



Cabinet

Monday 6 December 2021 at 10.00 am

Conference Hall - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Please note that this meeting will be held as a socially distanced physical meeting with all Cabinet members required to attend in person.

Guidance on the safe delivery of face-to-face meetings is included at the end of the agenda front sheet.

Due to current restrictions and limits on the socially distanced venue capacity, any press and public wishing to attend this meeting are encouraged to do so via the live webcast. The link to attend the meeting will be made available [here](#).

Membership:

Lead Member Councillors:

Portfolio

M Butt (Chair)	Leader of the Council
McLennan (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Resources
Farah	Lead Member for Adult Social Care
Knight	Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement
Nerva	Lead Member for Public Health, Culture & Leisure
M Patel	Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care
Krupa Sheth	Lead Member for Environment
Stephens	Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills
Southwood	Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform
Tatler	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning

For further information contact: James Kinsella, Governance Manager, Tel: 020 8937 2063; Email: james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **democracy.brent.gov.uk**

Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

***Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

****Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party of trade union).

(b) The interests of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
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1	Apologies for Absence	
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2	Declarations of Interest	
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Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, the nature and existence of any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.

3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	1 - 6
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To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 8 November 2021 as a correct record.

4	Matters Arising (if any)	
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To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5	Petitions (if any)	
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To discuss any petitions from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

6	Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)	
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To consider any reference reports from the Council's two Scrutiny Committees.

Chief Executive's reports

7	Draft Budget 2022/23	7 - 50
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This report sets out the Council's budget proposals for 2022/23 and provides a general update on the Council's overall financial position, including an assessment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's October 2021 Autumn Budget. Subject to the results of consultation and scrutiny, these proposals will then form the basis of the budget to be agreed at the Full Council meeting in February 2022.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)

Contact Officer: Minesh Patel, Director of

Regeneration and Environment reports

8 Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21

51 - 94

This report introduces the Council's second Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), which has been prepared in line with the CIL Regulations (as amended).

Ward Affected:

All Wards - excluding parts of Harlesden, Kensal Green, Stonebridge and Tokyngton where Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation is the Local Planning Authority.

Lead Member: Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)

Contact Officer: Alice Lester, Operational Director - Regeneration, Growth and Employment

Tel: 020 8937 6441

Email: alice.lester@brent.gov.uk

Digital and Customer Services reports

9 Digital Strategy and Business Case 2022-2026

95 - 184

This report sets out the draft Digital Strategy 2022-26 for agreement. The draft strategy builds on the 2019-23 strategy that was agreed in October 2019. The report also presents an Outline Business Case (OBC) for an extension of the Digital Programme to 2026 and the capital investment required to deliver the strategy.

Ward Affected:

All Wards

Lead Member: Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)

Contact Officer: Sadie East, Operational Director Transformation

Tel: 020 8937 1507

Email: Sadie.east@brent.gov.uk

10 Exclusion of Press and Public

The following items are not for publication as they relate to the category of exempt information set out below, as specified under Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

Agenda Item 9: Digital Strategy and Business Case 2022-26 -

Appendix 1 to the Outline Business Case (attached as Appendix 2 of the report) detailing the expected benefits within the business case.

The above appendix is classified as exempt from publication under Para 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act, namely: "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)."

11 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or her representative before the meeting. Any decision taken urgently under this item must comply with the provisions outlined in paragraphs 12 and 36 of the Council's Access to Information Rules (Part 2 – Constitution).

Date of the next meeting: Monday 17 January 2022

Guidance on the delivery of safe meetings at The Drum, Brent Civic Centre

- We have revised the capacities and floor plans for event spaces to ensure they are Covid-19 compliant and meet the current social distancing guidelines.
- Attendees will need to maintain the necessary social distancing at all times.
- Signage and reminders, including floor markers for social distancing and one-way flow systems are present throughout The Drum and need to be followed.
- Please note the Civic Centre visitor lifts will have reduced capacity to help with social distancing.
- The use of face coverings is encouraged with hand sanitiser dispensers located at the main entrance to The Drum and within each meeting room.
- Those attending meetings are asked to scan the coronavirus NHS QR code for The Drum upon entry. Posters of the QR code are located in front of the main Drum entrance and outside each boardroom.
- Although not required, should anyone attending wish to do book a lateral flow test in advance these are also available at the Civic Centre and can be booked via the following link: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/if-you-dont-have-symptoms/>

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LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 8 November 2021
at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Farah, Knight, Nerva, M Patel, Krupa Sheth, Stephens, Southwood and Tatler.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Lunt (Strategic Director Regeneration & Environment) who was represented by Chris Whyte (Operational Director Environmental Services) and Shazia Hussain (Assistant Chief Executive) who was represented by Katie Smith (Head of Executive & Members Services).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous Cabinet meeting held on Monday 11 October 2021 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. **Matters Arising (if any)**

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

There were no petitions submitted for consideration at the meeting.

6. **Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)**

There were no references from Scrutiny submitted for consideration at the meeting.

7. **School Place Planning Strategy 2019-23 Refresh**

Councillor Stephens, Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills, introduced a report setting out a refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-2023 initially agreed by Cabinet in November 2018.

In considering the report, members noted that the annual refresh of the Strategy provided an updated assessment of school place demand across the borough based on the latest pupil projections from the Greater London Authority (GLA). Overall the 2021 forecasts for primary mainstream school places were lower than

the 2020 forecasts whilst the secondary forecasts were broadly similar to 2020. Based on the current forecasts, it was considered that:

- sufficient capacity was available in order to meet the forecast demand for mainstream primary places whilst maintaining the 5% of spare places required to respond to in-year movement and migration.
- sufficient capacity was available to meet the forecast demand for secondary places and provide 5% spare places up to 2029/30, which included the capacity that would be provided through the North Brent School. Given the latest forecast demand having confirmed that further additional secondary capacity was not required, Cabinet was also being asked to confirm that the proposed secondary school expansion programme did not proceed.

Alongside the above update, members also noted that demand for places to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Education Needs (SEND) was continuing to increase. Whilst this was due in part to overall population growth, it also reflected increasing diagnosis and the extension of services to children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. In order to address this increase in demand and reduce dependence on out of borough places members noted and welcomed the strategies being developed to provide additional capacity through a new special school, special school expansions and new Additionally Resourced Provision as part of the overall School Place Planning Strategy. As part of this approach, members also welcomed the work being undertaken to establish a 16-25 Skills Centre for young people with complex learning difficulties.

Members were supportive of the overall approach adopted as part of the refresh of the strategy along with the work being undertaken alongside Brent Schools to ensure that place planning continued to be informed by local information on population trends, especially given the ongoing impact of Brexit and the pandemic.

Having welcomed the update provided, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-2023 provided as Appendix 1 of the report.
- (2) To note that the current forecasts for primary places would remain fairly steady over the next five years.
- (3) To accept the recommendation that the Secondary School Expansion Programme, presented to Cabinet on 14 October 2020, does not proceed as the latest forecasts indicated that additional secondary places were not required.
- (4) To note the planned strategies for addressing the significant and increasing demand for places that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25.
- (5) To note the concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on Early Years provision and the strategies to support the sector.

8. **Purchase of a S.106 block of apartments at the Telford Homes Alpertons Bus Garage Development**

Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report seeking approval to purchase a long leasehold interest in 155 affordable rented homes (flats) at the Alpertons Bus Garage site, located at 330 Ealing Road, Alpertons.

Cabinet noted that the scheme was currently in development with an estimated practical completion of Quarter 3 2024 for the affordable rented homes element. In order to finance purchase of the block it was proposed that the Council take a lease of 50 years from an Asset Special Purpose Vehicle (ASPV). This would be on the basis of current social rents and upon completion a reversionary 999 year lease would be granted at nil or peppercorn rent with the developer continuing to insure the premises during the construction and until completion of the contract.

In considering the report members were advised that the size and breakdown of the affordable homes would assist in addressing current housing needs at a location considered to be beneficial. As further assurance, confirmation was also provided that the Council would be employing their own professional services team to ensure that the quality and progression of the build met required standards.

In expressing their support for the proposal, Cabinet highlighted the opportunity the scheme provided to further increase the supply of affordable social housing within the borough based on a leasing model which was felt to represent good value for money. Officers were thanked for their efforts in securing the necessary terms as a means of providing additional high quality affordable homes offering secure tenancies.

As a result of the discussion and having noted the information provided within the exempt appendices of the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and the Operational Director of Property and Assets to negotiate and agree the terms and thereafter enter into a 50 year under lease (to be made between L.B. Brent and Asset SPV) in respect of the 155 affordable homes within the Alpertons Bus Garage Development subject to:

- (a) clean and marketable title;
- (b) financial and legal due diligence;
- (c) all commercial terms having been agreed between the parties; and
- (d) vacant possession, with a target completion date as soon as possible after the grant of the long lease of 999 years (the headlease).

9. **Annual Procurement Strategy Report 2021**

Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report detailing the Procurement Strategy Annual Report 2020-21.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the progress (as detailed within section 3 of the report) being made against each of the five pillars within the 2020-23 Procurement Strategy and way in which these had also been aligned to meet the key objectives within the Borough Plan 2019-23.

In focussing on the pillars within the strategy, members noted the specific progress being made in relation to the Active Procurement, social value considerations and community wealth building commitments and support being provided for local businesses through the strategy as well as the benefits in relation to employment and skills opportunities.

In recognising the progress being made and associated benefits being achieved, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note and approve the Annual Procurement Strategy report 2020-2021 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

10. Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

11. Any other urgent business

In accordance with Paragraphs 12 and 36 of the Council's Access to Information Rules Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, advised Cabinet that he had also agreed to deal with the following as an urgent item on business at the meeting on the grounds that there was a statutory requirement for the Council to have in place a Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 and there was therefore a need to consider renewal of the policy in advance of it expiring on 30 January 2022.

11.1 Proposed renewal of the Council's current Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles (Policy Statement)

Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement, was then invited to introduce the accompanying report which she advised was seeking approval to renew the Council's existing Gambling Policy in its current form for a maximum period of a further 24 months until 31ST January 2024 and recommend this on to Full Council for formal agreement.

In considering the report Cabinet noted that the Council was required under the Gambling Act 2005 to publish a statement of principles (policy statement) to be applied in exercising its functions under the Act, with the current version due to expire on 30th January 2022. In December 2020 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had launched a major and wide ranging review of the Act to consider the increase in online gambling along with advertising, marketing rules and the powers of the Gambling Commission and to ensure the necessary protections were available within the regulatory framework in order to protect children and vulnerable people, prevent gambling related crime and keep gambling fair in the digital age. The Council had made representations in response to the consultation seeking to secure more control over the number of Adult Gaming Centres (AGCs) able to be established within the borough given the detrimental impact they were felt to have on local communities, particularly in areas of deprivation. Given the need for the Council to review and prepare a new or revised

gambling policy and statement of principles that would align with any new legislation framework introduced as a result of the review, it had been recommended that the current policy be renewed for up to a further two year period in order to allow this process to be undertaken. Confirmation was provided that the current policy had been reviewed and was considered to remain fit for purpose with no amendments required.


In commenting on the report, members expressed their strong support for the robust and hostile stance being maintained by the Council against the establishment of AGCs in Brent given the detrimental impact they were felt to have on town centres, local communities and in targeting the most vulnerable and deprived neighborhoods. In confirming their support for the approach outlined in the report, Members were keen to ensure the Council continued to do all within its power to control and minimise the number of ASCs across all parts of the borough.

As a result of the discussions, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that, having agreed the reasons for urgency, the current gambling policy and statement of principles be renewed until 31st January 2024.

The meeting ended at 10.30 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair

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 Brent	Cabinet 6 December 2021
	Report from the Director of Finance
Draft Budget 2022/23	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	Two: Appendix A: Savings Delivery Tracker Appendix B: HRA Business Plan
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Minesh Patel Director of Finance Email: minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 4043 Rav Jassar Head of Finance Email: ravinder.jassar@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1487

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's budget proposals for 2022/23. It also provides a general update on the Council's overall financial position, including an assessment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget of 27 October 2021.
- 1.2 Subject to the results of consultation and scrutiny, it is envisaged that the budget proposals set out in this report would then form the basis of the budget to be agreed at the Full Council meeting of February 2022. For the avoidance of doubt,

all of the proposals included in this report were set out for Council in February 2021, together with the results of the consultation carried out leading up to that.

- 1.3 Brent, like most well-run local authorities, seeks to avoid making substantial new proposals in the last budget of any Administration, as it will be for whatever Councillors are elected in May 2022 to determine longer-term financial policy. Therefore, no new budget proposals are recommended by way of this report and the position for 2022/23 is still broadly in line with that estimated in February 2021 and updated since.
- 1.4 This report renews the MTFs, which is the Council's overarching financial planning document. The MTFs contains forecasts for the financial position of the Council's General Fund revenue budget, as well as providing a framework within which financial planning is undertaken for the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Capital Programme. The report also asks Cabinet to take decisions necessary to enable the council to participate in a mini Business Rates Pool should this be in the council's interests.
- 1.5 It should be recognised, however, that forecasting over the medium term has been, and continues to be, extremely difficult. There is a high level of uncertainty over the medium term due to the delays in funding reforms, the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on residents and businesses in the borough and the impact of BREXIT. The significance of the financial challenge cannot be underestimated, however the measures outlined in this report aim to ensure that the Council continues to operate in a financially sustainable and resilient way.
- 1.6 Agreeing the proposals in this report, all of which were consulted on and agreed in February 2021 will enable the council to set a balanced budget in 2022/23, in accordance with the statutory obligations. At this stage, however, Cabinet is merely being asked to note the position so that further consultation can be concluded, prior to a formal budget being recommended to the 24 February 2022 Council meeting. Aside from the usual updating of and adjustments to various technical assumptions the key features of this budget would be:
 - A council tax increase of 3%, making a Band D council tax of £1,419.48 (for the Brent element). The GLA precept, which typically makes up 20% of the overall bill, is currently unknown and is subject to their own decision making.
 - Budget savings proposals (all of which were considered by Council in February 2021) with an aggregate value of £2.7m, as summarised in Appendix A.
- 1.7 The process following this Cabinet meeting is: -
 - Proposals, together with any changes made by Cabinet, to form the basis of consultation between December 2021 and February 2022 with local residents, businesses and other key stakeholders;
 - Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to review the budget proposals and report accordingly;

- General Purposes Committee, in December 2021, will review the calculation of the Council Tax base; and
- After consultation, a budget report will be presented for Cabinet to recommend a final budget and Council Tax to the February 2022 Council meeting.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the overall financial position.
- 2.2 That Cabinet endorses the budget proposals for 2022/23 that were previously agreed at the Council meeting of 22 February 2021, as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees to consult on a Council Tax increase of 3% in 2022/23.
- 2.4 That Cabinet agree to participate in a sub London Business Rates Pool in 2022/23 and delegate authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the participating authorities as may be necessary to implement and/or regulate the pool.
- 2.5 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Finance to agree to participate in such pools in subsequent years (in consultation with the lead member) and to enter into Memorandum of Understandings in respect of any such subsequent pools.
- 2.6 That Cabinet notes the position with regard to the funding for Schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in seven of this report.
- 2.7 That Cabinet agrees to consult on a rent increase of 4.1% (CPI + 1%) for the 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account budget, as set out in section eight and Appendix B.
- 2.8 That Cabinet notes the position with regard to the Capital programme, as set out in section nine.

3.0 Strategic Financial Overview

Financial Context

- 3.1 In February 2021, Council agreed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that sought to provide the financial framework for the years 2021/22 to 2022/23. The programme, developed through a combination of effective financial management and cost control and more innovative approaches to investment and demand management, set out the delivery of £11.2m of savings (profiled £8.5m in 2021/22 and £2.7m in 2022/23) in order to deliver balanced budgets over the two year period. This followed a period of 10 years where, as a result of significant reductions in government funding and the challenges posed by new legislation, the Council had been obliged to make an unprecedented £185m of savings, despite an increase in demand for key services.

3.2 At the time the MTFS was agreed in February 2021, it was recognised that the Council was already operating in a significantly challenging financial environment prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. Most notably, these were around the uncertain funding outlook for local government, uncertainty around long term funding for adult social care and emerging pressures in children's services.

3.3 In addition to the uncertainty, there is also the potential for significant spending pressures from demand-led services, specifically in children's and adult social care, new burdens which impact on the budget and new pressures as a result of COVID-19. Although growth has been built into the MTFS to help alleviate some of these pressures, they continue to present a significant budget risk, particularly in respect of the demographic and contractual pressures. For example:

- The impact of COVID-19 is not fully known or how the pandemic will play out for the remainder of the year. Therefore, there is a level of risk when setting the budget that the Council may be exposed to unfunded financial pressures in-year.
- The new income loss compensation scheme announced for Council Tax and Business Rates does not fully cover the losses the Council is estimating and only applies to losses incurred in 2020/21. The ending of the furlough scheme in September, the tapering of business rates reliefs and the ending of business support grants are likely to have a continuing impact on business rates income. Other income losses will be dependent on the pace at which the economy recovers. Overall, income losses can pose a considerable budget pressure.
- The level of 'scarring' that has occurred, for example pent up demand in children's social care, long Covid and the mental health impact on adult social care. In addition, the extent to which current circumstances will become the 'new normal', for example greater domestic waste if more people continue to work from home and a larger role for Public Health.

If these were to transpire, without any further government support, they could expose the Council to a liability that may require it to put in place further savings and/or expenditure reductions in order to balance the overall budget and MTFS.

3.4 In July and October 2021, Cabinet received updates on the Council's overall financial position. Firstly, the Financial Outturn 2020/21 report set out the outturn for income and expenditure versus the revenue budget for 2020/21. Despite reporting an overall General Fund overspend of £41.2m as a result of COVID-19, emergency funding from central government, and other interventions undertaken by the Council, were sufficient to offset these pressures. Secondly, the Q2 Financial Forecast report set out that based on current assumptions, the financial impact of COVID-19 can be contained with the overall growth built in the 2021/22 budget. Finally, the 2021/22 budget provided a framework to invest in broader ambitions and long term priorities. This includes:

- Delivering the refocused Borough Plan;

- £1m of recurring funding for long term priorities, including the Climate Emergency, Tackling Poverty and Tackling inequality; and
- £17m to facilitate the delivery of initiatives in priority areas identified as essential to secure a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These projects are themed around supporting communities, supporting businesses, reducing health inequalities and a green recovery.

Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Budget 2021

- 3.5 On 27 October 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, delivered Spending Review 2021 and the Autumn Budget. The latter set out the Governments' taxation and public expenditure plans for the year ahead, and Spending Review confirmed resource and capital budgets for the three years 2022/23 to 2024/25. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the main headlines and announcements of interest with respect to Local Government finance.
- 3.6 This Spending Review announced a £40 billion increase in taxes, which coupled with an improved economic outlook, have allowed for real increases in day to day spending. Local government has been promised a headline 3.0% average real-terms increase in core spending power each year. That includes £3.6bn to fund social care reforms, such as the implementation of the cap on personal care costs (£86,000 lifetime cap) and the changes to the means test (free care for those with assets less than £20,000).
- 3.7 Overall, the headline announcement is that core spending power will increase by 3% each year. However, this assumes that all Council's will increase Council Tax by the maximum amount allowable of 3% without triggering a referendum. In addition, much of the new money is tied to social care reforms, meaning other services will benefit less. Removing the funding for the social care reforms, the increase is actually 1.8% compared to 3.3% for the average government department. Nevertheless, while the additional funding announced for Local Government is welcome, the precise outcome for individual authorities will not be known until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, usually announced in mid-December.
- 3.8 Likewise, it is currently unknown whether the new grant funding will be sufficient to cover the cost of reforms to social care, for example the increase in employers National Insurance Contributions (for both the Council's pay bill and supplier costs), the cost of the cap on personal care costs and inflationary pressures expected in the social care market. Early modelling suggests the additional cost of increasing National Insurance Contributions alone could be in the region of £2m per annum. There will no doubt be a long queue of claims on this tranche of funding. Any shortfall in social care funding will, therefore, mean that Council Tax will end up taking the strain. This may mean that Brent, like all other local authorities, will need to continue to plan with little or no funding certainty.
- 3.9 In addition, the additional grant funding is front-loaded and then frozen thereafter. While this decision seems reasonable given any COVID-19 related pressures

are also likely to be front loaded, it will mean relying on local taxes to meet spending pressures by 2024/25. Whether the overall funding increases are enough to keep pace with the rising demands over the medium term remains to be seen and will depend on how inflation affects the Council's costs. And with the Office for Budget Responsibility predicting inflation could rise between 4.4% and 5.4% next year, which would be the highest rate seen in the UK for three decades, will create further financial pressures, particularly for social care where the cost of placements presents a significant financial risk.

- 3.10 The Spending Review also confirmed that there will be no separate compensation for Council Tax and Business Rates losses as a result of COVID-19 or other support generally for managing the ongoing financial impact of COVID-19, such as the rising cost of the Council Tax Support scheme. The consequences of these decisions are discussed further in section four of this report.
- 3.11 In addition, the Spending Review did not address a number of long-standing funding issues for Local Government that remain unresolved which include:
- Details and a revised timeline of the 'Fair Funding Review - relative review of needs and resources'.
 - Business Rates retention reset and Business Rates revaluation.
- 3.12 It is reasonable to assume that these reforms are likely to be further delayed to 2023/24 at the earliest, some four years later than originally planned. These reforms are expected to fundamentally change how, and to what level, all Local Authorities are to be funded. Therefore, despite a three year spending review, there remains long term funding uncertainty beyond 2022/23.

Administration Priorities

- 3.13 The budget process is designed to ensure that it is priority led so that resources are aligned with council priorities and statutory responsibilities. A 4 year Borough Plan (2023-2027) is due to be developed in 2022. This gives us the opportunity to refresh our vision and ambitions and to show how we will work with our communities over the next 4 years to deliver them.
- 3.14 The Borough Plan is the key strategic document that sets out what the Council aims to achieve (its key priorities), how the council and its partners will work to deliver these and how they link to frontline delivery. The current plan is based on five priority areas agreed in 2019 as being of fundamental importance to Brent and its people:
- Every Opportunity to Succeed
 - A Future Built for Everyone, An Economy Fit for All
 - A Cleaner More Considerate Brent
 - A Borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy
 - Strong Foundations
- 3.15 These are supported by actions (refocused in 2021), including activity to tackle key cross-cutting areas such as homelessness, reducing health inequalities,

providing youth opportunities, the climate and ecological emergency and delivering employment and training support.

Current financial position

- 3.16 Like all Local Authorities, dealing with the impact of COVID-19 continues in 2021/22 with major spending pressures and income losses across the Council. There are costs arising from a number of new functions such as providing additional support to vulnerable residents with supplementary care needs as well as providing specific controls to protect the general public, granting short term financial support to households and businesses to enable them to continue through this period. At the same time there has been a significant reduction in income received, particularly in relation to sales, fees, charges for services provided to the community where facilities are being under-utilised through reduced demand.
- 3.17 As reported to Cabinet in October 2021, it is currently expected that growth provided to services and additional government funding will be sufficient to accommodate the additional costs and losses of income arising as a result of COVID-19. This is inclusive of additional expenditure pressures as a result of the outbreak (e.g. additional front line care and well-being for staff, emergency accommodation for rough sleepers and the homeless, testing in the community, additional support for residents that are affected by COVID-19, etc.), loss of income (e.g. fees and charges from planning and building control, parking, rents, leisure services, venue hires, etc.) and slippage of 2021/22 savings plans.
- 3.18 Since the start of the financial year local government has received over £3 billion in general non-ring fenced funding, with Brent's share being £17m. In addition, further funding is being provided through a sales, fees and charges compensation scheme. Under the scheme, local authorities absorb losses up to 5% of their planned 2020/21 sales, fees and charges income, with government compensating them for 75% of losses thereafter. However, the scheme is only available for losses incurred in the first quarter of the year and does not cover all forms of lost income, for example commercial or residential rents. The Council estimates that approximately £2m of funding will be received through the scheme, albeit this has not been confirmed by government.
- 3.19 Further details of these pressures, risks and actions being taken to manage the 2021/22 financial position were reported to Cabinet in October 2021 in the Q2 Financial Report. The 2021/22 budget was set to accommodate additional costs and losses of income arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At present it is expected that these pressures can be contained within the growth provided to service areas.
- 3.20 Clearly, the government funding received thus far has gone some way to relieve immediate financial pressures. Governments' commitment to give all Councils the resources they need to support their residents and businesses through this pandemic cannot waver.

4.0 Review of Key Budget Assumptions

Review of 2020/21 – 2022/23 savings plans

- 4.1 The current MTFS contains total savings of £11.2m, profiled £8.5m in 2021/22 and £2.7m in 2022/23. Of these savings, £6.1m were agreed in February 2020 and £5.1m in February 2021. The latest savings delivery tracker in Appendix A shows that the Council is on track to deliver £8.5m of these savings, with £0.8m delayed. Overall, from a financial planning and budget setting point of view, the latest forecast on savings is broadly positive at this stage of the financial year, in that the majority of savings are on track to be delivered and mitigating actions have been put in place for those savings identified as delayed. This suggests that, other than re-profiling between years, the savings previously agreed should continue to be embedded in the MTFS. Further details are set out in Appendix A.

Departmental pressures

- 4.2 Managing ongoing demand-led pressures remains a key aspect of the MTFS. The table below sets out the existing annual growth assumptions, or estimated increases in unavoidable expenditure, that are built in to the MTFS, for example contract inflation, pay inflation, meeting the cost of providing existing services for a growing population, etc. For the avoidance of doubt, these expenditure assumptions represent the annual costs, all else being equal, that would have to be incurred just to stand still. These expenditure assumptions have also been reviewed and a summary of these growth and cost pressures are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Existing Growth / Cost Pressures

Assumption	Extra cost per annum (£m)	Description
Demography	3.5	Estimated annual cost of providing the same services to a growing population.
Payroll	3.0	Assumed 2.5% pay settlement and new pay spines.
London Living Wage	2.0	Assumed average annual cost of making more contracts LLW compliant.
Contracts	3.0	Primarily based on 2% inflation and known contractual commitments.
Transport	0.8	Transporting children with Special Educational Needs.
Technical	1.4	Pensions, levies (e.g. West London Waste Authority) and other technical items.
Capital financing	0.2	Interest and debt repayment costs for the capital programme.
Total Growth	13.9	

- 4.3 Most of these growth assumptions have largely been in place for over six years, and have been regularly reviewed and judged to be reasonable at each budget planning cycle. At this stage, the only change that is being considered is to the inflation assumption. The Office for Budget Responsibility has forecast that inflation could rise to between 4% and 5% next year. However, indexation on most of the Council's major contracts were set at the previous September's Consumer Price Index (CPI), which was 3.1%. The most significant spikes have been in the construction sector over recent months with supply chain challenges possibly caused by both COVID-19 and BREXIT, where the impact is largely within the Council's Capital Program. Overall, despite the varying impact, an increase in the cost of goods and services will undoubtedly put pressures on Council services to keep within budget. Despite this forecast, the Bank of England voted to keep interest rates unchanged at their November meeting citing that they were not yet confident that the risks associated with higher inflation are greater than the risk that a rate rise too fast would cause an unnecessary slowdown in growth and employment. Further work is being conducted on the impact of rising inflation on all Council services and contracts. For planning purposes the 2022/23 budget for inflationary pressures may need to increase by £1m. At this stage, it is expected that this increase can be contained within the overall growth built into the 2022/23 budget.
- 4.4 Last November, the government announced that all but the NHS and the lowest-paid public sector workers would have their pay frozen for a year, in response to

private sector hours and wages falling during the pandemic. The public sector pay freeze will not continue, and the intention is to return to the usual system of independent pay commission recommendations for 'fair and affordable' pay rises over the whole Spending Review period. While the pay award for Local Government is unlikely to be known when the 2022/23 budget is agreed, the MTFS can accommodate an increase of around 2.5% based on the current budgeted establishment. This will remain as the working assumption until negotiations are further advanced.

- 4.5 As part of the 2021/22 budget setting process significant growth was built into the MTFS to manage the financial impact on COVID-19. This was based on modelling various scenarios against key demand led services and activities that were judged to be particularly sensitive to the impact of COVID-19 and government interventions. The new expenditure assumptions were estimated to be in the region of £5m and £20m, excluding changes to income assumptions (Council Tax, Business Rates and government funding) and £13m is the 'central case' that was taken forward as part of the 2021/22 budget. To date this additional growth has been able to contain the pressures currently being experienced.
- 4.6 In addition, as the expected easing of restrictions continues to take place, it is reasonable to assume that some of these growth assumptions can move from the central case to more towards the best case. Therefore, a proportion of this growth will not be required in future years. For modelling purposes, this was estimated at £4m and has been judged to be reasonable. Further details are set out in the table below.

Table 2: COVID-19 Growth / Cost Pressures

Description	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)	Net Growth (£m)	Comment
Personal Protective Equipment	1.0	(1.0)	0	Expected increase in the cost of care, whether the Council funds it directly or care homes source their own. No further pressures expected from 2022/23.
Homelessness	1.5	0	1.5	A continuation of pandemic response measures will require additional resources for managing homelessness. Currently expected that pressures can be contained in the base budget.
Housing Needs rent	1.0	0	1.0	Estimate based on current levels of collection and increase in bad debts. Currently expected that pressures can be contained in the base budget.
Children's Social Care	1.0	0	1.0	Pressures arising within the Children and Young People with Disabilities (0-25) care at home and direct payment budgets. Currently expected that pressures can be contained in the base budget.
Transport	0.5	0	0.5	Pressure arising due to social distancing measures.
Council Tax Support	2.0	0	2.0	Based on an increase in working age caseloads. This pressure remains in 2022/23
Income generation	5.0	(3.0)	2.0	Income generated in the Regeneration & Environment department across various lines of business. Advertising and sponsorship income, conference and events income, Registrars and Nationality income and other traded services are affected. Currently assumed that most income sources will begin to return to pre-pandemic levels on a phased basis.
Allowance for uncertainty	1.0	0	1.0	Further slippage of existing savings plans or new emerging pressures.
Total pressures	13.0	(4.0)	9.0	

4.7 Forecasting growth under normal circumstances is challenging and the task has only increased as a result of COVID-19. Scenario modelling of assumptions

continues to be undertaken across all income and expenditure budgets, in particular demand led services. In many cases, and in particular on income lines, estimates are based on evidence available at the time of writing this report.

- 4.8 However it must be stressed that the estimates shown are based on a number of assumptions which are subject to constant change. It is incredibly difficult to predict the implications of the changes to the furlough scheme, how the general economy will recover after COVID-19 and what will happen as a consequence of BREXIT. This uncertainty runs alongside existing budget pressures including social care demand, demographic changes, housing and homelessness.
- 4.9 The commitment to fund ongoing demand led pressures is the most appropriate approach to support the budget setting process, which will be kept under close review to ensure that the budget presented to Cabinet in February 2022 reflects the most accurate and up to date impact of COVID-19 and other pressures in the Council's medium term financial position.

Council Tax

- 4.10 Council Tax is one of the most significant sources of income for the Council, making up £135.7m (or 44%) of total core funding in 2021/22.
- 4.11 The Spending Review announced that Local Authorities will be able to increase Council Tax by up to 2% without a local referendum. In addition, local authorities will be able to levy a 1% adult social care precept. Like last year, the Government's financing assumption is that all councils will act on this and increase council tax by the maximum amount possible. It should be noted that the additional income generated through the Adult Social Care precept alone does not cover the total growth requirement for Adult Social Care pressures.
- 4.12 COVID-19 has exacerbated existing pressures within the Adult Social Care service. The impacts of long-COVID are having significant effects on people's ability to live independently, therefore the Council is seeing more complex needs requiring a more comprehensive support package. There has been a significant increase in demand for acute Mental Health beds trained professionals, as well as a wider increase in demand for mental health services, both in working age adults and older people living with dementia, particularly connected to disrupted routines and social isolation. There has also been growth in the number of people approaching the Council with multiple needs. This is usually connected to the breakdown of difficult housing conditions and where self-neglect and hoarding is also becoming a problem. There has also been additional growth in Safeguarding Adults. In addition, an increase in demand for support is expected due to people living at home with their family and carers, where restrictions have increased isolation.
- 4.13 Taking into account the unprecedented pressures within social care and the financial position in the round, the budget has been prepared on the basis of a 3% increase in the Brent element of Council Tax. This will add £4.1m of recurring income for the Council. While it is acknowledged that increasing Council Tax will be difficult for some households, it should also be recognised that the Council continues to invest in the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme which provides

over £30m of support for around 28,000 households who are financially vulnerable. In addition, the Council's Resident Support Fund has made available additional funds for residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances as a result of COVID-19.

- 4.14 The GLA precept, which makes up c20% of the overall Council Tax bill, is unknown at this stage and is subject to their own decision making and consultation processes.
- 4.15 When budgeting for Council Tax, there are three main factors to consider:
- Council Tax Support (CTS) expenditure,
 - Short and long term collection rates, and
 - Growth in the tax base.
- 4.16 Nationally, there has been a significant increase in the number working age people claiming Council Tax Support. In Brent, this number has increased by 4.9% bringing the total number of working age people claiming CTS to 19,338. The total cost of providing CTS has increased from £28.4m at the start of the pandemic to £30.7m as at November 2021, an increase of £2.3m. This is important because an increase in CTS expenditure reduces the amount of Council Tax that is able to be collected.
- 4.17 The judgement to be made with regards to financial planning is the extent to which this level of CTS expenditure is expected to continue. Even at this stage of the pandemic it is still too early to make a reliable judgement as the ending of furlough has yet to have an impact on local CTS schemes. That being said, the budget for CTS was increased by £2m in 2021/22 on a recurring basis and based on the latest available data, it is proposed that this growth remains in place for 2022/23.
- 4.18 Another factor that could affect Council Tax income is a reduction in the collection rate. Typically, in-year collection for Brent is around 96% and over a longer period of time will reach around 98%, which is built into the MTFS model and prior to the pandemic was broadly comparable to other London boroughs. The collection rate in 2020/21 was 92%, although this is expected to increase in future years as collection will continue to be attempted. While this reduction resulted in an in-year loss of £8.9m, the government's 75% compensation scheme, hardship grant and the spreading of deficits over three years are intended by government to bring the Collection Fund, the ring fenced accounts for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates income, back into balance in the next three years. Based on current modelling, a collection rate of 93.5% is expected in 2021/22, which would result in a £7m reduction of income. Clearly this is significant, however it is expected that collection will continue to be attempted in future years and reach the long-term collection rate target.
- 4.19 As a result of the postponement of normal debt recovery action, it is too early to be able to estimate the short and long term impact on collection. That being said, it is deemed prudent to reduce the long term collection rate in the MTFS in order to reflect the reality that there will be an impact on collection, albeit unknown,

while acknowledging the Council holds provisions for writing off debt that will not ultimately be collected.

- 4.20 The calculation of the tax base (and likewise the collection rate) is one of the technical stages in the process of setting the Council Tax and is to be considered by the General Purposes Committee on 6 December 2021. Brent, like all Local Authorities, has to work out how much next year's band D Council Tax should be so that the total tax that will be collected equals the budget required to pay for its services. In effect, the tax base represents the aggregate taxable value of all residential property in Brent. The Council Tax base was previously assumed to grow at 1% per year annum (or around 1,000 properties) and contributes nearly 30% to total budgeted Council Tax income in the MTFS.
- 4.21 Data compiled by the Council from a number of sources, including the planning department and directly from developers, shows a number of consented schemes are likely to complete towards the end of 2020/21. This general trend is also supported by new Council Tax registrations that are currently awaiting banding by the Valuation Office Agency. On this basis, it is recommended to keep the tax base growth for budget setting purposes of 1% for 2022/23.

Business Rates

- 4.22 The Council remains committed to supporting local businesses through the pandemic. Funded by government, the Council has processed a range of reliefs for various businesses across the retail, hospitality, leisure and other sectors. This has significantly reduced the amount of rates paid to the Council with the reduction estimated at £64.6m in 2020/21 and £46.5m in 2021/22. In addition, the Council has administered direct grants, funded by central government, to local businesses totalling £98.3m across over 13,500 local businesses. The Council continues to engage with the business community to ensure that those eligible businesses have access to this support.
- 4.23 Irrespective of the range of support provided to businesses by Local Authorities, including the support provided directly by government (job retention scheme, loans, tax deferrals, etc.), it is inevitable that some businesses will be unable to pay their business rates, some businesses may be unable to trade effectively and some may be impacted by a reduction in customer demand. This will lead to an increase in bad debt and a loss of income collected on behalf of the Council, the GLA and government.
- 4.24 The collection rate in 2020/21 was 87.3% which is significantly lower than the amount collected in the same period in the prior year, at 98.2%. While this reduction resulted in an in year loss of £87m, the government's 75% compensation scheme, section 31 grants and the spreading of deficits over three years are intended by government to bring the Collection Fund, the ring fenced accounts for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates income, back into balance in the next three years.
- 4.25 The amount that was planned to be collected in 2021/22 was £136.0m and, as a result of mandatory reliefs funded by government, the amount that is able to be

collected is now £102.9m. At present, collection is 10% lower than planned, however this is masked by the number of payment deferrals that have been granted to support businesses through the pandemic, restricted enforcement activity and closure of courts. The in-year collection rate for 2021/22 is forecast to be around 88% of amounts due by the end of the year, increasing the levels of debt outstanding that will be pursued over time.

- 4.26 Business Rates and Council Tax income assumptions in the budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were fairly prudent and reduced the overall income built into the MTFS. For Business Rates, assumptions had been made for a reduced take from certain sectors as well as a lower collection rate. For Council Tax, the recovery rate was marked down from a historical collection rate of 98% and the removal of the furlough scheme and timing of the economic recovery was likely to give rise to a significant increase in the cost of Council Tax Support. At this stage of the budget process, and due to the continued uncertainty in collection, it is deemed reasonable to continue with these prudent budget assumptions.

Business rates- Potential eight authority pool

- 4.27 The Government designated a pan-London business rates pool in 2018/19, which piloted 100% retention in that year, and was revised to pilot 75% retention in 2019/20. For 2020/21 the Government decided not to renew the London pilot, and for London to revert back to the pre-existing 2017/18 67% retention scheme (30% borough share, 37% GLA share, 33% Government share). A voluntary pool was therefore set up with all London Boroughs in 2020/21 with reduced financial benefits from the previous scheme but all the strategic benefits. However, the onset of the pandemic during 2020/21 had a significant impact on the collection of business rates, which has led to an estimated £14.2m loss to be shared by pool participants. Further modelling for 2021/22 and 2022/23 showed a mix of risks across London, which, matched with the comparatively low level of financial return (the 2020/21 pool was only forecast to make a total gain of £36m), meant that it was agreed that the London Pool would not continue for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 4.28 As part of the business rates regime, Government has allowed Local Authorities with a geographic link to form a business rate pool. In forming a pool, the group of authorities are seen as a single entity from a business rate perspective and in doing this, should retain more of the business rate income generated locally.
- 4.29 The business rate system is complex with a number of moving parts such as property valuation, collection rates, reliefs from Government and revaluation appeals. However, a business rate pool works by lowering the amount paid to Government on business rate growth above the baseline level set by Government. At its highest, 50% of growth is paid to Government. By forming a pool, this rate can be lowered to 0%, and funds which were earmarked to Government would be retained locally.
- 4.30 The principles behind the eight authority pool are the same as the London Business Rate Pool, in that lowering the levy rate means payments which would have gone to Government would now be retained by the pool participants.

Limiting the membership enables this arrangement to limit the risk to participants in the following way:

- The financial benefit is generated by levy paying authorities reducing their levy rate from 50% to 0% on the business rate growth they generate. This pool contains 2 levy paying authorities, the City of London Corporation and Tower Hamlets. Whilst there has been an impact from the pandemic on the City Corporation business rate collection, this was the lowest in London. Monitoring of 2021/22 collection rates have remained stable as has the overall amount of collectable business rate. This provides some comfort that business rate growth will remain for the foreseeable future, albeit subject to continued monitoring and further analysis of trends in business premises usage i.e. office space, which represents 80% of the rates base. In order to lose all business rate growth, the City Corporation would need to experience a 20% loss in the value of business rates, something which has not been experienced to date.
- All the other participating authorities (Brent, Barnet, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest) are top up authorities i.e. authorities which do not generate enough income from business rates to meet their funding requirement, and therefore receive additional funding from Government to top them up. Their inclusion lowers the levy rate from 50% to 0%. Due to their top up status, this group would have to lose more than 100% of their business rate base in order to pull the pool into a loss.
- The business rate system has a floor funding level, which the pool will become responsible for should participating authorities fall below this level. These payments would be triggered with significant reductions in business rates income. The make up of the selected authorities make this circumstance unlikely. It would take a 20% reduction across all the participating authorities to create a pooling loss.

4.31 Based on the financial modelling undertaken to date, the benefit for Brent is estimated to be in the region of £2m. This is based on estimates using forecasts from participating boroughs and are therefore only illustrative and a lower set of figures is entirely possible. However, the example serves to illustrate the potential direct financial benefit of joining the pool on the basis being offered. It is important to note that the final value of the pooling gain will not be known until the Statement of Accounts for the Pool Collection Fund, managed by The City of London Corporation, has been finalised and audited in the autumn of 2023. This position will be closely monitored during 2022/23 but at this stage it is not deemed prudent to build this potential additional income into the base budget, especially given the uncertainty referred to above. Any pooling gain that is confirmed once the audit is complete will be brought forward for one off projects as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

Government Funding

4.32 As described earlier in the report, the precise details of the additional funding announced in the Spending Review for Local Government will not be known until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, usually announced in

mid-December. However, The Spending Review did confirm that the Revenue Support Grant and the Public Health Grant will continue and be uplifted by inflation. Unusually, there was no specific confirmation regarding the Improved Better Care Fund and the Social Care Grant, albeit it is widely expected that they will continue based on follow up discussions with DLUHC. Together these grants represent over £70m of funding. Therefore, core funding assumed in the 2022/23 budget remains as previously assumed.

- 4.33 The new grant funding allocations for Brent for expected social care reforms is currently unknown. However, follow up discussions with officers at DLUHC indicate that the new grant funding is expected to cover all of the cost of reforms to social care, for example the increase in employers National Insurance Contributions (for both the Council's pay bill and supplier costs), the cost of the cap on personal care costs and inflationary pressures expected in the social care market. It will be some time before the costs of these reforms are better understood and therefore if the new grant funding is sufficient.
- 4.34 At this stage, in the absence of any detailed information, these new grant allocations do not form part of the draft 2022/23 budget. Likewise, the anticipated additional expenditure is similarly excluded. Funding allocations will be presented to Cabinet in February 2022 as part of the 2022/23 budget.

5.0 Overall summary of the budget position

- 5.1 Expenditure in 2021/22 is forecast to be within budget for the General Fund. The main general fund revenue budget for 2022/23 was essentially set at the Council meeting of February 2021, where savings of £2.7m were agreed. Provided that the key assumptions set out in this report hold true then expenditure in 2022/23 should also be contained within budget, as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Overall Financial Position

	2022/23
	£m
Expenditure	
Assumed budget brought forward before in-year growth and savings	297.0
Demographic Growth	3.5
Other Growth	10.0
COVID-19 Adjustment	(4.0)
Total Expenditure	306.5
Income	
Revenue Support Grant	25.1
Specific Grants	41.2
Total funding from Central Government	66.3
Council Tax	142.5
Business Rates	95.0
Total funding from residents and businesses	237.5
Total Income	303.8
Budget Gap (Expenditure less Income)	2.7
Savings agreed in February 2020	1.8
Savings agreed in February 2021	0.9
Budget Gap	0

- 5.2 It should be noted that this report reflects the position at this point in the budget preparation and these numbers will change as the budget develops over the next two months. We also await confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement, expected in mid-December 2021. If there are any material changes announced by Government these will be reflected within the budget to be considered by Cabinet in February 2021.

6.0 Statutory process of consultation, scrutiny and equalities

Consultation

- 6.1 The Council recognises consultation as a key part of policy formulation, and makes considerable effort to ensure that the views of residents, businesses and other key stakeholders are taken into account. Legally, the results of consultation are something that Members must have due regard to, alongside other relevant considerations, when making decisions.
- 6.2 The Council's minimum legal duty in February 2022 will be to set a budget and Council tax for 2022/23. As set out in this report, provided the decision on increasing Council Tax is endorsed by members, the service budget for 2022/23 can be set on the basis of savings proposals which have already been consulted on extensively, subject to the results of the local government settlement and any other material changes in the financial position.
- 6.3 For clarity, these are the proposals set out in Appendix A. These were agreed in February 2021, following consultation at two online Brent Connects meetings. Clearly, in the consultation process set out below, it will be open for respondents to raise issues about these proposals if they so choose. However, on the basis that they have already been consulted on extensively, and agreed to go forward when other budget proposals were explicitly rejected through that process, the reasonable working assumption is that these proposals will proceed unchanged.
- 6.4 As in previous years, it is proposed to formally consult on the draft budget via the online consultation portal, where respondents will be invited to focus their attention on the 2022/23 budget. In addition, it is proposed that a presentation on the draft budget be delivered through the new online Brent Connects format.
- 6.5 There are a number of business forums and associations that the Council regularly engages with that include a wide range of both small and large local businesses. These include West London Business (a non-profit business membership organisation), the Federation of Small Businesses, a number of town centre business associations and the Brent Business Board. The consultation on the budget will be published in a newsletter that is sent to a large number of Brent businesses, explaining why the views of local businesses are important and how to they could have their say.
- 6.6 The local voluntary sector is closely engaged with Brent's communities and has considerable experience of the impact of the Council's difficult choices against a background of funding reductions. Engagement with the local voluntary sector will therefore play an important part of the consultation process and invitations to participate in the consultation will be sent to all Brent voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 6.7 Overall, the main aim of this approach to consultation is to raise awareness of the Council's financial position, inform residents of how the Council spends its budget and ensure residents, business and other key stakeholders are aware of

the opportunities to have their say, by knowing how to respond and when the consultation events are taking place.

Scrutiny

- 6.8 The scrutiny committees will review the draft budget through their budget task group in order to carry out the statutory scrutiny of the budget. This will include scrutiny of the budget development process, the budget assumptions in the MTFS as well as the savings proposals set out in Appendix A. Following this, the chair of the committee will present a report to Cabinet commenting on the outcome of the scrutiny process and providing recommendations for Cabinet to consider as part of their decision making.

Equalities Impact assessments

- 6.9 The Council has a duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who don't when making decisions. This duty is set out in more detail in the Equality Implications section of this report.
- 6.10 Each of the budget proposals attached in Appendix A have been subject to an equality impact assessment (EIA) screening to assess their potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics. Where the EIA process identified a disproportionate negative impact with no reasonable mitigation, the proposal was subject to a full EIA. In summary, it has been concluded that all of the proposals are considered reasonable and have shown due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

7.0 Schools and Dedicated Schools Grant

- 7.1 The Council will continue to set a local funding formula for mainstream schools in 2022/23, although the total funding available will be determined by the National Funding Formula (NFF). The provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) block allocations announced show that the Council will receive a minimal increase in mainstream pupil funding of £1.8 million which represents an overall 0.71% increase. This is lower than the national percentage increase of 2.9% and lower than the average of 1.7% for Local Authorities in London. The lower overall increase is due to factors such as: varying per-pupil funding levels across local authorities in London which are higher than the NFF 2022/23 minimum per pupil rate, and the impact of decreases in primary pupil numbers.
- 7.2 The Spending Review 2021 confirms a £4.7 billion growth by 2024/25 for the core schools budget in England. This growth includes: funding to cover the cost of a temporary increase in National Insurance Contributions (NIC) of 1.25% for 2022/23 from April 2023 to be replaced by the Health and Social Care Levy. The funding would also be used to increase teacher starting salaries to £30,000.
- 7.3 The Spending Review also confirms a £1 billion Recovery Premium for the next two academic years for schools. This funding is based on pupil premium eligibility. Primary schools will continue to benefit from an additional £145 per

eligible pupil, but it is expected that the funding for secondary schools will nearly double which may be close to the £290 rate for pupils in Special Schools, Alternative Provision & Pupil Referral units. Additional funding was also announced of £324 million in 2024/25 for additional learning hours for 16-19 year olds. This funding increases the average hours funded in 16-19 education by 40 hours. Further details are expected in the coming weeks detailing how the funding will be allocated.

- 7.4 The High Needs block (HNB) of the DSG for 2022/23 will increase by £5.3 million representing an 8% increase in the HNB income. This is below the London average of 8.21% and the national average of 8.84% due to London experiencing the lowest increase in the funding floor factor as a result of reduction in pupil numbers, and the lowest increase in 3 out of the 6 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) bandings.
- 7.5 There are pressures against the HNB block due to increased demand for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and this is a national issue. Despite the additional funds, the demand pressures continue to grow and to set a balanced DSG budget in 2022/23 the Council will request via the Schools Forum a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block. The pressure in the HNB has led to the DSG being in a £10.5 million deficit carried forward from 2020/21 and further forecast pressures of £4.4 million in 2021/22 will increase the deficit position to £14.9 million.
- 7.6 The DfE require local authorities with an overall DSG deficit to have a management plan to recover the deficit over a number of financial years. The Schools Forum have been presented with actions being taken to manage demand, improve sufficiency of places and financial management to recover the deficit in the medium to long term. These include: establishing more SEND provision in the borough as part of the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-23 Refresh paper including developing new Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs); ensuring there is full cost recovery from other local authorities that place pupils in Brent special schools including administration and other specific costs; a review of the DSG funded SEN support services; continued central government lobbying. The Deputy Leader of the Council is actively part of the lobbying process.
- 7.7 The key principle of allocating the funding for the Early Years Block remains the same i.e. 95% of funding received is allocated directly to providers with the remaining 5% or £1m retained for central services. Funding arrangements for the Early Years Block have not yet been published but following the Spending Review 2021, the DfE confirmed that nationally, the block will receive additional funding worth £160 million in 2022/23, £180 million in 2023/24 and £170 million by 2024/25 to enable local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to providers for childcare entitlement offers which reflects the costs of inflation and national living wage increases. An Early Years funding report for 2022/23 will be presented at the Schools Forum in January 2022 detailing the revised funding rates.

8.0 Housing Revenue Account

- 8.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account, which contains the income and expenditure relating to the Council's landlord duties in respect of 11,693 dwellings.
- 8.2 Each year, the HRA budget is set in the context of the 30-year business plan. The business plan is reviewed annually, allowing for horizon scanning and the identification and mitigation of risks in the short, medium and long-term. Early identification of risks enables planning and implementation of mitigations to ensure that the HRA can continue to remain financially secure and deliver on its commitments to:
- Expand and accelerate the development of new Council homes
 - Continue to maintain and improve existing Council homes
 - Transform and continuously improve front line services to tenants and leaseholders
- 8.3 The HRA budget setting from 2016/17 to 2019/20 was principally directed by the Welfare Reform Act 2016, which imposed a 1% rent reduction for four years. This has resulted in a reduction of rental income and bottom line surpluses previously assumed in the business plan. The resulting £23m loss of income, along with increased capital expenditure on major works, has led to the full utilisation of the major repairs reserve to finance investment in the existing housing stock. Efficiency savings targets are incorporated into the budget setting process. From 2021/22 onwards, this is a 2% target across management and repairs costs, which equates to £0.5m per annum.
- 8.4 From 2020/21, the Council has the power to increase rents annually up to a maximum of CPI plus 1% for a period of five years. For 2022/23, CPI plus 1% equates to 4.1%, allowing the potential to increase rental income by £2m, and up to £6m over the remaining three-year rent control period.
- 8.5 The average rent in 2021/22 is £118.74 per week. A 4.1% increase would equate to an average rent of £123.61 per week in 2022/23, an increase of £4.87 per week when compared to the current rent levels. The increase is required for inflation led growth and to ensure sufficient continued capital investment in the Council's existing housing stock.
- 8.6 HRA rent setting needs to be considered in the context of the ring-fence and the 30-year business plan. A return to the CPI plus 1% model for the five-year period is expected to provide some stability and certainty over planned investment in the stock, service improvement and new development, at least in the medium-term, as a £2m increase in rent has the effect of an additional £60m investment in the HRA over a 30-year period. The approach beyond 2025 remains uncertain, but continuation of the CPI plus 1% formula is probable.
- 8.7 The 2022/23 HRA Business Plan is attached as Appendix B. Following the consultation processes proposed in the plan, the HRA budget for 2022/23 will be presented to Cabinet in February 2022 for approval by Full Council.

9.0 Capital Programme

- 9.1 The Capital Programme comprises of projects approved by Cabinet at the February 2021 budget setting, new projects approved and a number of in year budget adjustments. The full details of the budget changes and new proposals will be reported in the budget setting report in February 2022.
- 9.2 The table below provides an overview of the planned spend and financing of the Capital Programme budgets for the five year period 2022/23 to 2026/27.
- 9.3 As set out in the table, the Council is planning to borrow externally up to £339m over the three year MTFS period. The prudential borrowing equates to around 61% of the total funding, followed by external grant and contributions at 25%. Internal funding from earmarked reserves and capital receipts make up a further 7% and these will be mainly generated from the sale of council land and property that will be constructed as part of regeneration schemes such as South Kilburn. The remainder comes from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) and S106 contributions.
- 9.4 The interest costs on borrowing has a direct impact on the revenue budget as the annual interest payments are charged to it. For this reason, the capital programme is continually being reviewed for projects to take forward, pause and to explore funding avenues for the programmes besides borrowing.
- 9.5 The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new borrowing undertaken on capital expenditure and reduces with the minimum revenue provision (MRP) set aside, and capital receipts or other funding used in place of borrowing.

Capital Programme Budgets 2022/23 to 2026/27

Board	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	Total £m
Corporate Landlord	5.912	53.333	22.600	-	-	81.845
South Kilburn	22.723	17.821	4.200	14.849	-	59.594
Regeneration	42.845	1.157	-	-	-	44.003
St Raphael's	0.005	-	-	-	-	0.005
Public Realm	22.939	5.701	2.145	-	-	30.785
Schools	62.014	22.000	-	0.000	-	84.014
HCIB – GF	59.956	21.363	53.622	-	-	134.942
HCIB – HRA	42.269	31.044	0.004	-	-	73.316
PRS I4B	24.309	18.597	-	-	-	42.906
TOTAL	282.972	171.016	82.570	14.849	0.000	551.408

Sources of Finance	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	Total £m
Grants & Other Contributions	92.295	36.876	6.645	-	-	135.816
S106 & SCIL	9.566	22.478	-	-	-	32.045
Capital Receipts	16.471	0.318	4.200	14.849	-	35.838
Reserves	0.800	-	-	-	-	0.800
Major Repairs Allowance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revenue Contribution *	4.000	4.000	-	-	-	8.000
Prudential Borrowing	159.840	107.344	71.726	-	-	338.910
TOTAL	282.972	171.016	82.570	14.849	0.000	551.408

*This includes funding towards the annual highways capital maintenance budget used to maintain carriageways and structures.

9.6 The strategy has been to build up the capital financing budget in manageable increments, rather than taking a substantial one-off hit. This prudent approach will ensure that sufficient capital financing budget is in place as the Council's capital borrowing plans are undertaken over the medium to long term.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 The financial implications are set out throughout the report. As the budget proposals are for consultation at this stage, not agreement, there are no direct costs associated with agreeing the recommendations, other than for consultation, the costs of which are built into existing budgets.

11.0 Legal Implications

11.1 A local authority must budget so as to give a reasonable degree of certainty as to the maintenance of its services. In particular, local authorities are required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to calculate as part of their overall budget what amounts are appropriate for contingencies and reserves. The

Council must ensure sufficient flexibility to avoid going into deficit at any point during the financial year. The Director of Finance is required to report on the robustness of the proposed financial reserves.

- 11.2 Standing Order 24 sets out the process that applies within the Council for developing budget and capital proposals for 2022/23. There is a duty to consult representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on the Council's expenditure plans before each annual budget under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Council also has a general duty to consult representatives of Council Tax payers, service users and others under Section 3 (2) Local Government Act 1999.
- 11.3 The Council is also required to comply with other statutory and common law consultation obligations relevant to particular options being considered and with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council must consult at a formative stage in the decision making process and adequate time must be given for public consideration and response. The consultation information must be accurate, fair and balanced, give sufficient reasons for proposals to permit of intelligent consideration and response and the information produced by the consultation must conscientiously be taken into account in finalising the proposals.

12.0 Equality Implications

- 12.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010, Brent Council is required to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different to those who have a protected characteristic and those who don't when making decisions. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Although socio-economic status (people on low income, young and adult carers, people living in deprived areas, groups suffering multiple disadvantage, etc.) is not a characteristic protected by the Equality Act 2010, Brent Council is committed to considering the impact on socio-economic groups.
- 12.2 The PSED does not prevent decision makers from making difficult decisions in the context of the requirement to achieve a significant level of savings across all operations. It supports the Council to make robust decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way that considers the diverse needs of all our local communities and workforce. Consideration of the duty should precede and inform decision making. It is important that decision makers have regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material, including relevant equality analyses and consultation findings. If there are significant negative equality impacts arising from a specific proposal, then decision makers may decide to amend, defer for further consideration or reject a proposal after balancing all of the information available to them. This may mean making up the shortfall from additional reductions elsewhere.

13.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 13.1 Section six of this report provides more details of the statutory and the non-statutory consultation process with regards to the proposed budget setting process.

14.0 Human Resources

- 14.1 Where options included in the appendices require changes or reductions in staffing, the Council's Managing Change policy will apply.

Related Document:

Medium Term Financial Outlook, Cabinet July 2021

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Director of Finance

MTFS Savings Delivery Tracker 2021/22 - 2022/23

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Community Wellbeing	2021-23 CWB 001	Reablement	460	120	320	260	Delivering the outcomes of the Newton Europe project, to increase the number of people going through Reablement, create better quality Reablement and clearer pathways, and minimise costs. Make further savings by reducing local authority contributions to rehab (health) element of the service.	Green	£200k of this has already been achieved through no longer contributing to the pooled budget. The remaining £380k will be achieved through improved reablement care practices which should reduce the need for ongoing adult social care packages after reablement care packages have been completed. Currently it is likely that reablement will be delivered in-house, however the implementation timeline has been been delayed.
Community Wellbeing	2021-23 CWB 003	Placement Review	250		250		Continuing robust challenge of individual package costs based on evidence as part of annual placement reviews.	Green	These savings will be achieved throughout the year as care placements are reviewed and fee reductions achieved through re-negotiated fees and step downs in care requirements
Community Wellbeing	2021-23 CWB 004	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) provision	30		30		Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) could be done internally; cost savings based on options including payment to staff vs external BIAs.	Green	On track to deliver this saving.
Community Wellbeing	2021-23 CWB 005	Community Care recommissioning	750		750		Recommissioning all external day care / homecare provision, restructuring provision into a new, lower cost model and inclusion of Public Health (PH) outcomes into new model of deliver to allow for rebadging of funding from PH grant.	Green	Will be achieved through homecare reprocurement which will be completed by January 2021.
Community Wellbeing	2021-23 CWB 006	Properties to relieve Temporary Accommodation	1,430	560	1,990		Additional properties obtained which reduce demand for Temporary Accommodation.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Community Wellbeing	CWB C2	Salaries Capitalisation	100		100		Capitalising more salaries spend within the Housing Partnerships Service.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Community Wellbeing	CWB C3	Concessionary Fares / Freedom passes	1,000		1,000		Freedom Passes cost the Council £15m per annum and the charge in based on usage over the last two years. A reduction in charges are anticipated as a result of the pandemic. The current estimates from TFL indicate a 2-year benefit of £1m which is the midpoint of the best and worst case scenarios provided by TFL.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Sub Total			4,020	680	4,440	260			
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 001	General Efficiencies across R&E	215		215		A review of the forecast underspends across the department to identify underspends that are recurring.	Green	On track to deliver this saving, though may be subsumed into a larger extended savings exercise now necessary as part of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS).
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 002	Lighting Maintenance	140		140		10% efficiency saving from new lighting maintenance contract	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 003	Schemes/Drainage fees	100		100		Increase the level of fees applied to the delivery of large scale funded infrastructure improvement projects	Green	The Highways revenue budget is reliant on TfL LIP (Local Implementation Plan) funding which has been significantly reduced due to severe financial pressures. The ability to increase income from fees now very limited. Covid budget growth has been received to offset the non-delivery of this saving.

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 004	Damage Cost Recovery		50	50		Deploying an officer to more proactively recover the cost of repairs from developers and builders causing damage to the public highway.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 005	Building Control Fees Review	50			50	a) Charge more - increase Building Control (BC) published fees by 10% (up to 15 dwellings) b) more business from in-house	Green	One-off covid growth funding has been allocated for 2021/22 which will cover the slippage of this saving. On track to be achieved in 2022/23.
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 006	Brent Transport Services move		150		150	Relocating buses back to Brent from Harrow to reduce operating times and costs	Amber	There is a risk of delay to this saving being achieved due to a delay in appointing a consultant to review the service and identify where savings can be made
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 007	Pre-app service; review basic and enhanced offer	5		5		Review fees and charges for 'place making' advice as part of enhanced pre-app service	Green	Still achievable in that fees will increase; however covid impact on volume of work unknown
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 009	Apprenticeship levy commercial offer	15	30	45		Offer to businesses on how to use the apprenticeship levy	Green	Alternative savings will be found within R&E. Not achievable in the initially intended form. There are proposals nationally to reform the Apprenticeship Levy. We will await these changes before progressing any proposals.
Regeneration & Environment	2021-23 R&E 011	Facilities Management contract review	70		70		Utilise 12 month contract extension (July 2010 - June 2021) agreement to explore opportunities and impacts linked to savings.	Green	On track to be delivered
Regeneration & Environment	R&E A1	Capitalisation	340		340		Allocating activity to capital projects enabling costs to be transferred from General Fund (GF) to capital	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Regeneration & Environment	R&E A2	Brent Transport Service		100		100	A review of the commercial aspects of the service to identify operational efficiencies, particularly with respect to route rationalisation, parking arrangements and on-bus support requirements. This will extend to a joint review with Children and Young People (CYP) of what opportunities there might be to promote and facilitate better take-up of independent travel by pupils.	Amber	There is a risk of delay to this saving being achieved due to a delay in appointing a consultant to review the service and identify where savings can be made
Sub Total			935	330	965	300			
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 001	Clawback of unused Direct Payments	25		25		Implementation of card payments for Direct Payment clients means the service will be able to reclaim unused or overpaid funds immediately. For a variety of reasons direct payments may no longer be required by a family for the purposes of supporting their child. At present there is a risk that payments can continue for several months before they are amended. The card system will allow officers to identify overpayments and reclaim these rapidly. CWD Direct Payments value £500k per year. A 5% clawback rate would equal £25K.	Green	Savings on track to be delivered. Regular reviews will be undertaken to identify funds to be clawed back.

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 002	Short Breaks Centre	50			50	It is proposed that existing spare capacity of respite beds/nights at the Ade Adepitan Short Breaks Centre (SBC) will be sold to neighbouring authorities at market rates. The intention is to sell the beds at £730 per night for planned stays and £910 for emergency bookings. Selling the nights will reduce voids at relatively low marginal cost as payments for the management, building and other operational costs are met from within the existing budget.	Amber	Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic there have been fewer children using the facilities. The saving is dependent on neighbouring authorities purchasing beds at the centre.
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 003	Adjusting resources in demand led budgets	150			150	The rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 of population is historically low in Brent and the current rate is low when compared to statistical neighbours. Although with expected population growth this number is likely to increase, it should however be in line with the current statistical measure. With the assumption that this low rate continues over the next 18 months a reduction in the budget in line with posts currently being held vacant could be implemented to align resource to demand.	Amber	Saving assumption to be reviewed due to an increase in caseloads in the the LAC & Permanency service.
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 004	Review and zero base other service area budgets	100		100		Review and zero base other service area budgets to achieve and accumulate minor savings. Budget analysis to be carried out on non-staff and non-frontline service budgets across CYP. The exercise will concentrate on those budgets which have historically underspent or which represent discretionary spend. For example; 1. The CYP Learning and Development budget is centralised in the SQA service area, and has underspent in recent years. A costed plan could be designed to meet key requirements, such as ensuring Continuous Professional Development for social workers, and deliver a saving.	Green	On track to be delivered
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 005	Increased income target for the Gordon Brown Centre	50			50	Increased income target for the Gordon Brown Centre. The Centre has benefitted from recent capital investment, and successful summer trading in 2019 indicates a forecast surplus of £50k against the current net zero budget.	Amber	There has been reduced income due to Covid-19 restrictions which limited the centre's capacity and the activities that it could offer between April and June 2021. For example, there were no residential visits. This led to a significant fall in income. Since June, following the lifting of some restrictions in May, the centre has been able to host residential visits, albeit within some continuing restrictions. With the lifting of nearly all restrictions from 19 July, the centre is now able to operate at full capacity.
Children & Young People	2021-23 CYP 006	10% saving on commissioning	50		50		10% saving on commissioning when contracts become due. The CYP procurement forward plan identifies a number of contracts which are due to go out to tender for new contracts to commence for April 2021, including for Speech and Language Therapy services and Mental Health and Wellbeing services.	Green	On track to be delivered

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Children & Young People	CYP A3	Gordon Brown Centre		300	300		An expanded use of the Centre, either supporting families with children at risk of being taken into care or as a residential provision for Looked After Children, would realise either cost avoidance or additional income.	Green	This project is underway. A cross-departmental working group is in place to identify options and plan for the additional provision.
Children & Young People	CYP B1	Integration with health	180		180		Opportunities to deliver more efficient commissioning and service delivery, building on established joint commissioning, have previously been identified with health partners. It is proposed that these opportunities are revisited by Brent Council commissioning and/or directly providing provision on behalf of Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to deliver more efficient services and achieve savings.	Amber	CYP Commissioning & Resources team is working with Health and Public Health colleagues to review commissioning approaches with the aim to realise efficiencies.
Sub Total			605	300	655	250			
Assistant Chief Executive	2021-23 CE 003	Efficiency savings		100	100		Efficiency savings within Assistant Chief Executive	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Assistant Chief Executive	ACE A1	Executive support team	52		52		Delete 1.5 scale 4 posts (Executive support asst)	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Assistant Chief Executive	ACE A2	Governance	10		10		Deletion and realignment of post (NB: this is contingent on staying with virtual or physical meetings i.e. not moving to hybrid meetings)	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Assistant Chief Executive	ACE A3	Chief Executive Office	30		30		Reduce various small budget lines	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Sub Total			92	100	192	-			
Chief Executive	2021-23 CE 001	Efficiency savings		100	100		Efficiency savings within Legal, Human Resources (HR), Audit & Investigations	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Chief Executive	2021-23 CE 002	Efficiency savings		100	100		Efficiency savings within Finance	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Chief Executive	CE A1	Reduce an assistant account post		50	50		This saving can be achievable through efficiencies expected from the Oracle Cloud implementation, for example through more efficient working practices	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Chief Executive	CE A2	Energy savings	100		100		Savings are expected from reduced energy usage from council owned buildings.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Chief Executive	CE B2	Restructure in a Legal Team	60		60		Reduce Principal Lawyer posts by 1 enabling a team restructure	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Chief Executive	CE B5	Restructure in an HR team	50		50		Delete two roles and redistribute essential functions. Cease routine Occupational Health (OH) checks on new recruits.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Sub Total			210	250	460	-			
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 001	ICT Client and Application support - Income generation	80		80		Increase in income generated from charging for IT support	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 003	ICT Client and Application support - Printing Costs	40		40		Expected reduction in printing costs	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 004	ICT Client and Application support - Salaries		160	160		ICT Client & Applications staffing efficiencies	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 005	ICT Client and Application support - Oracle changes budget	20		20		Reduction in changes to the current Oracle system	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 006	Merger of Housing and BCS contact centre	50	50	100		Merger of Housing and Brent Customer Service (BCS) contact centre	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 007	Reduction in Postal Costs		30	30		Reduction in Postal Costs	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 008	Savings from new Council Tax Support scheme	50		50		Staff saving arising out of the new, simplified, Council Tax Support scheme	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 009	Increased automation in Customer Services	50	50	100		Increased automation in Customer Services	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 010	Replace IEG (on line benefits form)		75	75		Replace IEG (IEG is external company) (on line benefits form)	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 011	Staffing efficiencies in Customer Services	50	95	145		Staffing efficiencies in Customer Services	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	2021-23 CDS 012	Transformation - Staffing efficiencies		100	100		Staffing efficiencies	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	CDS A2	Customer Service Operations	75		75		A full review of the customer front face offer in the Civic Centre would take place from autumn 2020 onwards. The intention would be to retain a 4 hours a day 5-day week service managed by customer services (as has been the case since July 2020). In addition to this, it is proposed to establish an additional Hub in the Civic Centre in line with the current 5 community hubs. This would enhance the support on offer at the civic centre to our most vulnerable residents.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	CDS A4	Revenue and Debt	75		75		Reduction of vacant Enforcement Service Manager P06 post. Post is currently vacant.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Customer & Digital Services	CDS A5	Resilience contract	100		100		Review of benefits assessment process, review of the Scale 6 Assessment Officer posts and reduction in use of the resilience contract.	Green	Savings are on track to be delivered
Sub Total			590	560	1,150	-			
Corporate	CORP A1	Reduction in procurement spend	500	500	1,000		This new work stream consists of an ongoing procurement and contract management review, covering new procurement activity, re-scoping of contracts and reviewing inflationary uplifts.	Green	This saving is expected to be delivered following a review of procurement spend and upcoming contract renewals by the Commissioning and Procurement Board
Corporate	CORP A2	Voluntary Redundancy Scheme	1,500		1,500		The voluntary redundancy scheme closed in October 2020 and based on the number of accepted applications c£1.5m can be saved from the budgeted establishment.	Green	Savings have been delivered

Department	Index	Reference	2021/22 original saving (£000)	2022/23 original saving (£000)	Savings on track to be delivered (£000)	Slippage on delivery but still achievable (£000)	Description	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Sub Total			2,000	500	2,500	-			
Grand Total			8,452	2,720	10,362	810			

Appendix D: Summary of the HRA Business Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes proposal for HRA rent setting for 2022/23 and provides an update to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, along with highlighting the key assumptions required to reflect national policies and financial impacts to the HRA. The business plan projections reflect the income and expenditure required to manage the landlord function and, at the same time, work towards the Council's objectives to increase Council housing supply in Brent.
- 1.2 This report does not attempt to summarise all aspects of the HRA business plan but aims to highlight areas where particular issues should be noted and consider options for future budget strategy.

2. National and local policies that can impact the HRA Business Plan

- 2.1 The HRA self-financing system for Council Housing was implemented in April 2012. Under HRA self-financing, the Council's HRA continues to be a ring-fenced account (income and expenditure) for Council dwellings. HRA self-financing is intended to allow local authority landlords to manage and maintain their own stock from the rental income they generate.
- 2.2 In October 2018, the government announced that the HRA borrowing cap would be lifted, revoking the previous determinations that specified local authorities' limits on indebtedness. This has provided councils with new borrowing powers to increase their housing supply, with a focus on mixed-tenure development including homes for social rent, affordable rent and shared equity products.
- 2.3 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced radical changes to the welfare system, which included a reduction of housing benefits for social tenants if their accommodation is considered larger than required. It also introduced a new universal credit system to be implemented over time, where benefit payments would be made directly to the tenant, rather than the landlord. This change increases the risk of non-collection, which could lead to a rise in rent arrears.
- 2.4 The Welfare Reform Act 2016 imposed a 1% rent reduction a year for 4 years from April 2016 to March 2020. The final financial year of reductions being 2019/20. The resulting loss of rental income for Brent over this period was £23 million when compared to the income that would have been due to the Council if this was not imposed.
- 2.5 It was therefore necessary to make revenue savings within the HRA to compensate for the loss of rental income. A combination of these savings and the use of HRA reserves has helped to achieve a balanced budget during the period of rent reduction, as required by legislation.

- 2.6 In October 2017, the government announced a return to the option of increasing rent by CPI plus 1% for 5 years for all local authorities, starting in April 2020.
- 2.7 A return to the CPI plus 1% model for 5 years from April 2020 will provide some stability and certainty over planned investment in the current stock, service improvements and new developments, at least in the short to medium term. The approach to be taken by the government beyond 2025 remains uncertain for all local authorities. In the absence of this information, it is assumed in the business plan that rent will remain as CPI plus 1% after 2025.
- 2.8 Increasing rents by CPI plus 1% over the next 5 years allows profiling of major works to be funded without the need to borrow in the long term. This creates the possibility for a borrowing strategy to be exclusively aimed towards new builds and housing supply. It is important to consider both short and long-term impacts of rent setting, as it will have an accumulated impact on future budget availability, similar to the way council tax is modelled.
- 2.9 Increasing rents by CPI plus 1% will also help the Council to deliver its commitment to fire safety improvement works, address the gaps identified from the stock condition survey, as well as fund agreed uplifts in contracts without affecting the delivery of essential services.
- 2.10 The independent review of building regulations and fire safety, also known as the Hackitt Report, was published in 2018. The report set out over 50 recommendations for the delivery of a robust regulatory system. As a result, in June 2019, the government published the 'Building a Safer Future' consultation detailing proposals to achieve long-term reform of the building safety system. This document sets out the government's proposals for a reformed building safety system covering the performance of all buildings, as well as the management of fire and structural safety risks in new and existing buildings in scope.
- 2.11 A low-rise fire safety programme was developed by Brent Housing Management to address risks in 1,208 converted and purpose built blocks. With regard to high-rise blocks, it was decided to go over and above regulatory standards by carrying out Type 4 Fire Risk Assessments across all tower blocks over 12 storeys, the outcome of which found no fundamental issues or safety concerns. The Council is currently in the process of developing a robust major works programme, as outlined in the Asset Management Strategy, to deliver the highest standards of compliance, providing ongoing peace of mind and reassurance to residents when it comes to fire safety in tenant homes.
- 2.12 As part of the South Kilburn regeneration programme, the Gloucester House & Durham Court site is being redeveloped to provide 235 new affordable homes to assured social tenants. These are expected to be fully occupied by Brent's residents in 2021/22. Brent Council owns the freehold and the Council's housing team, together with the Council's energy team, will provide the billing for heat to the residents. The associated costs will be funded by service charges and

through the HRA asset management strategy, in line with other communal heating networks.

- 2.13 In May 2019, the UK government declared a climate change emergency, committing to target net zero carbon emissions by 2050. In July 2019, Brent declared a local climate and ecological emergency, and has committed to working towards carbon neutrality by the year 2030.
- 2.14 London Councils have included a target of an average EPC Band B rating for London's housing stock by 2030 as part of its Joint Statement with the London Environment Directors' Network on Climate Change. Currently, 35% of Brent's council housing stock is performing better than the national average of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band D. However, 100% of housing stock falls short of EPC band B. A key feature of the borough-wide climate strategy will be to achieve an average level of EPC band B by retrofitting all housing properties by 2030. Research and piloting work on this is currently underway, and will form part of future updates to the Asset Management Strategy.
- 2.15 Brent has committed to an ambitious strategic housing target to deliver 5,000 new affordable homes over the five year period between 2019 - 2024. The 5,000 new affordable homes includes the provision of 1,000 to be delivered directly by the Council by the 31st March 2024. As of July 2021, 262 homes have already been delivered, with more in pipeline. The current baseline business plan has incorporated the expected delivery of an additional 700 new homes, along with the associated income and expenditure.
- 2.16 Following the identification of urgent remedial works required to Granville New Homes, Cabinet reviewed the proposed options presented in October 2021. It was agreed to dispose of the blocks at Granville New Homes owned by First Wave Housing (FWH) to the Council's Housing Revenue Account, subject to a consultation with residents. The transfer involves 110 properties, along with associated income and expenditures to maintain the stock.

3. Rent setting proposal for 2021/22

- 3.1 The table below shows a snapshot of current average rent levels from occupied properties and the proposed increase of CPI plus 1%, which equates to 4.1% for 2022/23. All new re-lets are charged at Formula rent and new builds are charged at Formula or Affordable rent, updated rent levels are reflected in the current average rent for 21/22, therefore average rent can change depending on time of reporting.

Bed Size	Current Average Rent 2021/22	Proposed Average Rent 2022/23 (4.1%)	Proposed v Current Rent
	£	£	£
Bedsits	88.51	92.14	3.63
1	103.95	108.21	4.26
2	120.61	125.55	4.94
3	132.20	137.62	5.42
4	144.61	150.54	5.93
5	156.82	163.24	6.43
6+	176.23	183.46	7.23
Average Rent	118.74	123.61	4.87

- 3.2 The proposed rent rates for 2022/23 will be £4.87 per week (4.1%) higher, on average, when compared to the previous financial year.
- 3.3 A rent increase of 4.1% is estimated to result in an additional £2.0m of income when compared to 2021/22. This is predominately to fund inflation led growth in contract costs and salaries, due to national inflation increasing by 2.6% when compared to last year, which is a reflection of current economic climate. The increase will also allow to ensure that there are sufficient funds to deliver the required capital investment in the Council's existing housing stock.
- 3.4 Brent Housing Management provide appropriate support to tenants who are struggling to pay their rent. The primary objective is to ensure that tenants have all the support that they can get, rather than pursuing an eviction. Officers liaise with tenants in order to establish the reason why they may be struggling to pay their rent and from the information received, assess what support can be provided. Support options include assessing whether the tenant is claiming and/or receiving all the welfare benefits that they are entitled to, assisting them to claim from the resident support fund and/or negotiating a suitable payment plan with them. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brent Housing Management endeavoured to identify vulnerable tenants and have since kept in contact with them in order to ensure that they continue to get the required support to sustain their tenancy.
- 3.5 The net rent amounts exclude service charges. Service charges are a recharge to tenants and leaseholders based on actual costs incurred in providing specific services, such as estate cleaning.
- 3.6 Two other scenarios have been modelled:
- Rents increased by just CPI (3.1% in September 2021). This is estimated to increase rental income by £1.5m. However, this would result in a £1.0m

deficit (as per the table below), which will need to be covered by the operating reserve.

- ii. Rents frozen at current rates. However, this will result in a shortfall of £2.5m and will not be absorbed by operating reserve of £1.4m.

Both of the options above would result in reduced maintenance and service improvements to tenants and leaseholders.

3.7 The table below illustrates the different options for rent setting and the projected outturn for 2022/23 as a result of indicative budget requirements to specific expenditure lines:

3.8

Rent Setting Scenarios 2022/23	Budget Requirements		Rent Setting Scenarios		
	Budgets 2021/22	Indicative Budget 2022/23	4.1%	3.1%	Freeze
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Net Rent	(48.4)	(50.4)	(2.0)	(1.5)	0.0
Rent related expenditure (not recoverable through service charges)					
Supervision and management	12.0	12.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Repairs and maintenance	12.6	13.4	0.8	0.8	0.8
Efficiency savings	0.0	(0.5)	(0.5)	(0.5)	(0.5)
Major works	13.5	14.7	1.2	1.2	1.2
Provision for bad debts	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rents rates and other charges	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Debt management & financing	9.2	9.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net (Surplus) / Deficit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	2.0

3.9 Supervision and management costs include allowances for pay inflation uplifts in the business plan. An assumed 4% inflation in 2022/23 will amount to an additional £0.5m budget requirement compared to previous year.

3.10 Repairs and maintenance contracts include an annual RPI inflationary uplift assumed at 4%, this amounts to additional budget requirement of £0.5m. There is an additional budget requirement for cyclical maintenance of fire safety monitoring devices £0.3m.

3.11 Efficiency savings targets are incorporated into the budget setting process and business plan, in line with the Council's overall budget setting process. A 2%

efficiency target across management and repairs will result in a £0.5m budget reduction for 2022/23.

- 3.12 Capital investment decisions derived from the Asset Management Strategy will need to be made in line with the affordability projections set out in the HRA Business Plan. It is envisaged that any significant investment identified in the Asset Management Strategy will require remodelling of the Business Plan to ensure that the cumulative financial impact of investment is sustainable over the long term, so that the HRA does not face a budget deficit over the next 30 years.
- 3.13 The provision for bad debt is maintained at the same levels as previous year, it is a key budget risk arising from the ongoing global pandemic, adding to the risk of under-recovery resulting from the rollout of Universal Credit. Covid-19 and Universal Credit are expected to have an impact on rental income collection rates, which could lead to an increased likelihood of bad debts arising. The average collection rate in 2020/21 was 99%%, which led to a £0.5m increase (from £4.8m to £5.2m) in rental arrears as at 31st of March 2021.
- 3.14 The HRA business plain aims to set aside appropriate funds and incorporate a voluntary debt repayment policy that mirrors the General Fund approach. The calculations involve profiling debt repayments for new builds over 60 years, and debt repayment for major works over 25 years, based on the rate of borrowing for the debt. The repayment modelling commences from debt incurred in 2019/20 onwards, reflecting the period when HRA borrowing exceeded a previously set debt cap of £199.3m. Repayments will be possible in years where there is sufficient capacity within the accumulated operating reserve.
- 3.15 HRA operating reserve as at 31st March 2021 was £1.4m, and it is not anticipated to be used while rent increases are set at CPI plus 1%. Currently, the business plan models to achieve a minimum operating reserve balance that represents an estimated 3% of income (£200 per unit), which is approximately £1.6m. The operating reserve is necessary to manage unexpected deficits, or for smoothing in-year budget pressures due to timing differences between the cost of building new homes and receiving rental income, so that it can offset the increased borrowing costs. In addition to the need for the HRA to balance competing demands, such as investing in supply of new homes, the Covid-19 pandemic has further stressed the importance of maintaining adequate level of reserves.

4. Summary of key assumptions in the HRA Business Plan

- 4.1 The HRA business plan provides long-term financial forecasts resulting from the implications of the Council's spending, investment and rent-setting decisions, based on the authority's current income, expenditure and investment expectations. The data is combined with key assumptions on how costs and income might change in the future to illustrate what the authority can reasonably expect to happen, using the best available information.

4.2 Regular review of assumptions is important in order to help the Council to make early decisions that help keep the HRA in balance, whilst also delivering substantial levels of investment in Council housing.

4.3 A summary of the key assumptions that underpin the 30 Year Business Plan are presented below:

Description	How it impacts the Business Plan	Assumptions used in the Business Plan
HRA stock movements	Projected rental income is based on stock numbers	Baseline stock numbers in the current year are adjusted for projected RTB sales and new affordable housing supply
Inflation on supplies and services	All income and expenditure is adjusted for inflation to reflect general cost increases	Rental income uses CPI, all other expenditure is assumed at RPI. CPI 2% reducing to 1.5% from year 5. RPI 4% reducing to 3.5% from year 5
Minimum Working Balance	Target level of minimum reserve for any overspends	Working balance requirements assumed at 3% of income giving circa £1.6m
Rental Income	Tenant rent projections are driven by stock numbers and average rent. Tenant rent is the largest source of income for the HRA	Average rent is currently set at £118 per week. Rent is adjusted as per government policy. Assumed CPI+1% in 2022/23 (4.1%).
Supervision and Management Costs	Rental income is allocated to management costs of providing a landlord service	Cost assumed to increase by RPI each year
Service Charges	Cost of specific services are charged back to tenants and leaseholders	Service charge uplift is in line with anticipated cost increases at RPI
Voids	Level of void properties have an impact on rental income that can be charged	Rent loss though voids is estimated at 1.6% of rent

Description	How it impacts the Business Plan	Assumptions used in the Business Plan
Bad Debts	Rent arrears that are not collected results in loss of income	Assumed on average 1.5% of rent
Repairs and Maintenance Costs	Rental income is allocated to repairs budgets	Expenditure is adjusted in line with RPI and stock movements
Right to Buy Sales	Stock reductions reduce rental income and set a target for the Council to achieve 1-4-1 replacements	Projected 16 sales per annum
Interest rate on borrowing	Rental income is allocated to financing debt	New debt is assumed at 3% interest
Capital Programme - Major Works	Investment to maintain housing stock	Profiling over 30 years based on affordability of £15 per annum. This will be updated with ongoing updates to Asset Management Strategy
HRA Debt Balance	The HRA debt balance as at 31st of March 2021 was £245m.	Accumulated reserve balances will determine capacity for debt repayments
RTB Receipts	Rolling five year spend targets are set by MHCLG based on RTB sales	It is currently assumed in the business plan that spend targets will be met to achieve 1-4-1 replacement of homes
Affordable Housing Supply	The Council has committed to providing 1,000 affordable homes by 31 March 2024	The current baseline business plan assumes 700 new affordable homes with an estimated cost of £172m
Efficiency Savings	Savings contribute towards offsetting budget pressures	2% efficiency savings target across revenue costs on management and repairs

5. Sensitivity Analysis

5.1 Alongside the baseline assumptions, sensitivity analysis have been undertaken to explore the impact of a range of assumptions. Considering each of these in turn enables to read the baseline financial projections in the context of potential changes, and so gives an indication of key risks. The key sensitivities analysed are:

- RPI cost inflation 1% higher, at 5% in years 2 to 4
- Repairs and major works 1.5% higher than inflation in years 2 to 4
- Rent freeze imposed from 2025/26 for 4 years
- Voids and bad debts 1% higher from year 2 onwards
- CPI reduction by 1% from year 5 onwards

5.2 The sensitivity analysis demonstrates that:


- A) The baseline assumptions avoid deficits over 30 years with projected reserve balance of £67.33m in year 30.
- B) Cost inflations to RPI between years 2 to 4 from current economic uncertainties absorbs inflations in the short term at 1% higher than baseline (4%), however, it is projected to result in a deficit of (£7.27m) in the long term by year 30, as uplifts in rental income are not sufficient to keep up with rising costs.
- C) Repair cost inflations of 1.5% (total inflation 5.5%) from year 2 to 4, is projected to be absorbed within business plan model, if all other assumptions in the baseline remain consistent. The reserve balance in year 30 is projected at £17.46m (£49.87m less than baseline).
- D) Rent freeze 4 years from 2025/26 can have a significant impact on the health of the business plan, particularly in the medium to long term, resulting in deficits from year 20 onwards, with a negative reserve balance of (£60.28m) projected in year 30.
- E) Rental income inflations assumed in the baseline is projected to absorb 1% increases to voids (1.6% baseline) and bad debts (1.5% baseline) over the life of the business plan. The projected 30-year reserve balance is £25.93m (£41.4m less than baseline).
- F) If CPI was to reduce by 1% to 0.5% from year 5 onwards, rental income inflation will be 1.5% per annum. The impact of this will lead to a deficit from year 18 and business plan unviable over 30 years. The projected 30 year reserve balance is a deficit of (£160.05m).

6. Risks

- 6.1 The business plan is based on a set of assumptions, and there will always be an element of risk of significant changes in cashflow projections in the revenue and capital accounts, if any of the assumptions fail to materialise.
- 6.2 The main variables that could affect the long-term viability of the Business Plan are rent levels and long-term major works and repairs. Whilst currently the Council has the power to increase rents annually up to a maximum of CPI plus 1%, after April 2025, the implications of future Government regulated rent policy remain uncertain. The Coronavirus pandemic is also likely to have a long-term impact, a potential severe or prolonged recession which impacts employment can affect the collection rates and increase the levels of bad debts incurred by the HRA. The pandemic has prompted a major recession and is likely to accelerate the implementation of digital solutions. Cost pressures and income losses are continuously monitored and updated in the Council's Covid-19 Budgetary Impact Tracker.
- 6.3 The impacts of Universal Credit can affect the HRA Business Plan, as the number of rent arrears may increase considerably. A number of mitigations are in place to help support tenants with universal credit such as:
- Continuing raising awareness with residents about Universal Credit, including what it means for them
 - Developing future delivery partnership with DWP
 - Establishing delivery partnership agreement that supports the most vulnerable
 - Increasing provision for digital inclusion and improve capacity for residents to manage accounts independently
 - Continuing to review strategy for maximising rent collection that reflects Universal Credit implications for transition and full service
 - Investing in technology to optimise operating process and generate efficiencies
- 6.4 As the Council adds more stock to its portfolio and complexities of new additional requirements to building standards are increasing, such as fire safety works and climate change, the cost of major works is rising. At the moment, there is no government subsidy available to address these changes. The asset management strategy and investment plans must be approached cautiously and allow for flexibility.
- 6.5 Impacts of national housing policies and any changes proposed in future Government papers can have an adverse impact on the HRA and could require additional resources to address any unexpected changes.

- 6.6 Uncertainty surrounding Brexit can lead to delays in housing policy decisions. The value of sterling could fall, which would lead to an increase in the cost of imported materials. The RPI in September 2021 is 4.9%, the business plan has built in an annual uplift on costs of 4% as an estimated average projection over 30 years.
- 6.7 The HRA debt cap has been removed and significant borrowing is required to invest in stock in order to increase housing supply in Brent. The HRA is exposed to interest rate fluctuations, which can have a significant impact on revenue budgets and the overall business plan. In March 2020, the government announced a discounted rate of PWLB for the HRA. This means the HRA can secure borrowing at a level of 100 basis points above gilts. Brent Council operates a one-pool approach to its borrowing, where the HRA receives a proportion of the Council's overall borrowing but with the reduced rate. The Council expects to be able to secure some long-term borrowing for the HRA at these low rates. The expected borrowing rate for the HRA is predicted to remain low over the next few years due to the global pandemic, however the expectation is that it will rise in the future. Interest rates for borrowing in the HRA are currently at 2% in 2021 and the business plan has built in an annual interest rate of 3% on average to cover any fluctuations.
- 6.8 Spend targets for 1-4-1 receipts set by Government mean that the Council may need to transfer receipts with interest, if spend targets are not met within 5 years of receiving the receipt. There is currently an agreement in place with the GLA to ring-fence RTB receipts for a further 3 years if Brent transfers over any unspent RTB receipts to the government.
- 6.9 There are also demographic changes and a general recognition that there should be better integration of housing, social care and health services. As time goes on, the proportion of the population who are elderly and / or vulnerable increases and there is an increased need for appropriate housing. However, with limited clarity on the government's funding of supported housing, it is likely that the problem of how to house vulnerable elderly people will intensify.
- 6.10 Since the early 2000s, a large number of councils in London, including LB Brent, entered into agreements with water companies to collect payments from their social housing tenants towards the water and sewerage charges. The councils were operating under the assumption that they were entitled to a discount from the water providers when they bought the water rates, on the basis that they were acting as their agent in collecting the water rates. The discount was to cover for bad debts, void loss and commission. However, following court rulings involving Southwark and Kingston-Upon-Thames, it was deemed that the councils were providing these water collection services as a 'water reseller', and not as an 'agent' of the water companies, as initially assumed. This means that the councils were only allowed to levy a small administration charge on top of the amount charged by the water undertaker, and therefore, councils have been overcharging their tenants for water and sewerage.

- 6.11 Therefore, Brent, and all local authorities, who had similar agreements with regional water companies, will need to reimburse all social housing tenants for any overcharged amounts. Brent had two such water collection agreements in respect of water charges, one with Thames Water and another with Affinity Water (formerly Three Valleys).
- 6.12 As these sums were received into each authorities' Housing Revenue Account, the money for these reimbursements will need to come out of local authorities' Housing Revenue Accounts as well. For Brent, the cost of refund is estimated to be £7.2m. Brent have set aside provisions for this in the accounts.

 Brent	Cabinet 6 December 2021
	Report from the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment
Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21	
Wards Affected:	All - Excluding parts of Harlesden, Kensal Green, Stonebridge and Tokyngton where Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation is the Local Planning Authority.
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	One: Appendix 1 Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Martin Holley Infrastructure Planning Team Leader 020 8937 4811 martin.holley@brent.gov.uk

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report introduces the Council's second Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), which has been prepared in line with the CIL Regulations (amended 2019).

1.2 It outlines:

- Performance on Brent's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in relation to the previous financial year (2020/21);
- Performance on Section 106 (S106) planning obligations in relation to 2020/21;
- Amount of Section 278 Highways agreements entered into and for what purpose in relation to 2020/21; and
- An indication of future spending priorities on infrastructure in line with the draft Brent Local Plan and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

2 Recommendations

2.1 To note the content of this report and Appendix 1 'Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21

- 2.2 To recommend that the Infrastructure Funding Statement be approved for publication.

3 Detail

- 3.1 The Council has been collecting the borough's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) since July 2013. CIL is a levy applied to most developments granted planning permission that commence, and is for infrastructure to support the development of the area. CIL is also important in demonstrating to communities the benefits that new development can bring, including through key infrastructure projects, place-making and local improvements.
- 3.2 This is the Council's second Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) and it covers the financial year **2020/21**. It has been prepared in line with the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and covers income and expenditure relating to CIL, S106 obligations and s278 highways agreements.
- 3.3 It also, where possible, sets out future spending priorities on infrastructure in line with the growth identified in the draft Brent Local Plan, Borough Plan, Capital Pipeline and Draft Long Term Transport Strategy.
- 3.4 CIL is allocated in accordance with the capital programme governance arrangements, in line with the corporate strategies listed in the Council Plan, Black Community Action Plan, Poverty Commission Action Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy, Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy and Draft Long Term Transport Strategy. The Capital Pipeline, Local Plan and IDP are intrinsically linked to this with any project seeking a CIL allocation required to go to the Capital Programme Board. Any project seeking a CIL allocation of more than £250,000 is then required to go to Cabinet for final approval.
- 3.5 The borough CIL receipts can be broken down into three portions – the Strategic CIL, the Neighbourhood CIL and the Administration CIL. A Mayoral CIL of £60 per sqm is collected as well and passed on to TfL on a quarterly basis. The borough keeps 4% of this levy for administrative purposes. All London Boroughs are subject to this levy, with the money used to fund Crossrail 1 (the Elizabeth Line) and Crossrail 2.
- 3.6 Strategic CIL must be used to fund the improvement or replacement of infrastructure (e.g. education, transport facilities, medical facilities, schools, sporting and open space/recreation facilities) that supports growth in the borough. Whilst it cannot be used to resolve pre-existing deficiencies, it can secure improvements to existing infrastructure if it is shown to that this supports development and this request is eligible for CIL funding in line with CIL regulations.
- 3.7 CIL is a tool for local planning authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. The IFS is an annual requirement that reports to the Government, among other things, how the CIL has been spent in line with the regulations. Reporting on CIL in this way helps communities and developers

see how contributions have been spent ensuring a transparent and accountable system.

- 3.8 The Council also enters in to Section 106 agreements with developers - a mechanism which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms. S106 agreements are focused on site-specific mitigation of the impact of development such as securing affordable housing or requiring improvements to an access road. CIL, on the other hand, is designed to raise funds for infrastructure needed generally as a result of an increase in development in an area, and is spent on community infrastructure projects across the borough.
- 3.9 In September 2019 changes to the CIL Regulations included a requirement for local planning authorities to publish an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement – the first of which was published in December 2020 – outlining how much CIL and s106 income it has received for the previous year, what it has been spent on and future spending priorities. The statement must be published each year by 31st December.
- 3.10 The IFS is a statement of spend as required by the regulations and not a statement on the allocation process of CIL and S106.
- 3.11 Since the Council starting collecting CIL in 2013, annual reports have been produced setting out the amount of CIL income, expenditure and retained receipts for the reported financial years. Monitoring of s106 income and spend is done through the Annual Monitoring Report. This is the second time to report on both planning obligations in a combined report. Reporting on planning obligations in this way allows our communities to have a better understanding of how developer contributions have been used to deliver infrastructure in Brent.

Summary of CIL performance in 2020/21

- 3.12 The Infrastructure Funding Statement is set out at Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.13 Brent CIL is made up of Strategic CIL (SCIL), Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) and CIL Admin. A summary of Brent CIL receipts, allocation and expenditure for 2020/21 is set out below:

Table 1: Total Brent CIL receipts

BCIL item	Total receipts
The total value of BCIL set out in all demand notices (issued when a planning permission is granted) issued in 2020/21	£11,293,559.33
The total amount of SCIL received	£12,883,218.86
The total amount of NCIL received	£2,416,309.91
The total amount of BCIL Admin received	£805,238.36
Total BCIL receipts received	£16,104,767.13

- 3.14 In 2020/21 SCIL was allocated to the following infrastructure items:

Table 2: Total SCIL allocated in 2020/21

Infrastructure project	SCIL Allocation	Ward
Northwick Park Highways Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Underwriting	£10,000,000*	Northwick Park
Onside Youth Zone	£2,150,000	Tokington
Total SCIL allocated	£12,150,000	

*£10 million has been allocated to underwrite the HIF towards a road to facilitate the development at Northwick Park however, we expect this to be repaid by the HIF. Until it is repaid in full, this £10 million cannot be reallocated and is considered 'allocated'.

3.15 In 2020/21 SCIL was spent on the following infrastructure items:

Table 3: Total SCIL expenditure in 2020/21

Infrastructure project	SCIL Expenditure	Ward
Wembley Two Way Working	£105,388.78	Tokington
Wembley North End Road	£2,487,673.03	Tokington
Olympic Way Public Realm Improvements	£6,163,929	Tokington
Morland Gardens Education Facility	£284,973.18	Stonebridge
Total SCIL expenditure	£9,041,963.99	

3.16 A summary of SCIL at the end of the reported year:

Table 4: SCIL at the end 2020/21

CIL Type	Total Unallocated	Total allocated	Total Unspent*
SCIL	£53,781,362.57	£41,340,000.09	£95,121,362.66

**Unspent is money which is yet to be allocated along with money that has been allocated and has yet to be drawn down by the projects to which it is allocated.*

Neighbourhood CIL performance in 2020/21

3.17 For the reported year **£2,416,309.91 of NCIL** was collected.

3.18 **£3,783,229.03** was spent on projects during the same period.

3.19 Through the NCIL bidding process undertaken in 2020/21, the Council approved 23 projects for funding to deliver a variety of infrastructure projects across the borough. The projects and allocated NCIL amounts, along with NCIL spend are outlined in Appendix 2 of the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Table 5: NCIL position at the end of 2020/21

CIL Type	Total Unallocated	Total allocated	Total Unspent*
NCIL	£6,459,751.80	£6,999,135.13	£13,458,886.93

**Unspent is money which is yet to be allocated along with money that has been allocated and has yet to be drawn down by the projects to which it is allocated.*

Summary of S106 performance in 2020/21

- 3.20 During the reported year, 22 S106 agreements were negotiated which are outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the IFS.

Table 6: S106 Receipts

S106 summary	Amount
The total amount of money to be provided under any planning obligations which were entered into during 2020/21	£3,166,581.41
The total amount of money under any planning obligations which was received during 2020/21	£1,606,137.07
The total amount of money under any planning obligations which was received before the reported year but has not been allocated	£6,640,646.55

Table 7: Summary of S106 allocation and expenditure

Name of project	S106 expenditure
The total amount of money (received under any planning obligations) which was allocated but not spent during the reported year	£1,377,336.31
The total amount of money (received under any planning obligations) which was spent by the authority (including transferring it to another person to spend)	£2,096,584.74

- 3.21 The total amount of money received (under any planning obligations) during any year which was retained at the end of 2020/21 is **£14,029,709.72**. Appendix 3 of the IFS shows the projects which had S106 money allocated to them in 2020/21.
- 3.22 For non-monetary contributions – 801 affordable housing units were secured with an average of 48% affordable units secured per scheme. The names of the schemes along with the number of affordable housing units secured are in Table 13 of the IFS.

Future spending priorities

- 3.23 The draft Local Plan outlines an ambitious strategy for development in the borough to 2041. Over this time, the borough will continue to see a significant increase in its population, similar to levels seen over the last 20 years. This will require a substantial amount of new homes, jobs and associated physical and

social infrastructure. The Council Plan and other strategies also set out capital needs to meet the needs of our growing population.

- 3.24 The Council has an ambitious programme of capital expenditure, and Strategic CIL will be used to fund, in part or full, some of these items, which are linked to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and other Borough priorities. The Council will continue to focus the spending of CIL and S106 receipts on essential infrastructure to support the level of growth outlined. It will do this jointly with partners through effective and ongoing engagement ensuring key infrastructure is delivered at the right time and in the right place to support growth and development.
- 3.25 SCIL funds have matured over a number of years. Prudent financial practice and good future infrastructure planning demands that the fund is judiciously allocated over time. This allows for important infrastructure coming forward in the future to be funded. In view of this, the Council is currently updating its IDP to help with the future planning of infrastructure ensuring it aligns with the growth anticipated to come forward in the draft Local Plan. This provides transparency to residents, members, infrastructure providers and the wider development industry on the type of infrastructure required to support long-term growth and development of the borough.
- 3.26 It is important to highlight that although a significant amount of SCIL has been collected over the past couple of years, the Council has nevertheless secured a significant amount of infrastructure investment through other mechanisms. These include planning consents, infrastructure provided within developments and funding for infrastructure secured via s106 legal agreements. Infrastructure has also been secured through work that has been undertaken with partners such as the Department for Education and TfL.

Next steps

- 3.27 Following Cabinet, if agreed, the IFS will be published online at; <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/community-infrastructure-levy-cil/>

Alternative Options Considered

- 3.28 The requirement to produce an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement is set out in the amended CIL regulations (2019). The Council must prepare an IFS for 2020/21 and publish it online before 31st December 2021. For these reasons, no alternative options have been considered.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 No implications as a result of this report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The CIL Regulations (as amended, 2019) require local planning authorities to produce an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement and publish it each year by 31st December. It will include:

- The total value of CIL set out in all demand notices issued in the reported year;
- The total amount of CIL receipts for the reported year;
- The total amount of CIL receipts, collected by the authority before the reported year but which have not been allocated;
- The total amount of CIL receipts, collected by the authority before the reported year and which have been allocated in the reported year;
- The total amount of CIL expenditure for the reported year; and
- The total amount of CIL receipts, whenever collected, which were allocated but not spent during the reported year.

5.2 In relation to CIL expenditure for the reported year, summary details of:

- The items of infrastructure on which CIL (including land payments) has been spent, and the amount of CIL spent on each item;
- The amount of CIL spent on repaying money borrowed, including any interest, with details of the items of infrastructure which that money was used to provide (wholly or in part); and
- The amount of CIL spent on administrative expenses pursuant to regulation 61, and that amount expressed as a percentage of CIL collected in that year in accordance with that regulation.

5.3 In relation to CIL receipts, whenever collected, which were allocated but not spent during the reported year, summary details of the items of infrastructure on which CIL (including land payments) has been allocated, and the amount of CIL allocated to each item.

5.4 The Statement must address CIL collection and spend, infrastructure projects and S106 collection and spend.

6 Equality Implications

6.1 The infrastructure projects have been established as part of the evidence work to support the draft Local Plan which has been subject to Equality Impact Assessment. This has informed the policies and projects including analysis of potential alternatives, to seek to reduce adverse impacts and wherever possible improve the outcomes for those with protected characteristics and the social, economic and environmental outcomes of the Plan.

7 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 Quarterly reporting on infrastructure priorities and projects as well as CIL and S106 expenditure and income has been provided to the Lead Member for Regeneration Property & Planning over the financial year, providing clear links back to decisions, which in turn help to deliver priorities and objectives of the draft Brent Local Plan and other Borough priorities.

7.2 The Lead Member was briefed on 15th October 2021 on this report and the Appendix, the Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21.

8 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

8.1 None.

Report sign off:

Alan Lunt
Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

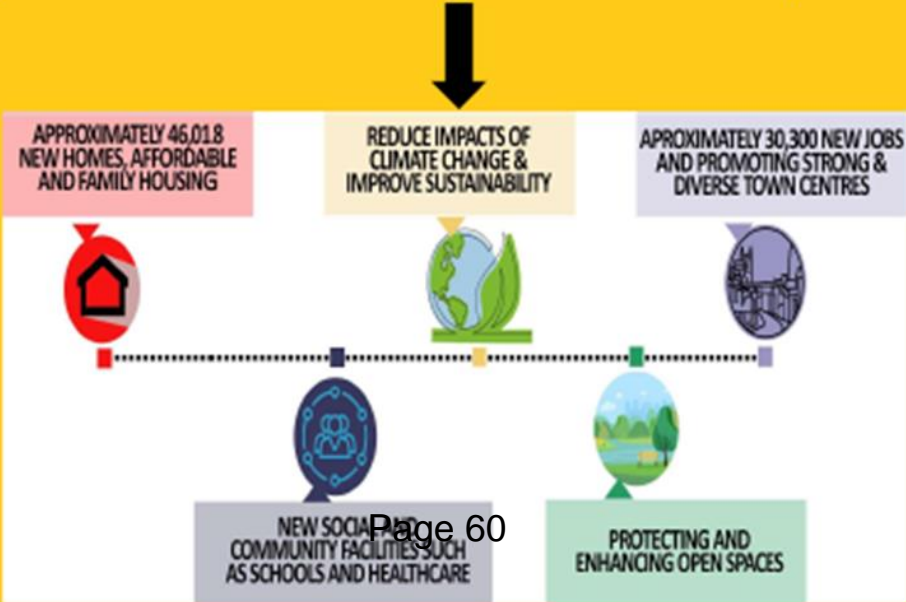
BRENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT 2020/21



BOROUGH PROFILE



Emerging Brent Local Plan sets a vision for development to 2041



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Brent is the 6th largest borough in London by area, with a population of 334,700, the 7th largest population in London. It is projected to grow by at least 17% and reach 400,000 people by 2040.
- 1.2 The draft Brent Local Plan outlines an ambitious strategy to accommodate development in the borough to 2041. To support this growth, significant investment in infrastructure will be required.
- 1.3 An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) supports the draft Local Plan. It sets out short, medium and longer-term infrastructure requirements to address growth needs. The IDP will be used to support the allocation of Community Infrastructure (CIL) and Section 106 (s106) funding.

The Infrastructure Funding Statement

- 1.4 In September 2019 changes to the CIL Regulations came into effect which included a requirement for local planning authorities to publish an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement – the first of which was published online in December 2020 – outlining how much CIL and s106 income it has received for the previous year, what the income has been spent on and future spending priorities. The statement must be published each year by 31st December.
- 1.5 This is the Council's second Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) and it covers the previous financial year **2020/21**. It has been prepared in line with the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and covers income and expenditure relating to CIL, S106 obligations and s278 highways agreements for the financial year 2020/21. It also, where possible, sets out future spending priorities on infrastructure in line with the growth identified in the draft Brent Local Plan, Borough Plan, Capital Pipeline and Draft Long Term Transport Strategy.
- 1.6 The IFS is a statement of spend as required by the regulations and not a statement on the allocation process of CIL and S106.
- 1.7 The Council uses s106 obligations and CIL to support development and mitigate its impacts and maximise the benefits and opportunities from growth to deliver the priorities of the Borough Plan (the Council's Corporate Plan) and the draft Brent Local Plan.
- 1.8 CIL is allocated in accordance with the Capital Programme governance arrangements, in line with the corporate strategies listed in the Borough Plan, Black Community Action Plan, Poverty Commission Action Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy, Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy and Draft Long Term Transport Strategy. The Capital Pipeline, Local Plan and IDP are intrinsically linked to this with any project seeking a CIL allocation required to go to the Capital Programme Board. Any project seeking a CIL allocation of more than £250,000 is then required to go to Cabinet for final approval.
- 1.9 The IFS sets out what infrastructure has been delivered to date via CIL and s106 planning obligations, as well as identifying, where it is able to do so, future infrastructure spending priorities.

- 1.10 The IFS will also help communities understand how the level of growth outlined in the draft Local Plan can deliver tangible outcomes and investment in infrastructure projects such as new public realm, health facilities, schools, transport and open space that will support long-term growth and development of the borough.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

£16,104,767.13

Borough CIL
collected in 2020/21

£9,041,963.99

Total amount of
SCIL spent in
2020/21

£3,783,229.03

Total amount of
NCIL spent in
2020/21

CIL COLLECTION BREAKDOWN



ALLOCATIONS IN 2020/21



£12,150,000.00

Allocated to Strategic projects

- £10,000,000 to
Northwick Park
Highways Infrastructure
Fund Underwriting
- £2,150,000 to
Onside Youth Zone at
the York House site



£2,000,000.37

Allocated to Community projects

23

Projects approved for funding



2 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.1 The Council has been collecting the borough's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) since July 2013.
- 2.2 CIL receipts can be broken down into three distinctive portions – the Strategic CIL (SCIL), the Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) and the Administration CIL. A Mayoral CIL (MCIL) is also collected. This is passed on to TfL on a quarterly basis and will be used to fund Crossrail 1 (the Elizabeth Line) and Crossrail 2.

Table 1: CIL Portions Description

Portion	% of receipts	Process
Brent Strategic CIL	70% plus	Spend decided by the Council according to its strategic infrastructure priorities. Spend must support development in Brent, although does not have to be spent by Brent
Neighbourhood CIL	15% to neighbourhoods or 25% where a neighbourhood plan is in place	A round of bids inviting communities to suggest projects for NCIL funding
CIL Administrative expenses portion	Up to 5%	Spend applied to administrative expenses for collection and enforcement in line with legal restrictions on the use of this funding
Mayoral CIL Administrative expenses portion	Up to 4% of MCIL received	

- 2.3 Strategic CIL must be used to fund the improvement or replacement of infrastructure (e.g. education, transport facilities, medical facilities, schools, sporting and open space/recreation facilities) that supports growth in the borough. Whilst it cannot be used to resolve pre-existing deficiencies, it can secure improvements to existing infrastructure if it is shown that this supports development and this request is eligible for CIL funding in line with CIL regulations.
- 2.4 CIL is a tool for local planning authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. The IFS is an annual requirement that reports to the Government, among other things, how the CIL has been spent in line with the regulations. Reporting on CIL in this way helps communities and developers see how contributions have been spent ensuring a transparent and accountable system.
- 2.5 The tables below outline how the Council has performed in terms of Brent CIL receipts and expenditure for the reporting year - **2020/21** in line with Regulation 121. Brent CIL is made up of Strategic CIL (SCIL), Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) and CIL Admin.

Table 2: Brent CIL receipts for 2020/21

Infrastructure item	Brent CIL receipts
The total value of CIL set out in all demand notices (sent to those who have assumed liability to pay CIL) issued in 2020/21. These may not all be paid in the same financial year	£11,293,559.33
The total amount of CIL receipts collected in 2020/21	SCIL: £12,883,218.86 NCIL: £2,416,309.91 CIL Admin: £805,238.36 Total: £16,104,767.13
The total amount of CIL (SCIL and NCIL only) receipts, collected by the authority in the years prior to 2020/21, but which have not been allocated prior to 20/2021	£59,092,458.57
The total amount of CIL (SCIL and NCIL only) receipts collected by the authority, or by another person on its behalf in the years prior to 2020/21, which have been allocated in 2020/21	SCIL: £12,150,000.00 NCIL: £2,000,000.37 Total: £14,150,000.37
The total amount of CIL expenditure in 2020/21 (includes SCIL & NCIL spend only)	SCIL: £9,041,963.99 NCIL: £3,828,229.03 Total: £12,870,193.02
The amount of CIL spent on administrative expenses pursuant to regulation 61	£613,000.00
The percentage of CIL received in 2020/21 spent on administrative expenses pursuant to regulation 61	3.8%
The amount of CIL spent on repaying money borrowed, including any interest, with details of the items of infrastructure which that money was used to provide (wholly or in part)	Not applicable

2.6 The breakdown of the total CIL collected by Brent in 2020/21 is set out below:

Table 3: Total Brent CIL collected 2020/21

CIL Type	Total Receipts
Total SCIL Collected for Brent in 2020/21	£12,883,218.86
Total NCIL Collected for Brent in 2020/21	£2,416,309.91
Total Brent Admin Collected for Brent in 2020/21	£805,238.36
Total CIL Collected for Brent in 2020/21	£16,104,767.13

2.7 Mayoral CIL returns for 2020/21 are shown below.

Table 4: Total Mayoral CIL collected 2020/21

Mayoral 20/21	Mayoral	Admin (4%)	Total
Q1 Apr- June 2020	£303,127.51	£12,630.31	£315,757.82
Q2 Jul-Sep 2020	£1,915,032.29	£79,793.01	£1,994,825.30
Q3 Oct- Dec 2020	£1,045,184.25	£43,549.34	£1,088,733.59
Q4 Jan -Mar 2021	£1,041,871.75	£43,411.32	£1,085,283.07
Totals:	£4,305,215.80	£179,383.98	£4,484,599.78

- 2.8 The financial year 2020/21 covers the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the early stages of the first lockdown the Council allowed developers in financial difficulty because of COVID-19 to apply to defer their CIL payments by 6 months. On 22nd July 2020, changes to the CIL regulations came into effect which allowed small and medium sized developers with an annual turnover not exceeding £45 million to apply for a CIL payment deferral. This regulation is in place for any development due to commence before 31st July 2021.
- 2.9 In 2020/21, 15 developments were granted COVID deferrals, these developments are listed in Appendix 1. The following amount of Brent CIL COVID deferral was granted:

Table 5: Total CIL deferrals granted in 2020/21

CIL Type	Total Deferrals Granted 20/21	Total Deferrals Paid 20/21
SCIL	£9,045,482.12	£6,163,031.04
NCIL	£1,696,027.90	£1,155,568.32
Brent Admin	£565,342.63	£385,189.44
MCIL Admin	£88,748.27	£59,371.57
Total Deferrals & Payments for Brent CIL 20/21	£11,395,600.92	£7,763,160.37
MCIL	£2,129,958.51	£1,424,917.58
Total Deferrals & Payments for Brent & Mayoral CIL 20/21	£13,525,559.43	£9,188,077.95

- 2.10 In 2020/21 the following infrastructure items were allocated Strategic CIL funding:

Table 6: SCIL allocations in 2020/21

Infrastructure project	SCIL Allocation	Ward
Northwick Park Highways Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Underwriting	£10,000,000*	Northwick Park
Onside Youth Zone	£2,150,000	Tokington
Total SCIL allocated	£12,150,000	

*£10 million has been allocated to underwrite the HIF towards a road to facilitate the development at Northwick Park however, we expect this to be repaid by the HIF. Until it is repaid in full, this £10 million cannot be reallocated and is considered 'allocated'.

- 2.11 **Northwick Park HIF Underwriting** – In order to unlock a development site of approximately 1,600 new dwellings, 18,000 sqm university teaching space, 900 bed spaces of residential student accommodation, 9,000 sqm sports facilities and 2,600 sqm of supporting commercial use at Northwick Park, the Council and its development partners secured £10 million of Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) to fund a critical road into the site, enabling the unlocking of the development site.
- 2.12 To ensure a timely progression of the road design, procurement, delivery and completion, it was agreed at Cabinet that £10m of SCIL, equalling the amount securing by the HIF grant, is allocated to the project to cash flow it through to completion. The SCIL would be replenished by the HIF grant during the project programme period to a net effect of £0. However, if difficulties were encountered meeting the HIF conditionality, which includes but is not limited to; timing, planning and restrictions on title, then it is proposed that this SCIL allocation would also

underwrite the delivery of project to ensure its completion and the delivery of the wider programme goals it unlocks.



CGI of the proposed wider Northwick Park Development site (Source: Network Homes)

2.13 Inside Youth Zone - Cabinet have agreed a SCIL contribution towards the development of a Youth Zone, subject to the successful application for match funding in the form of grant funding from the Department of Culture Media and Sport's Youth Investment Fund of £4.3m, and the grant of planning permission. Youth Zones provide safe, supportive and affordable places where young people can spend their free time constructively. Targeting young people aged 8-19, and up to 25 with additional needs, Youth Zones provide large-scale multi-activity facilities which typically include multi-use 3G pitches, indoor sports hall, climbing wall, gym, music, dance and performing arts facilities and café, along with flexible spaces that can respond to young people's changing needs and preferences.

2.14 In 2020/21 SCIL was spent on the following infrastructure items:

Table 7: SCIL expenditure in 2020/21

Infrastructure project	SCIL Expenditure	Ward
Wembley Two Way Working	£105,388.78	Tokyngton
Wembley North End Road	£2,487,673.03	Tokyngton
Olympic Way Public Realm Improvements	£6,163,929	Tokyngton
Morland Gardens Education Facility	£284,973.18	Stonebridge
Total SCIL expenditure	£9,041,963.99	

2.15 Wembley Two Way Working & Wembley North End Road - As identified in the Core Strategy and Wembley Area Action Plan, there is the need for new road connections and junction improvements to support the ongoing development of the Wembley Growth area. These include two significant road improvement schemes

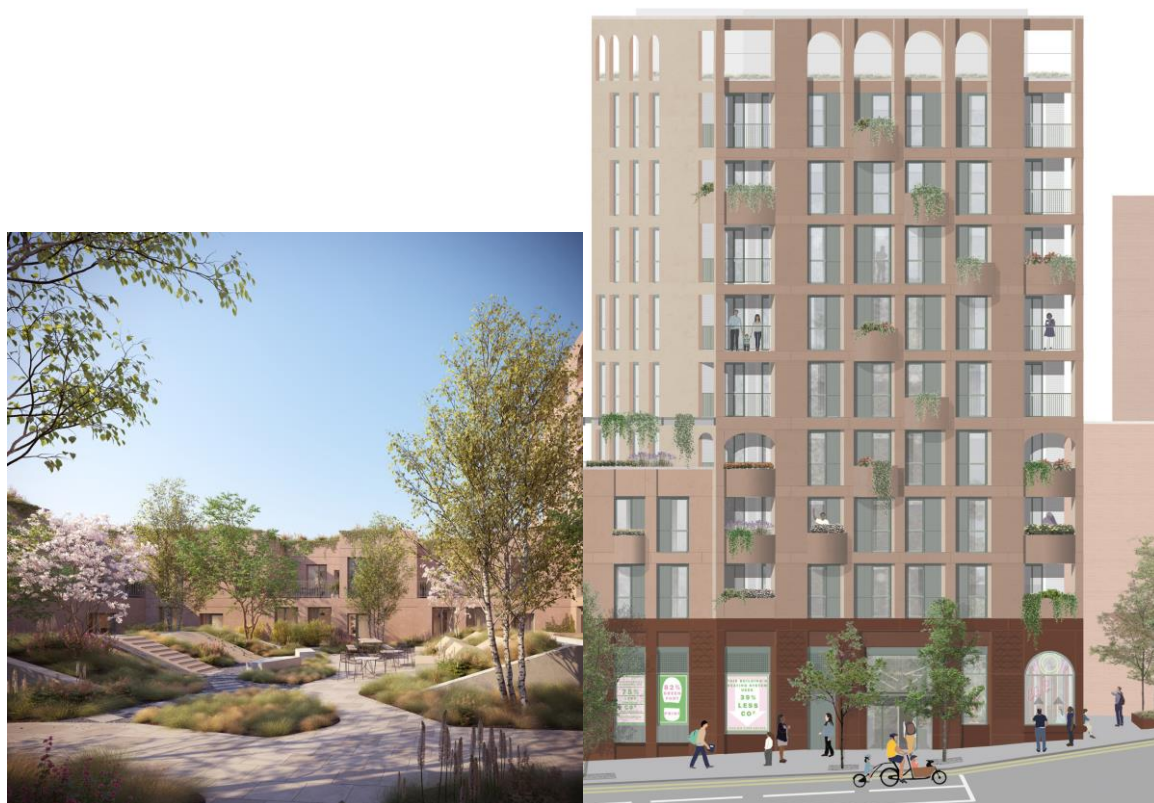
which have been implemented to improve traffic flow and connectivity through the area.

- 2.16 The first phase of the Wembley Two Way working project was completed and operational on 22nd March 2020 and plans for the second phase and further improvements on First Way and South Way are being developed. The new North End Road connector to Bridge Road opened on 11th June 2021 ahead of the EURO 2020 tournament initially operating as a T junction. The Highways and Infrastructure Team are working with Transport for London on signalling the new junction by the end of the year.
- 2.17 **Olympic Way Public Realm Improvements** – The improvements are a recognition that Wembley Park is an area of national and international importance. The high quality public realm supports the ongoing transformation of the area into a thriving, attractive environment where people want to live with access to shops and entertainment.
- 2.18 Public and private investment for Olympic Way has involved a new treatment to the Bobby Moore Bridge, new hard and soft landscaping throughout, a new crossing at Fulton Road, new lighting, trees, street furniture, wayfinding, WIFI, a new public square, and replacement of the 'pedway' with steps, lifts and flexible covered space to form an iconic new entrance to the national stadium.



Wembley Way with the new Olympic Steps (Source: LBB)

- 2.19 **Morland Gardens Education Facility** - Is an investment in skills and employability prospects for residents. Cabinet have agreed SCIL contribution towards the redevelopment of the existing adult education facility in Morland Gardens, Stonebridge. The new, mixed use redevelopment will provide an expanded and improved educational facility, along with workspace, a community space and 65 new council homes.



CGI's of the Morland Gardens Scheme (Source: LBB)

Table 8: SCIL and NCIL position at the end of 2020/21

CIL Type	Total Unallocated	Total allocated	Total Unspent*
SCIL	£53,781,362.57	£41,340,000.09	£95,121,362.66
NCIL	£6,460,624.40	£6,779,391.04	£13,240,015.44

SCIL (summary)	Totals
SCIL unspent* receipts retained at the end of 2020/21	£95,121,362.66
SCIL unspent* receipts retained at the end of 2019/20 and carried forward into 20/21	£88,575,563.71

Neighbourhood CIL (summary)	Totals
NCIL unspent* receipts retained at the end of 2020/21	£13,240,015.44
NCIL unspent* receipts retained at the end of 2019/20 and carried forward into 20/21	£14,651,904.46

**Unspent is money which is yet to be allocated along with money that has been allocated and has yet to be drawn down by the projects to which it is allocated*

Future Spending Priorities

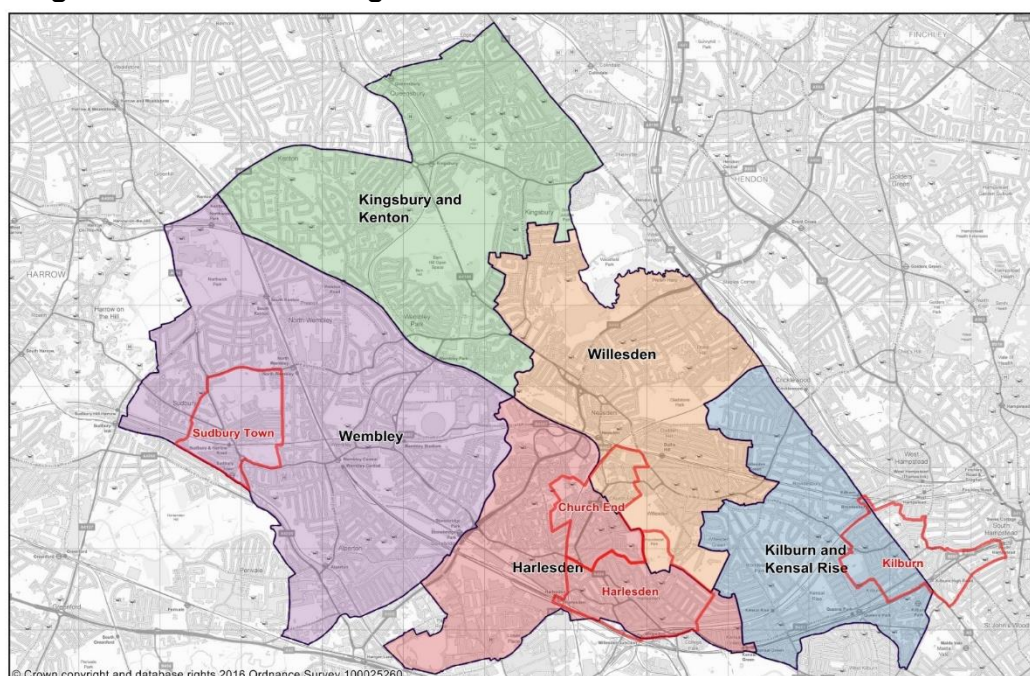
- 2.20 The draft Brent Local Plan outlines proposals to accommodate development in the borough to 2041. Over this time, the borough will continue to see a significant increase in its population, similar to levels seen over the last 20 years. This will require a substantial amount of new homes, jobs and associated physical and social infrastructure.
- 2.21 To support this, a programme of capital expenditure, and Strategic CIL will be used to fund, in part or full, some of these items, which are outlined in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and which meet Borough priorities.
- 2.22 The Council will continue to focus the spending of CIL and s106 receipts on essential infrastructure to support the level of growth outlined in the draft Local Plan and the projects identified in the IDP. It will do this jointly with partners through effective and ongoing engagement ensuring key infrastructure is delivered at the right time and in the right place to support growth and development.
- 2.23 SCIL funds have matured over a number of years; prudent financial practice and good future infrastructure planning demands that the fund is judiciously allocated over time. This allows for important infrastructure coming forward in the future to be funded. In view of this, the Council is currently updating its IDP to help with the future planning of infrastructure across the borough ensuring it aligns with the growth anticipated to come forward in the draft Local Plan and Borough priorities. This provides transparency to residents, members, infrastructure providers and the wider development industry on the type of infrastructure required to support long-term growth and development of the borough.
- 2.24 It is important to highlight that although a significant amount of SCIL has been collected over the past couple of years, the Council has nevertheless secured a significant amount of infrastructure investment through other mechanisms. These include planning consents, infrastructure provided within developments and funding for infrastructure secured via s106 legal obligations. Infrastructure has also been secured through work that has been undertaken with partners such as the Department for Education and TfL.

Neighbourhood CIL

- 2.25 The CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) stipulate that at least 15% of CIL receipts generated must be spent on Neighbourhood Projects. Whilst the legislation does not prescribe a process for how Neighbourhood CIL is allocated, the expectation is that priorities for spend are agreed with the local community.
- 2.26 A CIL Neighbourhood may also contain a Neighbourhood Forum with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. In this case, up to 25% of CIL funds collected from liable developments within the Neighbourhood Forum boundary may be spent on priorities identified by the Neighbourhood Forum.
- 2.27 There are currently three Neighbourhood Forums in Brent: Harlesden, Kilburn and Sudbury Town Residents Association (STRA). STRA and Harlesden Neighbourhood Forums have adopted a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Forum priorities will be outlined in their Neighbourhood Plan and set for the duration of the Plan once adopted.

- 2.28 In line with the CIL Regulations, NCIL can be used to fund a very broad range of facilities such as play areas, parks and green spaces, public realm improvements, cultural and sports facilities, healthcare facilities, and other community facilities provided it is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area. The NCIL must be spent on priorities agreed in consultation with the local community. These priorities must be aligned with the needs of the local community. CIL funding has no immediate deadline and therefore is available on a rolling annual basis. It is important to recognise that CIL receipts can only be spent on capital projects, although associated revenue spending to maintain those capital items is also permissible.
- 2.29 Brent is divided into five CIL Neighbourhoods - Harlesden, Kilburn and Kensal, Kingsbury and Kenton, Wembley, and Willesden. Brent also has two Neighbourhood Forum Areas – Sudbury Town and Harlesden, with a Neighbourhood Forum under consultation in Kilburn. Figure 1 demonstrates the locations of the CIL Neighbourhoods, with the Neighbourhood Forums marked in red.

Figure 1: Brent's CIL Neighbourhoods



- 2.30 Arrangements for spending Brent's NCIL were formally approved by Cabinet on 13 February 2017. The funding strategy for 2020-2023 which will be used for decisions on expenditure of NCIL was agreed by Cabinet on 17 August 2020. Since April 2017 we have received 430 applications for NCIL funding. In total, 229 projects have been awarded funding, with the allocation of £14,199,082.40 of NCIL money.
- 2.31 The Council normally undertakes two bidding periods each year to provide the local community with an opportunity to apply for funding for projects that will help to support the impact of development. The 2020-2021 financial year was severely impacted by Covid 19 and therefore, there was only one bidding period this year with it specifically targeted at addressing inequalities.
- 2.32 All shortlisted projects for NCIL funding must demonstrate that they:
- Meet the CIL Regulations (2010) as amended;

- Evidence of community backing;
- Address the impact(s) of development and supports ongoing development in the neighbourhood the project is being delivered in;
- Reflect the strategic priorities of the Council within the Borough Plan, meeting the theme of the specific NCIL round;
- Reflect the neighbourhood priorities within the neighbourhood the project is being delivered in;
- Are one-off projects that do not require additional revenue funding in their delivery or operation (or identify how additional revenue funding may be met);
- Benefit diverse Brent communities, reflecting the demographics of the neighbourhood that the project is being delivered in; and
- Represent value for money.

2.33 It is understood that the system has been reviewed and a new process of participatory budgeting will shortly be implemented.

NCIL performance in 2020/21

2.34 For the reported year, **£2,416,309.91 of NCIL** was collected.

2.35 **£3,828,229.03** was spent on projects during the same period.

