

London Borough of Brent

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6th February 2008

Local Area Agreement 2008 – 2011.

Story of Place – January 2008

Brent in Context

Brent is a place of contrasts. Located in North West London the borough is classed as an outer London authority, yet is characterised by a sharp divide between the relative affluence of the northern wards and high levels of social and economic deprivation in areas south of the North Circular Road. While the north of the borough is generally sub-urban in character with an older population, the south experiences many of the challenges faced by inner city communities. Within the West London sub-region Brent has the highest levels of diversity and multiple deprivation and is also the most densely populated borough.

Our population is growing and dynamic with recent figures indicating significant numbers of people moving into the borough creating new emerging communities, as well as significant numbers of transient people within the borough. Brent is one of only two local authorities serving a population where the majority of people are from ethnic minorities. ONS estimates for 2006 give our population as 271,400. However independent research commissioned by the council estimates the figure to be nearer 289,000 at March 2007. This growth is largely in the south of the borough and is predominantly young adults, often with pre-school or young children. This has resulted in a significant increase in the birth rate within the borough which has risen by 8% in the past eighteen months. Brent has the second highest number of new National Insurance registrations in the country at 15,600 in 2007. Nearly 8% of our population is classified as refugees or asylum seekers. The GLA expects our population to grow to 293,003 by 2011/12. As many of our existing and new communities have high levels of complex needs this will place particular pressure on the prioritisation and allocation of available public resources.

These changes in population have created a borough of rich diversity with 54.4% of our residents being from black or minority ethnic communities. As well as the longer established Indian, Black Caribbean, Black African and Irish communities there are also emerging Eastern European, Somali, Turkish and Hispanic communities. An increasing number of Brent's school children are of mixed heritage.

The population of Brent is relatively young with almost a quarter of our residents aged 19 years or under. Many of these young people live in the south of the borough and in our 5 most deprived wards a third of residents are under 16 years of age.

In the 2007 Index of Multiple deprivation Brent increased from 81st most deprived in 2004 to 53 out of 354 boroughs. This ranking now places us within the 15% most deprived areas of the country. While the main locations of multiple deprivation are in the south of the borough, there are new pockets emerging in the north and west, with more acute concentrations in the most deprived wards.

The deprivation experienced within the borough is characterised by relatively high levels of long-term unemployment (24% of unemployed people are classified as long-term unemployed compared to a London average of 15%), low house-hold incomes, dependence on benefits and social housing. The prevalence of life limiting health conditions and health inequalities is also higher within these areas of the borough.

Children and young people are particularly affected by this deprivation with a third of Brent's children living in low income households, a quarter in social housing and a fifth in single-adult households. The proportion of our young people affected by acute deprivation is rising, with a growing disparity between the educational outcomes achieved by some BME children in comparison to the rising borough average.

Despite this Brent is an area of great opportunity and potential. Wembley is the focus for one of the largest regeneration projects in London. The opening of the new Stadium has already created several thousand new jobs, but more importantly has simulated a wider rejuvenation of the surrounding area. Thousands of new affordable homes, leisure facilities, retail and office space will be provided through Quintain's £3.5b redevelopment plan and the £50m redevelopment at Wembley Central Square. Major improvements have already been made to the transport links at Wembley Park and Wembley Stadium.

The Council's Development Framework and Regeneration Strategy have also identified other specific areas across the borough with the potential for new development for both housing and employment uses. These areas at Church End, Alperton, and Burnt Oak/ Colindale are well placed to access Brent's excellent transport links and will be supported by new infrastructure improvements and community facilities. We are also assessing the potential for redevelopment of areas adjacent to the North Circular with the aim of improving the quality of the environment, local housing and access to employment.

While the social and economic regeneration and development of the borough are critical to promoting the future prosperity of our residents, we also recognise the need to retain and protect the quality of the local environment.

Approximately a fifth of the land in Brent is open space, parks and water. Our parks have won national accolades and three of our open spaces are designated as sites of metropolitan importance. These facilities are much valued by local residents and are widely used for sporting, recreational and cultural activities. The quality of the local environment, our approach to tackling enviro-crime and promoting sustainability is central to our future vision for the borough.

These broad factors provide the context for the ambitions for Brent's Local Area Agreement and the drivers for our partnership improvement priorities.

Brent Council

In November 2006 our newly elected joint Liberal Democrat and Conservative Administration agreed a challenging four year Corporate Strategy setting out detailed proposals to deliver high quality public services which are relevant to local needs and improve the quality of life experienced by people who live and work in Brent. The Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 is structured around the three priority issues agreed with local partners in the Community Strategy 2006-2010 and aim to create:-

- A Great Place.
- A Borough of Opportunity
- An Inclusive Borough.

Improving the performance of public services and addressing disadvantage and inequality through effective governance and local partnership working are central to the administration's strategic and operational objectives.

Over the past year we have continued to deliver on these corporate and partnership priorities. The Council is rated as a three star CPA authority which is improving well with particular strengths in housing delivery, educational achievement and community cohesion. Our strong partnership working has enabled good outcomes in children's services, regeneration and community safety. These achievements have been underpinned by robust performance management both internally and across partnerships and a strong financial standing.

We are an ambitious council with a good understanding of the needs of our diverse communities and a well articulated vision of the place that we want Brent to be and the opportunities that must be available to all our residents.

Our LAA 1 agreed in April 2006 has provided a strong focus for joint working across public, private and voluntary agencies within the borough. We have used the opportunity of LAA 2 to refine and deepen our understanding of the local priorities within Brent as set out in the accompanying evidence base.

Brent's Local Strategic Partnership – 'Partners for Brent'

Brent has an established local strategic partnership 'Partners for Brent', which has a strong track record of delivering joint local objectives under both the PSA framework and LAA structures. The partnership is composed of an Executive Board and four strategic partnerships covering:-

- Crime Prevention Strategy Group
- Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership.
- Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Brent Sustainability Forum.

A range of joint sub-groups are accountable to each of the strategic partnerships for operational delivery of targets and performance is managed through quarterly reports on LAA priorities to the LSP Executive which is chaired by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Paul Lorber.

The Members of the LSP Executive are:-

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

In April 2006 Partners for Brent agreed its first LAA. This was an ambitious programme designed to operate as the delivery plan for the Brent Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2010. Our first LAA has proved a successful delivery mechanism for our joint community priorities and has facilitated a more rigorous approach to effective performance management of joint objectives and innovation in partnership delivery models.

We have built on the experience gained over the past 18 months of LAA working in the principles and process used to develop the local priorities proposed within our new LAA. Many of the community issues addressed within our first LAA remain current and relevant, but we are seeking to tackle them in a more integrated manner viewing our LAA as a coherent package of initiatives, with mutually reinforcing benefits. The priorities we have identified are inter-related with strong cross-cutting linkages and outcomes. In developing our LAA the LSP agreed a number of principles to inform the selection of our priorities. These were:-

- To focus on the preventative agenda.
- Achieving greater efficiency in the delivery of public services.

- Promoting inclusion and tackling inequality experience by the most vulnerable communities in Brent
- Promoting community cohesion

In addition there are four strong cross cutting themes which unite our LAA priorities and address the most pressing community concerns within the borough. These are:-

- Tacking crime and the fear of crime.
- Supporting children and young people to achieve their potential.
- Regeneration and creating prosperity
- Promoting environmental sustainability.

Over the past six months the LSP Executive has lead the process for designing our LAA through a programme of consultation, evaluation of evidence and challenge. Each of the strategic partnerships has been responsible for consultation within their sector on the proposed improvement priorities and submitting detailed evidence on their nominated suggestions. All suggestions have been the subject of a cross partnership scrutiny during a series of challenge workshops. These workshops were attended by a range of service providers, community representatives and the voluntary sector. Proposals were then evaluated against the strategic principles and cross-cutting themes agreed by the LSP Executive.

This process has been supported by the Executive of the Council and integrated to the mainstream budget setting process of the Council through reports to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Our LAA priorities are central to the overall strategic policy objectives of the Council addressing improvement in both core public services as well as targeted interventions to raise the quality of life and the opportunities available to our most deprived communities. In particular the focus on preventive programmes and greater efficiency is fundamental to our approach to service transformation across a range of complementary services not specifically included as targets within the LAA.

Our LAA Priorities

We are proposing 35 improvement priorities for inclusion within our LAA 2008-2011. This integrated package has been developed following extensive consultation with partner agencies and local community representatives. It is informed by a thorough review of local social and economic information and public consultation results as detailed in our evidence base, as well as an assessment of the performance challenges facing the council and its partners over the coming three years.

We have retained the three themes of our Community Strategy and are also proposing the retention of the 12 existing stretch targets from our first LAA. Our rational for including these targets is that following assessment of performance and statistical evidence they still remain locally relevant. We do not wish to lose focus on these priorities by removing them from the LAA framework at this stage. However we will reassess their inclusion as part of

the re-refresh process for 2009/10 and propose replacement priorities where appropriate.

Our 35 LAA improvement priorities are designed to address the strategic partnership themes of creating:-

- A Great Place
- A Borough of opportunity
- An Inclusive Borough.

Detailed statistical evidence to support the proposed priority is set out within the accompanying 'Brent Evidence Base'.

A Great Place.

Community Safety

It is our aim to make Brent a great place to live in, work or visit. We want our residents to be safe, in a clean, green and well cared for environment. Our residents will appreciate where they live and enjoy what Brent has to offer. 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.

However too many people in Brent still view our streets as unsafe places to be with reducing crime levels still rated as the most important overall priority for our residents. While Brent has traditionally been perceived as a high crime area, the past four years has seen a 15% reduction in overall crime in the borough and in comparison with similar areas, Brent performs well in terms of sanctioned detection rates. Concern about anti-social behaviour and environmental crime is particularly acute in our more deprived neighbourhoods. Although actual crime is falling, the fear of crime remains a blight on many peoples lives and we want to improve peoples confidence in using Brent's public spaces though high visibility policing and reassurance measures. We are proposing the following crime related improvement priorities for inclusion in our LAA.

1. Reducing the rate of serious acquisitive crime in the borough.
2. Increasing public satisfaction with the way we deal with anti-social behaviour.
3. Reducing the level of serious violent crime in the borough.
4. Reducing repeat incidents of domestic violence.
5. Reducing the number of residential fires.

A Clean Place

Every one deserves to live in a clean place and in April 2007 the Council implemented a new waste management contract with an improved cleanliness specification for our streets and enhancements to the recycling service. The early months of the contract have already shown improvements in the performance of the service but there is still a long way to go. Clean streets are a top political priority endorsed by resident feedback. We are proposing

to retain our street cleanliness measure within our LAA 2 as a core improvement area for the Council.

While our recycling performance has achieved significant improvements over the past 18 months we are still faced with a considerable challenge to deliver the required national targets. With a highly mobile population, many of whom live in flatted properties, increasing the proportion of our residents who regularly recycle their waste is difficult. However both on the grounds of environmental sustainability and future financial pressure from landfill charges, increasing recycling rates is critical to the borough. Members are committed to a robust approach to sustainable waste management and have agreed a comprehensive programme of community engagement and education to support the implementation of compulsory recycling. We are proposing the inclusion of the waste recycling target within our LAA priorities.

6. Improving street cleanliness
7. Increasing the percentage of domestic waste recycled

As with many urban areas the air quality within the borough is adversely affected by traffic and congestion particularly in the south of the borough and the localities bordering the North Circular Road. These communities have the lowest level of car ownership in the borough yet suffer the consequences through a poorer environment and higher levels of upper respiratory infections. The council is currently exploring the potential for future redevelopment of the areas around the North Circular with the aim of improving local housing provision, reducing the health impacts of pollution and increasing access to local facilities and jobs. Combined with our approach to encouraging greater use of public transport and green travel options we aim to reduce harmful emissions and improve the air quality. We therefore propose to include the target for adapting to climate change within our LAA.

8. Adapting to climate change

A Borough of Opportunity.

Employment

As a location Brent has a huge amount to offer residents and business. 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 want to ensure that our residents are able to lead healthy lives with the right skills and opportunities to enable them to prosper.

Despite the real opportunities that exist within Brent, the average annual salary of our residents is £25,407 which is only 70% of the London wide average earnings of £36,279. Average earnings in the south of the borough are lower at only £21,615, 60% of the London average. A significant number of our households have an annual income of less than £7,000 with a total of

29,750 people claiming some form of income related benefit at May 2007. The single largest group of people (12,400) are claiming incapacity benefit.

In September 2007 3.6% of residents of working age were claiming unemployment benefits. This proportion has been steadily decreasing over the past 10 years but is still above the London average. The proportion of economically active people classed as unemployed is higher at 9.4% (12,200) and this figure is a 2% increase on the previous years (7.7% April 05- March 06).

This picture of lower than average incomes and higher unemployment is further underlined by the skills profile of local residents. Over a third of our residents have qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 2 or below and 12% have no formal qualifications.

Tackling worklessness and low income levels and the associated social exclusion and deprivation which results is a critical priority for the council and its partners. Low household income levels are a key determinate of health outcomes, educational achievement and long-term well-being. Our partnership programmes to increase employment and improve benefit take-up have a strong track record of delivery and are central to achieving a number of related local outcomes. We propose to include the following regeneration priorities within our LAA:-

9. Increasing the overall employment rate within the borough, including those in social housing.
10. Improving access to employment for people with mental health difficulties.
11. Time taken to process new claims for housing benefit.
12. Working age people on out of work benefits.

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 that exists between our residents born in the south and the north of the borough. At a borough wide level life expectancy is at the national average at 82.6 years for women and 76.4 years for men. But these figures mask the gap between the lowest level 71.7 years for men living in Harlesden and 81 years for men living in Northwick Park, a gap of 9.3 years.

Circulatory diseases, including heart disease and stroke, and cancers are the most common cause of death in Brent. People most likely to die prematurely from these health conditions are men under 75 living in Harlesden and Stonebridge.

The prevalence of diabetes in Brent is also high compared to the national average with 4.6% of the population being diagnosed with the condition, although the proportion that are undiagnosed may be closer to 6%. Women

particularly from the Asian population tend to be most affected although the death rate from diabetes related illness is higher amongst men.

The incidence of mental health problems in Brent is also higher than the national average with 8% more admissions into secondary care for mental health disorders.

Smoking has been identified as the single greatest cause of preventable illness and premature death. While smoking rates for the borough as a whole are in line with the rest of England at 25.7% this varies between 40% of residents in Stonebridge estimated to be smokers and 16% in Kenton. Young, single people are also more likely to smoke, a group which is strongly represented in the Brent population.

Sexual health is a critical issue for many young people with an overall increase in the diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections, particularly Chlamydia predominantly amongst the under 25 age group. While the increase is in part due to better diagnostic techniques consultation with young people highlights the need for access to sexual health information and services as a high priority. This includes contraceptive services and while there has been a steady decrease in teenage pregnancy the current rate of 41.6 conceptions per 1,000 is still slightly above the England average.

Obesity is the second most significant contributory factor to ill health and preventable disease. Overall estimates of adult obesity levels in Brent are below the England average at 19.6% of people compared to 22.1% of the population nationally. However a recent study of school children in Brent found the level of obesity to be 16.3% slightly above the national average of 15%. Of more concern than the actual current obesity rates are the future implications of poor diet and lack of exercise. Brent has one of the lowest adult physical activity rates in England with 56% reporting they do not participate in any sporting or physical activity and only 18% taking exercise on 3 occasions a week for 30 minutes. Respondents cited no transport, high costs and lack of awareness as the greatest barriers to more participation in sporting activity. Based upon these health factors we propose to include the following health priorities within our LAA:-

- 13.Reducing smoking prevalence of adults.
- 14.Reducing the number of alcohol related hospital admissions.
- 15.Reducing the number of tuberculosis cases within the borough.
- 16.Increasing the number of adults taking part in sport.
- 17.Reducing obesity in primary aged children.
- 18.Reducing the rate of mortality from all cancers under age 75
- 19.Reducing the number of under 18 conceptions.

An Inclusive Community

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. The picture of housing provision is quite diverse with 54% of dwellings being houses and 46% flats.

Brent currently has around 107,000 dwellings, with an average household size of 2.62 people. This is the third highest in England and nearly a quarter of Brent's resident population is deemed to be living in over crowded conditions. Local research suggests that this trend towards larger households and over crowding is increasing partly due to economic factors but also social and cultural factors with more extended families requiring larger accommodation. Combined with the loss of larger accommodation converted into flats for the private rented sector and new build which is predominantly 1 or 2 bed accommodation the housing shortage is critical. Our statutory Housing register lists 21,575 households who need accommodation that better meets their needs either in terms of size or affordability. 4,308 of these are currently in temporary accommodation in many cases outside of the borough due to the shortage of suitable in borough provision.

The affordability of housing is also an important factor, with average salaries in Brent 30% below the London average buying their own home is beyond the means of many of our residents. With the average price of a house in Brent at £284,431 an annual income of £77,203 would be required. The Average salary in Brent is only £25,407.

We have a strong track record of delivering new housing and we are planning to accommodate population growth of up to 28,000 people by 2017. This will require approximately 10,000 new homes to be built over the next ten years. Our aim is that 50% of these homes should be affordable. The provision of high quality, affordable homes is central to our future development and regeneration objectives and a fundamental component in creating sustainable, cohesive communities. We are proposing to include the following housing priorities within our LAA:-

- 20 Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- 21 The number of affordable homes delivered.

