



Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 9 January 2018 at 7.00 pm

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

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Kelcher (Chair)

Davidson (Vice-Chair)

Aden

Colacicco

Crane

Ezeajughi

Mashari

Stopp

Substitute Members

Councillors:

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

Councillors:

Maurice and Warren

For further information contact: Bryony Gibbs, Governance Officer

Tel: 020 8937 1355; Email: 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 interests 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 Deputations (if any) To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 69.	
4 Minutes of the previous meeting To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2017 as an accurate record. <i>Please note these minutes will be circulated as a supplemental item to the main agenda.</i>	<i>To follow</i>
5 Matters arising (if any) To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
6 Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report This report set out the findings and recommendations of the recent budget scrutiny task group.	1 - 24
Ward Affected: All Wards	Contact Officer: Mark Cairns Policy & Scrutiny Manager Email: mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1476
7 The Digital Strategy and the Customer Experience To receive a report from the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships providing an update on the Brent Digital Strategy 2017 – 2020 and its impact on the customer experience in accessing services. The report also provides an outline for the forthcoming Channel Strategy and seeks feedback from the Committee on its scope and the principles proposed to underpin the ways in which Brent Council will design and deliver its services across a range of contact channels to ensure accessibility and value for money.	25 - 40

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships
Email: peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk
Tel: 0208 937 1400

8 Review of Recycling Rates in Brent

41 - 46

This report provides details on the Borough's current recycling rates along with a comparison against rates from other similar authorities. The report has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee to assist Members in considering how performance might be improved.

In addition details are provided on attempts being made to reduce food waste in the recycling stream and on the use of new technology to help improve recycling rates.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Kelly Eaton
Public Realm Projects and Policy Manager
Email: kelly.eaton@brent.gov.uk
Tel: 0208 937 5565

9 Review of Trading Standards' Role and Priority Areas

47 - 80

This report outlines the role and priorities of the Council's Trading Standards, focussing, as requested by the Committee, on the following areas:

- Analysis on the role of Trading Standards in 2017
- Are the Service targeting the correct areas?
- What do the public want trading standards to do?

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Simon Legg
Senior Service Manager
Email: simon.legg@brent.gov.uk
Tel: 0208 937 5522

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 60.

Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 21 February 2018



Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

 Brent	Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 9 January 2018
	Report from the Strategic Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships
Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	One: • Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Mark Cairns, Policy & Scrutiny Manager Email: mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1476

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report set out the findings and recommendations of the recent budget scrutiny task group.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee is recommended to endorse the report at Appendix 1 and the recommendations contained therein.

3.0 Detail

3.1 This year's budget scrutiny task group was formed at the halfway point of a two-year budget. As a result, it has undertaken budget scrutiny in a slightly different way than in previous years. This includes focusing on specific policies where it had concerns, rather than reviewing all spending plans (which last year's task group had already examined), as part of its legal duty to scrutinise the budget. Alongside this, the task group has also looked at the impact of the plan to pool business rates across the London boroughs.

- 3.2 The task group was comprised of members from the three scrutiny committees and chaired by the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee. It met three times, including a session attended by the Leader and Deputy Leader, to discuss the proposed pilot for pooled business rates in London. Relevant members of the Cabinet and senior officers also attended to inform discussions of the progress against savings proposals from the existing budget. It was also advised by experts from London Councils, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 3.3 The task group has made 12 individual recommendations, as follows.
1. Brent should dedicate some time and intellectual space to mapping out the potential consequences of Brexit for the borough, particularly in the areas of population, housing and manufacturing exports.
 2. Brent should advocate a form of sub regional investment for the “strategic investment pot” produced in the London business rates pool, if the arrangement becomes permanent. The West London Alliance could deliver investment in our region of London.
 3. The criteria Brent should adopt for strategic investment are as follows:
 - That the capital investment should have a spend to save rationale, and, in some way, reduce Brent’s anticipated revenue spending in forthcoming years.
 - That the investment aligns with the Council’s political priorities.
 - That the investment should represent a sound long-term financial decision.
 - That the money spent makes a significant positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in Brent.
 4. Brent should leave no stone unturned in attempts to grow the local private sector. Two ideas it should specifically look at are appointing a business champion and using the procurement system to support local businesses.
 5. A report on progress in delivery of the new sexual health services for the borough should come before Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny in six months’ time.
 6. The Council should always give due consideration to ensuring a geographical spread when strategically purchasing property.
 7. The Council should set a target to keep bulky waste collection requests low in order to reduce costs and the amount of materials finding their way into landfill.
 8. The special collection service page of the Brent website should be re-designed to give maximum exposure to alternative and sustainable options which residents can use to dispose of bulky waste, particularly charity retailers in the borough. Helpline staff should also be trained to offer alternative options in the first instance.
 9. The Council should look to develop sustainable ways for people to dispose of mid-sized waste items as a way of reducing illegal rubbish dumping.

10. A report should be sent to the appropriate scrutiny committee in twelve months' time, demonstrating how the change of contract due in July 2018 affects parking enforcement in the latter half of 2018.
11. The Council should look into the possibility of hiring an external partner to find more advertising space in the borough on a no-win no-fee basis.
12. A review of pavement licencing in Brent should be carried out to see how much we could generate from this source. This should take particular account of price and enforcement.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Scrutiny is an important part of the budget development process. The report does not have direct financial consequences per se, since decisions on the budget will be taken by Council.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications of the task group report.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications of the task group report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The task group was made up of members of the three scrutiny committees. It was also advised by officers, as well as experts from London Councils, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Director of Performance Policy & Partnerships

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Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report January 2018

1. Introduction

a) A two-year budget

This year's Budget Scrutiny Panel was formed at the halfway point of a two-year budget. As a result, we have undertaken budget scrutiny in a slightly different way than may have been the case in previous years.

It has been commonplace to focus the vast majority of budget scrutiny time on looking at each of the Cabinet's proposed savings/cuts (members and residents may choose their own vernacular) and assessing their suitability.

During this budget cycle, all such plans were introduced at the start of the 2016/17 municipal year and no further specific savings plans are being introduced at this stage. Therefore, we decided to pick out just those specific policies where we had concerns for further analysis, rather than re-reviewing every single spending plan which last year's Budget Scrutiny Panel already examined.

This work is summarised later in the report and forms part of our legal duty to scrutinise the budget to ensure it is legal – i.e. balanced and costed – which we can confirm we believe it to be.

b) Business rates

The Resources and Public Realm Committee has had a long standing interest in business rates reform and the impact this could have on the way Brent raises and spends money.

The first task group ever commissioned by this Committee focused on the impact of devolving business rates retention to local government, as was the stated policy of the Government at the time. As far as we are aware, we were the first Council in the country to commission such a report through the overview and scrutiny function, and we hope that this has added some strategic value to the Council.

In 2016/17 we followed this up with a Budget Scrutiny Panel Report which gave particular recognition to issues around business rates, as well as a further task group report on the best ways local authorities can support local small businesses.

Given this track record, there was enthusiasm amongst the Panel to spend a significant part of our time looking at the impact of the plan to pool business rates across the London boroughs. We were able to do this because of the space available at the midway point of a two-year budget. The first half of this report deals specifically with these issues.

c) Brexit

Hanging over all of our deliberations as a Panel was the uncertainty generated by Brexit. There is no quick-fire way for Brent, or any other council, to acquire certainty on these issues. Indeed, the Government itself seems very unclear as to what will happen when the UK leaves the EU in 2019.

However, we do believe that the council should dedicate some time to thinking through the ways in which Brexit might impact on Brent.

Most notably, the population of Brent, both in its composition and total number, may change. Net migration to the UK is already down by 106,000 in the year after the referendum as EU nationals have left the country. If this trend continues and even accelerates in the years to come it is bound to have an impact on London as a whole, and a borough as diverse as Brent in particular.

The impact on trade for local manufacturers, for example at Park Royal, must also be considered.

Finally, with housing such a pressing need for so many local families, the combined impact of these issues on the local housing market is of paramount importance. A report produced by the estate agents Savills published in November predicted that in 2018 'average London house prices will fall by 2 per cent ... as Brexit uncertainty weighs on the economy and buyers hit the limits of mortgage' (Financial Times 2/11/17). This eventuality must be considered and planned for.

d) Method

This report is the beginning, not the end, of the Budget Scrutiny process. It will go to the full Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, and be on the agenda of that Committee's first meeting in 2018. It will also be presented to Full Council as part of the standing scrutiny report in February 2018.

The Budget Scrutiny Panel was comprised of representatives from each of the Council's three scrutiny committees, and chaired by Cllr Matt Kelcher as chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee. Cllrs Kelcher, Ketan Sheth, Long and Nerva (pictured below) participated in three formal meetings at the Civic Centre where they were able to question the relevant officers and lead members. The chair also carried out interviews with front line officers and external experts.



Cllr Kelcher



Cllr Sheth



Cllr Long



Cllr Nerva

2. Business Rates Pool

a) Overview

With the loss of the Government's overall majority, the policy of fully devolving the collection and retention of business rates to local government has been

placed on the backburner. No bill to introduce this reform – which would amount to the most radical change to the way in which councils are funded in thirty years – was in the most recent Queen’s Speech.

However, this does not mean that scrutiny’s previous work on the localisation of business rates is no longer of use. As confirmed in the November 2017 budget, the government is establishing a 100% business rates retention pilot in London in April 2018. This raises many of the issues of business rate localisation discussed in our previous reports.

All 32 boroughs, the City of London and the Mayor of London, have agreed to formally enter into this pool.

A Memorandum of Understanding between London and the government establishes the specific terms of the 100 per cent retention pilot, within the general processes which govern any local authority business rates pool. The resulting key principles that underpin the pooling agreement are that:

- the 2018-19 pool does not bind boroughs or the Mayor indefinitely;
- no authority can be worse off as a result of participating;
- all members will receive some share of any net benefits arising from the pilot pool.

Through the pool, these authorities will be able to retain 100 per cent of business rates growth in London over 2018/19 to be spent on strategic investment. By contrast, at present, individual councils in England and Wales are only entitled to keep 50 per cent of the growth in their own area. As a result, there are obvious opportunities for councils within the pool, although sharing all the growth generated by the nation’s capital across so many local authorities obviously presents its own challenges.

The sustainability of the pool should some boroughs decide to leave, or if it will continue over the long term at all, are questions for next year’s report. For now, all that has been guaranteed is that the pilot will operate across London in 2018/19.

b) Sharing growth

At the start of our work, the Panel anticipated that there would be huge debate amongst the London boroughs as to how the money generated by business rate growth should be shared. This is because there are boroughs which generate many, many more millions of pounds of business rates each year than others. The incentive for the richer boroughs is therefore to retain as much of the growth they have generated themselves as possible, and the incentive for poorer boroughs is for a system which shares the growth pot on the basis of need. Brent would probably sit somewhere between these two extremes in its incentives.

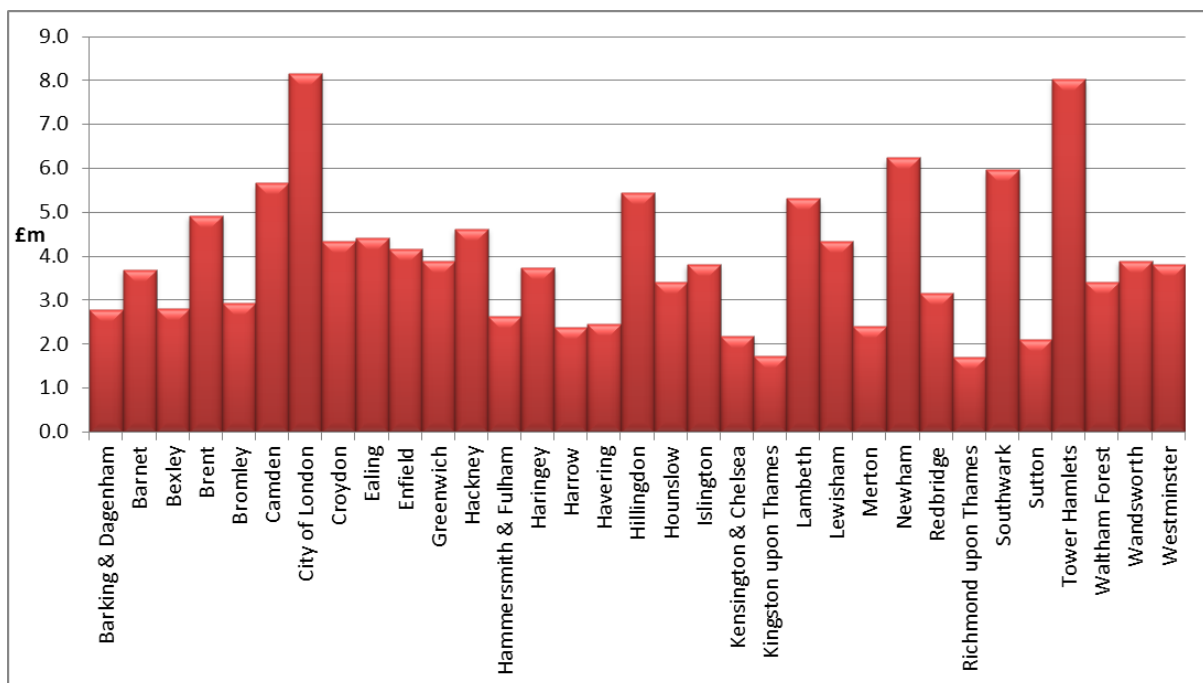
However, we found from questioning the Leader and Deputy Leader of Brent, and from an interview with a senior officer at London Councils, that in fact most boroughs were open to compromise and that an agreement of how to split the money in principle has been reached.

We were also told on more than one occasion that a strong push from the Department for Communities and Local Government that the split should strongly favour strategic investment helped to settle discussions.

At the time of writing, the proceeds of growth in the 2018/19 pilot year are estimated to be about £240 million. They will be split across the boroughs as follows

- 15% to reward growth
- 35% to reflect population
- 35% to reflect 'Settlement Funding Assessment'
- 15% set aside for a 'Strategic Investment Pot'

Brent will do moderately well out of this settlement in comparison with other boroughs, as demonstrated in the tables below.



	15:35:35:1 5 New
Barking & Dagenham	2.8
Barnet	3.7
Bexley	2.8
Brent	4.9
Bromley	2.9
Camden	5.7
City of London	8.2
Croydon	4.3

Ealing	4.4
Enfield	4.2
Greenwich	3.9
Hackney	4.6
Hammersmith & Fulham	2.6
Haringey	3.7
Harrow	2.4
Havering	2.5
Hillingdon	5.4
Hounslow	3.4
Islington	3.8
Kensington & Chelsea	2.2
Kingston upon Thames	1.7
Lambeth	5.3
Lewisham	4.3
Merton	2.4
Newham	6.2
Redbridge	3.2
Richmond upon Thames	1.7
Southwark	6.0
Sutton	2.1
Tower Hamlets	8.0
Waltham Forest	3.4
Wandsworth	3.9
Westminster	3.8
London Boroughs	130.3
GLA	73.9
London subtotal	204.3
Investment pot	36.0
London Total	240.3

These figures should meet the government’s guarantee that Brent is no worse off through joining the pool than it would have been under the old 50 per cent retention scheme. Therefore, our overall revenue budget in the coming years will be at least the same as it would otherwise would have been.

What is perhaps more interesting however, is the 15 per cent set aside as a “strategic investment pot”. This will be new money which London’s boroughs – through the City as lead borough – can invest in projects designed to prompt further economic growth and develop a virtuous circle where growth promotes re-investment and then further growth.

This investment must obviously be at a sufficient scale to ensure an impact. Sharing the pot amongst the 33 councils and letting them each spend a bit on their own local growth project is unlikely to achieve this scale. It is therefore understandable that the investment will be made strategically by all the

boroughs (administered by the City of London), as after all they will all share any proceeds.

Our Panel believes that regeneration is about more than just the bottom line. London's sub-regions will be able to exercise a veto on investment proposals for the pot, which should ensure that no sub-region benefits disproportionately. This should prevent a scenario where, for example, Brent will benefit from a share of the additional business rates revenue raised, but not from any of the jobs generated, nor from any attendant social or environmental benefits which may be generated.

However, the task group feels that this could be taken further, if the pooling arrangement becomes permanent. We suggest that Brent should advocate a form of sub regional investment. For example, in our region of London, the West London Alliance would be perfectly placed to organise investment on a scale which will generate sufficient growth to yield a return, whilst also providing opportunities to residents in a contained geographic area. We hope this could deliver the best of both worlds.

c) Short term windfall

An additional question the Panel considered is how Brent should spend the short term windfall it is expected to receive for entering into the pool in the first place.

The amount Brent is expected to receive is around £4.9 million, though the final exact figure will be confirmed once the 2017/18 business rates accounts have been audited.

As this is a one-off payment, with no commitment from the Government that it will be repeated should the pilot become permanent, we believe it should only be used for a specific and significant capital investment.

We believe the criteria the cabinet should use when assessing viable schemes that come under this bracket are as follows:

- That the capital investment should have a spend to save rational, and, in some way, reduce Brent's anticipated revenue spending in forthcoming years.
- That the investment aligns with the Council's political priorities.
- That the investment should represent a sound long-term financial decision.
- That the money spent makes a significant positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in Brent.

