



Cabinet
5 February 2024

**Report from the Corporate Director
of Resident Services**

**Lead Member – Leader of the
Council
(Councillor Muhammed Butt)**

Future of Resident Support Fund (RSF) and New Model of Support

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	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
List of Appendices:	<p>Four</p> <p>Appendix 1: Cost-of-Living Pilots Monitoring Frameworks</p> <p>Appendix 2: Update on the Cost-of-Living OBR Pilots</p> <p>Appendix 3: Cost of Living Statement</p> <p>Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment</p>
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines proposals for introducing a new model of support for Brent residents from April 2024, which has been developed through the piloting of Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) projects and guided by a series of Design Principles agreed with Members in December 2023. The report proposes a single, joined-up model including development of a Community Wellbeing Programme aligned with a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), designed to support residents to be more resilient in the longer term and align more closely with strategic priorities and related projects.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agree the proposed model for resident support, including a Community Wellbeing Programme and refreshed Resident Support Fund and Crisis Response Fund (CRF) as detailed from section 4.21 in the report.
- 2.2 Agree that:
 - 2.2.1 the access criteria for the Community Wellbeing Service (detailed from section 4.24 of the report) are delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Director of Public Health; and
 - 2.2.2 authority to amend the award criteria for RSF and CRF funds are delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities and Culture.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1.1 The proposed model of resident support detailed in this report supports the Brent Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 priorities of ‘Thriving Communities’, ‘A Healthier Brent’ and ‘Prosperity and Stability in Brent’, including a focus on achieving the desired outcome of ‘Easing the Cost-of-Living Crisis’ for our residents. This work also closely aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027 ‘Healthy Lives’ priority, and will support the new Brent Food Strategy, which is currently in development.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 In December 2023, Members were presented with a report providing an update on the pilot projects that were developed through the Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) and considerations for further developing them into a single, more-joined up support model.
- 4.2 To guide development of the model, the following design principles were presented and ratified by Members:

1. The model should support residents to become more resilient and independent.
 2. The programmes and support available should be targeted and easily accessible to those who need them most.
 3. The model should incentivise skills and employment and address physical and mental health challenges.
 4. The model should align with and support connectivity between related support offers (including those detailed in the Cost of Living statement).
 5. Development of the model should be intelligence-led
 6. The model should be sustainable.
- 4.3 This report details how these design principles are being applied to guide the development of a new model that will succeed the current Resident Support Fund (RSF) and apply the learning from the Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) to better support residents in the longer term.

Cost-of-Living Outcomes Based Review Pilot Projects (OBR)

- 4.4 An Outcome Based Review (OBR) constitutes a system-wide review, bringing together diverse groups of stakeholders to collaborate in tackling crosscutting issues by using design-led methodologies, across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.
- 4.5 Brent Council has successfully utilised the OBR approach for several years. Previous OBR themes include Welfare Reform, Housing Vulnerable People, Domestic Abuse, and Children on the Edge of Care. Outputs of previous OBR's directly led to the creation of the borough-wide Brent Hubs model and the design of Family Wellbeing Centres, as well as other initiatives.
- 4.6 In 2022, Brent Council launched a Cost-of-Living themed Outcomes Based Review (OBR) aimed at developing tailored solutions to best support residents impacted by the ongoing Cost-of-Living crisis. A cross-council working group was convened to monitor the cost-of-living strategic risk and resulting mitigating actions, including supporting the delivery of the OBR and ensuring the work aligns with key corporate strategies and initiatives such as the Brent Poverty Commission.
- 4.7 Insights from an extensive Discovery phase were shared at a Visioning Day collaboration event in September 2022, attended by over 80 of the partners and stakeholders that were engaged throughout the OBR process. Attendees were facilitated to generate and prioritise ideas for new solutions that respond to the challenges and opportunities identified.
- 4.8 Several pilot projects emerged and have been in testing and development throughout 2023/24, in partnership with local organisations and stakeholders. The pilot projects are:

