



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 22 June 2026 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor Grahl (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Amadi, Dixon, Johnson, Kelcher, Knight and Rubin

Also present: Councillors Maurice and HB Patel (for item 5) and Councillor Georgiou (for item 8)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Thomas Cattermole (Corporate Director Resident and Housing Services) with Kirsteen Roe (Director of Resident Services) attending as his representative.

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council and Chair) opened the meeting by taking the opportunity to congratulate all members present on their re-election and to welcome the newly appointed members of Cabinet.

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 Tuesday 7 April 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising (if any)

None identified.

5. Petitions (if any)

5.1 Installation of MUGA in Preston Park

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Angela Barrett (as lead petitioner) to the meeting, who he advised was attending to present a petition regarding the location of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in Preston Park.

In thanking the Leader of the Council for the opportunity to present the petition, Angela Barrett began by explaining its purpose in calling on the Council to reconsider the current location for the proposed installation of a MUGA on the tennis courts to an alternate site within the small meadow land area of Preston Park. Following its submission and subsequent engagement with officers and local

ward councillors regarding their concerns, the petitioners had welcomed the engagement with the Parks Service in considering available options relating to the site of the MUGA. The previous and current local ward councillors were also thanked for their support and engagement, with it hoped the concerns raised and alternative proposals identified could lead to development of a more appropriate scheme.

In outlining the initial concerns of the petitioners, Angela Barrett advised that whilst supportive of the provision of better facilities for young people in the Park they had been concerned about identification of the original tennis court site for the MUGA given its close proximity to a number of adjacent residential properties and associated risk of ongoing noise and nuisance from a use, which would be different in nature to tennis. Further adding to these concerns was the secluded location of the site, which it was felt had the potential to attract Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) leading to issues around safety and inclusion, particularly for girls and younger users. Angela Barrett advised these concerns had also been supported by the Brent Parks Forum and Preston Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) in relation to the current proposed location of the MUGA.

Given the concerns raised, local residents in support of the petition had therefore worked with the Parks Team and local ward councillors to identify a new site which was felt to be more suitable for the MUGA in an area adjacent to the existing children's playground in the centre of the park, which it was felt would create a more unified and safe family activity hub. The site identified had been within the existing meadow land area, which unfortunately had not managed to become fully established and was consequently viewed to be of low ecological value. Residents and officers had also recognised the potential for a rain garden and pollinator planting to be incorporated into the design without significant extra cost, which it was pointed out would help to manage drainage whilst also improving the biodiversity and appearance of the space and which could be used as an additional community asset for residents. In considering the design options for the MUGA, the petitioners were also keen for Cabinet to consider a more flexible, grass-based alternative to a traditional tarmac type MUGA, such as a mini-grass football pitch or natural adventure playground, referencing research that showed traditional MUGAs excluded girls, with over 90% of users being male.

Whilst recognising the associated cost and resource implications, Angela Barrett advised that the petitioners felt the proposals they had put forward regarding siting and design would lead to a better space and facility that more people could support and utilise and which would avoid future problems in relation to noise and potential ASB. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the positive and constructive engagement of residents in the process, with South Kenton & Preston Park Residents Association, the Brent Parks Forum and the Preston Ward SNT all supportive of the approach in seeking to find an alternative location for the MUGA that was felt to be safe, well-integrated and worked for the community.

The opportunity was also taken to highlight lessons learnt from the engagement process, with Angela Barrett referring to a supporting background paper that had been circulated to all members of Cabinet regarding improvements it was felt could be made to the community engagement process involving future Parks projects.

In concluding presentation of the petition, Angela Barrett felt that the scheme was now in a more positive position, moving away from a site that was not considered suitable by a number of local residents and other stakeholders to an alternative which it was felt would provide better access and it was hoped Cabinet would support, recognising the work and engagement undertaken to produce a thoughtful design that would deliver enhancements to the park and benefit everyone.

Having thanked Angela Barrett for presenting the petition the Leader then invited Soulla Kwong to speak, who he advised had requested to address the meeting on behalf of the Friends of Preston Park (FOPP) to outline their support for the MUGA proposal based on the current site identified utilising the existing tennis courts.

In opening her comments, Soulla Kwong began by advising of the background to formation of the Friends of Preston Park as a community group of local residents and volunteers seeking to maintain, protect and care for Preston Park and its environment. This work had involved engagement with pupils across local schools regarding the measures they felt could be taken in support of maintaining the park whilst also providing the type of facilities that would encourage greater use and best serve their needs. Cabinet was advised that it had been the feedback provided from this process which had led to development of the initial proposals for the MUGA alongside the provision of wider facilities such picnic and chess tables, table tennis and more trees.

