

CORPORATE STRATEGY 2006-2010

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the London Borough of Brent's Corporate Strategy 2006-2010. This document sets out the council's priorities and ambitions for Brent over the next four years. It includes details of how we will work with our partners to deliver the Brent Community Strategy 2006-2010 and how we will increase the performance and efficiency of council services to improve the quality of life for people living and working in Brent.

In May 2006 the people of Brent elected a new council and they voted for change. All councillors will be working to deliver the changes that people in Brent told us all that they wanted. Local people still want us to build a better Brent but they want a greater say in what that looks like. This Corporate Strategy reflects their ambition for Brent.

This Corporate Strategy reflects the rapid changes that have been taking place in Local Government over the last four years. The fact that services and initiatives are delivered ever more in partnership with other public agencies and private and voluntary sector organisations makes this Corporate Strategy very much a partnership document. In 2006 Brent Council along with our partners in the public, private and community sectors agreed a set of ambitions for the future well-being of the area and its people in the Brent Community Strategy 2006-2010. These priorities were defined following extensive consultation and local needs analysis. We are committed to ensuring that the wishes of the people of Brent are delivered. The council's role as the only directly democratically accountable partner to our residents gives us a special responsibility to reflect the views and interests of all our residents, businesses and visitors.

However it is not just organisations that the council wishes to work in partnership with but most fundamentally with our residents. It will be the hallmark of this Corporate Strategy that its priorities and objectives are delivered with our residents and are relevant to the neighbourhoods where people live. The ethos of the council will be one that listens to local people and is respectful of them. We are clear that both councillors and officers alike will in all their dealings with residents treat them as they themselves would wish to be treated.

This strategy can be summed up in three words – Excellence, Regeneration and Respect. We will strive to deliver excellence in all of the services we provide to local people with no exceptions. We will regenerate the borough ensuring that local people are the beneficiaries and we will promote respect between ourselves and residents and within the borough so that the community cohesion we have is maintained and enhanced.

Critical to this has to be an accessible corporate strategy, which sets out in a 4 year time-frame the priorities and key actions for the council and partners. This Corporate Strategy has longevity and durability, it is unashamedly ambitious and with it we will measure our success.

PART 1. BRENT - OUR VISION, OUR PRIORITIES.

OUR VISION FOR BRENT

A Great Place

Brent will be a great place to live in and to visit. We want our residents to feel this is their permanent home. It will be safe, clean, green and lively. It will be the daily experience of local people that our streets and open spaces are safe places to be and that our green spaces and leisure facilities will be worth visiting. Residents will care for their surroundings, appreciate where they live and enjoy what Brent has to offer. Our priorities are to:-

- Give our community a greater say in what the council delivers, through greater engagement with people on the decisions that affect them locally.
- Work with the Police and the community to continue to reduce crime and the fear of crime through implementation of the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of Drugs Strategy.
- Implement improvements to the street scene and programmes that tackle enviro-crime such as graffiti, dumped rubbish and abandoned cars.
- Provide clean, well-designed and cared for streets and open spaces so that people feel good about the areas in which they live and work.
- Promote environmentally sustainable practices including waste reduction and recycling and develop new policies to address climate change.
- Provide a broad range of sports and leisure activities and ensure that they are accessible to all sections of the community.
- Make our Cultural Services the forefront of our approach to community cohesion and through them enhance civic pride and encourage residents to celebrate their unique cultural identities.

A Borough of Opportunity

Brent will be a prosperous, healthy place where there are opportunities for all. A place where income and employment levels will be higher than London average, where businesses thrive and where residents will enjoy good health and be able to make healthy choices. Our priorities are to:-

- Provide high quality education and schooling that enables all our young people to achieve their full potential.
- Create a place where businesses want to locate and can succeed.
- Reduce the significant levels of deprivation and low levels of income experienced by our most deprived communities. We will support people to improve their skills enabling them to get jobs, boosting the local economy and their own prosperity.
- Ensure that housing in every sector and tenure is safe, secure and high quality and give all residents a stronger voice in housing management issues.
- Create the right environmental conditions for business growth and increase the opportunities for inward investment to the borough.
- Address the inequalities in health experienced across the borough through a dual approach of improving access to high quality health care and encouraging healthy life style choices.

One Community

Brent is an inclusive community welcoming to all. Services will respond to the needs of young and old alike, supporting them to achieve independence and enabling them to take a full part in the life of the borough. Our priorities are to:-

- Improve access to decent homes with both greater supply and greater diversity of tenure in the private and affordable sectors and promote sustainable development that creates balanced communities and secure, settled homes for families with children based in temporary accommodation.
- Continue the programmes to regenerate priority neighbourhoods and deliver the new and refurbished homes within the South Kilburn NDC.
- Support children and young people in Brent to realise their full potential and succeed in life by providing high quality educational services and the opportunity to live and play in a healthy, safe environment.
- Introduce more early intervention and preventative services that support those children that experience the greatest barriers to learning, enabling them to improve their long-term life chances.
- Provide tailored care packages for those with the greatest need and engage in preventative work so that need does not escalate unnecessarily.
- Empower residents to lead active, independent lives, providing services that enable them to do this.
- Work in partnership with health services and the voluntary sector to promote independence, well-being and choice for vulnerable people.

Civic Leadership

As the only democratically elected organisation representing the whole borough we will use our mandate to provide leadership and representation for all our residents and all those who work in or have businesses in the borough. We are committed to empowering residents at a neighbourhood level and will be developing new ways to increase local participation. We will use our position to lobby government and other organisations to provide the resources Brent needs. We will proactively seek opportunities. We will ensure that we speak for communities and neighbourhoods as well as the borough as a whole.

Our priorities have been developed following detailed discussions with local communities, service users and partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They reflect the issues that are of most concern to local residents and regularly feature in consultation findings and Area Consultative Forums. They have been endorsed by the borough-wide partnership the Brent Local Strategic Partnership who have adopted the Brent Community Strategy 2006-2010 as the framework for our collaborative work over the next four years. These three priorities underpin our recently signed Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA is an agreement between the Council, local partners and the Government on the local priorities for joint-working within the borough. The council will play an important role in leading the Brent Local Strategic Partnership, delivering real improvements with our partners for our residents.

We believe that together our vision and priorities represent a radical programme for the future development of council services over the coming four years and a critical stage in securing the long-term prosperity, well-being and quality of life for Brent and all its residents.

The actions that we will take to deliver these priorities and the targets we have set ourselves are set out in detail in Part 3 of this Corporate Strategy 2006-2010.

Our Values

Brent is a uniquely diverse borough. This quality offers every one of our residents and the whole borough tremendous opportunities. We will empower and work with our residents to fulfil their potential and contribute to making our borough a better place that reflects local wishes.

Providing Excellent Services

We are committed to providing excellent, publicly accountable services that give real value for money. We will drive improvement in service standards through rigorous performance management, effective stewardship of resources, and meaningful engagement with local people on the public services that most effectively meet their needs and expectations. This is a customer focused organisation which is committed to improving customer service standards and customer satisfaction ratings as a priority. We will collaborate with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver the best value for money from local resources.

Improving the Quality of Life for All Communities.

Improving the quality of life experienced by all our residents is at the centre of the Councils' ambitions. Our duty to promote the social, economic and environment well-being of all communities underpins our approach to effective policy development and service planning. We will work creatively with our partners to transform the local environment, making Brent safer, addressing inequalities in health and providing accessible, affordable homes. All children and young people will have the opportunity to achieve their potential and the needs of older people will be recognised within mainstream services. Our regeneration strategies and policies will maximise incomes, especially for households receiving benefits and in low paid employment. Through all our actions we will improve the opportunities available to all residents and reduce the disadvantages experienced by the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Promoting Diversity and Community Cohesion

Brent is defined and enriched by the diversity of our population. Our services will recognise the diversity of local communities and all service users will be treated with sensitivity and respect. We will celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the borough and promote tolerance, understanding and community cohesion between our different communities. All communities will be able to participate in local decision-making and shall be represented by local Councillors to the highest standard.