- **Community Wellbeing Project (CWP):** aims to increase community resilience, tackle food insecurity and provide holistic interventions to better support residents in the long term, and to prevent vulnerable families from experiencing severe financial crisis. Partnership with Sufra NW London.
- **Crisis Response Fund:** a rapid cash payment of £200, or £400 for white goods, for residents facing an emergency. Several trusted Brent teams and partners are able to complete applications on behalf of residents.
- **Debt Advice:** In partnership with Advice 4 Renters, two dedicated debt advisors situated across Brent Hubs providing specialist debt advice, income maximisation reviews, application support for benefits and support funds and referrals onto other support organisations as required.
- **Immigration Advice:** In partnership with Northwest London Law Centre, specialist immigration advisors are situated across the Brent Hubs delivering an immigration advice programme.
- **Upskilling Frontline staff:** consisted of a programme of upskilling staff training sessions, the Practitioners network aiming to bring together frontline practitioners to share information and knowledge, and a debt advice apprenticeship offered to Brent Hubs staff to upskill in providing specialist debt advice.

4.9 An overarching outcomes framework was developed for all Cost-of-Living pilots to support evaluation of their impact and joint outcomes. Each pilot also has a tailored monitoring and outcomes framework against which the pilot is evaluated. All frameworks can be found in Appendix 1 of the report.

4.10 Detail on all Cost-of-Living pilots including monitoring and outcomes can be found in the Appendix 2 of the report.

4.11 Evaluation of the Cost-of-Living OBR pilots show that they are effective in supporting residents both through their individual, core purposes as well as by connecting them with aligned services and other local support. Over the lifespan of the pilots they have been continuously developed to increase join-up of the offers, for example, introducing access to the Debt Advice Service via the CWP in Bridge Park, and the extension of facilitating Crisis Response Fund (CRF) applications to additional services and partners including Family Wellbeing Centres and Sufra NW London (to facilitate CRF applications for CWP members).

4.12 The pilot phase of this programme is due to end in March 2024. Following feedback from Members, detailed work to further develop, align and formalise the pilot services to become a core part of a more cohesive and sustainable BAU model has been completed. This includes development work to ensure greater alignment and connectivity with wider Brent offers and initiatives (as summarised in the Cost of Living Statement – Appendix 3 of the report).

Resident Support Fund (RSF) and Household Support Fund (HSF)

- 4.13 The Resident Support Fund (RSF) was established in August 2020 in response to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. From 2020 to date the RSF scheme has been administered and further developed as a discretionary fund available to Brent residents experiencing financial difficulties.
- 4.14 In March 2021, following input from the Brent Poverty Commission and consultation with colleagues and partners across Brent, Cabinet agreed that the council's Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) scheme, would be discontinued and that all remaining funds from the LWA scheme would be transferred to the RSF scheme. Following this, Cabinet further agreed a commitment in the Borough Plan for RSF to continue in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 4.15 Historic analysis of RSF awards shows that the five most common reasons for awards granted are for the increased cost of living, rent arrears, council tax arrears, white goods and debt.
- 4.16 In the period August 2020 to March 2023, RSF made 8,058 awards to residents with a total spend of £13.06 million. From April 2023, new RSF criteria, including a maximum £1,000 award per application and limiting the number of awards per year to one, were implemented to contain the spend within the available budget. For the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, RSF has supported 2,773 households with a total spend of £2m.
- 4.17 From August 2020 to date the RSF has been funded by the Council and topped up by Household Support Fund (HSF) and other available funds.
- 4.18 Brent Council's current allocation for HSF is £5,562,445, which must be used from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and of which £2m has been allocated as a top up to the RSF. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2023 this provided support to 18,291 households with a total of £5.2m already spent. We anticipate to spend the full grant by March 2024. The Council cannot carry over any residue of the HSF grant fund to the next financial year (2024/25).
- 4.19 This matrix sets out the allocation of HSF 2023/2024 funds for different groups of residents and the fund available for RSF for reactive support to the most vulnerable households:

Table 1: Breakdown of HSF 2023/2024 allocation

Type of Support	Number of Households supported	Amount
Free school meals during holidays (13 weeks) £15 per week per child	7850	£1,530,750
Food vouchers for 0-4 year olds during holidays (13 weeks) where parents/guardian are in receipt of Housing Benefit	1740	£339,300
Emergency Super Market Vouchers	410	£87,395
Disabled residents £50 one off payment	6600	£330,000
Housing Benefits only (no other government grant) £900 one off payment	750	£675,000
Local food bank grants		£200,000
Partners, charities and voluntary organisations	500	£250,000
Carers in Brent (Housing costs)	150	£150,000
Resident Support Fund	2000	£2,000,000
Total	20,000	£5,562,445

4.20 It is currently unclear what level of HSF funding (if any) will be available to Local Authorities from 2024/2025 to help support residents, including via locally designed schemes like the RSF. In this context, despite the significant financial challenges facing the Council, £1m has been allocated to the RSF in the 2024/25 budget, which is being considered on the same agenda as this Cabinet meeting. However, as demonstrated at paragraph 4.15, this will not be sufficient funding to continue administering the RSF scheme in its current form. It is proposed, therefore, that the RSF in its current form ceases as of April 2024, and that the £1m budget allocation is used to fund the new, more sustainable model of support detailed in this paper.

Developing the model

4.21 Evaluation of the Cost-of-Living OBR pilots (Appendix 2) shows that they are effective in supporting residents both through their individual, core purposes as well as by connecting them with aligned services and other local support. In accordance with the design principles at 4.2, the new arrangements will incorporate key elements of these pilots and develop them into a consolidated and more sustainable borough-wide model of support.

- 4.22 The vision for this model is to move away from providing short-term financial assistance towards focussing on more sustainable outcomes through a behaviour-centred approach. The ambition is to provide a multifaceted programme including the space, tools, and knowledge to support residents to improve their situation and increase opportunities in the longer-term, reducing long-term dependency on services. This aligns with recommendations in a report commissioned by the GLA and London Councils to work towards a preventative approach, intervening upstream to build long-term resilience and ensuring that effective models and ways of working that emerged through the cost-of-living crisis are embedded in longer-term ways of working. This also builds organisational memory and can minimise effects of future crises.¹
- 4.23 By further developing, consolidating, and aligning the OBR projects with the refreshed RSF and existing services - for example Brent Hubs, Brent Start and GP surgeries - the new model will promote independence for residents and enable more sustainable outcomes.
- 4.24 The proposed new model consists of a 'Community Wellbeing Service' – an expanded version of the Community Wellbeing Project which has been piloted at Bridge Park and supports up to 400 families per year. Capacity will be increased with the Community Wellbeing Service operating five days per week at a new location where it can be co-located with wider support provision. This will include capacity to support 1,000 families and residents per year through a three-month membership programme. Eligibility for the expanded offer will include health needs, with health professionals, including GP Social Prescribers, able to refer.
- 4.25 The model also includes a Resident Support Fund (RSF), Crisis Response Fund (CRF) and interest-free loan offer in partnership with Hillingdon Credit Union. The level and types of payments available in the new model are based on learning from historic RSF and CRF awards and the former Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) scheme, which Brent operated between 2013 and 2021. LWA payments were made for expenses incurred to help with disaster situations like fires and floods, or to help vulnerable residents to live an independent life in the community. These generally covered costs of furniture and white goods, connection and removal costs, minor repairs in certain accommodation, travel costs and essential clothing and footwear. The proposed model will support similar short-term financial pressures through a Crisis Response Fund with a maximum award amount of £200. There will also be a Resident Support Fund with a maximum annual amount of up to £500 which could be used to help with food, utility bills and arrears, as well as referrals to the Credit Union for interest free loans, for example, if the resident's need is greater than £500 or includes credit or store card debt. The CRF and RSF will also act as a gateway to connect the applicant with a wider package of support relevant to their longer-term sustainability.

¹ [Winter Learning: Support for low-income households in winter 2022/23 Key Findings](#). Published August 2023. Research commissioned by the GLA and London Councils, conducted by Social Life.

- 4.26 To ensure the support package available through the new model meets local needs, it is proposed that specialist Immigration and Debt Advice offers (piloted in partnership with Northwest London Law Centre and Advice 4 Renters respectively) are incorporated into the wider programme, and debt advice capacity increased through further apprenticeship training for Brent officers. These building blocks will align with existing provision including Brent Hubs, FWCs, Brent Start, and the Turning Point, and will ensure core support such as ESOL classes, digital training and other life skills are embedded in the offer. Additional employment and skills provision is also currently being explored for inclusion in the programme, including a potential partnership with the London Community Kitchen to support residents with training courses on horticulture and employment within the hospitality industry via an Employment and Skills Project located in Alperton.
- 4.27 Beyond this, there are opportunities to develop additional offers in-line with the Design Principles set out at 4.2 to further strengthen the model and support longer-term outcomes. These include a new Employment and Skills-themed OBR, which launched in December 2023 and is focussing on enabling residents to better support themselves through employment, as well as opportunities for expanding on national Breathing Space legislation through local initiatives (i.e. 'Brent Breathing Space'), which could test the potential to 'write-off' a proportion of a resident's debt to the Council (e.g. Council Tax arrears) upon their completion of a tailored programme of support.

Support with urgent needs

- 4.28 Support with urgent needs is a key element of the model and includes the provision of cash awards via the RSF and CRF. The value of the cash awards would be up to £500, compared to current RSF arrangements of up to £1000. To support residents to become more independent, this part of the model also includes referrals to the Credit Union for interest free loans and directs residents with urgent needs to engage in parts of the programme suitable to their wider needs and has the potential to provide higher value, more sustainable outcomes.
- 4.29 As part of the application for Resident Support Fund cash payments, there will be an option to request additional support, for example with debt, finding employment, getting online. This will link applicants with elements of the model suitable to their needs. Crisis Response Fund applications can only be made by recognised services, these currently include Brent Hubs, Family Wellbeing Centres and some VCS partners (including members of the Practitioners Network). As part of this process, residents will also be linked to additional support within the programme.
- 4.30 Table 2 below show's example scenarios of those who may access the model through these routes, and the potential outcomes.

Table 2: Example scenarios of residents with urgent needs

Scenario	1. Urgent needs	2. Wider needs	3. Outcome / Next steps
1	Resident requires new white goods due to recent fire in their property.	Process confirms this is a stand-alone emergency and resident has no wider support need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility confirmed, resident receives cash payment. No further action needed.
2	Resident requests assistance due to several outstanding utility bills.	Process identifies resident is experiencing other debt-related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident is connected with Brent debt advice service for debt-related support. Resident receives cash payment.
3	Resident requests assistance to support with purchasing food for their family.	Process identifies that resident's family is struggling with food insecurity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident is referred to Community Wellbeing Service and can access food support and other wraparound support. Resident receives cash payment.
4	Resident is struggling to repay council debts	Process identifies resident is currently unemployed but would like to find a job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident is referred to employment element of model to support with obtaining a job. Ethical Debt Recovery policy applied, giving resident breathing space and debt advice
5	Resident is facing financial pressures, including credit card debt	Process identifies resident has digital skills needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident is referred into skills element of the model for digital inclusion support Resident is referred to Credit Union and receives interest free loan.

