



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

**Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 10 February 2025 at
10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor M Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Benea, Fleur, Farah, Grahl, Nerva, Rubin and Krupa Sheth.

Also present: Councillors Conneely, Lorber & Mahmood.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Kim Wright (Chief Executive) with members advised that Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health & Wellbeing) would be acting on her behalf.

No other apologies for absence were received at the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No 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 Wednesday 15 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising (if any)

None identified.

5. Petitions (if any)

No petitions were presented at the meeting.

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

There were no items referred from either the Community Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees.

7. Review of working age Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025-26

Prior to considering the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised that he had accepted a request from Councillor Lorber to speak on the proposals being presented for consideration in relation to the Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. In addressing Cabinet, Councillor Lorber began by

highlighting the significant impact he felt the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme would have on local residents already struggling as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. In considering mitigations to the impact of the proposed changes, he suggested that the Universal Credit system should not be used as the basis of the backdating rules for new CTS claims as the system was not felt to work effectively. Councillor Lorber also felt there had not been enough time to make residents aware of the changes to allow them to make any necessary adjustments, with concerns expressed about the extent and meaningfulness of the consultation process undertaken given the preferred option which had been identified as the basis of that process, following the initial modelling undertaken. In highlighting the responses provided as part of the consultation, including those by Brent Citizens Advice, Councillor Lorber ended by urging Cabinet when considering the proposals and impact locally to consider, as a minimum, increasing the level of the financial hardship Support Fund from £1.5m to £3m.

Having noted the comments and representations made, the Leader then moved on to invite Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) to introduce the report from the Corporate Director Partnerships, Housing & Resident Services detailing the outcome of the consultation process which had been undertaken on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and seeking approval to recommend the final changes outlined to Full Council on 27 February 25 for formal adoption.

In presenting the report, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson began by highlighting the challenging financial context within which the proposals being presented for consideration had needed to be developed involving the Council having to deliver a range of essential demand led services amidst rising costs and growing financial pressures. This had led many local authorities, including Brent, to have to re-evaluate every aspect of spending in order to identify where the greatest efficiencies could be unlocked enabling the Council to achieve more with less. Whilst recognising that Brent remained in a relatively robust financial position, it was pointed out the Council had still been required to review all areas of spending and deliver significant savings in order to be able to deliver a balanced budget. The growing costs identified in relation to the current Council Tax Support Scheme had been identified as one of the resulting areas in which it would be possible to make changes that would not only alleviate the administrative burdens of the scheme but also deliver significant cost savings that would enable the Council to continue providing support for other vital services and the most vulnerable residents.

In recognising the important role of the Council Tax Support scheme in supporting many households across the borough and challenging nature of the proposed changes outlined, members were advised that the scheme had reached a point at which it was no longer affordable to deliver in its current form given the projected cost totalling £35m, which involved nearly 20p from every £1 collected in Council Tax being provided in the form of Council Tax Support. Whilst acknowledging the impact of the proposed changes, the opportunity was also taken to highlight the way in which operation of the scheme had also reinforced the need for urgent reform of the overall system of local government finance (including Council Tax) with the approach being developed by the government, on which further announcements were anticipated as part of the next spending review, therefore welcomed. In noting that the growing cost associated with provision of local Council Tax Support Schemes was also an issue being reviewed by a many other

local authorities (regardless of political persuasion) across London, members were advised that the proposals relating to the operation of Brent's scheme had been designed to focus on the working-age element. In confirming that the pensioner element of the scheme would remain protected members were advised that the changes for the working-age population would include designing the scheme with a standard 35% minimum payment and simplified non-dependant charges with more residents therefore required to make a contribution towards their Council Tax bill.