One potential investment which would meet these criteria would be the building or purchase of more properties for use as temporary accommodation. The Council currently spends significant sums on rents in the private sector for those in Brent who are homeless. Running more of our own properties would reduce this annual revenue cost as per our criteria above.

The properties would also not be subject to Right-to-Buy legislation which currently makes it so difficult for local authorities to build true social housing, as they cannot hedge their investment over a long period of time, knowing that

they may be forced to sell any of their properties at a rate below market value just three years after building it. This idea would also have a clear advantage for the most vulnerable people in our borough.

Of course the investment of such a significant sum will require much greater consideration but we hope these principles and thoughts provide the Cabinet with a good starting point.

d) Collection issues

As part of our research, the Chair of the Panel interviewed officers in Brent's revenue team about the process of collected business rates. We did this to reassure ourselves that switching to a pool would not present undue problems for our officers.

We were told that there would be little impact, if any, on day-to-day collection as it is only the place where the money is sent that will change.

We were reassured that the Council is doing all it can to maximise business rates collection at the current time, with a collection rate of 98.7 per cent achieved last year by Brent's contractor Capita. This represent the culmination of a positive recent trend as demonstrated in the table below.

Year	Proportion of business rates collected (%)
2016/17	98.74
2015/16	98.32
2014/15	98.11
2013/14	97.56

We were also pleased that the Council is taking the innovative approach of using an outside company to identify areas and buildings which are eligible to pay but are not currently being charged business rates on a no-win no-fee basis. This approach could probably be used more generally in the area of income generation, as we will discuss further below.

e) Backing Brent businesses

Whether through a regional pool, the total devolution of business rates, or further growth incentives – it seems clear to us that in future all local authorities will become more reliant on business rates as a source of income.

Therefore, we reiterate our calls from previous Panel reports that the council leaves no stone unturned in its efforts to grow our local private sector. We suggest two ways in which this may be achieved:

i. Business champion

The Panel was attracted to the idea of creating a single post, or small team, whose sole role would be to attract business to the borough. We believe that this could be funded through incentives with the additional rates brought into the borough used to pay costs and wages, it would therefore not represent a significant new financial burden.

We would also emphasise that significant private sector experience be essential for anyone applying for this position or team, and that the role not be specifically tied to any one department within the Council. Instead the business manager or business team should have free reign to float between departments identifying areas where the work of the council may be making things unnecessarily (we would very much emphasise the word "unnecessarily") difficult for businesses and suggesting improvements.

Of course, they should not have the only or final say and the council should never simply become a tool of business, but with such huge changes to the financing of local government soon to be upon us we feel that creating a new point of view within our structures could be essential in ensuring Brent takes a lead in adapting to life after the central government grant.

In other countries, such as Germany, membership of a Chambers of Commerce is compulsory for registered businesses ensuring that these Chambers are much more powerful and authoritative voices for businesses in their areas and that they have a semi-formal relationship with public bodies. The option suggested by the Panel for Brent could replicate some of the best features of this system.

ii. Procurement

Reforms to the machinery of government – local or national – to support our own businesses are long overdue in this country. It is amazing to think that the Government is still debating about whether it is a good idea to have an industrial strategy or not, decades after many of our competitors developed their own.

The head of the US Small Business Administration reports directly to the US President whereas none of the 15 direct reports to the permanent secretary in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is responsible for small British businesses. No wonder 45 per cent of US Federal procurement spend goes to home grown American small businesses - a figure which represents roughly eight times the lending rate of the UK Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme after taking into account the relative sizes of the two economies.

Brent should not be afraid to think big, and realise the huge role it can play in creating a virtuous cycle where local businesses are supported to grow and then contribute back into the community and council coffers.

One in every seven pounds in the UK is spent by the state (equating to approximately 40% of GDP), making procurement one of the key levers that any public sector body has to boost business, employment and the economy.

Currently many businesses feel frustrated and locked out of the public sector procurement process. All public sector bodies set their own pre-qualification test for procurement contracts, so in any given area the Council might ask for copies of accounts dating back five years and a

biography of the CEO, the Fire Service might ask for six years of accounts and a biography of every director, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for something different altogether.

Brent Council is ideally placed to act as a central coordinator bringing together all public sector bodies which procure services in Brent and get them to synchronise their pre-qualification policies. This would give a strong message that Brent is open for business and encourage businesses to base themselves here so that they can access many different procurement opportunities, and in the long term pay more business rates back into Brent.

We would emphasise that within in this there would also be a golden opportunity to ensure further Living Wage payment within local supply chains if such a commitment became a more regular requirement to secure local procurement opportunities.

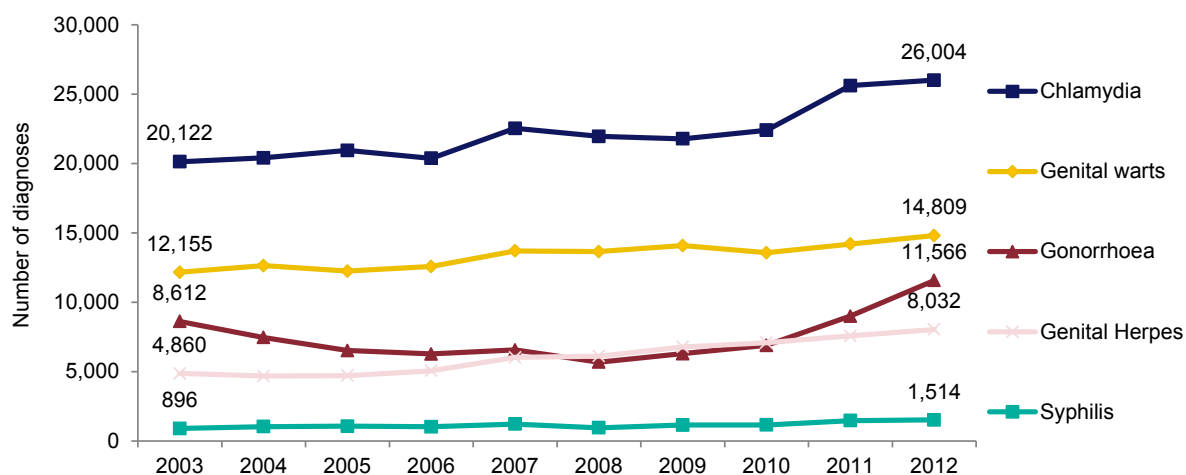
To truly adapt to the changing world of local government finance Brent must not only think openly but big and learn from the best practice around the world.

This report will now turn to the savings instigated at the start of the two-year budget, which we believed it would be prudent to review at this stage.

3. Savings – halfway review

a) Sexual health services

Provision of sexual health advice and services is an important budgetary consideration. In recent years there has been a clear trend of increased demand for these services which the council has a statutory duty to supply, as well as advice from Public Health England on the need for repeated testing. It is therefore very important that Brent finds a way to deliver these services which is both effective and efficient.



Diagnoses of the five main STIs: London GUM clinic attendees, 2003-2012

Last year, the Panel endorsed the idea of using an online platform to provide many of these services, as this would be both easier to access for many people and cheaper to deliver. However, we expressed some concerns about delivery and therefore wished to review progress again this year.

We learned during this process that there have been delays in implementing the full scheme, largely due to the fact that procurement is across 28 local authorities. Whilst this is understandable, we obviously have a duty to continue to monitor this issue and therefore recommend that an update report is presented to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in six months time.

b) NAIL

This time last year, the Budget Scrutiny Panel gave its broad support to the policy known as New Accommodation for Independent Living, or NAIL. Of this policy we wrote:

'Moving people towards supported living is a laudable goal as many people prefer to live in an independent setting. This should be an aim of the Council in any circumstances and so we believe it is regretful that it may be seen by some as a purely financial reform by being presented in this budget.'

'However, we would like every effort to be made to identify those users who may be fearful of change at the earliest possible stage to ensure work is done to reassure them and help them to adapt.'

This remains our view and we were pleased to see that the Council is stretching itself further by adding 18 new places to the original target of 450.

We are also encouraged by the council's move to purchase properties it will own in order to deliver the service. Even with the recent small increase, interest rates are at an historically low level and therefore it is a bad time for any local authority to leave unnecessary sums of money in its accounts and a good time to borrow to invest.

The council has approved a total capital outlay of £45.4m in relation to developments that deliver NAIL accommodation.. The table below summarises these schemes.

Council Developments	NAIL units
Clock Cottage	17
NAIL acquisitions (20 large dwellings)	90
Clement Close	12
Peel Road	11
London Road (Mixed Development 135 units in Total)	14
Knowles House (Mixed Development 149 units in Total)	55
TOTAL	199

In line with the principles of investment we outlined earlier in this report, we also investigated what impact this would have on Brent's revenue budget in coming years. If now is a good time to make capital investments, these investments should also save the Council money in the longer term. The initial direct capital investment by the council will deliver 199 units and will save the council over £3 million a year. The total NAIL programme is anticipated to save in the region of around £7.8 million per annum, which is not insignificant.

One aspect of this policy that the Panel did have concerns about was the geographical spread of these new services. Property in the north of our borough is significantly cheaper than in the south, and so it is a likely outcome that the vast majority of these units will only be purchased and run in one part of Brent. We are concerned this could continue to fuel perception, which members of our panel who represent wards south of the North Circular very much recognised, that the council is "only interested in Wembley".

We therefore recommend that due consideration is given to ensuring a geographical spread when strategical purchasing property. This should not be absolute, as we are aware of the cost implications, but we want to ensure that the council has foot prints all across Brent when delivering services. The Panel also accepted the possibility that a majority of property owned may already be in the south, and a policy of buying in the north may now even this out. However it is achieved, we believe a clear geographical spread should be the goal.

c) Bulky waste

The council's provision of bulky waste collection services is perennially a controversial issue. This is not a statutory service and it brings costs to the council both in terms of collection and disposal. However, an efficient and well-used system can have a positive effect on levels of illegal rubbish dumping in the borough and our recycling rates.

When the proposal to introduce a charge for a "gold standard" collection option was made in last year's budget, the Panel had clear concerns. We wrote at the time:

'The Panel had severe concerns about this proposal, primarily focused around the potential reputational damage to "Brand Brent" for what is a relatively small saving ... This is a sensitive political area and we feel that when speaking about this subject the Council needs to be extra careful to get its messaging right so no misinformation gets into the public arena.'

Anecdotally, the Panel believes that some of these predictions have come to pass. At public meetings in our wards, residents have come to us and asked why the council has taken away the free bulky waste service. In person we are able to explain why this is not the case but there must be many more residents we have not met who believe the free service has gone and never get to hear the alternative case.

Nevertheless, the policy is now in place and seems to be having some positive impact, with collection requests dropping from 70 per day to 15 per day. In the spirit of "what gets measured gets done" we would recommend that a clear

target for daily referrals is set and monitored each month by cabinet to ensure it does not begin to creep back up.

In our last Panel report we also recommended that the council do more to signpost people to other organisations which will take away bulky waste and dispose of for free, for example the British Heart Foundation Furniture and Electrical shop in Cricklewood. We believe that this helps to get the referral rate down but also lead to more re-use, as the shop will resell the item in the local community, whereas the council would most likely dispose of it in landfill. As the chart below demonstrates, re-use is a much more sustainable option than disposal or even recycling, it is also far cheaper for the council, which must pay landfill tax on every tonne of waste it puts underground.



With this in mind, we are very please that the council does signpost to these services on the special collection service page of Brent's website.

However, we would note that this information is contained nearer the bottom of the page and that even on a large screen residents will have to scroll down to find the appropriate information.


This is demonstrated in the screenshots below.

Furniture and large items: X

Secure | <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/recycling-and-waste/types-of-collection/special-collection-service/>

Apps | Google | Guardian | FPL | Natwest | Gmail | CRA OWA | Brent | Salesforce | CRA | CRA Members | MailChimp | Social Value Toolkit | TinyURL.com

Contact us | E-news/e-alerts | Jobs | Translate | Log in to My Account

 Search (e.g. Housing) | Apply | Report it | Pay It | Book it

My Services | My Business | My Council | My Community | My Account | My Location

Home > Services for residents > Recycling and waste > Types of collection > Special collection service

Ad closed by Google
Stop seeing this ad | AdChoices

Special collection service

Collections | How to present your items | Guidance - flats and North Circular | Terms and conditions

We have made changes to the way that our special collection service is provided. Our service is now chargeable, but we have made it easy for you to make bookings online and select your own collection day.

A charge of £35 applies for a collection of up to 5 items. You can book as many collections as you like in a year and we have increased the range of items that you can ask us to remove.


You can see the full terms and conditions of our new service in the tab at the top of this page. We recommend that you read them before making your booking.

Please note that if you previously booked a collection with our free service; your date of collection still applies and remains unaffected by the new service.

Book a Special Collection

[Book a Special Collection for bulky items](#)


Collections take place Monday to Friday. You can select your own collection day; up to 2 weeks in advance.

 Council Tax | Benefits | Parking | Council jobs | Planning Applications | Report missed bins collections

Furniture and large items: X

Secure | <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/recycling-and-waste/types-of-collection/special-collection-service/>

Apps | Google | Guardian | FPL | Natwest | Gmail | CRA OWA | Brent | Salesforce | CRA | CRA Members | MailChimp | Social Value Toolkit | TinyURL.com

 Collections take place Monday to Friday. You can select your own collection day; up to 2 weeks in advance.

If you are a landlord, you can now use our collection service to dispose of items when a tenant is moving out of a property.

If you are in receipt of Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit you will be entitled to one free collection per year (April to March). Any further collections will be chargeable at the full rate of £35. This free collection should be automatically applied when you make your booking. For the discount to be applied for other benefits you may need to contact us by telephone. Eligible benefits include Income related Job Seekers Allowance, Pension Credit (Guaranteed Rate) and Income Support.

If you experience any problems, please contact our customer service team on 020 8937 5050.

Alternative collection methods

If you don't want to use our new bulky waste service; you can use one of the many free alternatives for giving your item another home.

Most charity shops love to take things off you that you no longer need. If you have trouble finding a shop willing to take a large item, try the [British Heart Foundation's free furniture and electrical collection service](#).


Online sites and web communities

- [Freecycle](#) - the original platform for helping match up those in need of certain items, with those who want rid.
- [Frengle](#) - Around 17,000 people in Brent are using Frengle to give away and make use of items that are no longer needed by some people.
- [Gumtree](#) - Online classified adverts to pass on your no longer needed items.
- [Facebook](#) - Now featuring local buy and sell groups to sell or giveaway items with no fees.
- [eBay](#) - Buy and sell items on the well-known online auctioning site.
- [Nextdoor](#) - A free and private social network for your local neighbourhood with a 'free items' section
- [Preloved](#) - The popular classified site features a Preloved section, letting you pick up things for free. While it's free to advertise your wares, users pay £5/year to get first dibs on the latest freebies.
- [SnaffleUp](#) - While still relatively small, SnaffleUp's modern design means it's easy to browse for freebies.
- [Re-cycle](#) - A charity that isn't able to collect unwanted bicycles, but can take them off you at several drop off points for them to be reused in developing countries in Africa.

Know of any others? Let us know and we'll update this web page.

What we can't collect

We will not collect pianos, soil, rubble, clinical and hazardous waste.
You can dispose of those items using these services.

 Council Tax | Benefits | Parking | Council jobs | Planning Applications | Report missed bins collections

By organising the information in this order the impression that the council is the first option, and that every services is second class, is maintained. It is our

opinion that these services would be even better used if they were more prominently displayed at the top of the page. Some of the charity retailers who collect furniture in Brent are well known national or local brands, so displaying these logos may catch people's eye quickly and encourage them to give to a charity they support rather than the council.

With all this in mind, we recommend a re-design of this council webpage and also training for staff in our information centre so that residents are referred to charity collectors in the first instance.

We believe this would benefit the council by reducing daily collection requests, benefit the residents by giving them a free and ethical option, and also benefit local charities who get more stock to sell and re-use.

Win/win/win.

Finally, we would also urge the cabinet to think about how the council can make it easy for residents to dispose of mid-sized items in an ethical and sustainable way. It was noted by the Panel that when a resident wishes to dispose of a very small item (for example a broken plate) they can do so for free by placing in their residential bin. Likewise, when they wish to dispose of a large, bulky item (for example a sofa) they can do so for free by organising a bulky waste collection. However, there are no such options for mid-sized items like an older vacuum cleaner or microwave.

Residents with a car can take these to Brent's household recycling centre, but for the majority of our residents who do not have their own vehicle this is very difficult. One suggestion from a member of the Panel was that at certain points throughout the year the council could set up collection points at designated places throughout the borough to allow people to dispose of these items in a sustainable way. This may help to tackle levels of illegal rubbish dumping which costs the council so much to clear.

d) Parking

We were surprised by how few demands for change were passed to the council as part of the demand-led review of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) announced in last year's budget. It is therefore welcome that CPZ policy will continue to be reviewed on a demand-led basis, though without significant publicity we feel that only those who already have enough social capital to access the council system might be able to participate.