Details were then provided on the way in which these proposals had been shared with local residents. This had included meetings held in Preston Park with Brent's Parks Team, which local ward councillors, residents, and local schools had also been invited to attend. This had led to the formation of a Committee to support fundraising efforts and development of the plans, which Cabinet was advised had also been successful in attracting Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding. Development of the proposals had also been supported by a petition in 2024 seeking support for the original site identified, based on what were regarded to be the largely disused nature of the tennis courts and their main use for football by adults. The site was therefore felt to be an ideal location for the MUGA, given the existing surface, which it was also pointed out would support the installation of a low-level noise surface to avoid disturbance to adjacent properties at lower cost. Confirmation was also provided that the original proposal had not involved the installation of flood lights with a closing time of 9pm in summer alongside the provision of trees and a high net to prevent further noise transmission. It was pointed out, this proposal had been further supported by a subsequent petition in May 2026 which, taken together with the original petition, had attracted over 800 signatories.

Since the initial proposals had been identified, the Friend of Preston Park had become aware of concerns being raised by some residents living adjacent to the proposed site relating to noise nuisance and ASB affecting their properties, which had spread some fear and doubt in the neighbourhood and led to the petition which had been presented at the meeting seeking to use the meadow land in the Park as an alternative location for the MUGA. Having considered the alternative proposal, Soulla Kwong advised that the Friends of Preston Park remained opposed to the loss of green space within Preston Park highlighting the small nature of its footprint and their aim to preserve the green space available within the wildflower meadow

and community gardens as a space supporting biodiversity and valued by park users and local residents alike.

In highlighting the damage being created more widely to the environment, Soulla Kwong also felt it important to remind members that the site originally proposed had been based on a disused tennis court area which had fallen in disrepair and was already attracting alternative use. The opportunity was also taken to outline the wide engagement undertaken by Friends of Preston Park on the proposals, including local shop owners, schools and residents who had all been supportive of the initial proposal to locate the MUGA on the misused and underutilised tennis courts. In summing up, she hoped Cabinet would therefore support the Friends of Preston Park in seeking to preserve green space within the park and help sustain the environment for future generations recognising the need to enhance natural sustainability in the area.

In thanking both speakers for their presentations, the Leader then invited Councillor Promise Knight (as Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm) to respond to the points raised.

Having thanked Angela Barrett and Soulla Kwong, along with their supporters, for attending Cabinet to ensure the views of local residents were represented Councillor Knight felt it important to start by recognising the concerns raised regarding the proposed conversion of the tennis courts in Preston Park to a MUGA. She advised that the scheme had originally emerged through the NCIL process, recognising the keen support expressed by local school children and residents for the scheme with the intention to enhance the facilities available in the park for young people.

In addressing the speakers, an assurance was provided that the concerns raised regarding noise levels and the enjoyment of homes and gardens by those residents whose homes backed onto the initial proposed site had, however, also been recognised. Since the petition had been submitted, this had resulted in further discussions being undertaken with residents, officers, ward councillors and Friends of Preston Park to better understand the concerns raised. In considering the feedback from all parties, Councillor Knight confirmed that the Parks Service would therefore continue to review all options outlined to assess what would be possible moving forward. It was hoped this would provide residents with the necessary assurance that the Council was continuing to listen to all affected parties with all residents thanked for the time taken to engage constructively in the ongoing discussion.

As a final contribution and in summing up, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) confirmed that the Council remained committed to working with residents in order to achieve a positive outcome for the local community and to continuing the positive engagement with residents in an effort to find a way forward.

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. Appointment of Cabinet Sub-Committees

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to confirm the appointment of the following as a Cabinet Sub Committee for the 2026-27 Municipal Year:

Barham Park Trust Cabinet Sub Committee

Members:

Councillor M.Butt (Chair)
Councillor Grahl (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Kelcher
Councillor Knight

Substitute Members: Councillors Amadi, Dixon & Rubin

8. **Brent Housing Compact**

Prior to considering the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Heather Thomas (Chief Executive, Sapphire Independent Housing – as an online participant) and Councillor Georgiou (as Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group) to the meeting who he advised had both requested to speak on the Brent Housing Compact.

