

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Meeting of the Full Council</b> 26th November 2007</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from The Executive</b></p>
<p>For Action: _____ Wards Affected: ALL</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The First Reading of the 2008-09 Budget Priorities of the Administration</b></p>	

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 This report sets out the Administration top priorities for action and spending and should be read in conjunction with the Corporate Strategy and the concurrent report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources which sets out the main parameters surrounding the setting of the budget.

## 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Council is recommended to consider the priorities alongside the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources paper on the budget and to debate them as set out in Standing Orders 25A and 44.

## 3.0 The Priorities

3.1 In November 2006 we set before Council our Corporate Strategy and highlighted the key areas for priority action for the year. In this paper we set out the key themes of our forward programme in Section (1) and in Section (2) what we believe to be excellent achievements against the Corporate Strategy during our first year.

3.2 Having rigorously looked at the needs of the Borough, examined over the past year our delivery and listened as we promised to the views of local people we have as an Administration agreed that from the

Community Strategy and Corporate Strategy we will pursue the outcomes through four major themes which will set our course up to 2010 and beyond.

- 3.3 These themes are Crime and Community Safety – the number one issue for our residents. Regeneration - ensuring that we seize any opportunity to provide jobs, better homes, health and education. Youth, - Brent is a Young Borough and the needs and aspirations of young people must be addressed. And, finally Sustainability. There is both a hard-nosed business case and a compelling moral case why we must in all our activities be aware of the effects we have on our environment, climate change and the borough and world our young people will inherit.
- 3.4 We therefore propose to Council that over the next three years, these four key themes encompass the absolute priorities of our Corporate Strategy and that these provide an overriding direction for our efforts and achievements.
- 3.5 These four themes will be reflected in the make up of our Local Area Agreement and in early discussions representatives of some of our key partners have already agreed these as a basis for our LAA negotiations and our Comprehensive Area Agreement outcomes.
- 3.6 A key underpinning for this will be our approach to Neighbourhood Working now rolling out. It is the Administration's view these four themes will provide all Councillors with a framework with which to make a local difference within their wards.
- 3.7 Alongside our four themes there is a commitment to deliver and extend the Transformation programme we have set in hand for key services. In 2006 we set out our intent to transform Social Care Services for Adults & Children ensuring that the most vulnerable of our residents receive the most appropriate service, that prevention as opposed to crisis management is our long-term aim and that every penny spent is spent most effectively and provides value for money.

Officers have been working with enthusiasm over the year to deliver on this agenda and we have supported change through judicious use of 'spend to save' resources. We are determined to see this through and ensure that these services are fit for the future'

We are making progress, we are determined that services to older people and people with learning difficulties will give these residents real control over their care.

We will ensure that support is given to vulnerable children in the borough and that the right sort of support is available at the right time. We will support children and their families whenever we can as we know that children's life chances, when they stay with their families are enhanced.

However it is not just in the social care area that we will look for transformation and over the next three years we will be taking a systematic look at all our service areas to ensure that they too are delivering to their maximum potential.

3.8 We set out below some of the areas we wish to progress under our four key themes.

3.8.1 Crime and Community Safety

This is a key priority for delivery in partnership and is the number one issue for local people. We have had major success over the past twelve months with crime falling, however whilst this is happening the fear of crime stays stubbornly high and the lives of residents thus remain blighted.

We will look to maximize our investment in additional Police Community Support Teams and ensure they are deployed to make our residents feel safer.

We will with the Police, other partners and the community bring forward initiatives to bear down on the key crimes that local people have identified as their greatest concerns, namely violence in public places and in homes, robbery and particularly the use of guns and knives.

We have been increasingly concerned with what appears to be violent incidents on a territorial basis. 19 teenagers have been murdered in London this year.

However this Administration will not deal in knee-jerk responses and we will commission an in-depth study of gangs and gang culture in Brent. The Council took this hard-headed approach to gun crime which was rated nationally. This study we will use to drive through necessary changes in community safety and social policy.

