



Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 5 September 2017 at 7.00 pm

Boardrooms 4, 5 & 6 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Kelcher (Chair)
Davidson (Vice-Chair)
Aden
Colacicco
Crane
Ezeajughi
Mashari
Stopp

Substitute Members

Labour Councillors:

S Choudhary, Daly, Harrison, Hylton, Kabir, Long and Naheerathan

Conservative Councillors:

Colwill and Kansagra

For further information contact: Bryony Gibbs, Governance Officer
020 8937 1355; bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **www.brent.gov.uk/committees**

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

***Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

****Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

- (a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party of trade union).

- (b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members	
2 Declarations of Interest	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda.	
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting	1 - 6
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2017 as an correct record.	
4 Matters Arising (if any)	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
5 Deputations (if any)	
To hear any deputations received from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Order 69.	
6 Brent Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) Update	7 - 14
For Members to consider an update on the outcomes and learning from the Council's first three Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs).	
7 Follow Up Review on Brent High Street Initiatives	15 - 32
This report contains:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An analysis on how have the town centre managers performed since being appointed;• An analysis of how the Digital High Streets project is performing;and• A report on how uniformed litter patrol officers are performing after being brought in-house.	

8 Update on Recommendations of S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group 33 - 42

In early 2016 a S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group was commissioned by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. It made its recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee on 12th July 2016. These recommendations, subject to three modifications, were accepted by the Scrutiny Committee. This report sets out progress against the modified recommendations.

9 Update on the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group 43 - 86

This report provides an update to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on progress of the recommendations made by the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group in November 2016.

10 Any Other Urgent Business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.

11 Date of the Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the committee is on 7 November 2017.



- Please remember to ***SWITCH OFF*** your mobile phone during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.



MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **Tuesday 11 July 2017 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair), Councillor Davidson (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Aden, Colacicco, Crane, Ezeajughi, Harrison (Substituting for Councillor Stopp) and Kabir (Substituting for Councillor Mashari)

Also Present: Councillor McLennan

Apologies were received from: Councillors Mashari and Stopp

1. Declarations of interests

For purposes of transparency, Councillor Crane informed the committee that he was a Director of Investing 4 Brent (I4B).

2. Deputations (if any)

None received.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 May 2017 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising (if any)

Councillor Kabir referred to the discussion on the Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report and Update on Community Safety item and queried whether officers had been referred to the Schools Partnership Board. The Chair summarised the reasoning for the recommendation made and clarified that the committee had not prescribed to officers the means of implementing the recommendation.

5. The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 2017-18 Work Programme

The Chair introduced the report on the committee work programme for 2017/18 and detailed the strategic approach taken in developing the programme. The meeting was informed that committee members, Lead members and Directors were all invited to pitch ideas for scrutiny for the forthcoming year, these were then judged against criteria developed to reflect the principles of effective scrutiny. The resulting work programme covered a broad range of items and policy areas across corporate resources, regeneration and environment, transport and community safety and extended beyond the council to include a submission from the Department for Work and Pensions. Recognising the significance of the council's

Digital Strategy, many of the reports to be presented to the committee would also include comment on the Digital element.

A number of minor amendments to be made to the programme set out in the papers before the committee were highlighted by the Chair.

In the subsequent discussion, it was noted that a report on Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) was due to be submitted to the committee at its next meeting and officers were directed to review what consideration was given to past Task Group reports by those undertaking the OBRs. The Chair also clarified to the committee that any members wishing to be involved in proposed Task Groups should indicate their interest to the Chair and Scrutiny Officers.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2017-2018 be agreed subject to the following amendments:
 - a. Councillor Miller (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities) should be the Cabinet Member against item 4, 'Trading Standards' for the meeting of 9 January 2018.
 - b. Councillor Butt (Leader of the Council) should be the Cabinet member against item 2, 'Property and assets' for the meeting of 21 February 2018.
- ii) that the task group reports on gangs and domestic violence be circulated to the committee for review prior to the next meeting of the committee at which a report on Outcome Based Reviews would be considered;
- iii) that the report from the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships, presenting the committee's annual work programme be agreed.

6. 2016-17 Annual Scrutiny Report

The committee considered the Annual Scrutiny report for 2016-2017. The report summarised the work conducted by the Scrutiny function throughout the year, including Task Group work and questions and decisions made by both the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. The report also provided an overview of Call-ins dealt with by the committees under Standing Order 20 and summarised committee engagement with the public and wider networks.

Reflecting on the report, Members noted that site visits undertaken by the committee during this period had been extremely valuable and had enhanced the committee's ability to scrutinise the issues presented. Members further commented that the report should contain an appraisal of the impact of the committee's work, to underline the importance of the scrutiny function and support further improvement. The committee agreed to incorporate the changes discussed in future reports and the Chair advised that he would include these in his report to full Council. Members further directed that the report should be shared in the Members' Bulletin to ensure

that all Councillors were encouraged to view the document. In concluding the discussion, the committee expressed its thanks to all the officers who had supported the committees work in 2016-2017.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the 2016-17 Annual Scrutiny Report be agreed;
- ii) that the 2016-17 Annual Scrutiny Report be included in the Members' Bulletin.

7. Strategic Overview of the Council's Funding

Andrew Ward (Head of Finance) delivered a presentation to the committee outlining the council's funding position, highlighting key risks and obligations, and noting the current level of uncertainty resulting from the absence of the Local Government Finance Bill from the Queen's Speech on 21 June 2017. The main sources of local government funding were set out and the year on year reduction of local government core funding was illustrated to the committee. Noting the legal budgeting responsibilities of the council, Andrew Ward reminded members that balanced budget had been set for 2017/18 and proposals had been agreed in February 2017 detailing how a balanced budget for 2018/19 would be achieved. These proposals included a council tax increase of 4 per cent, procurement savings of £4.5m and additional income of £1.25m generated through civic enterprise. A budget gap of circa £13m remained to be bridged for 2019/20. In concluding the presentation, Andrew Ward outlined a number of key developments in local government finance including: business rates devolution and the potential to join a London pool if devolution of the rates was to proceed; school funding and the national funding formula; Adult Social Care and NHS integration; and, the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader of the Council) emphasised that the Local Government Association had undertaken a peer review of Brent's budgetary management and had concluded that the way the council was progressing was good. As the situation regarding the Local Government Finance Bill and devolution of business rates was still evolving, the committee would be updated as soon as clarity was obtained.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee questioned how the council was responding to the current uncertainty. Clarity was sought regarding the reported figure of £4.5m procurement savings and the challenges that this target had presented. Further comment was sought on the £1.25m income to be generated via civic enterprise. It was queried how the council would capitalise on the increased use of Wembley Stadium and particularly, what the revenue benefit was for the council of the use of Wembley Stadium by Tottenham Hotspurs. Questions were raised regarding the anticipated level of revenue from the in-house litter enforcement team, whether this could be maximised by a more aggressive deployment of the team and how this had been accounted for in the budgeting process. The committee questioned what work had been undertaken to identify how the council would meet the £13m funding gap for 2019/2020. A member highlighted the need to safeguard pensions and meet any percentage increase in staff pay and questioned how prepared the council was to meet these eventualities. Members

sought information on Brent's comparative position to other local authorities with regard to per capita cost of services and business rates generated in the borough.

Responding to the queries raised, Andrew Ward advised that officers were monitoring the position regarding the Local Government Funding Bill and clarified that the procurement savings of £4.5m were for the financial year 2017/2018, with further savings to follow in the subsequent year. Althea Loderick explained that the procurement savings sometimes exceeded or fell below the target of 10 per cent per contract but the overall deficit was proportionately redistributed across departmental budgets. Discussing income generated via civic enterprise, Althea Loderick (Strategic Director Resources) emphasised that this would provide a yearly contribution of £1.25m to the council's budget. There had been a shortfall against this target in the first year of operation and lessons had been learned during this period. More sophisticated market modelling had been undertaken by the council with regard to fees and charges. This had underlined that increasing fees did not always lead to increased income due to the impact on demand. There was also a heightened focus on the council's strengths, such as delivery of digital services and maximising use of the Civic Centre. The opportunity to market the Civic Centre as a venue for tie-in events for larger Arena or Stadium events was recognised and would be pursued by the new Head of Conference and Events. The projected income for the uniformed litter patrol team had been accounted for within the budget for the Regeneration and Environment department. The Chair highlighted that the committee would receive an update on the working of this new team at its next meeting in September.

Althea Loderick assured the committee that the council's pension contributions were sufficient and were based upon regular actuarial reviews. The council was also planning for a potential increase of staff salaries beyond the current 1 per cent cap.

During the discussion, officers advised that the following information was not available to share at the current meeting but could be circulated subsequently: an assessment of the revenue benefit and any costs incurred for Brent Council as a result of Tottenham Hotspurs use of Wembley Stadium; a comparative analysis of income from Business Rates across London's 33 boroughs; and, details of the CIPFA analysis of spend on services per capita for Brent if available.

The committee thanked officers for their contribution to the meeting.

8. Proposed Scope for Scrutiny Task Group on the use of Food Banks in Brent

The Chair introduced the report setting out the proposed scope for the Scrutiny task group on the use of food banks in Brent. The task group had been requested by members following a noticeable increase in the usage of food banks, both in Brent and nationally. It was proposed that the task group would look at Brent, London and the national picture, with a focus on understanding the issue and the current position of central government, local authorities and other public sector partners. Specifically, the task group would analyse four key areas: understanding the drivers and scale of the problem; policy and practice; the experience of the resident; and, public perception. Members' attention was drawn to Appendices A and B to the report detailing in full the proposed scope and terms of reference for the task group respectively.

In the subsequent discussion, members agreed that a visit be conducted by the task group to a food bank as part of the research undertaken and questioned how the conclusions of the task group would be taken forward by the council. The Chair emphasised that currently there was no legislation around this issue, nor any formal council policy in place. There was an opportunity to ensure that the council was at the forefront of responding to this issue, reflecting on partnership working and providing a clear steer locally. The councils referred to in the report as providing good examples had established food network partnerships. A member highlighted the supplementary role played by some voluntary or religious organisations in providing meals and noted that these may not fall within the definition of a food bank. The Chair advised that these groups would fall within the scope of the task group.

RESOLVED: that the scope, terms of reference and time scale for the task group on the Use of Food Banks in Brent, attached at appendices A and B to the report from the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships, be agreed.

9. **Any other urgent business**

None.

10. **Date of next meeting**

The committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 5 September 2017.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

M KELCHER
Chair

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Brent Outcome Based Reviews

The story so far....

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee | 5 September 2017

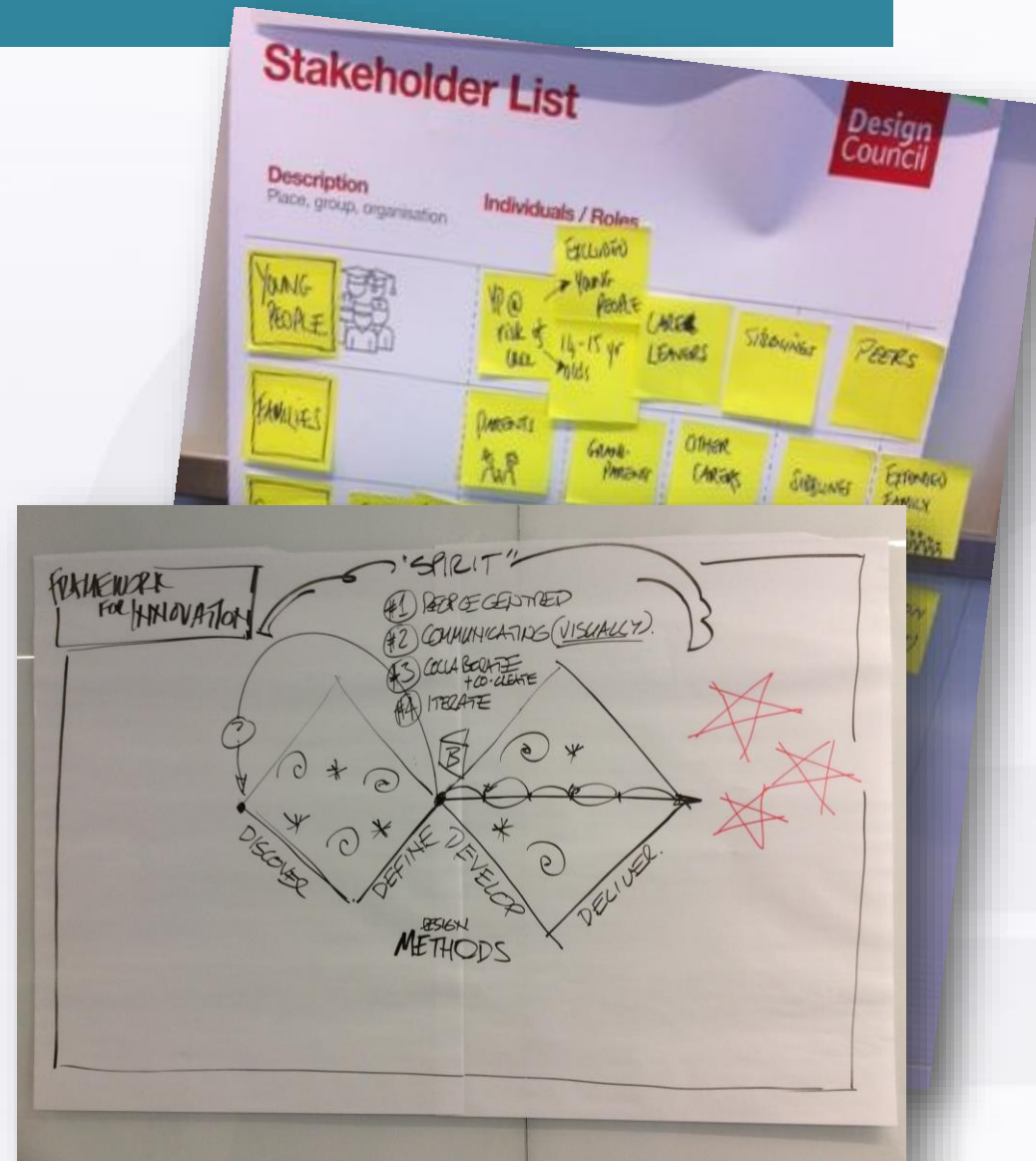
Aim

- Update you on outcomes and learning from first three OBRs
- Update you on progress with the gangs and domestic abuse OBRs
- Share early insights and gather your thoughts
- Discuss next steps

OBR: our approach

Four stage design framework:

- **Discover** more about what is actually being delivered and gather new perspectives
- **Define** a vision for future arrangements and generate ideas to take forward
- **Develop** the new ideas and agree an approach and plan for testing
- **Deliver** and test new model(s) and build a business case based on learning



Update on 2016 OBRs

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- Carried out first set of OBRs in 2016 focusing on Housing for Vulnerable People, Employment Support and Welfare Reform and Regeneration (physical, environmental and social).
- In 2016 this was a new approach for the Council, adopting a design-methodology and working with a wide range of stakeholders to reimagine ways of working and jointly develop and test solutions.
- The OBRs brought together a range of stakeholders and generated a number of ideas to try something different in response to the key insights from community research.
- This included the design and testing of a community hub model in Harlesden and a number of new projects including single homeless assessment pathway, town centre managers, commissioning short term accommodation and redesigning disabled related adaptations processes from a customer perspective. The Change Team are working closely with service areas to deliver these.

2017 OBRs: our focus

Building on the learning from the first set of OBRs, we've established three new OBRs following a design methodology: **Domestic Abuse**, **Edge of Care** and **Gangs**

Our challenge:

OBR: Domestic Abuse

- How do we increase the number of victims and perpetrators who are able to access early intervention and support to prevent reoccurrence?

OBR: Edge of Care

- How to support young people at risk of becoming LAC safely in the community?

OBR: Gangs

- How do we reduce levels of gang related offending?

Discover phase – what have we been doing?

- Data collection
- Service mapping
- Ethnographic interviews
- Focus groups
- Community research
- Interviews with professionals and experts
- Horizon scanning

Next steps

Complete discover stage:

- More community and professional research including ethnographies, focus groups with perpetrators, professional interviews with other services
- Horizon scanning
- In-depth case analysis
- Financial modelling

Visioning:

- Joint visioning day across three OBRs: 4th October 2017

Develop and test:

- Developing and prototyping



Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

5 September 2017

Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

For Information

Follow Up Review on Brent High Street Initiatives

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report contains:

- An analysis on how have the town centre managers performed since being appointed
- An analysis of how the Digital High Streets project is performing.
- A report on how uniformed litter patrol officers are performing after being brought in-house.

1.2 A visit to high street(s) with managers to see how they work was requested by the scrutiny panel. The panel chose Harlesden as their preferred location and the visit is scheduled for 30th August.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Not applicable.

3.0 Town Centres progress update – first three months

Recruitment

3.1 2 Town Centre Managers started their jobs on 22nd May. Grace Nelson was recruited internally to be the Town Centre Manager for Harlesden and Willesden Green, and Rubina (Rubie) Charalambous was recruited externally to be Town Centre Manager for Wembley and Ealing Road.

3.2 Employment, Skills and Enterprise are still recruiting for the third Town Centre Manager (for Neasden and Church End). The role has not yet been appointed to, due to candidates not meeting the required standard. Recruitment will be complete by the third week of September, if a suitable candidate is found.

Stakeholder engagement

- 3.3 Town Centre Managers have written a 12 month plan for each Town Centre (taking us to May 2018) in consultation with ward members, business representatives and relevant council services. See Appendix 1 – 12 month plans.
- 3.4 Draft, longer-term investment plans (included in the Cabinet report of 24th April 2017) are being developed further alongside key stakeholders in each town centre, including businesses, residents and Ward Members. Some shorter-term action contained in the draft plans have already been taken forward (for example, identifying gaps in current business support delivery that could be plugged through external funding for the council to commissioned services).
- 3.5 The Town Centre Managers have offered to meet with all relevant ward members. A ward members' engagement session, to work alongside the Town Centre Managers to clarify the shorter and longer term plans for each Town Centre, was planned for 25th July 2017 but has since been rearranged to 4th September 2017. In the meantime all ward members have seen the appended 12 month plans and have fed back with changes where relevant. Regular walkabouts will be arranged with ward councilors, and the Town Centre Managers provide an email update every two months.
- 3.6 Town Centre Managers have met with all existing businesses partnerships in each town centre and identified and met with other key external stakeholders to understand their work and the scope and nature of their vision. Meetings are booked with remaining individuals.

Business Partnerships

- 3.7 Engagement with already established business partnerships is critical to the development and delivery of the 12 month plans and longer term investment plans. In the priority town centres this includes the Ealing Road Trader's Association (ERTA), Wembley High Road Business Association, and via the Harlesden Business Association.
- 3.8 The feasibility of a Business Improvement District (BID) - or multiple BIDs - is being considered for Wembley and Ealing Road, which if viable would enable a self-run and funded entity to support the town centres, working in partnership with the Council. The starting point will be to consider the potential of a BID that encompasses Wembley High Road, Wembley Park Drive, Ealing Road, and Wembley Park (in partnership with the developer, Quintain).
- 3.9 Work is also underway to support smaller or less established partnerships:
 - 3.9.1 Engagement has taken place with Harlesden Business Association, working with a community business champion. There has been a boost recruitment in the Business Association, with membership recently reaching 220 having been at 40 the previous month – as it has been for two years.
 - 3.9.2 Work is taking place to support the Willesden Town Team, established in 2012. The Town Centre Manager has started to identify key individuals from within the business community who will help to develop the group. The local plan consultation process will include a section on creating a vision for the area and will help to engage more businesses.
 - 3.9.3 Neasden has a small but empowered Business Association that the new Town Centre Manager will seek to grow when they arrive. Church End currently has no

business partnership in place but this will be a priority of the new Town Centre Manager when they start.

Coordinating council services

- 3.10 The Town Centre Managers have spent a significant amount of time establishing working links with relevant council services including: Regeneration, Transport and Highways Infrastructure, Environment Improvements and Public Realm, Parking and Lighting, Community Protection, Capital Delivery, Transport Planning, Planning policy, Planning Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Brent Connect, Communications, School Improvements, Business Rates and Air Quality.
- 3.11 Current council service performance measures have been collated for each town centre, which will enable the Town Centre Managers to monitor progress on a monthly basis in each priority Town Centre. The information monitored will include ASB rates, waste collection rates, recycling rates, car park usage figures, schedule identifying trees which require maintenance, number of non-compliant estate agents boards across Town Centres.
- 3.12 To support more coordinated communication with businesses and stakeholders, frontline information relevant to businesses is being gathered from council services, for example:
- Waste collection schedule for each Town Centre;
 - Patrol times of the Enviro-crime team;
 - Timescales of capital works and information about the end use;
 - Current regulatory cases relating to businesses in town centres.
- 3.13 Services will nominate key contacts for Town Centre issues such as noise, illegal rubbish dumping, regulatory services, licensing, ASB issues, emergency planning, environmental improvements, parking and lighting. This approach will be streamlined when new Neighbourhood Managers are appointed in the coming weeks as the council's adopts a more widespread area-based model for the delivery of its key environmental services. The connection between the Town Centre Managers and the local Neighbourhood Manager, representing all Environmental Services, will be a key new relationship.
- 3.14 In addition to the coordination of services and communication with businesses, value-adding projects have also been identified in partnership with other council teams:
- Parking: Park Mark accredited which means all council run car parks will have an accreditation (approved by a partnership including the Metropolitan Police) which is recognised nationally;
 - Regulatory: Helping regulatory services identify estate agents in breach of the required standards by taking photos of 'for sale' boards and sharing with colleagues;
 - Information: Production of car parking leaflet for businesses in Wembley High Road and Ealing Road to give to customers, so that existing space is better utilised.

Projects and funding

- 3.15 The Brent Business Board are currently working on a marketing strategy and implementation plan for key localities within Brent: Wembley, Harlesden and the 'South East' (comprised of Willesden, Kilburn, Kensal Rise and Queens Park). The Town Centre Managers have a role in shaping this work to raise the profile Brent businesses.

- 3.16 The Town Centre Manager for Willesden and Harlesden has just submitted an expression of interest for the London Mayor's Good Growth Fund. In Willesden the expression of interest is for a capital investment pot to develop workspace, community and leisure facilities, for which community groups can submit ideas. In Harlesden the bid is phased and includes capital improvements to the shop fronts and public realm in phase 1 and rethinking uses of council owned assets in the area within phase 2.
- 3.17 External funding has been identified that will be used for:
- High Street 'health checks' which will provide us with the baseline data needed to measure longer term progress, updating from the most recent data collection in 2013;
 - Seed funding/sponsorship for one off Town Centre events/initiatives run by business associations and/or community;
 - Footfall counters pilot in Wembley and Harlesden to test effectiveness over one year, before considering roll out to other High Streets;
 - 'Costar' commissioned for one year to provide database of nationwide property and real estate information. This will assist with matching vacant units to interested business. Should we spot any properties that have been authorised to be on the market, CoStar will add them to their database.
- 3.18 An application has been put in for neighborhood CIL funding for footfall counters over 3 years and promotional material to market the priority Town Centres.
- 3.19 The Town Centre Managers have also managed to secure additional quick wins in their respective Town Centres, for example:
- 3.19.1 Community engagement with Keep Wembley Tidy and other highly engaged residents, to build trust and provide reassurance and visibility locally;
 - 3.19.2 Establishing a project with Anglia Ruskin University examining multiculturalism and belonging within Harlesden and Ealing Road;
 - 3.19.3 Sharing information on business support i.e. raising awareness of training to make the most out of Small Business Saturday;
 - 3.19.4 Sharing information about Discretionary Rates Relief;
 - 3.19.5 Informed relevant local residents to apply for Love Where You Live grant;
 - 3.19.6 Town Centre Manager met with Police, who agreed to attend business association meetings to talk about crime hotspots and test their reaction to potential solutions.
 - 3.19.7 Responding to businesses on longstanding queries (such as why railings have been removed);
 - 3.19.8 Communicating with a key private sector partner to secure funding for a leaflet for Wembley Park Drive.

Next steps

- 3.20 The next steps for each Town Centre are set out in the 12 month plans (appended). The headline actions and milestones are summarised below:

Key achievements by January:

- 3.21 12 month plans for Neasden and Church End complete [assuming recruitment goes to plan].
- 3.22 Health Checks for all Town Centres complete;
- 3.23 Business surveys complete;
- 3.24 Engagement events will be completed. The feedback will be used to shape the action and investment plan for each Town Centre;
- 3.25 Progress with establishing Business partnerships;
- 3.26 Health checks completed providing baseline economic information against which the impact of the action and investment plans can be measured;
- 3.27 Identifying hidden gems of the town centres, to be promoted through press and new marketing materials Brokered a stronger and mutually beneficial relationship to support internal services;
- 3.28 Monitoring of council impact on each Town Centre established and Town Centre Managers sitting on relevant internal working groups;

Key achievements by May

- 3.29 Business partnerships:
 - 3.29.1 A consultant will be analysing BID feasibility (both financial and relational) in Wembley and Ealing Road;
 - 3.29.2 Willesden membership increased;
 - 3.29.3 Neasden membership increased and partnership governance established to ensure growth and sustainability of business association.
 - 3.29.4 Work commenced to establish a partnership in Church End.
- 3.30 A robust database of business contacts for each Town Centre;
- 3.31 Improved communication with town centre businesses to follow up issues and ideas they raise.
- 3.32 Comprehensive information regarding landlords sought where possible;
- 3.33 Marketing and events programme established;
- 3.34 Day to day action to mitigate recurring issues established in Town Centres;
- 3.35 Funding bids made to CIL, Good Growth fund, Tottenham Hotspur and any other sources that become available;
- 3.36 Action and investment plans agreed and progressed by all stakeholders.

Delivery of 12 month plans - risk analysis and mitigating actions

The complexity and potential breadth and depth of the Town Centres programme requires proactive action to be taken, to manage inherent risks in delivering against the 12 month plans, which is important for council-business relationships.

Town Centre	Risk	Mitigation
All	Longer term progress is sacrificed due to level of resource needed to react to day to day concerns	Focus on longer term Action and Investment Plans Careful monitoring of amount of Town Centre Managers' time each part of the 12 month plan (and work sitting outside it) is taking up
All	Increase in requests from non-priority Town Centres	Senior Economic Growth Manager has been taking on requests generated through publicity of the Town Centres Programme. This has been manageable to do date but will be monitored to avoid resource being averted from priority Town Centres.
All	Burnt Oak, Cricklewood and Kilburn have been identified as priority Town Centres but do not have a Town Centres Managers and do not have 12 month or action and investment plans. They will receive the Digital High Streets offer in the next 6 weeks.	Officers from other parts of the council are engaged on specific projects in those areas. Plans for regeneration need to be created in partnership with neighbouring boroughs, Camden and Barnet.
All	Business groups not at a stage of development that enables them to take action forward themselves, leading to over reliance on council/ Town Centre Managers.	Businesses empowered to own the vision and pragmatic action required to improve their Town Centre (while the council continues to play an important role). Although their impact and added value is clear, Town Centre Managers are facilitators and advisors rather than owners of all ideas/ achievements.
All	Unable to reach consensus on key action in certain town centres with range of stakeholders	Invite wide range of stakeholders to engagement events in September to start building dialogue with the business community and council
Harlesden and Willesden	Good Growth funding not secured	Applications submitted to other funding sources
Wembley and Ealing Road	It emerges that a BID is not feasible in Wembley and Ealing	An alternative partnership arrangement is sought

	Road	
Wembley and Ealing	Sponsorship may not be approved by key external partners	Look at alternative funding sources
Neasden and Church End	A suitable candidate is not found through the next round of recruitment	The post will be readvertised and the programme unfortunately delayed

4.0 Digital High Streets update

4.1 The Pilot phase of the Digital High Streets project ran in Wembley from January 2017.

- 4.1.1 20 small businesses took part in the pilot, receiving one-to-one coaching and mentoring to help tailor their new skills to their businesses, such a social media and digital marketing.
- 4.1.2 As well as growing their own businesses, they have together launched [their own website for Wembley High Road](#), helping promote the area itself as a great place to do business.
- 4.1.3 More than 30 SMEs on Wembley High Road were invited to join the Wembley High Road Business Association.
- 4.1.4 The pilot, run in partnership with Meanwhile Space and Clockwork City, won a Place West London Award.

4.2 Work then went into scaling up the project and rolling it out in 7 priority Town Centres, aiming to deliver intensive digital skills training and mentoring through a series of workshops and one-one sessions. The project went live in July.

4.3 At the time of writing this report, 30 individuals have been trained across Harlesden, Willesden and Neasden. This breaks down as follows:

Where?	When?	Total trained in this Town Centre	Total trained (cumulative)
Harlesden	3 rd – 14 th July	10	10
Willesden	17 th – 28 th July	13	23
Neasden	31 st July – 11 th August	7	30
Ealing Road	14 th – 25 th August	-	-
Kilburn	29 th August – 8 th September	-	-
Church End	11 th – 22 nd September	-	-
Burnt Oak	25 th September – 6 th October	-	-
The Hyde	9 th – 20 th October	-	-

5.0 Uniformed litter patrol officers

- 5.1 On 13th June 2016 Brent entered into a 12 month pilot with Kingdom Security to provide on street litter patrols to issue, where appropriate, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's) for littering and other minor environmental offences.
- 5.2 In early 2017 Brent's Cabinet decided that the service should be brought in-house at the end of the contract on 13th June 2017.
- 5.3 Of the 6 posts, 4 of the existing team chose to transfer to Brent, 1 became vacant and the other opted to remain with Kingdom.
- 5.4 On 13th July 2017 after TUPE arrangements were finalised the officers were moved onto Brent contracts of employment.

Current Operational Position

- 5.5 The team is currently being deployed to specific geographical areas within the borough. This has proved particularly effective in curtailing Paan spitting which has historically been very difficult to tackle. They are also deployed in response to complaints from members of the public, Veolia, as well as requests from Councillors and community groups to provide a high-visibility presence in illegal rubbish dumping hot-spots and to tackle specific local issues such as dog fouling, vermin feeding and other similar environmental issues. An important task is to response to reports of dumped waste flagged by our contractors, Veolia. They have also been involved in community assurance patrols which include weekend and evening work.
- 5.6 On 1st September 2017, the team will be fully equipped with the latest technology which will enable officers to issue on the spot FPN's using mobile phones and portable bluetooth printers. For the safety and security of the officers, new body worn cameras will also be used. The technology provided to support the officers will be the best available in the current market.
- 5.7 Of the 4 Patrol Officer posts, 2 are yet to be filled. The rationale is that these posts will be offered to redeployees, then advertised internally before being offered externally.

Deployment

- 5.8 The purpose of the team is currently as follows:
 - 5.8.1 Issuing FPNs for witnessed littering / dog fouling / spitting / bird feeding offences,
 - 5.8.2 Searching waste found dumped for evidence and then to referring this back to the Enviro-Crime inbox for senior members of the team to investigate, and
 - 5.8.3 Preliminary waste management (duty of care) inspections on businesses referring any suspected non-compliance for further investigation.
 - 5.8.4 To engage with members of the public on environmental issues which are affecting their neighbourhoods.
- 5.9 Table 1 (below) provides an example of a typical working week for the team.

Table 1 – Team Duties

Monday 7th - 11th August 2017

Monday	Limesdale Gardens+Holmstall Avenue	08:30-09:30	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	07/08/2017	07/08/2017
	College Road, Kilburn, Jackmans Mews	08:30-15:30	Pigeon feeding, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	07/08/2017	07/08/2017
	Criclewood Broadway, Anson Road, Hassop Road	09:30-15:30	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	07/08/2017	07/08/2017
Tuesday	Ealing Road, High Road	08:30-12:30	Paan Spiting, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	08/08/2017	08/08/2017
	Monks Park	12:30-13:15	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	08/08/2017	08/08/2017
	Kingsbury	14:30-16:00	Pigeon feeding, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	08/08/2017	08/08/2017
Wednesday	Wendover Road, Criclewood Broadway	08:30-13:30	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	09/09/2017	09/09/2017
	Kilburn (Willesden Lane, Waterloo passage	08:30-13:30	Pigeon feeding, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	09/08/2017	09/09/2017
	Ealing Road	14:30-16:30	Paan Spiting, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	09/08/2017	09/08/2017
Thursday	Kingsbury	08:30-12:30	Pigeon feeding, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	10/08/2017	10/08/2017
	Monks Park	12:30-13:15	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	10/08/2017	10/08/2017
	Ealing Road, High Road	14:30-16:30	Paan Spiting, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	10/08/2017	10/08/2017
Friday	Kilburn (Willesden Lane, Waterloo passage	08:30-11:30	Pigeon feeding, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	11/08/2017	11/08/2017
	Ealing Road	12:00-15:00	Paan Spiting, Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	11/08/2017	11/08/2017
	Monks Park	15:15-15:45	Littering, Fly tipping, High Viz Patrol	11/08/2017	11/08/2017

Performance

5.10 Team performance from 13th June 2017 to 4th August 2017 is summarised in Table 2 (below) with non litter FPN related performance shown in Table 3

Table 2 – Litter Related Performance

Actions	June	July	August
Number of cases sent to W/E inbox	21	262	83
Number of FPNs issued	21	166	32
FPN issued for Spitting	4	40	4
FPN issued for Pigeon feeding	0	0	0
FPN issued for Other	0	13	1
FPN issued for smoking related litter	17	99	14
Cases ongoing	20	109	18
Cases cancelled	0	0	0
Cases - FPN paid	1	31	1
Cases referred to legal	0	0	0

Table 3 – Non Litter Related Performance

Actions	June	July	August
Referred cases sent to W/E inbox	1	94	51
DOC	0	18	17

5.11 It is important to note (in Table 3) that the work the patrol officers refer to the Enviro-Crime in-box (i.e. non litter FPN related) also has additional value both in terms of providing

intelligence, physical evidence and fixed penalty or clear up cost related income for action by Enviro-Crime officers. See Appendix 2 – Case Study.

- 5.12 During June to August 2016 Kingdom Officers issued a total of 1028 litter related FPN's in relation to 219 FPN's issued by officers during the same period in 2017. This difference can be attributed to Kingdom initially providing a team of up to 8 officers in the early stages of the contract, vacancies arising during the transfer of staff, public awareness on littering since June 2016 and an approach that now looks at the broader spectrum of waste related crime – i.e. illegal rubbish dumping.

Summary & Conclusion

- 5.13 Since the transfer of staff to Brent, developing the operation to fit the Brent model continues to progress at a steady pace. Going forward the focus will be on better integration with the current Enviro-Crime Enforcement Team and other services, adapting their working practices to be more customer focused and adopting a more pro-active approach to finding solutions for issues the team and Veolia come across on the street – see Appendix 3 – Added Value. The team are performing well and have already enhanced the overall performance of the Enviro-Crime Enforcement Team by contributing high quality evidence, referrals of waste related crimes identified while on patrol and meeting with councillors and members of the public to discuss environmental issues affecting them directly.
- 5.14 Support and encouragement has already been received from established community groups such as Keep Wembley Tidy. By continuing to engage with councillors, community groups, businesses and through close co-operation with Veolia the team is expected to become a valued visible enforcement presence thereby continuing to contribute to the overall reduction of waste crime in Brent.
- 5.15 In the coming months once staffing and system issues have been resolved the team will begin focussing on extra duties such as:
- 5.15.1 The deployment of cameras to target waste hotspots,
 - 5.15.2 Issuing FPNs for the breach of Public Space Protection Orders,
 - 5.15.3 Joint on street operations with Veolia, and
 - 5.15.4 Timed waste collection education and enforcement.
- 5.16 Finally, with the anticipated introduction of area based working and the deployment of new Neighbourhood Managers it is expected that the team will compliment this approach by focusing efforts on eliminating engrained local environmental problems.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 None

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 None

8.0 Diversity Implications

8.1 None

9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

9.1 None

10.0 Background Papers

Cabinet decision – [Town Centres Action and Investment Planning](#)

11.0 Officer contacts

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SUMMARY OF 12 MONTH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PLAN WEMBLEY TOWN CENTRE (WEMBLEY HIGH ROAD AND WEMBLEY PARK DRIVE)					
Project	Areas for Action	Resource	Partnership	Objectives Met	Measures for Success
1. Businesses sharing responsibility and accountability for both Wembley High Road and Wembley Park District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved business ownership of local issues via Wembley High Road Business Association (WHRBA) and the emerging network of businesses in Wembley Park District - Improving digital skills - Health Checks updated 2017 	WHRBA & WPDBA established.	WHRBA WPDBA Regeneration and Environment services	RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly meetings set up with all Wembley Business Associations - Mandate of aims and objectives agreed - Health Checks complete - Website development CIL dependant - Training monitored : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business rates and how that works • Visual merchandising • Digital Skills Training
2. Priority to monitor event days and usage of the High Road and Park Drive	Close working partnership with Wembley Stadium, local traders in Wembley High Road to draw footfall.	Officer time WHRBA business network identify investment.	WHRBA WPDBA Wembley Stadium Quintain	RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - footfall counter installed
3. Look and feel of Wembley High Road is often compromised by waste and illegal dumping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement and education to improve compliance whilst understanding business needs. - joint working with internal departments - responding to ASB , waste , recycling , Car Park usage, unlawful estate agents boards , regulatory cases, park mark , pdf of car parking, involving communities & external stakeholders - Love Where You Live Campaign to tackle the levels of waste and community engagement 	Officer time from a number of teams would need to be prioritised in a coordinated campaign.	WHRBA WPDBA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council service standards monitored - individual issues raised by businesses are logged and feedback given to them
4. Seasonal Marketing campaign	Supporting WHRBA to find sponsorship to develop a seasonal marketing programme, which includes seasonal lighting, events, festivals and markets to help attract new audiences in to the High Road and other parts of the area.	Officer time /capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA, Match funding	WHRBA WPDBA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Footfall and dwell time - Eating and drinking guide for Wembley (CIL dependant) - Sponsor sought for festive lighting , events & festivals - Further promotion of Wembley using array of marketing platforms
5. Shopfront improvement and wider business support made available	Pilot shopfront programme to create a more inviting and appealing entry into each area. Accompanied by a robust business support programme which includes visual merchandising, marketing and promotion.	Officer time/ capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA Quintain skills Programme	WHRBA WPDBA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up awards to identify notable businesses. - pilot shopfront complete
6. Landlord Partnership	Working closely with landlords to manage/ help reoccupy empty spaces along the High Road	Officer time	Landlords WHRBA WPDBA Co-star	ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database of landlords - Written communication with landlords regarding future plans of retail units
7. Promoting available parking in the area	Campaign to promote the available parking opportunities to visitors within the Town Centre	Officer time	WHRBA WPDBA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of car parking on web page and distribution of pdf to businesses

SUMMARY OF 12 MONTH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PLAN EALING ROAD					
Project	Areas for Action	Resource	Partnership	Objectives Met	Measures for Success
1. Businesses sharing responsibility and accountability for Ealing Road	- Improved business ownership of local issues via Ealing Road Traders Association ERTA. - Health Checks updated 2017	ERTA established.	ERTA Regeneration and Environment services	RETAIL	- Quarterly meetings set up with all ERTA Associations -develop aims and objectives - seek private funding - Health Checks complete - Website development (CIL dependant) Plus training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business rates and how that works Visual merchandising Digital Skills Training
2.Priority to monitor event days and usage of Ealing Road	Close working partnership with ERTA & establishing usage of Ealing Road	Officer time ERTA business network identify investment.	ERTA Along with working with WHR & WPD business associations	RETAIL	- Footfall tracker installed to inform future decisions
3. Look and feel of Ealing Road is often compromised by waste and cleansing issues.	- Enforcement and education to improve compliance whilst understanding business needs. - joint working with internal departments - Responding to ASB , waste , recycling , car park usage, unlawful estate agents boards , regulatory cases, park mark , pdf of car parking, involving communities & external stakeholders - Love Where You Live Campaign to tackle the levels of waste and community engagement	Officer time from a number of teams	ERTA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	- council service standards monitored - individual issues raised by businesses are logged and feedback given to them
4. Seasonal Marketing campaign	Supporting ERTA in the development of a festive seasonal marketing programme, which includes seasonal lighting, events, festivals and markets to help attract new audiences in to Ealing Road to show case the rich culture	Officer time /capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, private sector match funding	ERTA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	- Distribution of a current up to date guide targeting key audiences (CIL DEPENDANT) - footfall and dwell time - Sponsor sought for festive lighting and events
5. Shopfront improvement and wider business support made available	- seek permissions for shop front improvement to create a more inviting and appealing entry into the area. - Robust business support programme: including visual merchandising, marketing and promotion.	Officer time/ capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA, THS Quintain skills Programme, Small Business Saturday	ERTA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	- Awards to identify notable businesses
6. Landlord Partnership	Working closely with landlords to manage/ help reoccupy empty spaces along Ealing Road	Officer time	Landlords ERTA Co-star	ECONOMY	- Database of landlords - Written Communication with landlords regarding future plans
7. Promoting available parking in the area	Campaign to promote the available parking opportunities to visitors: existing Council car parks and on street parking, plus a review of CPZ areas.	Officer time & ERTA	ERTA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	- Promotion of car parking on web page and distribution of pdf

SUMMARY OF 12 MONTH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PLAN HARLESDEN TOWN CENTRE					
Project	Areas for Action	Resource	Partnership	Objectives Met	Measures for Success
1. Businesses sharing responsibility and accountability for Harlesden Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved business ownership of local issues via supporting existing Harlesden businesses and increasing membership - Health Checks updated 2017 	Officer time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harlesden Business Association Regeneration and Environment services Federation of Small Businesses ACCA 	RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings set up with Harlesden Business Association - Increased business association membership numbers - Mandate of aims and objectives agreed - Businesses associations engaged and agreed constitution established - Harlesden Health Check completed - Themed workshops delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business rates and how that works • Visual merchandising • Digital Skills Training
2. Priority to monitor a robust marketing campaign and usage of Harlesden Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close working partnership with local traders in Harlesden to introduce measures to increase footfall and trade in the local area. - Robust destination marketing campaign which celebrates the rich heritage and diversity through marketing, pilot market, events, festivals alongside community group cohesion 	Officer time	Harlesden businesses	RETAIL	Developed 1 – 3 year marketing plan
3. Look and feel of Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement and education to improve compliance whilst understanding business needs. - Joint working with internal departments (including ASB and Crime, Environmental Services, Planning Enforcement, Food Safety, Trading Standards, Licensing, Parking and Lighting, Highways and Infrastructure) and wider communities & external stakeholders - Support “Love Where You Live” Campaign to tackle the levels of waste and community engagement - Highways Scheme – High Street Harlesden/ Furness Road Safety Improvements to Traffic Signal Layout (Design, Consult and Deliver 17/18 subject to TfL signal programme) 	Officer time from a number of teams would need to be prioritised in a coordinated campaign.	Harlesden businesses	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual issues raised by businesses are logged and feedback given to them - Council service standards monitoring
4. Seasonal Marketing campaign	Supporting Harlesden businesses to consider developing a seasonal marketing programme, which includes seasonal lighting, events, festivals and markets to help attract new audiences in to the high road and other parts of the area.	Officer time /capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA	Harlesden businesses	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - footfall & dwell time - Eating and drinking guide (CIL DEPENDANT) - Sponsor sought for festive lighting and events - Further promotion of Harlesden using different mediums
5. Shopfront improvement and wider business support made available	<p>Improve the physical appearance, coordinating investment towards better lighting, improving the shop frontages with more attractive, cleaner designs (Good Growth fund dependent).</p> <p>A tailored business support programme should accompany the shop front improvement scheme so that business owners can learn skills on visual merchandising, marketing (social media)</p>	Officer time/ capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA	Harlesden businesses	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring of council service standards in town centre - Awards to identify notable businesses - Good Growth funding sought
6. Landlord Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working closely with landlords to manage/ help reoccupy empty spaces along the high road - Direct dialogue between the council and landowners to understand aspirations and to discuss options for, and viability of, bringing forward development 	Officer time	Landlords Harlesden Business Association Co-star	ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database of landlords - Written Communication with landlords regarding future plans
7. Promoting available parking in the Town Centre	Campaign to promote the available parking opportunities to visitors	Officer time	Harlesden Business Association	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	- Promotion of parking web page and distribution of pdf

SUMMARY OF 12 MONTH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PLAN WILLESDEN TOWN CENTRE					
Project	Areas for Action	Resource	Partnership	Objectives Met	Measures for Success
1. Businesses sharing responsibility and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willesden Green Town Team - Health Checks updated 2017 	Officer Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willesden Green Town Team Local Businesses Regeneration and Environment services 	RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willesden Green Town Team - Health checks complete - Training and clarification provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business rates and how that works • Visual merchandising • Digital Skills Training
2. To monitor, support and investigate Festivals/ Events along Willesden High Road	Close working partnership with WGBA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer time WGTT business network identify investment. 	Willesden Green Town Team	RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tracker set up to inform future decisions
3. Look and feel of Willesden Green.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement and education to improve environment whilst understanding business needs. - Joint working with internal departments - Responding to ASB , waste , recycling , car park usage, unlawful estate agents boards , regulatory cases, park mark , pdf of car parking, - Close working with community champions - Love Where You Live Campaign to tackle the levels of waste and community engagement 	Officer time from a number of teams	Willesden Green Town Team	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council service monitoring in town centre - individual issues raised by businesses are logged and feedback given to them - Empower community champions - Funding applications completed - Meet regularly with Town Team through Cllrs surgery sessions - Establish speciality markets such as beer festival, arts and crafts
4. Seasonal Marketing campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Willesden Green Town Team in the development of a seasonal marketing programme, which includes seasonal lighting, events, festivals and markets to help attract new audiences in to the high road and other parts of the area. - Design and delivery of new market near Willesden Library. 	Officer time /capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA	Willesden Green Town Team	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eating and drinking guide (CIL DEPENDANT)
5. Shopfront improvement and wider business support made available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding for shop front improvement works to create a more inviting and appealing entry into the area. This will be accompanied by a robust business support programme which includes visual merchandising, marketing and promotion as well business plan review, information on how to access finance etc. and incentivising those businesses that remain compliant. 	Officer time/ capital investments to be secured e.g. CIL, GLA Quintain skills Programme	Willesden Green Town Team	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awards to identify notable businesses
6. Landlord Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with landlords to manage/ help reoccupy empty spaces along the High Road. Direct dialogue between the council and landowners to understand aspirations and to discuss options for, and viability of, bringing forward development 	Officer time	Landlords Co-star	ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database of landlords - Written Communication with landlords - future plans of retail units
7. Promoting available parking in the area	Campaign to promote the available parking opportunities to visitors:	Officer time	WGBA	ACCESSIBLE & ATTRACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of parking web page and distribution of pdf

Appendices

Appendix 2 – Short Case Study


Litter Patrol Officers found rubbish illegally dumped on the pavement in Craven Park on the 7th July 2017. They then searched the waste and found evidence connecting the waste to a nearby business.

After having referred the evidence to the Enviro-Crime inbox a senior officer of the Enviro-Crime Enforcement Team then conducted an investigation which resulted in the business in question being fined a total £410 which they subsequently paid. The business now has a valid waste contract in place.

Appendix 3 – Added Value

A litter patrol officer was approached by a member of the public on the High Road, Wembley who was concerned that a male was selling stolen goods to people on the street. The officer approached the person in question and confirmed that he was trying to sell electronic goods to members of the public on the street. The officer then approached passing Police Officers who subsequently arrested the suspect.

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 Brent	<p>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 5 September 2017</p> <p>Report from the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment</p>
For Information	
Update on Recommendations of S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In early 2016 a S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group was commissioned by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. It made its recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee on 12th July 2016. These recommendations, subject to three modifications, were accepted by the Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee resolved that a progress report against the recommendations should be submitted to it in the future.
- 1.2 This report sets out progress against the modified recommendations. This has been done against the Red/Amber/Green assessment requested. The majority of the progress has been adjudged to be green or completed (13). For the remainder the majority are identified as amber (10), whilst one is red and one is considered not applicable.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The report is for comment.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 Planning legislation provides for the potential adverse impacts of development to be addressed in order to make that development acceptable. This includes the provision of necessary physical and social infrastructure both on the development site and off it. This is addressed through the application of a mixture of mechanisms. These include the design of the development and, where necessary subject to statutory tests, associated conditions, planning obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- 3.2 The Council regularly employs both Section 106 planning obligations (S106) and CIL towards the provision of necessary infrastructure. Since the commencement of Brent CIL on 1st July 2013, S106 are now rarely used for financial contributions towards infrastructure and as such the value of funds attained through S106 is rapidly diminishing annually. In the financial year 16/17 £1.73 million was received through S106. CIL contributions are however much higher. In the financial year 16/17 £8.43 million was received through CIL.
- 3.3 In early 2016 a S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group was commissioned by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. This Task Group undertook a wide ranging review. It focussed primarily on the administration and implementation of planning obligations and Brent's Community Infrastructure Levy. It made its recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee on 12th July 2016. These recommendations, subject to three modifications, were accepted by the Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee resolved that a progress report against the recommendations should be submitted to it in the future.

Progress against the recommendations

- 3.4 When considered against a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) assessment, the majority of the progress has been adjudged to be green or completed (14). For the remainder the majority are identified as amber (9), whilst one is red and one is considered not applicable. The RAG assessment is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 Whilst progress on the whole has been positive, the Committee should note that progress has also been slowed by resource constraints and the need to meet other priority projects as set out in the service plan. Subsequent to Scrutiny's consideration of the Task Group's recommendations positive news is the agreed restructure of Planning. This will bring additional resource to the S106/CIL team and Planning Policy. Nevertheless, recruitment to the posts has not yet been completed. Six additional posts are yet to have new starters. Appointment to the CIL/S106 posts has unfortunately been hindered through a lack of suitable candidates applying, both on an interim (from July 16) and permanent basis (May 17).

Greens/Completed.

- 3.6 Since the Task group recommendations, the process of spending Neighbourhood CIL has been implemented. Much work has gone into awareness raising of the funds available and the initial round of bids for the £3.2 million that was available to the end of the financial year 16/17. Reaction appears to have been very positive. There has been strong interest from communities in identifying priority themes for spend within their areas, and bidding for funds will be on a 6 monthly basis.
- 3.7 In terms of S106 funds, Cabinet in June 17 approved £6.19 million of projects. This covered a mixture of education, transportation, employment and skills, landscape, parks and open spaces and transfer to external organisations (TfL & Ealing) as required in S106 obligations. There has been engagement with Councillors and communities in the delivery of much of the S106 funded projects, which will continue. A recent example is S106 Street Tree Planting with associated Mayor's funding

which has won a Forestry Commission award for its pro-active work in engaging with local communities in delivering these projects.

- 3.8 The Statement of Community Involvement has been updated and adopted by the Council in July 2017. This provides greater clarity on how developers should engage with local communities during the pre-application process. The Planning Policy Team is currently providing support to Neighbourhood Planning Groups where it has been requested. The majority of support has been given to Harlesden who are actively progressing their plan and near to the point of submission of their Plan for examination. Officers have also supported Kilburn Neighbourhood Forum and a potential Stonebridge Forum.
- 3.9 There has been an improvement in S106 performance with additional training undertaken to provide greater capacity and resilience to changes of personnel within the legal team. Additional support is also provided when appropriate via external sources.

Ambers

- 3.10 In terms of Leadership in CIL/S106 and clear responsibility, there has been some progress in appointment of an officer, but as indicated, recruitment to other posts has not been successful, which has had an impact on addressing this issue.
- 3.11 There has been some agreement on the principle of spend on Strategic CIL in relation to specific projects, e.g. Wembley Park infrastructure by Cabinet (July 17) Notwithstanding this, the mechanisms for spending strategic CIL are still being developed for agreement by the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet. Work continues on this with a view to taking a paper for agreement as a priority, and the intention is for the Portfolio Holder to take a report to Cabinet within a few months.
- 3.12 Monitoring of S106s on both financial and non-financial matters does occur. Following audit there has been a concerted and successful effort to collect outstanding payments/debts. A more pro-active approach to this on an on-going basis and CIL implementation/collection will improve noticeably when new staff are recruited.

Reds

- 3.13 The issue of the level of CIL contributions versus affordable housing contributions is one that will not be easily resolved. Notwithstanding Scrutiny's recommendations, there has not been a clear direction from Cabinet that it requires this matter to be addressed as a priority. The CIL went through a significant consultation process and was subject to public examination by a Planning Inspector who considered it to be viable and balanced in the face of known policy requirements. This included 50% affordable housing.
- 3.14 A typical 70 sq.m. market dwelling (2 bed) currently generates £17,875 of Brent CIL, of which £16,981 is available for strategic and neighbourhood CIL spend. CIL however is subject to numerous exemptions which significantly reduce the overall

amount collected from development. These include discounting the existing floorspace deemed to be in use at the time of the permission, social housing relief (all affordable policy compliant affordable housing pays no CIL) and self-build relief. As such the CIL attained in 15/16 of £9.89 million and S106 of £3.04 million (which includes all CIL and S106 attained from commercial developments too) needs to be considered against the 1582 net additional dwellings delivered. A contribution of essentially £8,200 per dwelling towards infrastructure.

- 3.15 Affordable housing requires significant subsidy from developers to make it work. Affordable dwellings typically generate 60-70% of market value for the developer (i.e. their level of subsidy is 30%-40%). In the context of the actual CIL collected from developments there would need to be a significant reduction in rates for it to have a meaningful impact on affordable housing delivery levels. This obviously ultimately would reduce average contributions towards infrastructure received. This is a sensitive issue with existing communities who want to be sure that proposed development will not undermine existing access to facilities.

Conclusion

- 3.16 There has been noticeable progress in relation to the majority of recommendations made by the Task Group and Scrutiny. Moving forward there should continue to be improvements, particularly with the introduction of a full complement of staff through the restructure of Planning being implemented. This will lead to a much more proactive approach by the S106/CIL team and Planning Policy. The issue of the appetite for CIL review is something that needs further investigation with Cabinet as part of the Local Plan adoption process.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 This report is primarily for information and comment by Scrutiny and as such there are no specific financial implications arising.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None specifically from this report.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new public sector equality duty under section 149. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council must, in exercising its functions, have "due regard" to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.2 S106 obligation and CIL receipts are used to address the infrastructure requirements of new communities. These often address the requirements of those more dependent on public provision of such facilities in the absence of their ability to meet their needs through private purchase of such facilities. Typically groups with protected characteristics are more likely to be dependent on public facilities as they represent higher proportions of those within lower income groups. All Council projects are subject to Equalities Screening to identify the extent to which they address the needs of these groups.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None specifically related to this report.

Background Papers

[Scrutiny Task Group on Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) and Section 106](#)
Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 12 July 2016

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Appendix 1

S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Task Group Recommendations - Update August 2017

Recommendation	RAG	Commentary
South Kilburn		
1 The successes of the South Kilburn Project engagement strategies and consultation activities is used as a benchmark when considering how to manage developments across the borough.	Green	<p>The Councils Community Engagement strategy is currently being reviewed - led by Corporate Partnerships & Engagement.</p> <p>The Planning Statement of Community Involvement has been updated and is now adopted. This encourages developers of major planning applications to undertake early engagement with the community to explain their proposed development and seek feedback before an application is submitted to the Council.</p> <p>Whilst the work at South Kilburn has been good, much of the engagement is undertaken by consultants who are paid for out of the development value generated through the regeneration of the area. Whilst officers do try to engage as much as possible, similar levels of funding are not always available in other parts of the Council.</p>
Policy		
2 There is no clear leadership or responsibility on who is in charge on CIL and S106 and the task group recommend that a named officer assumes direct responsibility, accountability and operates in a more transparent way.	Amber	An officer was appointed (July 2016) to oversee CIL Spend. A restructure of the Planning Department is being implemented which includes 2 additional CIL/S106 officers. The first advertisement of the posts did not generate anybody to shortlist and the posts remain vacant. A review of the job description is underway and a re-advertisement will follow. In the meantime, responsibility for CIL and S106 sits with the Head of Planning and Team Leader Policy and Projects
3 A public register is created (taken from the bi annual report and statement) detailing the infrastructure projects that are being funded directly through CIL receipts.	Amber	The register is available in the annual CIL report published on the Brent website although no Strategic CIL funds have been allocated to date. An update of neighbourhood CIL projects given funding will occur once the allocation process for this round of spend has been completed.
4 The council review its affordable housing policy and the relationship between s106 and CIL, once the Mayor of London announces its housing policy. As part of the review, a forensic independent analysis should be commissioned and reported back in a joint session to the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on how the council is meeting its affordable housing targets in light of the introduction of CIL and the Mayor of London targets for social housing.	Amber	<p>CIL cannot be used for affordable housing, however the Housing Strategy - which includes agreeing an approach to affordable housing provision in Brent - is being reviewed. This is being led by Housing Policy and Strategy. The emerging Local Plan will contain a planning policy on affordable housing provision.</p> <p>A review of the impact of CIL on affordable housing has not been commenced and is not currently within the work programme. Any such review would be dependent against recruitment to vacant posts in Planning Policy and wider consideration against the work programme of Planning Policy/Regeneration.</p>
5 The council ensures that there is better understanding of planning performance in dealing with planning applications – both planning and legal team. This should be done by producing easy to understand guidance via the councils website.	Green	There is a Planning Obligations SPD available on the Brent website. Planning performance is monitored and reported as part of the quarterly, corporate performance indicators. There is monitoring of the performance in relation to S106 obligations and regular meetings to review a list of progress on S106s. Additional training has been progressed within the legal department to ensure greater capacity and resilience to deal with planning work and potential loss of staff. Additional capacity is also provided by external legal resource when appropriate.

S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Task Group Recommendations - Update August 2017


Recommendation	RAG	Commentary
<p>6 The council carry out a review of delegated powers given to officers for spending limits and prioritisation of CIL/ S106 receipts for projects. All variations to CIL and S106 agreements be published quarterly and an agenda item at planning committee policy meetings.</p>	Green	<p>Completed for Neighbourhood CIL - See Cabinet report February 2017. Completed for S106 - See Cabinet Report June 2017. Strategic CIL - still in progress, however this process will be managed via the Capital Programme Annual reports are produced covering both CIL and S106 All variations are discussed with the Chair of the Planning Committee, major variations are discussed with the whole Committee. Such variations are rare and becoming even more so since CIL has replaced S106 for funding infrastructure spend.</p>
<p>7 The planning department conduct an annual review of S106 agreements and that where developers have not complied with the agreement action plans are included with that report. The task group recommend that that report is considered annually at a planning committee policy meeting and is available for scrutiny.</p>	Amber	<p>A review of financial obligations has been completed - See June 2017 Cabinet Report When the new appointments to the Policy team to work on CIL/S106 are in place a more proactive approach to non financial obligations can be taken. As set out in response to Issue 2, this is reliant on successful recruitment to posts which has proven to be more problematic than was anticipated.</p>
Engagement		
<p>8 The council invite the voluntary sector to submit proposals demonstrating the value they can add to supporting the expansion of Neighbourhood Forums. The council's expectation of the voluntary sector to include setting up viable community action groups, accessing available government funds, organising up to standard training.</p>	Amber	<p>The Council has resolved not to implement Community Action Groups and to continue with the Brent Connects model. The Statement of Community Involvement adopted July 2017 sets out how the Council supports potential and existing Neighbourhood Forums. Planning does not currently have the resources to be pro-active to the level anticipated by the Scrutiny recommendations.</p>
<p>9 The current engagement and consultation process with residents is inadequate and it is recommended that where CIL receipts are to be spent, at least 25% of resident respond, the demographic make-up should be reflective of the population and the location concerned.</p>	Green	<p>A new process to consult on and approve Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) spend was approved by Cabinet in February 2017. A six-week consultation to identify strategic funding priorities for each of the five CIL Neighbourhoods took place in Spring 2017, seeking suggestions for community led projects. 675 responses were received. First round of NCIL projects proposals will close on 30 July 2017, and the second round in December 2017. The level of response anticipated by the Scutiny recommendation is unlikely to be achieved; as a comparison the turn out in the by-election for the Kensal Green ward in 2015 was 20%.</p>
<p>10 There is wider consultation with residents groups, faith groups, the business sector, residents associations and elected members before the Community Action Groups go live. The Community Action Groups have clear objectives linked to delivery of Community Development Plan objectives.</p>	Not Applicable	<p>Community Action Groups are no longer being taken forward by the Council.</p>
<p>11 Elected ward members are involved in the decision making process for developments within their wards. Elected members should also be informed any planning applications in their wards with the view of engaging concerned residents and neighbourhood forums.</p>	Green	<p>A weekly email is sent to Members listing all planning applications received that week in their wards. Any comments made by a councillor on a planning application are recorded, and form part of the officer assessment and report.</p>

S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Task Group Recommendations - Update August 2017

Recommendation	RAG	Commentary
12 Provide neighbourhood forum training and support in whichever capacity is possible, in order for residents to create independent and sustainable Neighbourhood forums.	Green	This support is provided by Planning Policy and Projects when requested, however resource is currently limited and the priority is on progressing the Local Plan, which in itself involves engaging with existing Neighbourhood Forums and other resident/community groups. Support is currently being provided to the emerging Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan, but a more pro-active approach is currently not possible given scarce resources and the priority of the Local Plan.
13 Support at the highest strategic level a Brent Developers Forum consisting of elected members and active developers in the borough which meets quarterly to review existing development projects and engages in forward planning. The task group recommend that a subcommittee of the developer's forum works with Community Action Groups to deliver added value to CIL projects.	Amber	Community Action Groups are no longer being taken forward, however the Registered Providers Forum is being reviewed. It is intended to establish a developer forum by the end of 2017. Developers are also being engaged with on the call for sites and on the emerging local plan. High level strategic meetings are regularly held with Quintain and St George's (Northfields site) to review progress.
14 Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping support is provided for voluntary sector organisations and neighbourhood forums, in order for these groups to access site previously and currently being developed.	Completed	This is provided when requested
15 Up-to-date information is provided about S106 /CIL that it is easily accessible and shared online and regularly email to members, neighbourhood forums and voluntary sector.	Green	The Brent website has been updated to provide up to date information about CIL www.brent.gov.uk/cil This includes the CIL annual report Each S106 agreement is also available online, and there is an annual S106 Cabinet report (Latest report June 2017)
Funding		
16 A bi –yearly report and financial statement is provided, outlining CIL receipts every six months showing the income and expenditure on specific projects funded through CIL. receipts should be provided to the Cabinet. An annual Report summarising CIL receipt income and expenditure should be published and presented to the Full Council annually together with a draft forward plan of strategic projects to be funded over the next year.	Amber	The CIL regulations require an annual report showing income and expenditure to be produced and published. This is available on the Brent website www.brent.gov.uk/cil NCIL will be updated once shortlisting for Round 1 projects is completed (Summer 2017) A forward plan of strategic infrastructure projects will be presented via the Capital Programme
17 Neighbourhood CIL receipts are accounted for and a reporting and expenditure mechanism is established between the Council and designated Neighbourhood Planning Forums.	Green	An annual report is produced and published on the Brent website www.brent.gov.uk/cil The Brent website will be updated once shortlisting for Round 1 projects is completed (Summer 2017)
18 A more flexible allocation of CIL receipts beyond schemes that are prioritised through the Regeneration Benefits Assessment Tool (RBAT). The task group recommend that the Council review the Regeneration Benefits Assessment Tool (RBAT) after it has been operating for three years.	Amber	All strategic infrastructure projects will be agreed and funded via the Capital Programme. The prioritisation mechanism for allocation of funds has yet to be confirmed.
19 Consideration is given for borough CIL receipts use in the wider local communities (in both areas with and without Neighbourhood Planning Forums).	Completed	Neighbourhood CIL Receipts are allocated across five broad 'CIL Neighbourhoods' (15% of CIL receipts) and to any Neighbourhood Forum with an adopted plan (25% of CIL receipts). Sudbury Town Residents Association is currently the only Neighbourhood Forum with an adopted plan
Future planning		

S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Task Group Recommendations - Update August 2017

Recommendation	RAG	Commentary
20 A review of its CIL viability assessment test is commissioned to see if all the CIL receipts rates are viable and that it is not deterring the council's policy objectives in achieving its affordable housing targets.	Red	There will always only be a limited amount of development value that can be captured for 'developer contributions' (CIL, S106 obligations or affordable housing). National planning policy around viability means that affordable housing will always be the flexible element as CIL is fixed and cannot be negotiated with the landowner or Council, whilst affordable housing can. There would have to be an appreciable change in Brent's CIL levels to impact on affordable housing percentages achieved as the subsidy for rented properties required are so high, which raises the issue of how to pay for infrastructure requirements associated with development. A review of the impact on affordable housing has not been commissioned and is not currently within the work programme.
21 Maximise the expertise and resources, directly or in kind of the development community and facilitate in partnership with CVS Brent, dialogue between developers and community/residents and neighbourhoods forums to work on community issues.	Green	Joint working is being encouraged via Neighbourhood CIL funding proposals The Statement of Community Involvement also encourages developers to consult with the community early on, on major schemes, and report on their engagement at application stage. Major applications are now presented to the Planning Committee at pre-application stage for councillor input, including raising anticipated community concerns.
22 We recommend that S106 agreements are available to the Planning Committee as part of planning committee reports. We recommend the council review the viability of travel plans and ensure that detailed travel plans are included in all reports going to the planning committee. The council's planning officers should provide an in-depth and detailed briefing of the developments with regard to viability, CPZ and travel plans to the planning committee before the application is made.	Green	Head of Terms are set out in each planning committee report. A detailed travel plan to be provided with the submission of the planning application and the planning conditions/S106 require a revised travel plan to be submitted (for LPA approval) 3-6 months after occupation with a completed baseline survey. Continuous monitoring is then carried out following TfL's standardised approach and this is detailed in the condition/S106. Travel plans secured under planning conditions/ S106 are monitored and enforced by Westtrans, who delegate an officer to look after Brent's Travel Plan.
23 Council planning negotiators ensure that agreements are aligned with council priorities in order to take full advantage of future development/ regeneration opportunities; this includes priorities such as social value and employment and that Portfolio Holders have an oversight of this.	Green	S106 obligations are governed by a statutory tests; they have to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. Officers do pursue types of social value that the Committee seeks where they meet the statutory tests. The Head of Employment, Skills & Enterprise is reviewing the training planning obligations SPD, but the council is not able to insist that obligations are used for this purpose.
24 The task group recommend that at least half of the Planning Committee members serve two years terms at any given time and all committee members and relevant committee members involved in housing and regeneration receive relevant up to date training on planning development and viability policy and practice issues.	Amber	The membership of the Planning Committee is determined by the political groups at their AGMs. In the current municipal year all the substantive committee members have at least one year's previous experience of being on the committee. Training is compulsory at the start of the year, and further topics are provided (to date, this year the Committee members have had training on decision making and planning law, affordable housing and viability, the planning policy framework, and NCIL).
25 The task group recommend regular strategic meetings on future regeneration issues is held between officers, the cabinet and chair of planning committee.	Green	Officers and Cabinet meet regularly The new planning pre application process means Members are more informed about proposed developments

 Brent	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 5 September 2017 Report from Resources and Regeneration and Environment
Wards Affected: All	
Update on The Devolution of Business Rates Task Group Recommendations	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has asked for a report to update the committee on progress on the recommendations made by the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group in November 2016.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee note the update attached.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The detail is included in the attached paper showing an update for the recommendations.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

Devolution of Business Rates Task Group Report

Contact Officers

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Theme	Recommendation Detail	Action / planned activity	RAG
Future Business Rates strategies	<p>1. Brent Council must develop a strategy to attract and retain businesses that pay good wages to Brent residents. We must encourage further growth in our already successful businesses and attract incoming investment into the borough which will benefit from and harness a skilled multicultural workforce. The strategy should be a central function within the council, embedded in the council's income generation and civic enterprise strategies going forward as Brent will rely on this income to fund services to residents and business development for decades to come.</p>	<p>Brent is approaching inward investment and attraction of businesses in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with the West London Alliance boroughs to commission work to promote the West London sub-region nationally and internally to prospective investors and businesses. Seeking to maximise value of the 'West London' scale and brand. - Brent Business Board proposed and is now overseeing the commissioning of 'place marketing' activities, to promote areas of Brent to improve perceptions of the borough and highlight its key assets. The audience will primarily be prospective businesses, investors and visitors to the borough. It aims to highlight Brent as a place to live, work and invest. - A council officer is beginning work to attract businesses to Brent to vacant workspace. This will be targeted at 	<p>AMBER</p> <p>Brent is well positioned to market itself the region, nationally and internationally. This is being taken forward in partnership with other boroughs to create scale, and locally to involve the business community. The activity is at early stages of development.</p>

		higher skilled growth sectors, such as creative, digital and tech.	
	<p>2. Brent Council must be innovative, designing schemes like Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts, and must also build on current policies such as the London Living Wage business rate reduction programme. The council should explore how existing powers such as, varying the business rate could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable Town centre development e.g. Business Improvement Districts in Willesden High Road, Ealing Road and Chamberlayne Road • Offer incentives to businesses to provide supported employment opportunities and increase public convenience provision • Encourage businesses to share knowledge and skills such as improving local supply chains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council established the Brent Business Board in late 2016 to bring together key business representatives, with the council, Higher Education and Further Education, to develop and inform strategies to support economic growth in Brent. For example, they will be consulted on the borough's Growth Strategy and Local Plan. - X2 Town Centre Managers have been recruited, with a third being recruited in September/ October. Business Improvement Districts are now being considered for the Wembley and Ealing Road area, and will be in due course for other parts of Brent (e.g. Willesden and Harlesden). - X3 Meet the Buyer events are being hosted in 2017/ 18, to enable Business to Business (B2B) activity, bringing large and small contractors together in some of Brent's most active sectors (e.g. construction and food manufacturing). They will be 	<p>AMBER</p> <p>Good progress has been made but activities are in early stages of delivery.</p> <p>The Business Board, Town Centre Management, Meet the Buyer and employment programmes are new to the borough, launching in 2016 or 2017.</p>

		<p>encouraged to utilise the Brent Contracts portal (also enables access to wider major infrastructure projects as part of the Compete 4 platform). Business coaching will be available to assist SMEs to engage with the events and portal, and to help them in how they present bids for work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported employment programmes are being run at no cost to employers, although not with additional financial incentives. This includes apprenticeship support from Brent Works, supported employment placements for residents with mental health issues via the Mental Health Trailblazer (delivered by Twinings Enterprise), and for residents with learning difficulties or disabilities (delivered by The Royal Mencap Society on behalf of Brent Works). 	
	<p>3. Brent Council will need to establish arrangements to ensure that decision making on whether to increase or decrease the business rate tax is evidence-based. This decision should be made in consideration</p>	<p>Brent, like all Councils, is not allowed to increase its business rates. However, we are allowed to reduce business rates payable via discretionary discount schemes subject to certain terms and conditions, for example the London</p>	GREEN

		with the wider strategy and will require debate in Cabinet and at Full Council.	Living Wage discount and Revaluation support. Before any scheme is introduced a full appraisal will be carried out and then approved by Cabinet. There are also a number of reliefs that are mandatory and determined by the Government. Whether Councils will be given any flexibility to vary these under the proposed business rates retention scheme is still unknown.	
Skills and Enterprise	4.	Brent Council must support its businesses throughout the borough with the cultural shift that will be needed to implement this change. The council should have a role in supporting the businesses in that shift by encouraging the employment of local workers wherever possible and (developing skills and apprenticeships for Brent's workforce.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brent Works is offering support to employers at no cost, to encourage the creation of apprenticeships and recruitment of local residents, as well as promoting The London Living Wage (LLW) discretionary rate relief scheme. Outcome targets for 2017/18 are to support a minimum of 100 residents into employment and further 50 into apprenticeships. - The Growth Strategy, which is in development, will consider skills to meet future labour market demand. This will be consulted on with the Business Board (including the United Colleges Group and University of Westminster). 	<p>AMBER</p> <p>Work is underway to develop skills in Brent fit for the current and future economic opportunities. The work is progressing well but at relatively early stages of implementation.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new Construction Employment and Skills Board has been live since early 2017, in partnership with Quintain and their lead construction contractors. Apprenticeship and local employment targets are agreed and now being delivered for developments associated with the new Wembley Park masterplan. It includes over 65 apprenticeships for Brent residents. 	
	<p>5. As a result of successfully growing the business rates base, Brent Council should be given greater powers for employment such as working more closely with Job Centre Plus so that the Council can ensure that skills and employment are aligned with the Council's wider economic growth objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposals were put forward in the 2016 Comprehensive Spending Review by the Greater London Authority and London Councils for the devolution of skills and employment funding. <p>Two decisions were made by government in the November 2016 Budget, including.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devolution of the Adult Education Budget to London from The Department for Education (current aim is for the 2019/20 academic year). The proposal from West London Boroughs is for the Economic 	<p>AMBER</p> <p>Commitments to devolving funding to London have already been made by government for key skills and employment programmes (although this doesn't include all investment by government in London,</p>

		<p>Prosperity Board to create a West London Skills Commissioning Board to oversee this for the 7 West London boroughs.</p> <p>2. Devolution of the Work Programme, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. A new 'Work and Health Programme' is now being commissioned by the West London Alliance to deliver a new service from April 2018 (Brent is involved in the evaluation of prospective service providers).</p>	which prevents full coordination).
	<p>6. Given the extremely low interest rates at present, Brent Council should, individually and in partnership with neighbouring boroughs and the Mayor of London create businesses cases for borrowing money to improve infrastructure. Mixed housing and business units for example will support economic growth in the borough.</p>	<p>There has been a relatively large amount of growth in housing units within Brent in recent years, which the Councils has supported by working with key partners. In addition Brent is currently in negotiations with other London Boroughs, the Mayor of London and the Government in a pan-London business rates pilot pool for 2018/19. Under the current proposals, this will create an investment fund that will be used to promote economic growth across all of London, which will include improving</p>	GREEN

		infrastructure. Proposals are at a relatively early stage and further updates will be provided to scrutiny when the position becomes clearer.	
Preparation for 100% Devolution of Business Rates	<p>To reduce the possibility of any negative impacts of business rates devolution on Brent, the council should be making preparations to ensure that we have a healthy local economy and that we are in the best position to implement the change with minimal disruption to services.</p> <p>7. Brent Council must do more to show that the borough is open for business. All of the borough has a responsibility to do this, so officers, Councillors and partners must work together to look at what is unique to the borough such as, Wembley Stadium and the fact that Brent is one of the most diverse places in the UK and actively promote these to attract new business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brent Business Board 'place marketing' campaign (being commissioned to specialist agency). To align with local developer activity and the Love Where You Live and Love Where you Work campaigns. - West London Alliance inward investment work, promoting the West London boroughs to investors and businesses (being commissioned to an specialist agency). - Additional activities being provided, such as 'Meet the Buyer' events and business support. - Park Royal Business Group and the council running a 'Meet the 	<p>AMBER</p> <p>A significant amount of work is underway to enable partnership working with the Brent business community and to show that Brent is open for business.</p>

		<p>Borough' event in November to encourage partnership working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct targeting of businesses to attract to Brent's vacant workspace / new workspace opportunities. - The Digital Board has agreed investment in a 'Business Portal' online to bring together business information, advice and marketing in a coherent and accessible form, to help promote Brent as a destination for prospective businesses and to support existing businesses to succeed. 	
	<p>8. Brent Council must consider the impact the devolution of business rates will have on policy development and financial planning. It is vital senior officers and Councillors keep abreast of the latest developments and continue to feed into consultations ensuring that Brent's interests are heard. Regular bi-annual updates should be brought to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee. In addition given the significance of this policy change we would urge a Full Council debate on this matter.</p>	<p>The Government's policy intentions with regard to 100% retention of business rates remain unclear following the General Election. Consequently, any decisions or policy proposals cannot progress until a Local Government Finance Bill sets out the detailed proposals. However, all London Boroughs and the Mayor of London are currently negotiating a pilot pool for 2018/19. Regular updates have been provided to Cabinet with regards to how proposals have developed, more recently in the July Cabinet and also planned for</p>	GREEN

		the September Cabinet. Another report is planned for Cabinet in February 2018 following the outcome of negotiations with other London Boroughs, the Mayor of London and the Government. Scrutiny have been invited to review and comment on the current proposals ahead of these key meetings.	
Growth in income – Working in Partnership	<p>To ensure we make the most of the opportunities that devolution of business rates can provide to grow income, the task group proposes working in partnership where possible with London and sub-regional councils.</p> <p>9. Brent Council must build on the West London Alliance and the work of the Economic Prosperity Board, as sub-regional alliances' with neighbouring boroughs of similar economic profile will be essential in developing a business strategy. The work of these boards should be expanded with input from backbenchers, and regular reporting back to Scrutiny Committee and Full Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Leader of Brent council is currently chair of the West London Economic Prosperity Board. In order to ensure that the full membership of the Council is able to engage with the work being undertaken, the Director of the West London Alliance was invited to give a presentation to Full Council in November 2016, this was followed by questions from elected members. <p>The presentation outlined the collaborative work being undertaken in partnership with neighbouring boroughs across West London to</p>	<p>GREEN</p> <p>Brent is at the table to influence local major developments and is submitting proposals for additional capital infrastructure investment to unlock housing and economic growth in the borough.</p>

		<p>deliver the West London Vision for Growth and participating boroughs aspirations for greater economic prosperity across the region. Members recognised the central role played by the West London Alliance in improving the collaborative approach of those boroughs represented in addressing the key challenges identified alongside the opportunities presented to share best practice and improve ways of working, which the Economic Prosperity Board continues to lead on.</p> <p>- Meetings of the West London Economic Prosperity Board are open for the public and other interested parties to attend (including elected members from any participating borough) and ask questions/make representations.”</p>	
	<p>10. Brent Council must continue to work with the Mayor of London to lobby for opportunities for Brent that may emerge</p>	<p>- Brent continues to work proactively to maximise benefits from the ‘game changing’ schemes in the area. Brent’s Leader of the Council sits on</p>	GREEN

	from Mayoral initiatives such as Old Oak Common.	<p>the Old Oak Common and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) Board and officers are contributing to the Local Plan and encouraging synergy to ensure benefits for Park Royal, Harlesden Town Centre and the prospective Willesden Junction development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brent is also applying for funding to unlock major capital infrastructure schemes, to build housing, improve transport infrastructure, and public realm in the borough. Brent has been successful in securing funding for infrastructure from government and the GLA, including the High Street Fund, Local Implementation Plan (transport and public realm) and Regeneration Fund. Proposals are being considered for upcoming rounds of capital funding from government and GLA. 	
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Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Devolution of Business Rates Task Group Report

November 2016

Cllr Joel Davidson (Chair)
Cllr Tom Miller
Cllr Bernard Collier
Cllr John Duffy
Cllr Neil Nerva
Cllr Helen Carr
Cllr Michael Maurice

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1. THE CHAIR'S FOREWORD

As a Brent Councillor, I represent many hard-working local businesses in the borough. I have seen at first hand the virtuous circle that exists between good quality local shops and commerce, good housing, and a flourishing local economy.



The business rates system plays a crucial role in sustaining a thriving local economy. The Government's recent announcement that it will be devolving business rates to Local Authorities marks a radical change to the system. By the end of this Parliament, Councils will be allowed to retain 100 per cent of business rate revenue, changing the way in which local government is funded for decades to come.

Brent Council needs to be prepared for this change to ensure that opportunities for local growth are optimised. This task group was established to bring local representatives from different political parties and with a range of knowledge and expertise together to examine the impact of this policy change and develop a framework to help the Council prepare.

As a Chartered Accountant and audit committee member, I have a keen interest in supporting local business activity as a means of boosting local economic growth to help overcome our budgetary challenges. It was an honour to be asked by Cllr Kelcher to chair this very important task group.

The Business Rates devolution policy will allow Local Authorities to take full responsibility for the appropriation and collection of business rates within their borough. Councils can now seize this opportunity to develop a proactive and localised strategy to attract and retain a diverse mix of business activity. This will in turn deliver a sustainable local tax base to fund good quality public services. There will undoubtedly be challenges in the implementation of the policy in London boroughs such as Brent which have high service needs, as the Revenue Support Grant is phased out and replaced by borough-specific business rates funding. This means that it is particularly important for the council to look at options around local tax flexibility, and rewarding growth in business activity. This has been a focus of the group and we have provided some recommendations to address key challenges both during and post policy transition.

Over the past two months, I and my fellow Brent councillors have met with a broad array of stakeholders involved in the policy change to further understand how it will work and ensure that our recommendations are practical and deliverable. This has included working with Government Ministers, MPs, London Assembly Members, Councillors in other London Boroughs, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, London Councils, business organisations and regional economic development agencies.

Particular thanks go to Bob Blackman MP, Clive Betts MP, Andrew Boff AM, and Caroline Pidgeon AM for their time and the valuable counsel they provided.

I believe that the recommendations we have made should provide valuable guidance for the Council however, we firmly believe that this policy is of major significance, and that the Council must regularly review and address policy developments in relation to this as it became clear from our work on this group that there are still grey areas around how it will work in practice.

I pay tribute to the Task Group Members: Cllr Miller, Cllr Collier, Cllr Carr, Cllr Maurice, Cllr Duffy and Cllr Nerva. The insights and support of the team has produced some strong recommendations and I look forward to carrying on our work together in the future.

Finally, I must also place on record my appreciation for the thorough professionalism of Kisi Smith-Charlemagne, ably assisted by Jon Cartwright, who has been integral in compiling the report.

The task group is united in its desire to create the right environment for a prosperous economic future for Brent. Our report sets out a cross-party approach to embrace this opportunity to grow business activity and make the most from the new changes to the rate system. Our recommendations should help the council ensure a bright future for residents and businesses across the borough.

**Cllr Joel Davidson, Brondesbury Park Ward
November 2016**

2. TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP



Cllr Helen Carr



Cllr Bernard Collier



Cllr John Duffy



Cllr Tom Miller



Cllr Michael Maurice



Cllr Neil Nerva

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 5th October 2015 the then chancellor George Osborne announced that local government as a whole would be able to keep 100 per cent of business rates by 2020. Using Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts, the Government has estimated that the additional business rates kept by councils could be as much as £13 billion in 2020/21. Brent set up this task group to explore the risk and opportunities that this change may generate.

The task group has made recommendations which will boost local growth, help attract businesses and create jobs in Brent.

This Government's aim is to phase out Revenue Support Grant and potentially some other specific grants, and transfer new responsibilities to local government at the same time. Up to now, councils haven't been able to keep the full amount of business rates collected in their area. There will continue to be a system of redistribution across the whole of local government to make sure that councils which have higher needs or have less capacity to raise business rates do not suffer. However, individual councils will be able to keep subsequent growth in their business rates income.

The reform will mean local government retaining all revenue from business rates for the first time since 1990. These new powers will come with new responsibilities, as well as the phasing out the main grant from Whitehall, to ensure the reforms are fiscally neutral. Local government will of course also need to contribute to fiscal consolidation over this Parliament, and the government is due to set out further details in the Spending Review.

Whilst the task group encountered strong support for the principle of the move to devolution of business rates, there remain uncertainties regarding implementation.

Brent and London regional government must have a significant and substantial role to drive economic development, local employment and skills training in Brent. We highlight other devolved powers that have worked well, and we are excited by the opportunities presented by devolution in England via the creation of city region deals. The task group therefore supports fully devolving powers to Brent in the areas of employment and skills training.

Up to now business rates has been seen as a national tax, with little connection to the local authority. Going forward, the relationship between the local authority, local business and the local community will be more transparent, more obvious, and more direct. The task group believes that the devolution of business rates can trigger a cultural change in the relationship between public authorities and local businesses.

The task group considers that the impact of these changes could be far reaching. It is vital therefore that the authority puts in place organisational arrangements that enable Brent to take advantage of the opportunities from the outset.

The task group has made eleven individual recommendations, spread across the four key questions outlined in its Terms of Reference. The recommendations have been grouped into one of five discovery themes which the task group believes should form the basis of Brent Council's future devolution and business rates growth policies.

1. Future Business Rates Strategies

In response to the Government's business rates policy proposal, the task group recommends the development of a robust business rates growth strategy, which considers the wider skills, enterprise and infrastructure needs of the borough.

2. Skills and Enterprise (what new responsibilities should be devolved)

To mitigate any financial risks the devolution of business rates may impose on Brent, our strategies should have a keen focus on skills and enterprise.

3. Preparation for 100% Devolution of Business Rates

To reduce the possibility of any negative impacts of business rates devolution on Brent, the council should be making preparations to ensure that we have a healthy local economy and that we are in the best position to implement the change with minimal disruption to services.

4. Working in partnership

To ensure we make the most of the opportunities that devolution of business rates can provide to grow income, the task group proposes working in partnership where possible with London and sub-regional councils.

5. General and Best Practice

To be a model for best practice by developing ground breaking strategies for the implementation of business rates devolution within local government.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Future Business Rates Strategies

In response to the Government's business rates policy proposal, the task group recommends the development of a robust business rates growth strategy, which considers the wider skills, enterprise and infrastructure needs of the borough.

1. Brent Council must develop a strategy to attract and retain businesses that pay good wages to Brent residents. We must encourage further growth in our already successful businesses and attract incoming investment into the borough which will benefit from and harness a skilled multicultural workforce. The strategy should be a central function within the council, embedded in the council's income generation and civic enterprise strategies going forward as Brent will rely on this income to fund services to residents and business development for decades to come.
2. Brent Council must be innovative, designing schemes like Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts, and must also build on current policies such as the London Living Wage business rate reduction programme. The council should explore how existing powers such as, varying the business rate could:
 - Enable Town centre development e.g. Business Improvement Districts in Willesden High Road, Ealing Road and Chamberlayne Road
 - Offer incentives to businesses to provide supported employment opportunities and increase public convenience provision
 - Encourage businesses to share knowledge and skills such as improving local supply chains.
3. Brent Council will need to establish arrangements to ensure that decision making on whether to increase or decrease the business rate tax is evidence-based. This decision should be made in consideration with the wider strategy and will require debate in Cabinet and at Full Council.

Skills and Enterprise

To mitigate any financial risks the devolution of business rates may impose on Brent, our strategies should have a keen focus on skills and enterprise.

4. Brent Council must support its businesses throughout the borough with the cultural shift that will be needed to implement this change. The council should have a role in supporting the businesses in that shift by encouraging the employment of local workers wherever possible and (developing skills and apprenticeships for Brent's workforce.)
5. As a result of successfully growing the business rates base, Brent Council should be given greater powers for employment such as working more closely with Job Centre Plus so that the Council can ensure that skills and employment are aligned with the Council's wider economic growth objectives.

6. Given the extremely low interest rates at present, Brent Council should, individually and in partnership with neighbouring boroughs and the Mayor of London create businesses cases for borrowing money to improve infrastructure. Mixed housing and business units for example will support economic growth in the borough.

Preparation for 100% Devolution of Business Rates

To reduce the possibility of any negative impacts of business rates devolution on Brent, the council should be making preparations to ensure that we have a healthy local economy and that we are in the best position to implement the change with minimal disruption to services.

7. Brent Council must do more to show that the borough is open for business. All of the borough has a responsibility to do this, so officers, Councillors and partners must work together to look at what is unique to the borough such as, Wembley Stadium and the fact that Brent is one of the most diverse places in the UK and actively promote these to attract new business.
8. Brent Council must consider the impact the devolution of business rates will have on policy development and financial planning. It is vital senior officers and Councillors keep abreast of the latest developments and continue to feed into consultations ensuring that Brent's interests are heard. Regular bi-annual updates should be brought to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee. In addition given the significance of this policy change we would urge a Full Council debate on this matter.

Working in partnership

To ensure we make the most of the opportunities that devolution of business rates can provide to grow income, the task group proposes working in partnership where possible with London and sub-regional councils.

9. Brent Council must build on the West London Alliance and the work of the Economic Prosperity Board, as sub-regional alliances' with neighbouring boroughs of similar economic profile will be essential in developing a business strategy. The work of these boards should be expanded with input from backbenchers, and regular reporting back to Scrutiny Committee and Full Council.
10. Brent Council must continue to work with the Mayor of London to lobby for opportunities for Brent that may emerge from Mayoral initiatives such as Old Oak Common.

General and Best Practice

To be a model for best practice by developing ground breaking strategies for the implementation of business rates devolution within local government.

11. The extensive meetings with all relevant stakeholders held by this task group has confirmed that the policy remains nebulous in many aspects, so work on the Devolution of Business Rates will still require regular reviewing, with regular updates

to Scrutiny Committee and Full Council. Brent Council must remain closely connected to the work the of the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) and Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, the Parliamentary Select Committee and the London Assembly/Mayor of London's office.

5. INTRODUCTION – SCOPE OF THE TASK GROUP

Background

Devolution of Business Rates (DBR)

On the 5th October 2015 the then Chancellor George Osborne set out plans for local government to gain new powers and retain local taxes. The Chancellor set out major plans to devolve new powers from Whitehall to local areas to promote growth and prosperity. The Chancellor announced that local government as a whole would be able to keep 100 per cent of business rates by 2020.

Using Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts, the Government has estimated that the additional business rates kept by councils could be as much as £13 billion in 2020/21. The Government feels that changing the current system of financing local government will boost local growth, help attract business and create jobs.

The Government's aim is to phase out revenue support grant and potentially some other specific grants, and transfer new responsibilities to local government at the same time as it receives additional income from business rates. This is so that the reform does not result in previously unplanned spending by the public sector as a whole and local government does not benefit financially at the point of transfer. An example is the consideration of whether other grants, such as the public health grant, should in the future be funded from retained business rates.

As in previous years, individual councils would not keep the full amount of business rates collected in their area. There will continue to be a system of redistribution across the whole of local government to make sure that councils which have higher needs or have less capacity to raise business rates do not suffer. However, individual councils will now be able to keep subsequent growth in their business rates income. Whilst we don't currently know exactly what the system will look like, the LGA is working with government and engaging with local authorities to consider how this could work.

Those areas which choose to have city-wide elected mayors will get even greater flexibilities. They will also be given the power to increase rates for spending on local infrastructure projects, as long as they win the support of local business.

The reform will mean local government retaining all revenue from business rates for the first time since 1990. These new powers will come with new responsibilities, as well as the phasing out the main grant from Whitehall, to ensure the reforms are fiscally neutral. Local government will of course also need to contribute to fiscal consolidation over this Parliament, and the government is due to set out further details in the Spending Review.

Impact on local government finances

Local government is currently financed by a combination of centrally-administered funding (Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and locally-administered charges and taxes.

Since 1990, local business rates have been set by central government at a uniform national rate. Rates are collected locally, but then transferred to central government to be distributed back to local areas in the form of grant. Since 2013, local councils have been enabled to retain 50 per cent of the proceeds of rates, to ensure that when local areas take steps to boost business growth in their area, they should see the benefit.

The reforms go much further, moving to 100 per cent retention of the full stock of business rates by 2020. It will mean that all income from local taxes will go on funding local services.

Local authorities will be able to cut business rates as much as they like. Directly elected mayors – once they have support of local business leaders through a majority vote of the business members of the Local Enterprise Partnership – will be able to add a premium to business rates to pay for new infrastructure. This power will be limited by a cap, likely to be set at 2p on the rate.

Impact on current systems

Currently business rates are paid by occupiers and owners of commercial and industrial property to the local authority, but at a rate set by central Government. The Government sets the rate in order to prevent wide disparities in charges stemming from widely differing rate bases between local authorities.

The multiplier - also known as the Uniform Business Rate (UBR) - is then used by the local authority to calculate what percentage of the rateable value of a property has to be paid as business rates. The multiplier is set annually by the Government.

A small business rate relief scheme has been in operation in England since April 2005 and there are other reductions available, for example if the premises are empty.

The impact on the current system will be significant and the Government is expected to publish further details as to how the new devolved system will operate in broad terms following the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25 November. Negotiations will presumably then start in earnest with local government to develop the local and national frameworks for the system within the funding envelopes set in the CSR. The new system is likely to require primary legislation and the changes are unlikely to be introduced in full before 2018-19 at the earliest.

Questions

The review considered the following questions in five key areas:

Central Government Policy

- What is the current status? What has been proposed to date?
- What will the pilot schemes look like?
- How can the Council engage in the current work?

Financial Risk

- What is the biggest risk to the Council's planned finances?
- What safety net mechanisms are in place?
- Will we still want to be part of a Business Rates Pool?

Possible impact to Brent

- What will be the impact on current arrangements?
- Will Brent be better or worse off?
- How do we prepare for the devolution of business rates?

Growth in Business rate income

- How do we grow our business rates locally?
- How do we encourage local economic growth?
- How do we improve collection rates?

Aims

The aims of the review set out at the start of the investigation were as follows:

- There is transparency and understanding of the local and national policies and processes regarding the devolution of business rates.
- Clarify how that policy is going to be implemented in Brent and make recommendations to support the best possible implementation outcome for the council and its residents.
- Through the recommendations of the review the council is able to further stabilise its financial position and has clear strategic direction.
- There is a link between council expenditure and business growth.
- The council develops links for engaging with local businesses that generate discussion on how to grow our local business rates and economy.
- The council is in an informed position to make good financial choices.

6. METHODOLOGY

As part of this review the task group invited relevant partners to contribute through discussion groups, meetings and visits. Primarily, the task group started by collecting information about the proposed devolution of business rates policy changes. This included meetings with many Government officers and Members of Parliament.

The task group then met with Council officers to discuss the financial risks and how the policy as they understood it would impact Brent.

The task group decided to hold one themed discussion meetings which reflected a key area of the review (Growth in Business rate income) and met with the West London Business Consortium and Small Business Federation. Local business groups were invited to attend along with officers and partners. As part of the discussion group other local councils attended and added their knowledge which enriched the quality of the discussions held. Given the focus on identifying good practice elsewhere, the group consulted with the LB Ealing, LB Camden, LB Westminster, LB Harrow and LB Barnet.

Partners: Group 1

- Relevant Council Departments
- Brent Partners
- Local Residents Groups
- Local Business Groups

Partners: Group 2

- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- London Councils
- London Assembly
- Parliament Select Committee
- Best Practice Local Authorities

*A full list of participants of the task group's work can be found in section 10 of this report

7. POLICY CONTEXT

7.1. Brent

Local Context – Brent

There are currently, four (principal) sources of local government (revenue) finance, plus two others:

1. Revenue Support Grant
 - Based on central government assessment of need
 - In 2014/15 provided 30% of funding
 - Will be 10% by 2018/19 and falling to nil after 2020
2. Council Tax
 - Locally determined with significant restrictions
 - Six year freeze strongly encouraged by central government
 - Now can increase by 4% each year
 - Of this, half ring-fenced for adult social care
 - For planning purposes, 1% raises approximately £1m
 - Current technical financial model doesn't assume any increases
3. Business rates
 - Retain 30% of business rates paid in Brent
 - 20% paid to GLA and 50% paid to Treasury
 - Rate (multiplier) and exemptions set centrally
 - Amount raised capable of being influenced locally
4. Top up grant
 - Required to make any system fair (Westminster effect)
 - Amount set on transition to new system (2011/12)
 - Then inflated annually at CPI
5. Fees and charges
 - Discretion varies significantly
 - E.g. Parking, PCNs set regionally, P&D set locally
 - Usually some restrictions on ability to create surpluses
 - Can be for services to residents or businesses
 - Traditional (swimming pool); creative (filming)
 - Can link to policy goals; civic enterprise in more detail
6. Specific grants
 - Government makes specific grants to achieve policy goals
 - Nice to have, but can't choose what to spend on

Table 1 shows that in 2014/15 RSG still provided nearly 30% of our funding; more than council tax (26%) and more than business rates (24%).

Table 1

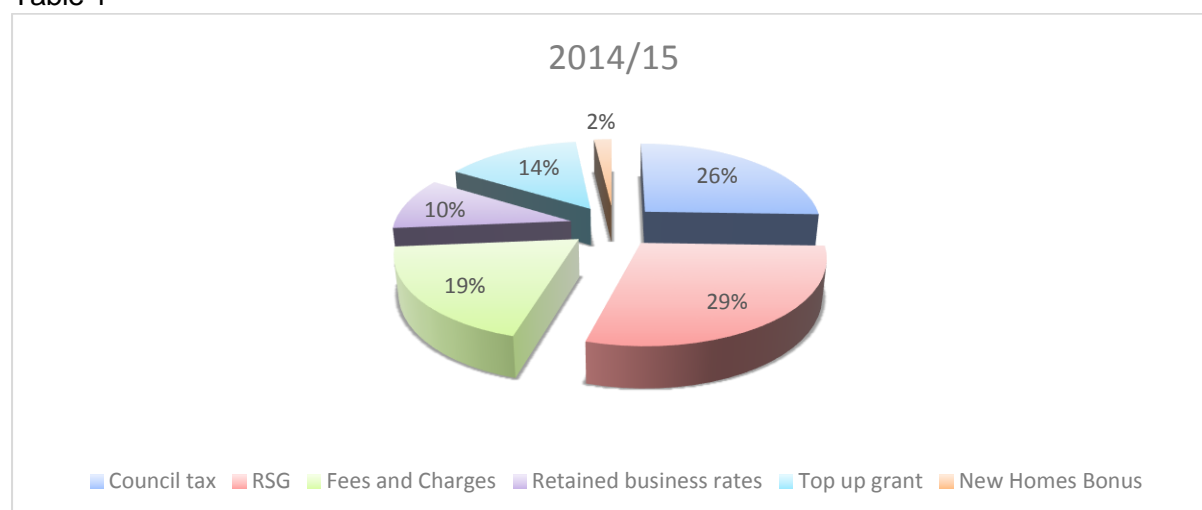
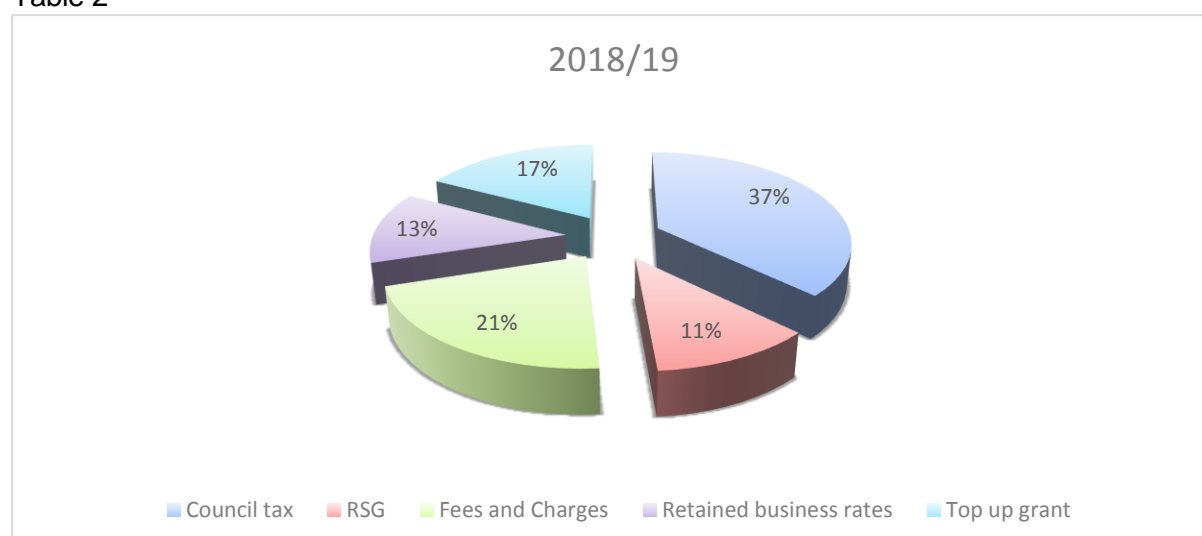


Table 2 shows that by 2018/19 RSG will barely provide 10% of our funding, less than half the amount we raise through fees and charges and a fraction of the amounts from local taxes.

Table 2



7.2. National

Business rates were introduced in 1990, along with the community charge or 'poll tax' (now Council Tax) as a replacement for the old system of domestic and non-domestic rates. The Valuation Office Agency, an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs, has a statutory duty to prepare local rating lists containing rateable values for all non-domestic properties in England and Wales every five years.

On 1 April 2013 a new system of business rates retention began in England. Before April 2013 all business rate income collected by councils formed a single, national pot, which was

then distributed by government in the form of formula grant. Through the Local Government Finance Act 2012, and regulations that followed, the Government gave local authorities the power to keep up to half of business rate growth in their area by splitting business rate revenue into the 'local share' and the 'central share'. The central share is redistributed to councils in the form of revenue support grant in the same way as formula grant. Local share tax base growth is retained within local government.

However, this was done in a way that was consistent with the Government's deficit reduction plans. The change gave financial incentives to councils to grow their local economies. At the same time, it has resulted in more risk and uncertainty. By far and away the primary challenge was the level of financial risk that councils face due to appeals and business rate avoidance.

Councils keep up to 50 per cent of growth in their business rate receipts arising from tax base growth, which may arise from new or expanding businesses. Local authorities which were deemed to have a 'disproportionate potential to grow' by the Government (for example most councils in Central London) pay a growth levy of up to half of this retained growth. This is then used to partly fund the 'safety net' system to protect those councils which see their year-on-year business rate income fall by more than 7.5 per cent.

The introduction of business rate retention meant that from April 2013 a significant part of a council's budget became dependent on the amount of business rates collected from its area.

The business rate retention reform created a need for councils to receive new, previously uncollected, information to enable sufficiently robust financial planning, such as data about upcoming appeal decisions, the value of business rate income at stake and the impact of business rate avoidance. Most of this information had previously been collected by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and provided to central government, as councils had no direct stake in business rate collection.

Business rate retention resulted in the need for a major cultural change at the VOA as its importance as information provider has increased. This transition is still ongoing. The VOA has been working hard to provide information, for instance on the appeals and proposals sent to billing authorities in autumn 2013. However, 61 per cent of all respondent councils are not satisfied with the level and quality of data provided by the VOA to help financial planning.

Overall, respondents tend to agree that the retention scheme created a strong incentive to grow the business rate tax base. More than two thirds agreed, and 58 per cent said that this was the single best outcome of the reform. In last year's survey, 29 per cent of respondents said the reform provided sufficient incentives.

The LGA has been working with the councils and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to ensure that local government is vocal in shaping the way that this new system will work (appendix 1). A technical steering group and a number of sub-groups have been established to provide information and expert advice to support the LGA and DCLG in advising Ministers on the setting up and implementation of this new system. The Steering Group will meet regularly and papers are available on the LGA website.

8. KEY FINDINGS

8.1 Central Government Policy

The task group accessed several levels of central government to gather its evidence on the devolution of business rates policy change. The policy was announced in October 2015, but the details have yet to be agreed and consultations are still being conducted.

One of the task group's main objectives for this piece of work was to gain a much better understanding of the devolution of business rates policy. Essentially the task group understands that this is a major fiscal change to the way that local government is financed and as such started gathering evidence from central government ministers who had agreed the policy. The task group found that total business rate yields are exceeding the amount given to local authorities as grants. The decision was made that profits should go to local authorities, however some local authorities with larger business rates bases would receive huge gains, while those local authorities with lower business rate yields would suffer huge losses.

This policy could pose a significant risk to local authorities across the country. Therefore, financial protection would need to be in place for losses of income. It was also agreed that this policy offers significant opportunities for local governments to have more control over finance and shaping local economies. The current timetable for implementation will remain, it is suggested that the policy may be phased in.

In the 2016 Budget the Government committed to piloting approaches to 100% Business Rates Retention in London, Manchester and Liverpool from as early as 1st April 2017. Pilot negotiations are now in the final stages. Pilots are bespoke to reflect the diverse needs of different areas and therefore contain different elements. In London the GLA will take over responsibility for funding Transport for London (TfL) Investment grant from Department for Transport (DfT). In return, the GLA will be allowed to keep a commensurately higher percentage of the business rates income collected in London. The GLA will also fund its share of RSG through business rates from 2017 (appendix 2).

In response to the policy, it was felt that the following areas highlighted raised more questions and needed further analysis in the context of local government actions.

- London region - should we be looking at this from a London regional perspective via London Councils?
- Financial risk - being able to predict appeals, how might this work?
- Valuation - who will administer this? Will there be a new department?
- Additional responsibilities – what might these be and will they be related to economic growth?
- Growth in business rate income - How do we want to be seen as a borough? How should LA's act to incentivise business growth?
- Employment – local employment, what kind of business do we want to attract as employers? What skills will be required?
- Council policies – how do we ensure that our business rates policies are aligned with employment and Income generation policies?
- Political accountability - the leadership of the council should take accountability for growing business rate tax base.

London Councils has recently finalised its consultation responses from the London boroughs which will feed into the DCLG/LGA consultation (appendix 3). There are two parts: the direct consultation on the business rates proposals, how the tax should work, what it should fund and what the responsibilities transferred should be. Separate to the consultation is a call for evidence on the needs assessment process, which also needs to be reviewed in order to underpin the way the finance system will work in the future.

It is possible that the end result could continue to be a relationship between individual councils and the national system. London boroughs and the Mayor's Office have stated that they are very interested in managing that as a collective system for London. London Councils is proposing two options 'what they would like to see for London' and 'how a national system should work'.

London Councils argument is that London is a large, complicated metropolis. It is argued London is a massive contributor in international terms because of the amount raised for its own use and controls, therefore there should be substantial devolution in order to raise taxes to pay for services in the capital. If this were a role of central government, accountability would improve, providing incentives for people to manage those taxes more effectively than the government does for London.

Financial Risk - Appeals

If a business disagrees with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) assessment of a property's rateable value, they can propose changes to the VOA. They can also appeal the valuation which will be considered by an independent Valuation Tribunal. There are currently 300,000 outstanding appeals.

The number and scale of appeals are a concern for many councils. Currently, many local authorities pool their resources to tackle with appeals so that no Local Authority is disadvantaged disproportionately.

The uncertainty created by appeals means that instead of spending money on local services, they have to withhold a portion to ensure they can pay half of the costs of successful challenges in the future or backdated appeals. The Government is implementing a new system for appeals from 2017 which will require business ratepayers to state their case at an earlier stage and they could be fined for incorrect or misleading information.

London Councils believe that if London is permitted to manage its own system, this could reduce the rates to London as a whole, with a view to increased rates in the future, such as Canary Wharf. London boroughs would work on a more collective basis and would need a quota based on deprivation and London priorities. The challenge is to balance such a structure.

Additional Responsibilities

The Government intends the reform of business rates to be 'cost neutral'. This means that the level of public spending after the reform should remain the same as planned before the reform through phasing out revenue support grant, other specific grants and the transferring of new responsibilities to match the remaining additional business rates.

The Government has stated that it wants to consult with the sector on what specific funding and responsibilities will be funded from the retention of business rates. So far, the only confirmed decisions are the phasing out of revenue support grant and the additional Transport for London Capital Grant. This leaves a significant sum yet to be decided upon.

What are these additional responsibilities that will come to local government as a result of 100 per cent devolution of business rates? Will these be linked to inflation? These questions are the current points of the negotiations to be confirmed. It is thought these additional responsibilities should be related to financial drivers and be broadly business related, such as:

- Skills
- Employment
- Infrastructural spending
- Transport

This is a tax and not a payment for services and local government should be careful not to overspend; the relationship between councils and businesses is critical. Accountability and responsibility needs to be obviously and clearly defined.

Before the transfer of additional responsibilities, the LGA/DCLG want to consider how existing services can be funded.

The draft response to the LGA/DCLG consultation contains the following emerging themes:

- 1) Simple is good, but not at the expense of what works best in terms of distribution formula.
- 2) Which new resources should transfer - expected £7-11billion by 2020. TfL grant of £1billion already agreed, £3.5billion public health expected already, new responsibilities should be services that support economic growth such as skills, infrastructure and transport, the very things that are in devolution deals.
- 3) There is strong agreement that the Attendance Allowance would not be welcome as it is not linked to business growth.

Political accountability

What are the definitions of success and failure? The task group were curious to know how this policy will be held to account. Could, would or should senior officers have their positions terminated and what are the legal implications etc? Could, would or should by elections be held if councilors are deemed to fail? It will be extremely difficult for some boroughs to grow their business rates base and central government may introduce additional measures to support these boroughs. A definition of fail might be if London boroughs are unable to grow their business rates and not meet targets.

Central government announced that all councils will have the flexibility to reduce the business rates multiplier in their area and combined authorities with directly elected mayors will also having the power to increase the multiplier by up to two pence in the pound. Such an increase must be agreed by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and if used, must be spent on infrastructure.

The task group firmly believes that there is still time to ensure the needs and aspirations of Brent council are incorporated into the final policy. Therefore, now is the time to ensure we have a firm vision for Brent's future, the tools required to achieve this vision, and sustainability measures. The council will need to be brave and ambitious regarding applying the multiplier and ensuring its application is fair and equitable. Flexibility around this area will be key. The task group feels central government should provide a toolkit for local government to use when considering whether to reduce or increase rates.

Council Policy

The task group wanted to understand what tools could be used at a local level to both enhance growth and reduce any negative impacts of the policy. What incentives and rewards would be available to local government. Since local government will be expected to take on new responsibilities, it is important to know what services that can be devolved will most benefit our residents. This issue is undecided because of the current status of the consultation. However, the tendency is for these details should be decided at a local level, with local governments' contributing significant to the consultation and models piloted.

The task group wondered if a 'race to the bottom' in terms of reducing rates might be an unintended consequence of the policy. However, historically few local authorities have used these types of powers when they have been available. Business rates remains a national tax and a stronger relationship between local governments and valuation office agency will help develop better insights.

Recommendations

Future Business Rates Strategies

In response to the Government's business rates policy proposal, the task group recommends the development of a robust business rates growth strategy, which considers the wider skills, enterprise and infrastructure needs of the borough.

1. Brent Council must develop a strategy to attract and retain businesses that pay good wages to Brent residents. We must encourage further growth in our already successful businesses and attract incoming investment into the borough which will benefit from and harness a skilled multicultural workforce. The strategy should be a central function within the council, embedded in the council's income generation and civic enterprise strategies going forward as Brent will rely on this income to fund services to residents and business development for decades to come.
2. Brent Council must be innovative, designing schemes like Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts, and must also build on current policies such as the London Living Wage business rate reduction programme. The council should explore how existing powers such as, varying the business rate could:
 - Enable Town centre development e.g. Business Improvement Districts in Willesden High Road, Ealing Road and Chamberlayne Road
 - Offer incentives to businesses to provide supported employment opportunities and increase public convenience provision
 - Encourage businesses to share knowledge and skills such as improving local supply chains.
3. Brent Council will need to establish arrangements to ensure that decision making on whether to increase or decrease the business rate tax is evidence-based. This decision should be made in consideration with the wider strategy and will require debate in Cabinet and at Full Council.

8.2 Financial Risk

The financial risk that the change in policy could pose to Brent is uncertain. There are some major concerns, such as appeals, the valuation office and new additional responsibilities as outlined in 8.1 of the group's findings. The task group found that the other major concern is what a formula might be. The balance between incentive and need is essential, if business rates grow overall across the country there will be more money for everyone. The LGA is leaning towards a partial reset every five years, reassessing the business rates base against the needs requirement. Real-time needs data could be used to update the formula.

The impact of the policy change may be softened if the full list of devolution powers (excluding the Attendance Allowance) (appendix 4) were made available to all areas of local government. Brent Council should be lobbying for more devolved powers from Central Government.

Local government have a good track record of managing risk, as well as predicting and pre-empting changes. Business rates will be used for example to fund childcare and, back to work schemes. There will be some challenges shifting funds from one area to another. However the real issue will be reducing and/or removing any additional bureaucracy created related to the use of business rates funds.

Distribution of grant/funding

When introducing the system of 50 per cent business rate retention, the government put in place a system that ensures councils with relatively higher needs (but with relatively lower income from business rates) receive a 'top-up'. Equally, a Council with a relative income deemed greater than relative need, pays a 'tariff' to government.

These top-ups and tariffs balance each other nationally and rise in line with inflation between revaluations. In 2016, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced a full review of needs and redistribution. This will be used as the starting point for the new system when it comes into force.

When the task group enquired about a due date, it was stated that this would depend on "the call for evidence", but will be decided by the end of the Parliament. DCLG/LGA are optimistic and ambitious for reforms and are therefore keen to ensure that this policy is implemented at an efficient pace.

Revaluation

Revaluation is to be implemented 2017. Central Government has said it will re-examine the approach to valuations (perhaps becoming more frequent). It is at this stage, the perception of changes will shift to be understood as a 'local' tax. The GLA/DCLG believe that business rates are 'taxes' not necessarily requiring a culture change, but that a stronger working role between Valuation Office Agency and local government is more desirable.

The task group believes there will be a cultural shift, at least to the majority of Brent businesses, and that it is vital for Local Authorities to support its local economies through this transition.

Social Care

For most local authorities, the increase in income from business rates will not meet the increased spend requirements of care - largely due to demographics and aging population. LAs will need another source of funding - hence the issue of grants reemerging. Current proposals require local authorities to fund social care through council tax and business rates. It is anticipated that the Better Care Fund will end in 2020 when business rates are retained.

Employment

It was the unanimous view of all those consulted that employment, skills and enterprise is the most effective way to grow our economy, thus increasing our business rate tax base and our income to fund services. As previously stated, more devolved employment powers would allow the council the opportunity to redesign the way employment is tackled and work directly with residents.

The task group asked “what do we want a local employment market to look like” and ‘what kind of business do we want to attract?’ These questions should be managed not just elected members and council officers, but residents would need to be engaged in this work. The task group feel that the council should consider:

- What do our residents/public want?
- What types of businesses will improve and develop the borough?
- What types of businesses will improve the quality of employment in the borough?

The task group welcomes any opportunities for Brent residents to have priority over local jobs. However, it is not possible for the council to impose any such clauses on employers in accordance with discrimination and equal opportunity employment law. We can, however, strive to provide Brent residents with the skills needed to be competitive and be recruited to these jobs, thus making living in the borough attractive. Brent needs to become a borough people choose to live and work in.

Strategy for Business Improvement and enterprise

The task group explored the strategies already employed by Business Improvement whilst there were examples of best practice, a joint strategic approach has not yet been achieved. The task group are keen for the council to utilize these successes, and carry out needs analyses. Business intelligence gathered on the regeneration of Willesden might act as a pilot to establish if and how income has increased. Research is required to flesh out what the positive impact of business improvement districts are. The council is considering utilising Town Centre Managers to support this work.

If we are to be ambitious in growing our business rates income, then the council requires the technical expertise and resources in our council departments to help us understand the business sector not just in Brent and the WLA, but across the world.

Recommendations

Skills and Enterprise

To mitigate any financial risks the devolution of business rates may impose on Brent, our strategies should have a keen focus on skills and enterprise.

4. Brent Council must support its businesses throughout the borough with the cultural shift that will be needed to implement this change. The council should have a role in supporting the businesses in that shift by encouraging the

employment of local workers wherever possible and (developing skills and apprenticeships for Brent's workforce.)

5. As a result of successfully growing the business rates base, Brent Council should be given greater powers for employment such as working more closely with Job Centre Plus so that the Council can ensure that skills and employment are aligned with the Council's wider economic growth objectives.
6. Given the extremely low interest rates at present, Brent Council should, individually and in partnership with neighbouring boroughs and the Mayor of London create businesses cases for borrowing money to improve infrastructure. Mixed housing and business units for example will support economic growth in the borough.

8.3 Possible impact to Brent

Predicting and pre-empting unintended and unwelcome outcomes is essential and we must prepare for a potential loss in income to fund services.

Brent is a borough rich in culture and history. Home to Wembley Stadium and Wembley Arena, Brent has healthy manufacturing trade and good transport links throughout the borough. The task group understand that responsibility to promote Brent as a place for business should be shared by elected representatives and council officials.

Brent is unique and we should be utilising these features and benefits to attract and retain business and skills in the borough. The task group believe that there are examples and case studies (Manchester) that the council should visit as a place to learn. Any additional responsibilities should be linked to improving employment and supporting business growth

There should be a focus on:

- A skilled workforce
- Housing
- Good transport links
- Uniqueness of Brent
- International trade

A priority is to ensure the council also has the appropriate skills and resources made available immediately to undertake this change. The task group is specifically concerned with the extra pressure the policy may place on Brent councils finance team, especially the current capacity of the business rates team.

Recommendations

Preparation for 100% Devolution of Business Rates

To reduce the possibility of any negative impacts of business rates devolution on Brent, the council should be making preparations to ensure that we have a healthy local economy and that we are in the best position to implement the change with minimal disruption to services.

7. Brent Council must do more to show that the borough is open for business. All of the borough has a responsibility to do this, so officers, Councillors and partners must work together to look at what is unique to the borough such as, Wembley Stadium and the fact that Brent is one of the most diverse places in the UK and actively promote these to attract new business.
8. Brent Council must consider the impact the devolution of business rates will have on policy development and financial planning. It is vital senior officers and Councillors keep abreast of the latest developments and continue to feed into consultations ensuring that Brent's interests are heard. Regular bi-annual updates should be brought to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee. In addition given the significance of this policy change we would urge a Full Council debate on this matter.

8.4 Growth in business rate income

The task group was most concerned with this area of its work since growth in the business rates income will be vital for funding future council services. As such, central government and representatives from the local and west London business sectors were part of the consultation process.

The task group was keen to consider what incentives and rewards would be available to local authorities who successfully grow their business rates income. Unfortunately, at present it looks unlikely that there will be any incentives. The task group was told that being able to provide additional services from its own income should be reward enough.

Growth in Business Rate Income

The first question the task group wanted to know, was how we want to be seen as a borough. Councillors and officers responded by referring to ambitions in the borough plan and its 2020 vision

Well-connected by public transport within one of the great world cities and home to one of the world's most iconic sporting stadiums, Brent is attracting new investment, new business, new visitors and new residents every year. This makes the borough an exciting, dynamic and vibrant place to live and work, and it brings both opportunities and challenges.

The task group asked; 'what kinds of business packages can we offer to incentivise?' 'How flexible should we be?' And ultimately, 'what attractive business rates can we offer?' 'However, in order for Brent to compete, the full package should include infrastructure, transport and Broadband fibre.

Further questions for consultation were:

- Can we offer systems where we can temporarily reduce the business rate?
- Will this be a reduction for all or certain types of businesses?
- If we are independent or in a pool with other boroughs, how might they respond if we decide to reduce rates and encourage business to Brent?

Some consideration should be given to the future of high streets. Given modern business is not dependent on location, with many businesses working from home – the questions will arise about whether these businesses be liable for business rates? We need to consider borough boundary areas and business areas shared with other boroughs such as Cricklewood and Kilburn. Discussions need to be initiated with neighboring boroughs. It is

clear that further investigation is required as to how we incorporate Park Royal and how we incorporate Old Oak and Park Royal Development Cooperation (OPDC) into our strategies and wider objectives for business development.

Regional Working

Senior Officers stated there will be a regional and sub regional economic need for a combined approach, sighting the West London Alliance (WLA) as body supporting such an approach. The agreement to work as part of the WLA Economic Prosperity Board was passed by Cabinet earlier this year.

The task group wanted to know the WLA priorities and objectives, officers stated the purpose of the WLA Board is to work together, but they are not a formal/legal body (and not permitted to be). Mayor of London and individual local authorities are legal bodies (as is the Manchester arrangement) but partnerships between boroughs are partnerships, not legally binding entities.

The WLA is a vehicle to promote digital skills. A long term strategy is to partner with the University of Westminster and College of NW London to develop a digital economy. All WLA members have delegated some powers to the WLA and this has been agreed by Cabinet. The task group understand that insufficient Councillors are aware of the work of the WLA, and therefore this should be addressed with updates to Full Council. The task group recommends that WLA needs to raise its profile across the board.

Reliefs

Brent is comprised of different categories and sizes of businesses (appendix 5), with some properties eligible to apply for a discount on their business rates. The council needs to be very familiar with its tax base and be clear on its strategic approach. Questions should include how we grow small businesses and if we support small business reliefs when it is necessary to raise income.

In addition to smaller scale reliefs, the following types of businesses are eligible:

- small businesses – in the 2016 Budget the Government announced that businesses with a rateable value up to £51,000 would pay lower business rates and that those below £12,000 would get 100 per cent relief
- businesses in rural areas
- charities – eligible for 80 per cent mandatory relief
- Businesses in enterprise zones – designated areas across England that provide tax breaks and government support to help an area in need of growth or regeneration.

Brent council will strive to work with other local authorities where possible. It is mindful that not all local authorities will be at the same point in their business development plans, Brent is keen to move forward with pace and therefore any additional partnership working must fit within its parameters.

Recommendations

Working in partnership

To ensure we make the most of the opportunities that devolution of business rates can provide to grow income, the task group proposes working in partnership where possible with London and sub-regional councils.

9. Brent Council must build on the West London Alliance and the work of the Economic Prosperity Board, as sub-regional alliances' with neighbouring boroughs of similar economic profile will be essential in developing a business strategy. The work of these boards should be expanded with input from backbenchers, and regular reporting back to Scrutiny Committee and Full Council.
10. Brent Council must continue to work with the Mayor of London to lobby for opportunities for Brent that may emerge from Mayoral initiatives such as Old Oak Common.

General and Best Practice

To be a model for best practice by developing ground breaking strategies for the implementation of business rates devolution within local government.

11. The extensive meetings with all relevant stakeholders held by this task group has confirmed that the policy remains nebulous in many aspects, so work on the Devolution of Business Rates will still require regular reviewing, with regular updates to Scrutiny Committee and Full Council. Brent Council must remain closely connected to the work the of the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) and Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, the Parliamentary Select Committee and the London Assembly/Mayor of London's office.

9. CONCLUSION

The devolution of business rates policy change offers the council real opportunities for businesses rates growth. This report has set out some key mechanisms by which this can be achieved as well as flagging potential pitfalls and issues that the Council need to be mindful of and this policy is implemented.

Firstly, it has identified how vital it is to the council to understand and engage with our local businesses.

Secondly, it has identified that a robust business growth strategy is needed and should be used to promote the borough; attracting appropriate businesses to the borough. The more appropriate businesses that are attracted to the borough the greater the opportunities the Council will have to increase revenue.

Thirdly, it has shown how crucial skills and enterprise is to growing our business base.

Fourthly, it has emphasised the importance of making our voice heard via the ongoing consultations on this policy. Working in partnership at a, London and sub-regional level, allows local government to have a louder voice which should be used to lobby for more devolved powers.

The task group believes that this report provides a range of important recommendations which, when implemented, will lead to improved outcomes for the borough.

We look forward to seeing these changes in action.

10. PARTICIPANTS, REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

Participants

London Borough of Brent:	The Leader of the Council
	Chief Executive Officer
	Strategic Director of Resources
	Chief Finance Officer
	Employment & Enterprise Team
Government Agencies	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
	Local Government Association (LGA)
	London Councils
Ministers of Parliament (MP's)	Bob Blackman
	Clive Betts
	Andrew Boff
	Caroline Pidgeon
Non-Government Organisations	West London Alliance
	Federation of Small Businesses
Brent Partners	Quintain
	OPDC
Business Groups	Wembley High Road Business Association
	Ealing Road Traders Association
	Neasden Business Association
Other Local Authorities	LB Ealing
	LB Harrow
	LB Camden
	LB Barnet
	LB Westminster

References:

The task group referred to a number of reports in the course of its work. Key documents include:

1. Local Government Association, Don't Be Left in the Dark, July 2016
2. Department for Communities and Local Government , 100% Business Rates Retention, August 2016
3. London Assembly, A New Agreement for London., September 2016
4. London Finance Commission Interim Report, October 2016

Table of Appendix

	Appendices
1	DCLG Business Rates Retention Consultation
2	Pilot update for DCLG steering group
3	London Council's Joint London Government Response
4	Devolution to local government England
5A	Brent NNDR Collectable Debit
5B	Brent Rateable Value by Category
5C	Brent Council Tax vs NNDR
*	Brent NNDR Properties October 2016 – Large document and can be emailed on request

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