Having outlined the proposals for which approval was being sought, Cabinet was reminded these were not being put forward as a matter of choice but out of necessity, with the changes designed to address a £5m shortfall in the Council's budget which would otherwise have required the use of reserves (no longer recognised as a sustainable approach) or cuts to other frontline services in order to deliver a balanced budget. In recognising the impact which the proposed changes were likely to have on affected households members also noted the additional measures which had been developed to provide targeted support for those most in need. These had included the reinvestment (from the savings identified) of £1.5m into a hardship fund alongside the existing programme of proactive outreach and support designed to ensure eligible residents were aware of the financial advice, welfare support, and discretionary reductions that were available to them with the changes also providing an opportunity to better integrate the scheme with the Universal Credit system which, over the longer term, it was pointed out would also help to streamline the process and make it more accessible for those already receiving welfare support.

In ending her introduction, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt the changes outlined reflected the delicate balance needing to be achieved in seeking to meet the Council's broader aims to secure the Council's financial sustainability whilst also targeting support where it was needed most across the Council in order to work towards a fairer and more financially sustainable future for Brent.

In recognising the challenging nature of the financial position faced by the Council as context within which the proposals had needed to be developed, members also acknowledged the efforts being made to ensure those households most in need would continue to be supported. The concerns raised in relation to the regressive nature of Council Tax and need for fundamental reform of the funding system for local government were also supported along with the ongoing efforts being made to lobby for the necessary change and longer term funding settlements.

All those involved in developing the proposals and package of additional supporting measures were thanked for their efforts, with members having recognised the difficult nature of the decision to be made and views expressed as part of the consultation undertaken with residents and key stakeholders in relation to the impact of the proposed changes. In commending the efforts made to engage with those most likely to be affected, members highlighted what they felt to be the importance in ensuring that any alternative proposals put forward had been subject to the same process, recognising the need to protect those in greatest need whilst also achieving the required balance in terms of delivering a sustainable and balanced budget.

Having noted the discretionary nature of the funding provided for the scheme and efforts being made to safeguard the most vulnerable residents, Cabinet

RESOLVED to approve and recommend the following changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for consideration and approval by Full Council on 27 February 2025:

- (1) That the revised Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2025-26 incorporate the following changes: introduce a standard 35% minimum payment for working age households and apply a percentage reduction to each of the income bands. This means all CTS claimants would be expected to contribute a minimum of 35% towards their Council Tax liability. Their CTS would then be calculated based on their income and that would determine which income band they fall into. This would reduce the cost of the scheme by £7.6m with detailed explanations and calculations, number of residents impacted and the proposed weekly reduction in CTS outlined in Appendix A of the report.
- (2) Simplification of the non-dependant charges incorporating two flat rate non-dependant deductions for most households with other adults living in the property, £8 per week for non-dependants “out of work” and £20 per week for non-dependants “in work”. This would remove the need to verify income for non-dependants for CTS claims and reduce the administrative burden. Adopting this proposal would reduce the cost of the scheme by £0.7m with detailed explanation and calculations of the proposed non-dependant deduction, number of households affected and proposed weekly reduction in CTS support outlined within Appendix B of the report.

Technical and administrative changes

- (3) To note that the amendments to CTS scheme would include the Universal Credit notification received from DWP for Council tax, as start date of claim for Council tax reduction if there was entitlement to it.
- (4) To note the alignment of the backdating rules for new CTS claim with the Housing Benefits and Universal Credit regulations i.e. for a maximum of one calendar month. The backdating request is made at the time of submission of a new claim. This change would reduce the administrative burden, and customers would not lose out as the start date would be accepted as per DWP notification date to start date of entitlement. In exceptional circumstances, the Council would consider revising the claim for more than a month e.g. bereavement of close relative.
- (5) To note that the income bands for households was reviewed every year in line with the Consumer Pricing Index (CPI) from September of previous year to be considered for the new financial year.
- (6) To note that a review and update of section 13A policy for hardship fund for Council tax, including an additional £1.5m fund to support residents, would be considered at the March 2025 Cabinet meeting.

8. Budget & Council Tax 2025-26

Prior to consideration of the main report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised that he had agreed various requests to speak in relation to the budget report and proposals.