Speaking first, Heather Thomas thanked the Leader for providing the opportunity to outline her support for Brent's Housing Compact as one of the Registered Housing Providers (RPs) who had been engaged in its development. Highlighting the importance of the Compact in providing a clear partnership framework between the Council and Registered Providers and support for the five core themes around which it had been developed, the collaborative approach towards its design was welcomed as a means of highlighting the commitment to continue working together to deliver the best outcomes for tenants across the borough.

Having thanked Heather Thomas for her contribution, the Leader then invited Councillor Georgiou to address Cabinet who, whilst welcoming the intention behind development of the Compact, advised he was also keen to ensure this was used as a means of encouraging stronger partnership working between the Council, Registered Providers and Housing Associations. In seeking the necessary assurances relating to implementation and operation of the Compact, Councillor Georgiou highlighted a number of issues on which he felt further clarification was required. These included:

- The difference it was expected the Compact would make for residents given its status as a voluntary partnership and lack of legally enforceable statutory obligations that could be imposed on RPs and Housing Associations.
- The level of accountability in terms of being able to monitor and manage performance issues with RPs and Housing Associations.
- The level and extent of meaningful engagement with residents in development of the Compact and also in terms of its shaping its ongoing development.

- The lack of what was felt to be clear measurable outcomes and targets against which delivery of the Compact could be assessed and monitored.

As a result of the issues raised, Councillor Georgiou was keen to ensure that as the Compact developed the Council sought to utilise the experience from a wider range of stakeholders including councillors, resident and tenant groups and community representatives in seeking to reflect lived experience enabling the Compact to succeed and provide a meaningful vehicle for change backed by clear accountability, transparency, resident involvement and measurable outcomes.

Having also thanked Councillor Georgiou for the representations made and advising that the issues on which further clarification had been sought would be addressed following the meeting, the Leader then invited Councillor Johnson (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters) to introduce the report from the Corporate Director Resident and Housing Services providing an update on the development of the Brent Housing Compact as a new partnership framework between the Council and Registered Providers (RPs).

In presenting the report, Councillor Johnson highlighted housing as one of the biggest ongoing issues facing the borough. Whilst acknowledging that much of Brent's social housing was owned and managed by Registered Providers it was pointed out that residents often failed to distinguish between the Council and these providers when issues arose meaning that many would approach their local councillors in seeking a resolution and ensuring that the responsible organisations were able to work together to address the issues raised.

Recognising the level of casework generated as a result, and the level of frustration often experienced in seeking to address issues with repairs, anti-social behaviour and the condition of properties when the outcome being sought involved other organisations often operating under different systems and standards, members were advised that the Compact had therefore been designed to bring the council and housing providers together around a shared set of commitments covering housing quality and safety, affordable housing, homelessness prevention, neighbourhood management and resident engagement. Outlining the approach taken towards design of the Compact, Councillor Johnson was also keen to highlight the collaborative nature of its development, which had involved residents and housing providers being able to actively shape the process, providing a much clearer picture of where it was felt things were working well as well as areas for improvement.

In highlighting the significant challenges involved in addressing the housing crisis, the opportunity represented through development of the Compact to bring partners together, raise standards and improve the experience of residents was therefore welcomed as a means of ensuring the necessary responsibility and ownership was taken in seeking to address issues on behalf of residents which members, in concluding, were advised reflected the spirit behind the Compact and its ongoing development.

In commending development of the Compact as an important initiative to improve standards, accountability, and collaboration across social housing providers in Brent, Cabinet took the opportunity to thank all those involved in its development recognising the efforts made to collaboratively engage with residents and housing

providers. Highlighting the significant level of casework generated in relation to Housing Associations and challenges often experienced in being able to hold them to account, it was felt the more collaborative approach developed under the Compact would prove more effective in driving improvement and encouraging greater partnership working and development of shared performance frameworks. The engagement and participation with a range of housing associations and Registered Providers (which it was noted covered approx. 80% of social housing stock across the borough) was therefore welcomed along with the efforts to secure further signatories and increase engagement and participation from the larger housing associations.

Members were also keen to highlight the practical benefits of the Compact in terms of encouraging and delivering more standardised expectations and responses from providers, which it was felt would also provide a constructive step towards improving service quality for residents whilst also addressing concerns regarding accountability and seeking to improve standards.

