

Brent Electoral Review



Draft Submission from Brent Council

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1. Introduction

Brent welcomes the review of its internal electoral boundaries and the opportunity to submit representations to the Commission. This submission has been considered and approved by Full Council.

2. Summary and Recommendations

2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission in terms of proposed Council size as part of the preliminary stage in the London Borough of Brent's Electoral Boundary review process.

2.2 The recommendation proposed by the Council is that, based on:

- (a) The more streamlined governance and decision making arrangements introduced by the Council, following the local election in May 2018;
- (b) The number of councillors actively involved as members serving on bodies with a role in the Council's formal decision making structure; and
- (c) Changes in the way that residents are now interacting with the Council and are able to communicate with councillors.

The size of Brent Council be reduced from the current total of 63 councillors to 57 councillors (a reduction of 6 councillors overall).

2.3 In making this recommendation, a number of factors have been taken into consideration, which include

- (a) **Governance Arrangements:** How the Council takes decisions across the range of its responsibilities – *the submission will outline and provide evidence about the Council decision making structure, involvement and workload of those councillors involved as well as on the Scheme of Delegation and other bodies.*
- (b) **Scrutiny Function:** How the Council scrutinises its own decision making and responsibilities in relation to outside bodies – *the submission will provide details and evidence about the number of councillors involved and required to hold decision makers to account and ensure that the Council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations.*
- (c) **Representational Role of Councillors:** How councillors engage with local residents, conduct casework and represent the Council on outside organisations and local partner organisations – *the submission will provide evidence about how councillors interact with their communities, their caseloads and the support required to represent local residents and groups effectively.*

3. Borough Profile

3.1 Demography and place

3.1.1 Brent is a vibrant borough located in North West London. The Borough is well known for being home to Wembley Stadium, which has encouraged tourism and businesses to thrive. It has also brought opportunities for redevelopment in the area such as with the opening of the London Designer Outlet which boasts a number of modern leisure facilities making Wembley an attractive place to visit. Regeneration is taking place across the whole borough which is delivering significant employment benefits for local residents and is helping to put Brent on the map.

3.1.2 Brent is a well-connected area, particularly by public transport and with links to Central London. The North Circular Road separates the less densely populated northern part of the borough from the south, and provides access to the other outer London suburbs. Additionally, a large number of Transport for London services pass through the borough - for example the Underground, London Overground services, buses and the Transport for London Road Network.

3.2 Population and people

3.2.1 The population of Brent has increased by 27% from 263,500 people in 2001 to 335,800 people in 2018¹. From 2011 to 2018 the growth rate was 7% compared to a 9% growth rate for London and a 5% growth rate for England over the same period². From 2001, the increase in population has differed from ward to ward, with some wards seeing an increase of up to 49% and others only 6% (Figure 1)³. Brent is now the sixth largest of the London boroughs by population and the fifteenth most densely populated local authority in the country⁴.

¹ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slide 2.

² Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slide 3.

³ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slide 4.

⁴ London Borough Profiles excel, <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-borough-profiles>.

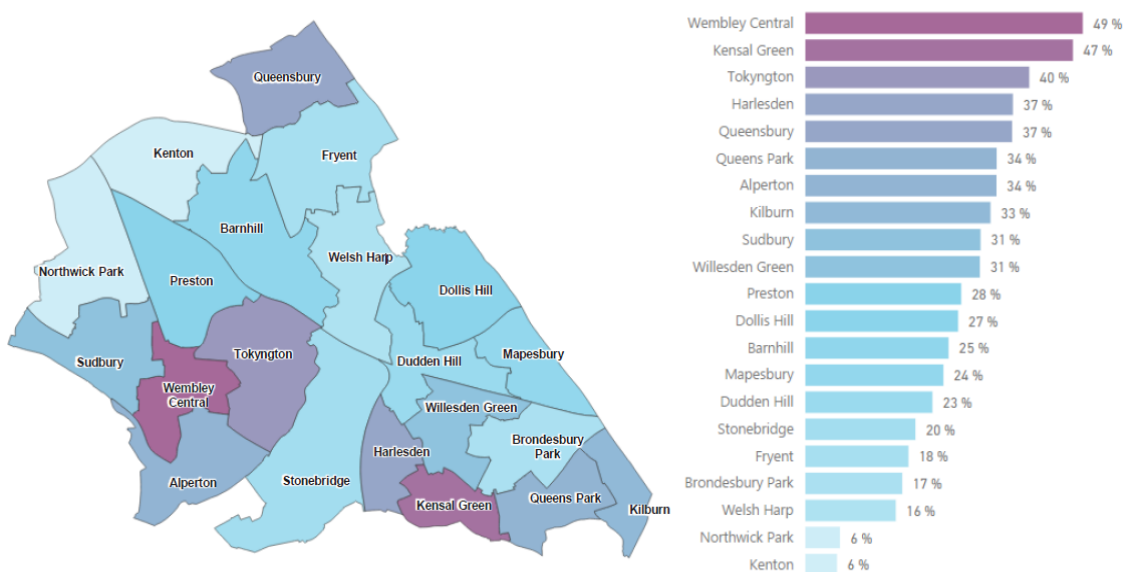


Figure 1- Population growth 2001-2018 by ward

3.2.2 Brent is also one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK; 149 different languages are spoken in Brent and according to the 2011 census, 65% of the population are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds⁵. This is significantly higher than the England average at 14% and the London average at 40%⁶. Brent also has a large number of 20-40 year olds giving the borough a young population which is higher than the England rating, but in line with London's.

3.3 Deprivation

3.3.1 The most commonly used measure of deprivation is known as the index of multiple deprivation (IMD) and in 2015 Brent was ranked 39th out of 326 local authorities (LA) in England⁷. In 2010 Brent was ranked 24th which shows a significant improvement over a five year period⁸. Levels of deprivation vary across the borough and within wards (Figure 2)⁹.

⁵ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slides 8 and 11.

⁶ Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>.

⁷ Indices of Multiple Deprivation ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=590>, slide 5.

⁸ Indices of Multiple Deprivation ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=590>, slide 35.

⁹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=590>, slide 6.

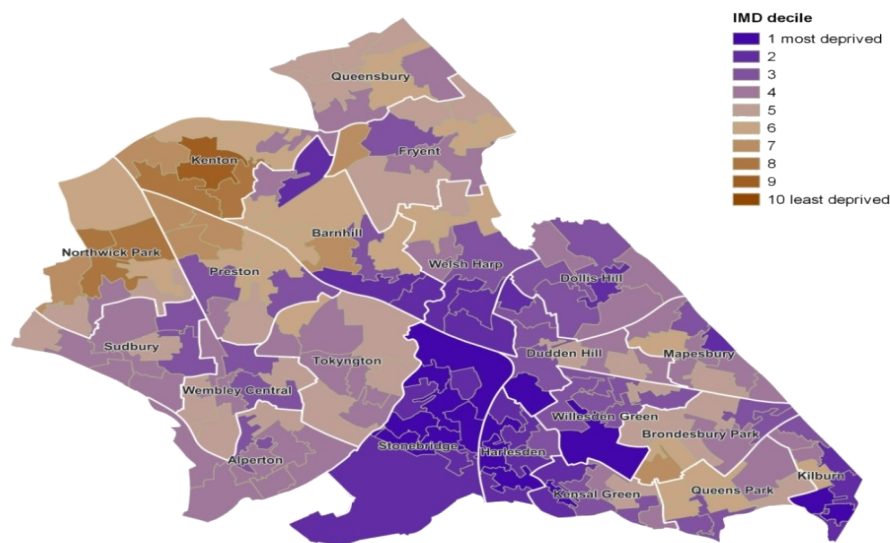


Figure 2 - Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015

3.3.2 The indices of deprivation rank each lower super output area (LSOA) in England in order of deprivation. Brent has 173 LSOAs and 108 of these are within deciles 1-4 of the most deprived LSOAs in the country (Figure 3)¹⁰. The deprivation rank is measured using a number of domains. The domains where Brent exhibits the lowest rankings are barriers to housing and services (3rd out of 326 LAs), income deprivation affecting older people index (14th out of 326 LAs) and crime (17th out of 326 LAs). The domains where Brent exhibits higher rankings are education, skills and training deprivation, health deprivation and disability and employment deprivation. Stonebridge is a ward which tends to be consistently low in all domains¹¹.

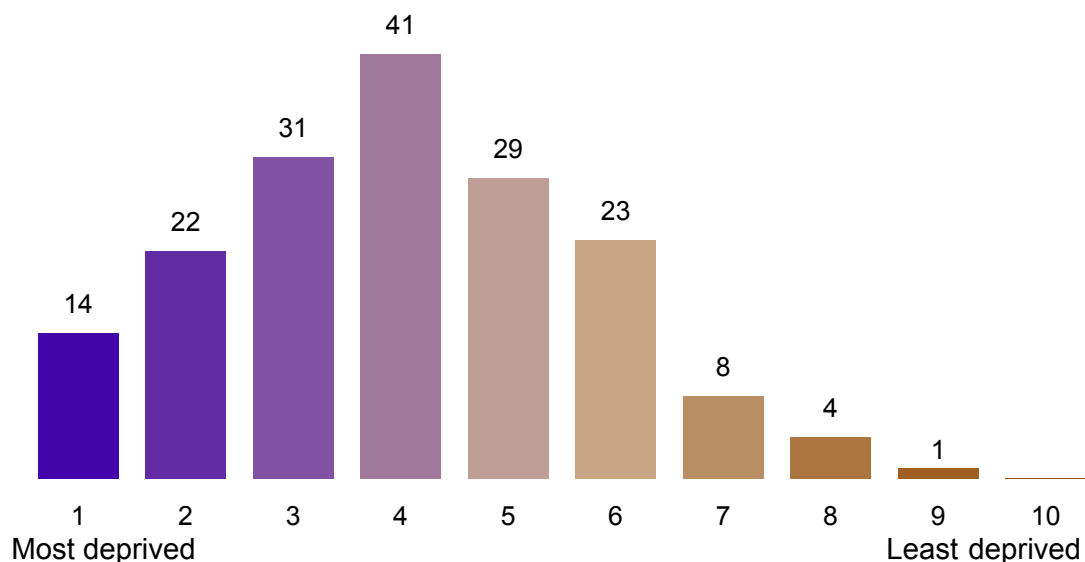


Figure 3 - Number of LSOAs in each decile

¹⁰ Indices of Multiple Deprivation ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=590>, slide 5.

¹¹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=590>, slides 7-28.

3.4 Economy

- 3.4.1 Most of the employment in the borough is in small and medium sized businesses. Brent's economy continues to thrive from the ongoing regeneration which is bringing with it capacity for new housing, jobs and better local services and the employment opportunities which these create.
- 3.4.2 The median household income for Brent is currently the third lowest in London¹². However this varies considerably between wards, for example Queens Park has an average household income of £40,259 compared to Stonebridge which is £17,979¹³. Of Brent's working population, 39% are paid less than the London living wage and 46% of these are residents with a Pakistani or Bangladesh ethnic background¹⁴.

¹² Brent Borough Plan, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>, p. 10.

¹³ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slide 18.

¹⁴ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slides 18 and 19.

4. Challenges and Priorities

4.1 Corporate Priorities

4.1.1 The Council's corporate priorities are defined in the Brent Borough Plan 2015-19 and Brent 2020 vision which set out an ambitious plan for the future of the borough. The three corporate priorities which Brent is working towards in partnership with its residents are as follows:

- Better locally;
- Better place;
- Better lives.

Better locally

Brent will work towards building community resilience and building citizenship. We will ensure that all residents in the borough are able to participate in local democracy, have a say in how services are delivered and are listened to. We will also work with partners to find new ways of providing services that are better tailored to individual, community and local needs¹⁵.

Better place

We will strive to make Brent an attractive place to live, with a sustainable environment, clean streets and well-cared for parks and green spaces. We will also continue to reduce violent crime and make people feel safer by implementing our crime reduction strategy and target areas experiencing the highest levels of crime. Brent will also increase the supply of affordable and good quality housing and provide good quality, accessible arts and leisure facilities¹⁶.

Better lives

Brent will support local enterprise, generating jobs for local people, helping people into work and promoting fair pay. We will also support the most excluded households into work and ensure that our children and young people have access to the best education and training and are able to achieve their potential. Finally, Brent will also encourage people to live healthier lives and support vulnerable people and families when they need it¹⁷.

4.1.2 Our current priority is to build on the successes we have already achieved and focus more resources on services designed around the individual and those residents with complex needs. The core aim of the Brent 2020 vision is to change the nature of the Council's relationship with its service users which will

¹⁵ Brent Borough Plan, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>, pps. 39-45.

¹⁶ Brent Borough Plan, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>, pps. 31-38.

¹⁷ Brent Borough Plan, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>, pps. 20-30.

involve managing demand and ensuring that residents can become more resilient¹⁸.

- 4.1.3 Whilst meeting these priorities, there are a number of key issues which remain an ongoing challenge for the Council. One of the most critical challenges is the need for the Council to cater for an increasing population by securing appropriate housing and providing opportunities for employment in order to tackle inequalities in the borough. Five key growth areas have been identified in Alperton, Burnt Oak/Colindale, Church End, South Kilburn and Wembley¹⁹ for long-term regeneration in a bid to facilitate new housing options, jobs and local services. The 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) found a need for additional housing in Brent to be 47,500 dwellings in the period 2011-37, equivalent to an average of 1,826 dwellings per year. Brent is working towards delivering this target which should accommodate residents with a range of different needs.
- 4.1.4 Brent also faces the challenge posed by central government cuts (this will be explored further in the next section). The Council needs to adapt and transform in order to find new ways of doing things so that we can maintain the quality of our services.
- 4.1.5 Finally, Brent has been awarded the London Borough of Culture 2020. A key priority going forward is therefore to make culture an integral part of the borough's future and development.

4.2 Financial Position

- 4.2.1 Brent has made savings of £150m since 2010; however in the face of austerity it is clear that further savings are required²⁰. Brent anticipates that approximately £30m in further savings will need to be made before 2021²¹. The Council takes a strategic approach to its corporate and financial planning, in line with the Brent Borough Plan and the Brent 2020 Vision. The priority is to ensure that the quality and availability of key services are not affected and that resident's needs are still being met.
- 4.2.2 In setting the 2016/17 budget, the Council approved a council rise tax in order to avoid £3.8m in cuts to essential Council services. In order to enable the Council to deliver more services long-term, the following savings proposals were agreed to take effect in 2018/19:
- Civic enterprise – a work stream to make the council more entrepreneurial, and generate income of £5.6m; and
 - Procurement – a work stream to deliver savings of £8m by improving commissioning and procurement of services²².

¹⁸ Brent 2020: Our Vision and Priorities, *Our Vision*, p. 2.

¹⁹ Brent Local Plan Issues and Options Document, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/shapebrent>, section 2.34, p. 27.