As an initial contribution Councillor Conneely was invited, as Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Task Group, to introduce the main findings and recommendations within the Budget Scrutiny Task Group report, which had been included as an appendix to the Budget and Council Tax report. In introducing the report, Councillor Conneely began by thanking all members of the Task Group and everyone else who had participated in the scrutiny process. In emphasising the ongoing nature of the financial challenges and pressures faced by the Council, Councillor Conneely reiterated the need for fundamental reform of the current way in which local authorities were funded, given what was widely regarded to be the inadequacy of the existing funding regime.

Having outlined the comprehensive nature of the process undertaken by the Task Group in reviewing the budget proposals Cabinet was advised that the key recommendations made had included a focus on:

- The impact of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme and package of support being provided for more vulnerable residents in seeking to manage the impact, which it was noted the Resource & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee would continue to monitor.
- The need to review the way in which the use of funding generated through Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy could be maximised to provide optimal community benefit; and
- The way in which the Council's commissioning and procurement arrangements could be enhanced to provide greater cost efficiency, value for money and social value.

In concluding, Councillor Conneely once again thanked all those involved for their participation in the Task Group and commended the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group to Cabinet for consideration as part of the budget setting process.

In welcoming the contribution from the Scrutiny Budget Task Group, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) commended the thorough nature of the approach and robust challenge undertaken by the Task Group with the recommendations made as a result now subject to active consideration in terms of how they could be taken forward and way in which progress would be reported and monitored by scrutiny. The Leader thanked all those involved for their contribution as a key part of the budget consultation process.

As a further contribution the Leader then invited Councillor Lorber to speak who took the opportunity, in also recognising the financial crisis faced by local government, to highlight the £150m reserve of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) funding held in Brent. Whilst aware of the restrictions in the permitted use of this funding, Councillor Lorber felt stronger representations needed to be made to the Government in seeking to ease the restrictions and provide greater flexibility and autonomy in how the Council could use this funding given the wider

pressures and demands faced by key local services and in addressing what he felt to be the current poor state of the borough. In closing, he felt the £150m SCIL reserve identified could make a significant contribution towards addressing the issues residents were concerned about and therefore was keen to encourage ongoing lobbying of Government to allow Councils to decide how to spend that money and avoid the need for further cuts to services.

Having noted the representations and comments received, the Leader then invited Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) to introduce a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources which set out the Council's budget proposals for 2025-26 along with the results of the budget consultation, scrutiny and equality processes and the overall financial position facing the Council for the medium-term.

In presenting the report, Councillor Mili Patel began by outlining the extensive nature of the consultation undertaken with all key stakeholders to develop the budget proposals, before highlighting the challenging nature of the Council's financial position, given the ongoing impact of the previous Conservative Governments programme of austerity and increasing levels of demand being experienced as a result of the homelessness and the social care crisis. Despite the delivery of £238m worth of cuts over the last decade Councillor Mili Patel felt it was important to recognise the way in which the fiscal discipline, established as a fundamental value by the current Administration in Brent, had ensured the foundations on which the Council stood remained strong, enabling the continued delivery of high quality services to residents and presentation of a fully balanced budget.

In recognition of the work undertaken in an effort to achieve this position, thanks were expressed to all officers, members (including the Budget Scrutiny Task Group), residents and stakeholders who had engaged in the budget consultation process with the outcome reflecting the Council's ongoing commitment to undertaking the budget setting and consultation process and presenting the facts as clearly, accurately and transparently as possible.