2.36 Through the NCIL bidding process undertaken in 2020/21, the Council approved 23 projects for funding to deliver a variety of infrastructure projects across the borough, allocating £2,000,000.37 The projects and allocated NCIL amounts, along with the spend of the NCIL approved in the 2020/21 bidding round are set out in Appendix 2.

2.37 Table 9 outlines the total NCIL allocation and projects by NCIL Neighbourhood in 2020/21. Many of the projects allocated NCIL in 2020/21 had programmes working across multiple wards/neighbourhood areas, but the principle neighbourhood where the project was based is where the money was allocated from. Appendix 2 shows which wards each project worked across.

Table 9: NCIL allocations by NCIL Neighbourhood

Ward	No. of projects	Allocation
Kilburn & Kensal Rise	4	£364,871.45
Kingsbury & Kenton	1	£53,395.74
Harlesden	1	£97,460.20
Wembley	17	£1,484,272.98
Willesden	0	£0
Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum	0	£0
Sudbury Town Neighbourhood Forum	0	£0
Totals:	23	£2,000,000.37

Summary of Projects Approved/Delivered in 2020/21

- 2.38 **The Lexi Hub** - a new community space attached to the Lexi Cinema. The new Hub building will be an attractive, eco build, suitable for community gatherings, providing an additional 2000+ hours of community space per annum. This project will also provide a community hub for school groups, the hard of hearing, seniors and many others, to come together and celebrate film.



- 2.39 **Middlesex Association of the Blind (MAB)** – this project supports visually impaired residents who are referred to MAB via eye hospitals, local authorities, or self-referrals. An individual needs assessment is then completed for each referral, and if appropriate, a Home Visiting Service is put in place. The project offers low level floating support in the form of weekly or fortnightly visits and can include anything from assistance with reading mail, going shopping or leaving the house to get some exercise. Additionally, MAB offer monthly support groups where clients can get together for a coffee morning, share stories, their struggles, and their successes.



2.40 **Jason Roberts Foundation** - Reaching Communities is an inter-generational project that supports the whole community by encompassing three different aspects, each complementing the other:

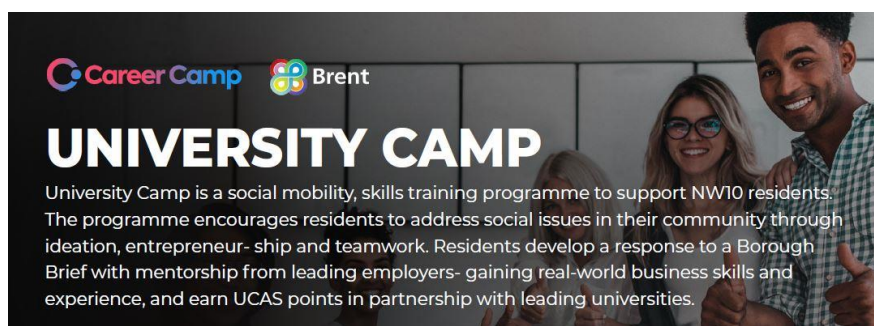
- Youth Engagement: Providing a safe, accessible, and vibrant environment for young people to come engage in a variety of activities and leadership programme.
- Community Cohesion: Providing a welcoming community space with a range of activities and events for all.
- Health & Wellbeing: Providing a wide range of sports and activities for all to improve physical and mental health.



2.41 **Horn Stars SC** – the project delivers a series of training, capacity building, residential and social action opportunities for 80 Brent-based girls from a BAME background. The weekly sessions aim to build confidence and problem-solving abilities, develop employability skills, challenge stereotypes, and build a supportive social network. The project uses physical activity sessions as a tool to also help address wider social issues that participants face.



- 2.42 **Careers Camps** - NW10 University Camp is a community-led, employability and social mobility skills intervention designed to support residents of Willesden Green and Harlesden into Higher Education and offer them new employer networks through project-based learning and employer-led mentorship. The project's focus is on supporting residents with low social mobility and aims to address inequalities in the boroughs of Willesden Green and Harlesden.



- 2.43 **Ultra Education** - The project aims to use entrepreneurship as a vehicle to increase life chances and lower gaps in educational attainment and achievement of Black Caribbean Boys (BCB) in Brent; positively tackling the disproportionate educational outcomes of BCB in Brent by bringing about a transformation in their school, community and home. Ultra Education works with a large number of stakeholders (children, parents, teachers, siblings, and the community) and strategic partners. The project '*It takes a village*' aims to bring these stakeholders across Brent to engage, listen and working together collectively to support positive outcomes for BCB. NCIL funding will help to consistently achieve excellence from KS1/2 through to KS3 and beyond, breaking cycles of low attainment, raising children with aspiration, and ambition.



2.44 **Brent Council: Creating a bright, welcoming and adaptable space in Brent's new family Hubs** - This project aims to improve Children's Centre space within the borough to make it more flexible for the use of children, young people and their families, this includes:

- New furniture and equipment.
- New signage and branding.
- More storage space.
- Painting, decorating and reconfiguration of space.

2.45 To make these new centres as welcoming, vibrant, and homely as possible, local young people aged between 12 and 14 were invited to design and create a mural for the centre. The project empowers young people to share their ideas and advance their artistic skills. The mural reflects the theme of "My Area" and is on display for the public to see.



2.46 **Brent Council: Street Art Expressions in Wembley and Ealing Road** – This project has delivered new street art in Wembley to help raise the profile of the local area, improve its visual appeal, and celebrate local culture and heritage at the time of the London Borough of Culture in Brent. This idea started by assessing the feasibility of an art based community plan, speaking to community neighbours to get their input and setting out a basic timeline for the completion of the project. Ideas were developed through partnership focus groups with a diverse set of community stakeholders including the Wembley and Ealing Road Traders Associations, as well as local faith organisations and resident associations. These local stakeholders developed a collective view of their priorities for the local high streets before selecting and commissioning the art works.

- 2.47 **Northwick Park Community Garden Charity** – the project seeks to educate people in the Northwick Park area about sustainable living (retrofitting houses to reduce water usage, waste and to make energy efficient choices), designing gardens and public land to both produce food and improve local biodiversity and natural habitats. The Charity have devised an educational program for adults to help develop a core of local people who will provide leadership in the community through their substantial knowledge about sustainable lifestyles, wildlife-friendly design and horticultural approaches. Running alongside this is an educational program for children to improve the next generation's knowledge of living sustainably, learning about the natural world, and how we can live in ways that will benefit both wildlife and ourselves.



- 2.48 **United Borders** – The project is working in multiple schools across Brent delivering music education and mentoring sessions to 13 to 15-year-olds who are at risk of social or school exclusion. The young people are selected by Brent Council CYP team against referral criteria and given a personalised intervention and mentoring plan to meet their needs. Through targeted mentoring and support, the project aims to tackle the cycles of trauma, low resilience, lack of risk consciousness, and limiting beliefs that many young people experience.



Future NCIL spending priorities

- 2.49 The Council at its Cabinet meeting on 13 February 2017 agreed that the approach to NCIL would be reviewed every 3 years following community consultation on the neighbourhood priorities.
- 2.50 In August 2020, a revised approach to the NCIL funding strategy based on the review of the 2017 - 2019 projects and the consultation completed in December/January 2020 was agreed.
- 2.51 As part of this revised approach a more detailed analysis of the impact of development and growth, as outlined in the draft Brent Local Plan, will be undertaken. This will help determine what specific local infrastructure projects will be required to mitigate the impact of development. This will ensure NCIL is allocated in a way that meets neighbourhood priorities.
- 2.52 A bid round dedicated to addressing the long term inequalities linked to development and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 closed at the end of September 2020. The successful bids allocated NCIL funding are available to view in Appendix 2.
- 2.53 The next round of bidding is anticipated to take place in late 2021 with a new approach of participatory budgeting. This will ensure real time consultation within each neighbourhood is done at the time of bidding and voting for successful projects. This model will ensure that all the CIL regulations are met whilst empowering the local communities to be directly involved in the decision-making around allocation of NCIL.

Details of all approved NCIL allocations to date are available to view on our website – [brent.gov.uk/your-community/community-and-voluntary-sector-support/neighbourhood-community-infrastructure-levy-ncil-fund/](https://www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/community-and-voluntary-sector-support/neighbourhood-community-infrastructure-levy-ncil-fund/)

SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS



18

Projects approved
for funding



£2,096,584.74

Total amount of S106
spent in 2020/21



£1,606,137.07

Total amount of S106
collected in 2020/21



801

Affordable Housing units
secured in 2020/21



300 Affordable Rent



326 Intermediate



175 Social Rent

ALLOCATIONS IN 2020/21

£1,930,735.14

Total allocated
to projects



£91,066.64

Regeneration



£215,802.00

Employment & Skills



£723,866.50

Transportation



£900,000.00

Affordable Housing

48%

Affordable Housing
units secured on
average per
scheme

26%

Affordable Housing
units secured
across 3048 units
approved

3 Section 106 Planning Obligations

- 3.1 The Council enters in to Section 106 (s106) obligations with developers - a mechanism which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms. S106 obligations are focused on site-specific mitigation of the impact of development such as securing affordable housing or requiring improvements to an access road. CIL, on the other hand, is designed to raise funds for infrastructure needed generally as a result of an increase in development in an area, and is spent on community infrastructure projects across the borough.
- 3.2 The tables below outline the current status of all s106 contributions received and spent for the last five years.

Table 10: Summary of S106 contributions received for the last 5 years

Financial Year	Total Received
2016/17	£1,742,373.90
2017/18	£2,949,782.78
2018/19	£2,240,714.75
2019/20	£1,683,719.19
2020/21	£1,606,137.07

Table 11: Summary of S106 contributions allocated and spent in the last 5 years

Financial Year (FY)	Total Amount Allocated to Projects at Year End	Total Spent
2016/17	£13,227,409.75	£1,502,451.10
2017/18	£19,902,374.93	£7,150,222.16
2018/19	£13,663,075.06	£4,507,247.60
2019/20	£12,030,046.84	£3,256,673.46
2020/21	£10,468,822.55	£2,096,584.74

- 3.3 During 2020/21, the following 22 S106 obligations were negotiated and agreed:
- 100 Beresford Avenue, Wembley, HA0 1QJ
 - Peel Precinct, 97-112 Carlton House, Canterbury Terrace, 8-14 Neville Close, 2 Canterbury Road & Peel Site Garages, London, NW6
 - Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow, HA1 3UJ
 - Ex Marylebone Boy's School, 60 Christchurch Avenue, London, NW6 7BH
 - Olympic Office Centre, 8 Fulton Road, Wembley, HA9 0NU
 - All Units, Stadium Retail Park, Wembley Park Drive & 128 Wembley Park Drive (fountain studios), HA9
 - 2A, Part of Former Westend Saab and Boyriven Textile, Bridgewater Road, Wembley, HA0 1AJ
 - Argenta House, Argenta Way, London, NW10 0AZ
 - Land rear of 37-53 Strode Road AND Strode Road Car Wash, Strode Road, London, NW10
 - Transputec House, 19 Heather Park Drive, Wembley, HA0 1SS
 - Gwalia Working Mens Club, Manor Park Road, London, NW10 4JU

- 6 Bowmans Trading Estate, Westmoreland Road, London, NW9 9RL
- 162 Willesden Lane, Kilburn, London, NW6 7PQ
- Land, garages, alleyway rear of 416-444, High Road, Wembley, HA9
- All Units at 4-9 INC, and Garages rear of 4-9 Gladstone Parade, Edgware Road, Cricklewood, London NW2 6JS
- 1-7 Bridgehill Close, Wembley, HA0 1EP
- 290B Ealing Road, Wembley, HA0 4LL
- 1 Olympic Way, Wembley, HA9 0NP
- 5-9 Chippenham Gardens, London, NW6 5LH
- Heron House, 109-115 Wembley Hill Road, Wembley, HA9 8DA
- 79-83 ODDS, Kenton Road, Harrow, HA3 0AH
- 85, 87 & 89 Ealing Road, Wembley, HA0

3.4 Table 12 provides an update on the s106 receipts for the reporting year 2020/21.

Table 12: S106 receipts for 2020/21

Regulation requirement	S106 amount
The total amount of money to be provided under any planning obligations which were entered into during 2020/21	£3,166,581.41
The total amount of money under any planning obligations which was received during 2020/21	£1,606,137.07
The total amount of money under any planning obligations which was collected in years previous to 20/21 and carried forward into 20/21 which has not been allocated by the authority	£6,640,646.55

3.5 In relation to non-monetary contributions, **801 affordable housing units were secured** on the following schemes:

Table 13: Affordable housing units secured

Site Name	Breakdown of Affordable Units	Total Units	Ward
Rear of 416-444 Wembley High Road, HA9	34 Affordable Rent 16 Intermediate	50 (20% AH)	Wembley Central
Garages Next To 13 Sycamore Grove, NW9 8RB	1 Social Rent	1 (100% AH)	Fryent
Argenta House, NW10 0AZ	21 Affordable Rent 14 Intermediate	35 (27% AH)	Tokington
Gwalia Working Mens Club, NW10 4JU	4 Intermediate	4 (24% AH)	Harlesden
Strode Road, Land rear of 37-53, NW10 2NN	2 Intermediate 3 Social Rent	5 (33% AH)	Willessden Green
Edgware Road, Gladstone Parade, NW2 6JS	11 Affordable Rent 5 Intermediate	16 (30% AH)	Dollis Hill

Site Name	Breakdown of Affordable Units	Total Units	Ward
2, Bridgewater Road, HA0 1AJ	47 Affordable Rent 77 Intermediate	124 (100% AH)	Alperton
Heather Park Drive, 19 Transputec House, HA0 1SS	13 Affordable Rent 5 Intermediate	18 (50% AH)	Alperton
Morland Gardens, 1 Stonebridge Centre, NW10 8DY	65 Social Rent	65 (100% AH)	Stonebridge
Stadium Retail Park, HA9	174 Affordable Rent 75 Intermediate	249 (25% AH)	Tokington
Ex-Ark Elvin Academy, HA9	36 Intermediate 52 Social Rent	88 (35% AH)	Wembley Central
388 Ujima House	7 Intermediate 12 Social Rent	19 (35% AH)	Wembley Central
2 South Kilburn Studios, NW6	85 Intermediate 42 Social Rent	127 (41% AH)	Kilburn
Total units	300 Affordable Rent 326 Intermediate 175 Social Rent	801 (48% AH secured on average per scheme)	



CGI of the 2, Bridgewater Road (Source: Peabody, Barton Willmore & RockHunter)

Table 14: S106 allocation and expenditure

Regulation requirement	S106 amount
The total amount of money (received under any planning obligations) which was allocated but not spent during 2020/21 for funding infrastructure	£706,460.16
The total amount of money (received under any planning obligations) which was spent by the authority (including transferring it to another person to spend)	£2,096,584.74
Total amount allocated to infrastructure projects in 2020/21 and the amount spent from these allocations. The items of infrastructure on which the money (received under planning obligations) during 2020/21 was allocated, and the amount spent on each item is shown in Appendix 3	Allocated: £1,489,866.50 Spent: £783,406.34
The amount of money (received under planning obligations) spent on repaying money borrowed, including any interest, with details of the items of infrastructure which that money was used to provide (wholly or in part)	Not applicable
The amount of money (received under planning obligations) spent in respect of monitoring (including reporting under regulation 121A) in relation to the delivery of planning obligations	£96,604.50

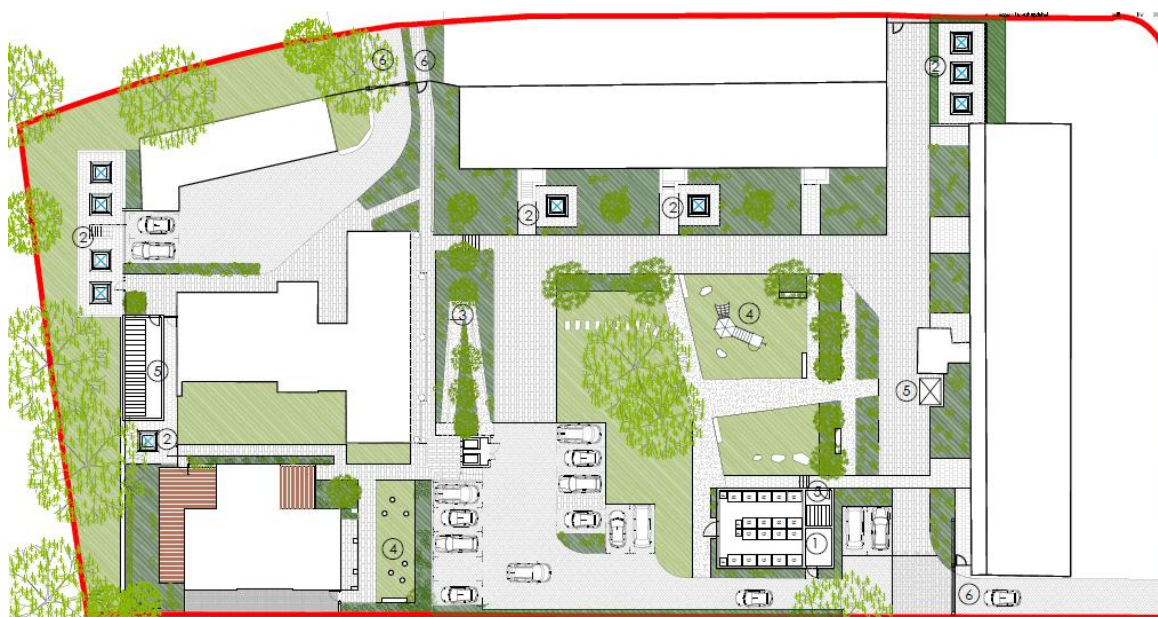
- 3.6 The total amount of money received (under any planning obligations) during any year which was retained at the end of 2020/21 is £14,029,709.72. The table in Appendix 3 shows the projects which had S106 money allocated to them in 2020/21. A summary of some of the S106 projects allocated money in 2020/21 is provided below.

Summary of s106 projects in 2020/21

Affordable Housing Projects

- 3.7 The Council has committed to an ambitious strategic housing target to deliver 1,000 new affordable homes every year, over the next five years. These new developments will provide a mixture of flats and houses in line with the borough's current housing commitments and our Borough Plan priorities.
- 3.8 Tackling the housing crisis, the council will continue to look at innovative ways to deliver genuinely new affordable homes. The below new developments unlock small sites, increasing the number of homes we can build by using creative ways to address the housing challenges across the borough and London, helping increase supply.

- 3.9 **Frontenac** – S106 money helped part fund a project for a four storey affordable housing block consisting of 3 x three-bed and 1 x two-bed units.



Site plan of Frontenac development (Source: LBB)

- 3.10 **Gloucester Close** – S106 money helped part fund a project for affordable housing consisting of 2 x two-bed houses and 3 x three-bed houses.
- 3.11 **Mason Court** – S106 money helped part fund a project for affordable housing consisting of 7 x two-bed houses and 1 x one-bed flat on a former garage site.
- 3.12 **Hindhurst Court** – S106 money helped part fund a project for affordable housing consisting of 6 x one-bed houses and 2 x two-bed flats on a former garage site.



Image showing work underway at Hindhurst Court, December 2020. Planned end date: June 2022 (Source: LBB)

Employment & Skills

- 3.13 **Brent Works: Job and Apprenticeship Brokerage** - During 2020/21, the Employment team registered and engaged over 2800 residents with employment related advice and support. Despite the challenging labour market, in light of the pandemic, the Brent Works team directly supported over 170 local people into employment and supported the recruitment of 47 Apprentices. In addition, approximately 200 jobs were created for local people via s106 obligations.

Transportation Projects

- 3.14 **Cycling Quick Wins and Cycle Parking** - The project was developed in response to a growing demand for secure on street cycle parking particularly in areas where residents do not have access to a private outdoor space. The project aims to promote sustainable travel and encourages more residence to cycle and enjoy the many benefits that cycling brings, including reducing air pollution in the borough.
- 3.15 Following a successful trial in 2016 the Council have continued to install bike hangers. The Council have introduced Cyclehoop and Falco bike hangers on a number of streets to allow residents to hire a space to store their bicycle. Each hanger can store up to 6 bicycles.



Example of on street bike storage installed by the Council (Source: LBB)

- 3.16 **Go Ultra Low City Scheme (GULCS) Vehicle Charging Points Phase 2** - Lamp Column Charging is a new technology to embed Electrical Vehicle Charging point into Streetlights. The Technology is being rolled out in Brent through funding from the Go Ultra Low City Scheme and S106. The Ubitricity 'Smart Socket' technology will be installed at various lamp posts across the borough by Siemens and Ubitricity, with Siemens installing and maintain the ubitricity charging technology.
- 3.17 The move is part of a wider effort to bring more EV charging availability to the growing numbers of UK drivers without private parking, with an aim to create cleaner and greener local communities.
- 3.18 **Engineers Way Zebra Crossings Phase 2** - This scheme has been developed to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility and safety on Engineers Way, Wembley. The scheme aims to reduce vehicle speed, provide more opportunities for

pedestrians to cross the road more safely and enhance cycle facilities on Engineers Way, subsequently improving road safety for all road users.

4 Section 278 Highway Agreements

- 4.1 Section 278 (s278) of the Highways Act 1980 allows a developer to carry out works to the public highway. This is generally necessary where planning permission has been granted for a development that requires improvements to, or changes to, public highways.
- 4.2 During 2020/21 the Council entered into s278 highways agreements associated with the development proposals outlined below. The description and value of these highway works are outlined below.

Table 15: s278 agreements in 2020/21

Development	Stuart Road / Chippenham Gardens – HIF works
Description of works	<p><u>Adoption of Stuart Road</u> The land belongs to Brent Housing Management. There will be highway works to bring Stuart Road to an adoptable standard and the adoption will be executed by Appropriation</p> <p><u>Chippenham Gardens</u> The former post office building is redeveloped as residential development. The highway works associated with this development are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a gated pocket garden in the existing public amenity space • Reconstruction of the footway surrounding the site to improve public realm
Value of works	£119,262.10
Status	The work has not started yet
Development	Durham Court & Gloucester House, Cambridge Rd /Kilburn Park Rd / Carlton Vale / Rudolph Rd
Description of works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of redundant vehicle crossovers in Kilburn Park Rd and Rudolph Rd • Provision of a new vehicle crossover to the basement car park • Amendment to parking bay to accommodate the new crossover • Provision of four new wheelie bin dropped kerbs around the site
Value of works	£26066.50
Status	Nearing completion
Development	Box Park, 85 – 89 Ealing Rd
Description of works	Provision of a 10m loading bay at the front of the Box Park and construction of a adoptable footway on the rear of the loading bay to facilitate uninterrupted pedestrian flow
Value of works	£36,550.01
Status	Highway works not started yet

Appendix 1 – CIL COVID Deferral Applications

Planning Permission Number	Address	Amount Deferred	Original due Date	Deferred Due Date
18/0321	Former Northfield Industrial Estate	£2,701,249.62	24/07/2020	24/10/2020
17/1296	58 Neasden Lane, London, NW10 2UJ	£248,655.48	04/09/2020	04/12/2020
19/0836	23 Forty Lane, Wembley, HA9 9EU	£209,880.00	10/05/2020	10/08/2020
18/2183	Car Park North East of Morrisons, Honeypot Lane	£1,408,078.6	10/04/2020	10/07/2020
15/4034	7 Northwick Avenue, Harrow, HA3 0AA	£93,604.65	30/03/2020	30/06/2020
19/2750	10 & 11 Watkin Road, Wembley, HA9 0NL	£1,507,123.83	13/06/2020	13/09/2020
19/1884	114 Church Road, London, NW10 9PL	£126,165.53	03/05/2020	03/08/2020
19/2662	1050 Harrow Road, London, NW10 5NL	£215,280.00	15/06/2020	15/09/2020
16/2968	128 Windermere Avenue, Wembley, HA9 8RB	£55,184.52	15/04/2020	18/09/2020
18/4422	Land to the South of Fulton Road, east of Harbutt Road and north of Humphry Repton Lane (Plot NW09/10), Wembley (1 st Instalment)	£2,622,855.62	08/07/2020	24/03/2021
18/4422	Land to the South of Fulton Road, east of Harbutt Road and north of Humphry Repton Lane (Plot NW09/10), Wembley (2 nd Instalment)	£2,622,855.62	03/02/2021	03/11/2021
18/4486	196 Willesden Lane, Kilburn, London, NW6 7PR	£319,275.71	16/11/2020	09/05/2021
18/4716	133-137 Kilburn Lane, North Kensington, London, W10 4AN	£366,943.22	04/12/2020	23/05/2021
19/4351	62 Dunster Drive, London, NW9 8EL	£81,438.08	26/06/2020	17/06/2021
19/4473	79-83 ODDS, Kenton Road, Harrow, HA3 0AH	£25,957.83	15/11/2020	03/05/2021
18/4777	All Units at 4-9 INC, and Garages rear of 4-9 Gladstone Parade, Edgware Road, Cricklewood, London, NW2 6JS	£500,000.00	20/03/2021	16/09/2021
18/4777	All Units at 4-9 INC, and Garages rear of 4-9 Gladstone Parade, Edgware Road, Cricklewood, London, NW2 6JS	£421,011.02	16/09/2021	16/03/2022

Appendix 2 – Allocated NCIL Projects and Spend in 2020/21

Project	Summary of Project	Ward	NCIL Allocated	NCIL Spend
Community Hub; development of Laurence's Larder to meet increasing levels of need	An extension of current services provided by St Laurence's Larder to deal with COVID Impact	Brondesbury Park	£59,647	£18,000
BAME Incubator Project	Capacity Building / Development of 5 black-led civil organisation to become Charities in own right	All Wards	£85,955	0
Powering Change - Social + Mobile Engagement + Ethical AI	Rolling out a digital programme aimed at engaging young people in new skills and employment. Slenky will drive digital engagement in Brent, distributing free/low-cost tech to community organisations schools, start-ups and other local stakeholders	All Wards	£197,561.95	£112,000
Self-Worth, Wellbeing Film Project for BAME children	Film production - addressing self-worth and self-esteem for children and young people from Black Communities. To be made available to all schools	All Wards	£5,000	0
B.R.A.C.E.S. Brent Reset. After-Covid Equality Support	Providing individual and group support, advocacy and a new programme of COVID secure activities	All Wards	£87,500	0
Facilitating Alternative Learning in Brent	A three-year mentoring support programme in schools, targeting black boys in tackling identity and inequality.	Harlesden	£53,395.74	£26,000
Ansar Youth And Community Project	One-year programme of a diverse range of activities for young people and adult residents of Brent. Based in Wembley Youth and Community Centre.	Tokington, Wembley Central	£52,974.73	£30,974.73
Shifo - Healing	Community Project within Somali and East African communities to help address the new normal following impact of COVID	Harlesden, Willesden Green, Kensal Green, Kilburn, Wembley	£45,000	0

Project	Summary of Project	Ward	NCIL Allocated	NCIL Spend
STRIVE	A one-year Mental Health Support Programme for BME people to recover from the impact of Mental Health, DV and Substance Misuse. Providing culturally sensitive ETE and counselling support.	All Wards	£146,699	£50,000
Brent Mobile	Developing an App and training for use by community front line workers to help with assessing and supporting digital literacy of support organisations to confidently support clients, in addressing benefits.	Wembley Central, Willesden Green	£30,828	£25,000
Reaching Potential	Personal development programme for 24 young people aged 18-25 (Brondesbury, Willesden green and Mapesbury ward)	Mapesbury, Willesden Green, Brondesbury Park	£42,603.50	£16,201.50
It Takes a Village – Black Caribbean Boys of Excellence	Project to address the root cause of the underachievement of BCB - working across family, schools, communities	All Wards	£227,272.30	£57,000
NW10 University Camp	Employment and social mobility skills camp for 32 residents of Willesden and Harlesden, targeting BAMER residents with a focus on females.	Harlesden, Willesden Green, Stonebridge	£68,800	£50,000
Safer outside spaces	Develop outside space for safe use by elderly in winter	Kensal Green	£43,890	0
AWRC ReVITALise Project	Refurbishment of AWRC building to improve experience and safety for clients.	Harlesden	£197,561.95	£98,781.95
Starlet	Social Development programme, free to all young people aged 14 – 19 years olds from the target neighbourhoods.	Barnhill, Wembley central, Tokyngton, Harlesden, Stonebridge	£30,000	£15,000
Brent BAMER Community Development Programme	Training and employment programme in partnership with the University of SOAS for 40 BAMER participants	All Wards	£97,308	0

Project	Summary of Project	Ward	NCIL Allocated	NCIL Spend
Building Communities	A one-year Community Outreach and Social engagement programme targeted at vulnerable families, addressing Inequalities and social exclusion.	Alperton, Stonebridge, Welsh Harp, Tokyngton, Dollis Hill, Sudbury	£79,706	£34,750
ESOL for Community: weekly classes and events	ESOL, digital skills and employment classes to benefit disadvantaged Brent communities aged 18+	All Wards	£82,531	0
Mentoring for Moving Forward	A three-year mentoring support programme in schools, targeting black boys in tackling identity and inequality.	Wembley Central, Alperton, Barnhill	£97,460.20	£15,194.20
Block Project	A two-year Football and community engagement programme in three estates. Offering football-coaching course to selected NEETS aged under 25.	Wembley Central Tokyngton Barnhill	£99,226	0
Other Cinemas in Brent	A two-year film school for BME creative in Brent, training 20 students in filmmaking and running a programme of films screenings, by BME filmmakers	Wembley Central, Kilburn	£90,390	£27,390
Young's Football club Community Project	A two-year football programme providing sessions for children aged 6+ and FA coaching qualifications for young people aged 16+ leading to employment. The project targets participants from low-income area	Wembley Central	£78,690	£30,000
Totals:			£2,000,000.37	£606,292.38

Appendix 3 – S106 Projects Allocated Money in 2020/21 and Their Spend

Table 1 - S106 Infrastructure Projects Allocated Money in 2020/21 and Their Spend

Project Type	Project	S106 Allocated	S106 Spent	Expected Completion	Ward
Affordable Housing	Housing Infill and Mixed Development Programme Frontenac	£500,000.00	£160,760.24	In progress, expected final completion: Q1 2022/23	Willesden Green
Affordable Housing	Housing Infill and Mixed Development Programme - Mason Court	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	Completed	Barnhill
Affordable Housing	Housing Infill and Mixed Development Programme - Hindhurst Court	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	Completed	Fryent
Affordable Housing	Housing Infill and Mixed Development Programme - Gloucester Close	£200,000.00	£200,000.00	Completed	Stonebridge
Transportation	Go Ultra Low City Scheme (GULCS) Vehicle Charging Points Phase 2	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	Completed	Borough Wide
Transportation	Detailed design of Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM's)	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	Completed	Tokyngton
Transportation	Engineers Way Zebra Crossings - Phase 2	£83,230.50	£57,646.10	Completed	Tokyngton
Transportation	Cycling Quick Wins and Cycle Parking (Including Cycle Hangers)	£300,000.00	£15,000.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q4 2021/22	Borough Wide
Transportation	South Way Study	£16,800.00	£0.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q1 2021/22	Tokyngton
Transportation	Wayfinding Scoping Strategy	£24,836.00	£0.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q1 2021/22	Tokyngton
Transportation	Improvements to parking management and pavements at the Avenue, NW6	£15,000.00	£0.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q3 2021/22	Brondesbury Park
Totals:		£1,489,866.50	£783,406.34		


Table 2 - S106 Non-Infrastructure Projects Allocated Money in 2020/21 and Their Spend

Project Type	Project	S106 Allocated	S106 Spent	Expected Completion	Ward
Employment & Skills	Brent Works - Job and Apprenticeship Brokerage	£215,802.00	£215,802.00	Completed	Borough Wide
Regeneration	Land North of Chippenham Gardens - New Public Square (Ongoing Maintenance only)	£91,066.64	£0	Yearly drawdown. Final drawdown to be in 2029/30	Kilburn
Transportation	Harlesden Town Centre Review	£64,000.00	£53,549.54	In progress, expected final completion: Q4 2021/22	Harlesden
Transportation	Review of CPZ's in: Montrose Crescent, Union Road, Station Grove and Copland Avenue	£10,000.00	£2,000.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q3 2021/22	Wembley Central
Transportation	Review of CPZ's in Chamberlayne Road and Whitmore Gardens	£10,000.00	£2,000.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q4 2021/22	Willesden Green
Transportation	Towards a CPZ in: Holmstall Avenue, Redhill Drive, Limesdale Gdns, Oakleigh Court, Birchwood Court	£30,000.00	£10,995.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q4 2021/22	Kenton
Transportation	Introducing 90 No Waiting Restrictions to the north of the borough	£20,000.00	£2,000.00	In progress, expected final completion: Q4 2021/22	Kenton
Totals:		£440,868.64	£286,346.54		

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	Cabinet 6 December 2021
	Report from the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services
Digital Strategy and Business Case 2022-26	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Appendix 1 to the Outline Business Case is exempt from publication as it contains the following category of information exempt under Part 1, Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act: paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
No. of Appendices:	Three: Appendix 1 Draft Digital Strategy 2012-26 Appendix 2 Draft Outline Business Case (OBC) Appendix 2(a) (exempt) Future benefits (Appendix 1 to the OBC) Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Sadie East, Operational Director – Transformation 020 8937 1507 Email: Sadie.east@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the draft Digital Strategy 2022-26 for agreement. The draft strategy builds on the 2019-23 strategy that was agreed in October 2019. The report also presents an Outline Business Case (OBC) for an extension of the Digital Programme to 2026 and the capital investment to deliver the strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees the Digital Strategy 2022-26 as set out in Appendix 1.