The Panel noted, as is demonstrated in the table below, the number of penalty charge notices issued has generally increased over the last few years.

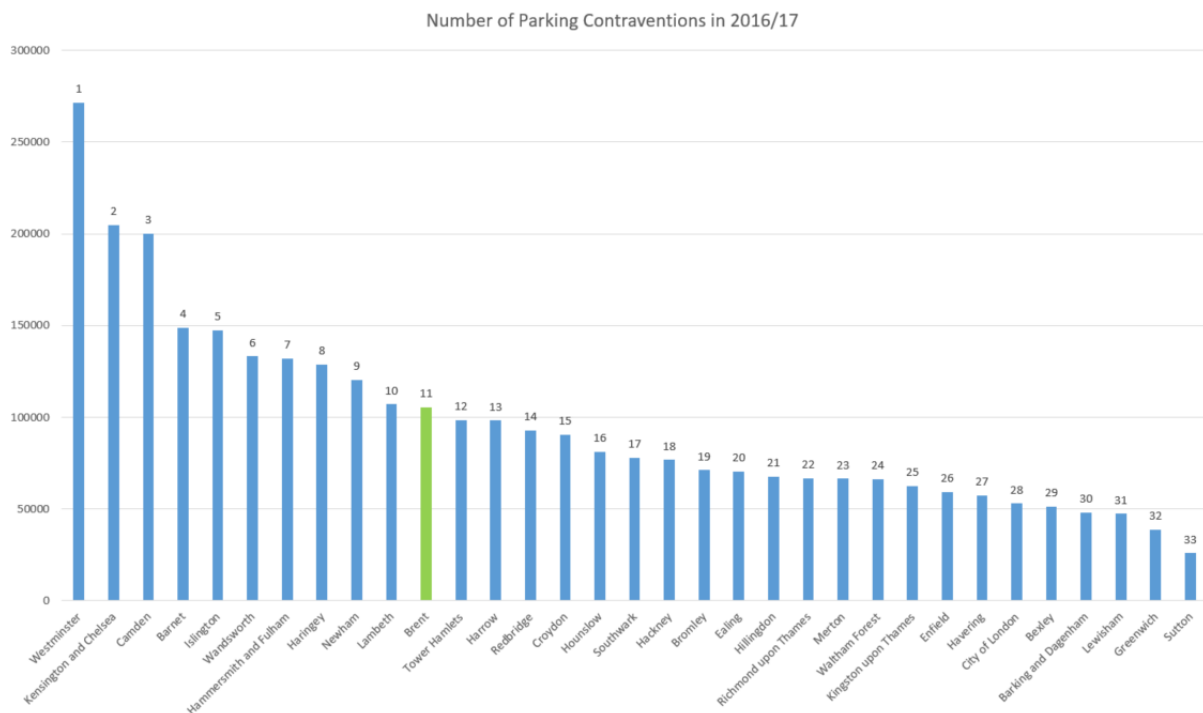
Contravention	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Parking Offences	85,101	75,460	87,146	99,145	103,424

We believe this is right. Those who do not play by the rules take away parking spaces from those residents who have paid into the system, they also contribute

to over-crowding and dangerously cluttered streets. A consistent system of penalty charges can help to change behaviour in the right direction.

The panel did express a belief that night time enforcement may be a gap in our operation. Residents are able to alert the council at night if cars are parked blocking drives or on double yellow lines or making any other infringement, with officers on duty to come out and issue penalty notices. However, many residents are not aware of this option and we suggest a publicity campaign may help in this regard and eventually pay for itself.

We were also interested in seeing how Brent performs in comparison to other London boroughs, and to this end acquired the data shown in the table below.



So, in terms of total PCNs issued, Brent sits eleventh out of 32 boroughs and the City of London. We were interested to see what it would take to move Brent further up this table as this would not only generate more income for the parking service, but also ensure a consistent approach which deters people from parking in places they should not right across Brent.

We accepted the argument from officers that more central London boroughs (Westminster, Camden, Islington, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea) will likely always generate more PCNs than Brent. This is also true of Wandsworth where every single road is covered by a CPZ. Despite this, there are certainly other boroughs in the "Top Ten" which could be expected to have similar amounts of parking stress as Brent and to which we should be comparing ourselves.

Further information we were given by officers was as follows:

'The main constraint is that we have been required by the Inter Authority Agreement with Hounslow to pay Civil Enforcement Officers minimum

wage, and this has impacted on recruitment and retention. As soon as the IAA is terminated next July we intend to move to London Living Wage like other neighbouring boroughs, and this should facilitate the expansion of the workforce and an increase in parking enforcement volumes.'

If this assertion is correct, we would expect to see an increase in the number of PCNs issued in the months after July. We believe this performance should be tested and scrutinised and therefore recommend that a report comes back to the appropriate scrutiny committee in twelve months' time analysing how the change of contract has affected our parking enforcement.

4. Other budget issues

a) Structural issues

In previous budgets there were particular departments which frequently incurred an overspend, and others an underspend which was used to bridge the gap and balance the budget.

This was clearly not a sustainable policy and we are pleased to see that ahead of this year's budget officers have done significant work to address these structural problems and deliver a more sustainable budget.

One concern that was raised revolved around Universal Credit and the impact this could have in Brent, particularly if vulnerable local residents require access to support and services during the five weeks claimants must wait for their first payment. As the full impact of Universal Credit is unknown at this time this is difficult to address, but we would hope the council builds the best assumptions possible into its budget planning.

b) Income generation

Councillors of all parties have a long-standing interest in income generation ideas and the commercialisation of council activities. This is likely because councillors see the process of generating our own money as a way to begin to plug the gap that appears as the central government support grant is slashed.

We are not naïve enough to believe that Brent could ever generate enough money to overcome the huge cuts we have faced since 2010, but generating additional income is never a bad idea and can contribute to our council's independence as well as our revenue.

We endorse Brent's "Civic Enterprise" strategy which seeks to imbed commercialisation at all levels of the organisation. In many areas this plan is having an impact. For example, in the area of debt, half of the targeted £1 million has already been raised.

However, other areas are more concerning. The plan to raise an additional £300k per year from advertising is behind target, with just £62k or recurring income secured so far. We were assured by officers and cabinet members that this was not the result of the council being "squeamish" about local authorities getting into the advertising business. For example, quotes have been gathered

to use the civic centre as advertising space, but bids were far lower than anticipated.

One suggestion we would like to make is that a similar model to that used in the area of business rates (as discussed above) is adopted. The council has a partner who travel around Brent identify business space which is rateable but not yet being charged on a no-win no-fee basis. Could a similar partnership be enacted to ensure every public space in Brent is examined to find new advertising space?

Another area of concern comes with fees and charges where a shortfall of £606k has been identified. Our suggestion for investigation in this area is the licensing of pavement space.

We have all noticed businesses in the borough who expand their shop or bar front onto the pavement – sometimes so far out that it causes blockages for prams and wheelchairs – and there does not seem to be any policing of this. We would recommend that a review of pavement licencing in Brent is carried out to see how much we could generate from this source.

This will not be an entirely straightforward task, as, at present, the council does not have an officer in place to enforce pavement regulations. Likewise, the cost of a pavement licence must be pitched at the right level. If we begin to take thorough enforcement action in this area but charge too much local businesses would be adversely affected, and if no business is willing to pay the amount demanded no income will be generated. We therefore believe that any review will also look closely at any figures set.

Finally, we do believe there is a role for Brent's CCTV network in this kind of enforcement action. Most high streets in Brent are covered by our CCTV cameras, and studying these could certainly help to identify those shops whose frontages are creeping ever further across the public pavement.

5. Recommendations

1.

Brent should dedicate some time and intellectual space to mapping out the potential consequences of Brexit for the borough, particularly in the areas of population, housing and manufacturing exports.

2.

Brent should advocate a form of sub regional investment for the "strategic investment pot" produced in the London business rates pool, if the arrangement becomes permanent. The West London Alliance could deliver investment in our region of London.

3.

The criteria Brent should adopt for strategic investment are as follows:

- That the capital investment should have a spend to save rationale, and, in some way, reduce Brent's anticipated revenue spending in forthcoming years.
- That the investment aligns with the Council's political priorities.
- That the investment should represent a sound long-term financial decision.
- That the money spent makes a significant positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in Brent.

4.

Brent should leave no stone unturned in attempts to grow the local private sector. Two ideas it should specifically look at are appointing a business champion and using the procurement system to support local businesses.

5.

A report on progress in delivery of the new sexual health services for the borough should come before Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny in six months' time.

6.

The council should always give due consideration to ensuring a geographical spread when strategically purchasing property.

7.

The council should set a target to keep bulky waste collection requests low in order to reduce costs and the amount of materials finding their way into landfill.

8.

The special collection service page of the Brent website should be re-designed to give maximum exposure to alternative and sustainable options which residents can use to dispose of bulky waste, particularly charity retailers in the borough. Helpline staff should also be trained to offer alternative options in the first instance.

9.

The council should look to develop sustainable ways for people to dispose of mid-sized waste items as a way of reducing illegal rubbish dumping.

10.

A report should be sent to the appropriate scrutiny committee in twelve months' time, demonstrating how the change of contract due in July 2018 affects parking enforcement in the latter half of 2018.

11.

The council should look into the possibility of hiring an external partner to find more advertising space in the borough on a no-win no-fee basis.

12.

A review of pavement licencing in Brent should be carried out to see how much we could generate from this source. This should take particular account of price and enforcement.

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 Brent	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 9 January 2018
	Report from the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships
The Digital Strategy and the Customer Experience	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Programme Governance Arrangements • Geodemographic Classification Maps • The Customer Promise and its Themes
Background Papers:	Brent Digital Strategy 2017 – 2020
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Jon Cartwright, Senior Transformation Officer Email: jon.cartwright@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 1742 Sadie East, Head of Transformation Email: sadie.east@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 1507 Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships Email: peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 1400

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Brent Digital Strategy 2017 – 2020 and its impact on the customer experience in accessing services. It also provides an outline for the forthcoming Channel Strategy and seeks feedback from the Committee on its scope and the principles proposed to underpin the ways in which Brent Council will design and deliver its services across a range of contact channels to ensure accessibility and value for money.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Committee notes the content of this report, including the progress of the Brent Digital Strategy and its impact on the customer experience.
- 2.2 The Committee provides feedback on the proposed scope and underpinning principles of the forthcoming Brent Channel Strategy.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 The Brent Community Access Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in October 2014. It set out a vision for transforming the way in which customers were able to access information, advice and services at that time - including an improved digital offer with greater take up of digital channels, a more consistent and excellent customer experience, access arrangements to meet the differing needs of customers and more efficient demand management.
- 3.2 The Community Access Strategy was designed to support the wider aims of the previous Borough Plan, which has since been superseded by the Borough Plan 2015 – 2019 and, in response to further financial and political changes, the Brent 2020 Vision.
- 3.3 In June 2017 Cabinet agreed the Brent Digital Strategy 2017 – 2020. The Digital Strategy sets out a vision for a sustained programme of change where modern technology will be a catalyst for delivering each of the Brent 2020 priorities: Demand Management, Raising Income, Business and Housing Growth, Employment and Skills and Regeneration.
- 3.4 A digital work programme, which is overseen by the Brent Digital Board, was subsequently established to deliver this vision. The governance arrangements for the programme are included in Appendix 1.

Digital Strategy

- 3.5 The Digital Strategy superseded the Community Access Strategy through the objectives set out in its 'Demand Management (helping people to help themselves)' section. The first four of these objectives directly influence the experience of customers and other stakeholders in accessing services, as well as interacting with and working alongside the council. These objectives are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1:

Brent Digital Strategy (2017 – 2020) Demand Management - helping people to help themselves	
Objective	Additional Details
1. Design more effective and preventative service models.	This includes utilising advanced data analytics and business intelligence to design more personalised service models that promote self-help, self-care and pathways to partner organisations at earlier points in the customer journey.

<p>2. Make online the first choice for interacting with all council services.</p>	<p>This means providing a faster, better and enhanced user experience through a platform that works effectively across the preferred device of service users.</p> <p>This will be achieved by following user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design principles to ensure that the end user is always at the forefront of what constitutes 'good'; encouraging more customers to choose online and supporting the closure of higher cost channels.</p>
<p>3. Ensure all residents have access to the support they need to confidently access online information and services.</p>	<p>This includes increased access to free Wi-Fi and self-serve terminals at locations across Brent, as well as assistance for our most vulnerable residents in accessing services via a network of community hubs, delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector.</p>
<p>4. Integrate channels, applications and workflows to enable seamless end-to-end transactions across a wider range of services, increase automation and maximise the first touch capability of council officers.</p>	<p>Service users will only need to submit relevant details once. This is essential in allowing customers to independently complete full transactions and do business with the council at times of their choosing, providing a digital offer in-line with modern expectations, whilst freeing up officer time for higher value relational work.</p>

3.6 There are a range of projects and workstreams within the digital programme (and related work) that support the delivery of these objectives and will change the experience of service users. Throughout the life of the strategy the work programme will continue to grow and evolve in line with wider transformation work across the Council, but key examples of some of the work already underway are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2:

Objective	Workstream / Project
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Person Homelessness Pathway • Predictive modelling for earlier identification and intervention for those at risk of exploitation
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brent Customer Services (BCS) service offer pilot and redesign to support accelerated channel shift • Extension of and enhancements to Brent MyAccount • Brent website review
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harlesden Community Hub model expansion to additional locations • Futureproofing Brent's digital infrastructure
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRM build and roll out (first in Housing services then council-wide) • Integrated online form roll out • Introduction of new telephony system, increasing flexible working

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- 3.7 The overarching theme of this work is about making it quick and easy for customers to access services online via their preferred device 24/7, whilst promoting self-help and digital inclusion. It aims to provide a customer experience that meets the expectations set by modern online offers; where transactions can be completed in seconds and users can track the progress of service interactions in real time. This theme aligns with the 'Internet User Classification' map of Brent included in Appendix 2.
- 3.8 The other key theme acknowledges that there is a smaller but significant group of vulnerable service users that are not able to self-help or access services independently. This includes those with learning difficulties, mental health disabilities, severe physical disabilities, severe hearing and visual impairments, as well as those of pensionable age that are unable to navigate on-line services with assistance. For this cohort the future experience for accessing services will be more tailored to their needs, including appointments, relational support in community based settings and earlier interventions by core services. This theme aligns with the 'Older people in Brent' and 'People with disabilities in Brent' maps included in Appendix 2.
- 3.9 The Digital Strategy also includes a final Demand Management objective to '*Trial radical approaches and develop innovative solutions for new models of service delivery*'. Workstreams under this objective will trial and implement new technologies, including chatbots and next generation telephony, across multiple council departments and service areas. In some instances this work will support the closure of non-digital channels by enhancing the online offer and user experience, for example, for private landlord licencing services. In other areas transformation work with individual service areas (and stakeholders) will develop models that utilise both digital and traditional channels in new ways, which will impact the experience of different cohorts of service users.

Channel Strategy

- 3.10 To ensure consistency and provide greater clarity on how the Digital Strategy Demand Management objectives will change the customer experience across all council services and channels, an aligned Brent Channel Strategy is being developed.
- 3.11 The contact channels proposed to be included in scope of the Channel Strategy are detailed below. It is requested that the Committee provide feedback on this scope:
- Face to face
 - Email
 - Web
 - Phone
 - Mobile
 - Post
 - Social Media
 - Emerging channels (video, voice recognition / headless interface, virtual and augmented reality)

- 3.12 The Channel Strategy will incorporate the learning from the Brent Customer Services (BCS) pilot, which ran between June and September 2017 and evaluated the impact of a new service model that included accelerated channel shift delivered with significantly reduced resources. The outcomes of this pilot included reductions in phone calls received via the contact centre and reductions in face to face appointments, with a concurrent increase in take up of online self-service and digital assistance (in particular webchat). Feedback from customers that experienced the pilot offer, as well as levels of complaints, remained similar to what had been recorded over earlier periods.
- 3.13 A Channel Strategy paper is currently scheduled for Cabinet on 12 March 2018, which aligns it with a complementary paper setting out the evaluation of the Harlesden Community Hub pilot and proposals to expand the hub model to additional locations. This paper will include details of user experiences and the multiple needs identified throughout the pilot in providing services to vulnerable residents. The learning from this paper will also inform the Channel Strategy.
- 3.14 Additional current and planned work that will feed into the development of the Channel Strategy includes the rationalisation of published telephone numbers, email addresses and online forms; the migration of new services onto the Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system and comprehensive analysis of contact data across all channels. It will also include the final Brent website review report, which incorporates feedback from a number of workshops with a diverse range of residents and stakeholders.
- 3.15 It is proposed that the development of the Channel Strategy will be underpinned by principles derived from the Digital Strategy Demand Management objectives outlined in Table 3 (with additional details in Table 1). It is requested that the Committee provide feedback on these principles.