Whilst recognising that the operating environment and wider economic context faced by the Council remained volatile, members were advised that as a result of careful financial stewardship, Brent had found itself in a position of precarious stability when compared to a number of other local authorities across London, who had been presented with little choice but to approach government for Exceptional Financial Support. These boroughs were having to borrow to avoid failure, which members were advised (given its unsustainable nature) Brent remained determined to avoid. Although not immune to the pressures faced, with specific challenges identified in relation to the substantial in-year overspend on housing driven by rising homelessness alongside new financial strains in Children and Young People and Community Health and Wellbeing, increased build costs and levels of demand generated through an ageing population and ongoing impact of the cost of living crisis the considerable efforts to maintain financial control were recognised. In noting this process had included the identification of £8m worth of in-year savings designed to mitigate against the pressures outlined, members were reminded the financial landscape still remained extremely challenging with the Council, as a result, having little choice but to shape the financial plans and proposals outlined as

part of the budget setting process around that reality and in the most equitable way possible.

Looking to the future, the plans announced by the Government for significant reform of local government across England and Wales were welcomed as a means of addressing the fundamental issues and concerns arising as a direct impact of the previous governments programme of austerity and in seeking to ensure that local government was provided with the foundations and ability to deliver what it was originally intended to do and not just act as a safety net or as the government's emergency provider of last resort.

In highlighting Brent's commitment to delivering not just essential services, but those that matter most to residents, the efforts being made to protect frontline services whilst also ensuring maximising value for taxpayers and continuing to seek improvements to services were identified as a key commitment. As an example reference was made to the ongoing work being undertaken to deliver new, safe and secure homes across the borough, raise standards for renters in the private sector, support those in fuel and food poverty, provide access to employment & training opportunities, keep Brent clean and on the move with a focus on infrastructure and the environment, maintain parks and open spaces, provide the best start in life for children and young people and dignity in the last stages of life through the social care offer with the only limit on the Council's ambition identified as the golden thread of funding.

In concluding her introduction, Councillor Mili Patel once again highlighted how challenging development of the budget proposals had been. Cabinet Members and officers were thanked for their support in the process with it noted that despite the significant pressures identified the Council remained committed to supporting local residents across the borough, protecting the most vulnerable, and investing in Brent's future with the budget proposals as presented therefore commended for approval and reference on to Council for formal adoption.

In supporting the budget proposals, contained within the report, Cabinet Members recognised the ongoing nature of the challenges and financial pressures identified and also took the opportunity to thank the finance team for their work in developing the budget proposals whilst also seeking to safeguard, as far as possible, key services and support for local residents and businesses focussed around the Council's core strategic priorities. In terms of specific pressures and priorities identified these had included:

- The ongoing pressures in relation to homelessness and the supply of housing to address increasing levels of demand across the borough with members commending the work being undertaken in seeking to mitigate against these pressures and in maintaining the Council's commitment to increase the supply of genuinely affordable and accessible housing in as viable a way as possible. This had included the acquisition programme being delivered through i4B, which it was noted had delivered savings in excess of £4m in terms of the avoidance of Temporary Accommodation costs identified as one of the most significant financial pressures within the budget.
- The extension of the Household Support Fund as a key programme of discretionary support for residents across the borough financed by central

government which would continue during 2025-26 to support Brent's most vulnerable households, including funding free school meals provision outside of term time, dispensing welfare benefits and debt advice (contracting with organisations such as Citizens Advice and the Credit Union) supported through the Brent Hubs model.