²⁰ Budget and Council Tax 2018/19, *Report from the Chief Financial Officer* (February 2018), section 1.3.

²¹ Budget and Council Tax 2018/19, *Report from the Chief Financial Officer* (February 2018), section 1.3.

²² Budget and Council Tax 2017/18 to 2019/20, *Report of the Chief Financial Officer* (February 2017), section 1.3.

- 4.2.3 These strategies have helped to ensure that overall expenditure is expected to be contained within the agreed budgets. However, this has raised challenges around the delivery of the savings program, particularly around its management and the risks that a programme of this complexity can bring.
- 4.2.4 In February 2018, Brent's Full Council agreed further increases in council tax to help maintain services, to make innovative capital investments to reduce the costs of these services, plan for the impact of the growth in services caused by demographic pressures and investing in services for vulnerable residents in the community, for example council tax exemptions for care leavers until the age of 25²³.

4.3 Electoral arrangements

- 4.3.1 As at December 2017, 71% of the borough's electorate were registered to vote²⁴. In April 2018, 224,674 electors were registered to vote in Brent; the largest proportion of these registered voters live within Kilburn ward (7%) and the lowest proportion live within the Kenton ward (3%).

The European Union (EU) referendum is largely responsible for this figure as it provoked masses of residents across the borough to register to vote and engage in this referendum. During the five months prior to the referendum, over 41,500 electors registered to vote which is 23% of the total number of electors who are registered today²⁵.

- 4.3.2 Outreach work is ongoing to encourage registration rates to grow further. During the 2018 Borough Council elections, outreach work was directed particularly at young people aged 18-25 as this group were the least likely to participate in elections. Members of staff ensured that they were accessible to these young people, for example by going to areas they knew students or young people would be, in order to have the largest reach and to make it as easy as possible for this group to register.
- 4.3.3 Turnout for elections fluctuates according to the type of election. General elections consistently see the highest turnout which has been steadily increasing in recent years from 63% in 2010, to 65% in 2015 and then to 67%* in 2017 despite the proximity of this general election to the previous one²⁶. The 2016 EU referendum similarly saw a high turnout in the borough at 65% which was significantly higher than turnout for the UK Parliamentary voting system referendum in 2011 which was only 31%; however this is likely a result of the media attention given to and significance of this election²⁷.

²³ Budget and Council Tax 2018/19, *Report from the Chief Financial Officer* (February 2018), section 1.7.

²⁴ Population on Electoral Roll excel, <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/population-electoral-roll-borough?> and History of Register Changes Statistics by Month pdf, (April 2018).

²⁵ History of Register Changes Statistics by Month pdf, (April 2018).

²⁶ Election Results, *General Election 06/05/2010, General Election 07/05/2015 and General Election 08/06/2017*, <http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/mgManageElectionResults.aspx>.

²⁷ Election Results, *EU referendum 23/06/2016 and Referendum on the UK Parliamentary voting system 05/05/2011*, <http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/mgManageElectionResults.aspx>.

** This figure does not include the three Brent wards within Hampstead and Kilburn as these details are contained within the London Borough of Camden.*

4.3.4 Borough Council elections do not historically see as a high a turnout. In 2018 the turnout was 37% for the Borough elections on May 3 with 24% for a subsequent countermanded poll in the Willesden Green ward on 21 June 2018. This was only a slight increase from the turnout in 2014 which was 36%²⁸. However, the appetite for local democracy in Brent is in line with that of its statistical neighbours and London-wide. During the 2018 Local Elections, the average turnout for Brent's statistical neighbours was 38% and London boroughs collectively saw an average turnout of 39%.

4.3.5 The councillor to elector ratio is set out in the table below. It shows the 2017 figures compared to the projections for 2023, including our proposed council size option.

Number of councillors	Electorate per councillor (2018)	Electorate per councillor (2023)
57	3,942	4,242
58	3,874	4,169
59	3,809	4,098
60	3,745	4,030
61	3,684	3,964
62	3,624	3,900
63	3,567	3,838

4.3.6 The electorate ratio for each of Brent's [West London Alliance](#) partners is listed in the table below. The West London Alliance (WLA) is a partnership between seven West London local authorities of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. This demonstrates that if any changes are made to Brent's Council size, its electoral ratio would still be consistent with that of the other partner authorities in the West London Alliance.

West London Alliance London Boroughs	Number of councillors	Electorate ratio
Hillingdon	65	3,096
Harrow	63	2,937
Barnet	63	3,964
Brent	63	3,567
Ealing	69	3,556
Hounslow	60	3,201
Hammersmith & Fulham	46	2,808

²⁸ Election Results, *Borough Council elections 22/05/2014 and Borough Council elections 06/05/2010*, <http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/mgManageElectionResults.aspx>.

4.4 Future Projections

- 4.4.1 The borough's population is projected to increase further by an estimated 5% to 354,000 by 2023 and then again by another 5% to 371,000 by 2028²⁹. The borough's electorate population increase is calculated by using the last six years' electoral data to determine a population to electorate ratio, then using that proportion with a population projection for the next six years to project the electorate. The projections for 2018 - 2023 are illustrated in Figure 4 below³⁰.

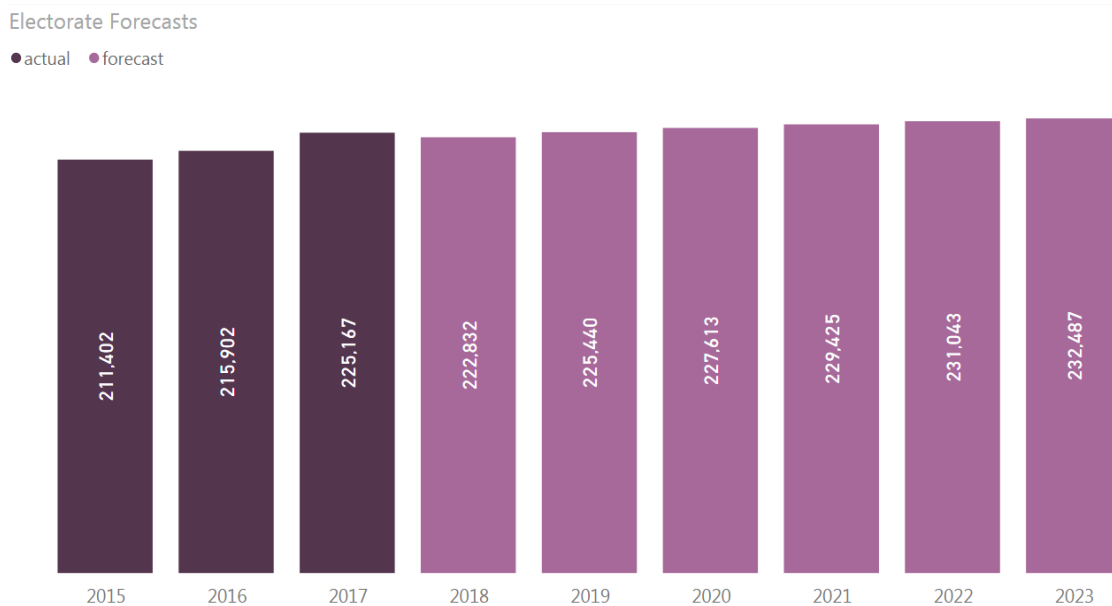


Figure 4 - Borough-level electorate projection

- 4.4.2 In order to estimate the ward forecasts, the LGBCE recommends calculating the past share of the electorate by polling district-level and applying the same ratio to the forecasted borough-level electorate.
- 4.4.3 However, we believe that in Brent a development-driven methodology would be more suitable to take into account the borough's significant redevelopment which will impact population growth in these areas³¹. Highlighted in Figure 5 below are the borough's key Growth Areas where major building and regeneration is taking place³². These areas, for example Tokyngton, will likely experience considerable changes to their resident and electorate populations over the next few years which could have a negative effect on electoral equality if not factored into this review. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the impact of this redevelopment on the electorate polling-district level for 2017 (current) and 2023³³.

