

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

**FULL COUNCIL  
17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2003**

**FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT TITLE: 1<sup>ST</sup> Reading of 2004/5 Budget  
Priorities for the Administration**

**1. Summary**

This report sets out the priorities for spending and activity for 2004/5 and beyond and should be read in conjunction with the concurrent report of the Director of Finance which sets out the main parameters surrounding the setting of the budget. This report also highlights progress made against the aims of the Corporate Strategy 2002-06.

**2. Recommendations**

Full Council is recommended to consider the progress and priorities set out in this report alongside the report of the Director of Finance on the same subject and to debate them as set out in Standing Order 25 (a).

**3. The Corporate Strategy**

We have already made significant achievements in the delivery of our Corporate Strategy from 2002 to date and these are set out in detail in Appendix 9 of the Director of Finance's report. The Executive would like the Council to note the following progress, set out under the Corporate Strategy themes.

Supporting Children and Young People

- New Opportunities Funding secured for three nurseries to develop under the Neighbourhood Nurseries initiative
- The number of children remaining on the child protection register for more than 2 years has been reduced from 12% to 3.4% in 2002/03. This has been achieved by better staff training, guidance and professional practices. New referral and assessment processes have been introduced, with 99% of child protection cases now allocated.
- The borough has 9 schools with specialist status.

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- We received a very positive OFSTED inspection in January 2003, which rated the LEA as highly effective in monitoring and challenging schools.
- A capital investment programme totalling £10m is in place to improve the quality of schools facilities and buildings.

### Quality of Life

- We have achieved a significant reduction in the numbers of families in bed and breakfast accommodation - down to 350 from a high point 734, which has resulted in the provision of better living circumstances for homeless families and a significant saving in the expenditure on temporary accommodation.
- The Housing Service received three stars in the recent Audit Commission inspection releasing £50m in capital investment to achieve the decent homes standard for Council stock.
- Enviro-crime is being tackled on a number of fronts, with improved performance in removing dumped cars, additional graffiti removal services and local education programmes in place.
- The Park Warden service has been extended to include a mobile team and has been warmly welcomed by local park users.
- A major programme of work is underway to improve the physical infrastructure of Brent parks and green spaces, including works at Gibbons Recreation Ground, Gladstone Park and phase 1 of the River Brent scheme.
- Library hours have increased by 17% and the funding for library material has been increased by 36%. Library visits are up 12.2%.

### Crime and Community Safety

- Through our effective partnerships and community leadership burglary has been reduced by 6% and street crime by 16% in 2002.
- A youth crime prevention officer has been appointed and anti-social behaviour is being tackled in 4 priority wards including the use of anti-social behaviour orders. A notable success has been the application of Orders on 7 individuals in the Welsh Harp/Chalkhill area.
- Actions to reduce domestic violence are in place in 4 wards with the taking up of individual case work.

### Regeneration

- Neighbourhood Renewal Teams have been established in St Raphael's/Brentfield, Stonebridge and Harlesden and have already secured the participation of local people in the action planning process for the priority areas.

- Working with the NWL Hospitals Trust, 49 unemployed Brent people have been assisted to secure key worker positions.
- £37m has been secured from the LDA single pot towards a range of capital and revenue projects in support of the regeneration of Wembley.
- We have secured national recognition through the Beacon Council scheme for our work on Neighbourhood Renewal in 2003, and in 2004 for Removing Barriers to Work.

### Achieving Service Excellence

- The One Stop Shop have continued to improve access to Council services through a range of initiatives including, language cards, increasing the number of languages spoken by One Stop Shop staff and installation of induction loops at Libraries and extended contract hours up to 8.00 pm.
- £1m of disabled access improvements have been made to pedestrian crossings and public buildings such as libraries, schools, pedestrian crossings and main Council buildings.
- Diversity Strategy is being implemented with mentoring schemes in place for Black and Asian Staff, better work force monitoring, the publication of the Race Equality Scheme and staff forums for Women and disabled staff set up. This is complemented by the establishment of a wider Black Minority Ethnic Forum (BMEF) for local people.
- Significant improvements have been made to the financial monitoring arrangements and systems used across the Council along with a corporate training package on financial management skills.

## **4. The Priorities**

- 4.1 The starting point for consideration of the Administration priorities must be the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy and our underlying analysis which made the Corporate Strategy the right prescription for Brent! In setting out these priorities we are mindful of balancing our financial responsibility with our unswerving commitment to improving the lives of our fellow citizens. This we believe is the strength of local government that elected citizens can make choices on behalf of fellow citizens. When the Corporate Strategy was launched we stated that we were deadly serious in our intent to Build a Better Borough – that intent remains undiminished.
- 4.2 As an Administration we have prided ourselves on our commitment to keeping our promises and our priorities reflect this. We will continue to reconstruct and improve key services such as Education and Social Services. The necessary investment will be made to ensure progress in these vital areas. The results of recent Ofsted and SSI inspections have

borne out our approach and the steady progress in both these services has been validated by external scrutiny. The Council is well on track to fulfil its priorities for Children & Young People.

- 4.3 We will continue to direct our efforts into the regeneration of the Borough. The Council gained Beacon Status over consecutive years for its work in this area. This practice will continue and become more successful as the partnerships get stronger. The New Deal in South Kilburn is gearing itself up to deliver major and irreversible change and with Wembley we are now on the brink of finally realising the promise we have worked so hard to obtain. The developers outline planning application is with us signalling a new phase in the regeneration of Wembley.
- 4.4 As we promised when we launched our Corporate Strategy we would pay very close attention to those issues of key public concern which impact directly on local people's quality of life. Consistently at the top of everyone's list has been Crime, Fear of Crime and the quality of the Environment.

We propose to address these head on with a major initiative which will link our approach to Crime and Fear of Crime whilst simultaneously improving people's local environment.

- 4.5 What we propose is a package of measures which combines a targeted and concentrated approach to envirocrime – graffiti, dumped cars, fly tipping and noise with an enhanced and improved Warden service putting a presence on the streets where people most want to see it. We will establish a new direct partnership with the Police to build on our recent success with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, we will target additional investment on our street scene and initiate a further major push on our 'war on waste' with an expanded recycling service.
- 4.6 Our approach is built upon the success we have already achieved in these areas and the popularity of our Neighbourhood focus. The next step is to integrate, focus and enhance this. With a mix of funding from the Council and Central Government we have built up a number of different Warden services on our estates, on our streets and in our parks. We propose to establish additional Warden services in such key areas as Willesden, and Harlesden, and create a mobile service that can move with our crime hotspots. We will pull these services together and whilst they will continue to have their individual service remits and identities we will establish a single central control and point of public access. We will create a new joint team with Brent Police, to act proactively both to prevent and challenge anti-social behaviour. Our Wardens will act as local people's eyes and ears reporting enviro-crime incidents and alert our enhanced services to remove eyesores quickly and efficiently. We will increase enforcement

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action by appointing a number of new officers to take a proactive approach to major sources of public concern such as noise, alleyways and unadopted land. Tippers, Dumpers and the Graffitists and the Noise Makers should be warned – they are not welcome in Brent.

- 4.7 As well as addressing nuisance and the causes of nuisance we are also determined to set in hand a series of exciting projects that will positively enhance the lives of Brent people. We are absolutely committed to ensuring the provision of a new Swimming Pool in Kingsbury and to the relocation of the Grange Museum to the Willesden Library Centre. We will implement our Sports Strategy providing an enhanced level of facilities and support for local people to engage in sporting activity.
- 4.8 We take our responsibilities on waste and recycling very seriously. We have taken on board the recommendations put forward by the Overview Task Group with the provision of a proper civic amenity site being at the core of this.
- 4.9 We therefore propose that 2004-5 is a year when the issues of crime and the environment are the Council's critical focus, a year when major improvements are made to the lives of local people, and where they live. We invite all members of all parties to work with us to make this succeed.

Underpinning all this is our absolute commitment to service excellence to a sustained but dynamic approach to improvements across all services, supported by sound financial management, rigorous and accountable corporate governance and an approach to the constitution which allows all members to make best use of their talents.

We believe we have achieved much, this next budget will help us to achieve much more.

Councillor Ann John  
Councillor David Coughlin

for the Executive  
November 2003