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. Our 2007 GCSE results show continued improvement in educational achievement and the borough wide performance is now above national averages at A* - C 61.4% and A* -G is 92%. The number of young people engaged in education, employment and training is increasing and we have put in place a comprehensive programme to support children with additional needs and reduce the numbers of children becoming looked after.

However this performance is not sustained across all communities in the borough and the statistics indicate that academic and economic outcomes for children and young people from Black Caribbean and some Black African

heritage groups continue to be below the borough average. Detailed analysis, about the outcomes for these groups has been undertaken and it is being used to implement a joined up strategy to improve outcomes for this group.

Our transformation programme for children's social care is focused on providing early intervention and family support to prevent vulnerable children entering the care system. This is being delivered through a greater emphasis on integrated services and a common partnership assessment process that puts in place holistic packages of support. The numbers of children entering the care system is already reducing and the programme is funded through a two year invest to save package which is raising the quality of care and intervention provided, as well as creating greater efficiency within the child care system.

For those children and young people that do become looked after we want to ensure that they have the best possible chance to fulfil their potential through a stable care environment and the achievement of good educational outcomes. We are focused on developing more in-borough foster places to enable continuity of care and additional educational support to ensure looked after children are able to access training and employment opportunities.

We are making good progress on the implementation of our extended schools programme. This initiative is central to supporting both children and their families with the provision of high quality additional activities and wrap around care that enables many people to access previously unattainable employment opportunities. This programme is vital within our most deprived wards and those families on low incomes where child care is unaffordable.

Good health is critical to full participation in school life and educational activities. Our statistics suggest that the level of obesity and being over weight is rising within our primary school population and this can have long term consequences for health and well-being into teenage and adult life. Our programmes to increase participation in sport have already proved popular and successful. We aim to extend these to enable potentially excluded children, disabled children and those least likely to take part in sport to engage in a wider range of physical activities. Our emphasis on promoting health and well-being in young people will be supported by the continuation of the programme to achieve accreditation for 'Healthy Schools' across the borough.

Research with our children and young people through the Youth Parliament has identified being safe as their top priority. Frequently young people are the victims of crimes undertaken by their peers and become engaged in anti-social behaviour through peer pressure. We want to reduce the numbers of young people who are both victims and perpetrators of crime through a robust approach to managing anti-social behaviour and positive activities for young people to engage in and build community cohesion.

- 22 Improving educational achievement at key stage 4 for BME groups
- 23 Reducing the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system

- 24 Stability of placements for looked after children.
- 25 Number of schools achieving healthy schools status.
- 26 Number of extended schools.
- 27 Educational achievement of looked after children.
- 28 Young peoples participation in sport.
- 29 Improving the emotional health of children
- 30 Services for disabled children – respite breaks

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. We provide 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 have put in place a comprehensive programme of service transformation within our adult social care service. The objective of this programme is to facilitate more choice and flexibility in the range of care packages available across all client groups with greater use of self directed support and direct payments. We are streamlining the assessment process to provide greater speed and clarity on eligibility for care services and working with the voluntary and community sector to develop responsive local care services. This transformation programme is fundamental to gaining greater efficiency, choice and satisfaction for those most in need of care and support within our community.

Approximately 12% of our population are providing care and support to look after a friend, relative or partner. Many of those are young people and carers frequently provide up to 50 hours of care per week to a person requiring help because of illness, age or disability. Carers are an invaluable resource to both the person they care for and the wider community. We want to provide carers with the support, respite and opportunities they need to lead a full life and continue to provide care. At present we are only able to provide a minority of carers with the kind of services they need and we want to extend this programme as a central part of our preventative approach to health and social care. We propose to include the following priorities within our LAA:-

- 31 The number of social care clients receiving self directed support.
- 32 The number of carers receiving assessment, advice or information.
- 33 Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living.
- 34 Delayed transfers of care from hospital.

Community Engagement

Brent benefits from a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector. Our partners with BrAVA and representatives from users groups and local community groups have been active in developing our partnership priorities.

Increasingly the voluntary and community sector plays a central role in delivering local public services as well as providing networks within our most excluded and vulnerable communities. Encouraging volunteering is a key way of developing the capacity of the sector, building community cohesion and providing gateways for individuals into employment. We wish to retain our volunteering target within our future LAA:-

35 Increasing the number of people participating in regular volunteering.