- The continued support for children and young people despite the ongoing pressures identified in relation to school budgets, increasing demand for SEND provision and costs of residential placements, which it was felt highlighted the crisis in local government funding and urgent need for reform. In seeking to address the pressures identified within Brent, reference was made to the innovative approach adopted in relation to the establishment of a Children's Residential Centre, which members were advised was on track to open during 2025 and was anticipated to save up to £400k in costs relating to the provision of childcare residential placements, as well as the enhancement of SEND provision through capital investment in a new SEND school within the borough. Reflecting on the challenges identified in relation to the funding pressures outlined along with the complexity of need in relation to many demand led services, the proposals contained in the Government's Children and Wellbeing Bill and plans for devolution were felt to reflect a positive way forward and mandate for change, with support also expressed for the increasing focus on co-production, insourcing and partnership work as models of service delivery.
- Members also welcomed the aim to continue prioritising the most vulnerable in society whilst also seeking to protect essential services particularly in relation to health and adult social care with reference made, as an example, to the funding allocated within the budget for reablement as a means of supporting residents requiring care to live as independently as possible and avoid residential placements or extended stays in hospital as well as minimising the need for extended support following hospital discharge. This approach was also being supported by efforts to expand opportunities for the provision of care in community settings and modernisation of the Front Door access model working with customer services. The recognition of the impact relating to inflationary cost pressures and increase in demand on both adult and children's care services and way in which these had been reflected within the budget was also welcomed, with support expressed for continued lobbying of government in relation to the One Public Purse approach towards public sector reform.
- The ongoing programme of work and investment in key highway and environmental infrastructure across the borough to ensure the borough remained clean, green and safe including the Don't Mess with Brent campaign focussed around tackling fly-tipping and enhancing enforcement activity, programme of investment in highways and footways and utilisation of the additional funding being made available by the government to repair potholes which taken together would ensure the borough remained on the move and able to support the wider economy and programme of regeneration.

Prior to closing the debate, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance & Resources) was then invited to update Cabinet on a number of amendments to funding details within the report following confirmation of the final Local Government Financial

Settlement. The key changes outlined involved an increase in the ringfenced Children Social Care Prevention Grant from £1.3m to £1.4m and reduction in the funding being provided to cover the increase in National Insurance (NI) Employer contribution rates from £3m to £2.9m. Confirmation was, however, provided the revised rate would remain sufficient to cover the Council's costs in relation to increased NI Employer contributions during 2025-26 for directly employed staff.

In summing up, Councillor Muhammed Butt felt it important to once again highlight the challenging nature of the budget setting process given the ongoing impact of the legacy created by the previous government. As a result, he welcomed the approach taken by all Cabinet Members and officers in seeking to review all aspect of their services to ensure budgets could be managed whilst delivering core strategic priorities and protecting the most vulnerable residents in the borough. Despite recognising the significance of the financial challenges identified and the level of funding cuts already delivered by the Council, he commended the approach adopted and measures outlined within the report which had been designed to ensure the Council was able to operate in a financially sustainable and resilient way whilst also seeking to delivery on key priorities and provide essential support for residents across the borough. This included a range of investments identified within section 4.39 of the budget report focussed on the delivery of 1,700 new safe and secure homes; raising standards for private renters; the maintenance of roads and pavements across the borough; improving Brent's Libraries and providing funding support for community projects to empower local people and community groups to enhance their neighbourhoods; the delivery of 427 new school places for children with SEND within the borough and supporting over 4,600 elderly and vulnerable residents with vital social care support. Whilst development of the proposals had required difficult choices to be made these had been necessary to address the financial challenges faced as a result of what he felt had been the failures of the previous government. In thanking all those who had engaged in the budget consultation process along with Cabinet Members and officers (with specific reference to the finance team) for their support, Councillor Butt ended by highlighting the aim to ensure the process remained as open and transparent as possible and was focussed on enabling the Council to deliver a balanced budget whilst also seeking to maintain the provision of key services and essential support for residents across the borough.

Having noted the comments provided, and welcomed and supported the approach outlined within the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To recommend to Full Council an overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2025/26, with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 2.99% general increase.
- (2) To recommend to Full Council the General Fund revenue budget for 2025/26, as summarised in Appendices A and B of the report.
- (3) To recommend to Full Council the savings proposals for 2025/26 as set out in Appendices C (i) and C (ii) of the report.
- (4) To note the Equalities Impact Assessments on the budget proposals, as set out in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv) of the report.

