet ended (having recognised the challenging nature of the process) by commending the extensive nature of engagement undertaken on the Strategy, including the involvement of key stakeholders such as London Renters Union & Advise for Renters.

Having welcomed development of the Strategy Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Note the consultation response and subsequent changes to the drafted strategy.
- (2) Approve, having considered the update provided, the Private Sector Housing Strategy for sign-off and final publication.

11. **Travel Assistance Policy**

Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools) introduced a report, which provided an update on the development of the new Travel Assistance Policy and included details of the feedback received from the recent public consultation and stakeholder engagement exercise on the plan, prior to seeking approval for adoption and publication.

In introducing the report Cabinet noted that the Policy covered the provision of home to school travel assistance to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and played an essential role in enabling their ongoing access to education. In recognising the value of independent and active travel and changes in the cohort of young people requiring assistance, members noted that the Policy had been developed around two key principles that underpinned the culture of providing travel assistance. The first of these had been focused around promoting independence, including supporting young people to travel independently and the second focussed around maintaining quality of life, with the Policy also designed to ensure access to education remained fair and equal for children and young people with SEND as well as continuing to support opportunities for Post 16 skills development for young people with SEND.

Members were advised that development of the strategy had also been based on a comprehensive public consultation process which had included a wide variety of stakeholders with the process and outcome having been detailed in section 4 and Appendix 2 of the report.

In commending the approach outlined within the Policy, Members noted the feedback provided on the current service and were keen to support the efforts being made to encourage the use of more active forms of travel given the wider climate, environmental and health impacts as well as the focus on the options being developed to promote independent travel as a means of developing independence skills and self-confidence. Whilst recognising that these options may not be appropriate in all cases and welcoming the assurance provided in acknowledging this point, support was expressed for the proposed development of an Independent Travel Training Programme and work being undertaken with Transport for London on this, seeking to utilise all available sources of funding and as part of the wider package of support already available through the Local Offer for children and young people with SEND.

In supporting and welcoming development of the Policy as a means of seeking to further enhance the support available to children and young people with SEND Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Approve the minor amendments to the Policy, as detailed within section 3.4 of the report which had been designed to strengthen the Plan following consultation feedback.
- (2) Note the feedback received and suggestions made by the public and various stakeholders as part of the recent public consultation and stakeholder engagement exercises on the draft plan, as set out in the Community Consultation Report attached at Appendix B to the report.
- (3) Approve adoption of the final version of the Active Travel Implementation Plan incorporating the amendments agreed under (1) above, as detailed within Appendix A of the report.

12. **Corporate Performance Update - Quarter 4 2023-24**

Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation & Climate Action) introduced a report, which provided Cabinet with an overview of corporate performance in the fourth quarter of 2023-24.

In presenting the report, Cabinet noted that the performance monitoring update provided a detailed assessment against the full suite of Key Performance Indicators developed to monitor delivery of the desired outcomes and corporate priorities within the new Borough Plan 2023-2027.

In recognising the efforts being made to ensure the continued delivery of services and work being undertaken jointly by Cabinet Members with their relevant Corporate Directors, in seeking to manage and mitigate against the financial challenges and strategic risks identified as part of the overall wider approach towards supporting local residents and in support of the priorities within the Borough Plan, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the Borough Plan 2023-24 performance reporting for Q4 as set out in section 3 and Appendix A of the report.
- (2) To note the current and future strategic risks associated with the information provided and agree the remedial actions on strategic risks identified as appropriate alongside the challenge on progress being provided with responsible officers as necessary.

13. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

14. Any other urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

Prior to ending proceedings, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) took the opportunity to wish Councillor Knight and her family well as she commenced a period of maternity leave.

The meeting ended at 10.33 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair