



OFFICIAL EXECUTIVE DECISION NOTICE PUBLISHED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Notice is hereby given that the following decision(s) have been made today by Cabinet Members at the London Borough of Hillingdon:

Title of decision	Translation & Interpreting Services - thebigword
Reference No.	2026/1786
Date of decision	Friday 25 September 2026
Call-in expiry date	Friday 02 October 2026
Relevant Select Committee	Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee
Relevant Wards	All

Decision made

Cabinet Members making the decision	Councillor Richard Mills, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digital & Transformation Councillor Eddie Lavery, Cabinet Member for Finance
Decision	Agreed That the Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digital & Transformation: 1. Approved the direct award of a one-year contract for Translation and Interpreting Services to The Big Word (TBW), commencing on 21 August 2026 and ending on 20 August 2027 for Language Services, in accordance with the framework terms and the Council's Contract Standing Orders, at an estimated maximum contract value of up to £130,000. 2. Noted that officers will continue to monitor demand, promote lower-cost telephone and video interpreting where appropriate, and evaluate the Beam Interpret pilot, wider learning from AI-enabled tools such as Magic Notes, and other emerging digital interpreting solutions before bringing forward longer-term commissioning options.
Reason for decision	The recommendation is made for the following reasons: • The Council has an ongoing requirement to provide accessible translation and interpreting support across a range of statutory and resident-facing services. • The proposed direct award via the ESPO framework provides a compliant, transparent and low-risk procurement route.

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	- The Council's current contract with TBW expires on 20 August 2026, and no further extension is available. A replacement arrangement is therefore required to ensure continuity of a critical service to avoid service disruption to residents and frontline services. - The Big Word has successfully delivered the Council's translation and interpreting services since August 2023 and has demonstrated an understanding of the Council's operational requirements, service delivery expectations, and safeguarding responsibilities.
Alternative options considered and rejected	<u>Option A – Competitive Procurement Exercise</u> A full competitive procurement exercise could be undertaken. This option was considered; however, officers are simultaneously evaluating longer-term service transformation opportunities, including AI-enabled interpreting technologies and alternative operating models. Undertaking full procurement at this stage may create duplication of effort and could limit the Council's ability to adapt to emerging technologies. <u>Option B – Bring Service In-House</u> Bringing the service in-house was considered but is not recommended due to: - The significant breadth of language coverage is required. - The need for 24/7 availability. - Specialist interpreter accreditation, safeguarding and vetting requirements. - The operational complexity associated with managing a large interpreter network <u>Do nothing</u> This option is not recommended because it would leave the Council without a compliant translation & interpreting service when the current arrangements expire, creating significant operational, safeguarding and accessibility risks. <u>Cease activity</u> This is not an option due to statutory service requirement.
Classification	Part II – Members Only and Not for Publication
Link to associated report	Exempt - Not for Publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 due to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
Relevant Officer contact & Directorate	Zeenat Kapadia, Resident Hub Manager
Any interest declared by the Cabinet Member(s) / dispensation granted	N/A

Implementation of decision & scrutiny call-in

[Internal Use only]	
When can this decision be implemented by officers?	Officers can implement Cabinet Member decision in this notice only from the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period which is: 5pm on Friday 02 October 2026 However, this is subject to the decision not being called in by Councillors on the relevant Select Committee. Upon receipt of a valid call-in request, Democratic Services will immediately advise the relevant officer(s) and the decision must then be put on hold.
Councillor scrutiny call-in of this decision	Councillors on the relevant Select Committee shown in this notice may request to call-in this decision. The request must be before the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period above. Councillors should use the Scrutiny Call-in App (link below) on their devices to initiate any call-in request. Further advice can be sought from Democratic Services if required: Scrutiny Call-In - Power Apps (secure)

Further information	These decisions, where applicable, have been taken under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. This is the formal notice by the Council of the above executive decision, including links to the reports where applicable. If you would like more information on this decision, please contact Democratic Services on 01895 250636 or email: democratic@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of this decision notice is to a variety of people including Members of the Council, Corporate Directors, Officers, Group Secretariats and the Public. Copies are also placed on the Council's website. Democratic Services London Borough of Hillingdon Civic Centre High Street Uxbridge UB8 1UW
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