- (5) To note and endorse the report from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in Appendix D of the report.
- (6) To recommend to Full Council the HRA budget and business plan for 2025/26, as set out in section eight and appendix O of the report.
- (7) To agree, for final approval by Council, the HRA rents for council dwellings, tenant service charges and garages as set out in section eight 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 eight of the report.
- (9) To note the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of the report.
- (10) To recommend to Full Council the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new schemes and reprofiling, as set out in section ten of this report, and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix E of the report.
- (11) To recommend to Full Council the Capital Strategy, the Non-Treasury Investment Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendices F, G, H and I of the report.
- (12) To recommend to Full Council the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendices J (i) and J (ii) of the report.
- (13) To agree, and where relevant agree to recommend to Full Council the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix K (ii) of the report.
- (14) To note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section seven and detailed in Appendices L (i) and L (ii) of the report.
- (15) To note the legal advice from the Corporate Director, Law and Governance, as set out in Appendix M of the report.
- (16) To note the decision of the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources to continue as part of the Eight Authority Business Rates pool in 2025/26 as set out in section six of the report.
- (17) To note the changes to waste policy, notably the Extended Producer Responsibility (ERP) for packaging from 2025 and agree to recommend to Full Council for the funding to be transferred to reserves in 2025/26.
- (18) To note and approve the specific recommendations identified for consideration by Full Council as detailed in section 2.18 – 2.37 of the report.

9. Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2024 - 25

Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) presented a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources

updating on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the financial year 2024-25 which included the Council's investment and borrowing activities and strategy.

In introducing the report, members were advised that as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to financial transparency, the report included details on the Council's borrowing requirement, cash investment balances and compliance with the Prudential Indicators enabling Brent to meet its financial obligations. Members were reminded that as part of the approach outlined in terms of managing Treasury Management activity to support the Council's overall financial position it was only possible to borrow for capital investment and not to fund operational day-to-day expenditure for example to offset the increasing financial pressures being experienced within the revenue budget with the Borrowing Requirement reflecting the Council's capital ambitions for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. As a result of the Council's careful financial stewardship and compliance with Prudential Indicators the Council's borrowing balance (as at September 2024) was £791.9m with the decrease in this balance, along with that held in cash investments, reflecting the ongoing approach towards the repayment of loans and investment in the Council's capital programme in place of additional borrowing. By prioritising existing cash investments, the Council had also been able to generate an interest income of £3.6m with the Council's borrowing strategy therefore recognised as continuing to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

Members welcomed the report and prudent approach being delivered in terms of the Council's Treasury Management activity to support delivery of the Council's wider ambitions and priorities given the challenging economic context under which the Treasury Management Strategy was having to be delivered.

Having noted the assurance provided that the Council had fully complied with the Prudential Indicators set as part of the annual strategy for 2024 – 25 and thanked officers for their support in delivery of the Council's Treasury Management strategy, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the 2024-25 Mid-Year Treasury report and approve it being referred on to Council, in compliance with CIPFA's Treasury Management Code of Practice.

10. **Authority to award contract for the provision of Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) for Children & Young People in Brent and Out of Borough Schools**

Councillor Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools) presented a report from the Corporate Director Children & Young People regarding the procurement of Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) for children and young people in Brent schools and out of borough school placements who had speech and language therapy needs identified within their Education Health Care Plan (EHP).

In introducing the report, members noted the increasing importance of speech and language therapy provision as part of the support available for children and young people with SEND. Against the background of an increase in the number of children and young people with SEND in the borough, members were advised that the proposed contract award had been designed to include a comprehensive package of support that would not only contribute to improved outcomes, educational

attainment and emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people but would also continue to nurture and empower a skilled workforce. As such, the proposals were seen to not only contribute towards providing children with the best start in life but also the priorities identified in Brent's SEND strategy in a way that supported the best interests of children and young people.

In recognising the positive nature of the whole system approach outlined in seeking to ensure that children, young people and their families had access to a seamless service and thanking officers for the work undertaken in developing the proposals Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the direct award of a contract for the provision of Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) for children and young people in Brent schools, Additionally Resourced Provision and out-of-borough schools (the "Contract") following the Provider Selection Regime (PSR) process C for an initial period of three (3) years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028 with an option to extend by a further one (1) year in the sum of £6,569,499 exclusive of VAT to Central London Community Healthcare Trust NHS (CLCH).