In closing, Councillor Johnson thanked Cabinet for their support and took the opportunity to advise members of a number of additional Registered Providers who had agreed, in principle, to participate in the Compact including Notting Hill Genesis and ongoing engagement with Hyde Housing Association. Whilst acknowledging the limited enforceable powers directly available to the Council to hold Registered Providers to account (with those organisations accountable to the Social Housing Ombudsman) it was felt that the emphasis on partnership working and collaboration rather than enforcement within the Compact ultimately represented a more effective means of achieving the positive outcomes being sought for residents

In welcoming the collaborative approach towards development of the Compact as a new partnership framework designed to improve accountability, strengthen cooperation, enhance repair and safety standards, support homelessness prevention, and ensure that tenants and residents were provided with a stronger voice in raising concerns Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the progress to date in developing the Brent Housing Compact.
- (2) To note that the next phase will include:
 - Engagement with internal teams to confirm and align commitments.
 - Establishment of an RP Working Group.
 - Development of the governance model, including the proposed Housing Compact Board
- (3) To endorse the Draft Housing Compact (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report).

9. **Authority to Tender for the Appointment of a Social Investment Backed Design & Delivery Partner to support the sourcing of suitable Providers for Housing Related Support Services**

Councillor Johnson (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Residents & Housing Services seeking approval to procure and appoint a design and delivery partner to work with the Council on the design, development and delivery of an outcomes based Housing Related Support Service through a Social Outcomes contract with payments linked to the achievement of agreed outcomes.

In presenting the report, Councillor Johnson began by advising members of the vital role Housing Related Support services played in supporting vulnerable residents to maintain their independence and sustain their tenancies including those experiencing homelessness, residents with mental health support needs, young people at risk, women fleeing domestic abuse, ex-offenders and others facing complex circumstances.

Highlighting a correction to section 6.1 in the report with reference to the Procurement Regulations 2004 being amended to 2024, members were reminded that for many residents the support provided for those residents most in need through the services available would often be the difference between them maintaining stability and reaching crisis point with the benefits of an early intervention approach in relation to homelessness prevention and in keeping people housed, independent and connected to support services outlined as key in the delivery of better outcomes for residents and in reducing pressure on already stretched public services. As a result, members were advised that the proposal presented for approval would involve the development of an outcomes-based approach to commissioning key services with a stronger focus on output alongside value for money and long-term sustainability whilst also enabling the council to work with specialist partners to design the most effective model before any commitment was made to future delivery arrangements.

In considering the report, members expressed support for the approach outlined highlighting the importance in maintaining a focus on prevention, early intervention independence and housing stability in an effort to reduce long term demand on services and improve outcomes for residents. As a result, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the procurement of a design and delivery partner to co-design an outcomes-based Housing Related Support service, in accordance with the approach set out in the report.
- (2) To approve officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (1) above on the basis of the evaluation criteria.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resident and Housing Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters to award the contract to the design and delivery partner for a term of 4 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years to co-design the service model with the Council and procure suitable delivery partners to deliver outcomes-based Housing Related Support service through a Social Outcomes Contract.

10. Capital Investment in Leisure Centres

Councillor Dixon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Public Health) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy seeking approval for a package of investment and associated financial measures relating to Vale Farm Sports Centre and Willesden Sports Centre as well as approval for discretionary National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) relief in relation to Vale Farm Sports Centre and Moberly Sports Centre.

In presenting the report, Councillor Dixon began by outlining the significant package of investment proposed within the report for two of what were felt to be Brent's most important leisure facilities. Highlighting the increasingly important role of public leisure provision in tackling health inequalities often linked to income, deprivation, ability, age and access, members were advised that the transition to an active well-being model (which the proposed package of investment had been designed to support) had been designed to recognise that leisure facilities should not only be regarded as places to participate but also as part of the local infrastructure for prevention, inclusion, and healthy communities. In total, the package of measures represented almost £4.25 million worth of investment in leisure provision serving the borough's residents, including nearly £3.25 million being invested directly by the Council, which was felt to provide a clear demonstration of the commitment to maintaining and improving the facilities valued and relied on by local residents.

In terms of the specific investment proposals, members were advised these had been focussed on the modernisation of facilities aimed at improving the experience for users and helping to ensure that more residents could benefit from all the borough's leisure centres had to offer whilst also supporting the commitment towards the delivery of active wellbeing.