Longer term support and sustainability

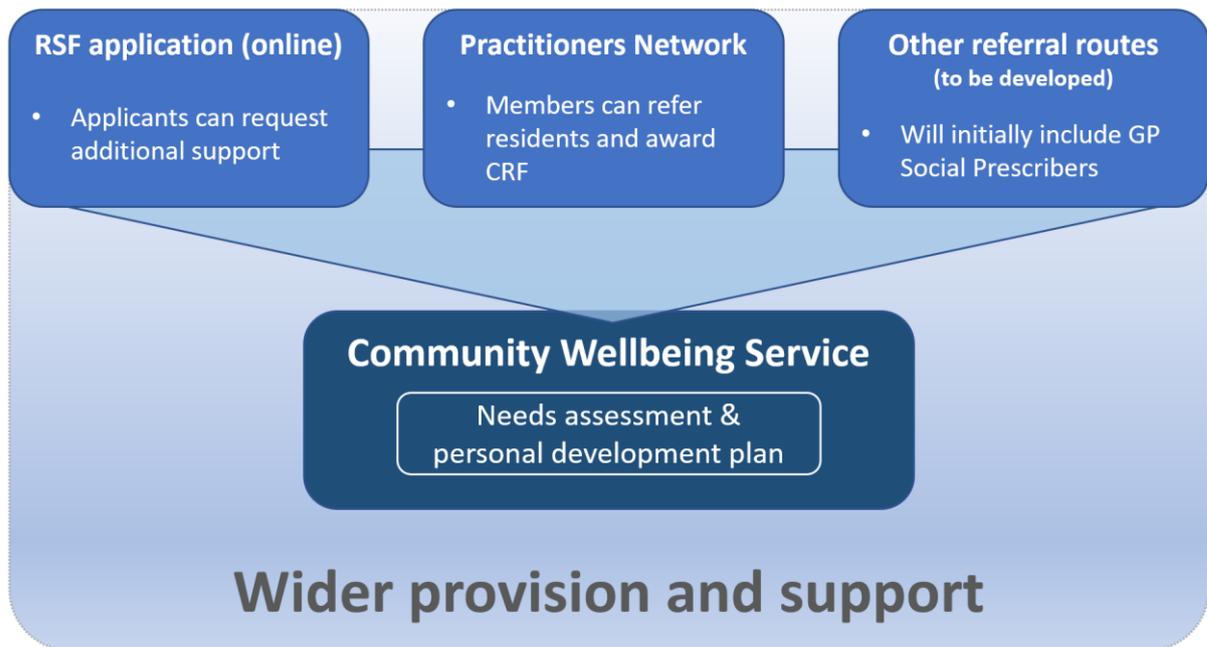
4.31 A key enabler for longer-term sustainability is through improving access to and further designing improved skills, employment and health outcomes into the model. This would include connecting more residents with an enhanced offer modelled on the Community Wellbeing Project pilot at Bridge Park, where members currently enrol to take part in a three-month scheme and for a £4 weekly fee can access:

- A Community Kitchen – providing free evening meals
- A Community Café – providing free hot lunches and snacks

- A Community Shop – providing access to a weekly shop worth approx. £25 consisting of food staples, fresh fruit, vegetables and toiletries
 - A 1-2-1 assessment with a Brent Hubs advisor, including creation of a personal development plan based on individual needs
 - Welfare, health and wellbeing and employment advice, themed drop-ins and workshops from partners
 - Free access to Bridge Park Leisure Centre gym facilities
- 4.32 It is proposed to extend delivery of this two-days-per-week offer at Bridge Park for six months from April – October 2024 before transitioning to a new location at New Millennium Day Centre, which will be open five-days-per-week and will be able to support up to 1,000 families and residents per year through the Community Wellbeing Service.
- 4.33 Locating the service at New Millennium Day Centre provides the space and facilities required to effectively deliver the expanded Kitchen, Café and Shop offer as well as make use of other on-site facilities including the arts space and garden. Additional spaces within the New Millennium Day Centre site also provide opportunities to co-locate the service with complementary offers such as Brent Hubs, as well as test new approaches, for example, those developed through the current Employment and Skills OBR. This approach also aligns with savings proposals relating to the site, including supporting development of a more dynamic day support offer for existing ASC client groups that would include continued use of spaces within the centre on a sessional basis for day opportunities.
- 4.34 In line with the model design principles at 4.2, this location is accessible for residents (including through 206 and 226 Bus Routes) and is located in a deprived area with low food accessibility (based on e-food desert index EFDI) and high levels of RSF applications and Council Tax Arrears. It is also within walking distance of the Willesden Centre for Health and Care (2 minutes) and both Harlesden and Willesden High Roads (15 minutes).
- 4.35 Referrals into the service will come from members of the Cost-of-Living Practitioners Network, which includes council services such as Brent Hubs, FWCs and other front-line staff, as well as VCS partners. New referral routes will be developed with GP Social Prescribers and Public Health Community Support Officers and BHM leads, and discussions are also taking place with DWP about improving referral routes.
- 4.36 Residents referred into the service will receive a full needs assessment and will co-produce a personal development plan with an advisor. This will include linking them with wider provision and support including help with debt, support with physical and mental health, and preparing for employment. Alongside the support agreed in this plan, the resident (and their family) will gain access to the offers listed at 4.30 (access arrangements to local gym facilities will be developed).
- 4.37 Benefits identified through piloting this approach included residents reporting greater financial resilience, improved mental and physical wellbeing, improved

