

## **Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration, Planning and Growth – Councillor Muhammed Butt**

### **Top news since my last report:**

- **Local Authority Housing Fund (Round 3):** Emergency and Temporary accommodation can never be a long-term solution to tackling the UK's homelessness crisis. But it is one of the fundamentals to crack if we are to help our residents move across housing types and tenures as their circumstances change.

It acts as a vital safety net when residents approach us, with little other place to turn and until recently, Brent had been working extremely hard to reduce the number of our residents placed in Temporary Accommodation. The astronomical cost of sourcing high-quality Temporary Accommodation is threatening the very financial stability of local authorities across London. We are experiencing an in-year overspend of over £10m, primarily driven by the cost of sourcing Temporary Accommodation in and around London. There are no quick fixes.

But one thing this council can do is to multiply the supply of high-quality Temporary Accommodation which allows the council to move residents out of the most expensive emergency provision in B&B and hotels, in doing so reducing the financial burden on the council; and improving the quality of life for the residents we support. The Local Authority Housing Fund [LAHF] is nothing short of a lifeline for Brent, with a £10.5m grant, topped up with a further £15m of capital funding from the council.

We need these external grants if the council is to be able to move at pace, to tackle the crisis in supply of affordable housing. These measures will enable the council to purchase 42 street level properties for Temporary Accommodation - and although a small start when compared to our overall ambitions, it will change the lives of the residents we will be able to support.

We know where the demand is at its most acute, so officers will be tasked with sourcing the larger properties that we know our families need, with 22 of these properties above 3-bed in size.

- **Families Homelessness Service Relocation:** The Families Homelessness Service will soon be relocated from the Brent Civic Centre to the New Millennium Centre in Roundwood.

The service has been experiencing high demand for the past 2 years, due to the national housing crisis, and sees an average of 61 families per week. On 5th February 2024, Cabinet approved proposals to develop a new model of support for Brent residents. The ambition is to provide a multifaceted programme including the space, tools and knowledge to support residents to improve their situation and increase opportunities, reducing long-term dependency on services.

The site is located in the south of the borough, where a significant amount of homelessness demand originates from, and is walking distance from the Single Homeless Service, and in walking distance to the Crisis Skylight building (15 minutes) and Job Centre Plus Harlesden (15 minutes), both key partners in tackling the homelessness emergency. Co-location with wider services will also

include Brent Hubs, debt and food support which will all be able to help vulnerable families with wider challenges they may be facing.

#### **Other news:**

➤ **Cost of living support this winter**

In Brent, an astonishing £124 million in benefits goes unclaimed each year, which means you could be missing out on thousands of pounds in support.

Over £2 million in Pension Credit is going unclaimed, a life-changing benefit for people over state pension age on a low income. It provides almost £4,000 a year and unlocks a range of additional support, including a free TV licence, Housing Benefit and Winter Fuel Payments.

Apply for Pension Credit online or call 0800 99 1234.

➤ **Visit your local Brent hub**

If you're facing hardships, our seven hubs across the borough are here to provide advice and support with housing, benefits, employment, emergency assistance (including fuel and food vouchers), and more.

➤ **Get help through the Resident Support Fund**

If you need help with everyday essentials or are facing short-term financial problems due to an emergency, you can apply for help through the Resident Support Fund. It can help with food, utility bills, household essentials and more.

➤ **Book a free appointment with Brent Well and Warm**

If you are 60+, have young children, or someone in your household who is pregnant or living with a long-term condition, you can book a free appointment with a Green Doctor to help make your home more sustainable and cheaper to run.

➤ **Find a warm space near you**

If you're worried about the cost of heating your home, there are a number of local places in Brent offering a warm welcome throughout the day, including your local library. There is a growing network of spaces across the borough offering a warm welcome this winter - visit: <https://www.warmwelcome.uk/>

➤ Under our new strategic restructure of the Council, the Property & Assets team will be moving from Finance and Resources into the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration team. A huge thank you to all the officers working through this change in our aim for a more streamlined, efficient Council.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## Deputy Leader and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources – Councillor Mili Patel

### Top news since my last report:

- **Budget update:** The formal process for the 2025/26 budget is still underway, with our service and Cabinet leads currently in consultation with our Finance Director and wider Finance team before the proposals go to public consultation. After £210m worth of cuts from our core spending budget since 2010, this year's budget will be the most difficult yet.

We will be working incredibly hard to safeguard the frontline services our residents rely on while upholding fiscal responsibility with the public purse. We welcomed the measures outlined by the Chancellor in the Autumn Budget to revitalise public services, and we await the updates from the Local Government Financial Settlement, expected mid-December, for further clarity on the position of local authorities.