²⁹ Diversity in Brent profile 2017 ppt., *Brent Data*, <https://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/Pages/DocumentDisplayView.aspx?ItemID=668>, slide 2.

³⁰ Electoral Projections, *Election Project Board Report* (April 2018), p. 7.

³¹ Electoral Projections, *Election Project Board Report* (April 2018), p. 3.

³² Performance & Improvement Team (April 2018).

³³ Performance & Improvement Team (April 2018).

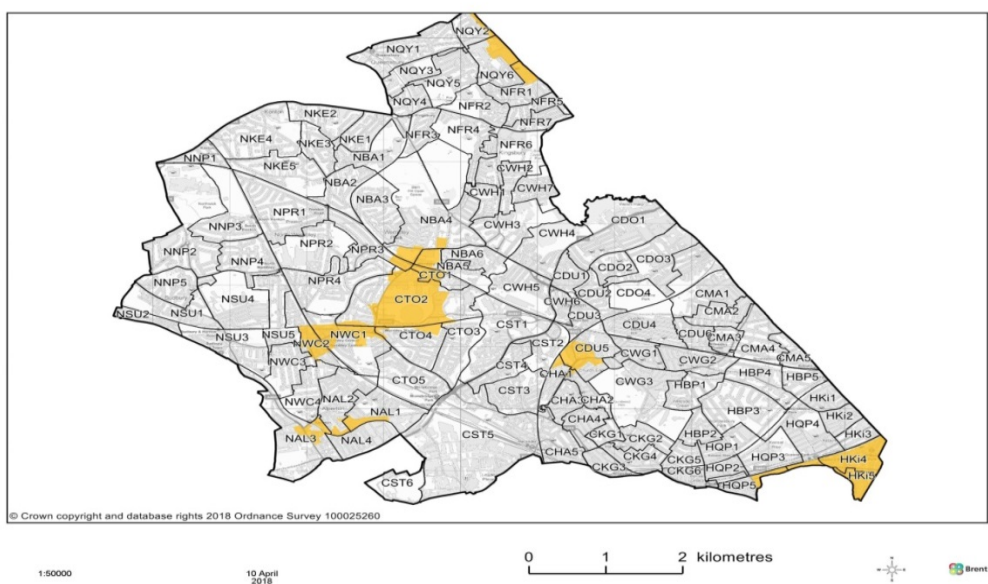


Figure 5 - Key redevelopment areas

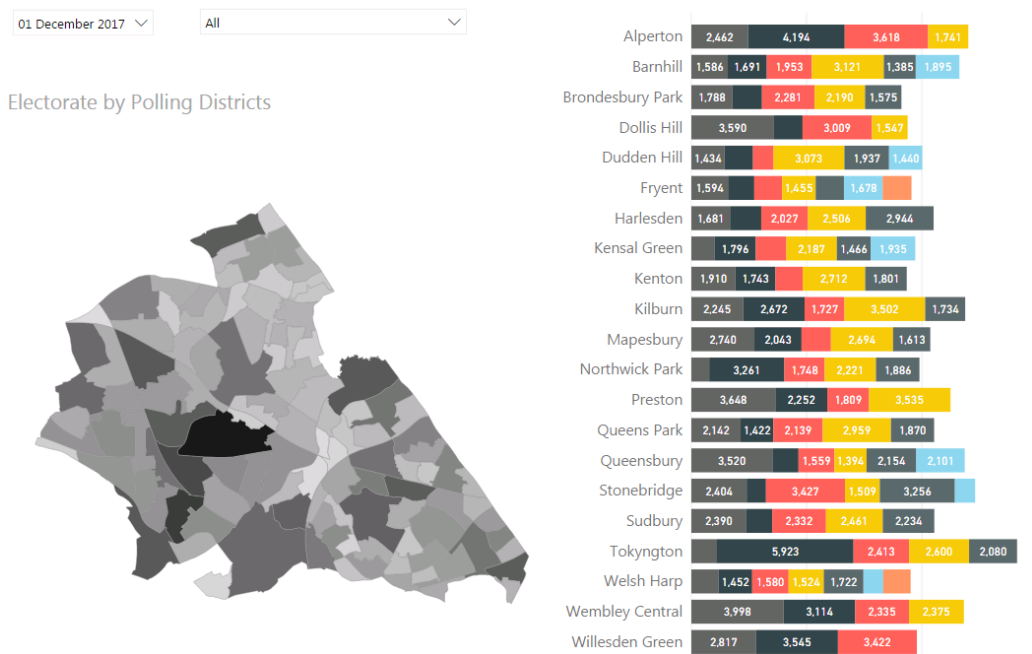


Figure 6 - 2017 Electorate by Polling District actual

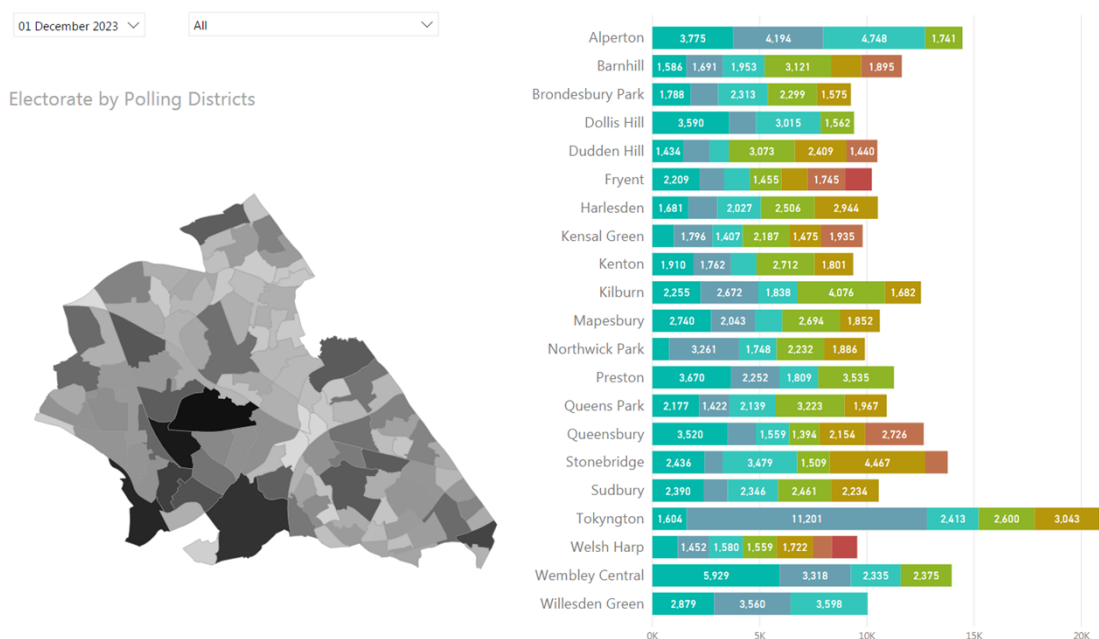


Figure 7 - 2023 Electorate by Polling District projection

4.4.4 It should also be considered the potential impact which Brexit could have on the electorate population across the borough. Please see Figure 8 for an indication of the number of European Union electors within Brent³⁴. We cannot predict what action will be taken from central government to progress the policy of Brexit. However, it is important to consider at this stage the possibility that this will lead to a change in the number of electors from EU member states, particularly those wards which have a high percentage of residents from these countries.

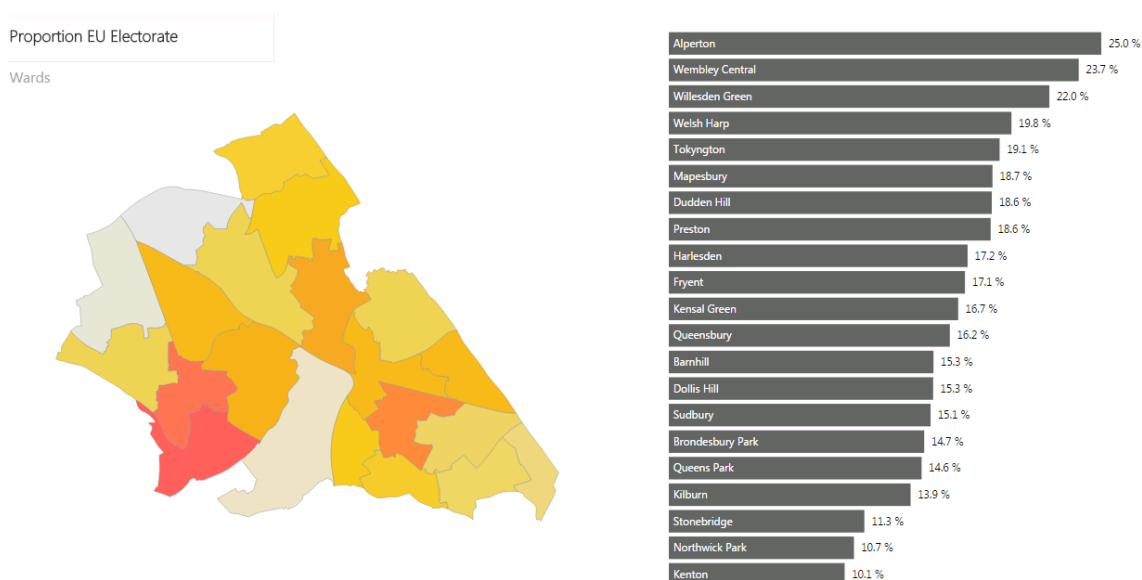


Figure 8 - Distribution of Brent's electorate from the European Union

³⁴ Performance & Improvement Team (April 2018).

- 4.4.5 The Localism Act 2011 also poses increasing opportunities for change as it redefines the relationship between central and local government. It empowers councillors and communities to have more control over where they live. The Community Right to Challenge gives local community groups the chance to run local public services where they believe they can do so better³⁵. This act could lead to a change in the role of councillors in how they work with their residents, encouraging them to work in a partnership with them and increasing the expectations of residents for getting their views heard.
- 4.4.6 Finally, technology similarly poses a challenge to the traditional relationship which residents have with their councillors. The use and reliance on technology is increasing. To give some context, 6 in 10 adults use a smartphone to go online both at home and elsewhere. Also, 61% of Brent households have created a Brent MyAccount which offers residents a chance to access council services and information online without needing to speak to a member of Council staff³⁶. Brent Council is utilising its digital infrastructure to make itself more accessible for its residents. However, the repercussions of this are that it could lessen the reliance which residents have on their councillors as they look elsewhere for answers to their queries. On the other hand, the ease at which residents can now find information and the numerous social media and online platforms which they can use to contact their elected representative might lead to an increase in a councillor's workload. It is difficult to predict the exact impact of this as each resident will use technology in a different way however it is worthy of consideration at this stage.

³⁵ Community Right to Challenge, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/voluntary-sector-advice/community-right-to-challenge/>.

³⁶ Brent Digital Strategy 2017-2020, <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/16408815/brent-digital-strategy.pdf>.

5. Governance and Decision Making

5.1 Introduction

Brent is made up of 21 (3 member) wards, comprising a total of 63 councillors. Prior to the local borough elections in May 2018 the council was made up of 55 Labour councillors, 6 Brent Conservative councillors and 2 Independent councillors. Following the 2018 local elections the political balance of the council now stands as **60** Labour and **3** Conservatives. All councillors serve on Full Council, which is the “sovereign” decision making body of the council and is chaired by the Mayor.

5.2 Streamlining of Council’s Governance Arrangements

5.2.1 As part of an ongoing review of Brent’s Constitution, an evaluation was undertaken, following the local elections in May 2018, of the committee structure through which decisions made at member level. Members were keen to look at ways in which the decision making structure could be streamlined, with the aim of reducing the overall number of formal meetings that Members would need to attend together with the associated cost providing greater efficiencies whilst also maintaining appropriate levels of overview and scrutiny in relation to the Council’s governance arrangements.

5.2.2 As a result of the review the following changes have been made to the committee structure:

- (a) An increase in the composition of Cabinet from 8 to 10 members.
- (b) Disbanding of the Highways Cabinet committee with decisions previously dealt with by that Committee either referred on to Cabinet for consideration (in relation to strategic and high level highways and transportation matters) or delegated to the Strategic Director for approval.
- (c) The Barham Park Trust Cabinet Committee now meets on an annual basis in order to fulfil the council’s obligation as trustee.
- (d) The Standards Committee has merged with the Audit Advisory Committee in order to bring together both of the main bodies with responsibility for the oversight of governance matters across the Council. Previously each Committee had a separate membership of 5 councillors and both met on at least a quarterly basis.
- (e) The Equalities Committee has been disbanded, as this body achieved its remit with the Council achieving the Excellent Standard in the Equalities Framework for Local Government. The Committee’s function has now been absorbed by the General Purpose Committee (in respect of staff matters) and Cabinet (in respect of service delivery matters).

- (f) The specific licensing matters previously allocated to General Purposes Committee have been re-allocated to the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee (to be called the “Licensing Committee”). This has resulted in that committee now having been constituted as the Council’s statutory Licensing Committee with all of the Council’s non-executive licensing and registration functions exercised almost entirely via sub-committees of the main committee.

Previously, the Council operated three licensing sub-committees (each comprising of 3 members) to conduct hearings and deal with such other Licensing Act/Gambling Act matters that could not be delegated to officers. Under the new arrangements there is now only a single sub-committee called the ‘Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committee’ which will, subject to availability, be chaired by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee. Given the frequency of these hearings, substitutes will be appointed from the full membership of the main committee, which will ensure that over a period of time all committee members will have the opportunity to decide contested applications and conduct hearings.

In addition the Council has also established a further Licensing Sub Committee (called the ‘Regulatory Sub-Committee’), comprised of 5 members, which will exercise (should it be required) all of the main committee’s non-Licensing Act and Gambling Act functions.

- 5.2.3 The improved streamlined committee and decision making arrangements have been designed to deliver greater efficiencies in terms of the Council’s governance arrangements in terms of the demands on both Member and officer time.

5.3 Appointments

- 5.3.1 As required under the “strong leader” model, Full Council elects a Leader to serve a four year term of office. In accordance with Part 3 of the Council’s Constitution (Responsibility for Functions), the power to make Executive Appointments is reserved to the Leader of the Council under the “Executive Leader & Cabinet” model of decision making. This includes Cabinet Member positions and portfolios, Cabinet Committees and Joint Committees exercising Executive functions. These appointments are reported to Council at the Annual Meeting each year, for information.
- 5.3.2 Appointments are also made to a number of Non-Executive positions which cover seats on other (Non-Executive) Committees and outside bodies.
- 5.3.3 A copy of the Council’s decision making structure has been attached as Appendix 1 with a full list of Executive and Non-Executive appointments attached as Appendix 2.