Commenting on the report, members were keen to highlight their support for the proposed investment in Brent's leisure facilities recognising that it represented not only an investment in physical assets but also one focused around residents health, wellbeing and quality of life. In acknowledging the benefits it was felt improved leisure provision would contribute towards a healthier borough, members also acknowledged the associated impact this would have on reducing pressure on public services and delivery of wider social benefits for local communities.

Recognising the investment as key in delivering the Council's long-term vision and commitment to improving opportunities for physical activity across the borough as well as support of community assets and extending access to affordable leisure opportunities, members thanked all those involved for their efforts in the development and design of the proposals. The opportunity was also taken to highlight not only the investment in Willesden and Vale Farm Sports Centre's but also wider leisure estate, with members noting the high quality of facilities available across Brent and also welcoming the way in which they would support broader commitments, including the provision of free swimming opportunities for children and young people recognising the positive impact such schemes had on community health and participation in sport. Support was also expressed for the pace at which the improvements were planned to be delivered and for their alignment with a number of other key Council priorities, including not only tackling health inequalities but also improving children's health and wellbeing, the promotion of active lifestyles and active travel, increasing accessibility to leisure opportunities for older people and children including those excluded from more expensive private leisure facilities.

Reflecting on the use and value placed on Brent's leisure centres by local communities, members also noted that the existing leisure contract was due to expire in 2031, which it was felt would also provide a further opportunity to consider the model of provision moving forward including potential to bring assets back in-house. In further support of the proposed investment, members were also keen to recognise how the proposals were felt to demonstrate the practical benefits of the prudent financial management approach adopted by the previous Administration as a means of enabling the Council to invest in services valued by residents in a way that would support continued participation in exercise, sport, and community activities and directly contribute to improved life outcomes. Members also noted the development of forthcoming proposals relating to other leisure facilities, including Bridge Park, with the shared aim of ensuring that all Brent residents continued to be able to access affordable, high-quality leisure provision.

In commending the positive impact of the proposed investment in terms of not only the leisure facilities outlined but also wider health and wellbeing of local residents, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve capital investment of £2m for a programme of major repairs and renewals at Vale Farm Sports Centre, to address priority asset condition, compliance and operational resilience requirements over the period to 2031.
- (2) To approve capital investment of £850,246 for contract-linked capital enhancements at Vale Farm Sports Centre to modernise and expand the main gym, women's only gym, studios and wider customer offer.
- (3) To approve a Council contribution of up to £393,752 towards the gym reconfiguration and fitness enhancement scheme at Willesden Sports Centre.
- (4) To approve the proposed variation to the Willesden Sports Centre PFI contractual arrangements required to implement the gym reconfiguration and fitness enhancement scheme and to regularise related existing contractual, financial and commercial matters under the PFI agreement, including matters relating to benchmarking, profit share, indexation, lifecycle and payment arrangements, and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, to finalise and enter into the necessary legal, financial and commercial documentation.
- (5) To approve the award of 20% discretionary NNDR relief in relation to Vale Farm Sports Centre and Moberly Sports Centre, in accordance with the Council's eligibility criteria for NNDR discretionary relief for charities and non-profit making organisations, and subject to the financial and legal considerations set out in the report.

11. Approval to Participate in a Joint Procurement Exercise for the provision of Advocacy Services

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy seeking approval for Brent to undertake a joint procurement with Harrow for the provision of statutory advocacy services including Care Act Advocacy,

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and the Relevant Person's Paid Representative (RPPR) support.

In presenting the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt began by highlighting the importance of advocacy services in support of some of the most vulnerable residents accessing care and ensuring they had the necessary advice and guidance as part of that process, recognising the importance in ensuring those residents (often with the most complex needs) were able to understand what was happening and that their wishes, feelings and rights were properly represented as part of decisions being made about their care and support.

In terms of development of the approach outlined, members were advised this would involve Brent working jointly with Harrow Council to commission the required services (which it was confirmed were statutory in nature) not only enabling the provision of a strengthened offer but more effective engagement with the market to deliver better value for money while also maintaining clear accountability for Brent residents and Brent acting as the lead authority for the procurement process. As part of the design of the proposals, assurance was also provided that both Brent and Harrow would retain their own decision-making responsibilities and enter into their own contracts.

In terms of the financial considerations, members were advised that Brent's contract value had been estimated at £267,000 per year, funded from existing resources, with a proposed contract term of three years and the option to extend for a further two. The approach was also felt to reflect the commitments made to residents in relation to delivery of more community-led care, prevention, dignity in later life, and building a more efficient and modern approach towards service delivery, recognising that adult social care was not only about the services commissioned but also about how people were treated, listened to and supported in order to be able to make informed choices about their own lives.