Investing in Our Capacity

To deliver our ambitious agenda we need excellent leadership from both elected Members and senior officers. We require a workforce that is highly skilled and flexible in the way it develops services to be customer-focused and efficient. We will support Members to fulfil their community leadership role and participate in effective decision-making. We are an open, outward-looking and professional organisation which invests in its staff and new technology to drive up performance and improve local outcomes.

Our Partners

The council holds a unique position in the life of the borough owing to its democratic mandate. We will use this legitimacy to lead the partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to work with us to deliver seamless services for the benefit of all residents. We will ensure that the voice of local people is heard and their interests are paramount as we seek with all our partners to deliver the Community Strategy.

Responding to the needs of a diverse, urban population is a challenge which the council can not undertake in isolation. Increasingly local services are delivered in partnership with other agencies from both the public and private sectors or often through voluntary and community groups. These partnerships are critical to improving the relevancy and effectiveness of the council's activities, they enable us to provide more integrated, responsive services for individuals and communities with complex needs.

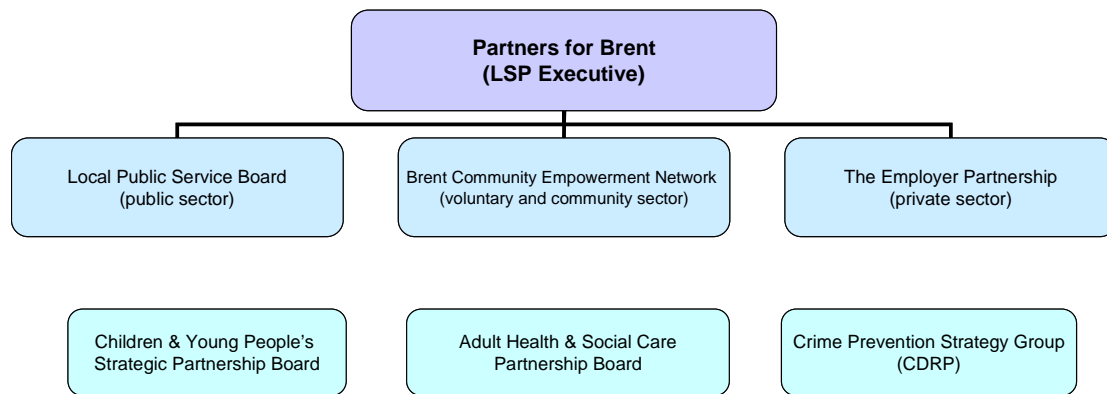
These service partnerships are co-ordinated through the work of the Brent Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Chaired by the Leader of the Council the LSP is the forum for defining the strategic priorities for the totality of public sector activity across the borough and enables our policies and actions to be co-ordinated and consistent across the various agencies. The LSP is central to the community leadership role of the council creating consensus on key local issues and enabling better use of public resources.

In early 2006 the LSP agreed its four year Community Strategy 2006-2010. The Community Strategy is supported by the Local Area Agreement which contains challenging targets for improving local outcomes around community priorities such as cleaner streets, reducing health inequalities and improving children's life chances. Our Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 reflects these aims and includes our commitment to delivering on community goals shared by the partnership.

The Local Strategic Partnership is composed of representatives from the following agencies and groups:-

- Metropolitan Police Service
- Brent NHS Primary Care Trust
- College of North West London
- Job Centre Plus
- North West London Hospitals Trust.
- West London Learning and Skills Council
- The Employers Partnership
- Brent Association for Voluntary Action
- Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership
- Brent Fire Service.
- Metropolitan Housing Trust

The work of the Local Strategic Partnership is delivered through a structure of three sector based partnerships and three strategic service based partnerships. Their relationship and lines of accountability are shown in the diagram below.



These groupings co-ordinate the operational delivery of partnership objectives through a range of sub-groups and ensure the planning and development of local services is joined-up. They report progress to the LSP Executive on a quarterly basis.

If you would like to know more about the structure and work of the LSP please visit www.brentbrain.org.uk or contact the Policy and Regeneration Unit on 020 8937 1030.

Brent in Context

Brent is one of only two local authorities serving a population where the majority of people are from ethnic minorities and these groups are growing faster than any other. Also, the mobility of the borough is increasing with many residents only staying for short periods of time. Between seven and eight per cent of residents are classed as refugees or asylum seekers. To serve this diverse population, the council has an equally diverse workforce.

Brent is the seventh largest London borough. According to the Office of National Statistics, Brent's population is 270,100 and is rising at a slow rate. But other data sources suggest Brent's population to be significantly higher – for example The Greater London Authority estimates Brent's population to be 279,000, and to be increasing at a rapid rate. As part of the Mayor's London Plan, it is expected that there will be around 11,000 new homes in Brent over the next ten years.

Brent has a young population. Almost a quarter of residents are under 19 years old but, within the 5 renewal neighbourhoods, one-third of residents are under 16 years old, compared with a fifth in London more generally. 74% of the children in Brent schools are from ethnic minorities, where over 130 languages are spoken. Over a third of Brent's children live in low income households in receipt of council tax benefit and depend upon free school meals - and the proportion is rising. Nearly a quarter live in social housing and a fifth in single adult households.

Recent population growth has meant that Brent is experiencing serious overall shortages of secondary school places and also local shortages of primary places in Wembley, Sudbury and other areas. Forecasts indicate that Brent will need to expand school capacity by 8-10% by 2011.

As a location Brent has much to offer residents and businesses. There are good quality local services and excellent transport links both to central London and the rest of the country. Brent's 8,000 local businesses make an important contribution to London's economy and there is great potential for future business growth. The new Wembley development will provide a world class visitor destination, providing an unprecedented range of sports, leisure, cultural and local community facilities. However, many of Brent's residents still experience high levels of deprivation. Brent is an outer London borough that faces inner London problems. Ranked 58th on the index of deprivation with acute concentrations of deprivation, the borough has 14.9% of its population living in the ten per cent most deprived wards in the country and 24.2% of unemployed people are classed as long term unemployed compared to 15.4% in London. This sharp socio-economic divide means that a substantial proportion of residents are excluded from the opportunities that living in London presents.

Broadly, Brent is characterised by a north-south split; a more affluent north and generally more deprived south, divided by the North Circular Road. Brent has high levels of housing need, visible in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and on the needs register; for example 23.9% of Brent's households are classified as overcrowded, the fourth highest in London, reflecting the severe supply and demand problem. The average household size is 2.6, the second highest in London. Brent has the third lowest level of car ownership of all the Outer London Boroughs. There are 37,372 households in Brent that do not have access to a car, representing 37.3% of the borough's households.

There is also a north-south split in terms of the health of residents. The average life expectancy for men in the borough is 76.5 years, while in Harlesden it is 71.8 years and in Northwick Park it is 82.9 years – over 10 years difference. For women the average is 82.3 years, ranging from 78.4 years in Harlesden to 85.9 years in Dudden Hill.

What You Have Told Us

In late 2005 we carried out both a Residents Attitude Survey and a Satisfaction Survey conducted according to guidance recommended by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This was to provide us with a robust picture of the priorities and satisfaction of residents to inform our development of the new Corporate Strategy 2006-2010. Over a thousand residents were interviewed and questionnaires were sent to a further 10,000 randomly selected households. About 20% of people responded to the postal questionnaire. The key findings from these two pieces of research are as follows:-

- 57% of people said that having a low level of crime was their most important local priority.
- The second priority was to have cleaner streets at 44% of people and better pavements at 40%.
- 77% of people are satisfied with the performance of the waste collection service and 70% liked the boroughs parks and open spaces.
- 53% of people were satisfied with the way in which the Council is running the borough.
- 61% felt that the Council kept them well informed on its activities.

The services that residents said were priorities for improvement in order of importance are listed below:-

- Providing more activities for teenagers.
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Creating more affordable decent homes in the borough
- More local opportunities for sport and leisure activities
- Better retail facilities
- More accessible health services
- Nursery and play facilities for young children.

These results have shaped our Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 and in Part 3 of this document you will find our detailed proposals for delivering these local priorities.

PART 2 – HOW WE WORK

Managing our Performance.

Embedding effective performance management practices and delivering excellent services is one of our top priorities. While our approach has achieved significant improvements in the quality and performance of our core services all councillors are aware that more is expected by our residents. Of all our statutory performance indicators 79% have improved and five of our six service blocks are now rated as three star (out of a maximum of four) by The Audit Commission (the independent body which assesses the performance of all councils in England). In January 2006 the Audit Commission undertook an inspection of the council's corporate capacity and found that as an organisation we are a strong three star council that is improving well. They said:-

'Brent is an ambitious Council and has a well articulated desire to improve the area for all its residents. The ambitions have developed to reflect the significant progress the Council and partners have made in recent years. There is a strong focus on priority neighbourhoods, community cohesion and delivering high quality services.'
Audit Commission – Corporate Inspection of Brent Council January 2006.

We welcome these results, but we are not complacent and all councillors are committed to the ambition of achieving the top four-star rating for our performance. We will rigorously monitor the performance of our services and set challenging improvement targets. Our new reinforced approach to performance management is characterised by the following features:-

- A stronger focus on performance from the leadership of the council.
- Improved understanding and commitment to our strategic and corporate aims across the council and with our partners.
- Ensuring all our corporate and service priorities are supported by robust SMART targets that will assess our performance and measure the progress we are making in delivering community objectives.
- Making sure that the performance data we collect is measuring the right things and is accurate and timely.
- Regular reporting of performance information to the Executive, the Corporate Management Team, Performance and Finance Select Committee.
- Using performance information to make informed expenditure decisions and assessing the value for money we are providing.
- Managers taking responsibility for their own performance and using data effectively in the day-to-day delivery of their services.
- Supporting staff to improve their performance through regular supervision, appraisal and development opportunities.
- Engaging all Members in performance matters through the work programme of the Scrutiny Committees.
- Responding collectively to areas of under-performance by putting in place corporate support for improvement and learning from each other.

Over the coming four years we will continue to develop the sophistication of the performance management techniques that we use. This is with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the outcomes our actions are achieving and deploying public resources more effectively. Our performance management priorities will be:-

- To fully implement the Performance Management IT System (PMS) across the council and our key partners to enable accurate monitoring of our shared objectives.
- Delivering more through effective partnership and ensuring that high standards of performance management underpin good partnership working.
- Ensuring that our service area action plans and targets are aligned with the agreed corporate priorities.
- Developing more robust data on value for money relative to the performance being delivered by the council.
- Defining a new Improving Brent Action Plan to focus our improvement activities and ensure staff development is supporting the achievement of the organisations business objectives.
- Through our High Level Monitoring arrangement corporately support the improvement agenda in priority service areas.
- Providing a robust Member challenge on performance matters through strong Executive involvement and effective Scrutiny.

Financial Management

Financial prospects of the council

Funding increases over the four years of this strategy will be much more constrained than over the past four years and the period before that. Two main factors drive this:

- Firstly, the council can expect to be at the 'floor' level of grant increase over the next four years. The 'floor' increase in grant was 2% in 2006/07 and will be 2.7% in 2007/08. Public finances are tightening and it is likely that grant increases will be in the range of 2% to 3% for the next four years.
- Secondly, council tax capping means council tax increases will be limited to a maximum of 5%.

The council will also face budget pressures over the next 4 years. In addition to pay and price inflation, these include: demand pressures in adults' and children's care services; costs associated with implementation of single status for all staff from 1 April 2007; increases in Pension Fund contributions; major contract renewals such as the waste management contract; the impact of funding pressures on the Brent PCT on council spending requirements; and funding of priorities outlined in this strategy.

The table below shows projections of General Fund resources over the next four years using different assumptions about council tax increases:

	2006/07 £'000	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000
Formula grant (assuming 2.5% increases after 2007/08)	147,334	150,556	154,320	158,178
Freeze in Brent element of council tax	£950.13	£950.13	£950.13	£950.13
Council tax income ¹	89,357	89,357	89,357	89,357
Total funds – freeze in council tax	236,691	239,913	243,677	247,535
Percent increase in funds	N/A	+1.4%	+1.6%	+1.6%

¹ This assumes no change to the number of council tax payers in Brent.

2.5% increase in Brent element of council tax	£950.13	£973.87	£998.23	£1,023.19
Council tax income	89,357	91,591	93,881	96,228
Total funds – 2.5% increase in council tax	236,691	242,147	248,201	254,406
Percent increase in funds	N/A	+2.3%	+2.5%	+2.5%
5% increase in Brent element of council tax	£950.13	£997.64	£1047.52	£1,099.90
Council tax income in funds	89,357	93,825	98,516	103,442
Total funds – 5% increase in council tax	236,691	244,381	252,836	261,620
Percent increase in funds	N/A	+3.2%	+3.5%	+3.5%

Linking the corporate strategy to the financial projections

Limited growth in resources and pressures on budgets, together with an expectation that council tax rises will be kept to a minimum in future years, means that there will be no new money to fund priorities identified in this strategy. The Council has a responsibility to residents to ensure that every penny raised is well spent and directed towards service delivery.

In order to deliver the targets set out in this strategy and ensure continuous improvement in council services, the council plans to ensure that:

- The overall budget will increasingly reflect the council's new and changing priorities as set out in this strategy.
- Improvements identified in this document will be funded within existing resources, wherever possible;
- Where growth is required to deliver the improvements, there will be rigorous assessment of the level of additional funding needed;
- There is equitable sharing of costs of providing services with our partners, including Brent tPCT;
- All services deliver 2% annual savings built into cash limits by improving efficiency of service provision and disinvesting in services which are low priority;
- The corporate efficiency agenda will focus on those changes that could yield the most significant savings – particularly:
 1. reviewing support services, including identifying the potential for achieving efficiencies by sharing services;
 2. reviewing major service areas including customer service provision, adult day care and libraries to identify changes which would improve services whilst reducing cost;
 3. using IT to deliver process efficiencies e.g. remote working;
 4. delivering improved commissioning arrangements in adult social care;
 5. maximising savings from better procurement;

- Fees and charges are reviewed to identify opportunities for increasing income without compromising key council objectives including promoting healthy living and reducing poverty.

Schools funding

Funding for schools is ring-fenced and costs are met through a Dedicated Schools Grant from central government. Schools in Brent can expect significant growth of funding in this area, partly because they have been historically under-funded and partly because the government has committed additional funds at a national level.

Per pupil growth in funding is over 8% in both 2006/07 and 2007/08. Whilst growth may not continue at this rate in later years of the strategy, it is likely that real terms increases will continue into the foreseeable future.

The council must consult with the Schools Forum, consisting of representatives of head teachers and chairs of governors, on the basis on which this funding is distributed to schools. In doing so, the aim will be to ensure that as far as possible within the constraints of the schools funding regime the additional funding is used to meet the priorities for children set out in this corporate strategy and the Children and Young Persons' Strategy.

Capital spending

The council's capital strategy is based on priorities set out in the corporate strategy. The capital strategy forms the basis for developing a four year rolling capital programme.

Funding for capital spending comes from a combination of government grant, capital receipts from disposal of assets, developer contributions and borrowing. A key element in determining the level of the capital programme is deciding the amount of borrowing which the council can afford in the context of the medium term financial strategy.

There is a direct link between capital spending and the delivery of efficiencies in the revenue budget. During the period of this corporate strategy, the council will have to determine the amount it wants to invest in customer services, libraries and day care provision in order to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

The council will also have to address the need for additional school places given the limited capital resources available to it.

In taking forward the capital strategy, the council will aim to maximise resources from sources other than borrowing, including rationalisation of the current asset portfolio, applications for government and other national funding, use of private finance, and developer contributions as part of planning agreements.