- **Change Programme:** Our new strategic change programme, introduced earlier this year, ensures that we as an organisation can focus our ambitions, improving and evolving to tackle the ever-changing demands in meeting the needs of our local communities with the resources available. As part of this, over 1,200 staff members have taken part in Values Workshops in recent weeks to get a greater understanding of their outlook on working in the council and where we can harness our strengths.
- **Better Together:** From October, all Brent colleagues have been working at least three days a week in-house, with the option to work from home for up to two days a week. This change ensures we meet the needs of the local community and deliver effective services as a public service organisation, through enhanced collaboration, understanding our community, and enhancing our professional development, too.

### Other news:

- **Kilburn Library:** Plans for the reformat and refurbishment of Kilburn Library are underway, following in the footsteps of the newly refurbished Wembley Library in Brent Civic Centre. The new space has a brand-new children's library, a larger main library with more stock, and dedicated spaces for quiet study.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action – Councillor Jake Rubin

### Top news since my last report:

- **Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme (2024-2026):** We were excited to announce the launch of the Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme for 2024-2026 at Cabinet in October.

Brent continues to face the challenges of climate change with determination, and the actions we take now will help shape the future of our community. Aligned with the 'Cleaner, Greener Future' priority in our Borough Plan (2023-2027), this updated programme renews our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030.

It includes both immediate and long-term goals to support Brent's journey toward a sustainable future. New initiatives include:

- **Church End & Roundwood Green Corridors Scheme** with a **£3 million capital budget**, aimed at boosting green spaces, air quality, and biodiversity.
  - Adjustments to the **Brent Carbon Offset Fund** to attract more funding and achieve greater impacts.
  - Seeking external grant funding to support the **decarbonisation of council housing and corporate estates** —a critical move toward reducing emissions.
- **Green Corridors:** In October, Cabinet approved a £3m capital budget allocation to implement the Church End and Roundwood Green Corridors Scheme, approving £3m SCIL funding to offset these costs. The Scheme is a flagship element to the Church End & Roundwood Green Corridors project and is expected to deliver significant benefits, including reduced carbon emissions, improved air quality and increased levels of walking and cycling. We've also launched a community engagement programme to explore expanding the scheme in Kingsbury ward.
- **Rebel Business School Business Start-up Programme:** Rebel Business School have been commissioned to deliver further Business Start-up support to entrepreneurs and fledgling businesses through until 31 March 2025. This overarching programme will include, taster sessions, bespoke outreach programmes to support minority groups who may wish to start a business such as refugees, female led, disabled, BAME, as well as their usual 2-week intensive courses.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools – Councillor Gwen Grahl

### Top news since my last report:

- **State of the art SEND school set for completion in 2025:** A groundbreaking ceremony will be held at Wembley Manor School, our brand new school for neurodiverse children, on November 11<sup>th</sup> with the school scheduled to open in 2025. It forms part of Brent's SEND capital investment programme, which will deliver over 400 SEND places across the borough by 2025. Designed to be BREEAM Outstanding, which is the highest sustainability rating, the school will provide high-quality SEND teaching spaces, external play areas, sports facilities, soft and hard landscaping, car parking and drop-off facilities.
- **Brent's Corporate Parenting Committee votes to make care experienced a protected characteristic:** Corporate Parenting Committee members voted to make care experienced a protected characteristic within Brent Council, following recommendations from care leavers and young people in care that this would help celebrate Looked After Children and tackle stigma and discrimination. The committee also expressed support for an expansion of support available to Care Leavers, which will now include greater allowances, free internet access, a rent deposit scheme and mentoring support with work and life skills. The move will be announced to all of our young people at a celebration event in December
- **Secretaries of State visit Brent Family Wellbeing Centre:** Education Minister Bridget Phillipson and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Liz Kendall paid a visit to Preston Park Family Wellbeing Centre on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, taking time to meet families and children who use the service in conjunction with local children's charity Barnardo's. The visit commemorated the government's new Child Poverty Taskforce, which published a report on Wednesday outlining a 10 year plan to tackle the issue.

### Other news:

- **School Place Planning Strategy 2024 – 2028 1st Refresh:** Cabinet approved the new Strategy, looking into primary and secondary school places, SEND demand, and childminder provision across the borough.
- **Brent Holiday Activity Fund (HAF):** The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will be running across multiple venues in Brent during the Christmas holidays. The programme enables children and young people on benefit-related free school meals in Reception to Year 11 to access free activities as well as free, nutritional meals.
- **School Holiday Activity Fund (London):** Grants of up to £5,000 are available to enable registered charities and mainstream state schools to deliver fun and accessible activities for children and young people during the school holidays.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## **Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing – Councillor Neil Nerva**

### **Top news since my last report:**

- **Family Wellbeing Centres annual report published:** During the 2023-24 financial year 18,113 families were supported to achieve positive outcomes in various areas, a few of which include:
  - Improved family finances and reducing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis
  - Reduced numbers of families presenting as homeless, securing long term accommodation and reducing the threat of eviction
  - Improved family health and wellbeing outcomes.
  - Reducing the risk of domestic abuse and providing a whole family offer to process the trauma of domestic abuse
  - Supporting parents towards better employment outcomes
  - Preventing family problems becoming more complex and entrenched by intervening earlier and providing the right support at the right time
  - Preventing family breakdown and CYP going into care

The Family Wellbeing Centres and Start for Life programme key priorities for the 2024-25 financial year are to:

- Deliver the final year of the Start for Life programme delivery plan with a focus on exit planning and sustainability
  - Develop stronger links to the Council's strategic change programme to ensure that FWCs improve and evolve to tackle current and emerging challenges in meeting the needs of Brent's local communities, helping to empower communities and build resilience
  - Increase the number of parents completing accredited parenting workshops, particularly those referred from front line practitioners
  - Develop the FWC youth offer linked to the refreshed Youth Strategy and delivery plan.
  - Support the Early Help and Social Care redesign programme to contribute to the development of a service that is fit for the future.
- **Government NHS survey:** The government wants to have the biggest ever conversation about the future of the NHS. It doesn't matter whether you have a lot or a little to say. Your views, experiences and ideas will shape a new 10 Year Health Plan for England.
  - **Drug and Alcohol Service Open Day:** On Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November, the drug and alcohol service New Beginnings and Eelv8 will be holding an open day at Cobbold Road from 2-7pm. The event is designed to introduce stakeholders and residents to the wide range of support services available to adults and young people affected by drugs and alcohol. There will be opportunities to meet the team and have questions answered, learn about treatment options and hear personal stories from individuals on their journey navigating recovery.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement – Councillor Krupa Sheth

### Top news since my last report:

- **Lime:** Over the past few months, we have been unequivocal in our stance with Lime. The current situation, particularly the disruptions from poorly parked bikes, has been both unacceptable and unsustainable. We made it clear to Lime that unless they addressed these issues head-on, we would end their operations in Brent by October 31st. After a series of intense negotiations and a thorough review by our officers, Lime proposed a revised action plan. Some of the key measures include:
  - **Mandatory parking:** Lime have agreed to hundreds of thousands of pounds in funding for mandatory parking zones. This, coupled with funding from TfL should see around 200 bays installed across the borough.
  - **30% reduction in fleet size:** Decreasing the number of bikes in the borough to 500.
  - **75% increase in operational team members stationed in Brent**
  - **Quarterly attendance at a residents' forum:** Lime will appear at residents' meetings every quarter to discuss concerns and updates.
  
- **Don't Mess with Brent:** We remain committed to keeping our community clean, safe, and welcoming for all residents. A fly-tipping event caught recently on camera in Fryent Way has resulted in a £1,300 fine. We've also set up a Don't Mess with Brent inbox for all sightings of littering and fly-tipping: [dontmesswithbrent@brent.gov.uk](mailto:dontmesswithbrent@brent.gov.uk)
  
- **Trading Standards Week:** We held events throughout October, each day with a different theme, from the Tenant Fees Act to Vapes and Illegal Tobacco and work on tackling knife crime.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## Cabinet Member for Resident Support and Culture – Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson

### Top news since my last report:

- **Wembley Library reopening:** On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, Wembley Library officially reopened. It is now home to a brand-new Resident Hub and has been transformed into a better space designed to serve the needs of residents and customers. The upgraded facilities have created a space dedicated to fostering knowledge, learning and community connections in the heart of Brent Civic Centre. Improvements include:
  - A new accessible entrance on Exhibition Way.
  - Expanded library with a larger collection.
  - More study areas and quiet zones.
  - A new purpose-built children's library.
  
- **Resident Hub:** Alongside the Library reopening is also the new Resident Hub on the ground floor. This hub features a dedicated customer service area with a digital zone to support residents in accessing online services. These exciting new spaces will enable us to better serve our residents, especially those with the most complex needs.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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## **Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships – Councillor Harbi Farah**

### **Top news since my last report:**

- **Funders Fair:** The Funders Fair was held on 25 September in collaboration with Wembley Stadium Trust and CVS Brent. The event was a great success within excess of 600 people in attendance and over 30 funders stalls.
- **Brent Connects:** The autumn round has launched. Three meetings have been held so far, Harlesden, Kingsbury and Kenton and Wembley. All were well attended with Kingsbury and Kenton seeing their highest ever attendance of 30 people. The newest format has been welcomed by chairs and attendees alike, and all meetings saw an increase in attendee participation than in previous meetings.
- **PSPO Consultation:** We are currently running a consultation on PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Orders) until the 10<sup>th</sup> of December.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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