We will balance any short term initiatives with long term partnership work to tackle the drivers of crime, alcohol, drugs, family dysfunction, school failure and exclusion and worklessness. We will ensure that the driving down of crime is a key element in all our preventative work and is a major theme of our LAA.

We will above all prioritise making sure we do the things that make a difference and stopping doing those things that don't!

3.8.2 Regeneration has been a major success in this Borough and it provides our one real opportunity to make irreversible change for the better over the whole range of issues that affect local people, not just crime but also health, jobs, homes (both for rent and shared ownership) education and the environment.

We will bring together social and physical regeneration.

We will ensure that initiatives started will finish and be successful in our areas of acute stress. South Kilburn, Church End and Stonebridge. Come what may we will find the resources to achieve this. We will ensure that the great opportunity area of Wembley benefits all our citizens.

However the Administration is ambitious for change. We see the North Circular Road and its surrounding areas as nothing short of a national disgrace. Our residents living alongside and near this road have some of the highest incidence of respiratory illness in the capital if not the country and at the same time have some of the lowest incomes. We aim to establish a comprehensive scheme which regenerates the surrounding residential area, opens up routes into Wembley, Welsh Harp and other major attractions and create new landmark developments and jobs on prominent sites such as Bridge Park/Unisys. We will bring forward early in the new year a vision document and prospectus to get this moving.

This Administration understands that regeneration is a long-term business which has to have both flexibility and durability. We will not shrink from seizing any opportunity if it provides the means to better the lives of our citizens.

- 3.8.3 The third theme is Youth. We have pledged earlier in this report to transform the services we provide to older people. However this is a young borough and too often young people are seen as a problem and particularly are portrayed as such in the press. We are proud of Brent's young people, proud of their improving educational attainment and proud of their willingness so often to take a lead on key issues that affect us all such as climate change. As well as our specific and statutory duties we as an Administration believe that we should be making the experience of living in Brent for children and young adults as good as it can possibly be.

A cornerstone of this theme will be to listen to young people. The success of the Youth Parliament is already apparent and we will be listening as an executive carefully to the 'manifesto' and action plans the parliament produces but not only will we listen to young people but we will also act.

Brent Young people have already told us that safety is their number one concern and this is reflected nationally. We will build upon the success of the bus project run by the Kelly schools in collaboration with the youth service and bring forward proposals with schools, the police, partners, youth service, Transport for London and local business to ensure that every child can feel safe going to and from our secondary schools.

We will work to safeguard and roll forward our extended schools programme which has had a hugely beneficial effect on the life chances of young people and the lives of their families. We will not shrink from

lobbying government for further funding.

We will continue to push forward our positive activities for Young People programme.

We will invest in more outreach youth workers as young people tell us it is this work that matters most and we admit that we have clear gaps in our provision.

We will continue to strongly support schools to enable them to raise achievement for all children, year on year and that school places are available for all who want them.

We will strengthen our collaborative work with the voluntary sector.

Above all we will have a dialogue with young people and ensure that our community strategy aim of Brent being a Great Place means also a great place to be young.

- 3.8.4 If we pledge to work harder for youth then what they inherit from us is as important as what we do now. Sustainability and the combating of climate change are critical to all our futures and in this Brent Council will play its part. We will make a sustainability central to everything we do.

Our ultimate aim is to be a top performer on recycling and we pledge in the first instance to increase recycling in Brent to 30% by 2010. We will do whatever it takes to get there.

We will put our own House in order by becoming an exemplary organisation for recycling and sustainable activity.

We will publish and implement our green travel plan covering staff, councillors and the way we do business by the summer of 2008.

We will cut our own CO2 emissions by 20% by 2011 by better energy and water efficiency, transport efficiency and by transformed business methods.

We will be an exemplary Borough for green design including new schools and our own new Civic Centre. We will look for renewable energy supply for all our buildings and developments in the borough.

We will work with Transport for London to improve public transport including bus services and bring forward new fast bus options to link our areas of need with our areas of opportunity.