11. **Authority to Tender contracts for the Provision of Extra Care Housing Support for six Extra Care Schemes**

Councillor Nerva (as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure) presented a report from the Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing regarding the procurement of Extra Care Housing (ECH) support for six extra care schemes. Cabinet was advised the report was seeking approval to invite tenders for the schemes split over two Lots – Beechwood Court, Harrod Court & Tulsi House (Lot 1) and Rosemary House, Newcroft House and Willow House (Lot 2).

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the focus of the schemes in providing essential support for vulnerable adults aged 55 and above, enhancing their health and wellbeing by offering an alternative to traditional care homes with the delivery of core services and tailored support, designed to foster independent living among residents. In addition, members were advised the scheme would also deliver further benefits in terms of local employment opportunities as well as enhancing community resilience through the fostering of supportive networks in a way that would also support the wider aim of tackling health inequalities by ensuring that all adults with care and support needs were able to access integrated, culturally competent services.

Attention was also drawn to the way in which the approach outlined had been designed to deliver a more efficient approach towards the way in which care was funded, including the utilisation of Housing Benefit to support accommodation costs while providing necessary support.

In recognising how the approach outlined would support the Council's wider objective in seeking to provide care closer to home and in developing health and social care services that supported individuals, especially those with complex needs, in maintaining independent living and in reducing the likelihood of transitioning to residential care as well as the Council's wider aspirations in promoting a healthier, more equitable, and unified community Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Approve inviting tenders for the provision of Extra Care Housing (ECH) support services for six extra care schemes split into two contracts/lots on the basis of the pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report.
- (2) Approve Officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (1) above on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in section (vi) of the table at paragraph 3.4.1 of the report.
- (3) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Lead Member for, Community Health and Wellbeing to award the contract for each of the two lots for the provision of ECH support services for the six extra care schemes for a term of three (3) years with the option to extend by a maximum of two (2) years on a one plus one basis (3+1+1).

12. Authority to Award Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contracts

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Partnerships. Housing & Resident Services detailing the outcome of a procurement exercise for the Housing Repairs & Maintenance contracts and seeking authority to award the new contracts.

In presenting the report, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson began by recognising the importance of the housing repairs and maintenance service for residents across the borough and as part of the Council's commitment to improving tenant satisfaction measures. Highlighting the role that safe, well maintained and sustainable housing provision played as a foundation of strong and thriving communities members were advised how the proposals for future delivery of the repairs service had been designed to secure these objectives with the new arrangements based around six contracts seeking to utilise a mix of providers, including a framework of local contractors and a handyperson service ensuring competition, accountability, and efficiency. In seeking to ensure the highest standards of repairs and maintenance were delivered for Council homes across the borough, members noted that development of the approach outlined had been subject to engagement with tenants as well as members (including scrutiny) with the proposed five year term (plus extensions) designed to provide long term stability and confidence that properties would be properly maintained.

In addition to the impact which the overall investment would have in driving up standards, members were also advised of the wider benefits identified in relation to the support being provided for the local economy and businesses as part of the Council's wider objectives in seeking to leverage contracts as an anchor institution to support the creation and retention of wealth within the borough. As part of this wider approach, it was pointed out that the new arrangements had also included specific commitments to hire Brent based contractors with the aim of providing a faster, more reliable repairs service and priority for the delivery of sustainable practices, including fleet decarbonisation and improved waste management. The new arrangements had also included a pledge to unlock social value, with all contractors providing a commitment to reinvest in Brent's communities. As such the approach outlined was felt to represent a transformational step for Brent which sought to not only deliver for local residents but at the same time also strengthen the local economy and protect the environment in a way that took account of views

expressed by residents and other stakeholders and also delivered value for money, accountability and a high-quality service.

