

Withdrawal of P/1528/20 and Pandemic Update

After careful consideration, Harrow Central Mosque & Masood Islamic Centre have decided to withdraw the planning application p/1528/20 dated 04.05.20 proposing a variation of condition 5 (no music /amplified sound) attached to planning permission p/0338/09 dated 16.12.10 to allow a call for prayer to be amplified every Friday at 6pm for a temporary period of 3 months. Harrow Central Mosque were one of over 25 faith institutions in Harrow approached to support the Call to Prayer initiative in early April 2020 when the effects of the pandemic in the UK were at a peak, lockdown was at its most stringent phase and there was a heightened sense of fear and uncertainty. There has since been a significant easing of lockdown restrictions and with the Grace of God the official figures of the devastation caused by Covid-19 in the UK has significantly dropped.

Religious communities all over the country have felt the devastating effects of Coronavirus at times when families are usually together. Christian and Jewish communities in the UK sadly spent their important festivals of Easter and Passover away from their families. Likewise, we are incredibly proud of our Muslim community for achingly staying away from the Mosque in order to protect everyone. Moreover, by participating in the Call to Prayer initiative, we aspired to curtail the sorrow and desolation felt across our community as the virus compelled us to worship in agonising isolation especially during Ramadan. We sought to achieve in Harrow, the most diverse borough of London, the multicultural cohesion that defines our nation as illustrated by countless other interfaith councils and organisations across London and the UK, notably in the neighboring Borough of Brent, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Walthamforest, Kensington and Chelsea, the entire city of Birmingham, Manchester, Southampton and countless other localities.

As the virus initially spread in the UK, we contacted the NHS to offer the entire mosque premises to be used as a temporary hospital if needed. We also initiated the Helping Hands service after we closed our doors on the 29th March, before the official lockdown. Helping Hands has provided almost 10,000 fresh meals to vulnerable people aided by the exceptional generosity of our Muslim Community in Harrow who consistently contributed towards the meals daily. Likewise, we beam with pride on the efforts of our phenomenal volunteer team who have continuously performed over 400 rounds of shopping and prescription collections supporting vulnerable residents who couldn't get a supermarket delivery slot and sometimes fell just short of being officially classed as vulnerable. It gives us great pride to say that our volunteers have never turned anyone away. We also partnered with the other three Islamic Centre's in our area (KSIMC, SLMCC and SICM) to help provide oxygen monitoring for free together on a loan basis to those with at risk of COVID-19.

We were one of the first mosques to implement a live streaming service well before it became popular and as such, we quickly moved all of our worship and school classes entirely online. Ramadan started in late April and many will have spent Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of May woefully devoid of community spirit and lacking the usual presence of loved ones. With the mosque closed during the holiest times of the year for Muslims, we live streamed as frequently as possible attempting to reduce, in what minimal capacity we possess, these voids for our community.

As the gradual lifting of restrictions continue, many sectors reopened on Monday 15th June, including some houses of worship for private prayer. Further significant easing of restrictions are also widely anticipated throughout July. **The safety of our community is paramount to us and due to the congregational nature of worship in the Mosque we will not be reopening and remain closed until further notice.** We have been informed by the initiator of the Call to Prayer initiative that it too will end on the 30th June. Many of us will be returning back to work and while we adjust to a new form of 'normal' embedded with social distancing measures and face masks we must not forget that many of our elders and vulnerable people will still remain isolated and at risk.

Harrow Central Mosque and the Muslim Community of Harrow stand ready, as always, to assist the vulnerable people in our community regardless of their religion, Muslims or non-Muslims. We are proud to announce that we are extending our community support services through the initiation of two separate helplines in the coming weeks. The befriending service which will contact and check up on isolated residents for a friendly chat and the counselling support service providing chaplaincy services support those who have recently been bereaved. Anyone can be referred to these services and more information will be released soon on our website and social media.

Our bereavement and funeral services have remained active despite the shortages of PPE. *On Saturday 11th April due to COVID-19 our beloved trustee, funeral director and dear friend Asif Mohammed, whom many knew as Saeed Bhai passed away.* He was the shining beacon and pillar of our completely Free Funeral service and his passing is a massive loss for us. We pray God grants him the highest stations in Heaven and us the ability to maintain and continue the work he was doing selflessly for the mosque and the Muslim community.

We would like to thank everyone for their full support and we will continue to work closely with our partners, the Council, and other faith groups to continue the great work we are all doing to support residents during these difficult times.