Table 3:

Proposed Channel Strategy Principles	
Digital Strategy (Demand Management) objective	Derived Channel Strategy Principle
1. Design more effective and preventative service models.	The service will promote self-help, preventative measures and support the most vulnerable in accessing it in the best way for them.
2. Make online the first choice for interacting with all council services.	Online will be the first choice for interacting with the service.
3. Ensure all residents have access to the support they need to confidently access online information and services.	Support in accessing services will meet the needs of the individual.
4. Integrate channels, applications and workflows to enable seamless end-to-end transactions across a wider range of services, increase automation and maximise the first touch capability of council officers.	Service users will only need to submit relevant details once.

Customer Promise

- 3.16 The Customer Promise was developed alongside the Community Access Strategy in 2014. Following consultation, five Customer Promise themes were later developed. These are the things that customers and members identified as being most important to them and the things that staff felt would inspire them to deliver excellent customer service. Full details of the customer promise and its themes are included in Appendix 3.
- 3.17 A scorecard based on the aims included in Customer Promise was developed to monitor delivery of these standards, but this did not include information relating to online services and performance relating to email, post and some face to face contacts required manual collection by departments.
- 3.18 Due to the complexities and inconsistencies in capturing this data it was not possible to use the scorecard to accurately monitor performance against the customer promise.
- 3.19 With the Community Access Strategy being superseded by the Digital Strategy and forthcoming Channel Strategy, new monitoring arrangements will be developed to reflect these changes. The monitoring arrangements for the Channel Strategy will remove reliance on manual collection of data by incorporating digital solutions, including the new CRM and telephony systems, to generate robust, real-time information showing how the council is performing against customer expectations. Accurate performance data will be available towards the end of 2018 and a baseline for the key measures of success and customer priorities will be gathered through the next Residents Attitude Survey, scheduled for May 2018.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Digital Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in June 2017, including £5.6M funding to deliver the digital programme.
- 4.2 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report other than that already approved by Cabinet in June 2017.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the Recommendations in this report.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 The changes to the service offer during the BCS pilot (outlined at 3.12) is the subject of an Equalities Analysis (EA). During the pilot period, due regard was given to vulnerable customers through the retention of appointments for them and additional staff support within the customer service centre for assistance in accessing online services. The learning from this model and its EA will inform development of the Channel Strategy.

6.2 Initial evaluation of the equalities implications of the Harlesden Hub Model and Brent Website Review are due to be completed by January 2018 and will also inform development of the Channel Strategy.

6.3 Additional work around the equalities implications of the Channel Strategy will commence when the scope and principles are agreed.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 The Lead Member for Digital (The Deputy Leader) was consulted throughout the development of the Brent Digital Strategy and is its champion.

7.2 This paper is part of the pre-policy consultation work for the Channel Strategy.

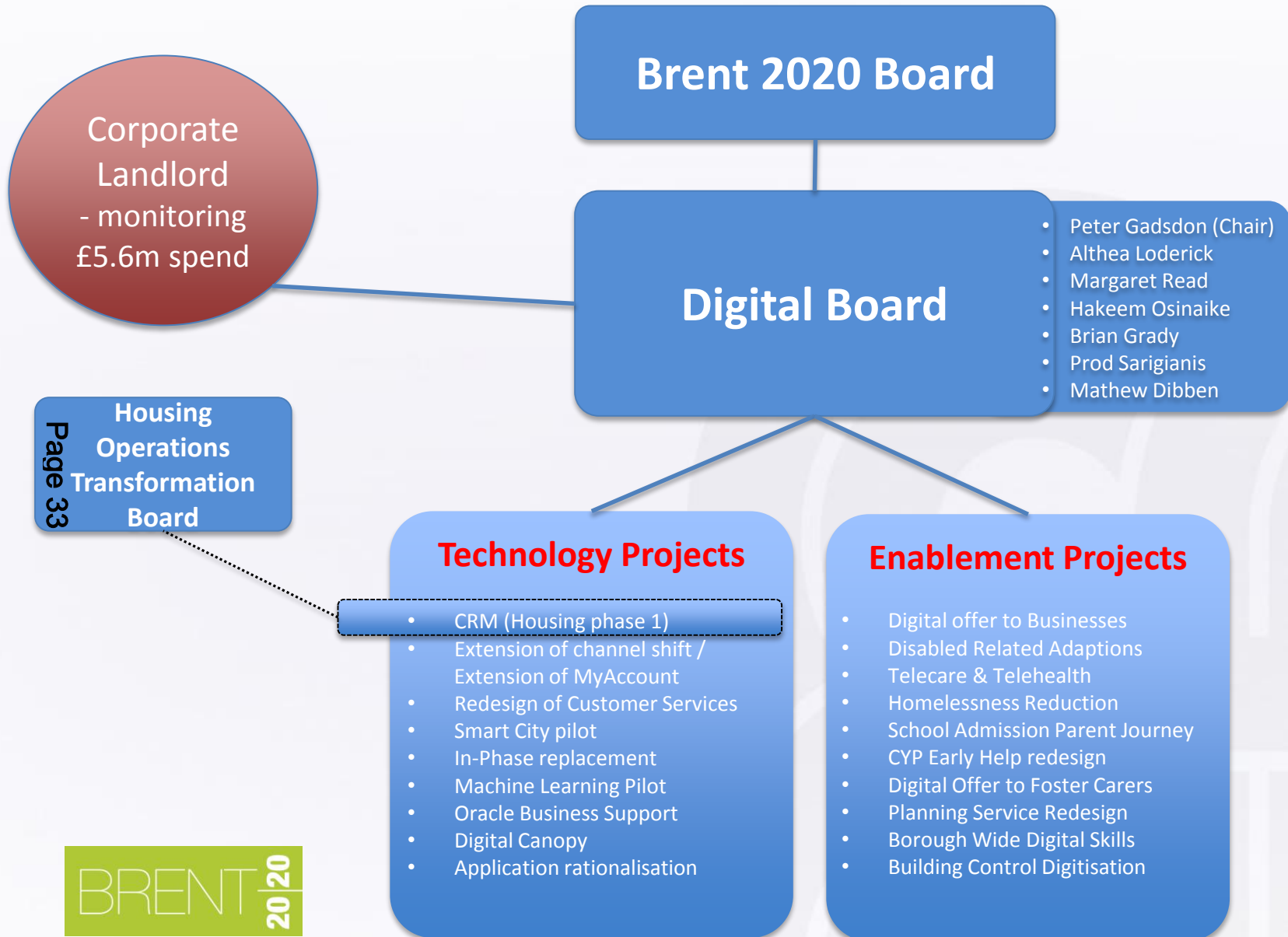
Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

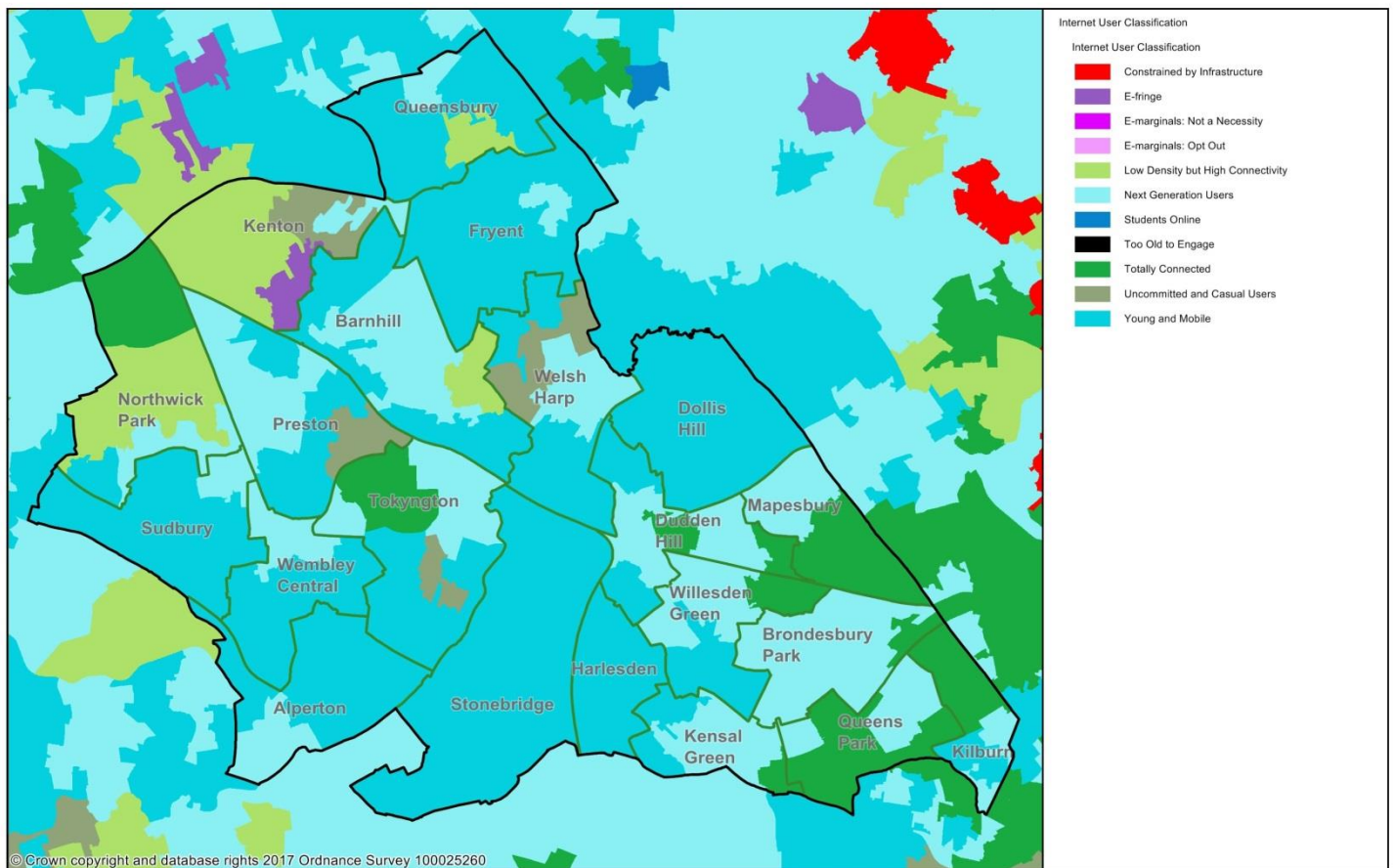
Strategic Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

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Digital Programme Governance



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07 December 2017

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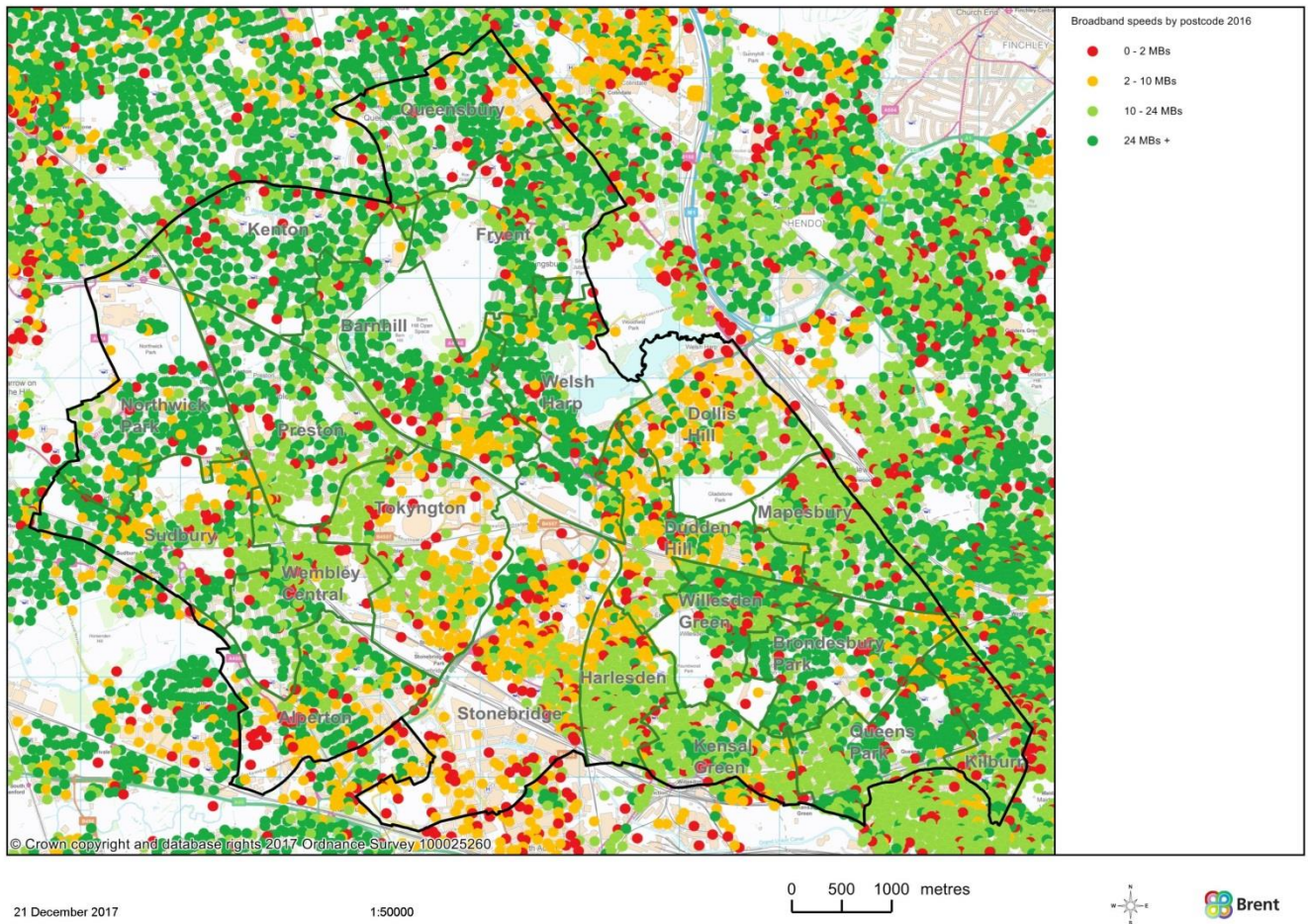
Internet User Classification in Brent

This geodemographic classification maps digital consumers by combining over seventy measures selected from survey and lifestyle data, alongside census and infrastructure performance statistics.

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/the-2014-internet-user-classification--iuc---lsoa>

Each group is named and given an informal description of their characterising traits. The top groups in Brent are:

"Young and mobile"	48%	The Young and Mobile Group is predominantly young and has a tendency to access the Internet using mobile devices rather than fixed line connections. This Group is found in major urban conurbations where population density is above average and infrastructure provision is sufficient to support heavy mobile broadband usage. These areas are typically inner city or city fringe and experience mixed levels of material deprivation.
"Next Generation Users"	27%	The Next Generation Users Group is characterised by high levels of engagement across all applications of the Internet. Members of this Group are heavy smartphone users and typically access the Internet on the move and for applications such as email, social networking and navigation. However, they favour fixed line connections for most other tasks such as general browsing and seeking information.
"Totally Connected"	15%	This Group displays a clear preference to use the Internet by default for almost all applications. Members of this Group access the Internet through multiple devices, whilst on the move and in the home to ensure seamless connectivity.
"Low Density but High Connectivity"	5%	Despite disparate populations, this Group is generally well connected and displays the strongest infrastructure and performance characteristics within the Supergroup, generally falling in line with the national average.



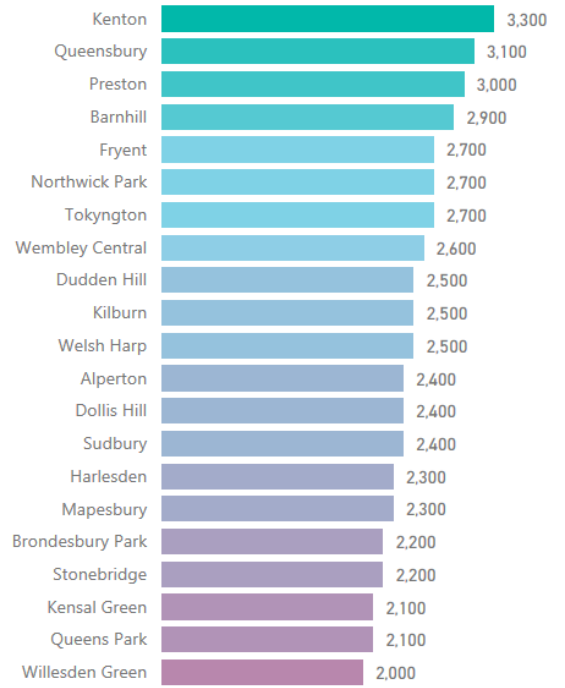
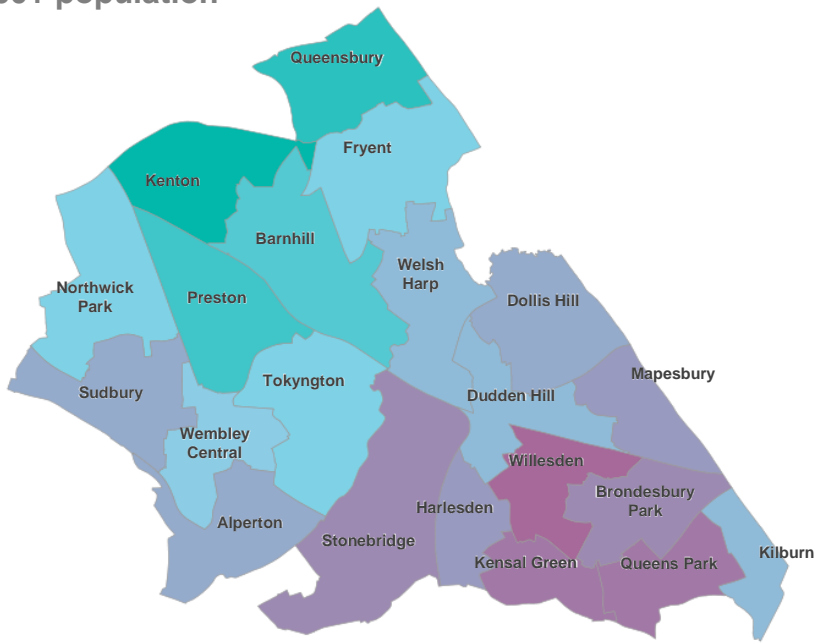
Broadband speeds by postcode 2016

Speeds based on broadband coverage and broadband speed data from major fixed telecoms operators (BT, Virgin Media, Sky, Talk Talk and KCOM) aggregated at postcode level. The availability data also includes coverage information provided by five alternative network providers (Cityfibre, Gigaclear, Hyperoptic, IFNL and Relish).

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2016>

The areas of weaker connectivity generally align with some of Brent's more deprived areas and housing estates. Support will be provided to ensure residents in these areas are able to access online services.

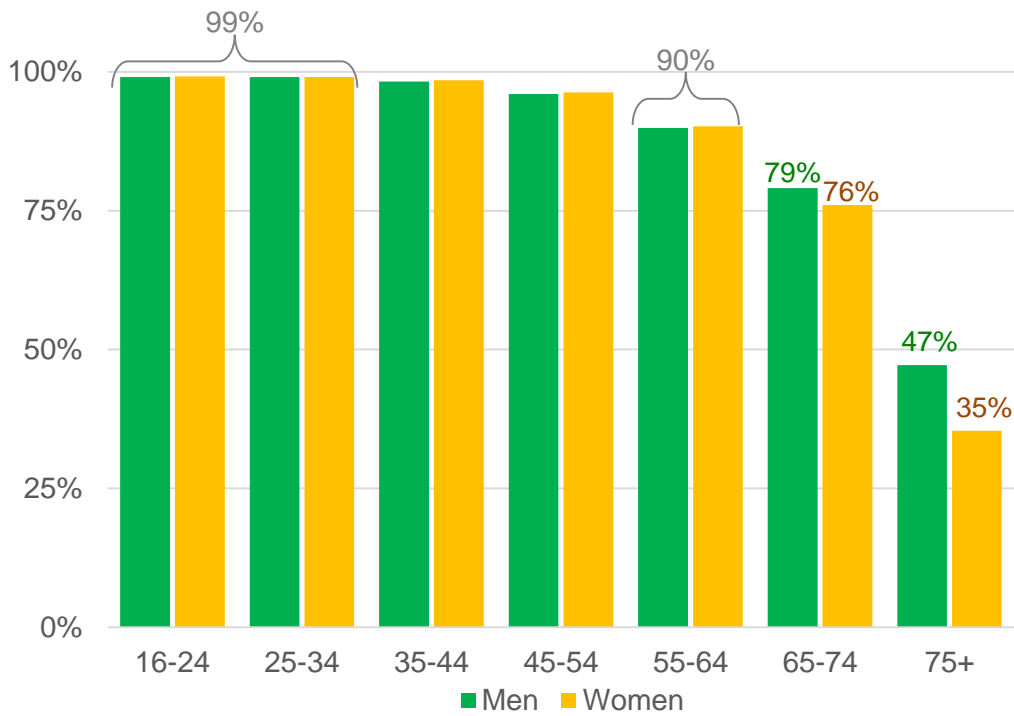
60+ population



© Crown copyright and database rights 2017 Ordnance Survey 100025260

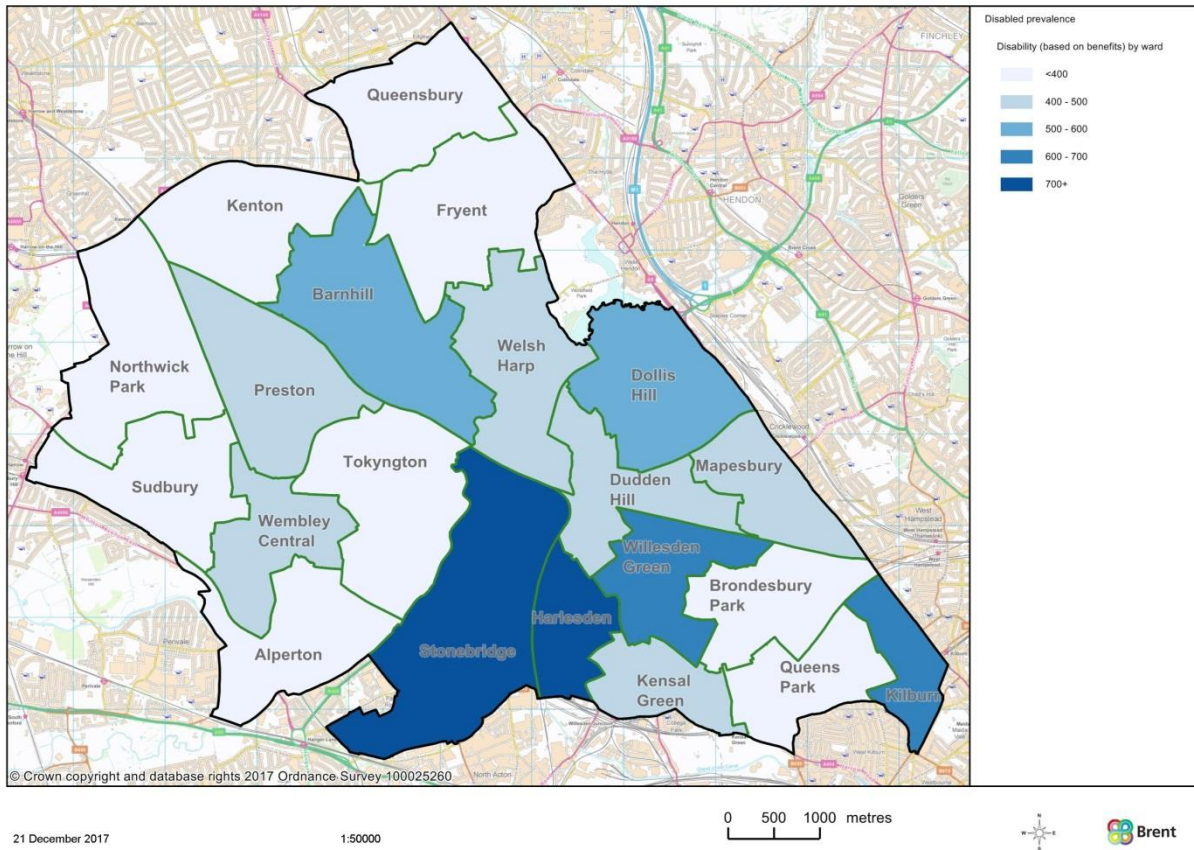
Older people in Brent

GLA estimates for 2017 (round to nearest 100)



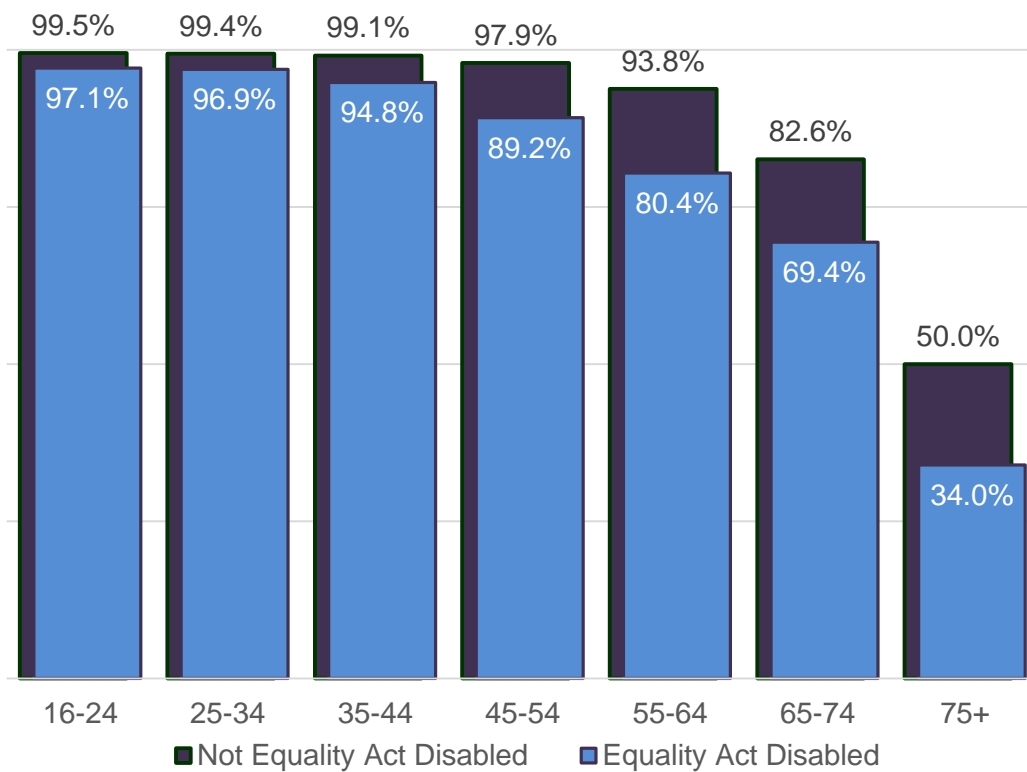
% UK population accessing the internet in the last 3 months (age and gender)

ONS -UK Internet Users, 2017



Disabled people in Brent

Based on receipt of disability related benefits



% UK population accessing the internet in the last 3 months (age and disability)

ONS - UK Internet Users, 2017

Customer Promise

Our commitment to you

You have the right to expect good quality, easily accessible council services and information.

Our service standards apply to everyone working for us.

We aim to:

- make it easy for you to access our building and find what you need
- welcome and greet you within five minutes of arriving at a customer service centre
- ensure that you do not have to wait for more than 30 minutes to be seen by an officer before your enquiry can be handled
- answer all calls received and respond to voicemails and messages within 1 working day
- acknowledge written enquires (by post or fax) within five working days
- respond to written enquiries within 10 working days
- acknowledge emails within 2 working days
- respond to email and SMS enquiries within 10 working days
- respond to all stage 1 complaints within 20 working days
- respond to all stage 2 complaints within 30 working days.

You can expect:

- all of our staff to be fully trained, customer service professionals
- us to help you with any council enquiry, complaint or suggestion
- to be given a warm and enthusiastic welcome
- to be provided with up to date information about your enquiry or complaint whenever you ask us
- to be sensitive to your needs and do our best to ensure that you can make best use of our service.

You can help us by:


- giving us all the information we need to help you
- letting us know if you have any special needs
- telling us how we can improve our services
- asking us to explain anything you're not sure of

Customer Promise Themes

These are the things that customers and members identified as being most important to them and the things that staff felt would inspire them to deliver excellent customer service.

- Respect
- Ownership
- Honesty
- Feedback
- Time

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 Brent	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 9 January 2018
	Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment
Review of Recycling Rates in Brent	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Kelly Eaton, Public Realm Projects and Policy Manager Email: kelly.eaton@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 5565

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee have requested a report to assist their understanding of the Borough's recycling rate. They are concerned recycling rates are not rising and wish to investigate this by comparing rates with other similar authorities to determine how performance might be improved.
- 1.2 To further assist this process, Committee Members seek specific information as follows:
- How does our performance compare to other authorities?
 - What can we do reduce food waste in the recycling stream?
 - What new technology could be deployed to improve recycling?

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the information provided in this report.

3.0 Detail

Recycling in the UK

- 3.1 Currently, the EU requires Britain to achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2020. The current overall English recycling rate is around 44%, with Brent's recycling rate during 2017/18 currently at 37%. This is increasing slightly every year. The rate is based on the material we send for reuse, recycling or composting; including food waste and garden waste. It does not include the disposal of wood.

Comparison with other London Boroughs.

- 3.2 The figures below show the recycling rates for all London Boroughs for 2016/17. Brent sits in the top half of the table but has a slightly lower recycling rate than the comparative boroughs within the West London Waste Authority grouping. However, with around 50% of our properties being flats, the second most ethnically diverse borough in the country and a large transient population, Brent has a higher recycling rate than authorities with a similar demographic such as Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

Authority	2016/17 Recycling Rate (lowest first)
Newham	14.1%
Westminster	17.4%
Lewisham	17.7%
Wandsworth	21.9%
Hammersmith & Fulham	23.2%
Barking & Dagenham	25.3%
Kensington & Chelsea	25.7%
Camden	26.6%
Redbridge	26.7%
Hackney	27%
Tower Hamlets	27.6%
City of London	28.5%
Lambeth	28.8%
Hounslow	30.1%
Islington	31.6%
Southwark	34%
Waltham Forest	34.4%
Greenwich	34.9%
Haringey	35.7%
Merton	35.7%
Brent	36.4%
Sutton	36.5%
Enfield	37.2%
Havering	37.3%
Barnet	37.4%
Croydon	38.6%
Harrow	39.7%
Richmond	42.4%
Hillingdon	43.4%
Bromley	46.9%
Kingston	47%
Ealing	50.7%
Bexley	52.7%

Recycling in Brent

- 3.3 Whilst our recycling rate is reported annually to the government's database Waste Data Flow for publication, the new Veolia Contract in 2014 stated that Veolia should concentrate their focus on reducing the residual waste tonnage that was sent to landfill, by encouraging positive public behaviour with regards to waste minimisation and maximising the amount of waste segregated for reuse, recycling, composting and recovery. The particular strategic principle of the contract specified that Veolia would achieve this by "engaging with residents, businesses and communities in Brent to help them use the services provided to increase the quality and quantity of materials collected and to reduce the amount of residual waste generated. This work will be carried out by Veolia's Community Engagement Team and will be supported by our Veolia's Operations Team who will ensure the quality of materials is maintained at every stage of collection."

Residual Waste Tonnage Position

- 3.4 In practical terms, the tonnage collected by Veolia for 2016/17 for each material stream was as set out in the table below. These figures also include the residual tonnage collected from street cleansing as well as from households. It should also be noted that the vast majority of residual waste is being sent to the WLWA Energy from Waste Facility in Bristol, and is no longer being sent to landfill.

	Tonnes
Residual	73,007
Recycling	20,113
Composting (including garden and food waste)	12,284

- 3.5 Our recycling rate in 2016/17 was 36.4% and is projected to be around 37% for 2017/18. Therefore, even with an increased number of properties in Brent in the last year, our recycling rate is increasing at a slow but steady pace.

How can we improve this?

- 3.6 Veolia's Education Officers visit individual properties who are recorded as having contaminated their recycling bins. Our database shows that for the month of November 2017 (YTD), there had been 2230 requests for visits by an education officer to properties who had issues with contamination of their recycling bin.
- 3.7 Veolia have produced a sticker which can be placed on the recycling bin to assist residents in a visual way to understand what can be placed inside and what needs to go in other bins. This is also currently available in Wembley Library and we will look to make this available in every library in 2018. The education officers should also be placing one of these stickers onto the lid of every bin that they find still contaminated when they visit.
- 3.8 In early 2018, we will be reviewing our bulky waste collection service to determine if we can provide a re-use and/or recycling service to our residents for large items. This will provide a potential increase in our recycling performance and a reduction

in our residual waste tonnage.

- 3.9 A recent project in conjunction with WLWA that looked at food waste recycling in Brent identified the possibility of our collection crews collecting food waste bins with food waste that is wrapped in carrier bags as recycling, rather than as general waste. More food waste is wrapped in carrier bags in our communal food waste bins in blocks of flats than in the individual household recycling containers. WLWA have advised us that the end processor is able to process carrier bags meaning we have the potential to significantly increase the amount of food waste by capturing that which is currently considered to be contaminated. A report on the outcomes of this project is due in early 2018.
- 3.10 The same project also examined the use of a 'no food waste' sticker on general waste bins. This is seen as a positive and easy way of telling residents that food waste is something that should be recycled. The impact of the trial will be reported in early 2018. As food waste is generally the heaviest component of waste in a general waste bin (and can constitute on average a third of the waste in a general waste bin) any project designed to have this amount of food waste recycled has the potential to increase our recycling tonnage and rate quite significantly.
- 3.11 We have also just been awarded a £5000 grant from Recycle for London to participate in a recycling campaign - One Bin is Rubbish. This will involve the use of vehicle advertising, an advert in the spring edition of The Brent Magazine and social media advertising on the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts in early 2018.

How to reduce the amount of food waste in our recycling?