- 2.2 Cabinet agrees the Outline Business Case as set out in Appendix 2 with the funding identified to deliver the programme.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approves the establishment of a Business Support Fund as set out in Appendix 2 and paragraph 3.19 of this report.
- 2.4 That Cabinet delegate to the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources authority to agree eligibility criteria for the Business Support Fund
- 2.5 That Cabinet delegate to the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services authority to administer and award assistance from the Business Support Fund.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 In October 2019, Cabinet agreed an investment of £12.5m for a programme of work to deliver Brent's Digital Strategy 2019-2023. Since then, the Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital technology in the way we live and work, and has accelerated the move to online for many more citizens, businesses and organisations. At the same time it has exposed greater inequalities, including digital exclusion, and increased the risk that those who do not have access to digital devices, fast broadband and sufficient data are left even further behind. The programme has also shown how we can use technology to support other priorities for the Council including work to tackle the climate emergency and to support the implementation of recommendations from the Poverty Commission and the Black Community Action Plan.
- 3.2 The original business case for the 2019-23 programme forecast cumulative savings of £16.6m, after Year 5 with payback within 4 years and an estimated recurring annual saving of £4.1m after year 4 (based upon new, enabling and efficiency savings).
- 3.3 Overall the programme has enabled agreed savings targets by providing the technology to support improvements to services such as the development of a new customer access model and the implementation of Family Wellbeing Centres. The programme has also provided services with efficiencies which can be used to manage increasing demand or to improve services. There are also a range of wider benefits for residents and businesses in Brent as a result of the investment in digital, for example improvements in connectivity and support for people who are digitally excluded.
- 3.4 Key achievements of the 2019-23 programme to date include:
 - Improved our resident online portal so that users have self-serve access to essential services such as housing needs, housing benefit and council tax 24/7 through any device.

- Worked with providers to retrofit fibre cabling to over 6,000 premises within Brent's housing stock, increasing our residents' access to full fibre broadband at affordable prices.
- Assisted over 200 digitally excluded residents through the Resident Support Fund
- Established one of the first data ethics boards and developed our first data lake use case – the rent arrears management system (RAMS) dashboard, with two more to follow shortly
- Introduced virtual agents (chatbots and web chats) in our online services to instantaneously answer residents' questions about council services and connect them with relevant information and forms, improving their experience when interacting with the council
- Supported the Council in responding to the Pandemic – from tools for home working to systems for shielding, test and trace and business support grants
- Used robotic process automation (RPA) to speed up manual processes, improved accuracy, delivered additional tasks such as reporting for Covid-19 and saved officer time to be used on more productive tasks (saved over £190k of officer time in 2020/21)
- Generated £2.8m of social value for the council and residents through the digital programme.

3.5 The programme has generated savings and efficiencies. It has enabled the delivery of savings including a £425k p.a. saving through the delivery of a new customer access model. It has also led to reductions in licensing costs as systems have been consolidated onto a single platform.

3.6 In terms of specific departmental efficiencies, examples include:

- Community Wellbeing used RPA to save £9k in officer time by automating leasehold repairs
- Children and Young People (CYP) used RPA to save £19k of officer time by automating a range of processes including school admissions checks and school admissions waiting list
- CYP has saved £7k of officer time with the introduction of online applications for registrations and bookings for Family Wellbeing Centres, and a kiosk for self check-in and check-out
- Customer and Digital Services has use RPA to facilitate the collection of over £500k more debt

3.7 These efficiencies have been used by departments in a range of ways including managing increases in demand and freeing up resources for front line work.

The draft Digital Strategy 2022-26 and Outline Business Case

3.8 The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital technology in the way we live and work, and has accelerated the move to online for many more citizens, businesses and organisations. At the same time it has exposed greater inequalities, including digital exclusion, and increased the risk that those who do not have good digital access are left even further behind. For this

reason, we are refreshing our digital strategy and business case to refocus our priorities as we emerge from the pandemic and better prepare us, our residents and the businesses of Brent, for the future.

- 3.9 The draft strategy sets out how digital transformation can support the delivery of the five borough plan themes: strong foundations; every opportunity to succeed; a future fit for everyone, an economy fit for all; a cleaner, more considerate Brent; and a borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy.
- 3.10 Delivery of this strategy requires ongoing investment in new technology and the capacity and capability to implement and support it, building on and leveraging the benefits from the strong foundations put in place by the 2019-23 digital programme. The OBC, appendix 2, sets out the potential costs and savings for the proposed programme alongside priority projects and technology investments.
- 3.11 Key benefit themes for the programme and the benefits underpinning them are below:

	Benefit theme	Supporting benefits
1	Customers are able to transact and participate securely, easily and conveniently in a way which meets their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents will be able to access more services online at a time and place that is convenient for them, and on a device of their choosing • Businesses will be able to access services in one place when and where it suits them • Enable greater access to services for residents who need more support as they can use trusted third parties to help them access their digital services • Quicker and easier access to information as a result to continuing website improvements • Save resident and officer time by using bio-metrics to prove identification, rather than relying on presenting documents in person
2	We are better able to use and share data to understand customers enabling us to deliver services which meet their needs and collaborate with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in performance information and data analysis will support planning, decision making and service improvements • The Data Lake will support predictive analytics, supporting early intervention and reducing demand on frontline practitioners • The increased ability to analyse communication with customers through chatbots will improve our understanding of issues and challenges impacting on residents

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be able to more efficiently support and communicate with business as all the data about them is in one place
3	We work more efficiently and effectively enabling staff to have the right tools and departments to realign resources to provide better services, and, deliver financial benefits and generate income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPA will automate mundane processes, improve accuracy, increase speed, and save officer time • Investment in EDM and Dynamics systems will reduce processing times (e.g. through enabling a single view of the customer) • There will be income generation through commercial developments • Savings will be generation through rationalisation of systems, reducing licensing and support costs • Officer productivity will be improved by efficiencies in processing and ways of working e.g. new online forms • Updating existing systems and ensuring they are secure will help avoid the cost of cyber-attack or data breach
4	Residents and businesses can access the right digital infrastructure and skills to succeed and innovate within a growing local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full fibre roll outs will enable residents to access faster, more robust and futureproof broadband • Roll out of 5G connectivity will enable wider use of Smart Home technology and provide a platform for innovation • Digital skills training will enable and increase residents' ability to access jobs and services • Devices for every digitally excluded household will improve digital skills, increase residents' access to services, reduce social isolation, and increase access to employment and educational opportunities • The business support fund will help support the local economy and jobs by bringing more businesses online and helping them connect with a wider customer base
5	We use technology to provide a healthier, safer, cleaner borough for residents to live in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet of Things devices will allow residents to live more independently for longer • Implementation of Smart city devices will enable better management of challenges including air quality

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green500 programme with Microsoft will identify opportunities to roll out smart devices to help Brent to achieve its ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
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3.12 Costs and savings set out in the OBC have been derived from internal consultation with service areas, external technology cost information from third parties and drawing on benchmarks and indicators of costs and savings from other London boroughs undertaking similar programmes.

3.13 Work on the programme to date has demonstrated that the appetite for digital transformation in the council is high and Brent is at the leading edge in relation to a number of aspects of its digital programme, including digital inclusion and its approach to data ethics. The programme has a pipeline of potential projects across a wide range of departments and service areas which have been built into the OBC. The OBC also recognises and reflects the need for capacity needed to drive and support this level of change.

3.14 The Digital Strategy and OBC are aligned with core strategic priorities including:

- The alignment of environmental contracts in 2023
- The Redefining Local Services Programme
- Shared Technology Services technology roadmap
- Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Shared Technology Service Cyber Security Strategy.
- Brent's Cyber Security Strategy 2019-23. This strategy is currently being refreshed and will come to Cabinet shortly
- The requirement to provide more effective back office systems to drive more effective workforce management and development

3.15 The programme will also deliver a number of projects which have gained funding as recovery initiatives agreed by full Council in July 2021:

- Take Your Shot initiative to provide support to Brent start-up enterprises and entrepreneurs. It will support the Black Community Action Plan as there will be a particular focus on entrepreneurs from Black and Ethnic Minority groups.
- 296 digital packages for children and young people in Brent to assist them with accessing online learning at home and to improve their digital skills
- Local shopping app to support local businesses and to give residents access to a local online marketplace and e-commerce
- A business database which the council can use to conduct a strategic analysis of the Brent business base and to engage a wider number of businesses in our business support offer
- A pilot business support fund for 100 business. If the draft 2022-26 business case for the digital strategy is agreed, this will be rolled out more widely.

- 3.16 The business case is for an extension of the Digital Programme until 2026. Currently the final year of the Digital Programme is 22/23. A further £1m was agreed for 23/24 for work to close the programme and fully embed and maximise benefits from digital transformation. It is intended for this £1m to be brought forward to 22/23 be used to help support the roll-out of Office 365 (to improve collaborative working), as well as delivering the first phase of improvement work for Adult Social Care projects, and the replacement of systems for Planning. These two projects were submitted as recovering funding bids earlier this year and it was agreed that they would be taken forward as part of the next phase of the digital programme. The total cost for these projects exceeds £1m, but the 22/23-25/26 business case makes provision for future years.
- 3.17 Other work which will be included in the programme for 23/24 includes a new system for Private Housing, rationalisation of asset management systems and enhancements to the Dynamics system for Housing. Other key projects which are already included in the pipeline include new customer facing systems for environment services, supporting the redesigning local services project and work to build on CYP projects including the single view platform and pathways app.
- 3.18 The core capital investment required to deliver the new digital strategy is £9.3m over the programme period, starting from 2022/23. Total cumulative savings of £14.8m are forecast after year 4, with an estimated recurring annual saving of £3.9m after 3 years, based on new, enabling and efficiency savings. The planned end of the programme is March 2026.
- 3.19 Separately, £4.2m is sought for a Business Support Fund (£2.0m) and devices for digitally excluded households (£2.2m). These projects are currently being piloted using recovery funding and this investment will support the extension and development of these activities. The Business Support Fund which will give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform. The devices project will provide a digital device for every digitally excluded household in Brent by 2025 (8,000 devices). This is in response to the Citizen Online report on digital inclusion in Brent and aligns with the London Recovery Board's Digital Access for all mission. These initiatives will result in significant economic and social benefits for the borough and will support recovery from the Pandemic, but the investment will not result in short time financial benefits for the Council.

Programme delivery

- 3.20 The OBC sets out a proposed programme of work to implement the digital strategy and the investment required in order to deliver this. The programme is organised into a number of themes:

Access

Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents

Digital Place

Having consistent technology and connectivity available to enable Brent to be a digital borough that is accessible for both businesses and residents. This includes improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents

Digital Inclusion

Identifying digitally excluded residents and providing access to devices and digital skills to enable all residents across Brent to safely participate in the digital world

Data and Smart Devices

Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents.

Digital Workplace

Ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and to have the digital skills to effectively use existing and new technology

Governance

- 3.21 Delivery of the programme will be undertaken by the Customer and Digital Board which is chaired by the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services and made up of senior representatives from all council departments. The Board will report regularly to the Council Management Team and on to the Policy Coordination Group. In addition, the programme budget and financial benefits will be monitored by the Corporate Landlord Board which reports to the Capital Programme Board.

Appraisal

- 3.22 An assessment of costs and savings has been undertaken for this outline business case based upon the following:
- **Cost of the programme and the proposed digital programme resources** –The programme will be temporary until spring 2026
 - **Cost of technology enablement** such as Dynamics, RPA, and EDM implementation support and data and security tools.
 - **Savings and income** – based upon the assumptions for headcount, third party savings, new revenue streams and cost avoidance/demand management.
 - **Savings** defined as **New** (i.e. not in current budget savings or plans), **Enabling** (i.e. supporting delivery of agreed savings targets, these projects give a further level of confidence to delivery), or **Efficiency** (i.e. providing opportunities for departments to increase efficiency which could include cashable savings to support delivery of new savings targets).

- 3.23 The programme additionally enables costs avoidance with service provision, which has not been included in the savings identified. The Business Support Fund will prevent some businesses from closing down, which will reduce the future support businesses and individuals need from the council in other ways. The analysis of data from the Data Lake will support early intervention, which will save costlier interventions further down the line.
- 3.24 The programme supports the generation of social investment. It provides a platform to gain money by bidding to funding programmes, and an opportunity to bring in money from partners donating to the programme. Previous examples include digital skills training for residents and staff and increased connectivity in the borough. In the absence of the social investment, the council would have to spend more money on areas such as connectivity, digital skills training and digital inclusion.
- 3.25 The table below summarises the cost benefit analysis over the programme period. In some instances the new investment gives greater confidence to previously identified savings (£0.9m of enabling savings for Customer and Digital Services), or continues work that is already taking place (licensing savings from rationalising IT applications). For other areas, the business case provides the investment to generate new savings through increased automation, more resource to focus on debt recovery and a greater opportunity to gain social investment. Through the programme, business cases will be developed for specific projects which are able to generate efficiencies through automation of processes and improving online interfaces and their integration with back office systems. The programme team and the Finance department will work with departments and services to identify and agree future savings to be delivered through digital technology. These will become part of the Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2023-26.

Digital programme 2023/24 - 26/27 ROI by theme (£ millions)					
Investment	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Access	2.25	1.38	0.30	0.05	3.98
Digital place	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Digital Inclusion	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.05
Data and smart devices	0.35	0.40	0.15	0.00	0.90
Digital workplace	0.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78
Building blocks	1.20	1.20	0.60	0.40	3.40
TOTAL COSTS	4.79	2.99	1.07	0.45	9.30

Savings/Income	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
a)Savings (Enabling) CDS	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	3.90
b)Savings (New) Licensing, etc.	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.70	2.50
c)Savings (Efficiency) Automation and increased productivity	0.40	0.50	0.90	0.90	2.70
d)Income (New) Income via increased debt recovery through RPA and RAMS	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	2.40
e)Income (New) via commercial opportunities	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.70
f)Social investment received	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.50	2.60
TOTAL CUMULATIVE SAVINGS/INCOME	3.28	3.58	4.08	3.88	14.80
Annual Profile	(1.51)	0.58	3.00	3.43	5.50

3.26 The savings from the table above come from:

- a) Already identified savings for the Customer and Digital Services department, which the Digital Programme supports the realisation of.
- b) Savings from a reduction in licensing costs as the Digital Programme enables the council to rationalise the number of IT systems it uses.
- c) Productivity savings. An automated process which saves an officer time can be said to save x hours of officer time multiplied by the officer's hourly salary to reach a productivity savings figure. RPA, for example, saves an average of £11k p.a. per automated process. The programme team and Finance will work with departments to identify where these can be used to deliver cashable savings. These efficiencies can also be used to manage additional demand or to allow officers to take on additional or more value adding tasks.
- d) RPA and RAMS can facilitate the recovery of more debt for the council, therefore increasing the amount of income the council receives. For example, RPA can track find debtor information from other systems, whereas previously this was a time consuming process for officers.
- e) Income generation through selling support and development expertise gained during the Digital Programme to other councils and public sector organisations.
- f) Social investment in financial and non-financial forms from partners and funding organisations. For example, the provision of free digital skills training for residents and officers.

3.27 The annual savings figures of £1.6m in year 1, rising to £2.4m from year 3 (a total of all new and efficiency savings and income listed in the table above), will be included in the councils MTFS through cashable savings and/or reductions

in the need for growth via cost avoidance. The allocation of such savings will be allocated to departments through the detailed businesses cases.

3.28 The table below shows the investment required for the Business Support Fund and the devices for every household

Digital programme 2023/24 - 26/27 Business Support Fund and Devices for Every Digitally Excluded Household (£ millions)					
Investment	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Business support fund	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.00	2.00
Devices for every digitally excluded household	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.00	2.21
TOTAL COSTS	1.24	1.49	1.49	0.00	4.21

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The overall investment required is estimated at £9.3m over the programme period and will be funded from the capital programme. Separately, £4.2m is sought for a Business Support Fund and devices for digitally excluded households. Based on work carried out on the OBC to date, cumulative savings of £14.8m are forecast, which are a combination of new savings and enabling existing savings.

- Delivery of savings in Customer and Digital Services by using technology to support the realignment of services. These are already agreed savings targets and the Digital Programme's projects give a further level of confidence to delivery (£3.9m).
- Licensing savings from rationalising systems and replacing them with Dynamics, SharePoint or another system (these savings partly offset the new licensing costs required to support the technology being delivered through the programme). (£2.5m).
- Efficiency and productivity savings from online forms, RPA, chat bots, AI, machine learning, MyAccount, Dynamics, IoT and the data lake. Officer time is freed up by improving online forms and integrating into back office systems, removing unnecessary data entry and contact demand, and automating processes and responses to customer queries. These are cashable savings where departments choose to reduce headcount. Alternatively, they can allow officers to take on additional or more value adding tasks.(£2.7m)
- Increase in debt recovery via RPA and rent arrears through RAMS (£2.4m).
- Income generation through selling support and development expertise (£0.7m).
- Social investment in financial and non-financial forms from partners and funding organisations (£2.6m)

- 4.2 The annual savings figures of £1.6m in year 1, rising to £2.4m from year 3 (a total of all new and efficiency savings and income), will be included in the councils MTFS through cashable savings and/or reductions in the need for growth via cost avoidance. The allocation of such savings will be allocated to departments through the detailed businesses cases.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 A range of contracts for systems, support and devices will be required to deliver the Digital Strategy and Business Case. All such contracts will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and where over relevant thresholds, in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 5.2 As part of the Digital Strategy and Business Case, it is proposed to establish a Business Support Fund ("BSF"). The purpose of the BSF is to give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform. The Council has the power to establish, administer and provide financial and other assistance to households and businesses pursuant to the general power of competence as set out in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 5.3 Under the United Kingdom's Withdrawal Agreement with the EU, obligations such as those under the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union continue to apply and require the council to deal with all potential recipients of support from the BSF in a fair, open and transparent way. Therefore, the council must advertise the availability of funds and assess potential recipients on predetermined and pre-advertised criteria applicable to all in the same way. Delegated authority is therefore sought for the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources to establish suitable eligibility criteria.
- 5.4 Authority is sought for the Strategic Director of Customer & Digital Services to administer and award assistance under the BSF. The Strategic Director will need to administer and award assistance in accordance with the UK's subsidy control regime to avoid state aid issues.
- 5.5 An element of the Digital Strategy and Business Case is the better use and sharing of data. Local Authorities are under an obligation to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons; and in particular their right to the protection of personal data is complied with when sharing data. Implementation of the Digital Strategy will need to ensure each element complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Further, where the processing of personal data using new technology is implemented which is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will need to be undertaken addressing those risks.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,

pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 6.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 6.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary. Cabinet is referred to the contents of this report for information, in particular the Equality Impact Assessment that has been carried out for the draft Digital Strategy 2022-26 and is included at Appendix 4.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The Lead Member has been consulted throughout the development of the draft strategy and OBC.
- 7.2 A range of customer feedback informed the development of the strategy. For example, residents have fed into plans for the website, giving their views through surveys and interviews. We have also worked closely with Brent's voluntary and community sector on Brent's Digital Inclusion Action Plan.

8.0 Human Resources Implications

- 8.1 Implementation of the Digital Strategy will require ongoing cultural change within the council which is included in the resources identified to deliver the programme.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Strategic Director, Customer and Digital Services

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-2026



FOREWORD



I am enormously proud to introduce Brent's new digital strategy, the key strategic document that sets out how our digital programme will support delivery of our Borough Plan priorities.

It comes at a time when our borough is facing unprecedented challenges, as we continue to tackle the pandemic and its consequences. These consequences will be far-reaching and long lasting, which is why we are refocussing our digital approach to best support our recovery and respond to new contexts.

These include the findings of Brent's Independent Poverty Commission, which laid bare the inequalities many people face in our borough, and our declaration of climate and ecological emergency - including our ten year strategy to become carbon neutral by 2030. This digital strategy will be key in helping to address these challenges and improving outcomes for local people.

Our response to Covid-19 has demonstrated the extraordinary speed with which technology can be deployed to support our residents. I was extremely proud of how rapidly we responded to the urgent needs of our communities, much

of which would not have been possible without digital solutions.

As Deputy Leader and champion of Brent's digital strategy, I am impressed with how far we have come on our digital journey; working with residents, partners and businesses towards our vision of becoming a digital place and a digital council. New systems are making us more efficient and effective, whilst transforming the experience of our residents when accessing services; more residents have gained the digital skills, tools and confidence needed to participate online; and our use of data has enabled us to adapt services to meet the changing needs of residents and provide more tailored support to meet individual needs.

But our work is not yet done. As technology continues to evolve, so must we. This strategy sets out how we will build on these successes and continue to innovate to improve services, realise efficiencies, and support local people. This includes constantly developing and refining our online channels to meet modern expectations; improving access to digital skills training and high speed fibre internet connections, accelerating residents and local businesses' ability to succeed in the digital world; and ensuring no one is left behind as we recover from the pandemic.

Over the next four years, we will make the most of the opportunities new digital technology and infrastructure will provide for us to ensure that Brent Council is an ambitious digital leader now and in the future; delivering better services for all, investing in our local economy and an area in which all who live or work benefit fully from technology.

Cllr Margaret McLennan
Deputy Leader, London Borough of Brent

INTRODUCTION

The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital technology in the way we live and work, and has accelerated the move to online for many more citizens, businesses and organisations. At the same time it has exposed greater inequalities, including digital exclusion, and increased the risk that those who do not have access to digital devices, fast broadband and sufficient data are left even further behind. For this reason, we have refreshed our digital strategy to refocus our priorities as we emerge from the pandemic and better prepare us for the future.

In Brent, we started our digital journey with the launch of our first digital strategy in 2017, which set out our long-term goals of transforming into a digital council and a digital place. In 2019 we published a revised strategy to capitalise on emerging opportunities to help us achieve these ambitions. This updated strategy for 2022-26 reflects on the progress we have made and sets out our plans to build on our successes and respond to new challenges as we move further into post-covid recovery.

By committing to invest in and implement this strategy, we will continue to develop as a digital place and a digital council. We will work to ensure local residents, partners and businesses are able to thrive in the digital future, and play active roles in shaping Brent into a digital borough where technology is used to improve the lives and life chances of everyone.

As a DIGITAL PLACE we are building a borough-wide digital infrastructure providing instantaneous connectivity. We

are developing a training and education framework that nurtures digital skills and expertise, with clear pathways into high-value contemporary employment. We will have an environment that emboldens a culture of digital entrepreneurship and innovation, attracts new businesses and supports the evolution of existing ones. Crucially it will be a place shaped by the strengths of Brent's local neighbourhoods and destinations, harnessing digital to amplify and promote their unique qualities. Our locality based approach extends to our Digital Programme. This aims to address complex issues that exist at a local level through tailoring approaches to meet local needs and working with communities to make them more engaged, connected and resilient.

As a DIGITAL COUNCIL we are enhancing our digital offer in line with modern expectations. By collecting data in an ethical and secure way we are using it to make our services and information more accessible, personalised and responsive. We will provide more efficient and value for money services, with leadership that empowers our workforce to use technology to work smarter to continually improve residents' experiences when interacting with the council. We are helping to connect people with each other and their communities and enabling more residents to have their voices heard in influencing decision making. We are also engaging with our partners to inform how we design and deliver services and ensure a joined-up approach to digital inclusion.

BRENT DIGITAL FACTS



7% of adults do not have access to the internet at home



11% of residents only use a smart phone to get online



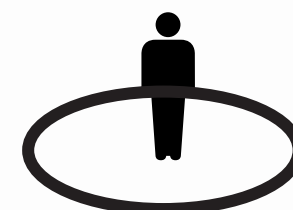
10,000+ staff are supported by our Shared ICT services



55% of residents tell us it was easy to carry out council transactions online, 45% said it wasn't easy



Over 150 different systems are used across the council



8% of residents reported feeling socially isolated. A further 15% said they don't have enough social contact



Brent has 337,000 residents today, projected to increase to over 360,000 by 2025, and over 410,000 by 2040



25.5% of properties in Brent can access the fastest full fibre optic services, 4% higher than the London average

50,566

residents have signed up to the Council's My Account



On average, there are 370,000 visits to Brent Council's website each month

18%

of adults don't have the digital skills for life

6



BOROUGH PLAN – BUILDING A BETTER BRENT

The Borough Plan sets out our vision to make Brent a borough of culture, empathy and shared prosperity. It focusses on five priorities around which we align our resources and collaborate with partners: strong foundations; every opportunity to succeed; a future fit for everyone, an economy fit for all; a cleaner, more considerate Brent; and a borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy.

Since 2017, we have been working towards becoming a thriving digital place and a successful digital council by embedding digital approaches within our Borough Plan priorities. This strategy sets out how our digital programme will continue to be a catalyst for delivering each of the Borough Plan priorities and help drive our recovery from the pandemic.



BRENT'S DIGITAL JOURNEY

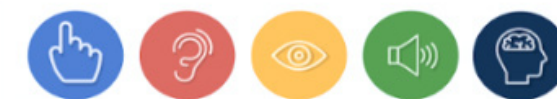
Throughout our digital journey we have been working with residents, businesses and partners to deliver a themed programme of activity, which continues to evolve.

Our digital strategy themes are:

- Access - Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents
- Digital Place - Having consistent technology and connectivity available to enable Brent to be a digital borough that is accessible for both businesses and residents. This includes improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents
- Digital Inclusion – Identifying digitally excluded residents and providing access to devices and digital skills to enable all residents across Brent to safely participate in the digital world
- Data and Smart devices – Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents.
- Digital Workplace - Ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and to have the digital skills to effectively use existing and new technology

Theme: Access

- Over 90% of the website now meets accessibility criteria, an increase of over 38% since early 2020.



- We have improved our resident online portal so that users have self-serve access to essential services such as housing needs, housing benefit and council tax 24/7 through any device.
- We have improved the security of the online portal to ensure that residents' information is stored more safely within the council.
- The Brent 'My Account' has enabled us to join up residents' interactions with the council by having one login to interact with a range of services.
- We have implemented a new feedback system providing residents with a simplified way to contact the council.
- We have introduced virtual agents (chatbots and web chats) in our online services to instantaneously answer residents' questions about council services and connect them with relevant information and forms, improving their experience when interacting with the council.



Theme: Digital Place

- We have worked with providers to retrofit fibre cabling to over 6,000 premises within Brent's housing stock, increasing our residents' access to full fibre broadband at affordable prices.
- We have successfully worked with providers to connect 15 community buildings, helping to ensure everyone can benefit from improved internet access and improve the public services delivered from these buildings.
- Throughout the pandemic our digital programme enabled us to quickly develop new processes to help set up local test and trace and other key systems, providing vital support to over 33,000 residents.



Theme: Digital Inclusion

- Through our Resident Support Fund (RSF), which helps those affected financially by the pandemic, we have provided devices and internet access to over 200, and counting, digitally excluded residents.
- We have partnered with Social Box, a community interest group that refurbishes organisations' laptops, to distribute 55 council laptops to residents via Brent's Living Room, the Refugee Support Network and the homeless community. These laptops were given to residents who wanted to develop their digital skills.
- We have worked with Infosys to provide 25 laptops to housing tenants to support them to access the new housing portal. This approach has enabled residents to improve their digital skills and actively engage with services and family members
- We have provided 65 Looked After Children and Care Leavers with laptops to enable them to continue to access education and to promote digital inclusion



Theme: Data and smart devices

- Through working with Mobile Network Operators to better use data, we have been able to understand how people use spaces by measuring footfall and time spent in our local areas, which has helped generate intelligence to inform the recovery of high streets after the pandemic.
- We are one of the first councils to establish a data ethics board to ensure oversight and proper use of data within an ethics framework.
- We have established a data lake which gives us the capability to look across all the data we collect when delivering services, providing customer insights that have informed service improvements.
- Our new Rent Arrears Management Solution (RAMS) is used to identify when tenants begin to miss rent payments and automatically alert case officers that additional support may be required for the resident, successfully preventing escalating debt.



Theme: Digital Workplace

- By investing in technology and skills for staff we successfully delivered council services without disruption throughout all stages of the pandemic, including new and enhanced services for our residents to help them to stay safe and well.
- We have piloted virtual appointments in our births, marriages and deaths service, enabling residents to choose to access this service remotely.
- We have partnered with Microsoft to offer over 20,000 hours of digital training for staff across the council, supporting new skills for improved services.

ROAD MAP

Below is a summary of the key digital initiatives that have been delivered and others that we are working on, or will deliver, as part of Brent's Digital Strategy.

Theme	2023/25	2023/26
Access	Improved customer access for key services, including Environment, Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services	
	Planning system replacement	
		Further website improvements
		More services on My Account
		Automation (RPA, AI, chatbots, virtual agents)
		Pipeline of Dynamics projects/ systems rationalisation
Digital Place		Increased connectivity
		Digital jobs
		Business Support Fund
Digital Inclusion		Digital champions
		Digital skills
		Digital devices
Data and smart devices	Biometrics	
		Data lake
		Internet of things hub
Digital workplace		Rollout of Office 365
		Digital skills training for staff



STONG FOUNDATIONS

Strong foundations

To improve residents satisfaction with the way the council does things, we are ensuring they have more opportunities to shape services to better meet their needs. Their voice is key in helping us best utilise new technology as we modernise and redefine the "front door" through which the council can be contacted.

Improvements to our website and portal are supporting residents and businesses to have a more positive experience when interacting with the council online, through simplified processes and improved access to relevant information; helping us to be more efficient and better manage demand.

Enhancing our digital offer does not mean that we expect all interactions to take place online but gives residents the choice to access services in a way that best suits them and allows us to dedicate additional support to those who need it most via our network of community Hubs.

The council's workforce and its digital skills have been crucial to our ability to respond to new challenges, including the impact of Covid and our ongoing recovery, and it is vital that we continue to invest in our staff to enable them to support residents and deliver services in the way our residents want.

Our targets for 2026

- The new Council website will provide a more personalised experience for residents and be accessible on smart phones and tablets
- Residents will be able to book, pay, report and request services seamlessly online through streamlined processes that reduce the requirement of providing duplicate information

- Telephone demand will have decreased by 25% through greater availability of digital access and through the use of virtual assistants
- 75% of enquiries made at Brent Hubs will be resolved at the point of contact
- More than 80% of residents will be satisfied with the new Brent website
- 56% of Residents will say that the council is easy to contact in the Resident attitude survey
- All staff will engage in digital skills training, including Digital Accessibility fundamental training, to support a culture of supporting residents to access services in a way that is suitable for their needs
- We will invest £80,000 in suitable training to fill identified skills gaps for developing and maintaining new technology
- We will recruit eight digital skills apprentices to demonstrate our commitment to encouraging digital employment opportunities in Brent
- Automation (Robotic Process Automation, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning) will increase staff productivity, producing an equivalent of £400k savings per annum in staff time by 2023/24
- Staff experience a more manageable work load due to efficient systems and where possible digital automation of administrative tasks.

CASE STUDY – VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS

Mrs Shah goes to the council website to complete a housing benefit application. Mrs Shah has limited digital skills but wants to complete the forms online as she doesn't want to travel to the Civic centre. She finds the forms on the council website but feels she needed help as she had never completed a form online. She calls Brent Customer Services who identify that she would benefit from a virtual appointment where she can speak to a staff member face to face on her computer or mobile. The customer services officer discusses a suitable time to arrange an appointment with Mrs Shah and then sent her a text message with the appointment link which Mrs Shah is able to click at the time of her appointment.

At the allotted time, a customer services advisor joins the virtual appointment which Mrs Shah joins from her mobile phone so she can fill out the form on her computer while she speaks to the advisor. During the virtual face to face appointment, the staff member guides Mrs Shah through the housing benefit process and explains the supporting evidence she needs to provide. With this assistance, Mrs Shah is able to successfully submit the housing application with the required information which is then sent to a housing benefit assessor.

Mrs Shah is approved to receive housing benefits promptly as she



has provided all the information that is required. By using the virtual appointment system Mrs Shah is able to successfully complete her housing benefits application and avoid having to come into the Civic Centre

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Improved access

As a Digital Council, we've made it easier for citizens to interact with us; continually improving our online provision. Enhancements to our website have included a new, decluttered design to make it more responsive, streamlining of navigation for heavy traffic areas to improve user journeys, and upgrades to MyAccount, making it more secure and easier to log-in and access an expanding range of online services. We are now able to better support residents with the introduction of webchats and chatbots, and improved online forms which collect information in a simple way and avoid users having to provide the same information more than once.

We have implemented video conferencing software to support increased civic

participation; utilising this technology to continue to engage with residents remotely, for example, in developing Brent's Black Community Action Plan. And we are now regularly using a wide range of tools and technologies - including MS Dynamics, RPA, AI and Machine Learning - to improve access and deliver services in a smarter way.

The introduction of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax MS Dynamics platform allows Brent officers to have an overall view of residents' interactions with these services, supporting more informed decision making and improved outcomes. Virtual agents and RPAs have improved resident experience by directing them to relevant council website information in response to their query. This reduces the number of calls to Brent's contact centre and enables our customer service officers to dedicate more time to supporting our residents who need additional assistance.



CASE STUDY – CHATBOT



Mr Jones recently welcomed his first child and needs to register the birth with Brent Council. As Mr Jones has never done this before he goes onto the Council's website to find out more information about the process.

When he goes on to the Marriages, Civil Partnership, Deaths and Births page on the website, a Chatbot appears. Mr Jones is able to interact with the Chatbot 24/7 and therefore can access the information at a time that suits him as opposed to calling Brent Customer Services during their opening hours. Mr Jones clicks on the Chatbot and types in 'Birth'. The Chatbot responds straight

away and asks Mr Jones if he would like a copy of a birth certificate or to register a birth. Mr Jones selects that he would like to register a birth, at which point the Chatbot tells him which documents he will need to bring to the appointment. It also provides a link to the appointment page which Mr Jones follows and books an appointment for three weeks' time.

Three weeks later Mr Jones arrives at the Civic Centre with all the required documents and completes a face to face appointment with the registration team. As Mr Jones has brought all the right documentation he successfully registers the birth of his daughter.

We continue to invest in council systems that improve the resident experience when interacting with the council and support joined up communication between residents and council services. The 'Plan your Pathway' app for young people leaving care is one the applications that will achieve this by offering an interactive way for care leavers to complete their pathway plans. The app also supports young people to provide updates to their social workers and personal advisors instantly.

Changing the way we work

In response to the pandemic, Council employees demonstrated their ability to rapidly adapt and make use of new technology; continuing provide services for residents whilst moving to remote working arrangements.

We have been able to increase the pace of change across the council through successful implementation of new systems, such as Microsoft Teams, which enabled 215,548 virtual meetings to take place in 2020. The introduction of 'DocuSign' technology allows council employees to digitally add their certified signatures to documents, removing the need to print documents and upload them onto systems. Alongside this, 'Govmail' has enabled us to reduce time and money spent on printing, supporting the council to continue to send information and forms to residents while staff have been working remotely, ensuring sustained service delivery whilst realising efficiencies. We also have introduced Oracle Cloud which has improved our ability to monitor, analyse and improve processes. This includes improved self-service capabilities and information accuracy for staff members as well as supporting faster payments for external stakeholders and enabling them to access and maintain their own information.

Next steps

- We will launch a new customer-driven web offer that will:
 - Create a customer-first online experience that is accessible for all
 - Allow residents and businesses to effectively engage with council services when and where it is most convenient for them
 - Save the user time by providing quick and easy access to information and online services.
 - Gives the user confidence to transact more online due to an easy-to-use, reliable and consistent online environment
 - Increase efficiencies across the council by enabling customers to access a majority of council services online
- We understand that people will only interact with us online if they feel that their data is secure. We are building a more secure and robust network to keep all data safe from emerging threats and improve user access to online accounts.
- The portal will continue to be developed to provide a 'tell us once' service. This will remove the need for residents to complete several forms to inform separate services of changes in their circumstances and support an improved customer experience.
- We will develop a third party access option for the portal, enabling residents with complex needs to be supported online by trusted voluntary and community sector services.

- We will introduce voice bots in our contact centre, which will use Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to connect residents with the right service at the first point of contact.
- We will accelerate the roll out of RPA to more lines of business, including linking it with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to automatically read and input handwritten forms; enabling our staff to dedicate more time to meaningful and complex interactions with residents.
- AI will be used to support faster, more consistent decisions in areas where there is clear criteria - for example, planning applications or eligibility assessments for council services - enabling more residents to independently complete full transactions and do business with the council at a time of their choosing.
- We will make further use of MS Dynamics to integrate channels, applications and workflows to enable seamless end-to-end transactions across a wider range of services and maximise the first touch capability of council officers.
- We will increase the resources available to support new technology across the organisation and invest in the skill development of the team, including apprentices, to increase our digital capacity.
- As we deploy new systems to improve access and realise efficiencies, we will create opportunities for Brent's staff to develop their digital skills through partnership training programmes with industry leaders.
- We will continue to improve and modernise our Planning systems to improve the resident and user experience
- We will progress our culture change programme across the organisation, engaging with staff to demonstrate their role in promoting innovation and identifying opportunities for digital improvements within their service area and the wider council.
- We will implement Office365 across the council to increase collaborative working amongst colleagues, utilising features such as joint real time editable access to files which allows several colleagues to work on the same document at the same time. It will also enable flexible, secure access on any device at any time which employees can use with confidence as compliance rules are managed automatically.

A FUTURE FIT FOR EVERYONE, AN ECONOMY FIT FOR ALL

Investing in the local and regional economy as well as the creation of new jobs feature strongly in the Borough Plan. We will continue to improve Brent's digital infrastructure to enable our local neighbourhoods to adapt to new ways of working and develop as attractive destinations in which to live, work and do business. This includes improving broadband speeds across the borough so that they are fit for purpose, now and in the future, and working with the market to ensure Brent benefits from the roll out of new 5G networks.

To make sure Brent's a great place to start and grow a business, we will continue to develop an offer that helps businesses prosper in the digital place and makes Brent a desirable location for new and established businesses from across a variety of sectors. One of the ways we will implement this is through our partnership with 'Take Your Shot' in setting up an innovation hub in Brent for entrepreneurs and young talent to start up their businesses. Through the hub, new businesses will have access to business mentors, training and a space to network with other local businesses as they develop. This supports our commitment in the Black Community Action Plan to provide opportunities for black community entrepreneurs and start-ups to connect with large tech organisations.

With an increase in the number of residents working, learning and socialising from home, the demand for high speed internet has increased. Local businesses are adapting to meet changing needs by developing their online presence so they can continue to operate and grow. To support this we will invest in an e-commerce platform for local businesses, accompanied by the introduction of a council business database, to promote relevant local business opportunities and

offer support where required.

We will continue to work with Brent Start and other partners to improve the digital skills of businesses within the borough, including through training programmes, access to improved connectivity and devices. This will not only support existing local businesses but make Brent a supportive environment for start-ups and newly established businesses which in turn will increase employment opportunities for residents and support the Brent pound being put back into the Brent pocket.

Our targets for 2026

- **62% of Brent will have access to full fibre connectivity**, meaning a year on year increase in coverage of 8%
- We will pilot a '**Business support fund**' to help businesses thrive and increase economic growth within Brent
- We will give **25% of local businesses access to the training** to be able to have a presence online and enable them to **make use of available technology** and increase their online presence
- Over **2000 residents** will have access to classroom based digital skills training through Brent Start

Our journey so far

As our lives become more dependent on digital technology, connectivity is essential for helping residents and businesses to thrive. From a starting point of 4% access to Fibre To The Premise (FTTP) broadband in 2017, Brent now has full fibre available across 25.5% of the borough, higher than the London average of 21.05%. FTTP provides far faster connection speeds and much greater capacity than traditional broadband services. This means that

internet speeds won't slow down, or buffer, during peak times. It's also much faster to upload material, which businesses have told us is particularly important to them. We've reduced the barriers to providers wanting to invest in Brent's digital infrastructure and continue to work with them to support their investment within the borough.

The development of resident's digital skills through Brent Start training courses ensures they can take advantage of new employment opportunities. To support this we have been working with new and existing providers to offer employment opportunities to Brent residents through Brent Works as part of the social value element of our contracts.

Work has begun with local businesses to better understand the specific digital skills training and support they require. The Business Support Fund is bringing together a range of training for these businesses, including setting up social media platforms, accessing online marketplaces and enabling cashless payments at their stores. We are piloting an e-commerce platform for local businesses as part of our investment in the local economy and to encourage the Brent pound being spent in Brent. This pilot will explore how we can support businesses to have an online presence to increase sales and help Brent to be a place where local businesses thrive.

As part of our commitment to Community Wealth Building, we are supporting local businesses by ensuring they form part of the Council's supply chain and encouraging them to actively engage with the council through the introduction of our Local Supplier procurement register. This register will enable us to support local businesses by providing them with information on the range of support and future procurement opportunities available to them.

Next steps

- We will invest in an LPWAN (low-power wide-area network) to support the introduction of monitoring sensors that provide real time information to our systems. We will utilise the LPWAN and other available technology to measure footfall in town centres to better understand and support high streets Covid19 recovery and inform future plans for the local area, including the promotion of active travel
- The 'Living Room' and Brent Hubs will be used to support employers and employees to access digital training.
- We will engage the market to ensure Brent receives investment for the rollout of 5G to enable smart cities technology and make societies more sustainable and supportive by:
 - o Enabling 5G connections between appliances and service providers so residents can reduce their household energy use and costs
 - o Helping to care for people in their homes and within care settings by using telehealth to monitor vital signs remotely, reduce loneliness and observe medicine administration using 4K video
- We will continue to work with providers to increase the number of properties able to access FTTP Broadband at an affordable cost. And, in partnership with the West London Alliance, we will secure free gigabit capable connections for key community buildings, to ensure everyone can access fast and stable broadband.

- We will work with the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation to improve the digital infrastructure on the Park Royal industrial estate. The learning from this project will inform improvements to CCTV systems, Internet of Things applications and the capabilities of 5G.
- We will work with local businesses to demonstrate demand for full fibre broadband and share this with providers to stimulate investment programmes for the borough. By increasing the fibre coverage accessible to businesses we will address online business barriers, including 'not spots' and slow internet connection speeds.
- We will explore opportunities to introduce block chain systems to increase security when sharing information between public sector organisations, such as the NHS and other local authorities.
- We will develop our use of digital twin technology to virtually assess the impact of new technology in an area before implementing it. This will assist with the planning process for 5G masts and small cells, ensuring they provide consistent coverage across the borough and do not adversely impact existing infrastructure.
- A business database will be developed to collate information on businesses within the borough and identify areas of growth. This will be supported by a business portal which will enable businesses to access valuable information and support, including training, licencing information and procurement processes.
- We will continue to work with providers to create more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for Brent residents and seek partnerships with other companies in the technology sector to widen the range of apprenticeships available.
- We will launch a two year academy, via the apprenticeship level, which will focus on upskilling Brent staff who work with data in their current roles. Through the academy, staff will achieve a level 4 qualification in data management.
- We will ensure local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have the support they need to thrive in the digital place, working with these businesses to understand their digital needs through a Business Support Fund and share opportunities in online trading, marketing and digital efficiencies.

EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED

The Independent Brent Poverty Commission, which reported in 2020, laid bare the huge challenges many people face in our borough. Through our digital strategy we are addressing the digital divide by working with residents and the community and voluntary sector to make Brent a digital place for everyone. By identifying and supporting individuals who need help developing their digital skills, more residents are being empowered to overcome barriers and access vital digital services, for example, online GP appointments.

We want to ensure that all residents and businesses across Brent have the right skills and access to devices and connectivity to fully participate in the modern world, including online shopping, access to training and employment opportunities and engaging with the council online. We recognise that people's needs vary. As we improve our understanding of the barriers to engaging with technology we are better able to tailor support and services to meet diverse local needs.

The importance of access to digital devices and reliable broadband to help Brent children and young people engage in education and to achieve was highlighted throughout the pandemic. By supporting Brent families to access devices and by working with schools and colleges to promote digital innovation we will work to help every Brent child and young person fulfil their potential.

Our targets for 2026

- We will work with the voluntary sector and crowdsourcing platforms to provide 8,000 households in Brent with a digital device, connectivity and the opportunity to develop their digital skills and improve digital inclusion
- 35% of currently digital excluded residents will increase their digital confidence
- We will give access to over 20,000 hours' worth of self-study digital skills training to all residents
- There will be 500 trained digital champions across Brent to support residents in developing their digital skills
- We will improve and expand our front of house offering with Hubs and Family Wellbeing Centres assisting residents with developing their digital skills both face to face and virtually

Our journey so far

Tackling digital exclusion has always been a key objective for our digital strategy. In 2020, we commissioned an independent review which found that 19% of adults in Brent do not have access to a laptop and 6% of residents have no digital skills. In response to this we have continued to develop new targeted approaches to ensure no one is left behind on our journey to becoming a digital place.

We have piloted providing devices and connectivity to adult social care service users. This has included day centre users and residents known to AgeUK who otherwise would not be able to interact with services as they moved to virtual provision. By supporting these residents they have been able to engage in activities including arts and crafts sessions and physiotherapy while centres closed during the pandemic. AgeUK has also supported older residents to develop their digital skills so that they are able to interact with others and reduce their social isolation, as well as complete their shopping online and attend virtual GP appointments.

We have introduced digital champions within our council services and Community and Voluntary services to support residents with digital queries and develop their knowledge of different technology. We currently have 50 digital champions across libraries, Brent Hubs, AgeUK and health partners who are members of the national digital champion network.

To further support residents, Brent Start have continued to run digital skills programmes for using email, the internet and improving digital literacy. As more universal services move to online platforms the development of these skills has never been more important for ensuring all residents can be active participants in day to day life.

We continue to be active members of the London Office of Technology Institute (LOTI) and engage in collaboration and the sharing of best practice with other local authorities. Through this group, we have been awarded funding to develop a digital inclusion map for the borough to inform the areas of investment required to ensure all residents opportunities to develop their digital skills and become digitally included members of society.

Next steps

- We will work with existing and new providers to offer residents digital skills training opportunities, both in person at our locality based hubs and through online platforms.
- We will extend the offer of digital skills training to more more community and voluntary sector partners to empower them to provide digital services to meet the needs of the communities they support.
- We will expand our digital champions programme to increase the trained resources available for supporting digitally excluded residents. The digital champions will be trained as part of a national digital champion network that will support the sharing of best practice on engaging residents and developing their skills.
- We will continue our commitment to the London Recovery Board's Digital Access for All Mission goal for 'Every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025' through Brent's Resident Support Fund - providing devices and connectivity to our digitally excluded residents.

AGE UK DIGITAL INCLUSION PILOT

Mrs Kohen was referred to the digital Inclusion programme with AgeUK through Elders Voice. Mrs Kohen was hoping to acquire a place on the Board of Trustees for Elders Voice and the support provided would allow her to develop her skills which would be useful for her position as a Trustee.

Mrs Kohen was contacted by one of the AgeUK volunteers to discuss her objectives and gain more insight into what she hoped to achieve from the programme. She stated that she wanted to be able to use means of communications to attend remote meetings and that she was also interested in searching the National Archives as a hobby.

Mrs Kohen already had an email address, which meant that she was able to start the course straight away. She had used a laptop in the past, however, she stated that she had not used one for some time and was not confident to operate one independently. She lives alone, however, her daughter visits often and would be able to assist her if needed. The volunteer met with Mrs Kohen via Zoom every week to develop the digital skills she needed to achieve the objectives she had shared. After



successfully completing her course and increasing her digital confidence from working with the volunteer Mrs Kohen graduated from the programme.

- We will develop our Digital Inclusion Network (made up of the voluntary sector, health partners and local businesses) to monitor the implementation of the council's digital inclusion plan and ensure it meets the needs of residents.
- We will continue to implement the recommendations and embed the learnings from the 'Digital Inclusion in Brent' report (completed by Citizens Online in 2020) to ensure we reduce digital exclusion

A CLEANER, MORE CONSIDERATE BRENT

In 2019 Brent Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and began developing an ambitious ten year strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Investing in technology that supports a cleaner, more considerate Brent will support this goal and help improve the quality of life for all residents.

Technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), the Data Lake and smart devices present opportunities to better understand our borough by generating new insights for areas from air quality and waste management to transport use. By harnessing these types of technologies and making best use of data we will be in a better position to:

- improve our environment – green spaces, homes and businesses;
- tackle poor air quality;
- better plan service provision; and,
- react quickly to changes, such as those experienced during the pandemic.

Our targets for 2026

- We will develop an in-house Internet of Things Hub that supplies good quality data and real time information regularly to our data lake which will inform a range of environmental and property based safety actions
- The use of Internet of Things will monitor the progress of reduction in consumption emissions within Brent to meet the targets of the Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

Our journey so far

Our first steps in implementing Smart City technology and IoT networks that link into

our data lake have started to give us an improved understanding of the borough in real time. Air quality sensor pilots inform us where traffic changes or promoting active travel have improved air quality and are assisting with identifying areas where additional investment is required. Sensors have also enabled us to monitor humidity levels in homes and be able to take preventative action before mould becomes an issue for our tenants.

We are working with our partners at Microsoft, through their Green500 programme, to identify opportunities to roll out smart devices to support our Climate Emergency strategy. This includes approaches, where appropriate, for retrofitting our housing stock with energy efficient materials, encouraging investment in electrical vehicle charging points and identifying opportunities to use solar powered energy.

Next steps

- A range of Internet of Things (IoT) technology will be piloted, particularly within housing and adult social care, to test how it can help identify required works at an earlier stage, sustaining living conditions and reducing the costs of repairs in some circumstances.
- To enable the implementation of Smart City technology. We will work with the market to identify devices to pilot in Brent, focusing particularly on our town centres. We will test how well the devices assist in improving air quality, congestion and parking problems and the management of waste.
- Through participation in the Microsoft Green500 programme we will monitor the impact of new technology, including the retrofitting of energy efficient systems



within properties, and learn from partners across local government and the private sector to develop new approaches to support our Climate Emergency priorities.

- We will develop and expand Brent's open data platform to give the community, academics and businesses access to more information, empowering them to shape solutions that will improve the environment in Brent.

A BOROUGH WHERE WE CAN ALL FEEL SAFE, SECURE, HAPPY AND HEALTHY

The Covid19 pandemic highlighted the importance of using data and intelligence to understand issues and best respond to the needs of our different communities. It became apparent early on that Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on BAME communities, including health and employment outcomes linked to social and economic drivers. By rapidly developing digital solutions for local test and trace systems and surge testing we were able to improve our understanding and help reduce transmission of Covid19 within local communities. This approach also enabled us to identify, reach out to and work with hard to reach groups to encourage engagement with local testing and participation in the vaccination programme. As we have built a holistic view of how the pandemic has impacted different communities we can use this knowledge to inform future projects to overcome these challenges and improve health equality in Brent.

As a digital council we are committed to collecting and using data in an ethical and secure way. To support this we are developing our first data strategy, which will set out our council wide approach to data, and intend to refresh the cybersecurity strategy, which builds on the work we have done to implement the existing Brent 2019-23 cybersecurity strategy.

The Shared Technology Services roadmap for 2020-25 outlines the investment required to refresh and renew Brent's infrastructure to be stable, scalable and reliable. The roadmap focuses on four areas of technology change and investment to achieve the strategic objectives:

- Datacentres, datacentre networks and campus networks
- End user experience modernisation

- Cyber protection
- Service improvement

The benefits to our residents will be realised through improved security, customer experience and the increased resilience of Brent's systems.

Our targets for 2026

- We will utilise Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve quality of collected data across the organisation
- We will publish and implement Brent's data strategy
- We will implement a robust framework for the use of peoples' data and champion an ethical approach through the use of our Data Ethics Board
- We will increase the number of integrations between systems to support consistency across council services
- The number of IT applications will be reduced by at least 10%

Our journey so far

The development of our data lake has helped us to collect better quality data and use it to improve services and processes. We are increasingly able to combine data to build an overall picture of residents' interactions with multiple different council services; using it to inform new approaches and tailored support that meets individual needs.

In utilising data from across council services and the Internet of Things, we are committed to keeping all data secure and only collecting data that is necessary to help improve outcomes for residents.

To safeguard this commitment, we have established a Data Ethics board, which is one of the first of its kind. The board consists of council partners and industry experts who provide oversight to our approach to collecting, storing and using data.

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kind. The board consists of council partners and industry experts who provide oversight to our approach to collecting, storing and using data.

CASE STUDY – RENT ARREARS MANAGEMENT SOLUTION (RAMS) DASHBOARD



Miss Patel regularly pays her council rent on time and has done so for the past eight years since she moved into her property. However, in July 2020 Miss Patel did not make her agreed rent payment to the council. This appeared on the work allocation on Brent's new RAMS dashboard as it was unusual for Miss Patel to be in rent arrears. Miss Patel's case was allocated to a case officer who contacted Miss Patel and found out she lost her job due to Covid19 and was unable to pay the full

amount of rent this month.

The case officer was able to direct her to the application for housing benefit and also signposted her to BrentStart to receive skills and employment support while she was looking for a new job. The case officer also discussed with Miss Patel about how she would be able to pay back the arrears within her means. These repayments show on the dashboard as well as her rent payments so that further support can be provided if these are missed in the future.

Next steps

- As part of our data lake, we will develop fully operational data products to help professionals make more informed decisions around early intervention and support for residents.
- To utilise our learning from IoT pilots, and ensure we have a secure and sustainable model for IoT technology across the borough, we will explore setting up an IoT hub on Azure. By developing an in-house IoT hub we will have a self-sufficient method for gathering data from sensors and developing insights to shape future service improvements.
- We will explore the opportunities to use biometrics (e.g. passports, finger prints or iris scanning) to validate individuals' identities in a user friendly and secure manner, reducing the need for individuals to present paper documents.
- We will use the data lake to identify opportunities to improve existing services, including developing more effective and preventative service models, and do this in a way that improves resident's experience when they are interacting with the council.
- We will develop and implement a data management strategy that will form the foundations of an organisational culture change in our approach to data.
- We will ensure that we follow the highest standards when handling residents' information and ensure that data is protected with up to date security processes by adopting Shared Technology Services cyber strategy.

- We will improve the experience of our Adult Social Care residents by joining up back office systems to introduce efficiencies

Governance arrangements

Delivery of this digital strategy is overseen by the Brent Customer and Digital Board and championed by the Deputy Leader of the Council. The Board is chaired by the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services – the digital lead for the Council Management Team. The Board drives and supports the ambitious programme of change and is responsible for:

1. Identifying, prioritising and coordinating digital work packages;
2. Acting as the gateway that formally assesses and approves digital work packages;
3. Aligning and deploying resources, skills and expertise for most effective delivery of digital work packages;
4. Ensuring membership of the board is representative and has the appropriate skills and authority;
5. Supporting the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) in fostering a culture that values, protects and uses information for the benefit of residents.

With so many different elements to the Digital Programme, a consistent technical architecture is essential. While it's recognised that different services have different requirements, there does need to be a corporate approach to the systems and applications that support our work. The Technical Design Authority (TDA), has been established to make decisions regarding technical implementations for projects.

The TDA makes decisions and provides guidance and support where projects will impact more than one project or service, or when a new idea is being tested. This is accompanied by a Customer Experience Board which ensures that digital processes are implemented in a way that supports a positive customer journey and is accessible to the majority of residents.

The implementation of Brent's Data Ethics board ensures that before the council uses a dataset to drive its decision making we will have reviewed how the data will be used. The Data Ethics Board utilises The Open Data Institute (ODI) data ethics canvas to review the data, how it is collected, how it will be analysed, and ensure that the intended use is ethical, sensitive to the needs of our residents and makes a positive difference. Each review of data use and feedback provided is underpinned by the following ethics principle themes:

- Privacy
- Accountability
- Safety and security
- Transparency and explainability
- Fairness and no discrimination
- Human control of technology
- Professional responsibility
- Promotion of human value

The Shared Technology Services strategy will support the implementation of Brent's digital strategy as its driving ambition is to provide a suite of common tools for each partner to consume and a standard method of monitoring and managing

our datacentres, networks and devices to provide efficiency in operation and security protections.

To ensure existing and future online information is protected our Shared Technology Service has implemented a Cyber Security Strategy. The strategy ensures that there remains a focus on putting the right controls in place to protect and react to cyber threats going forward.



Our Shared Technology Service will continue to harness their strong relationship with the National Cyber Security Centre and other cyber agencies to protect residents', business and staff data in Brent. The Cyber Security Board is responsible for the implementation of the strategy and identifying, monitoring and managing risks. The introduction of a Chief Information Security Officer and a Cyber Security Team will focus on delivering technical controls and guidance for Brent council as well as other partners.

Key Principles

We recognise that the scale of transformation outlined in this strategy represents the continuation of an ongoing

culture shift for the council, residents, partners and businesses. It will have far reaching influence over future service models, the customer experience and the role of the council and its workforce. To support this sustained programme of change, delivery of this digital strategy is underpinned by the following key principles:

1. We will ensure that our services are accessible to everyone. We will develop guidance on digital inclusion, set out the accessibility standards new technology needs to comply with and help services plan their digital provision so that it is accessible for all residents.
2. Services will be people centred. We will work with residents, partners and businesses to co-design and co-deliver transformation, ensuring that Brent's evolution as a digital borough is shaped by the energy, ideas and requirements of local people and key stakeholders.
3. We will embed our digital vision within our policies and strategies including HR, Planning, Regeneration, Employment and Skills and ICT. We will also reflect it in our engagement with the community and models of working with the community and voluntary sector.
4. We will deliver robust information security measures to protect resident and stakeholder data from misuse and cyber threats, and we will safeguard their privacy through increasingly secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements both internally and with partners.
5. We will invest in our workforce to ensure they have the resources and agile skills they need to innovate, collaborate and excel in the digital workplace and work smarter.
6. We will work openly and actively collaborate with other organisations, including the community and voluntary sector, the Greater London Authority, the West London Alliance and the London Office of Technology and Innovation to develop innovative solutions and share learning and good practice

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

AI - Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processed by machines, especially computer systems.

Biometrics are body measurements or calculations, including voice recognition and fingerprint scanning, that can be used as a form of identification and access control.

Chatbot – A Chatbot is a computer program that fundamentally simulates human conversations. It allows a form of interaction between a human and a machine via messages or voice command.

Data Lake – A Data Lake is a centralized repository that allows you to store all your structured and unstructured data at any scale. You can store your data as-is, without having to first structure the data, and run different types of analytics—from dashboards and visualizations to big data processing, real-time analytics, and machine learning to guide better decisions.

Digital Twin - a virtual representation of an object or system that exists throughout its lifecycle. It is updated from real-time data, and uses simulation, machine learning and reasoning to help inform decision-making.

Dynamics – Microsoft Dynamics is a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for managing a company's interactions with current and future customers. It often involves using technology to organize, automate, and synchronize sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support.

EDM - An Electronic Document Management system (EDMS) is a software system for organizing and storing different kinds of documents.

IoT - The Internet of Things is a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines, objects, animals or people that are provided with unique identifiers (UIDs) and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interaction.

5G - Fifth-Generation cellular wireless follows previous generations of mobile technology such as 3G and 4G. It provides improved bandwidth, meaning higher download speeds and a faster user experience. It also offers greater capacity, allowing thousands of devices in a small area to be connected at the same time.

Full Fibre - Full-fibre broadband uses fibre-optic cables to connect your home to the street cabinet, replacing the old copper connections. Full-fibre connections provide a better service that can deliver much faster speeds – up to one gigabit per second.

RPA - Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is the use of software to handle high-volume, repeatable tasks that previously required humans to perform.

Smart Cities - A Smart City is a designation given to a city that incorporates information and communication technologies to enhance the quality and performance of urban services such as energy, transportation and utilities in order to reduce resource consumption, wastage and overall costs.

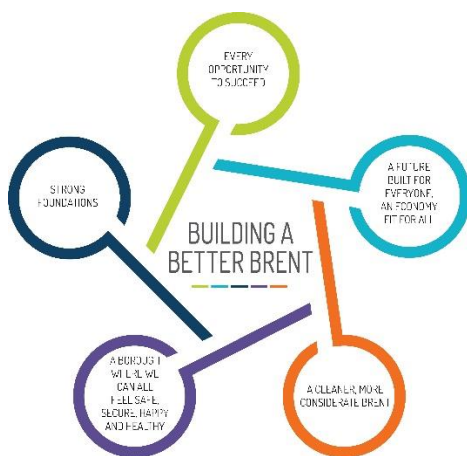
APPENDIX 1 – TARGET BREAKDOWN BY YEAR

2026 Target	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
There will be 500 trained digital champions across Brent	100 digital champions are recruited	200 digital champions are recruited	350 digital champions are recruited	500 digital champions are recruited	A network of 500 active digital champions will be maintained
We will introduce automation to improve quality of data and contribute to efficiencies and savings	10 RPAs 3 Virtual agents	10 RPAs 3 Virtual agents Contribute to £450k savings income via increased debt recovery and £400k in staff productivity savings AI / ML pilot	10 RPAs 3 Virtual agents £450k savings income via increased debt recovery and £400k in staff productivity savings	10 RPAs 3 Virtual agents £450k savings income via increased debt recovery and £400k in staff productivity savings	10 RPAs 3 Virtual agents £450k savings income via increased debt recovery and £400k in staff productivity savings
Telephone demand will decrease by 25% and enable a channel shift to accessing services online	15% call demand reduction, seeing 575,596 calls received or less A 200% increase in MyAccount users from 36,000 in 2021	20% call demand reduction, seeing 541,738 calls received or less An additional 68% increase in MyAccount users	25% call demand reduction seeing 507,879 calls received or less An additional 40% increase in MyAccount users	Maintain 25% call demand reduction An additional 29% increase in MyAccount users	Maintain 25% call demand reduction An additional 22% increase in MyAccount users
We will increase the number of services delivered through MyAccount	Children and Young People department and Council Tax services will be accessible online	Regeneration and Environment services will be accessible online	Regeneration and Environment services will be accessible online		
We will re-platform and rationalise the number of forms used to reduce the number across the council systems	All forms sitting on Umbraco to be redesigned and replatformed onto Sitecore. All frequently used forms to be redesigned and replatformed	'Pay It', and 'contact us' forms to be rationalised and replatformed	Book it' and 'Apply for it' forms to be rationalised and replatformed	'Report it' forms to be rationalised and replatformed	
Staff experience a more manageable work load due to efficient systems and where possible digital automation of administrative tasks.		70% of staff will agree that digital technology enables them to do their job more efficiently			75% of staff will agree that digital technology enables them to do their job more efficiently
We will increase the number of Community Hub customers that are more confident in using online services	Maintain 75% or higher resolution rate	Maintain 75% or higher resolution rate			56% of residents say the council is easy to contact

APPENDIX 1 –
TARGET BREAKDOWN BY YEAR CONTD.