knowledge of and access to local support services, and improved access to affordable food and other essentials. Wider benefits have also included increased confidence, reduced stigma in accessing support, multiple scheme members becoming volunteers within the service, and prevention of escalating needs. Through extending the service at the New Millennium Day Centre site and further enhancing the model with connectivity to and from related services more residents will be supported to become more resilient in the longer-term.

Image 1: Community Wellbeing Programme - pathways of support



Financial benefits of early intervention models

4.38 Whilst the model will provide short term financial assistance to those in emergency situations, it is focused on an early intervention approach, with the aim of intervening as soon as possible to reduce demand for more costly services in the future. Where there is an opportunity to address issues early and avoid escalation to other Brent Services, statutory services and local organisations, there is a potential financial cost avoidance benefit (outlined in the table below)

Table 3: Potential cost benefits

Need	Outcome and benefits	Who does benefit accrue to?	Potential cost benefit per 1 unit Source: Greater Manchester New Economy Model: Cost Benefit Analysis Tool July 2023 ² unless stated otherwise
Employment	Increased employment: 1. Fiscal benefit of moving people off benefits and into work 2. Improved health outcomes 3. Increased income	DWP - JSA	£19,153 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
		DH - ESA	£15,963 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
		Individuals – Income Support (IS)	£10,504 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
Improved skill levels	Increase in earnings amongst residents achieving Level 2 NVQ and residents progressing to Level 3	Population without Level 2 qualifications	£443 economic and fiscal value
Mental Health	Reduced Health cost of interventions	NHS/Individuals	£4,671 – economic and fiscal value per person per year
Housing and Homelessness	Reduced Temporary Accommodation costs	Brent Council	£442.50 weekly <i>*Source: Brent Council records, average weekly cost of a Temporary Accommodation placement between 1st April 2023 and 31st December 2023</i>
	Housing evictions - reduced costs of legal proceedings and repair of property	Housing Provider	£6,680 per incident
Wellbeing	Increased wellbeing of the population	Individuals / society	£13,000 social benefit (per one-point improvement in life satisfaction, per person per year)
	Alleviation of loneliness	Health and social care	Approx £3 per £1 long-term return on investment <i>*Source: LGA: Combating Loneliness, a guide for local authorities³</i>

4.39 As part of the new model, a tracking system to monitor individuals' following their needs assessment will support with monitoring of impact and outcomes against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers.

² Greater Manchester New Economy Model: Cost Benefit Analysis Tool 2023 v5.1.2

³ Case studies in Local Government Association's Combating Loneliness: a guide for Local Authorities, pg 14.

4.40 Table 4 below provides an overview of the timeline and key activities for developing and implementing the new model.

Table 4: Proposed timeline

Period	Activity
Jan – Mar 2024	Cost-of-Living Pilot Projects continue to operate.
Jan – Apr	Develop referral routes with GP's and Social Prescribers
Feb – Apr	Develop criteria for refreshed RSF and CRF and update forms, comms, materials etc.
Feb – May	Tender for partners to deliver Debt Advice and Immigration Advice services
Feb – Sep	Develop future offer and arrangements for ASC client groups at New Millenium Day Centre
Mar	Anticipated date of HSF 2024/2025 allocation announcement
Apr	Move to new RSF and CRF criteria
Apr – Oct	Continue with two-days-per-week Wellbeing support at Bridge Park
Apr – Oct	Tender for partner to deliver five-days-per-week service at New Millennium Day Centre
Apr – Oct	Identify other services to move to New Millennium Day Centre
Apr – Oct	Pilot referral routes with GP social prescribers with small group
Apr – Oct	Pilot new Employment and Skills offers developed through OBR

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 The Cost-of-Living Outcomes Based Review process included early stakeholder and community engagement, and co-development of prototype ideas with key stakeholders. Ward members are regularly updated on the actions the Council is taking to mitigate the impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis on Brent residents.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 Table 5 below shows costs and funding for the proposed model for 2024-2027.