- 3.12 Food waste is also currently the top contaminant in our recycling bins. Figures from our sorting facility (MRF) state that around 3-4% of our dry recycling (which equates to around 70 tonnes per month) is actually contaminating food waste. This can be reduced by better communication regarding food waste and by gaining a better understanding of the type of food waste that is being placed into recycling bins. We will also seek to carry out analysis on whether this is occurring more at individual houses or at blocks of flats. Tailored communications will be more possible once we have this information.

The use of technology in increasing our recycling rate

- 3.13 We have commissioned a recycling search facility and an app called Recyclepedia. This tool allows residents to search for an item and see which bin it should be placed in. Recent figures suggest that there are between 4-5,000 searches taking place by Brent residents every month. Technology is being utilised at the moment by companies to focus on how to better recycle existing items, particularly those containing Styrofoam, polystyrene and polyethylene, which is currently found in all the soft plastics that cannot currently be recycled by Brent, such as carrier bags and bread wrappers. These advances will greatly assist on an environmental level. They may not impact so greatly on our recycling rate, as items made of these materials tend to be extremely light. Reuse, waste minimisation and the use of a MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) are all, in their own way, innovative methods of increasing recycling and reducing the amount or

waste generated by Brent residents. We continue to watch for emerging technology that will assist us in increasing our recycling rate.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 None required at this stage.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications


8.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

Report sign off:

Amar Dave

Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment

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	<p align="center">Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 9 January 2018</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment</p>
<p align="center">Review of Trading Standards' Role and Priority Areas</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Not applicable
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trading Standards Annual Report • Trading Standards Priorities • Trading Standards Departmental Objectives
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Simon Legg, Senior Service Manager Email: simon.legg@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 5522

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) have requested a report to assist their understanding of the three following areas regarding the Council's Trading Standards Service:

1. Analysis on the role of Trading Standards in 2017
2. Are we targeting the correct areas?
3. What do the public want trading standards to do?

1.2 To further assist this process, Committee Members will meet a selection of frontline Trading Standards staff on 8 January 2018 ahead of their committee meeting, to provide some background to their work and give examples of current investigations and/or assignments. Members can ask questions and hear first-hand what sort of service is being delivered and how this seeks to benefit our local resident and business communities.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Detail

Introducing the Service

- 3.1 The Trading Standards Service (TS) has operated on a joint consortium basis between the London Borough of Brent and the London Borough of Harrow for over 50 years, with Brent being the host authority.
- 3.2 TS performs the statutory role of a 'weights and measures authority' with the responsibility of enforcing more than 250 pieces of legislation which cover a wide ranging remit. The legislation we have a duty to enforce continues to rise with law to ensure lettings and property management agents are transparent with their fees and the rules controlling standardised packaging for tobacco products being examples of the most recent additions.

Joint Advisory Board

- 3.3 The consortium agreement between the two boroughs requires the Councils to operate a 'Joint Advisory Board' whose role is to advise the Service on the discharge of its duties, provide oversight and to consider papers reporting on the level of fees charged, budget options, the annual report and any other managerial reports concerning the provision of the Service.
- 3.4 The Joint Advisory board comprises of three elected members from each Council. The current Brent members include Councillor Jones, Councillor Long and Councillor Perrin and for Harrow Councillor Ferry, Councillor Mithani and Councillor Parmar.
- 3.5 The board is required to meet a minimum of three times per year, with the last meeting held on 23 November 2017.

Staffing

- 3.6 The Service has a structure of 19 members of staff divided between the two boroughs. At present, the team has six vacant posts and one further officer absent on maternity leave making a current total of 12 staff.
- 3.7 Of these twelve staff, 3.5 work in the Harrow team, 4.5 work in the Brent team and the remaining 4 are two Financial Investigators, the Prosecutor and Service Manager. Whilst officers are allocated to specific Borough teams, they support each other with a flexible approach when demand requires larger staff numbers or if specific expertise is needed.
- 3.8 Our two Financial Investigators are engaged solely with financial investigations under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and whilst qualified to carry out Trading Standards duties, do not do this routinely. The Service Prosecutor is responsible

for all the team's legal proceedings which we conduct ourselves. The Prosecutor is currently also covering a vacant Team Leader position whilst a Senior Enforcement Officer is acting up in the role of the second, vacant Team Leader position. These arrangements mean there is currently a total of seven frontline staff between the two Boroughs. The Service is managed by Simon Legg, who reports to Regeneration Operational Director, Aktar Choudhury.

- 3.9 The current levels of staff represent a significant decline over the last 10 years, demonstrated by comparison of staff numbers in 2007 where the Service employed a total of 34.
- 3.10 All enforcement staff, have either attained, or are studying a recognised formal Trading Standards qualification. Three members of staff hold a statutory weights and measures qualification and two have achieved Chartered Practitioner status demonstrating we have a qualified and highly competent workforce.

Annual Report

- 3.11 The Consortium Agreement between the two Boroughs, requires the Service to produce an annual report to be presented to the Joint Advisory Board. A copy of the Service's last annual report is attached, referenced as Appendix A. This document will provide the Committee with an accurate summary of the range of work undertaken last financial year and some of our key achievements.
- 3.12 The Service delivered a mixed variety of work during the last financial year. This included completing over 80 written investigation reports, undertaking 14 prosecutions, issuing approximately 100 warning letters, providing more than 250 hours of primary authority advice (a service whereby businesses pay for our advice), responding to over 370 trader enquiries, conducting 260 underage test purchase visits and providing a financial investigation service not just internally, but also to other local authorities.

Other Successes

- 3.13 We have seen a number of notable investigations conclude during 2017 with the Courts awarding custodial sentences demonstrating the seriousness and complexity of some of the cases we investigate.
- 3.14 Examples include an event day street trader who employed over 30 staff to sell illegal football programmes, being sentenced in April to 14 months in prison, suspended for two years. In June, the Director of a travel agency who conned thousands of pounds out of unsuspecting holiday makers selling non-existent flights was sentenced to 12 months in prison although he has since been released on appeal. In August a man operating online from a storage base in Alpertons was given a six months suspended sentence and ordered to complete 180 hours of unpaid work, pay costs of £12,500 and a confiscation order of £19,674 for selling thousands of pounds worth of counterfeit toners, memory cards and mobile phone accessories. Another trader was fined £5,000 and given an 18 month suspended sentence after he was caught with more than 30,000 counterfeit souvenir sewn on patches.

- 3.15 Other achievements during the year have included organising various community events aimed at raising awareness of scams and doorstep crime. The last event in October, was delivered with Age UK where TS presented along with Councillor Butt and Councillor Hirani. Our role supporting vulnerable residents was quoted throughout the event by other partner agencies who addressed the audience.
- 3.16 The Service continues with its partnership agreements supporting the work of the National Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending and the Scam Teams. Both these areas of work support the Council's statutory duty to prevent financial abuse under the Care Act 2014 and we are members of each Borough's Local Safeguarding Adults Board.
- 3.17 The Service's Financial Investigators remain well respected securing over 70 confiscation orders since the team's creation, which has resulted in over £2.3m being paid back to local authorities via the Home Office incentivisation scheme. This has placed Brent Council as one of the highest performing local authorities in the whole of the UK for asset recovery.

Publicity and Public Relations

- 3.18 The Service's successes are regularly featured in local and national press resulting in positive news stories for the Borough which frequently rank as the most read on the Council's website. We work closely with the Council's Communications Team issuing 16 TS press releases during 2017 and responding to numerous media enquiries. Three of our investigations have featured on BBC television this year during prime time viewing.
- 3.19 In September 2017, we took part in a London wide campaign organised via London Trading Standards (LTS) aimed at increasing awareness of TS work across the capital. The following themes were covered; underage sales of knives, letting agents, scams/doorstep crime, supporting business and product safety.
- 3.20 We scheduled daily activities relevant to these themes and publicised our actions locally on an individual basis, whilst LTS produced media coverage on a collective basis from all London authorities who took part. This campaign resulted in an impressive 17,000 views of the 13 Tweets posted on the Council's Twitter pages as well as additional coverage in a range of media outlets.
- 3.21 The Service engaged in other public relations events such as the London Illicit Tobacco Week and Scams Awareness Week. We have publicised awareness of illegal money lending, debt advice and designed publicity materials to alert business owners of the dangers of selling acid or other harmful chemicals in response to the rise in acid attacks across London.

Determining our Priorities

- 3.22 The Service has to determine how best to undertake its duties within the allocated level of resources. We continually consider the balance between 'preventative' measures that reduce long term demands on the Service and avoid problems escalating into something bigger and 'reactive' measures, such as responding to service requests from consumers and businesses. These are often received from

members of the public who have exhausted all avenues of redress and are in desperate need for help, support, advice and if necessary rely on TS to take formal actions to bring about a resolution to their disputes.

- 3.23 In recent years, the Service has increased its offering to businesses to align itself with corporate priorities of each Council. We seek to ensure we offer effective regulatory advice so traders can operate their business understanding their legal responsibilities and providing them with confidence in the way they trade.
- 3.24 When determining the sort of work we should undertake, we strive to satisfy local, regional and national priorities as well as ensuring we meet as many statutory obligations as possible.

Local Priorities

- 3.25 On a local basis, each Borough has a documented corporate plan setting out what they want to achieve. Brent has a 'Borough Plan 2015-2019' and Harrow an 'Ambition Plan 2020'. These plans highlight the broad subject areas listed below as priority areas for each Council:

Brent: ¹

- Better Lives
- Better Place
- Better Locally

Harrow:²

- Build a Better Harrow
- Be More Business-like and Business Friendly
- Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families

National Priorities

- 3.26 In a wider setting, the National Trading Standards (NTS) funded by the Department for Business, Energy, & industrial Strategy, identifies priorities that apply to the Trading Standards profession across the country. These are researched by the national intelligence team who have expertise to identify and analyse country wide trends and emerging threats enabling targeted enforcement of problem areas.
- 3.27 Whilst there is no legal compulsion for us to have any regard to these priorities, being intelligence lead allows a specific focus on real time problems. Many of the subject areas they identify will be things that apply to our local communities so there is benefit aligning our work with their current priorities, which are summarised below.
- Doorstep Crime – Safeguarding of vulnerable adults and consumers
 - Scams - disrupting and reducing consumers exposure to scams
 - Fair trading issues - reducing incidents of bad practices and their impact
 - E-crime - disrupting trading crime perpetrated on-line
 - Product Safety - improving intervention on unsafe products, including points

¹ <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>

² http://www.harrow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8431/harrow_ambition_plan

- of entry into England and Wales
- Illegal Money Lending – disrupting operations and reducing exposure to those most at risk
- Intellectual Property (counterfeiting) - disrupting operations and support partnership working

Regional Priorities

- 3.28 A similar exercise is carried out regionally by London Trading Standards (LTS) who represent the 33 local authority Trading Standards Services across London. A regional intelligence officer looks at areas or business sectors causing a high amount of consumer detriment across London and produces quarterly reports of this information in a document called a 'Tactical Assessment'.
- 3.29 This document also features 'horizon scanning' to help predict what people might be complaining about before it happens, so preventative work could be scheduled. LTS has highlighted the following priority areas of work for its members:
- Doorstep Crime and Mass Marketing Fraud
 - Fair Trading – focusing on sales of second-hand cars
 - Intellectual Property Crime (counterfeiting)
 - Product Safety
 - Sales of age-restricted goods in the informal economy
- 3.30 It should also be noted that work identified nationally or regionally as a priority, can also provide sources of external funding or resource on occasions. For example, the NTS Regional Investigation Team seconded an officer for the majority of 2017 to assist us investigating a cross border scam involving a rogue kitchen fitting company and we are currently bidding for funding to assist with the investigation of a second hand car trader who we have received complaints about.

Annual Work Plan

- 3.31 Each year, in accordance with the consortium agreement, the Service produces an annual work plan which provides an estimated number and type of activities to be achieved during the financial year. The Lead Member, Senior Management and Harrow's Commissioning Officer and Head of Service are given the opportunity to contribute and are consulted over the report's contents before it is presented to the Joint Advisory Board.
- 3.32 This can be very challenging with current levels of resource, especially with the need to carry out statutory functions which may not fit into the above local, regional or national priorities. A report was presented in October 2016 to the Joint Advisory Board for discussion titled 'Trading Standards Priorities' to engage with members to see what areas of our work they wanted the Service to focus on.
- 3.33 Appendix B, shows our current, high, medium and low priority areas of work, taken from our annual work plan.
- 3.34 In addition to our annual work plan, we have some specific responsibilities detailed in our departmental service plan which sets out how Regeneration and

Environment will contribute to the delivery of Borough's priorities. These objectives are detailed in Appendix C.

Service Requests

- 3.35 During 2017, the Service received approximately 5,500 service requests from members of the public or local businesses. As is typical with most Trading Standards authorities across the country, we work in partnership with the Government funded Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) who act as our first point of contact with member of the public.
- 3.36 CACS provide specialist first tier advice which includes civil law, (a task highly valued by members of the public that there is no legal requirement for Trading Standards to provide).
- 3.37 CACS record all the relevant contact details and take case notes which are then electronically distributed to the relevant Trading Standards authorities and downloaded daily. Information is passed to us as a 'referral' which usually means there is a breach of criminal Trading Standards enforced legislation, or as a 'notification' which is where the data is for our information only.
- 3.38 Whilst there is no requirement for us to do anything with these notifications, they are reviewed so that we know which businesses are a source of complaint and why, or to double check information as we have access and may know more about a business or subject areas and hold local intelligence that suggests our intervention is necessary.
- 3.39 The first tier advice provided by CACS ensures all members of the public receive reliable guidance and access to help from the CACS website which contains template letters etc. Where a member of the public needs help from a different source such as an energy regulator, the police or a financial authority for example, CACS can make sure they are correctly directed.
- 3.40 There are occasions where members of the public misunderstand the role or remit of Trading Standards or have unrealistic expectations. We can't act in civil disputes or 'close businesses down' as is sometimes incorrectly implied. Unfortunately on occasions, businesses provide goods or services that fall below customer expectations yet still meet legal requirements or the circumstances do not fall foul of any criminal laws which would allow us to investigate.
- 3.41 Whilst we do investigate some 'fraudulent' businesses, there are no powers available to us under the Fraud Act or any statutory responsibility to enforce this legislation so in cases where there is fraudulent activity, but no breach of other Trading Standards legislation which might otherwise give us some enforcement powers, there is often little that we can do to investigate.
- 3.42 In other circumstances, we might not be able to assist a consumer based on their evidence alone, especially if they have only limited reliable evidence. However, if their experience is added to that of others who we may know about to evidence a regular pattern of wrong doing for example, this may give grounds for Trading Standards to then act.

- 3.43 It is important to note that with our current levels of resource, it would be impossible for us to individually investigate each and every allegation reported to us. Instead, TS need to apply some form of filtering to its incoming service requests to manage and prioritise this demand.
- 3.44 Accordingly, the Service operates a matrix system where service requests sent to us by CACS as referrals, are assessed by an experienced officer and given a risk rating. This takes into account the available evidence, the seriousness of the matter, the impact and risk of the allegation, a business's previous trading history, the alleged financial gain and any publicity that may arise from the case.
- 3.45 All high priority cases will be assigned to an officer for further investigation, medium risk cases may or may not be assigned for investigation and generally, low risk cases will not receive any investigation time. This matrix system does not apply to service requests received from businesses. They all get responded to no matter what the content to assist the Council's objective of supporting the local business economy.
- 3.46 At the time of writing this report, approximately 850 service requests, received during 2017, have been investigated by our Officers.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The gross cost of the TS Service is £1,362,710 although with a total income projection of £1,049,000, the net cost of is £313,710. The London Borough of Harrow pays £625,000 p/a for their proportion of the budget.
- 4.2 The Service is currently forecasting a year end underspend which is largely attributed to the savings achieved from vacant posts.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 The contents of this report have been screened to assess their relevance to equality and were found to have no equality implications.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 Individual Ward Members do not need to be consulted about this report.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications

- 8.1 There are no staffing or property implications arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Amar Dave
Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment



Brent & Harrow Trading Standards

Annual report
2016-2017

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Introduction

This Annual Report highlights some of the key work outcomes delivered by the Trading Standards Service for the period of the April 2016 to March 2017.

The Service is managed by Simon Legg with Anu Prashar and Samuel Abdullahi covering the two Team Leader roles for most of the year.

The Service Manager reports to an Operational Director, Aktar Choudhury who responsible for the 'Standards and Enforcement' team which includes Trading Standards, Food Safety and Planning Enforcement. This team sits within the wider Regeneration and Environment directorate.

The Service has sadly lost three valued, long term members of staff during this period with a fourth being off from 2017 on maternity leave. Recognising the current financial challenges faced by the public sector, the Service has operated throughout 2016/17 with reduced levels of staffing following these departures and existing staff vacancies in order to assist achieving required departmental savings.

This has inevitably effected the performance of the Service in some areas of work. Nevertheless, staff have worked hard throughout the year to deliver a range of successful outcomes.

The Trading Standards profession has been subject to several national reviews during this period many of which recognise the resourcing difficulties faced by local authorities. The broad consensus of these reports, is that regional working is the way the profession to find economies of scale and to match the skills its offers, to the needs of an area.

