



**Full Council**  
21 November 2011

## **Report from the Executive**

Wards Affected:  
ALL

### **The First Reading of the 2012-2013 Budget Priorities for the Administration**

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the Administration's priorities for the financial year 2012/13 to 2014/15 and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Borough Plan 'Brent Our Future 2010-14' and the concurrent report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Council is recommended to consider the broad budgetary priorities set out in this report alongside the Director of Finance and Corporate Services' paper and debate them as set out in Standing Orders 25A and 44.

#### **3.0 Introduction**

- 3.1 The format of this report has evolved again to reflect the three year approach to setting the Council's priorities and to budgeting in line with the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 3.2 We therefore deem it prudent to review our costs and savings over the period of the spending review. This being particularly pertinent with the level of savings we now have to find.

## **4.0 The Context**

- 4.1 This report is written at a very bleak juncture in the economic cycle which affects Brent Council and residents, not only in a shrinking resource allocation with which to provide services but also with rapidly increasing need and demand, rapid rises in unemployment and changes to the benefit regime which have put ever greater stress on local residents whilst simultaneously degrading the Council's capacity to ameliorate such stress.
- 4.2 The Council has over the last year been forced to take a number of difficult decisions as to which services to support and improve and which to discontinue or limit. There have been some predictable high profile instances where citizens have objected to the curtailment of a service they particularly value. This is understandable; this Administration did not seek election on a platform of massive cuts. However the front-loaded 26% target set by Government over the life of the Spending Review means that major cuts in services are inevitable and as the size of the Council organisation will shrink, the content of what it does will also inevitably be curtailed.
- 4.3 The Administration, through its 'One Council Programme' has therefore put service improvement, efficiency and transformation at the front and centre of all its initiatives. Whilst the Council may be doing less what it does do will be more effective, targeted and of higher quality. The vast majority of savings sought are being achieved through the 'One Council Programme'; in 2010/11 the programme achieved £11.8m in operational savings, in 11/12 it is on target to deliver £39m from existing and completed projects and £59.6m for 2013/14. Given the projected gap this is not enough though and a further 15 projects will be launched this year, covering all aspects of the Councils' activity.
- 4.5 The projects in this programme are becoming increasingly 'transformational' in nature. Therefore although our budget strategy is driven by necessity nevertheless we will use the adversity to drive forward improvements for what we do to support residents as the leeway to make savings for efficiency becomes less obvious.

## **5.0 The Priorities**

We believe we have a responsibility to re-order our priorities to reflect the unprecedented difficult times faced by our residents. We therefore propose the following:

- 5.1 That by the time of the budget in February we bring forward a package of measures, with other public, private and voluntary sector partners to address the acute issues of employment and employability which face so many of our fellow citizens;
- 5.2 That we take another look at the services and quality of life that people can expect in their neighbourhoods. It was our 2002-6 Administration that brought in the

successful and popular policy of Ward Working; and it is now time to look again at neighbourhoods in a practical and meaningful way and to set out a coherent set of actions which is a Brent rather than Central Government approach to localism;

- 5.3 That we concentrate on producing proposals that offers a comprehensive and targeted approach to working with young people and youth;
- 5.4 That we pursue vigorously the integration of social care and NHS health services to provide a better, seamless and more focused set of services provided to local people and use the transfer of Public Health to Local Government control to make a reality of a concentration on prevention;
- 5.5 That we work even harder to bring forward the regeneration of our Borough and adopt a strategy for our property which makes it integral to the economic renewal of Brent.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 We are rightly proud of our Borough, its diversity and the strength of its communities. In the next four years in the face of the onslaught on public sector resources we will prioritise our activities to strengthen those communities and make sure that whilst we have to make major savings there is a commensurate concentration on service quality.

**ANN JOHN**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**