The council will also ensure efficient procurement of capital assets as part of the wider efficiency agenda.

Consultation and Communication

Our Consultation Strategy is designed to ensure a variety of opportunities exist for residents and service users to give their views and opinions on Council activities.

We now wish to take this further. We will extend and devolve decision-making.

We will continue to engage in dialogue with our residents and service users to ensure that local expectations shape our services and reflect users needs, keeping residents informed of our work and enabling them to actively influence the direction of the authority.

The council is committed to making consultation meaningful and the recent example when the council listened to the strongly expressed views of residents and decided to halt proposals for a casino shows our commitment to listening to residents.

We are committed to finding out and understanding what our residents want before we change old or introduce new services. Residents' views will be central to the way the council now makes decisions.

Our consultation arrangements include:

Area Consultative Forums (ACFs) – There are five area consultative forums which cover the whole of the Borough. They are:

- Kingsbury & Kenton
- Kilburn and Kensal Rise
- Wembley
- Harlesden
- Willesden

They act as the main mechanism for a process of continuous dialogue between the council and local residents, community groups, service users and partners. Each forum meets four times a year and is chaired by a councillor and managed by a Steering Group made up of local residents supported by council staff.

Service User Consultative Forums (SUCFs) – There are seven user consultative forums that cover the specific needs of service users. These are children, youth, pensioners, the voluntary sector, disabled users, private sector housing tenants and the black and minority ethnic community. These are chaired by councillors, supported by a steering group and managed by council officers.

Brent Residents Attitude Survey – Every three years we carry out our own Residents Attitude Survey to gauge opinion and to identify priorities for improvement and engagement. The survey is undertaken by means of an in-depth interview with a representative sample of over 1,000 residents. The information from this survey is used to shape council priorities, develop local services and assess satisfaction levels with our activities. The survey is undertaken by an independent research company Ipsos MORI.

Best Value Performance Indicators – The Government requires all local authorities to undertake a prescribed postal questionnaire to assess resident's satisfaction with the performance of their Council. This is undertaken every three years and the results are used as part of the Audit Commission's assessment of council

performance. Our next BVPI survey will be undertaken in September 2006 and the results will be included in our CPA score for 2007. At present the Council is assessed as a three star (out of a maximum of four) authority that is improving well.

The Brent Citizens' Panel – The Panel is made up of 2,000 local residents and is managed on behalf of the authority by Ipsos MORI. We regularly consult the panel which is a reliable guide to resident thinking on our services and performance. Through our communications strategy we aim to ensure that residents feel well informed about the services available to them and the conduct of Council business.

We are committed to keeping our residents informed of the services available to them, as well as of our local programmes and the opportunities that exist for them to shape their area. We produce an A-Z of the council's services and an annual review of the council's work outlining progress against the corporate strategy aims.

We publish a full colour monthly Brent Magazine to provide thorough and accessible information on council services and other local information of interest to our residents. The magazine is delivered free to every home in the Borough.

We have an easy to use council website that has received numerous awards since it was first set up in 1995. However, we recognise the need to redesign the site to make it easier for residents to access council services on line. We know that residents while pleased with these arrangements expect and demand continuous improvement.

Our Staff

Without well-trained, experienced and able staff the council cannot deliver services. The people who work for us are central to achieving our corporate objectives. Investing in our staff and the right HR structures that support and drive performance are at the heart of the council's approach to improving local services. The council has held Investors in People status for the past three years and we aim to be reaccredited under the new tougher assessment in December 2006. This will demonstrate that the way in which we develop and manage staff is aligned with our service priorities and that we are using performance appraisal effectively to create a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

Central to our people management strategy is workforce development planning and capacity building, to ensure we maximise the full potential of our staff. However, the key challenge for us remains the recruitment and retention of a skilled and talented workforce. If our aim is to be an employer of choice we must ensure the package we offer includes those things staffs look for in an excellent employer. Brent's inspiring leadership and involving management style together with an environment where staff are encouraged and supported to be innovative are all key selling points. But staff equally look for a range of development opportunities both formal and informal delivered within a fair and flexible working environment. Our leading edge e-learning programme is central to our development programme and to ensuring that staff who work flexibly have equal access to learning and development opportunities. We will also continue to extend our award winning flexible working scheme where appropriate and ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive within the London labour market.

We have reviewed our management competencies to ensure they reflect our operational business needs and will continue to provide all staff with an annual performance appraisal and development plan. We want all staff to understand how their work contributes to achieving the Corporate Strategy and will keep staff well informed about council priorities and progress. In return we expect all staff to deliver their responsibilities in accordance with the agreed standards of performance.

Our Conduct.

In all our member and officer actions we will observe the highest standards of conduct in public life, maintaining our commitment to serving the public. Our decisions will be transparent and open, supported by robust evidence and with the long-term interests of the borough at their heart. Staff and Members alike are dedicated to providing excellent public services which use our resources wisely and efficiently. We share a strong belief in the value of public service and accountable local democracy which respects the rights of Brent residents both as citizens and service users.

We will not tolerate mediocrity, inequality or lack of probity in any area of council activity and will rigorously monitor ourselves through Scrutiny and the work of the Standards Committee to ensure that we keep this pledge.

PART 3 - DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

Brent Council's Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 is designed unashamedly to drive forward service excellence, urban regeneration and community cohesion. Through the actions detailed below we are focused on enhancing the quality of life for everyone who lives or works in Brent. During the next four years this will be our number one priority.

A Great Place

Creating a borough that is a great place to live, which is safe, clean and green with an accessible range of leisure and recreational facilities is a high priority for the council. The quality of the local environment has a significant influence on the quality of residents' lives and we believe that all our communities should benefit from safe, well-designed streets and open spaces maintained to a high standard. Design will be a major factor in our decisions about how Brent accommodates the increase in new households that will be required in the borough. We will ensure that all large scale development in Brent is accompanied by appropriate local infrastructure.

A Safe Place

To achieve this ambition we will improve and extend programmes to tackle environmental crime, decreasing the negative impact of graffiti, fly posting abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping. We have tough time targets to deal with reported incidents of environmental crime and wherever possible we will use our enforcement powers to prosecute offenders and deter future offences.

In partnership with the Metropolitan Police real progress has been made in reducing actual crime within the borough. There has been an overall drop in crime of 4% since 2003 and a reduction of 12.7% in residential burglaries. Over the same period gun crime has reduced by 6.5%. Through the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of Drugs Strategy and the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood teams we will continue to combat crime and aim by 2008 to have reduced the crime rate in the borough by a further 20%.

While crime is falling the fear of crime remains a blight on many peoples' lives and we want to improve resident's confidence in using Brent's public spaces through high visibility policing and local warden services covering our parks, key housing estates, town centres and priority neighbourhoods. By 2007 we aim to reduce the number of people experiencing fear of crime from 66% to 50%.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
<p>Improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of measures to tackle environmental crime and improve consumer protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide 1000 properties per year with alley gating subject to funding. • Remove all racist graffiti within 24 hours and all other graffiti within 4-6 weeks of notification • To investigate and sticker all reported abandoned vehicles within 24 hours of notification. • Average time to order removal of vehicle within 4 days. • Remove abandoned cars within 6 days. • Remove reported fly tips within 24 hours. • Ensure 99% of streetlights are working as planned. • Reduce the level of illegal trading year on year.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
To increase the effectiveness of the warden services provided by the Council, widening their role to improve their contribution to active management of the environment and public reassurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of people who feel threatened by crime 'a great deal' or a 'fair amount' from 66% to 50% in 2007. • To increase the rating given by park users in the annual survey for feeling safe in parks from 8.2 to 8.5 on the ILAM scale in wardened parks and from 6.0 to 7.0 in parks without wardens.
Implement the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of Drugs Strategy in Partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service and other partners on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in serious crime (assaults, wounding, robbery, domestic violence and gun crime) in the borough of 20% by April 2008 compared to 2004 figures. • Reduce the number of people who feel threatened by crime 'a great deal' or a 'fair amount' from 66% to 50% in 2007. • Reduce anti-social behaviour through prevention, diversion and enforcement activities. • Implement programmes of prevention work on knife and gun crime with local schools. • Reduce by 3% the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system by 2007. • Reduction in the sales of age restricted goods to children. • Reduction in illegal street trading.
Maximise the effectiveness of existing CCTV installations and develop criteria for the future extension of its use through partnership where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the criteria for new CCTV installation. • 99% of all existing CCTV cameras to be fully operational. • Ensure daily use of the CCTV control room by Police staff. • Use of CCTV by council regulators in enforcement against street crime.
Continue to reduce casualties caused by road traffic accidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of people injured and killed as a result of traffic accidents. • Securing additional funding from Transport for London to implement required traffic schemes.

A Clean Place

Everyone deserves to live in a clean, well maintained neighbourhood. We are working hard to make Brent cleaner through the Big Brent Clean-up campaign and will work with local communities to put in place alley-gating schemes and environmental improvement projects. 70% of Brent streets now reach government targets for cleanliness. We plan to improve that figure to 81% by 2009. We will have a dedicated Streetcare officer in each ward to monitor and respond to local environmental concerns raised by residents.

We know that our roads and pavements still require further investment. We will assess and prioritize those most in need of repair and maximise external sources of funding to support improvements in the safety and condition of the borough's highways.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Improve street cleaning through a new waste management contract to start in April 2007 to provide the borough with a service that meets resident's and Members expectations for service and value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure the best quality contract for Brent at the most competitive price. • Achieve a street cleanliness score of 19% by 2009 and assess the cost implications of achieving 15% by 2010.
Develop a programme to provide access to more public toilet facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 20 accessible public toilets in town centres and parks across the borough by 2010.
Develop a prioritised programme of road and pavement repairs taking into account the need to promote road safety and green travel options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in pavement trip hazards and insurance claims. • Improvements in the quality of roads and pavements in town centres. • More cost effective use of our resources available for highways maintenance.
Improving the co-ordination of environmental enforcement activity to ensure maximum impact and efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of enforcement actions taken in partnership across regulatory services and improvement in the average time taken to resolve environmental problems.
Ensuring that our regulatory services support the development of safe, effective and economic local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of compliance with regulation is high across all business sectors. • Ensure that businesses have an equal chance to prosper whilst protecting the rights and safety of residents and consumers and consumers in Brent.

A Green Place

Expansion of the recycling service has enabled more residents to recycle their rubbish. 22% of all household rubbish is now sent for recycling rather than landfill, but there is still a long way to go. We will be making further recycling services available as part of our new waste management service. These will include setting up a new green waste composting site, a second recycling centre and work with schools and colleges to support recycling projects. The range of items that can be recycled through the kerbside collection service will also be extended to include plastics. By 2010 we aim to be recycling 30% of all the waste collected in Brent.

Brent parks are one of the most popular facilities in the borough. They attract over 16 million visitors a year and they have achieved national recognition for their standard of planting and facilities. We plan to extend these high standards increasing the number of our local parks obtaining 'Green Flag' status and developing further district parks. We will raise the standards of provision for playground and youth facilities in local parks and improve access to pocket parks and open spaces across the borough.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
<p>Improve waste recycling performance to achieve our local and national targets for increased recycling of waste.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of waste reused or recycled by 2010. • Include plastic recyclable items within the doorstep waste collection service. • 100% schools and colleges with facilities to recycle their waste. • Explore options for further recycling and composting sites across the borough.
<p>Review and develop a clear transport policy within the context of the Mayor's Transport strategy for London that promotes real choice for residents and others through a clear view about the place of the car within the available range of travel options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report the findings of public consultation on draft parking policy. • Review the provision of resident's and other parking permits. • Ensure that residents have access to controlled parking where they tell us they want it. • Achieve targets on lowering emissions.
<p>Make Brent Council an exemplar of environmental practice and performance on sustainability issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2010. • Recycling facilities in place in all offices by April 2008. • Implement the Council's green travel plan.
<p>Maintaining the quality of parks and open spaces and upgrading the current range of facilities available within them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of district parks by 2010. • Increase the number of parks and open spaces holding 'Green Flag' by 2010. • Raise the standards for the provision of playground and youth facilities in Brent's parks and open spaces. • Improve pitch drainage and changing accommodation on sports pitches by 2010. • Re-furbish the Welsh Harp Environmental Educational centre by 2010 and encourage at least 3,500 schoolchildren a year to visit the centre. • Increase the number of older people using our parks for recreation and exercise.
<p>Develop a programme of green activities – such as tree planting, developing pocket parks and other open spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant hundreds of new trees in the borough by 2010. • A consistent approach to tree planting and removal that balances the need to minimise subsidence claims while encouraging the replanting of broad leaf, native and suitable species. • Easy access for all Brent residents to open spaces and parks.

A Lively Place

Brent hosts a multitude of arts and cultural events which enhance the local quality of life and reflect the rich diversity of our community. Our cultural services have been at the forefront of our approach to community cohesion, with over 50,000 people a year attending the festivals programme, which includes Diwali, Eid, Hanukah and St.Patrick's Day. Events such as these and the Respect Festival help to foster communication and understanding, celebrating the unique cultural heritage of Brent.

The refurbishment of the Willesden Green Library and the opening of the new Brent Museum has seen library usage increase by 6% in one year. We will continue to

modernise the library service to reflect the information and leisure needs of a diverse, urban community particularly through greater use of new communication technology and new ways to access other council services.

Access to high quality, affordable sports facilities is critical to maintaining health and well-being. The programme of free-swims for young people has seen a 40% increase in the numbers of visits by young people to council sports centres. Working with our health partners we will encourage more adults to take part in physical exercise and continue to improve the quality of our sports centres with the opening of Willesden Sports Centre and the new Sports Service contract. Through our sports strategy we will be working with schools and clubs to increase the range of sporting activities available in the borough with a particular focus on under-represented sports and groups.

The redevelopment of Wembley and the opening of the Wembley Stadium offers a unique opportunity for leisure led regeneration. We will seize that opportunity working with developers to create an area that brings maximum social and economic benefits to local residents, including employment, new retail outlets, sports facilities and housing. We will develop a programme of activities to ensure local people benefit from the 2012 Olympics and a tourism strategy that balances economic needs with those of local residents.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Modernising the provision of library services in Brent along side the development of an integrated approach to customer services across the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of visitors to libraries to the national average per 1,000 population. • Increase the percentage of people satisfied with our Library services to 77%. • Increase the percentage of people who find the item they want to 94%.
Continue to develop the Brent Museum and Archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase museum visitor numbers to an average of 30,000 by 2010.
Securing the best possible range of retail, leisure, housing and employment opportunities within the redevelopment of Wembley and ensure local residents can access these opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a mixed leisure based employment development within the Wembley regeneration area. • A creative workspace development to be under construction by 2010.
Creating a broader retail offer within the boroughs high streets and town centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the retail floor space, turnover, visitor numbers and profitability of Wembley and Kilburn retail sectors. • A Town Centre Strategy for Brent agreed by the end of 2006 and delivery of its action plan. • Reduce illegal trading in the borough. • Sign-up 500 local traders to the 'Good Traders' scheme by 2010.
Increase sports opportunities and participation across the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 4% increase in the number of adults taking part in sports and physical exercise for 30 minutes on three occasions per week by 2009. • To increase the number of visits by young people to council owned sports facilities from 33,800 in 2007 to 40,920 in 2009. • Increase the percentage of 5-16 year olds in schools sports partnerships engaged in 2 hrs a week minimum PE and schools sport to 86% in

	2009. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the use of sports centres and attendance at sports activities by looked after children and disabled young people in line with the LAA target.
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A Borough of Opportunity

As a location Brent has a huge amount to offer residents and businesses. The borough has excellent transport links both to central London and the rest of the Country, while our existing local businesses make a significant contribution to the London economy and have great potential for future business growth. It is our belief that everyone in Brent should be able to participate in and benefit from growth in the local economy. We will ensure that our residents are able to lead healthy lives with the right skills and opportunities to enable them to prosper.

Local Employment and Enterprise

The next four years will see an unprecedented level of public and private sector investment in the regeneration of Brent. The opening of the Wembley Stadium and the development of the surrounding area provides us with the means to secure the long-term economic prosperity of Wembley for future generations. We are working closely with developers to ensure the area contains a sustainable mix of retail, business, housing and leisure developments which will strengthen the local economy and provide employment opportunities for local residents.

Brent will be a place where businesses want to locate and can succeed. We will support the growth of local enterprise through our statutory regulatory and planning framework providing a conducive environment for inward investment and business growth. We will continue to work closely with local business to identify their needs, improving access to business advice, support and finance.

Making sure that Brent residents have the right skills and experience to access local job opportunities is critical to our intent to reduce deprivation and rejuvenate our priority neighbourhoods. Through programmes such as Brentin2work we will support people to gain the skills and employment which will secure their long-term prosperity and well-being.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Promote investment across the Borough, and in particular in the opportunity areas of Wembley and Park Royal, to ensure a diverse and strong local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6000 jobs to be created through the Wembley regeneration by 2010.
Ensure the delivery of the South Kilburn NDC programme for the long-term sustainable regeneration of the area and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Kilburn NDC delivery plan targets achieved. • All necessary Funding is in place September 2007. • Successful Ballot achieved by November 2007. • Granville homes start on site May 2006, completion February 2008. • 3rd Phase renovations completed by March 2007. • Outline planning proposals and detailed phase 1 proposals submitted by December 2007. • 800 local residents into jobs by 2010.

<p>With our partners implement our programmes to promote employment in the borough and reduce the barriers to employment experienced by the most deprived communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brent borough wide claimant count to consistently converge towards the London average. • Reduce levels of long term unemployment to the London average by 2008. • Increase the number of people with disabilities (including learning disability, physical disability, and mental health problems) in sustainable employment. • Increase the number of people with a disability employed by the council to 5.5% by 2009. • To increase the employment rate at a rate faster than London by focussing on those groups most in need of support. • To reduce the number of households living in poverty (below 60% median or 50% mean of Brent household income) year on year to 16% by 2008.
<p>Through our planning, development and regulatory activities create the conditions for the local economy to thrive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop set of indicators to assess health of the local economy as part of the Economic Development Strategy work.
<p>To make Brent a place where people want to stay and settle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Local Development Framework that manages population growth ensures the borough benefits from enhanced facilities and services and that it plays a full and active role in the wider London economy. • 2,000 new affordable homes created by 2010. • Win 2 architectural awards for new developments in the borough in each year of the strategy.
<p>Provide better regulation for local businesses which supports their development while meeting our statutory responsibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance levels for new and minority led businesses do not differ significantly from levels in mature businesses. • Common approaches to regulation of business regulation agreed across West London.
<p>Secure the maximum local benefits for local business and residents from the 2012 London Olympic Games.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby London 2012 to hold Beijing 2008 hand-over to London event at Wembley, build programme of activities around that event. • Secure external funding for regeneration related activities including procurement and volunteering programmes. • Ensure 2012 agenda becomes integrated into departmental action plans and everyday working. • Increase sports participation by building on the West London sports and physical activity partnership agenda.
<p>Continue to reduce the gaps in achievement, health and opportunity between the most deprived wards in the borough and average levels in line with the aims of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. During the period NRF aims will be integrated to mainstream service provision through the Local Area Agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce claimant count unemployment in priority wards at a faster rate than that for the Borough by 2008. • To reduce the proportion of residents who do not like to leave their homes at night by 5 percentage points in each area by 2008. • To reduce the proportion of residents who do not let their children play out by a further 10 percentage points in each area by 2008.

Health and Well-being

Brent residents must have the best possible chance of a long, fulfilling and healthy life. Our challenge is to reduce the gap in life expectancy, which is 10 years less in the south of the borough than in the north. Working closely with the Primary Care Trust, health care providers and the community we will develop a partnership Health Strategy setting out specific targets to reduce health inequalities in the areas of greatest need and improve the overall level of public health for all communities in Brent.

We will encourage and support local people to make healthier life choices, through programmes to reduce smoking, promote healthy eating and take part in physical activities. These programmes have a direct impact on reducing the prevalence of coronary heart disease, diabetes and cancer and creating long-term health and well-being.

Take-up of immunisation and cancer screening remains relatively low in the borough and we will work with the PCT and local community groups to better publicise available health services and improve access through new locally based health centres and services.

Increasingly people want to receive health and social care services within their local communities. Together with the PCT and health service providers we will be developing more integrated approaches that help people to live independent lives, give them greater choice in the care they receive and prevent the need to use long-term residential care.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Produce a partnership Health Strategy for the borough which reduces the health inequalities experienced within Brent and supports general improvement in standards of public health for all communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Health Strategy agreed March 07. • Actions implemented from April 07 onwards. • Increase life expectancy – especially in deprived neighbourhoods. • Decrease in numbers with/deaths from diabetes, Coronary Heart Disease. Detailed targets to be agreed with the PCT and partners and included in the Health Strategy.
Develop an integrated strategy to address the full range of older peoples needs including care services, leisure activities, inclusion and choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Older People's strategy agreed – March 07. • Launch Better Government for Older People – October 06. • Implement action plan from Older Peoples strategy. • Improve perception of well-being among older people. • Increase the number of older people taking part in recreational exercise and community activities.
Provide effective Member Scrutiny of health issues and the provision of health services to facilitate improvement in public health across the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual programme of Member led health scrutiny with recommendations for improvement to the Executive and partners in the health sector.

Help When You Need It

At some point in our lives we may all need extra help to maintain a good quality of life particularly when we are older or have a long-term illness or disability. The Council provides a range of services aimed at promoting and protecting the independence and health of people with physical disabilities, mental health difficulties or learning disabilities. Our challenge is to provide tailored care packages for those with the greatest need and engage in preventative work so that need does not escalate unnecessarily. Increasingly we deliver these services through partnership arrangements in community settings. We are committed to ensuring that people using our care services are able to exercise choice in the type of services they receive and wherever possible they are helped to live independently. Often we can prevent the need for long-term residential care through early intervention and support. Our focuses will be on providing social care services that enable people to maintain an active life, participating in leisure and recreation activities within an inclusive local community.

However, when people do require residential care we will ensure that it is of an excellent quality and respects the needs and wishes of each individual.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Develop the provision of adult social care services to enhance peoples' quality of life and enable greater choice and flexibility in the type of care received.	From baseline figures on 05/06: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people helped to live at home. • Reduce numbers of people admitted to residential or nursing care. • Increase number of people receiving Direct Payments. • Implement action plan arising from day services modernisation programme. • Increase the number of carers receiving a break.
With the PCT explore the options for greater integration of adult social care and health services to improve provision and seek increased efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a joint programme with PCT for integration of services. • Finalise the framework agreement with PCT & implement the attached action plan.

An Inclusive Community

We believe that Brent is an inclusive community that is welcoming to all. We will provide services which reflect the diverse nature of our community and respond to the different needs of young and old alike. We aim to support our service users and local communities to achieve independence, enabling them to fulfil their potential and participate in the opportunities available to them locally to improve their quality of life.

Settled Homes

Like many London boroughs Brent suffers from a shortage of good quality, affordable housing. Lack of an affordable home affects the quality of life of many of our most vulnerable people and families. We will maintain the supply of affordable new housing being built in the borough and achieve our targets for reducing the use of temporary accommodation for families with children. Alongside the creation of new housing we will continue the programmes to bring more empty properties back into use and work with private landlords to provide high quality rented accommodation.

Brent's priority neighbourhoods have undergone a transformation benefiting from significant investment in new and refurbished homes. Nearly 4,000 new and refurbished homes will be created in South Kilburn and plans are being developed to regenerate Barham Park. Tenant satisfaction has increased and we are on schedule to achieve the national 'Decent Homes' standard for council and housing association properties and vulnerable tenants in private housing.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Ensure an appropriate supply of new housing (market and affordable) is created in the borough within the context of regional and sub-regional housing policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of investment for new build properties for west London is at minimum maintained at current proportion when compared with rest of London. • Local Development Framework supports appropriate mix. • Nomination and allocation arrangements agreed by December 06.
Agree an appropriate policy for the level of housing densities acceptable within the borough while ensuring continuity in the supply of new accommodation and necessary capital income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree through the Local Development Framework a Core Spatial Strategy in late 2006. • Agree with Brent Housing Group and monitor through Common Management Standards project completed by April 2007.
Achieve our targets for reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settled homes proposal and related targets agreed by government by December 06. • Meet government and local annual targets for temporary accommodation reduction. • See targets above re: affordable housing supply.
Provide an appropriate level of support and regulation to private landlords to create a sustainable private rented housing sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet annual targets for houses in multiple occupation licensing as set out in Housing and Community Care service plans. • Meet annual targets for empty homes as set out in Housing and Community Care service plans • Forum meets quarterly. • Meet the LAA target to increase the % of vulnerable households in decent homes in the private sector.
Agree a future strategy and priorities for the management of the Council's housing stock by Brent Housing Partnership (ALMO).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review Brent Housing Partnership and Housing Revenue Account business plan post South Kilburn transfer by September 07. • Meet government Decent Homes target by April 2007 and agree ongoing maintenance programme. • To respond to government proposals re future of ALMO's by Sept 06. • To introduce pilot rent plus scheme by April 2008.
Develop effective partnerships with boroughs in the west London sub-region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of investment is at least maintained at current levels. • West London achieves an appropriate share of the regional pot based on need. • Sub-regional projects achieve spend and targets in line with relevant agreements.
Ensure that delivery of housing services is responsive to Brent's diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Older Peoples Housing Strategy. • Targets as per the revised Diversity Strategy (summer 2006). • Targets as per the Refugee Strategy (summer 2006).

Early Excellence

We believe that every child in Brent is entitled to the best start in life in a safe, healthy environment with access to excellent facilities to learn, play and develop to their full potential. We are committed to achieving this through the targets we have set in the three-year Children's and Young People's Plan. This plan has been developed in close collaboration with representatives on the Children and Young People's Strategic Group including the Police, voluntary section, and health service and education providers. The views and aspirations of children and young people are integral to the priorities and actions we have set for developing services that meet their needs.

The Children and Young People's Plan is an ambitious partnership programme designed to achieve a significant impact on the quality of life experience by children in Brent. The six strategic priorities address the range of factors that affect all children's lives in the borough as well as specific services to support and protect the most vulnerable children in our care. Our priorities for children are:-

- Creating the right conditions in which children can thrive by reducing local crime, supporting families to increase their income, providing settled homes and encouraging the development of parenting skills.
- Investing in excellent early years provision and increasing access to childcare services that provide a good start to each child's personal and social development.
- Raising the standard of education provision and the educational achievement of children and young people across the borough, while addressing the specific needs of those who experience the greatest barriers to learning.
- Supporting teenagers to fulfil their potential both educationally and socially whether making the transition to further education, training or work.
- Providing specialist services that met the needs of excluded and vulnerable children enabling them to achieve the best possible life chances.
- Safe-guarding the health and well-being of all children and young people with robust arrangements in place to protect those children most at risk.

To achieve these priorities we have developed a set of detailed action plans and targets which will provide a range of integrated services for children and young people across the borough. These will include providing universal access to the extended schools service, expanding the Children's Centre programme and creating more affordable childcare places. Our focus will be on providing early support services to those families or children experiencing difficulties to prevent and reduce the need for more long-term intervention.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Create the conditions in which children and young people thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decent income through employment - Affordable family sized homes - Safe and secure neighbourhoods and cohesive - Accessible and safe play, sport, culture and leisure facilities. • Provide effective parenting programmes through Children's Centres

Early years development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Foundation Stage provision • Increase available, accessible affordable childcare • Ensure all childcare is of good quality • Provide readily available and accessible parenting support and healthcare
Educational achievement and school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate the rate of improvement of under-achieving groups, narrowing and eliminating gaps • Improve educational outcomes for looked after children to match or exceed national average • Ensure all schools provide an education which is at least good as defined by OFSTED • Raise standards at key stage 1, 2, and 3 to match or exceed national averages • Ensure there are sufficient secondary school places • Support schools in providing a curriculum that fosters creativity, engagement and a love of learning • Ensure disabled children and young people are able to access the same wide educational and life opportunities as others
Support for young people and teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure forthcoming inspections show all aspects of Youth Service to be good. • Reduce the number of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) • Raise `value added` scores in all subjects by all providers for 16-19 year olds • Improve access to work experience and employment opportunities for targeted groups
Focus on excluded and vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce teenage conception rates • Reduce the number of looked after children, and for children who become looked after, to increase the rate of adoption • Increase family support for children in need, including those with disabilities • Reduce youth offending and support reintegration
Safeguarding health and well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is strong inter-agency collaboration to improve all aspects of safeguarding for all children and young people • Ensure robust arrangements to safeguard children and young people in need of protection are in place • Reduce bullying in schools • Reduce young people's involvement either as victims or perpetrators in crime • Improve health and fitness: ensuring emotional, physical and mental wellbeing and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Civic Leadership

Civic leadership is about pride in the borough, in the people that we serve, in the services we provide, in our staff and in all our actions. To have a borough we are proud of will mean making difficult decisions which we will not shrink from. Sometimes leadership will mean being unpopular, but we will not duck any issue that will help make Brent a better place to live.

Our democratic mandate gives us a unique responsibility to provide civic leadership and representation for all our residents. We will champion the interests of Brent and

its communities at the national and regional level to secure the resources and opportunities that local people and businesses deserve and need.

Working with our partners in the Local Strategic Partnership we will build a strong and enduring vision of the place we want Brent to be; a shared commitment to a borough that has excellent public services, offering a great quality of life within an inclusive community. To deliver this vision we will engage with and lead the implementation of our joint Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement through relationships with other public agencies, the voluntary and business sector.

We believe that a tangible sign of civic pride and identity for Brent would be the creation of a new state-of-the-art Civic Centre in Wembley. This facility would bring together a range of public service providers, containing high quality spaces for community uses and enabling better public access to local services from one site. We are preparing detailed feasibility studies to assess the scope and value for money of locating within a new Civic Centre in Wembley.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Building a shared vision for Brent through the Local Strategic Partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the shared priorities for Brent through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement.
Implement the plans for the creation of a new state-of-the-art Civic Centre in Wembley which will bring together council and other key public services in a community focused facility at the heart of the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring forward detailed proposals for the creation of a new Civic Centre in Wembley, which will provide high quality local facilities and value for money from our investment in property and assets.
Ensure continued probity, standards and transparency in the conduct of all our business and decision-making at both the officer and Member levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete new strategic audit plan and improve delivery of existing plan to 87% by March 2008. • To increase the audit coverage on schools to 300 audit days by March 2008. • To produce a new anti-fraud framework by March 2007. • To achieve a rating of level 3 for the number of Housing Benefit sanctions per 1,000 caseload. • To recover 25 Council tenancies from unauthorised sub-letting or false housing applicants.

Community Engagement

We are committed to listening to the opinions of local people and reflecting their views in all our decisions. We want to work with local people to make a reality of their wishes, giving them a greater say in local choices and services. We have already listened to local concerns by not bidding for a super casino in Brent. We will continue to treat resident's views and preferences as the test of how the Council makes decisions.

We need to make sure that we have a good understanding of what matters locally to people. We use a wide range of ways of consulting and engaging people to ensure that our priorities and services are informed by an understanding of communities and service users needs and preferences. Our approaches include a new Citizen's Panel which is representative of the local population, five Area Consultative Forums, formal consultation exercises and regular service based surveys and forums. We aim to

make our consultation open and inclusive to all citizens offering a variety of ways to communicate with us.

Over the coming year we will be rolling out neighbourhood programmes that put ward Members and local people in the forefront of making choices for their areas and influencing the way in which services are delivered.

We aim to keep people well-informed about the Council's activities and local services, providing different opportunities to access information including the regular council magazine, the call-centre and our well used Inter-net site. We welcome your views and comments whether you want to visit, make a phone call, write or send us an e-mail.

Voluntary and community groups play a critical role within Brent, frequently providing vital local services, engaging with those individuals that are most difficult to reach as well as building the capacity of the local community. We will continue to strengthen our joint working with the voluntary sector through our contractual arrangements, shared priorities and grant funding programmes. We also want to support and encourage individuals to take an active role within their communities and are working with the voluntary sector to promote volunteering and citizenship projects.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Agree and implement an appropriate neighbourhood working structure supported by ward Members and local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neighbourhood working programme which supports Members in their representative role and facilitates greater resident input to local decision-making by April 2007
Deliver our Consultation Strategy with a range of opportunities for local people to influence council policies, services and decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold quarterly meetings of the five area consultative forums. • Hold quarterly meetings of the service user forums. • Establish a Youth Parliament • Undertake regular consultation via the Citizen's Panel on policies and service priorities.
Ensure residents are kept well informed of council activities and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute to all households an annual A-Z guide to council services. • Print and distribute to all households the regular Brent Magazine.
Improve and develop relationships with the voluntary sector support the effective functioning of the voluntary sector and the achievement of community priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amount of funding brought into the borough by voluntary agencies. • Regular and effective consultative forums between the council and voluntary agencies established. • Contracts and/or SLAs in place where appropriate for voluntary agencies funded by the council. • Review council grant funding programmes to ensure they are reflective of corporate priorities.
Promote active citizenship projects that encourage local volunteering and support community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people from non-socially excluded groups engaging in (defined) volunteering activity for an average of two hours a week or more to 400 above the baseline for 2006 by 2009. • Increase the number of people from socially-excluded groups engaging in (defined) volunteering activity for an average of two hours a week or more to 100 above the baseline for 2006 by 2009.
Positively celebrate the diversity of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the proportion of residents who say that

our local community and promote good community relations.	there is a strong sense of community in their local area from 37% in 2005 to 45% in 2008 (as measured through Brent Residents Attitude Survey).
Create a borough that is internationally welcoming and reflects the rich diversity of Brent's cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the proportion of residents who say that their local area is a place where people of different backgrounds get on well from 72% in 2005 to 77% in 2008 (as measured through the Brent Residents Attitude Survey).

Building Our Capacity

In order to deliver an ambitious programme of change and improvement that meets the needs of a diverse, urban, population we must have excellent standards of management and administration. It is critical to plan for the workforce we need for the future and invest in the capacity of all staff to perform to the highest standards. Meeting the challenge to provide excellent public services requires creativity, multi-disciplinary and partnering skills. Our new Human Resources structure and programmes are designed to train and develop staff to effectively deliver our Corporate Strategy priorities. Together with technical improvements in the administration of HR functions they will enable us to monitor more effectively recruitment, training and performance appraisal of our staff.

Brent has a well deserved reputation for innovation in customer services. This is a customer focused organisation which is committed to improving customer service standards and customer satisfaction ratings as a priority. Services should be designed and delivered around customer needs and satisfaction which determine standards, drive performance levels and achieve value for money. Our One Stop Shops are at the forefront of integrated customer care. With the advent of new technology we will be reviewing the way in which we provide customer services to ensure that we provide choice and flexibility in how people contact the council, which reflects the changes in the way people live their lives.

It is a reality that we work with limited financial resources. The Council is committed to keeping council tax levels below the average for London boroughs and ensuring that local tax payers are receiving value for money. To achieve our dual aims of excellent services within financial discipline we will explore all options for improving our efficiency and effectiveness. We are working with other public sector organisations both within Brent and the wider west London sub-region to develop options for shared service that will release resources for reinvestment in local priorities. We will continue to refine our approach to procurement to ensure that we get the best possible value for money without compromising on service standards. Currently the Audit Commission rates the Council as a strong 3 for its use of resources; we plan to improve that performance to the highest rating of 4 by 2008.

Our Priorities for 2006-2010	What we will deliver
Continue to improve the performance of the Revenue and Benefits service to achieve upper quartile performance for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit processing times. Collection of Council Tax revenue. Fully implement the verification framework and maximise take-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 94% by 31 March 07 94% by 31 March 08 95% by 31 March 09 Reduce processing times for new applications to 24 days by 2009 and 19 days for processing reported change in circumstances Benchmark accuracy levels by September 06 and set targets to improve continuously for the next 3 years. Maintain levels of Local Authority Error overpayments at less than 0.48% of total

of benefits by eligible people	<p>expenditure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse existing monitoring data and compare to census by September 06. Set targets for increasing take up where underclaiming identified – by December 06.
Implement the Strategic HR Transformation programme to create an HR function that serves the business needs of the organisation and improves the performance of all staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An HR structure which supports the delivery of the Council's service and corporate objectives through sound advise to managers, creative workforce development and high quality training provision.
Create a People Centre to deliver improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of personnel related transactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater efficiency in the administration of HR transactions covering payroll, recruitment, collection of HR data and monitoring of training.
Improve our capacity to deliver high performing services through effective future workforce planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Council's Workforce Development Plan with improvement plans for key skill gap area and multi disciplinary working.
Develop flexible working arrangements that meet the business objectives of the Council and enable the most effect use of staff resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the proportion of staff who say they can use the council's flexible working arrangements from 75% to 82% by 2010 (as measured in the council's annual Staff Attitude Survey). To reduce sickness absence from 7.18 days in 2005/6 to 7 days in 2008/9 (as measured in the annual Best Value Performance Plan). Maintain turnover at 10.25% (as measured in our annual Workforce Monitoring Report
Implement the single status agreement and equal pay findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the single status agreement and equal pay findings following by 31 3 07.
Develop and deliver an integrated Customer Service Strategy for the council and its partners to ensure customer focus, modern access arrangements, increased effectiveness and value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the current review and make proposals for the future strategic delivery of customer services across the council. Increase the use of telephone and on-line as means of contacting the council. Increase customer satisfaction with the council's customer services. Introduce the corporate Client Index during 2007/8. Replace the corporate CRM system during 2007/8. Connect to the Government Gateway by December 2006. Website redesign to be implemented by Dec 2007. Together with OSS to review Access Channel Strategy by December 2007. Council network to connect with main partner agencies 2007/8.
Review our property and asset portfolio to ensure the sustainability of our asset management strategy to support the effective delivery of council services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and develop the corporate asset plan deliver a sustainable property portfolio that supports the delivery of services and provides value for money. Reduce the level of category 1 (essential repairs).
Work with our partners both within the borough and at the sub-regional level to identify the scope for shared services and greater efficiency savings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant positive savings generated each year for inclusion on efficiency statement.

<p>Improve our approach to purchasing and commissioning of services to secure quality and value for money from local resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our approach to procurement to deliver excellent services that represent value for money from local resources.
<p>Maintain effective stewardship of our resources to achieve value for money, transparency in decision-making and increased outcomes from our expenditure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Level 4 on CPA Use of Resources judgement by 2008, including a Level 4 on the value for money element of the judgement. • Maintain council tax below the median for London boroughs. • Maintain balances at a minimum of £7m. • Deliver the LAA value for money savings by the end of 2007/08.