Our joint consortium offers a micro example of the sort of regional working that is being suggested. I am certain that the continued partnership between the London Borough of Brent and the London Borough of Harrow has made the Service more resilient to some of the demands placed upon us during the year and has contributed to some of our successes.

Consumers in the UK take a lot for granted such as the products they buy being safe, not be defrauded, the things they buy by volume or weight are correct and that businesses trade in a fair environment. Our work is central to creating a well-placed, confident and prosperous market. I hope the work in this report evidences our commitment and contribution to making this happen.

Budget

The joint partnership between Brent and Harrow, means that the consortium is able to share many of the costs associated with providing the Service to help provide efficiencies. Throughout the year, all expenditure was kept to the absolute minimum following a forensic review of all budgets throughout the whole of the Regeneration and Environment directorate and income opportunities were maximised.

The table below shows the consortium budget since 2008/2009:

Date	Budget
2008/09	£1,772,000
2009/10	£1,702,000
2010/11	£1,673,000
2011/12	£1,274,000
2012/13	£1,274,000
2013/14	£1,299,000
2014/15	£ 864,000
2015/16	£ 379,600
2016/17	£ 313,710

It should be noted that the budget from 2014/15 is not a like for like comparison due Brent Council changing the way it accounts for overheads. Prior to 2014/15 costs such as accommodation, financial support, HR support, IT, telephones, printing, copying and administrative support were included in the services' budget costs. These components of the services' costs are now centrally accounted and this has made comparison of budget prior to 2014 difficult.

In addition, the service commits to meet the cost of providing our financial investigations team through a net contribution to the service from proceeds of crime of £250,000 p.a. This saw each Borough receiving £125,000 following the end of the financial year.

There was no change in the contribution to Brent from Harrow for these service costs for 2016/17.

Supporting Business

The Service has continued to contribute towards both Borough's objectives of supporting business growth by delivering effective regulation for the benefit of legitimate businesses. Some examples of us achieving this are summarised below:

Primary Authority

We continued throughout the year to promote the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Primary Authority scheme to businesses offering assured, tailored advice to help businesses ensure that they comply with the law. The scheme enables businesses to form a statutory partnership with one local authority, providing robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or addressing non-compliance.

This helps reduce businesses costs and assures those in trade, that what they are doing will not be subject to challenge elsewhere. This is advice and support above that normally offered and local authorities are permitted to charge for the service to cover the costs of providing it. The charge for 2016/17 was either £54 or £68 per hour depending on the type of contact a business opted for.



An officer checks this Primary Authority Customer's Stock

I am pleased to report that during 2016/17, we recruited the national producer of beers and spirits, Diageo, to the scheme. We provided our other members with a total of 248 of Primary Authority advice. This is up on the previous year of 177 hours but is still below the 311 hours provided in 2013/14 which was the first year that we introduced this work.

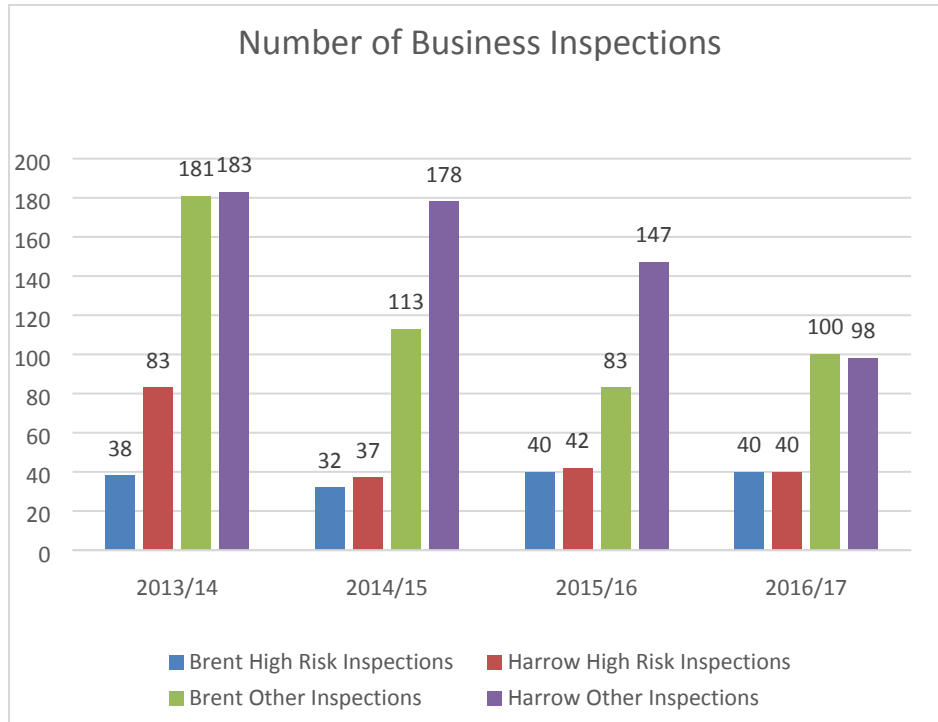
We continually look for new members to recruit to the scheme and strive to attract larger contracts to generate a higher number of hours of support which we offer a business. In January 2017, an article offering our Primary Authority service was published in the 'Brent Business News' publication and we will continue to engage with business groups to market this service.

Inspections

All of our business inspections are conducted in on a risk based approach. They are not routine, instead being based on need determined by intelligence, risk and a trader's past compliance history.

On some occasions, the Consumer Rights Act 2015 applies to our officers which requires them to give two days written notice to business owners of their intension to carry out an inspection unless a specific exemption exists.

The numbers of inspections and comparisons to previous years, are shown on the table below:

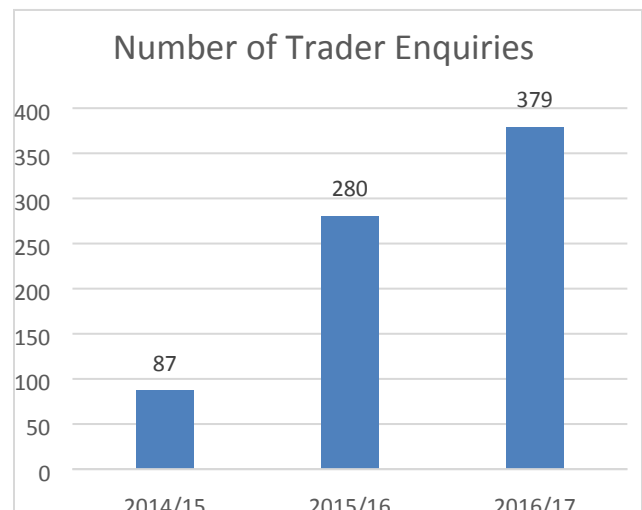


In our experience, it is a common myth that businesses find regulatory visits a burden on them. We find quite the opposite, with inspections providing a good opportunity to provide face to face contact, build relationships and for us to fully be able to understand what is happening in the borough’s businesses.

Trader Enquiries

When we are contacted by local businesses asking for our assistance or if a Primary Authority customer requests us to carry out some work for them, these requests are logged and recorded on our system as ‘Trader Enquiries’.

The table opposite shows the rise in the number of these enquiries. The greater number of requests received over the last two years is a clear reflection on the Service’s emphasis to better engage and offer greater support to our local business community. We aim to contact to all such enquirers within 48hrs of their enquiry being received (excluding weekend contacts).



Responsible Trader Scheme

The Service continued to promote the Responsible Trader scheme to all businesses in Brent & Harrow selling age restricted products following the scheme's refreshed training materials which were updated early 2016. The scheme is still free to join and provides businesses with training, advice and marketing materials to use with their staff and customers.

A total of 36 members received audit visit to ensure the scheme's terms and conditions were being adhered to and standards maintained.

Responsible
Trader Scheme



Trading Standards Webpage

During the summer of 2016, the Brent Council Trading Standards webpages were updated making them more eye-catching and user friendly. Important the Service was given its own link to our pages from the 'business' section of the website and a new page explaining the different levels of business advice available was created with increased options for making direct contact with us.

The advice page now includes a link through to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's 'Business Companion' web tool which provides numerous quick guides and videos to support businesses understanding the law.

Special Treatment Workshop



Harrow officers assisted colleagues in the Harrow Licensing team deliver a workshop to holders of special treatment licenses during September 2016. The event provided us an opportunity to speak to multiple local business owners on rules regarding the supply of cosmetic products.

Assisting Consumers

Responding to Service Requests

Responding to consumer complaints about business has always been an important role for the Trading Standards Service in delivering its key priorities. Providing relevant and timely advice is fundamental to ensuring that members of the public are informed, more confident and have the ability to resolve their own disputes or enforce their contractual rights in the marketplace.

We continue to work closely with Citizens Advice Consumer Service who provide the first tier of advice to members of the public before sending us daily referrals via a secure computer system when consumers require further help to resolve an issue where there is an allegation of criminal law having been breached.

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 provided a new set of consumer rights such as a 30 day time period to reject faulty goods and also introduced rights in relation to digital content for the first time. This required officers to learn new legislation and pass this onto to consumers and businesses who often would have otherwise been very much unaware of these changes and still applied the old law.

It remains the case that we do not have the capacity to respond to every complaint that we are referred so a complaints matrix is applied to prioritise those that will investigate further. During 2016/16, we investigated 704 complains received from members of the public, 399 from Brent residents and 305 from Harrow residents.

Loan Shark Awareness Event

In September 2016, we invited a speaker from the National Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending Team to speak at an event to raise awareness of loan sharks in our community. The idea behind the event was to inform people of what to look out for, provide confidence that concerns would be taken seriously and importantly, explain some of the work to make our communities safer and ensure that if people have to borrow money, they do this only after having sought proper advice from legitimate lenders.



Attending local Crime Reduction Events



The team have attended various events during the year supporting Neighbourhood Watch or other community groups. This offers important educational work and raises awareness of the Council's role protecting members of the public.

Events like this also provide a good opportunity to build relationships with other community groups.

With the growing awareness and increasing number of victims, we have attended two events focusing specifically on fraud and scams. It was pleasing to see that HSBC and Barclays banks each supported one of these events.

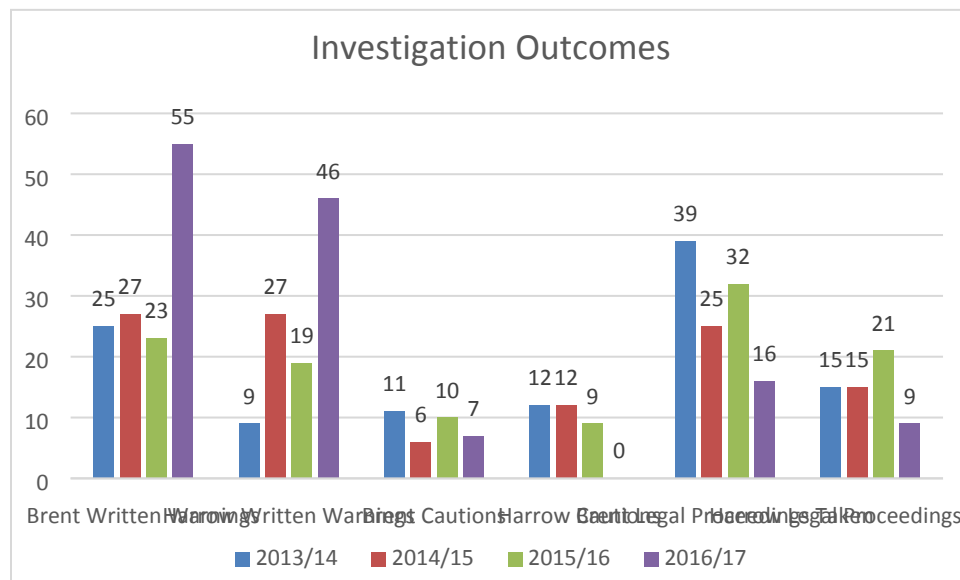
Investigations

Investigation reports are prepared and submitted by officers following allegations which have led to compelling evidence to prove the commission of a criminal offence(s). The outcome of investigation reports can include:

- No further action
- Re-inspection/advice
- Letter of warning/advice
- Simple Caution if the trader accepts their guilt
- Legal proceedings

During the year, the Brent Team submitted a total of 35 investigation reports and the Harrow Team a total of 22. This represents a reduction of investigations, down from 50 in Brent and 42 in Harrow the previous year.

The table below shows the number of formal actions taken last year alongside previous years for comparison. *The figure showing the legal proceedings can appear higher because in some cases, we may prosecute the company and its director. This would show as two examples of legal proceedings although it is only one business or case.*



Traders were fined a total of £20,785, down from £37,675 in 2015/16 and £39,630 in 2014/15. A total of £15,081 was awarded to us in prosecution costs, down from £28,560 in 2015/16 although ahead of 2014/15's total of £6,947 and £17,379 awarded in 2013/14.

The highest fine was £5,000 against a company convicted of selling counterfeit sew on badges online. This is comparable with the highest fine awarded the previous year which was for an online company selling counterfeit clothing who were fined £3,460.

The lowest fine was £175 imposed against a company director who illegally sold tobacco products which did not display the required statutory health warnings.

Underage sales

Our mystery shopping exercises continued throughout the year on the lookout for the small number of traders who think it is ok to sell age-restricted goods to children.

The following table shows the results of our test-purchasing in 2016/17, with an overall comparison to the previous year indicating a decline in the number of businesses selling age restricted goods. Whilst this decline is positive, these figures always vary year on year with early indications looking ahead to 2017/18 showing a rise in illegal sales, particularly in Brent.

Product	Test purchases (no.)		Sales (no.)		Failure rate (%)	
	Brent 2016/17	Harrow 2016/17	Brent 2016/17	Harrow 2016/17	Brent 2016/17	Harrow 2016/17
Alcohol	38	58	2	2	5	3
Tobacco	53	31	0	0	0	0
Knife	21	20	2	0	9.5	0
Fireworks	12	27	0	0	0	0
Spray Paint	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-Cigarettes	1	0	1	0	100	0
Video	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lottery	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total 2016/17	125	136	5	2	4	1.5
Total 2015/16	125	141	6	6	5	4

Rogue Cold Callers

During the year 10 'rapid responses' were provided to victims of rogue trading. Victims typically are taken in by the rogue's sales pitch which often starts with an agreement to complete works at a very reasonable price. Once the rogues start work, the price immediately rises due to 'unforeseen problems' or works are carried out which were not agreed. Often these works leave the homeowners property in such a state, they feel it necessary to commit to it continuing in order to put things back and repair the damage.

Our intervention in these call outs saved the victims an estimated £56,000 based on the sum being demanded by the rogues. Had we not intervened when did, there is no doubt that this figure could have potentially risen much higher.

However, on many occasions, it is just not possible to get the homeowners their money back. In April 2016, a Harrow resident paid a cold caller £2,100 to repair her porch. For an unknown reason, he dug her driveway up and was never seen again.

A callout in February 2017 took officers to a house in Brent where the homeowner had agreed to pay £15 to a cold caller to clean his gutters. This work escalated to £15,000 for a replacement roof and a 50% payment of £7,500 in cash was made which saw some work to the soffits taking place. The builder wanted full payment before completing the job and phoned the victim whilst officers were at the premises. Once he found out we were involved, the trader cut the call off and has not been contactable since.



It is reassuring to see that the Police are now starting to become more involved with this type of crime and we work with them on many of these callouts. This is largely due to the 'banking protocol' that was introduced during the year. The protocol is an initiative is hosted between the banks, Trading Standards and Police aimed at identifying customers who are in the process of being defrauded and implementing safeguarding procedures to prevent their repeat victimisation and further loss of funds. The protocol provides a method for bank staff to contact the Police when they have concerns about a customer withdrawing a large sum of cash which guarantees an immediate Police response.

This initiative has meant the Police are responding to many more rogue trader type of complaints than they have done previously, reducing the need for us to provide our repaid response service and reducing the chance of the rogue traders being able to make off if they are still at the homeowner's premises.

Both boroughs supported the national Operation Liberal during the year. This is a joint national Trading Standards, and Police initiative that runs annually to combat rogue builders and doorstep criminals. We conducted patrols with the Police and HMRC who were interested to identify whether people working as builders are paying their taxes correctly.

Working with NTSB Scams Hub

During the year, the Service formalised its work with the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) Scams Hub by signing a service level agreement pledging to visit victims of scams. These visits allow us to assess whether the person is a repeat victim and if necessary to alert the appropriate agencies to provide the required support.

Despite attempts to raise awareness of scams, there are still a steady supply of referrals from the Scams Hub detailing local Brent or Harrow victims who had responded to unsolicited literature tempting them to win non-existent prizes. A separate report is to be presented to the Joint Advisory Board detailing our work in this area.

Shisha

The Service has worked alongside colleagues in the Food Safety Team and Community Safety assisted by the Police in a Brent borough-wide crackdown on illegal shisha venues. Of the 47 known shisha venues in Brent, 39 were not compliant with the applicable laws. The smoking of shisha poses the same health risks as cigarette smoking, illegal venues have been found to create smells and noise nuisance and be places where there is an increased risk of anti-social behaviour taking place.