Costs	Funding	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
		2024-5	2025-6	2026-7
Operational costs for continuing 2 day per week service at Bridge Park for 6 months		£249,706		
Annual operational costs for running expanded service at NMDC (six months only in Y1)		£287,571	£575,142	£575,142
Grant for Alperton Employment & Skills project		£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Grant for debt advice provision		£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Grant for immigration advice provision		£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Grant for additional food support initiatives		£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Top up for Credit Union loan fund		£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Funding for CRF and RSF payments		£899,723	£689,858	£689,858
TOTAL COSTS		£1,662,000	£1,490,000	£1,490,000
	Borough plan poverty commission funding	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000
	Public Health contribution	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
	UK SPF funding	£172,000		
	Funding for RSF	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
TOTAL FUNDING		£1,662,000	£1,490,000	£1,490,000

6.2 The additional £172k funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been confirmed for the Community Kitchen model with Sufra NW London for 2024/2025. Other grants, such as the GLA's Food Roots grant, may become available and officers will actively monitor for opportunities.

6.3 If further funding is made available through the HSF, this model will be delivered and the additional funding used to enhance the offer, with potential to upscale to other locations in areas of high need.

Use of the public health grant reserve for the development of the Community Wellbeing Service

6.4 The public health grant reserve is subject to the same grant conditions as the original grant. The development of the Community Wellbeing Service as described in this paper allows the public health grant to be pooled with RSF, UKSPF and any HSF to support the service. The new service will have a more explicit focus on health needs in the eligibility criteria and be open to individuals as well as families. Closer working between Brent Health Matters (BHM), public health and various debt, employment and immigration service offers will be progressed along with the creation of new referral routes with GP Social Prescribers and Public Health Community Support Officers and BHM leads.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides that Local Government may pay a grant to a local authority towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it. Subject to the conditions put in place, failure to spend Government grants in accordance with Government grant conditions could result in the requirement to return all Government Funding.

7.2 In relation to the Housing Support Fund and the way in which monies are spent, the Council is required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund, clearly setting out their priorities and approach for use of the Fund, and to demonstrate the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding. Accordingly, payment from the Housing Support Fund into the Resident Support Fund.

7.3 The Localism Act 2011 section 1. introduced “the general power of competence” which enables authorities “to do anything that individuals generally may do”. The proposals within this report relating to the payment of grants from its resources are consistent with the Council exercising this power. Instead of being able to act only where the law permits it, local authorities are free to do anything provided they do not contravene other limitations set out in legislation or policy.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the “Public Sector Equality Duty”), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,

8.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender

reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 8.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 8.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.
- 8.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposals in this report has been completed and is included at Appendix 4 of the report.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 There are none at this stage.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 10.1 The Community Wellbeing Project pilot is currently in operation from Bridge Park Leisure Centre, Stonebridge, NW10 0RG and will continue to operate from this premises in the short term. This is a Brent Council owned site and is currently under a land sale agreement with longer term redevelopment plans. An appropriate lease arrangement is being agreed between Brent Council and Sufra NW London to ensure the proposals in this paper do not undermine the land sale agreement.
- 10.2 Proposals to provide an expanded Community Wellbeing Service from the New Millennium Day Centre site at 1 Robson Ave, London NW10 3SG are subject to the outcome of a public consultation that ran from 6 December 2023 - 14 January 2024 and included proposals to end existing arrangements for day support at the centre in 2024. The proposals in this paper align with those in the consultation and support development of a more dynamic day support offer.

11.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 New materials and targeted stakeholder campaigns will be developed to effectively communicate the Community Wellbeing Programme and refreshed RSF and CRF criteria.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Corporate Director of Resident Services