- 3.9 We believe that the above gives a firm direction for further policy initiatives which will deliver real and relevant outcomes for local people. We believe we are setting out a dynamic, deliverable and progressive agenda that will make Brent a borough of choice to live in and Brent a

Council of choice to work for - we commend it to you.

## **4.0 The Achievements**

4.1 We have enjoyed some notable successes this year of which we can all be justly proud, especially in the face of some difficult circumstances. External pressures, including poor financial settlements and the continuing problems with the Primary Care Trust, have made it more challenging to provide high-performing services. We have risen to these challenges, taking bold steps in changing the shape of the Council and undertaking the transformation of our social care services for both adults and children, to make us more fit for purpose.

The changes to the organisation itself are simply steps towards our overall objective to ensure better services for our residents, and this year we have achieved much. Our Children's Social Care service has just scored three out of four in a government inspection, and we have significantly reduced the numbers of children being looked after by the Council by supporting them within their families. We have also markedly improved the cleanliness of our streets, and raised recycling rates. The regeneration of the borough continues apace, with new jobs and homes being created for our residents, and all Council-owned houses have been recognised as meeting the Government's Decent Homes standard

However, we know that there is still much to do, and this Administration has set itself and the Council ambitious goals for the coming three years and beyond. The achievements are set out below following as always the format of the Community Strategy.

### **4.2 A Great Place**

- We continue to tackle the crucial issue of energy efficiency, including an e-Learning course to be available to all staff, and Carbon Trust energy audits. Conferences and seminars for officers and members are also being held.
- We made our roads safer, with fewer people being killed or injured in traffic accidents for 2006, and achieving our end-of-year target.
- Our programme of improvements to roads and pavements in Wembley town centre carries on, and with work beginning on Queensbury Station Parade at the beginning of November, another area is reaping the benefits of investment.
- We have begun public consultation so that residents can have their say on our Library Strategy, which we are determined will improve the service and increase visits.
- We have increased the opportunities for people to take part in regular physical activity and thus improve the health of the borough, by developing and expanding programmes of activities for adults, and young people during holidays.
- We have taken enforcement action against traders and retailers who have sold age-restricted goods to children.

- We have worked jointly with Police and Trading Standards to reduce illegal trading outside Wembley Stadium. This deterrent has meant that less than a quarter as many illegal items are now being traded since the Stadium first opened, as illustrated by seized goods.
- We remove all racist graffiti within 24 hours, and over three quarters of other graffiti is cleared within 6 weeks, beating our target.
- We recycled over twelve and a half thousand tonnes of household waste in 2006/07, exceeding our target for the year by 5.5%, and we are continuing to get even better.
- Our new contract for waste management came into effect in April 2007, and as a result our streets are cleaned more frequently, making an obvious impact on the look of the borough, and also making it easier for residents to recycle and do their bit in tackling climate change.

### **4.3 A Borough of Opportunity**

- Our performance in Adult Social Care has improved and we are exceeding our targets in several areas, meaning we are on track to retain our two-star government rating. We have plans to redesign some key services to bolster these improvements, and will be producing a strategy to address housing needs for people with mental health issues.
- We are working on a strategy to enhance the wellbeing of older people, and with “Better Government for Older People”, have been engaging with them and with statutory and voluntary agencies in innovative ways to better meet their needs and aspirations.
- We are committed to identifying more opportunities for disabled people to participate in employment, training and volunteering, and will provide support to physically disabled people in better accessing mainstream day-care services.
- We have actively involved service users and their carers in discussions about the move of Albert Road Day Centre, to ensure their needs inform this process. We will be consulting these key stakeholders again once options for the site of the new centre are finalised. The inclusive nature of this process has been recognised by social care inspectors.
- We have helped more people with mental health and learning disabilities to live in their own homes rather than having to go into residential care, and have set challenging new targets to ensure this trend continues. To enable even more people to continue to live at home, we are providing new Extra Care housing.
- The government’s social care inspectors reported positively on our services this year, recognising in particular our strong leadership, our involvement of service users, and the quality of support we provide to carers.
- Our achievements in Neighbourhood Renewal and employment have been recognised nationally, with Brent Language 2 Work being commended in the LGC and HSJ Sustainable Communities Awards. In total we placed over 1300 workless people into sustainable employment last year, including over 770 from BME groups (a

significant rise on last year's BME numbers). We are also working on new programmes for the growth areas in the borough, and transformation of the areas immediately adjacent to the North Circular in particular.

#### **4.4 One Community**

- We have been driving up performance with our new software, PerformancePlus, which has been rolled out across the Council. We will next be making it available to our partners at Brent tPCT, the Police and the Fire Service to ensure that we can monitor performance on our joint objectives. Additionally, to ensure our work and resources are focused in the right areas, we have introduced a new service planning framework.
- We have transformed our HR and Diversity services, to ensure that our staff development will be driven by the Council's objectives and our continuous improvement. Our new People Centre also went live in January, providing more efficient recruitment and training administration.
- To address the continuing efficiency and value for money agenda, we have introduced new procurement arrangements for the appointment of agency staff, resulting in savings of £32,000 cash each month, plus further savings worth £95,000 per month as well. We are currently reviewing our HR practices further to enhance them.
- More generally, we are continuously working towards making the Council a fitter, more streamlined organisation. We agreed a corporate efficiency strategy in March, covering six principal streams of work. We were also the only authority to include an efficiency stretch target in the Local Area Agreement, which will mean delivering an extra £2m in savings beyond the 7.5% required in total by the government for 2005/06 to 2007/08.
- In July 2007 the all-party Constitutional Working Group agreed the Neighbourhood Working model to be rolled out across Brent during 2007. Through this we will be engaging communities in making real decisions and supports Members in acting as an interface between local communities and the Council.
- The Audit Commission has awarded us a score of three out of four for Revenues and Benefits for 2006/07. We are on target to maintain that score this year, and are working towards scoring four in 2008/09.
- We are developing a robust borough-wide Parenting Strategy, so that appropriate services will be available to support parents in the important and sometimes challenging job of raising their children.
- Once again our GCSE results for 2007 show crucial further improvement in the educational achievement of our young people.
- We are improving the chances of our young people, by increasing the numbers engaging in education, employment and training. Brent Connexions has also gained additional funding for its valuable work in supporting outcomes for Black Caribbean and Somali young people, where attainment is lower.



- Ofsted has recognised the top-quality performance of our Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit, judging it “outstanding”.
- We reduced the numbers of children coming into the care of the Council from 416 to 398 in 2006/07. For those children who did have to be looked after by the Council, Ofsted rated the stability of their placements as “very good”.
- Our Youth Offending Service is on target to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system by 5%, and we have ensured that 90% of young offenders are in education, training or employment.
- We are working with the Primary Care Trust to developing a robust joint commissioning framework for children’s social care.
- In the last year, we have opened seventeen more Extended Schools in Brent, offering a range of valuable services for their pupils and the community outside of the school day. We now have 35 in total.
- Our housing service has raised its game across a range of areas, with demonstrable improvements in its performance indicators.
- With a need for housing in the borough, we are taking steps to make the best use of our housing stock, including a programme of extensions and conversions to provide larger homes.
- Communities & Local Government has shown their confidence in our regeneration programme for South Kilburn, making a commitment of £50m funding for the housing element (£60m remains to be sourced elsewhere). Our other housing renewal activities are also progressing well: the programme for Chalkhill is now practically complete, a ballot has been completed at Stonebridge and work is continuing with residents and partners to develop a solution for Barham Park.
- Our housing stock has met the government’s Decent Homes Standard (excluding areas such as South Kilburn where other solutions are being pursued). However, we are continuing to target vulnerable households renting from private landlords to ensure that these people also benefit.
- We have put in place new procedures for licensing houses in multiple occupation, so that we can be sure that we have an accurate record of HMOs in the borough and that these are of an acceptable standard. We expect to exceed our 2007/08 target in this.

We are proud of our achievements which provide a solid platform to deliver on our programme.

**PAUL LORBER**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Leaders Report – First Reading Nov 07

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