In welcoming and supporting the approach outlined, members were also keen to commend the way in which the proposals had been designed to address the concerns highlighted by tenants in relation to delivery of the previous repairs and maintenance service whilst also seeking to support the Council's strategic priorities in relation to Prosperity and Stability in Brent, Community Wealth Building and Thriving Communities. In recognising the more responsive and dynamic nature of the new arrangements, members felt these also represented a positive example of the way in which it was possible to co-produce services working with residents and other stakeholders.

Having thanked officers for the work undertaken in developing the new approach and commitment identified in relation to delivering improved standards as the Council continued its efforts towards becoming a leading landlord in London Cabinet **RESOLVED**, noting the information contained within the exempt appendix of the report, to:

- (1) Approve the award the contract for Lot 1 Responsive Repairs to Wates Property Services Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- (2) Approve the award the contract for Lot 2 Planned Works to Wates Property Services Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- (3) Approve the award the contract for Lot 3 Voids Repairs to Wates Property Services Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- (4) Approve the award the contract for Lot 4 Responsive Repairs to Masher Brothers Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- (5) Approve the award the contract for Lot 5 Planned Works to Mears Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- (6) Approve the award the contract for Lot 6 Voids Repairs to Greyline Group Limited for a term of five years plus an option to extend for three years and one further two year extension for the estimated annual value detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

13. **Authority to Tender for the Provision and Management of Temporary Accommodation Housing Association Leasing Scheme**

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Partnerships. Housing & Resident Services seeking approval to invite tenders in respect of the procurement and management of Temporary Accommodation in support of the Council's Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS).

In presenting the report, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson began by highlighting the acute shortage of affordable private rented sector accommodation across London due to the current inflated rental market. This had impacted directly on Brent's ability to gain access to private rented properties both within and outside of the borough to support discharge of the Council's statutory homeless duties with the proposals outlined in the report therefore designed to maintain and expand the availability of stable leased temporary accommodation to meet the growing level of demand in relation to homeless households reducing the reliance on costly and low-quality nightly temporary accommodation. Members also noted the advantage that enhancing the supply of local affordable housing would have in terms of enabling more families to remain in Brent, which was recognised as important not only in addressing long-term housing need but also for reasons relating to the wider access provided to work, school, support networks and health services.

In supporting the overall approach outlined as part of the efforts being made to tackle the housing emergency in the borough, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) approve inviting tenders for Procurement and Management of Temporary Accommodation in support of the Council's Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS) on the basis of the pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 4.20 of the report.
- (2) approve Officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (1) above on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in paragraph 4.20 of the report.
- (3) delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, to award contracts for Procurement and Management of Temporary Accommodation for an acquisition and management term of 3 years, with an option to extend for up to 2 years, and a further management term of 3 years following expiry of the acquisition and management term.

14. **Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

At this stage in the meeting, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Chair) advised that Cabinet would need to move into closed session to consider the final item on the agenda.

Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that consideration of the final item on the agenda would involve the

likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6a and 6b, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act, namely:

“Information which reveals that the authority proposes: (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment”

The webcast was ended at this stage of the meeting.

16. **Addressing the risk of Anti Social Behaviour in the Stonebridge area**

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Partnerships, Housing & Resident Services which updated Cabinet on action being taken to address the risk of anti-social behaviour in the Stonebridge area.

Having considered the update provided and noted that the timescales outlined with the report relating to delivery of the project had been provided on an indicative basis, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) In noting the update provided, to approve the proposed actions outlined within the report to address the issues and risks identified and funding for the estimated costs, as detailed within the report.
- (2) Having noted the concern to ensure a programme of ongoing engagement with Cabinet was established at key stages in the process, that officers provide fortnightly project updates for Cabinet members with a further report to be provided on the longer term options identified once that information was available.
- (3) That an amended project flowchart and associated project plan be circulated with updated timelines.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair