

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Meeting of the Full Council
29th November 2004

Report from The Executive

For action

Wards affected:
All

Report Title: 1ST READING OF 2005-6 BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION

Forward Plan ref:

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report sets out the Administration's priorities for spending and activity for 2005-6 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. The report also highlights progress made against the aims of the Corporate Strategy 2002-6.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 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)

3.0 The Corporate Strategy

3.1 Significant achievements have been made in the delivery of the Council's 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 against Corporate Strategy themes.

3.2 Supporting Children and Young People

- We have improved the long- term life chances of children leaving care with 43.2% now achieving at least 1 GCSE.
- The stability of placements for looked after children has improved with 85% now having 2 or less placements per year.
- 96% of looked after children under 10 years are placed in foster care or placed for adoption.
- In accordance with best practice examples a new Family Support service has been established.
- Brent children are now attaining above the national average levels of achievement with 53.2% of local pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE's at grades A-C.
- Central government funding has been secured for 9 neighbourhood nursery providers and some of the 6 Children's Centres will begin to come on stream next year.

3.3 Quality of Life

- Through the direct actions of the Council an additional 1,118 private, unoccupied properties have returned to occupation.
- By April 2004 we achieved the national target of no families being B+B longer than 6 weeks.
- The improvement in the quality of housing management has been reflected in increases in tenant satisfaction which are up by 20% to 76%.
- Abandoned vehicles are now removed in record time, while the free take back scheme has reduced the actual number of vehicles abandoned within the borough.
- There are 3 graffiti removal teams now operating successfully across the borough.
- 7 parks now have warden schemes, plus there are 4 town centres teams and mobile units are operating across the borough. Parks users perception of safety within parks has increased insignificantly.
- Recycling of waste has increased to 12% with the opening of the new Civic Amenity site and the continued expansion of the door step collection scheme to more properties within the borough.
- 78% of occupational therapy equipment is now delivered within a week.
- 77 extra sheltered accommodation units are available.
- 89 older people per thousand now receive help to live at home.
- Longer opening hours has given a 12% increase in the number of visits to libraries and there has been a 51% increase in the funding for new stock.
- The Festivals programme has been expanded.
- Major restructuring of the Sports service has raised user satisfaction to 73%. (Brent Survey)
- The significant improvement in our cultural services has been recognised by the Audit Commission who rated the service a 'good' 2 star service with promising prospects of improvement.

3.4 Crime and Community Safety

- Gun crime is down by 26%.
- 36 acceptable behaviour contracts and 12 ASBO's have been delivered.
- Joint Police Council ASBO Team established.
- 1,824 fire safety smoke alarms fitted to homes.
- 'Sanctuary' domestic violence project launched.
- Operation 'Cubit' cleared abandoned cars from St. Raphael's and Stonebridge.
- Community safety objectives integrated to many mainstream services.

3.5 Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal

- Wembley Stadium secured and ahead of time.
- £21m social and infrastructure benefit negotiated.
- Partnership and tough negotiation delivering the Council Vision.
- Neighbourhood renewal teams delivering real change in priority neighbourhoods.
- Back to back Beacon status awarded for neighbourhood renewal and removing barriers to work.
- Masterplan through the 1st stage – New Deal on its way, first 20 new homes to be built.

3.6 Service Excellence.

- In January 2004 the Council achieved Corporate IIP accreditation, recognising the vital role of staff development and appraisal in delivering our service objectives.
- Our performance on managing internal complaints has improved significantly which is reflected in the ombudsman having no maladministration findings for the past 2 years and only 10 local settlements from the hundred complaints made to him.
- 73% of service transactions are now electronically enabled.
- Our Call centre is now open from 8am – 8 pm as well as now providing a Saturday morning service.
- Implementation of the Customer Relationship Manager system is complete and testing of the complaints monitoring module is due to start in the New Year.
- 56 Council buildings now compliant with DDA standards.
- Social Services gains 2 stars in CSCI inspection.
- Cultural Services are rated good by the Audit Commission this year.
- Revenues and Benefits service has gone up two ratings in a recent CPA inspection.

4. **The Priorities**

- 4.1 This Administration has prided itself on consistency of purpose, determination and focus. Our Corporate Strategy has been the outward statement of this purpose and its achievement is our

overriding goal. These priorities as set out here, illustrate clearly this sense of purpose to Build a Better Borough.

- 4.2 In November 2003 we stated that Crime and the Environment would be the Council's critical focus for the coming year. This has been the case we have achieved major improvements to the lives of local people. We consider that these areas continue to be absolutely central issues for the Council and residents and we will continue the work we have begun.
- 4.3 In 2005-06 Brent Council's promise to promote the Green Agenda will continue. Our investment in recycling will ensure that the whole borough including high and medium rise homes are covered by recycling collections. We will build on the success of our new Civic Amenity site and extend the type of materials we will recycle. We have extended into plastics through collection points at 6 supermarkets and at the Twyford site. Next year cardboard, kitchen and vegetable waste will be added to our kerbside collections. Composting bins will be extended to another 30,000 homes and composting sacks will be available to all households. Our bulky item collection will now be sorted at the Civic Amenity site rather than going direct to landfill. In short we are determined that the Council will meet the ambitious targets for recycling set by government, make our contribution to the environmental well-being of the City and make the borough a cleaner and healthier place to live.
- 4.4 We will continue to bear down on problems in refuse collection by increasing our investment in vehicle capacity and putting in place vigorous traffic management measures to allow vehicles unrestricted access to homes. In the last Audit Commission survey 73% of our citizens rated the household waste service as good. This is only mid-table compared to other boroughs and we aim to do much better!
- 4.5 In 2004 we launched our Warden Service as an initiative to deter crime and reassure our citizens. We also resolved to pull together the existing services in Streets, Parks and Housing with a common control centre and integrating them more effectively with the Police. The impact of this initiative has exceeded our expectations we are extending the service further. We will continue to deal with the problem of Anti-Social Behaviour which blights the lives of residents. Our joint Council-Police Anti-Social Behaviour Unit is now moving into Willesden Police Station and we will ensure that a concerted and focussed effort is made to deal with these people who commit anti-social acts.
- 4.6 We are committed to working closely with the Police over a wide range of anti-crime initiative and our partnership work has been exemplary. The Police are enthusiastic participants in our Ward Working Pilot initiative and through this we have already identified one of the Wards for the roll out of the reassurance policing initiative by putting a team into Fryent based around Kingsbury Station who will provide

reassurance for the residents of all those wards who use Kingsbury Station. This was a key issue for local people and this illustrates our commitment in Ward Working.

- 4.7 We have consistently over a number of years re-invested in the critical services of Education and Social Services turning them from underperforming areas to services which serve local people well and of which this Council can be proud. This is not just our view – this is validated by the performance recognition given through the external CPA process. We will continue this investment and will rise to the challenge of the Children Act by ensuring an integrated and focussed service for all Children in this borough bringing together not only the Education and Social Services contributions but also those of our partners, particularly in the Health sector.
- 4.8 Our commitment to Regeneration and Priority Neighbourhoods is unshakable. This year in South Kilburn we will begin to realise the fruits of our commitment and investment by the building of the first 20 new homes. We will continue to pursue the success of the South Kilburn Masterplan by getting it agreed, funded and fulfilled whilst at the same time supporting the New Deal for Communities to deliver and improve the extensive regeneration offer to local people.
- 4.9 With Wembley we are proud to say the activities of this Council have been pivotal in the major progress now being made. There was a time not so long ago when only the Council kept faith with the vision for Wembley. Securing the Stadium was only the beginning, this year we have secured £21m in community and environmental benefit from the Phase (1) Quintain proposals and we intend to drive a very hard bargain with Phase (2). We can, we are and we will ensure that the Wembley development acts as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Brent. We are as a Council doing everything we can to ameliorate the problems for local residents and maximise the benefit to them. Without our hard headed approach the new health, education facilities promised would not have been funded nor would the coherent programme for jobs for local people exist. For example we are seeking to provide additional school places in Wembley through a state of the art City Academy.
- 4.10 One of the particular measures of any Councils' approach to strategy and prudent budgeting is the operation of its capital programme and the use of capital to provide better facilities for local people rather than capital subsidising existing services. This year again we are pleased to say that there will be a substantial capital programme which will mean better facilities across all service areas, Education, Environment, Social Services, Housing and Corporate. We will continue to invest in this borough and local people will see the difference.
- 4.11 We will continue to support the development of our sports and leisure offer to local people, we have almost completed our negotiations

around Willesden Sports Centre and are about to begin work there. We are also working with the NDC to provide a new centre in South Kilburn. Our determination to provide a better service has borne fruit and the latest Audit Commission review has proved how far the Sports Service has improved. It is valued and used by great numbers of our citizens.

- 4.12 We will continue to invest in and support our Revenues and Benefits service which has improved its performance hugely in the last year and whose performance rating from government has risen us considerably. Having secured government support for trainee benefit assessors we will switch our additional funding into supporting the establishment of the statutory verification framework. We aim by this to both enhance a service to some of our most vulnerable customers and safeguard the finances of the Council.
- 4.13 We have undertaken a pilot of the Ward Working scheme in selected wards this year which is designed as a long term commitment to put Councillors at the centre of improved and focused service delivery in their wards. Where activity has started it is appreciated by Councillors and residents alike. We intend over the next year to make Ward Working ever more effective.
- 4.14 Though our increase emphasis on performance management and performance support the quality of Council services has risen greatly over the last year. We will continue to manage performance rigorously and provide targeted support for these services in need of it though our performance fund. This is part of our commitment to service excellence. We are delivering better services and better outcomes to residents year on year.
- 4.15 We are committed to delivering on our promises and have made great progress so far. This budget will take us further.

Councillor Ann John

Councillor David Coughlin

For the Executive
November 2004