

## **Summary of Issues Raised at Consultation events**

Seven consultation events were held between 12 January 2016 and 3 February 2016 at locations throughout the borough.

The meetings had the following levels of attendance:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
12 January	Brent Connects Wembley	48
14 January	Budget consultation	7
19 January	Brent Connects Kilburn & Kensal	38
25 January	Budget consultation	14
1 February	Brent Connects Willesden	40
2 February	Brent Connects Harlesden	30
3 February	Brent Connects Kingsbury & Kenton	37

The Leader of the Council delivered a presentation outlining the financial position and the difficult budget choices faced by the Council. The Leader and deputy Leader then took questions from the audience and provided answers, supported by senior officers where appropriate for matters of technical detail.

A summary of the most common issues raised by the public is set out below:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>
Council Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarification was sought on the size of the tax-base increase and how this affected income</li><li>• Concern was raised over the impact of the planned increase in council tax on residents who receive council tax support and what would be in place to assist those most in need</li><li>• Clarification was sought over how much revenue would be raised by increasing council tax</li></ul>
Business Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarification was requested about how business rates retention would work, and what its impact would be on Brent</li></ul>
Central government Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concern was raised at the level of cuts imposed on some local authorities over others</li><li>• Clarification was sought on what local authorities are doing to challenge the cuts</li></ul>

Council assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was raised as to the size of Brent Civic Centre and if it was wholly necessary</li> <li>• Clarification was sought on how many floors of Brent Civic Centre are rented out and if more could be done</li> <li>• Questions were raised as to the extent of empty council properties and what was being done</li> </ul>
Streets and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was raised on the issues of maintaining pavements and repairing potholes</li> <li>• A suggestion was made to switch off alternate street lights, or dim them</li> </ul>
Budget setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification was sought on whether these were the full list of proposals</li> <li>• Clarification was sought on whether the budget setting exercise received independent / expert oversight</li> </ul>
Council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was raised as to the number of council staff and whether “delaying” management had been considered</li> <li>• Questions were raised regarding the pay of directors, and whether pay of directors had been cut</li> <li>• Questions were raised as to the cost of supporting the Mayor’s office</li> </ul>
Section 106 monies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification was sought as to where Section 106 monies are spent</li> </ul>
Front line services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was raised at the level of cuts in Adult Social Care</li> </ul>
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification was sought over the value of reserves held by the council</li> </ul>
Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was suggested that the council should be finding ways to increase income instead of increasing council tax</li> <li>• It was suggested that peer to peer lending could generate additional income for the council</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of housing for residents on low incomes within the borough was raised as an issue</li> </ul>

Ten people responded to the online consultation. These suggested that the following service areas should be protected from further cuts

- Road Safety
- Looked After Children
- Activities for the Elderly
- Community events for all cultures and faiths
- Keeping Brent Safe
- Local libraries
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting new business
- Refuse collections and street cleaning
- Planning enforcement
- Street tree planting
- Adult Social Care
- Supporting People

One person suggested that there could be further savings in refuse collection if the limits on the number of bins per household were enforced. In terms of rises in council tax one person was in favour and two people were against.

All of these consultation responses are important. Members need to have regard to them, but are not obliged to follow the suggestions made. It is relevant to note that the consultees are, statistically speaking, “self selecting” and therefore not necessarily reflective of opinion in the borough as a whole, nor are they necessarily statistically significant.