In support of the approach outlined and recognising the way in which it was felt the proposals would help reduce the risk of unmet need, support better physical and mental wellbeing as well as contribute to the wider ambition for a healthier Brent, where people were supported to live independently, safely and with dignity, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the Council's participation in a joint (collaborative) procurement exercise with the London Borough of Harrow ("Harrow Council") for the commissioning of statutory advocacy services, namely: Care Act Advocacy, Mental Health Act Advocacy (IMHA), Independent Mental Capacity Act Advocacy (IMCA) and Relevant Person's Paid Representative (RPPR).
- (2) To approve the Council acting as the lead authority for the purposes of the tendering of the Advocacy Services, including responsibility for conducting the procurement process on behalf of both authorities.
- (3) To approve the proposed joint commissioning arrangements and confirms that the procurement will be undertaken on the basis of the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.3.1 of the report and in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and applicable procurement legislation.

- (4) To approve the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Corporate Director Finance and Resources and the Director of Law:
- agreeing and entering into the necessary inter-authority or collaboration arrangements with Harrow Council to give effect to the Council's role as lead authority; and
 - being authorised to take all necessary steps to progress and complete the procurement exercise.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care to approve the award of the resulting contract following the completion of the procurement process.

12. Proposal to expand Phoenix Arch Special School onto the Strathcona Site

As the final agenda item, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member Children's Services, Employment and Climate Action) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development providing a summary of the informal consultation undertaken between March and April 2026 on a proposal to expand Phoenix Arch Special School by 50 places using the Strathcona site (Strathcona Road, Wembley) in response to increasing demand for special school places across the borough with approval being sought (taking into consideration the responses to the informal consultation) to move to a formal consultation on the expansion proposal.

In presenting the report, Councillor Rubin began by advising members how the proposal to move to the next stage of consultation on the expansion of Phoenix Arch Special School onto the Strathcona site reflected part of a wider commitment to ensuring that every child in Brent could access the education and support they needed to thrive as well as addressing the increasing level of demand for SEND provision. In Brent, this included more than 4,300 children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans, with a growing number requiring specialist provision and the proposal before Cabinet therefore designed to create an additional 50 specialist places for children with SEND.

As part of a wider context Councillor Rubin, in recognising the need for reform of the SEND system, welcomed the new direction being set nationally by the Government under their SEND reform programme which had been designed to reflect the need for both greater inclusion in mainstream schools and increased specialist provision for children with the highest levels of need. In terms of the proposal outlined, members were advised that the proposed expansion of Phoenix Arch School had been developed to reflect the same approach in helping to build local capacity enabling children to access the right support, in the right setting, at the right time and ensuring better support for those children with the highest levels of need, including access to more specialist and tailored teaching, therapeutic support and learning environments designed around their needs.

In addition, members were advised that the approach had also been designed to reduce the need for children within Brent to have to travel outside of the borough to access suitable placements. Highlighting the benefits of this approach, it was pointed out that the expansion of local provision would not only enable children to remain connected to their communities while reducing the burden on their families but would also help reduce the reliance on costly out-of-borough and independent placements, given the increasing pressure on both the High Needs Block and school transport budgets, ensuring that every child had the opportunity to succeed and get the best possible start in life.

In welcoming and commending the approach outlined, Cabinet (in considering the report) supported the proposed use of the Strathcona Site for the purpose outlined in terms of the delivery of high quality SEND provision recognising the level of demand across the borough and reputation of Phoenix Arch Specialist School as a provider. Whilst recognising the challenges in terms of addressing the increasing level of demand for SEND provision, members commended the proactive and innovative work of all involved in ongoing delivery of the SEND capital investment programme across the borough in seeking to meet that demand, along with the strengthening of support and inclusion across mainstream provision and difference being made to families as a result. Reflecting on the positive outcome from the informal consultation process members were also keen to highlight the level of engagement with the local community and support expressed for Phoenix Arch as the specialist provider reflecting the outcomes being delivered by the school.

Having considered the outcome of the informal consultation process and reaffirmed the commitment to ensuring that every child in the borough was equipped with the support needed to thrive, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED** to approve a period of formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on the proposal to expand Phoenix Arch primary school by 50 pupils through use of the Strathcona site.

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.

The meeting ended at 10.53 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair