

CABINET

**Tuesday 12 September 2017 at 7pm
Minutes**

PRESENT:

Councillors: Bell, Anand, Dheer, Gordon, Johnson, Mahfouz, Rai and Tailor.

ALSO PRESENT:

In accordance with paragraph 2.6(a) of the Constitution, Councillors Proud, Malcolm, Mullins and Young addressed the Cabinet with regard to the following items:

- Item 07 - Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 1 - Inequalities (Councillor Proud)
- Item 13 - Relocation of Ealing Central Library Update 2017 (Councillors Young and Mullins)
- Item 16 - Outcome of Marketing Exercise for Southall Town Hall – 1 High Street, Southall UB1 3HA (Councillor Mullins)
- Item 19 - Draft Empty Property Strategy 2017-2022 (Councillor Malcolm)

Councillor Rodgers addressed the Cabinet with regard to Item 7 in his capacity as Panel member of Scrutiny Review Panel 1 - Inequalities (Councillors McCartan (chair) and Conti (vice-chair) sent their apologies).

Councillor Raza addressed the Cabinet with regard to Item 8 in her capacity as chair of Scrutiny Review Panel 2 - Transport

Councillor Young addressed the Cabinet with regard to Item 9 in his capacity as chair of Scrutiny Review Panel 3 –: Emergency Planning and Business Continuity.

Councillor Malcolm addressed the Cabinet with regard to Item 10 in his capacity as vice chair of Scrutiny Review Panel 4 –Digital Services (Councillor Camadoo (chair) sent her apologies).

Councillor D Crawford (chair) sent his apologies with regard to Item 11 of the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

Mr Jain, Southall Community Alliance, addressed the Cabinet with regard to item 16 - Outcome of Marketing Exercise for Southall Town Hall – 1 High Street, Southall UB1 3HA

Also in Attendance

Councillors Mahmood and Nagpal

1. **Apologies for Absence**
Councillor Mason,

2. **Urgent Matters**

Item 23 - Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme

- The decision was not published on the Forward Plan more than 28 days in advance of the date on which it is proposed to be taken: rule 15(1) of the council's [Access to Information Procedure Rules](#).

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- The decision report was not published more than five clear working days in advance of the decision: rules 4 and 5 of the [Access to Information Procedure Rules](#)
- The decision be not subject to call-in. The procedure for this is set out in paragraph 16(a) of the [Scrutiny Procedure Rules](#) .
- The decision be exempted from call-in. The procedure for this is paragraph 16(a) of the [Scrutiny Procedure Rules](#) (within the constitution) Note that approval is still awaited for this.

Reason for Urgency

The local discretionary business rate relief scheme is a statutory scheme entirely funded by the government. If the full Forward Plan publication and call-in procedures are followed then there will be insufficient time for the scheme to be fully implemented and for businesses to take the benefit of it within the guidelines laid down by the government. The council has statutory duties in relation to the administration of the business rates scheme and the report recommendations will enable the council to meet those statutory duties.

Reason for Lateness

The report was not put on the Forward Plan for decision at Cabinet due to officer oversight.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

Items 12, 13, 15 and 16 contained confidential appendices but were not taken in private as it was not necessary to discuss the confidential information provided.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 July 2017 be agreed and signed as a true and correct record.

6. Appointments to Sub-Committees and Outside Bodies

There were none.

7. Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 1 - Inequalities

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- notes the final report of the Panel, as endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 6 July 2017, Appendix 1 of the report.
- accepts the Panel's recommendations in Section 16 of the report with exception of recommendations numbered 13 and 27, which were rejected.
- directs service officers to produce/or finalise an action plan within an agreed timescale on those recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet; and
- reports its decision to OSC on 5 October 2017 or 9 November 2017, as appropriate.
- thanks all those involved in this panel for a substantive piece of scrutiny and particularly for highlighting the homelessness of young people.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Scrutiny has a role in improving decision-making and service delivery through effective scrutiny. Recommendations from Scrutiny need to be taken forward in a timely manner

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and in accordance with the Council's Constitution if the Scrutiny function is to be effective. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol identifies the timescale for Cabinet to respond to Scrutiny recommendations. This decision will mean that the response is made in a timely manner and that services can implement the recommendations accepted.

8. Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 2 - Transport Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the final report of the Panel, as endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 6 July 2017, Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) accepts the Panel's recommendations in Section 7.0 of the final report numbered 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13; accepts with modifications recommendations numbered 2 and 10; rejects recommendations numbered 3, 4 and 6.
- iii) directs service officers to produce/or finalise an action plan within an agreed timescale on those recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet; and
- iv) reports its decisions to OSC on 5 October 2017 or 9 November 2017, as appropriate.
- v) thanks Councillors Raza and Dabrowska and all of the Panel for their work on this scrutiny review panel.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Scrutiny has a role in improving decision-making and service delivery through effective scrutiny. Recommendations from Scrutiny need to be taken forward in a timely manner and in accordance with the Council's Constitution if the Scrutiny function is to be effective. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol identifies the timescale for Cabinet to respond to Scrutiny recommendations. This decision will mean that the response is made in a timely manner and that services can implement the accepted recommendations.

9. Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 3 - Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the final report of the Panel, as endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 6 July 2017, Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) accepts the Panel's recommendations in Section 7.0 of the final report.
- iii) directs service officers to produce/or finalise an action plan within an agreed timescale on those recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet; and
- iv) reports its decisions to OSC on 5 October 2017 or 9 November 2017, as appropriate.
- v) thanks the all involved for their work on this Panel.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Scrutiny has a role in improving decision-making and service delivery through effective scrutiny. Recommendations from Scrutiny need to be taken forward in a timely manner and in accordance with the Council's Constitution if the Scrutiny function is to be effective. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol identifies the timescale for Cabinet to respond to Scrutiny recommendations. This decision will mean that the response is made in a timely manner and that services can implement the accepted recommendations.

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10. Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 4 - Digital Services

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the final report of the Panel, as endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 6 July 2017, Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) accepts the Panel's recommendations in Section 7.0 of the final report.
- iii) directs service officers to produce/or finalise an action plan within an agreed timescale on those recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet; and
- iv) reports its decisions to OSC on 5 October 2017 or 9 November 2017, as appropriate.
- v) thanks the all involved for their work on this Panel.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Scrutiny has a role in improving decision-making and service delivery through effective scrutiny. Recommendations from Scrutiny need to be taken forward in a timely manner and in accordance with the Council's Constitution if the Scrutiny function is to be effective. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol identifies the timescale for Cabinet to respond to Scrutiny recommendations. This decision will mean that the response is made in a timely manner and that services can implement the accepted recommendations.

11. Final Report Health and Adult Social Services Panel: Healthy Living

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the final report of the Panel's review, Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) accepts the Panel's recommendations set out in Section 14 of Appendix 1 of the report; with the exception of recommendation number 2, which was rejected.
- iii) directs service officers to produce/or finalise an action plan within an agreed timescale on those recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet.
- iv) thanks the Panel for their work.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Scrutiny has a role in improving decision-making and service delivery through effective scrutiny. Recommendations from Scrutiny need to be taken forward in a timely manner and in accordance with the Council's Constitution if the Scrutiny function is to be effective. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol identifies the timescale for Cabinet to respond to Scrutiny recommendations. This decision will mean that the response is made in a timely manner and that services can implement the recommendations accepted.

12. Environmental Enforcement Services Contract

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) authorises the Executive Director of Environment & Customer Services to undertake a competitive procedure with negotiation (or such other appropriate procurement process as agreed with the Director of Legal & Democratic Services) for a contract for environmental enforcement services for a term of up to five years and an option to extend for up to a further three years on its behalf and on behalf of other local authorities.
- ii) delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment and Customer Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder to award the contract for Environmental Enforcement Services subsequent to completion of the procurement process.

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iii) thanks Gillian Marston, Director of Environment, for her work on this report.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The Ealing Corporate Plan and Future Ealing objectives acknowledge that although we will continue to find new ways to reduce cost, faced with a further period of unprecedented financial contraction, efficiency alone will not get the Council where it needs to be by 2020.

It is therefore essential that we find new ways of working closer with our communities and support them to take responsibility for more of their neighbourhood. The Environmental Crime service is key to the success of this approach and will need to adapt as the core environmental services ability to answer demand reduces.

In order to maintain the cleanliness of local environment and street scene a range of enforcement activities are undertaken by the Council's Street Services Envirocrime Team. This requires consistent enforcement of certain environmental legislation, which to date has been carried out by Council staff in a targeted manner, dealing generally with high profile offences. There is no capacity to consistently deploy existing resources in support of this necessary activity. Staff deployed under the proposed contract would be employed directly by the contractor.

In September 2015 the Council entered into a pilot contract with an external provider (Kingdom Securities) to build on the work of the in house team by providing additional capacity to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in the borough in relation to littering enforcement (also covering dog fouling and spitting), to achieve zero tolerance principally in town centres and other high footfall areas. Kingdom delivers cost neutral environmental enforcement services to a number of Councils in London and across the country. The pilot project has been for 2 years, with the option to extend for a further year (or part) and the Council must decide on the value of continuing with the pilot and strategy for formal contract procurement.

Littering enforcement (also covering dog fouling and spitting) has mainly been carried out in town centres, with the majority of activity in the central Ealing area, in view of the high footfall and major transport hub. Table 2 in the report shows the spread of litter enforcement activity in the last financial year.

The littering enforcement contract is currently operating at a 77% payment rate, with a net operating surplus of £0.127m in 2016/17. With a high number of fixed penalty notices issued, the number of cases where alleged offenders have not paid the fixed penalty notice, and therefore have had to be pursued via the courts, is also high. Under the 'single justice system' it is possible for multiple cases to be heard in a single court session, so currently an average of 100 cases a month are heard at court, with a 100% success conviction rate.

The pilot contract provides for the enforcement of flytipping legislation in addition to the core littering enforcement. The surplus is reinvested in the service, supporting the provision of dedicated flytip investigation teams, working with the Council's street cleansing contractor. Littering legislation is used in connection with minor flytipping and new (£400) flytipping FPNs issued for larger deposits. For flytipping investigation support, Kingdom are paid in line with contract day rates rather than FPNs issued and the Council

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retains 100% of receipts from flytipping related FPNs. Flytipping investigation teams have been in place since August 2016.

The combined income to the Council from littering and flytipping FPNs in 2016/17 was £0.439m. The cost of the flytip investigation service for the period was £0.421m, resulting in a net environmental enforcement contract operating surplus of £0.018m.

The contract operating surplus detailed above does not include the current cost of legal services support and court attendance. This is currently running at £7k a month. From 2015 to January 2017 this was against a monthly average of 50 cases heard at Court. Utilising provisions of the 'single justice system', this number should increase to about 200 a month moving forward. Costs awarded as part of successful convictions in 2016/17 were £0.081m and costs actually received by the Council were £13k. It is unlikely that the Council will recover the full amount awarded for various reasons, the main one being that the court bailiffs are unlikely to be able to trace all defendants. Additionally, in most cases there will be a time lag (which can range from months to years) in receipt of costs in line with payment terms agreed with the court.

The costs incurred/received deficit leaves Ealing with a challenge to reduce net legal costs associated with all environmental enforcement activity. Accordingly, in addition to working with the Council's Legal Services team to investigate ways of reducing cost, it is intended to explore contractual options to deliver a cost neutral flytip investigation service and the potential economies of scale associated with a possible joint boroughs legal support provision.

13. Relocation of Ealing Central Library Update 2017 Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) approves the proposal for a new library in the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre.
- ii) agrees that the Council surrender the current lease of the space within Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre for the existing library.
- iii) agrees that the Council enters into a new lease based on the Heads of Terms as set out in section 5 of the report, including a break clause at any time after 3 years on giving the landlord 9 months' notice.
- iv) delegates authority to Executive Director Regeneration and Planning following consultation with Director Customer Services and the Director of Legal & Democratic Services to finalise arrangements for the relocation of the library and authorise the Council to enter into the necessary legal agreements to give effect to the surrender of the current lease and the grant of a new lease.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

Ealing Central Library is located in Ealing Broadway shopping centre. British Land, the owner of the shopping centre, approached the Council about the potential to move the library in order to remodel that part of the shopping centre to create a larger retail unit that will attract and retain a high quality retailer. In October 2014 the Council agreed in principle to support a relocation to ensure Ealing town centre develops and adapts its retail offer and thrives as a major shopping centre in the face of competition from other centres. (*Cabinet report – Perceval House and Ealing Central Library – 21st October 2014*).

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On 12th July 2016 Cabinet received a report entitled *Relocation of Ealing Central Library*. Cabinet agreed that the Ealing Central Library should be relocated to a site on the first floor of the shopping centre, previously occupied by British Land as its management suite. This relocation was predicated on British Land securing a retailer which required the vacation of the whole site, currently occupied by Ealing Central Library. The retailer has since withdrawn their proposal to extend its premises within the shopping centre. Therefore the library relocation to the management suite, previously agreed by Cabinet did not proceed.

Cabinet is now being asked to agree to the reprovision of the library on its current site on a more compact foot print. The principle of relocating the library to support the regeneration of the town centre has already been agreed and the benefits to the Council of agreeing to the latest proposal are outlined below.

British Land is committed to improving the retail experience for Ealing shoppers. It has been in negotiations with another retailer regarding a new store on the first floor of the shopping centre. In order for this deal to go ahead the library will have to be relocated on a reduced footprint of its current site.

In addition to supporting the regeneration of Ealing Town Centre, the relocation of Ealing Central Library would provide the opportunity for the Council to update the library offer and would provide a modern town centre library, achieving operational efficiencies and reducing running costs. All costs for decant and reprovision of the service would be met by the landlord, British Land including any work required to be done by Carillion in relation to the relocation and any restructuring resulting from the reduction of staff excluding any redundancies which the Council will remain responsible for.

The plan for the library offer at Ealing Broadway is to maintain the current opening hours and demonstrate what a library in the 21st century can look and feel like, and what it can deliver to the community. This will consist of a library with a retail look displaying popular stock on flexible shelving, to enable the creation of space for an exciting programme of events; cultural activities and children's events; and a digital offer fit for a modern library including online newspapers and magazines.

British Land has proposed to reconfigure and refurbish a new state of the art library in the shopping centre, provide a new archive store on the first floor in part of the old management suite and local studies customer point in West Ealing Library. They will also provide temporary space in the town centre that can accommodate study space during the refurbishment.

Following this interim relocation in the Ealing Broadway Centre, Ealing Central Library will be incorporated in to the new civic accommodation. It will be an integral part of the redeveloped Perceval House site. The Library will be co-located with Customer Services and also occupy shared space with Ealing Adult Learning Service. A new bespoke home for the Archives and Local Studies Service will be provided on the same site allowing storage and access. This information, learning and customer services hub will be an important addition to the cultural triangle stretching from Perceval House down to the University of West London.

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14. Southall Big Plan – Update on Southall Gateway, Southall Infrastructure Projects and Dine In Southall

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the proposals for the Southall Big Plan Annual General Meeting on 5 December and celebrates 5 years of success of the Southall Big Plan.
- ii) notes the current proposals for the redevelopment of Southall Gateway following Cabinet's previous decisions in February 2015 and June 2014 to undertake this project.
- iii) authorises the Executive Director of Environment and Customer Services to take the necessary steps to tender the works for the South Road bridge widening scheme by inviting and evaluating tenders following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Environment,.
- iv) delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment and Customer Services to award a contract if suitable tenders are received to deliver the bridge and highway widening project.
- v) notes the current position with regard to Southall Gateway as outlined in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.12 of the report.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The Southall Big Plan was launched in 2012 following an extensive consultation through the Southall 'Big Conversation'. The key underpinning tenet was 'we will if you will' – which meant that the Council, local stakeholders and local businesses needed collectively to invest, take pride in and responsibility for, the area. Since 2012, there has been an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year to review and report on progress. There was no meeting in 2016, but we are planning a meeting for 2017 to celebrate the first five years of Southall Big Plan.

South Road Bridge Widening

Officers are making progress with the design of the bridge and highway widening works on South Road between and including the Merrick Road and Beaconsfield Road junctions, and are ready to start procurement of a contractor. Cabinet authority is requested to allow officers to launch the tender process and award the contract with an estimated value of £14.5m.

Southall Gateway Land Assembly

In June 2014 Cabinet authorised officers to proceed with land assembly at Southall Gateway with a view to enabling a comprehensive scheme to go ahead involving:

- Relocation of the Sikh Gurdwara to the east of the footbridge
- Mixed use development on the remainder of the site with commercial along South Road
- New public space and the facilitation of a wider pavement along South Road and a new left hand turning lane from Park Avenue onto South Road.

In February 2015 Cabinet authorised the exercise of CPO powers to support the acquisition of sites if necessary.

The Council has been working closely with the Gurdwara for the past two and a half years to find a scheme that delivers the objectives of the SPD, is viable and is deliverable and also reflects the Gurdwara's aspirations. The original idea was that the temple would be relocated to the east of the footbridge to allow for continuity of provision and free up the land along South Road for commercial uses. This would be supported by a 'land swap' between the Council and the Gurdwara. The Gurdwara has aspirations to build a

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replacement temple building which is significantly larger and provides more facilities than its existing premises. As a result the overall viability of the scheme is under pressure. Consequently the Gurdwara considers that it would like to provide a replacement building in, or closer to, its current location but has stated that it would be willing to make a financial contribution towards the costs, should these exceed any profit due to the Gurdwara from the overall scheme.

Ealing officers have been working with the Gurdwara's team of advisers to develop such a solution, although to date no credible proposal has been made. Ealing officers will continue to work closely with the Gurdwara's team to develop both options (the original 'land swap' / CPO option' and the option of a replacement Gurdwara on its existing site) prior to the conclusion of the marketing and CPO processes. However the default option of relocating the Gurdwara must remain as the backstop position to meet the deadlines for land assembly under the terms of our contracts with the GLA.

A further report will be brought back to Cabinet when the current discussions with the Gurdwara enable a clear way forward to be identified.

South Road Bridge and Highway Widening project

In February 2015, Cabinet authorised officers to commence implementation of the South Road Bridge widening project, as part of the housing zone programme as soon as relevant grant and legal agreements are in place. Following completion of the borough intervention agreement and receipt of the GLA growing places fund, officers started to develop the bridge and highway widening project in more detail.

Design work to obtain technical approval from Network Rail for the bridge widening has commenced, and is expected to be secured early in 2018. Design work for the highway works and associated retaining walls has also commenced and is expected to be complete by Jan 2018.

It is proposed to procure a single civil engineering contractor to design and construct both the bridge and highway works given they are in close proximity to each other, and in order to achieve economies of scale. The tender process is expected to take approximately 6 months with the contract being awarded in the spring of 2018. The construction programme will be determined by the successful contractor but the aim is to complete the bridge works by December 2019 before Crossrail services commence.

15. Property Strategy - Authority to Market and Dispose of the Paddock - Freehold Sale of Sports Field

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) authorises the Acting Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing to dispose of the Paddock, by way of a freehold sale of the sports field site located to the northern boundary of Woodlands Academy, as shown outlined in bold on the plan, Appendix 1 of the report (subject to consideration of any representations received following notification of the proposed disposal under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972).
- ii) notes the correction to the report as follows: page 2, section 2 replace "Trailfinders Sports Club has expressed an interest in acquiring the site" with "The Mike Gooley Trailfinders Charity has expressed an interest in acquiring the site"

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Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The Paddock site has been identified as surplus to requirements. The site is a piece of green open space currently held by Education It is 0.834 hectares (2.075 acres) in size and is laid out to provide playing fields. The site is bordered to the west by the railway line, to the north by a playing field, Trailfinders sports ground to the east and Woodlands Academy to the south.

The Mike Gooley Trailfinders Charity has expressed an interest in acquiring the site that sits between the Sports Club and the railway line.

Given the location of the site and proximity to the existing Trailfinders Sports Club, it is considered that a sales exercise on the open market is unlikely to attract any interest from other potential buyers,

It is therefore proposed that the Council's managing agents, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), be instructed to agree terms for the freehold disposal, as set out in the recommendations report, attached as Confidential Appendix 2 to the Mike Gooley Trailfinders Charity (the Charity), as per the proposal letter, Confidential Appendix 3 of the report.

16. Outcome of Marketing Exercise for Southall Town Hall – 1 High Street, Southall UB1 3HA

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) approves the offer received from the Vishwa Hindu Kendra as the best offer for Southall Town Hall.
- ii) delegates authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, following consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance, to agree the terms and grant a 250 lease for Southall Town Hall to the Vishwa Hindu Kendra Southall.
- iii) notes the correction to the report as follows: page 1, (1.1 and 1.2) replace "Visha Hindu Kendra Temple Ltd" with "Vishwa Hindu Kendra"

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

A marketing exercise to select a purchaser for Southall Town Hall (STH) through an informal tender process was undertaken by the Council's managing agents, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH). The process began in June 2017 and is now concluded.

Details of offers received, analysis and recommendations are contained in the report prepared by LSH and forms the confidential appendix1 of the report.

Previous Cabinet approval of 13 December 2016 approved the justification to undertake the marketing exercise for STH.

The property was designated for disposal by the Council. On the 24 February 2017 Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) recommended the sale of the property be achieved by a marketing campaign with sale by informal tender. This was on the basis of offering a 250 year leasehold interest subject to contract either 'unconditionally' or 'subject to planning'.

A marketing campaign was implemented to generate maximum interest in the property. The campaign involved a number of channels, including advertising in the Estates

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Gazette, information sent to contacts held by LSH and parties that had expressed an interest to the Council. A letting board was also installed.

The advertising campaign resulted in 16 viewings. Eight offers from six bidders were received for the leasehold interest in the property, of which six were 'unconditional' and two were 'subject to planning'. Five of the 'unconditional' offers ranged from £1.350m to £2.015m on the basis of a premium subject to the rent of peppercorn. One of the 'unconditional' offers was based on a rental of £30,000 per annum over a 248 year period. Two 'conditional' offers ranged from £1.550m to £1.800m.

17. Council Quarter 1 Performance Report 2017/18

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the contents of the report.
- ii) notes the progress made against the Corporate Plan performance indicators.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet with a summary of the Council's performance in the first quarter of 2017/18 against key indicators set out in the Corporate Plan. Performance is described against key targets for operational delivery and service improvement, while also noting the direction of travel of comparable performance indicators since the same point last year.

18. Customer Service Strategy 2017/18 - 2020/21

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) approves the Council's Customer Service Strategy 2017/18 – 2020/21.
- ii) approves the proposed approach to fundamental organisational redesign, in alignment with the digital strategy, as outlined in part six of the Customer Service Strategy (Appendix A of the report).
- iii) thanks officers for their hard work on this strategy.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The current Customer Service Strategy has expired and officers have consciously awaited the development of the Council's first digital Strategy before creating a new version to ensure it is aligned. The Digital Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March this year and both the principles and strategic objectives of the Digital Customer work stream are embedded into this strategy.

Providing a positive customer experience is everyone's responsibility, therefore the Customer Service Strategy applies to all staff and council services and should be adopted by all staff who come into contact with customers whether they be residents, businesses, partners or suppliers.

From a customer perspective, the council has changed significantly in the last decade. Back in 2007 over 1,000 customers visited the customer service centre and the call centre responded to over 4,000 calls every day. Transacting on the web was not an option and without any telephone automation, the only way a customer could get their enquiry resolved was to speak to a member of staff. Customers were restricted to carrying out their council business to the 40 hours of the week that we were open and frequently customers had to wait, often for long periods of time to get through or be seen.

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The council has made significant investment to launch a host of online services allowing customers to transact at a time that suited them and for the first time customers were not reliant on speaking to an officer to get their enquiries dealt with.

Customer expectations were changing and with a variety of online transactions in place and further developments in the pipeline, the focus then turned to encouraging customers to use these more cost effective channels. The Council developed a Channel Shift Strategy which was implemented over a five year period resulting in dramatic 78% reduction in customers visiting the customer service centre.

Encouraging customers to use self-serve facilities when they visit us has now enabled the council to reach a tipping point in terms of face to face customer contact, with over 65% of all customer interactions being via a self-serve method.

Going forward, not only does the council need to invest further in technology platforms to support customer orientated digital services we need to work together to transform the way customers contact and interact with the council. To achieve this, a systematic, organisation wide, review of existing processes and customer journeys is required. A detailed outline of how this transformation will be approached is outlined in part six of the Customer Service Strategy.

19. Draft Empty Property Strategy 2017-2022

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) approves the draft Empty Property Strategy 2017 -2022, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) agrees to the proposed changes to modify the existing Empty Property Grant Policy as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
- ii) agrees to delegate the authority to the Director of Safer Communities & Housing following consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make amendments and any other such changes to the Policy as is necessary.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The Empty Property Strategy 2017-2022 and the amendments to the existing policy will:

- Assist in the provision of affordable housing to individuals, including those with disabilities, whilst ensuring properties meet today's decent homes standards.
- Reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for permanent secure accommodation, as this is both costly and time consuming for the council
- Revitalise the quality of the environment for local residents, communities and businesses.
- Protect and stimulate the housing market
- Ensure continued promotion of the various empty property schemes operated by the Council to encourage the renovation and occupation by persons in need of housing.
- Introduce an enhanced data monitoring system enabling the council to more effectively monitor the prevalence of empty properties in the borough and better evaluate the impact of interventions.

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- Encourage robust enforcement action is taken in relation to empty properties, by tackling and reducing the number of long term empty properties causing public nuisance and health and safety risks for residents living in the neighbourhood, and which devalue neighbouring properties.

20. Housing Responsive Repairs Contracts

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) authorises the Director of Safer Communities and Housing to invite and evaluate tenders for:
 - a) Multiple contracts for day to day responsive maintenance services for both residential properties and corporate buildings covering the Borough.
 - b) A contract for minor voids works across the Borough's residential properties.
- ii) delegates authority to the Director of Safer Communities and Housing to award contracts for responsive maintenance services and minor voids service as detailed in i) above if suitable tenders are received.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The existing Housing Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Contracts were re-procured during 2013. Two contractors, Mead Building Services Ltd in the West and MNM Property Services Ltd in the East, were appointed to manage the repairs and maintenance service, starting on 1st September 2013. The contracts were for a term of 4 years plus a 1 year extension, approximate annual value of £1.5 million.

The housing Minor Voids Contract – refurbishing voids up to £10,000 – was awarded to Mountjoy Ltd and also commenced on 1st September 2013 for a term of 4 years plus 1 year extension, approximate annual value of £1.5 million.

A Separate Drainage contract to serve the whole of the Borough was also awarded to MNM Property Services Ltd starting on 3rd March 2014 for a term of 4 years plus 1 year extension, approximate annual value of £250,000.

The Council has currently agreed to the one year extension with regard to all of the contracts mentioned above.

In addition an in house repairs team was created, made up from multi skilled operatives TUPE'd across from the previous Contractors, Kier and Mears The in house repairs team - under the name of Ealing Repairs Service (ERS) carry out communal repairs on estates, the majority of which have been generated from regular estate inspections. Any gaps in their workload have been accommodated by the team carrying out minor planned repair works, decorating and some day to day works.

There is an internal contact centre which receives enquiries from all over the Borough which is on average about 3,400 calls and 1,100 e-mails per month, which initiate 2,050 jobs raised by the contact centre per month.

Whilst most repair requests are received during normal working hours, the Council operates an Out Of Hours Emergency Call Service via Mears 24/7.

Ealing Facilities Management (EFM) currently have over 20 contractors on informal arrangements, this model incurs additional management costs and performance issues as the individual arrangements are of relatively low value.

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EFM requires a competitive managed service for responsive repairs that reduces both contractor costs and internal management costs.

By aligning with the Housing Team procurement, EFM will benefit from economies of scale and a clear contractual route with the appointed contractors. It is not envisaged that this process will add any additional actions to the contract management as EFM will work with the Housing Team to provide a seamless client function.

Following thorough market analysis (site visits at other local authorities and housing associations) as well as two workshops - with internal stakeholders, incumbent contractors and residents - the various delivery options that have been considered are detailed in Appendix A to the report.

21. Internal Refurbishment Work to Council Housing

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) authorises the Director of Safer Communities and Housing to invite and evaluate tenders for the formation of a framework for internal works in Council housing including kitchens and bathrooms and associated works.
- ii) delegates authority to the Director of Safer Communities and Housing upon completion of the tender process to:
 - a) award framework contracts in line with the evaluation criteria.
 - b) run mini-competitions within the framework call off procedures for the duration of the framework, and
 - c) award call off contracts upon completion of mini-competitions.
- iii) authorises the realignment of budgets for particular schemes within the HRA Capital Investment Programme for 2017/18 and the virement of budgets.
- iv) notes the update on fire safety.

Reasons for Decisions and Options Considered

The Council has a responsibility to maintain its housing stock. Since the completion of Decent Homes works in March 2011 replacement kitchens and bathrooms have been delivered through a number of contracts. Typically kitchens and bathrooms have been replaced when properties have become void. Where properties have not been void and kitchens or bathrooms have required replacement this has been done through smaller contracts commissioned on an annual basis.

The property data in respect of kitchens and bathrooms shows that over the course of the next 5 years approximately 1,000 kitchens and bathrooms will fall non-decent. These kitchens and bathrooms were not replaced in the various decent homes programmes as they either met the decent homes standard at the time or works were refused by the tenant.

In 2016 inspections were carried out of approximately 200 of the kitchens replaced under the earliest replacement programmes. The inspections identified that 95% of the installations which dated back to 2003/4 were still in good condition. In a few cases minor works were needed to maintain the condition of the kitchen e.g. mastic joints around the kitchen sink, repair of door hinges, re-sticking of trim. This element of work known as preventative maintenance is an important factor in achieving the 30 year lifecycle for kitchens which is the basis of the business plan. Provision is being made for this activity within the proposed contract.

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When kitchens are replaced it is good practice to check the electrical installation in the kitchen to ensure that it is safe and meets current standards. At the same time there will be provision made within the contract to install or replace smoke alarms / heat detectors / carbon monoxide detectors where necessary.

In 2015/16 a stock condition survey was commissioned and together with data from property records has formed the basis of the 30 year HRA business plan in relation to capital investment. The 30 year HRA business plan identifies the budget for these and all other works funded as part of HRA Capital Investment programme.

Under the Decent Homes contracts these works were delivered in the main by large national contractors who quite often sub-let the works to smaller contractors. Since then smaller contracts have been awarded to SME contractors. The quality of works delivered by these SMEs has been very good; their supervision of contracts and engagement by senior management has demonstrated the value which can be brought through contracts with such organisations.

After consideration of alternative procurement options officers recommend that tenders are sought on the basis that the Council has a 4 year framework for internal works with a number of contractors appointed to carry out these works. Annual programmes will be awarded from this framework on the basis of a mini-competition.

The budget allocated to these works from the existing HRA Capital budget amounts to £1m in 2017/18 and £1.7m in 2018/19.

The June 2017 Cabinet report agreed the overall HRA Capital Investment programme slippage from 2016/17 to 2017/18.

Fire Safety Update

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower in which over 80 people are reported to have lost their lives will have implications in social housing for the next generation.

Since then officers have progressed the following:

- Reported to DCLG that there are 34 Council housing blocks in the borough in excess of 18m high.
- Reported to DCLG that none of these blocks has Aluminium Composite Material as retro-fitted to the outside of Grenfell Tower.
- Checked and confirmed that all blocks requiring a Fire Risk Assessment has an assessment which is current i.e. in date.
- Visited all 34 blocks to check for any issues relating to fire safety.
- Carried out door to door tenancy management reassurance visits to all 34 blocks in the week following the fire.
- Communicated with residents of the 34 blocks and more generally with residents through the Homes and Communities Newsletter in July.
- Accelerated the second year of the programme of Fire Safety Works being delivered across the borough by Diamond Build and Lakehouse Contracts.
- Met regularly with the Borough Fire Commander to develop a joint approach to fire safety in Council housing blocks.
- Started an options appraisal relating to the automatic suppression of fires in tower blocks i.e. the practicalities / design and estimated costs and benefits of auto-misting devices / sprinklers and other equipment.

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22. Date of Next meeting

Resolved

That Cabinet notes that the next meeting of Cabinet will be held on 17 October 2017 at 7pm

23. Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme for the 2017/18 Financial Year

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the consultation responses and approve the Local Discretionary Rates Relief Scheme for 2017/18, as set out in appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) agrees that the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme be backdated to take effect from 1 April 2017 and run to 31 March 2018.
- iii) delegates to the Head of Local Tax and Accounts Receivable the power to make the determinations on whether or not applications qualify for relief under the Scheme, pursuant to the criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- iii) notes that officers will monitor the scheme and the details of its implementation and report back to Cabinet in February 2018. That report will include details of options for the 2018/19 financial year, subject to the provisions of any future Regulations.

Reason for decision and Options Considered

The council has statutory duties in relation to the administration of the business rates scheme and the report recommendations will enable the Council to meet those statutory duties.

There were a number of options available and following discussion with Lead Member, Senior Management and benchmarking with other London Boroughs, it was agreed the final scheme ultimately must focus on need that will mean targeting the discretionary fund where businesses have seen the steepest increases compared with the business rates payable in 2016/17. The scheme should also not be too restrictive so that it would not allow us to pay/claim the maximum amounts allowed from Government or indeed exceed the grant allocations.

The Options considered by Ealing were

Banded Scheme

The preferred option (and the one recommended at appendix 1 of the report) is a banded scheme, which would allow a specific relief amount to be awarded based on the individual case circumstances. This could either be in terms of a specific cash discount amount or as a percentage award.

The options around the calculation of relief needed to be carefully considered taking into account system capabilities and funding implications. Awards would be capped accordingly to ensure the council stays within funding allocations and the distribution could be weighted to allow more relief to smaller businesses.

Transitional Adjustments

Such a scheme would amend the current transitional scheme to provide additional support for affected businesses. Transitional protection limits the amount that demands can be increased by, from those charged in 16/17 to the new demands of 17/18. This potential scheme would amend the thresholds allowing increased protection to be applied for qualifying businesses. This would reduce bills accordingly for affected properties. The scheme recommended at appendix 1 of the report does not include this option.

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Retail Rate Relief

Previously the Government had introduced a retail rate relief scheme providing relief to qualifying retail outlets. This scheme could be re-introduced with either a fixed amount for all or different levels of relief based on qualifying bands. The scheme recommended at appendix 1 of the report does not include this option.

Hardship fund

Whilst an application based hardship fund would allow the council to review in depth the needs and impacts on individual businesses it would have significant impacts on resources. However the Council would retain the option for hardship payments for specific businesses even if they fall outside of the direct scheme rules. . The scheme recommended at appendix 1 does not include this option.

Geographic / Sector support

There is the opportunity to target support at specific geographical areas or particular business sectors, although any complexity in the award scheme process will add to the costs of administration. The scheme recommended at appendix 1 of the report does not include this option.

Councillor Julian Bell, Chair

Date

The meeting concluded at 8:45pm having completed its business.

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of this Committee.