We have offered businesses advice on achieving compliance with the law and carried out some of the late night visits to venues across the borough to monitor whether our advice has been complied with to prevent the smoking of tobacco in enclosed places.

This has resulted in multiple prosecutions of the offenders and several premises being forced to shut down following the receipt of closure orders. Following this work, the Leader of Brent Council, Cllr Muhammed Butt, wrote to the Home Secretary calling for the introduction of new legislation providing local authorities the better powers to regulate and enforce problem shisha businesses effectively.

Online Commerce

In previous years, Members have specifically enquired about the amount of time that is spent regulating the growing online marketplace. This is difficult to answer as many of our investigations involve some form of ecommerce but our database for recording work does not capture information that allows us to easily determine if goods or services were purchased in person or online.

What we are able to confirm is that when we specifically check advertising or terms and conditions belonging to an online trader, this work is recorded in a manner that enables us to report the amount of work undertaken. During the year, 104 Brent based websites were checked and 40 Harrow websites. This compares with 58 Brent-based websites and 53 Harrow websites the previous year.

In reality, I expect that we actually checked a much higher number of websites that this as it would routinely form part of an officers investigation to search for a business website and have a look at it when investigating allegations made against a businesses along with cursory checks on review sites to see what sort of feedback has been left a bout a trader.

Financial Investigations

A report specifically looking at our performance under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) was presented to the Joint Advisory Board in May 2017. The legislation provides a power to confiscate money that have been acquired as a result of crime. The Act can be used to recover benefit made from all sorts of criminal conduct including benefit fraud, planning and environmental infringements and breaches of consumer protection laws.

Since using POCA the team, consisting of two qualified Financial Investigators, Lee Wenzel and Alpa Shah have secured 73 confiscation orders worth £7.5m.

When a confiscation order is paid, the money is divided in accordance with the Home Office Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS), which means that 50% will go to the Government, whilst the remaining 50% is divided between the prosecuting authority (18.75%), the investigating authority (18.75%) and the court service (12.5%). During the financial year 2016/17 Brent Council received £369,435.80 from the Home Office as part of this incentivisation scheme.

Below are details of the confiscation orders the team secured during the financial year 2016/17.

During July 2016, an order was made against a landlord for £64,000 who converted a house in Brent into 7 self-contained dwellings without planning permission. I am pleased to report that the order has since been paid in full.

Another planning case followed in October 2016 when an order was made against a landlord for £80,080. On this occasion, a house in Brent had been converted into 5 self-contained dwellings without planning permission which had each been rented. Again, this order has now been paid in full.

In November 2016 an order was made in a Trading Standards case against a counterfeiter for £15,809. The trader, who sold illegal DVDs, was given 3 months to pay the order or face serving 7 months in prison. This order has also been paid in full.

Another case followed shortly afterwards in December 2016 when an order was made against a company for £250,000 after a planning breach had continued for a number of years. The single dwelling had been converted to eight self-contained flats and a flat in the garden. The company was registered in the British Virgin Islands and its Directors lived in Dubai but once a restraint order had been granted on the property, the individuals in control of the property came forward and the company was prosecuted. The property was in terrible state of disrepair as can be seen from the photos below:

We continue to work with and see more cases being referred from other London Councils who have requested our services for financial investigations. We intend to further promote the service we provide in the hope of securing more financial investigations and using our expertise to assist other local authorities using this powerful legislation.

Brent Team Investigations

2016 started with string of convictions against convenience store owners who stocked illegal cigarettes which did not displaying the correct health warnings and in some instances, oral tobacco, which is prohibited altogether in the UK. The highest penalty awarded was a fine of £1,600 and payment of costs totalling £1,081. In another case, the shop owner was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay costs of £961. This type work was very prevalent during 2016/17 as it followed the funding provided the previous year by Public Health to reduce the availability of illicit tobacco.

In August 2016, we concluded an investigation dating back to February 2015 against a Wembley Market trader. He was fined nearly £3,000 for selling fake branded luxury bags and purses from the now defunct Wembley Market. The Court heard how the defendant had been left in charge of the stall whilst the owner was away on holiday during which time he used cash from the stall takings to buy nearly 300 counterfeit bags and purses, containing brands which he then sold at a knock-down price.

The owner of a shop in Wembley High Road fined £660 and ordered to carry out 100hrs of community service for his second offence of selling banned oral tobacco products and cigarettes without adequate health warnings and counterfeit cigarette lighters. In addition he was ordered to pay costs of £557. The same trader has since been caught selling doggy tobacco again suggesting the penalties imposed by the Court have not acted as any deterrent from his wrong doing.

In February 2017, a tyre company and its Director, were fined just under £2,000 after fitting a part-worn tyre costing £25 to wheel supplied by an undercover Trading Standards officer which was below the legal standard, and for possessing a further supply of unsafe tyres for sale. The illegal tyre was supplied despite the business being given comprehensive advice by Trading Standards on selling part worn tyres.

Harrow Team Investigations

A student funding his lifestyle through the sale of dodgy DVD boxsets was handed an 18 week prison sentence and ordered to carry out 80 hours of community service and pay prosecution costs of £2,766. The trader has been selling counterfeit discs from his bedroom via eBay and Gumtree since 2009, generating profits to more than fund his studies. When officers searched his house, they found an illegal stock of more than 900 DVDs, with an estimated value of £35,000.

A Harrow Market trader who was selling fake designer handbags and jewellery was fined £1,441 and also ordered to complete 100 hours community service. Our investigations found that she was carrying out the same illegal business in Hammersmith and Fulham where the Trading Standards there has seized 150 items. When interviewed she claimed it was a hobby of hers, blaming the people who sold her the items for which there was no proof of purchase. A joint prosecution was taken to include offences from both local authorities.

In November 2016, another man who ran an illegal DVD business from his home, was given a 6 month suspended prison sentence, ordered to complete 100 hours community service and pay costs of £7,500. The Judge also made a confiscation order of £15,809.95 under the Proceeds of Crime Act. During the investigation, officers went undercover to meet the defendant in a car park, where he sold them the illegal discs. This was then used as evidence to apply for a warrant to search his home where they found a further supply of fake DVD boxsets ready to be dispatched to unsuspecting consumers.

In December 2016, we conducted a license review of a shopkeeper who was caught with almost a thousand litres of illegal alcohol for a second time. Harrow officers had been working with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs officers who seized the alcohol, on which he had paid no duty, and hundreds of packets of tobacco which didn't carry the required health warnings or English labels. The Licensing Panel decided to completely revoke his alcohol licence.

Another prosecution for dodgy DVDs followed in December 2016 after an inspection of the defendants businesses premises uncovered 519 rogue titles which were either counterfeit or contained no age classifications. The business director and manager received a fine of £800, and they were each ordered to pay £815 in costs.

In addition to these investigations, the Harrow team have worked proactively with other colleagues from Harrow supporting multiple 'Days of Action' in Wealdstone, Queensbury, Rayners Lane, Harrow, Burnt Oak and South Harrow. These events provide a good opportunity for us to visit high street business premises on the look out for illicit tobacco and alcohol which are readily available and at the same time, promote the our Responsible Trader Scheme to businesses where everything is found to be ok.

Performance

Complaints of Dissatisfaction about the Service

During 2016/17, there were six formal complaints of dissatisfaction received about the Service. Whilst we would have preferred not to receive such complaints, this level of dissatisfaction is very low given how many customer contacts the Service carries out each year. None of the complaints were upheld.

These complaints are summarised below:

A resident made a complaint to Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) who passed on advice and referred the matter to Trading Standards for our information only, with no commitment to contact the complainant. However, a technical error caused an automated email to be sent to hundreds of members of the public who had recently been added to the Service database, including this complainant stating that Trading Standards 'would be in contact'. The mistake was spotted and a follow up email was sent to those effected explaining that there had been a problem and apologising for the mistake that had made. The resident did not receive this follow up email and understandably, was annoyed that nobody had been in contact with them. Whilst we had to accept responsibility for the original email being sent, it was not our fault the second email was not received by the complainant and furthermore, the CACS had advised us there was no need to contact the complainant. The **complaint was not upheld**.

The complainant lived in Lambeth and was complaining about a business located outside of our area of jurisdiction. The complainant was unhappy that we would not investigate their complaint which we would not have done for a non Brent or Harrow resident. This was an **unjustified complaint**.

In similar circumstances to the above, the complainant lived in Edinburgh and was complaining about business who we had previously prosecuted but was now located outside of our area of jurisdiction. The complainant was unhappy that we would not investigate their complaint which we would not have done for a non Brent or Harrow resident. This was an **unjustified complaint**.

A landlord was unhappy that we would not investigate the letting agent who allegedly owed them rent. This was a civil dispute and the Service's civil advisory service was cut many years ago. The landlord also claimed the agent was not a member of a redress scheme but as the landlord and agent were based in Harrow and Trading Standards had not yet been delegated the enforcement of this function, the landlord needed to speak to Harrow's Housing Team. This was an **unjustified complaint**.

A consumer was unhappy that we would not assist with a civil claim to obtain a refund. The matter had already resulted in a criminal conviction following our investigation and subsequent prosecution but the complainant has not provided us with the required assistance to obtain compensation/a refund at the time. As we do not offer a civil advisory service and the complainant chose not to assist our criminal investigation, this **complaint was not upheld**.

A homeowner was complaining about their property management agent alleging that they had used false details to register with one of the redress scheme providers. Enquires showed the agent had valid membership and there was nothing to evidence any fraudulent membership so we concluded no investigation was necessary. This upset the homeowner causing them to complain about Trading Standards. This **complaint was not upheld**.

Compliments about the Service

On a positive note, I am pleased to report that we have received numerous letters of appreciation for the work we have carried out. Some examples of which, I have highlighted below:

'I regularly work with Trading Standards authorities from around the country, and rarely have I dealt with an officer with the commitment and passion for his work as Amar, who truly went above and beyond to find a quick resolution and kept us informed every step of the way'.

'I had asked for help through ATOL, ABTA and others with no help given. I then turned to trading standards and within 24 hours of the initial contact with Andrew, the travel agent phoned me and promised my refund. I have received the money and cannot express my gratitude strongly enough for the help provided by Andrew. I had been very stressed about the loss of a large sum of money and although I appreciate trading standards have many complaints to investigate, am convinced that I would not have the refunds without Andrews help'.

'I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention the very professional and highly valued support of two of your esteemed colleagues during our work with Trading Standards in Wembley yesterday. My German colleagues.... work in Brent was superbly assisted throughout the day by Andreas.....who tackled all of the sometimes difficult technical jargon with real gusto and contributed a great deal to the successful completion of this important work. Christine is fast approaching sainthood status within our company. Her tenacity and determination to conclude this difficult case has been a true inspiration to us all. Christine has a very professional and very dedicated approach which has, without doubt, kept this case on track throughout, at times, some rather challenging episodes'.

'Thank You Michael- most impressed with your speed of processing and issuing of License'

'Whilst writing it gives my wife and I the opportunity of thanking both of you {Paul and Paul} for all your time, advice, and assistance you have given us. As you know we are both Senior Citizens and sometimes circumstances take us out of our comfort zone. Without both of your intervention as part of the Brent Trading Standards Department we're not sure how we would have coped both financially and health wise. The stress and anxiety over the last few days has been immeasurable and both of you have taken so much weight off of our shoulders'.

Freedom of Information Requests

The Service received 18 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, up on the 8 requests received the previous year. I can confirm that all were responded to within the statutory timescale.

These requests related to a ranges of subjects broken down as follows: 1 request about underage sales, 1 request regarding skin lightening products, 3 requests concerning letting or estate agents, 2 requests enquiring about counterfeit alcohol or tobacco, 1 enquiry asking about a particular businesses, 4 requests about our procurement of goods, 1 general enquiry, 2 requests about building services, 1 request about scams, 1 request about secondary ticketing and finally a request about a subject not relevant to the Service.

Training and Qualifications

A variety of training was provided to Officers during 2016/2017, most of which was delivered at little or no cost other than staff time and travel. The majority of the training was facilitated by London Trading Standards (LTS). Training included the subject areas of; mandatory data protection and freedom of information courses for all staff, doorstep crime, Regulation of Investigatory Powers, Firework Licensing, Conducting Major Investigations, Memex (an intelligence database used by officers), Primary Authority, Safeguarding and Scams.

In total, 333 hours of training was provided to officers, equivalent to 46 days. Four officers successfully had their training accredited as 20 or more CPPD hours by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

Publicity

19 press releases promoting the work of the Service were produced during the year, 11 from Brent and 8 from Harrow. Whereas most of our releases attract local media interest, it is always pleasing to see when they grab the attention of a national news outlet.

During 2016/17, our intervention of a rogue builders who targeted an elderly couple, demanding £40,000 to fix a few loose tiles was featured in The Sun whilst The Mirror covered the conviction of an illegal loan shark following an investigation with the National Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending Team.

In November 2016 we contributed 16 tweets to the national #Ourday event, seven of which were used as part of the event increasing the profile of our work and demonstrating to the public, the range of services delivered by the Council.



Staff Member Highly Commended

The Service has always maintained a good relationship with members of the Anti-Counterfeiting Group who represent more than three thousand brands and are a leading authority on the global trade in counterfeit goods.

It was a welcome surprise when their members highly commended Officer Ali Bandukwalla for 'Individual Excellence in Anti-Counterfeiting Excellence' at the annual Trading Standards Conference in Harrogate.

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Appendix B

The table below shows our current, high, medium and low priority areas of work which have been taken from our annual work plan.

High priority

Most Complained About Traders	Underage Sales – alcohol, tobacco, knives
Doorstep Crime and Scams	Estate Agents/Letting Agents
Unsafe Goods (Manufacture /wholesale)	Clocked & Insurance ‘write off’ Cars
Business Advice and Primary Authority	Counterfeit Goods (Large Scale Operation)
Niche and Illicit Tobacco Products	Proceeds of Crime Investigations
Large Scale or High Value Frauds	

Medium Priority

Misleading Prices/Price Marking	Incorrectly Labelled Goods (safety)
Consumer Credit/illegal lending*	Counterfeiting and Copyright (low level)
Furniture and Furnishings	Un-roadworthy Cars
Road Traffic – Overloaded Vehicles	Harassment of Debtors
Package Travel holiday complaints	Storage of Fireworks (unless critical safety implication)
Inaccurate Weights and Measures	Hallmarking
Underage Sales – fireworks (as seasonal)	Unsafe Goods (Retail Level)

*High priority cases are also referred to Illegal Money Lending Team

Low Priority

Energy Labelling of Goods	Restrictive Notices
Misleading Descriptions (low value goods)	Underage Sales – lottery, , spray paints, DVDs, computer games and butane
Energy Performance Certificates	Essential Packaging
Mock Auctions	Motorcycle Exhaust Silencers
Market Sales	Business Names
Metrication	Bogus Colleges
Video Recordings – Unclassified DVDs	

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Appendix C

Activity	Milestone	Outcome	Corporate Alignment
Responding to doorstep crime incidents with a 'rapid response' service where required, to safeguard vulnerable consumers from financial harm	All required call outs are responded to within 24hrs with an onsite visit if necessary. Trader and consumer advice given as necessary and where appropriate, settlement of financial agreement.	Prompt support for vulnerable consumers. Trader and consumer legal advice provided. Assistance agreeing terms to remedy work and/or financial settlement.	Better Lives Better Place Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families
Take appropriate action to reduce the number of complaints being received against the Borough's most complained about businesses	Quarterly reporting to identify most complained about traders. Trader advisory meetings taking place. Appropriate enforcement action and/or Primary Authority commitment	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced consumer complaints about these businesses. Less longer term demands on the Service,	Better Lives Better Place Demand Management Be More Business Friendly
Reduce the availability of illicit tobacco products including cigarettes, chewing tobacco and shisha and ensure compliance with the new plain packaging requirements for cigarettes.	Pre-planned inspections of premises believed to be involved with the illicit sales of tobacco including shisha. Trader advice and awareness training regarding new tobacco legislation.	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced availability of illicit tobacco products. Reduction of anti social behavior in shisha bars. Increased health benefits.	Better Lives Better Place Be More Business Friendly Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families
Intervention of unsafe consumer goods from the supply chain, specifically from businesses at the manufacturing, importation or wholesale supply process.	Pre-planned inspections of premises believed to be involved with the supply of unsafe goods. Trader advice and support given. Seizure, suspension or reworking of unsafe goods.	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced availability of unsafe products from the supply chain. Intervention at the high level of the supply chain resulting in efficiencies	Better Lives Be More Business Friendly
Pursue effective day to day robust enforcement action where expedient (in partnership with other Service areas), to ensure serious infringements are dealt with expediently, reducing criminal benefit from crime, tackle large scale frauds and to remain one of the most effective regulatory teams in the country.	Take effective enforcement action when required, reduction of illegal shisha cafes and other problem sectors of trade such as second hand car businesses, responding to doorstep crime, fraud and other scam allegations as early as possible to limit financial harm.	Enforcement action taken against problem businesses premises and a reduction of any fraudulent trading in the borough.	Better Place Be More Business Friendly Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families

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