5.3.4 Appointments to Non-Executive bodies are governed by the requirements of Section 15(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended by the Local Government Committees and Political Groups Regulations 1990). These rules are designed to ensure that the political composition of the Council's Non-Executive decision making and deliberative committees, as far as possible, replicates the political composition of Full Council. The rules governing these appointments are as follows:

- (a) that not all the seats on the committee/sub-committee are allocated to the same political group;
- (b) that the political group having a majority of seats on the Council should have a majority of seats on each committee/sub-committee;
- (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on the Council's committees and sub-committees allocated to each political group, bears the same proportion to the total number of such committee/sub-committee seats as the number of members of that group bears to the membership of the Full Council; and
- (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, seats will be allocated on each committee and sub-committee in the same ratio that exists on the Full Council.

5.3.5 The Council's main duty to comply with (a) and (b) above will take precedent over achieving a mathematically balanced distribution of Committee seats, which means the current distribution of seats is as set out below:

- (a) 60 Labour Group councillors (i.e. 95.24%) and 3 Conservative Group councillors (4.76%).
- (b) There are a total of 36 ordinary committee seats to which appointments are made by Council included under the proportionality calculation. As the 60 members of the Labour Group constitute 95.24% of the total membership of the Council, the proportion of seats the group is strictly entitled to is 34. However, as the political balance rules do not allow all the seats on a committee to be allocated to the same political group, at least 5 seats have to be allocated to the other political group. This has resulted in a final allocation of 31 seats to the Labour Group and 5 to the Conservative Group.
- (c) In addition, there are other committees which the political balance rules apply to but only principles (a), (b) and (d) (the existing Scrutiny Committees x 3 and Audit and Standards Advisory Committee). There are a total of 29 seats on these bodies with 25 allocated to the Labour Group and 4 to the Conservative Group, on the basis of them having to be allocated a single seat on each body.

- (d) The political balance rules do not apply to the Health and Wellbeing Board but it has been agreed that this Board comprise 4 Cabinet Members and one opposition Member.

5.3.6 In addition the Council makes a number of appointments to a range of Outside Bodies, which are also listed in Appendix 1. These total 37 different bodies involving a mix of Executive and Non-Executive appointments. Officers work with these organisations to review the number of appointments required and to provide members with information on the role of each organisation and their role in representing the Council on them. These appointments are usually made for a one year period (unless otherwise specified) and are subject to review at the Annual Council meeting. Currently 27 out of the 60 members on Council serve on these bodies with 7 (outside of the Executive) appointed to represent the Council on 2 or more organisations.

5.4 Leadership

5.4.1 The Council operates under a “strong leader” model and the Leader of the Council currently undertakes this role on a full time basis. The Leader provides political leadership to the Cabinet and the Council and chairs Cabinet Meetings, key responsibilities include:

- Providing strategic political leadership and vision for the Council and Brent as a whole;
- Chairing Cabinet and determining the appointment of Cabinet Members, their portfolios and scheme of delegation for executive functions;
- Taking executive decisions not otherwise delegated to other decision makers;
- Budget and Strategic Policy;

5.4.2 The Leader may exercise the executive functions or may delegate those functions to the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet or a Joint Committee, another local authority, an individual member of the Cabinet or officers. The Cabinet may arrange for executive functions delegated to it to be carried out by a committee of the Cabinet, a joint committee, another Local Authority, an individual Cabinet member or an officer. The allocation of executive functions and delegations by the Leader and Cabinet are set out in Part 3 of the Council’s Constitution. Whilst the practice within Brent had been for the Leader to delegate to Cabinet (collectively) all executive functions, except those delegated to officers the Leader has decided (as part of the wider changes to the decision making arrangements) to delegate specified categories of executive functions to individual Cabinet Members. These delegations will include:

- Financial decisions relating to the submission of bids for additional resources from government and other bodies in relation to their portfolio area (subject to financial regulations and any matching funding being identified at the time of bidding); changes to existing fees and charges;

- Agreement of waivers of Contract Standing Orders for medium and high value revenue and capital contracts (as set out in the Council's Contract Standing Orders);
- Agreement to tender procedures and evaluation criteria, contract extensions, variation or termination where the decision is excluded from officer delegated powers;
- Agreement of performance standards where referred by an officer;
- Agreement of broad public consultation arrangements.

These delegations are due to come into effect from 1 September 2018 in order to allow time for officer and members to familiarise themselves with the new process and any necessary training to take place.

5.5 Delegations of Functions

5.5.1 In addition to executive functions, there are a range of other functions which either cannot be exercised by the Executive or where the Council has a choice over how they are delegated.

5.5.2 Part 3 of the Council's Constitution lists those functions which:

- (a) cannot be the responsibility of the Cabinet and specifies which part of the Authority will be responsible for them. It also specifies to whom, if anyone, those functions have been delegated. For instance, in the case of development control, all functions are delegated to the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment and/or the Head of Planning except those which are specified as being the responsibility of the Planning Committee;
- (b) are classified as Local Choice Functions which may or may not be Cabinet responsibilities and specifies which part of the Authority will be responsible for them. It also specifies to whom, if anyone, those functions have been delegated by the Council in the case of Council functions, or the Leader in the case of executive functions;
- (c) are not solely executive responsibilities. So far as those functions are to be executive functions, the Leader has agreed to arrange for these functions to be carried out by the Cabinet. The plans, policies and strategies, which form the Authority's Policy Framework are also detailed along with what role the Cabinet will play in relation to those plans, policies and strategies. Essentially, the Cabinet will develop and consult on the plans, policies and strategies listed and will then refer them to Full Council for consideration and approval. If approved, the Cabinet will then be responsible for ensuring they are implemented.

5.5.3 There are some decisions which are reserved for Full Council and these cannot be delegated, except to the General Purpose Committee or the Chief Executive (on grounds of urgency and where this is not in conflict with a statutory provision).

5.6 Cabinet

5.6.1 As outlined above, the Leader has responsibility for determining the size of Cabinet (up to nine other Members), appointment of a Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members, allocation of executive functions and delegation of executive decision making powers in line with the Scheme of Delegation.

5.6.2 Following the local election in May 2018 the Leader of the Council has increased the size of Cabinet from a total of 8 to 10 members. The remits covered within each portfolio are determined by the Leader of the Council and have been revised to reflect the increase in number of Cabinet Members.

The current portfolios are:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader (including remit for Resources)
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care
- Community Safety
- Environment
- Housing and Welfare Reform
- Public Health, Culture & Leisure
- Regeneration, Highways & Planning
- Schools, Employment & Skills.

The previous remits were as follows, with four of the eight areas being cross cutting in nature and not directly linked to an individual Strategic Director:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader (including Resources)
- Children and Young People
- Community Wellbeing
- Environment
- Housing and Welfare Reform
- Regeneration, Growth & Employment
- Stronger Communities

5.6.3 The Cabinet meets on a monthly basis to make executive decisions, with the Constitution setting out the matters reserved to Cabinet. Individual Cabinet Members are responsible for reports which come to the Cabinet and play an active role in the formulation and development of proposals that are presented to Cabinet for consideration. They do not, however, currently have individual decision making powers delegated to them so meet collectively to take decisions. Officers are also delegated responsibility for executive functions, as detailed within Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

5.6.4 Reports and policies are formulated between officers and Cabinet Members. Cabinet Members also have regular one to ones with their Strategic Director to

provide political leadership on the various matters that need to be considered and decided upon within their own portfolios and also across the Council.

- 5.6.5 The current Leader undertakes his duties as a full time role, alongside three of the other Cabinet Members. The remaining Cabinet Members undertake their duties alongside other employment. For all members this will involve a significant workload outside of normal office hours, including evenings and weekends.

5.7 Full Council

- 5.7.1 There are three types of Full Council meetings:

- Annual Meeting
- Ordinary Meetings
- Extraordinary Meetings

Ordinary meetings are held 5 times a year. The Annual meeting is dedicated to the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Extraordinary meetings are held to consider specific items of business, requisitioned by either the Mayor or a group of councillors. All meetings are held in the evening and are open for the public to attend. In addition, the meetings are also live streamed via webcast.

- 5.7.2 Meetings include public deputations, questions from the public and non-executive members to the Cabinet, updates from the Leader and Cabinet Members along with each of the Scrutiny Chairs and Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee, motions from members and themed debates. Full Council, as well as being a mechanism for holding the Executive to account will also consider reports on matters set out in the Constitution including committee memberships, petitions, changes to the Constitution, policy framework and approval of the budget, setting of Council Tax and Housing Rents.

5.8 Role and functions of the Mayor

- 5.8.1 The Mayor is elected annually by Full Council and is the “first citizen” or ceremonial representative of the Council. In addition to chairing Full Council the Mayor is responsible for representing the Council at any civic functions and also undertakes fundraising activities for his/her designated charity. The Mayor is expected to act in a politically impartial manner during their term of office.
- 5.8.2 The Council also appoints a Deputy Mayor who is authorised to chair Full Council if the Mayor is unavailable and will also deputise at various civic events, as and when needed. The practice in Brent is that the councillor elected as Deputy Mayor is then usually appointed to as Mayor the following year, allowing for development and continuity in the role.

5.9 Non-Executive Councillors

There are 51 non-executive councillors (excluding the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Leader and Cabinet). They will attend Full Council and in addition serve on various committees of the Council. In addition the Council operates substitute member arrangements so members may also be appointed to various bodies as substitute members and are expected to cover for any absences amongst the full membership, which provides greater flexibility in terms of cover arrangements and in ensuring all meetings are quorate.

5.10 Regulatory Functions

5.10.1 The Council has established a number of committees in order to discharge its functions. The delegation to these committees are as set out in Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) and operating rules in Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Council's Constitution. A full list of the current Executive and Non-Executive committees is provided in Appendix 2.

(a) Planning Committee

The Council has one Planning Committee (comprised of 8 members). Work involves considering and determining all strategic and major planning applications and other applications not delegated to officers. In addition they will meet to receive pre-application briefings on major applications.

In 2016/17 the Committee met 17 times. In 2017/18 it met a total of 15 times and in 2018/19 is currently scheduled to meet 12 times. Planning meetings can be particularly demanding for members given the high level of preparation required for each meeting and significant public interest and involvement in the process.

(b) Licensing Committee

As a result of the changes to the Council's governance arrangements introduced following the local election in May 2018, the Council now operates with a main Licensing Committee comprised of 10 members. The committee has been constituted as the Council's statutory Licensing Committee for the purposes of the Licensing Act 2003 and as an ordinary committee established under s102(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972. All of the Council's non-executive licensing and registration functions (which for the avoidance of doubt excludes landlord licensing as it is an executive and housing function of the Council) are exercised by the members of the Licensing Committee almost entirely via its sub-committees.

Previously the Council operated three licensing sub-committees (each comprising of 3 members in accordance with statutory requirements) to conduct hearings and deal with such other Licensing Act/Gambling Act

matters that could not be delegated to officers. This has now been streamlined with the Committee now only establishing a single sub-committee called the 'Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committee' which, subject to availability, is chaired by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee. In addition the Council has also established a separate Sub-Committee (called the 'Regulatory Sub-Committee') to exercise all of the main committee's non-Licensing Act and Gambling Act functions.

Between them in 2016-17 the Sub-Committees met a total of 29 times. During 2017-18 there were 23 meetings, which is where Members involvement in the licensing process is mainly focussed.

As with Planning the Sub-Committees generate significant public interest and work for Members with a high number of licensing applications and reviews being presented for consideration. The bulk of Sub-Committee meetings take place during the day, although on occasions they will also hold evening meetings.

5.11 Other Committees of the Council

5.11.1 In addition to the regulatory committees of the Council, Brent also has a number of other committees which play an important role in decision making and governance. These are listed in Appendix 2 and include bodies such as the recently merged Audit and Standards Advisory Committee.

5.11.2 The Council also participates in a number of joint bodies with neighbouring local authorities, reflecting specific joint working arrangements. These include a Joint IT Committee to oversee a shared IT service with Southwark & Lewisham; a Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board to reflect a shared Trading Standards service with Harrow and the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee to oversee management of a reservoir bordering Brent and Barnet.

5.11.3 In addition a number of Cabinet members serve on Panels or bodies by virtue of their executive function. Examples include London Councils, London Boroughs Grants Committee and representing the Council on various sub regional bodies such as the West London Economic Prosperity Board, West London Alliance and Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation. There are 15 of these bodies in total, which have been highlighted as Executive appointments on the list of Outside Bodies attached as Appendix 2:

5.12 Committee Membership

5.12.1 Not including the Mayor, Deputy, Leader and other members of Cabinet there are 5 councillors who, with the exception of being members of Full Council, are currently not appointed to serve on any of the committees listed within Appendix 2. This compares to 6 members for the 2017-18 Municipal Year. In terms of the remaining allocation:

- 16 councillors only serve on 1 committee with 3 of these on a Consultative body that meets 3 times per year;
- 14 councillors serve on 2 committees;
- 11 councillors serve on 3 committees; and
- 5 serve on more than 4 committees;

NB: These figures do not reflect appointments as substitute members.

5.12.2 During the 2015-16 and 2016-17 Municipal Year the Council's main committees and sub committees met a total of 181 times over each year. In 2017/18 the same bodies met a total of 173 times. For 2018/19 the number of scheduled meetings under the new governance arrangements is 126 (although this excludes meetings of the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub Committee which meet as and when required. There were 29 meetings of the Sub Committee during 2017-18).

5.12.3 On the basis of there being a total of 65 seats to be allocated on the main Council committees included within the proportionality criteria, this results in a mean average of 1.27 committee places(excluding Full Council, Cabinet and Cabinet Committees) per member (excluding the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet). If the recommended reduction in Council size was approved this would result in a mean average of 1.44 committee places per member, which still compares favourably with the current ratio. As can be seen from the figures in 5.12.1 above, only 15 councillors currently hold more than 2 ordinary committee appointments).

5.12.4 During 2017-18 Councillors on average were present at 74.4% of meetings (including Full Council and Cabinet) they were appointed to serve as full members on. With the exception of Full Council and Cabinet, the Council operates substitute arrangements. Members attending meetings in the capacity of substitute have not been included in the above figure.

5.12.5 Whilst all councillors serve as members on Full Council there are 5 non executive councillors who (outside of Full Council) are not appointed to serve on any bodies with a role in the Council's formal decision making structure and 3 whose only appoint is as a member of a Consultative body. Taken alongside the streamlining of the Council's governance arrangements it is therefore felt that the recommended reduction in Council size would not impact on the ability of the council or its Members to fulfil the governance requirements, given the number of councillors currently actively engaged as serving members on committees.

5.12.6 In terms of the current opposition, group this is comprised of 3 councillors representing the Conservative Group. The size of the Group was reduced by 3 following the 2018 local election. The opposition is represented on all of the main council committees but given its size this has placed a significant workload on members of that Group.

5.13 Scrutiny Function

- 5.13.1 The Overview & Scrutiny function is a statutory power and duty. Brent currently has three Scrutiny Committees (each comprised of 8 councillors).

The Committees cover the following remits:

- Resources & Public Realm
- Community & Wellbeing (including statutory education co-optees)
- Housing (including 2 co-optees representing tenants and leaseholders) – established during 2017/18

- 5.13.2 The Committees meet 6 times a year and also establish task and finish groups to undertake specific reviews as well as other more informal ways of working e.g. site visits; evidence sessions etc. The Chairs of each Committee provide a report to each Full Council meeting on the work being undertaken and also make recommendations to Cabinet arising from the outcome of specific reviews undertaken.
- 5.13.3 In addition to scrutiny taking place within the borough, the Council participates in the scrutiny of health provision across North West London, as a member of a standing Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) focussed on cross border health services.
- 5.13.4 In 2017/18 the Scrutiny Committees met in total on 19 occasions, with the same number of meetings of the main Committees scheduled for the 2018-19 Municipal Year.
- 5.13.5 In terms of call-in (established by the Local Government Act 2000 as a formal mechanism to review executive decisions prior to them being implemented) none have been received to date during the 2017/18 Municipal Year. Two were considered during 2016/17.
- 5.13.6 Currently 24 out of the 51 non-executive members serve on a scrutiny committee. Each committee develops its own work programme at the beginning of the municipal year, which is informed by input and advice from Cabinet members, officers, community representatives and other stakeholders about appropriate topics, as well as members' own priorities. Spare capacity is also left in the work programme so there can be sufficient time for any items which may arise and are deemed to be important. Most of the work takes place at committee meetings, where members question Cabinet members, officers and representatives of external partners where relevant.
- 5.13.7 Committee members' consideration of their agenda is informed by pre-meetings in advance of the main meeting, where they will discuss the agenda in private and consider the approach they wish to take to questioning. They may also carry out visits to relevant sites in advance of

a meeting in order to inform their consideration of an item, and speak to relevant stakeholders.

- 5.13.8 In addition, members of each committee will chair the task and finish groups mentioned above, which carry out an in-depth review of a particular issue outside of committee meetings. These can be joined by non-executive members who are not on any of the overview and scrutiny committees. Each scrutiny committee typically conducts two task and finish groups per municipal year, along with participating in a joint one carrying out the statutory function of scrutinising the council's budget. These groups usually consist of between three and five councillor members drawn from within the committee itself, and from other backbenchers, and run for four to five months (from sign-off of their scopes through to reporting back to the parent committee with their recommendations).
- 5.13.9 Task group working consists of gathering and analysing evidence (supported the relevant officers in service areas), to develop a report with recommendations, which - once approved by the parent scrutiny committee - is reported to Cabinet. Evidence-gathering is carried out through face-to-face discussions with relevant witnesses, most often through a small number of group meetings where the views of multiple witnesses are heard (such as Cabinet members and council officers, partners, external experts, service users, etc). Task and finish group members will also be provided with evidence from desktop research carried out by the officer supporting them, eg relevant data and background documents. Examples of topics for task and finish groups in the 2017/18 municipal year include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, home care, fire safety of low-rise domestic properties, and use of food banks (as well as the Budget).
- 5.13.10 The scrutiny chairs meet periodically to discuss matters common to their committees. They also each meet with the relevant Strategic Directors in advance of their committee meetings, to discuss the upcoming agenda.

6. Representational Role of Members

- 6.1 The tasks that councillors undertake range from acting to develop long term strategic vision to dealing with personal issues being experienced by one of their constituents. They are expected to represent their communities in debates around specific local issues and also engage with those that effect entire wards or the whole borough.
- 6.2 The fact that councillors are drawn from the local community they serve give them essential insight into its problems, priorities and opportunities.
- 6.3 All Members are required to adhere to the Member Code of Conduct with them expected to undertake the following roles:
- Represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision making process;
 - Dealing with individual casework and acting as an advocate for constituents in resolving concerns or issues;
 - Balance different interests within their ward and represent the ward as a whole;
 - Play an active role in the decision making process;
 - Be available to represent the council on other bodies, for example, London Councils; London Boroughs Grants Committee; Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporation; West London Alliance and Prosperity Board; Age Concern; English Heritage; various local charities and Trusts. A total of 27 councillors have been appointed to represent the Council on these bodies;
 - Maintain highest standards of conduct and ethics.
- 6.4 Development sessions are provided on a regular basis for Members with a full induction programme provided for all new and returning councillors after each election. Members are offered approximately 24 development sessions per year with around 8 mandatory sessions; however this can fluctuate according to priorities and need.
- 6.5 The Members' Portal was designed to put all the information which Members might find useful or would need access to in one place. It has made it easier for them to find answers to questions, to obtain guidance about their roles and responsibilities and to access tools such as the Members' Enquiry Form. It has been designed to support members and help them to carry out their roles more efficiently.
- 6.6 Councillors are all provided with iPhones and iPads as well as an email account and are expected to work paperlessly in relation to meetings. Whilst assisting with their representational role this has also made councillors more accessible and increased expectations on immediate responses in relation to casework.

6.7 Social media usage and activity varies between councillors. Of the 2014-2018 Council, 61% of elected members used Twitter as a means to interact with residents, and this generated significant work.

6.8 In terms of the representational role:

- One of the ways councillors interact with their constituents is through fortnightly surgeries. During these sessions, they invite residents to express issues of concern and this will help to build up a councillor's portfolio of casework;
- Councillors may also pick up casework in other ways and each councillor will choose a method they think is most effective in order to keep in touch with residents. Alternative methods include canvassing, door knocking or street stalls. Canvassing responsibilities will likely decrease as elections become less frequent in the following years;
- According to data collected through the Members' Enquiries system, over the past year, the wards with the highest caseloads have been Tokyngton and Dudden Hill who collected 26% and 12% of the total case load respectively. The remaining 62% is spread out over the other 19 wards and ranges from 7%-1%, making clear that there is a significant disparity between the two highest ranking wards and the rest; and finally
- Another way councillors carry out their representative role is through Brent Connects Forums which give residents a say about local community issues which matter to them. Each meeting is chaired by a councillor and is open to the public. There are five forums in total and each meet four times a year. Most of the forums represent three or four wards inclusively; however Brent Connects Wembley covers the largest area and represents six wards.

6.9 Brent is a diverse borough with 65% of the population being from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It is important that the make-up of the Council reflects the diversity of its residents in order to give a voice to these populations. Of the current Council, 22% of councillors are white British or Irish and 78% are from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.

The second largest proportions are Indian and Pakistani heritage councillors who make up 17% and 15% of the Council respectively. 65% of the current Council is male and 35% are female. In terms of moving forward, it is therefore felt that introducing one-member wards would be a detriment to the diversity of the Council as councillors would not be able to reflect the diversity in their wards accurately. With 3 member wards, the party structures should be able to ensure appropriate representation.

Conclusion

7.0 This report has described the significant changes in London Borough of Brent since the last review of electoral arrangements. It proposes a reduction in the size of the Council from 63 Councillors to 57. This reduction and submission on size has the support of the two political groups represented on the Council.