2026 Target	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
80% of residents will be satisfied with the new website	60% customer satisfaction levels	70% customer satisfaction levels	80% customer satisfaction levels	Maintain 80% customer satisfaction levels	Maintain 80% customer satisfaction levels
2,000 residents will have access to classroom based digital skills training with Brent Start	338 digital skill learners	371 digital skill learners	408 digital skill learners	448 digital skill learners	448 digital skill learners
We will continue the rationalisation of systems in Brent and IT applications will be reduced by 10%	3 applications will be decommissioned or integrated with existing systems	4 applications will be decommissioned or integrated with existing systems	3 applications will be decommissioned or integrated with existing systems	3 applications will be decommissioned or integrated with existing systems	3 applications will be decommissioned or integrated with existing systems
An additional eight digital skills apprentices will be recruited		3 digital skills apprentices recruited	3 digital skills apprentices recruited	2 digital skills apprentices recruited	
35% of currently digital excluded residents will increase their digital confidence	7% increase in digitally included residents 20,000 hours of digital skills training for all residents	7% increase in digitally included residents	7% increase in digitally included residents	7% increase in digitally included residents	7% increase in digitally included residents
We will invest £80,000 in suitable training to fill identified skills gaps for developing and maintaining new technology	Digital accessibility fundamental training for all frontline staff	Digital skills training Culture change of digital learning	Digital skills training Ember culture change of digital learning	Digital skills training Maintain culture change of digital learning	Digital skills training Maintain culture change of digital learning
We will develop an in-house Internet of Things Hub that supplies good quality data and real time information regularly to our data lake which will inform a range of environmental and property based safety actions	Publish and implement Brent's data strategy	Pilot IoT sensors within an IoT Hub	Develop an in-house IoT hub	Digital skills training	56% of residents say the council is easy to contact
Pilot a Business Support Fund to help businesses thrive and increase economic growth	Pilot business support fund for 250 businesses	Review learnings and needs analysis following completion of pilot			

DIGITAL PROGRAMME OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE 2022-26



December 2021

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Executive summary

This document provides an outline business case for an extension of the Brent Digital Programme to 2026. It supports the implementation of the 2022-26 digital strategy, building on and maximising the benefits from the strong foundations put in place by the 2019-23 digital programme.

The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital technology in the way we live and work, and has accelerated the move to online for many more citizens, businesses and organisations. At the same time it has exposed greater inequalities, including digital exclusion, and increased the risk that those who do not have access to digital devices, fast broadband and sufficient data are left even further behind. For this reason, we have produced a new digital strategy to refocus our priorities as we emerge from the pandemic and better prepare us for the future. This business case sets out the investment required to implement this strategy and the benefits it will deliver.

This business case aligns with other initiatives such the Shared Technology Services (STS) technology roadmap which will ensure Brent has robust and secure technology to meet its needs.

By committing to this business case and the digital strategy, we will continue to develop as a digital place and a digital council. We will work to ensure local residents, partners and businesses are able to thrive in the digital future, and play active roles in shaping Brent into a digital borough where technology is used to improve the lives and life chances of everyone.

Financial cost benefit analysis

The core capital investment required to deliver the new digital strategy is £9.3m over the programme period, starting from 2022/23. Total cumulative savings of £14.8m are forecast after year 4, with an estimated recurring annual saving of £3.9m after 3 years, based on new, enabling and efficiency savings. The planned end of the programme is March 2026.

Separately, £4.2m is sought for a Business Support Fund (£2.0m) and devices for every digitally excluded household (£2.2m). Although these projects bring significant benefits, they are hard to quantify and measure and therefore the £4.2m investment is not part of the return on investment calculation for the programme. The Business Support Fund which will give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform. The devices project will provide a digital device for every digitally excluded household in Brent by 2025 (8,000 devices).

Deliverables

Figure 1 shows the programme broken down into key deliverables. The programme is organised into five themes:

- **Access** - Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents
- **Digital Place** - Having consistent technology and connectivity available to enable Brent to be a digital borough that is accessible for both businesses and residents. This includes improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents
- **Digital Inclusion** – Identifying digitally excluded residents and providing access to devices and digital skills to enable all residents across Brent to safely participate in the digital world
- **Data and Smart devices** – Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents.
- **Digital Workplace** - Ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and to have the digital skills to effectively use existing and new technology

Theme	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Access	Further website improvements		
	More services on My Account		
	Automation (RPA, AI, chatbots, virtual agents)		
	Improved customer access for key services including Environment, Housing, Adult Social Care, Children’s Services		
	Planning system replacement		
	Pipeline of Dynamics projects/ systems rationalisation		
Digital Place	Increased connectivity		
	Digital jobs		
	Business Support Fund		
Digital Inclusion	Digital champions		
	Digital skills		
	Digital devices		
Data and smart devices	Data lake		
	Internet of things hub		
	Biometrics		
Digital workplace	Rollout of Office 365		
	Digital skills training for staff		

Figure 1 - Roadmap

1 Introduction

Purpose of OBC

- 1.1.** This document provides an outline business case for continuing a programme of activity to build on the foundations that have been put in place by Brent's digital programme since 2017. It sets out the investment required to deliver a refreshed digital strategy. Implementation of the new strategy will enable the council to fully leverage the benefits of the investment made to date and will secure further benefits; improving services to our customers whilst maximising opportunities for efficiencies. It will also ensure that the council is able to future proof its existing technology to better meet crises such as Covid-19.

Background

- 1.2.** This business case sets out a programme of work designed to deliver the draft digital strategy 2022-26. It sets out the potential costs and projected benefits for the proposed programme, alongside details of the technology investment and projects which will be delivered. The majority of benefits are achieved through technology enabling transformation of service delivery across council services.

- 1.3.** A financial model provides detail of the costs, including programme and technology enablement, and initial savings from project delivery to show the return on investment. The programme includes a number of key initiatives (see **figure 3** for a full list):

- The roll-out of Office 365 to increase collaborative working and so that officers can work on any device anywhere
- Adult Social Care projects to improve the resident experience, join up back office systems and improve efficiency
- Improvement and modernisation of Planning systems to improve the customer and user experience
- Support for the Redesigning Local Services programme to improve the resident experience and the integration of back office systems for environmental services
- Projects to improve services and increase efficiency of back office systems in CYP
- Housing projects to build on earlier work and maximise benefits through further enhancements and integrations
- Further website improvements to make it easier for residents to access services and information easily on a range of devices, and to ensure a more personalised experience
- More services on MyAccount and further MyAccount enhancements to support self-service and improved access to a wider range of services for residents 24/7
- An Internet of Things (IoT) hub to capitalise on IoT technology, its ability to help us improve services and to take a more responsive and preventative approach to supporting residents. To also generate new insights for areas from air quality and waste management to transport use, all of which will improve our environment and support our Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
- A Business Support Fund which will give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform
- A digital device for every digitally excluded household in Brent. This supports the Mayor of London's Digital Access for all ambition of supporting every London to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025

- Development of the data lake use cases to support the better use of data to drive improvements to services across the Council.
- 1.4.** In addition to this, work with all services will continue to be undertaken to determine where Microsoft Dynamics and technologies such as Robotics Process Automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence (AI) can be used, supported by improved customer interfaces to drive an improved resident experience and better outcomes.
- 1.5.** The programme will also deliver a number of projects which have gained funding from the council's strategic investment fund:
- Take Your Shot initiative to provide support to Brent start-up enterprises and entrepreneurs. It will support the Black Community Action Plan as there will be a particular focus on entrepreneurs from Black and Ethnic Minority groups.
 - 296 digital packages for children and young people in Brent to assist them with accessing online learning at home and to improve their digital skills
 - Local shopping app to support local businesses and to give residents access to a local online marketplace and e-commerce
 - A business database which the council can use to conduct a strategic analysis of the Brent business base and to engage a wider number of businesses in our business support offer
 - A pilot business support fund for 100 business. If the draft 2022-26 business case for the digital strategy is agreed, this will be rolled out more widely.

Building on the 2019-23 strategy and programme

- 1.6.** We began our digital journey in 2017, working with businesses, residents and different areas of the council. Since then we have implemented a single resident online portal and improved connectivity across the borough by 21% in the last four years.
- 1.7.** Covid-19 has further demonstrated the importance of digital access in the modern world. As part of our digital response to the pandemic we have provided devices and connectivity to digitally excluded residents through the Resident's Support Fund (RSF) and have run pilots for groups such as some older residents to improve their digital skills and participation in virtual services. As a council, we have had to adapt the way we work to ensure we are able to meet the needs of residents while working virtually. As an example, we have piloted a virtual appointment system for births, marriages and deaths registrations. We have also supported local businesses to have access to digital skills training so that they have the opportunity to adapt and succeed.

What we have achieved

- 1.8.** Significant progress has been made on planned activities alongside a range of additional work to develop forms and systems to support the response to the pandemic. These have helped the council in making grants and other support quickly available and accessible for residents and businesses. The infrastructure put in place to deliver the programme has made it possible to develop rapidly a number of systems to support the council's response to Covid-19, for example the Covid-19 resident support fund, shielding and inbound calls questionnaire, test and trace, surge testing , additional restriction grant and business grant form.
- 1.9.** As part of the 2019-23 strategy:

- connectivity throughout the borough has increased (Full Fibre To The Premises broadband is now available across 25.5% of the borough)
- residents and business have gained more digital skills training (over 200 residents have benefited);
- MyAccount has been improved; residents can access more services when and where they want;
- chatbots and virtual agents have freed up officer time and supported residents (saved over £20k of officer time in 2020/21);
- RPA has sped up manual processes, improved accuracy, delivered additional tasks such as reporting for Covid-19 and saved officer time to be used on more productive tasks (saved over £190k of officer time in 2020/21);
- more systems have been rationalised and built on Dynamics (total of 16 services, 80% of them have residents facing forms and case management) , making for a more consistent experience for residents and staff;
- and a data lake has been developed, allowing us to better utilise different types and formats of data to inform decision making and improve service delivery.

1.10. The original business case figures for the 2019-23 programme are below. 23/24 was intended as a year to fully embed and maximise benefits from the programme with a budget of £1m to support this work. As part of these proposals, it is intended for this £1m to be brought forward to 22/23 be used to help support the roll-out of Office 365, as well as delivering the first phase of improvement work for Adult Social Care projects, and the placement of systems for Planning. These two projects were submitted as Strategic Investment Fund bids earlier this year and it was agreed that they would be taken forward as part of the next phase of the digital programme. The total cost for these projects exceeds £1m, but the 22/23-25/26 business case makes provision for future years.

Digital programme 2019/23 cost benefit analysis						
Investment	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	Total
TOTAL COSTS	£ 4.5	£ 4.0	£ 3.0	£ 1.0	£ -	£ 12.5
Savings/Income	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	Total
TOTAL CUMULATIVE SAVINGS/INCOME	£ 1.7	£ 2.8	£ 3.8	£ 4.1	£ 4.1	£ 16.6
Annual Profile	£ (2.7)	£ (1.2)	£ 0.8	£ 3.1	£ 4.1	£ 4.2

Figure 2 - 2019-23 Business case financial

1.11. As a result of Covid-19 the actual cumulative savings delivered to date are slightly below target. However, an additional £2.8m in social investment was achieved, ranging from support for London Borough of Culture work, digital skills training for residents and staff, reduced digital development costs and full fibre programmes. We are confident that these savings will be achieved by the end of 2023 and that further savings will be delivered using the investment set out in this business case.

- 1.12.** To date we have successfully achieved many targets and outcomes that directly contribute to our ambition of becoming a digital place and digital council. These include:

Theme: Access

- Over 90% of the website now meets accessibility criteria, an increase of over 38% since early 2020. Our re-platformed website which will be launched later this year will be even more accessible and provide an improved experience for customers.
- We have improved our resident online portal so that users have self-serve access to essential services such as housing needs, housing benefit and council tax 24/7 through any device.
- We have improved the security of the online portal to ensure that residents' information is stored more safely within the council.
- The Brent 'My Account' has enabled us to join up residents' interactions with the council by having one login to interact with a range of services.
- We have implemented a new feedback system providing residents with a simplified way to contact the council.
- We have introduced virtual agents (chatbots and web chats) in our online services to instantaneously answer residents' questions about council services and connect them with relevant information and forms, improving their experience when interacting with the council.

Theme: Digital place

- We have worked with providers to retrofit fibre cabling to over 6,000 premises within Brent's housing stock, increasing our residents' access to full fibre broadband at affordable prices.
- We have successfully worked with providers to connect 15 community buildings, helping to ensure everyone can benefit from improved internet access and improve the public services delivered from these buildings.
- Throughout the pandemic our digital programme enabled us to quickly develop new processes to help set up local test and trace and other key systems, providing vital support to over 33,000 residents.

Theme: Digital inclusion

- Through our Resident Support Fund (RSF), which helps those affected financially by the pandemic, we have provided devices and internet access to over 200 digitally excluded residents.
- We have partnered with Social Box, a community interest group that refurbishes organisations' laptops, to distribute 55 council laptops to residents via Brent's Living Room, the Refugee Support Network and the homeless community. These laptops were given to residents who wanted to develop their digital skills.
- We have worked with Infosys to provide 25 laptops to housing tenants to support them to access the new housing portal. This approach has enabled residents to improve their digital skills and actively engage with services and family members.

Theme: Data and smart devices

- Through working with Mobile Network Operators to better use data, we have been able to understand how people use spaces by measuring footfall and time spent in our local areas, which has helped generate intelligence to inform the recovery of high streets after the pandemic.
- We are one of the first councils to establish a data ethics board to ensure oversight and proper use of data within an ethics framework.
- We have established a data lake which gives us the capability to look across all the data we collect when delivering services, providing customer insights that have informed service improvements.
- Our new Rent Arrears Management Solution (RAMS) is used to identify when tenants begin to miss rent payments and automatically alert case officers that additional support may be required for the resident, successfully preventing escalating debt.

Theme: Digital workplace

- By investing in technology and skills for staff we successfully delivered council services without disruption throughout all stages of the pandemic, including new and enhanced services for our residents to help them to stay safe and well.
- We have piloted virtual appointments in our births, marriages and deaths service, enabling residents to choose to access this service remotely.
- We have partnered with Microsoft to offer over 20,000 hours of digital training for staff across the council, supporting new skills for improved services.

2 Strategic case

Delivery

2.1 Figure 3 sets out the key themes set out in the digital strategy and the initiatives that will be delivered to implement these.

Themes	Initiatives
Access Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for Adult Social Care projects to support residents and improve officer productivity. To include: self-assessment tool, financial assessment tool, improved digital front end for residents, better integrations between systems, data to support better decision making and a single view of clients, digital toolkit to signpost support for residents. • Improvement and modernisation of Planning systems to improve the customer and user experience • Support for Housing projects to improve the customer experience and increase officer productivity. To include integrations and enhancements. • Support for CYP projects to help service users and officers. To include phase two of the pathway app. • Support for the Redefining Local Services programme in Regeneration and Environment to further improve the resident experience and services. To support customer focussed systems, integration across back office systems and data to inform improved services. • Work to enable the delivery of a re-designed customer access offer at the Civic Centre • Scale up the use of Virtual appointments and virtual agents • Introduce voice bots for telephone numbers on the automated call distribution system Further website improvements to make it more personalised, easier for residents to access the information and services they need 24/7 from any location and device • Improved online forms which better integrate into back office systems providing a more efficient and effective service • A further development of MyAccount to allow third parties to support residents who need additional assistance • More services on MyAccount where residents can access them easily and securely • Improve our citizenship system so that residents can book ceremonies directly

Themes	Initiatives
<p>Digital Place</p> <p>Having consistent technology and connectivity available to enable Brent to be a digital borough that is accessible for both businesses and residents. This includes improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further roll-out of 5G and an increase the number of properties with FTTP to further improve connectivity in the borough • The expansion of a local shopping app and a Brent e-commerce platform, building on a pilot for 250 SMEs in Brent • LPWAN (low-power wide-area network) to support the introduction of monitoring sensors that provide real time information to our systems • Work with new organisations and providers to increase technical employment and apprenticeship opportunities • A Business Support Fund which will give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform
<p>Digital Inclusion</p> <p>Identifying digitally excluded residents and providing access to devices and digital skills to enable all residents across Brent to participate in the digital world</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A digital device for every digitally excluded household in Brent • 500 digital champions by 2025 to support residents to get online and improve their digital skills • 20,000 hours' worth of self-study digital skills training to all residents by the end of 2022 • A digital inclusion map, through partnership working with LOTI, the GLA and other LAs, which details where digitally excluded residents are in the borough, the digital skills training available to them and the barriers to them becoming digitally included. This will inform the areas of investment required to enable residents to become digitally included. • Digital skills training for our Community and Voluntary sector to meet resident needs and provide digital services • Further development of Brent's Digital Inclusion network to ensure the programme of work meets the needs of residents

Themes	Initiatives
Data and Smart devices Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop our data lake to help us maximise our data, make better decisions and increase debt collection • IoT hub to capitalise on IoT technology and its ability to help us improve services and take a more responsive and preventative approach to supporting our residents • Implement sensors to monitor the impact of transport changes on air quality, resident behaviour and noise pollution • Through participation in the Microsoft Green500 programme we will monitor the impact of new technology and develop new approaches to support our Climate Emergency priorities. This includes approaches, where appropriate, for retrofitting our housing stock with energy efficient materials, encouraging investment in electrical vehicle charging points and identifying opportunities to use solar powered energy • Use sensors in building to identify required work at an earlier stage sustaining living conditions and reducing the costs of repairs in some circumstances • We will explore the opportunities to use biometrics (e.g. passports, fingerprints or iris scanning) to validate individual's identities therefore reducing the need for individuals to present several paper documents • Assistive technology for adult social care to increase independence • As part of our systems review we will explore opportunities to rationalise our asset management systems
Digital workplace Ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and to have the digital skills to effectively use existing and new technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out of Office 365 and secure collaboration with third party partners, so that officers can access council applications anywhere anytime and on any device • The technology and skills to support hybrid working • Digital skills training for staff • Invest in digital apprenticeships to develop the digital skills available within the council • Support for Oracle Cloud and AIMS projects • Further roll out of Govmail and DocuSign to save officer time and increase productivity • Increase in use of electronic document storage to reduce costs and increase security • Continue with automation in the form of RPA and run AI pilots • Further rationalisation of systems

Figure 3 - Themes and initiatives

Benefits

2.2 The key benefit themes for the programme and the benefits underpinning them are below in figure 4. These are outlined in more detail in Appendix 1.

	Benefit theme	Supporting benefits
1	Customers are able to transact and participate securely, easily and conveniently in a way which meets their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents will be able to access more services online at a time and place that is convenient for them, and on a device of their choosing Businesses will be able to access services in one place when and where it suits them Enable greater access to services for residents who need more support as they can use trusted third parties to help them access their digital services Quicker and easier access to information as a result to continuing website improvements Save resident and officer time by using bio-metrics to prove identification, rather than relying on presenting documents in person
2	We are better able to use and share data to understand customers enabling us to deliver services which meet their needs and collaborate with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in performance information and data analysis will support planning, decision making and service improvements The Data Lake will support a “single view” of vulnerable adults and children, predictive analytics, supporting early intervention and reducing demand on frontline practitioners The increased ability to analyse communication with customers through chatbots will improve our understanding of issues and challenges impacting on residents We will be able to more efficiently support and communicate with business as all the data about them is in one place
3	We work more efficiently and effectively enabling staff to have the right tools and departments to realign resources to provide better services, and, deliver financial benefits and generate income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPA will automate mundane processes, improve accuracy, increase speed, and save officer time Investment in EDM and Dynamics systems will reduce processing times (e.g. through enabling a single view of the customer) There will be income generation through commercial developments Savings will be generation through rationalisation of systems, reducing licensing and support costs Officer productivity will be improved by efficiencies in processing and ways of working e.g. new online forms

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating existing systems and ensuring they are secure will help avoid the cost of cyber-attack or data breach
4	Residents and businesses can access the right digital infrastructure and skills to succeed and innovate within a growing local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full fibre roll outs will enable residents to access faster, more robust and futureproof broadband Roll out of 5G connectivity will enable wider use of Smart Home technology and provide a platform for innovation Digital skills training will enable and increase residents' ability to access jobs and services Devices for every digitally excluded household will improve digital skills, increase residents' access to services, reduce social isolation, and increase access to employment and educational opportunities The business support fund will help support the local economy and jobs by bringing more businesses online and helping them connect with a wider customer base
5	We use technology to provide a healthier, safer, cleaner borough for residents to live in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet of Things devices will allow residents to live more independently for longer Implementation of Smart city devices will enable better management of challenges including air quality The Green500 programme with Microsoft will identify opportunities to roll out smart devices to help Brent to achieve its ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Figure 4 - Benefits

2.3 A clear set of stretching, measurable targets has been developed as part of the 2022-26 strategy against which delivery of the programme will be measured.

3 Economic case

Investment required

- 3.1** Implementation of the previous strategy focused on building on the groundwork, initial testing and piloting that had taken place. This strategy is about further capitalising on the pilots and building blocks, enabling greater benefits to be delivered for residents. This phase of work will focus on ensuring accessible and secure digital services for residents at the same time as supporting Brent's programme of recovery from Covid-19. More than ever, we need all residents and businesses to feel that they have the digital skills and connectivity they need to thrive.
- 3.2** The core investment required is estimated at £9.3m over the programme period. Based on work carried out to date, total cumulative savings of £14.8m are forecast after Year 4, with an estimated recurring annual saving of £3.9m after 3 years, based on new, enabling and efficiency savings.
- 3.3** Investment is required to:

Support and develop the programme – With sufficient programme governance and coordination so that it can work with services to define, resource and deliver key change projects and follow through efficiency and benefits realisation.

Further embed a digital platform – The Dynamics platform, supported by Sharepoint EDM, has been rolled out to Housing Management, Brent Customer Services and across core corporate systems such as complaints management. The next phase of the programme will build on opportunities through and 'bundling' of common processes to drive savings, create a data rich environment and 'single view', reduce the number of business applications and drive greater integration and automation of systems. It will also see an expansion of the MyAccount offering with more services available through the portal.

Strengthen the digital infrastructure and ecosystem – It is crucial that we future proof our technology and our services to meet the demands, expectations and shocks of the modern world. Some of the planned new initiatives are hybrid working, the rollout of Office 365 and enabling technologies that have not been explored before such as artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Maximise benefits from initial pilots – A key element of the programme to date has been to carry out small scale pilots of new technologies such as RPA. These have identified opportunities to generate significant savings through further roll out of these technologies across council services, as well as potential opportunities to generate income by selling expertise to external organisations. This investment will support work to maximize the benefits from initial investment through wider implementation.

Critical success factors

3.4 Some of the critical success factors in delivering this programme are set out below in Figure 5.

Success factor	Description
We will place customers at the heart of all we do	We will achieve this by designing and building services around the customer and delivering digital services by design and choice.
We will be innovative in our use of technology	We will be open to new ways of working and using emerging technology to 'break the rules' and bring new and more radical ways of working and service delivery to the table which meet our residents needs
Good decision-making	Our key decisions on how services are delivered will be based on effectively using strong data and insights analysis.
Our staff will be agile	We will create a culture that supports staff to be an agile, digitally skilled and solution-focused workforce

Figure 5 - Critical Success Factors

4 Financial case

Budget context

- 4.1** The Council faces challenging financial targets in order to maintain a balanced budget. At the same time, demand for services is increasing and residents' expectations of the quality of front-line services continues to rise. Many back office services that support our activities are stretched as a result of savings already made. The extension of the digital programme will build on work to date and continue to assist with addressing the joint challenges of the need to continue to make savings with the increasing expectations of customers for a high quality service.
- 4.2** The core capital investment required to deliver the draft digital strategy is £9.3m from 2023 onwards. Based on work carried out to date total cumulative savings of £14.8m are forecast after Year 4, with an estimated recurring annual saving of £3.88m after 3 years, based on new, enabling and efficiency savings.
- 4.3** Separately, £4.2m is sought for a Business Support Fund (£2.0m) and devices for every digitally excluded household (£2.2m). The Business Support Fund which will give local businesses access to a digital device, Microsoft package, bespoke skills and training, a market place and E-Commerce platform. The devices project will provide a digital device for every digitally excluded household in Brent by 2025 (8,000 devices). These projects will bring significant economic and social benefits to the borough and will support recovery from the Pandemic, but by their nature do not bring short term financial benefits to the Council. As a result the investment in this work has been separated from the £9.3m transformation funding in this business case.

Investment model

4.4 An assessment of costs and savings has been undertaken for this outline business case based upon the following:

- **Cost of the programme and the proposed digital programme resources** –The programme will be temporary until spring 2026
- **Cost of technology enablement** such as Dynamics, RPA, and EDM implementation support and data and security tools.
- **Savings and income** – based upon the assumptions for headcount, third party savings, new revenue streams and cost avoidance/demand management.
- **Savings** defined as **New** (i.e. not in current budget savings or plans), **Enabling** (i.e. supporting delivery of agreed savings targets, these projects give a further level of confidence to delivery), or **Efficiency** (i.e. providing opportunities for departments to increase efficiency which could include cashable savings to support delivery of new savings targets).

4.5 Figure 6 shows the return on investment for the programme, with investment shown by theme. 26/27 costs are included to show the money required to maintain the existing projects, which is mainly for skeleton staffing and a digital development team to support officers with any issues that arise with the technology. Costs for digital inclusion and place appear low. This is because success in these areas is reliant on partnership working and applying for funding. Also, the business support fund and devices for every digitally excluded household support these themes and the separate costs for these are outlined in Figure 7.

Financial tables

Digital programme 2023/24 - 26/27 ROI by theme (£ millions)					
Investment	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Access	2.25	1.38	0.30	0.05	3.98
Digital place	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Digital Inclusion	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.05
Data and smart devices	0.35	0.40	0.15	0.00	0.90
Digital workplace	0.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78
Building blocks	1.20	1.20	0.60	0.40	3.40
TOTAL COSTS	4.79	2.99	1.07	0.45	9.30
Savings/Income	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Savings (Enabling) CDS	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	3.90
Savings (New) Licensing, etc.	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.70	2.50
Savings (Efficiency) Automation and increased productivity	0.40	0.50	0.90	0.90	2.70
Income (New) Income via increased debt recovery through RPA and RAMS	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	2.40
Income (New) via commercial opportunities	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.70
Social investment received	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.50	2.60
TOTAL CUMULATIVE SAVINGS/INCOME	3.28	3.58	4.08	3.88	14.80
Annual Profile	(1.51)	0.58	3.00	3.43	5.50

Figure 6 - Return on investment. Investment by theme.

Digital programme 2023/24 - 26/27 Business Support Fund and Devices for Every Digitally Excluded Household (£ millions)					
Investment	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Business support fund	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.00	2.00
Devices for every digitally excluded household	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.00	2.21
TOTAL COSTS	1.24	1.49	1.49	0.00	4.21

Figure 7 – Business Support Fund and Devices for Every Digitally Excluded Household (£ millions).

4.6 Savings and income assumptions are based on:

- Delivery of savings in Customer and Digital Services by using technology to support the realignment of services. These are already agreed savings targets and the Digital Programme's projects give a further level of confidence to delivery
- Licensing savings from rationalising systems and replacing them with Dynamics, SharePoint or another system (these savings offset the new licensing costs required to support the technology being delivered through the programme).
- Efficiency and productivity savings from online forms, RPA, chat bots, AI, machine learning, MyAccount, Dynamics, IoT and the data lake. Officer time is freed up by improving online forms and integrating into back office systems, removing unnecessary data entry and contact demand, and automating processes and responses to customer queries. The programme team and Finance will work with departments to identify where these can be used to deliver cashable savings. These efficiencies can also be used to manage additional demand or to allow officers to take on additional or more value adding tasks.
- Increase in debt recovery via RPA and rent arrears through RAMS
- Income generation through selling support and development expertise
- Social investment in financial and non-financial forms from partners and funding organisations

4.7 The annual savings figures of £1.6m in year 1, rising to £2.4m from year 3 (a total of all new and efficiency savings and income listed above), will be included in the councils MTFS through cashable savings and/or reductions in the need for growth via cost avoidance. The allocation of such savings will be allocated to departments through the detailed businesses cases.

5 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Expected Benefits for 2023-26 Programme

6 Glossary of key terms

AI - Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processed by machines, especially computer systems.

Biometrics are body measurements or calculations, including voice recognition and fingerprint scanning, that can be used as a form of identification and access control.

Chatbot – A **Chatbot** is a computer program that fundamentally simulates human conversations. It allows a form of interaction between a human and a machine via messages or voice command.

Data Lake – A **Data Lake** is a centralized repository that allows you to store all your structured and unstructured data at any scale. You can store your data as-is, without having to first structure the data, and run different types of analytics—from dashboards and visualizations to big data processing, real-time analytics, and machine learning to guide better decisions.

Digital Twin - a **virtual representation of an object or system that exists throughout its lifecycle**. It is updated from real-time data, and uses simulation, machine learning and reasoning to help inform decision-making.

Dynamics – **Microsoft Dynamics** is a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for managing a company's interactions with current and future customers. It often involves using technology to organize, automate, and synchronize sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support.

EDM - An **Electronic Document Management** system (EDMS) is a software system for organizing and storing different kinds of documents.

IoT - The **Internet of Things** is a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines, objects, animals or people that are provided with unique identifiers (UIDs) and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interaction.

5G - Fifth-Generation cellular wireless follows previous generations of mobile technology such as 3G and 4G. It provides improved bandwidth, meaning higher download speeds and a faster user experience. It also offers greater capacity, allowing thousands of devices in a small area to be connected at the same time.

Full Fibre - **Full-fibre** broadband uses fibre-optic cables to connect your home to the street cabinet, replacing the old copper connections. Full-fibre connections provide a better service that can deliver much faster speeds – up to one gigabit per second.

RPA - Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is the use of software to handle high-volume, repeatable tasks that previously required humans to perform.

Smart Cities - A **Smart City** is a designation given to a city that incorporates information and communication technologies to enhance the quality and performance of urban services such as energy, transportation and utilities in order to reduce resource consumption, wastage and overall costs.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	Digital Strategy Refresh 2022 – 2026
DEPARTMENT:	Customer and Digital Services
TEAM:	Digital Transformation Team
LEAD OFFICER:	Ibrahim Fahiye
DATE:	12.10.21

NB: Please ensure you have read the accompanying EA guidance and instructions in full.

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

1. Please provide a description of the policy, proposal, change or initiative, and a summary its objectives and the intended results.

The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital technology in the way we live and work, and has accelerated the move to online for many more citizens, businesses and organisations. At the same time it has exposed greater inequalities, including digital exclusion, and increased the risk that those who do not have access to digital devices, fast broadband and sufficient data are left even further behind. For this reason, we have refreshed our digital strategy to refocus our priorities as we emerge from the pandemic and better prepare us for the future.

Our Digital Strategy Themes are:

- **Access** – Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents
- **Digital Place** - Having consistent technology and connectivity available to enable Brent to be a digital borough that is accessible for both businesses and residents. This includes improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents
- **Digital Inclusion** – Identifying digitally excluded residents and providing access to devices and digital skills to enable all residents across Brent to participate safely in the digital world
- **Data and Smart devices** - Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents
- **Digital Workplace** - Ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and to have the digital skills to effectively use existing and new technology

To support this sustained programme of change, delivery of this digital strategy is underpinned by the following key principles:

1. We will ensure that our services are accessible to everyone. We will develop guidance on digital inclusion setting out the accessibility standards new technology needs to comply with and to help services plan the provision for vulnerable customers as access arrangements change.
2. Services will be people centred. We will work with residents, partners and businesses to co-design and co-deliver transformation, ensuring that Brent's evolution as a digital borough is shaped by the energy, ideas and requirements of local people and key stakeholders.
3. We will embed our digital vision within our policies and strategies including HR, Planning, Regeneration, Employment and Skills and ICT. We will also reflect it in our engagement with the community and models of working with the Community and Voluntary Sector.
4. We will deliver robust information security measures to protect resident and stakeholder data from misuse and cyber threats, and we will safeguard their privacy

though increasingly secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements both internally and with partners.

5. We will invest in our workforce to ensure they have the resources and agile skills they need to innovate, collaborate and excel in the digital workplace and work smarter. This will include imbedding a culture of change across the organisation, moving away from a traditional 'service and department' approach to working in flexible, multi-disciplinary teams that use methodology aligned with the Local Government Digital Service Standard to iterate continuous service improvements in response to user needs.
6. We will work openly and actively collaborate with other organisations, including with the Community and Voluntary Sector, to develop innovative solutions and share learning and good practice.

2. Who may be affected by this policy or proposal?

The digital strategy will have a positive impact on the majority of Brent residents as the strategy seeks to improve the ease with which residents can access council services and to improve the digital skills of Brent residents. The programme is designed to increase digital inclusion and ensure all groups have the both the infrastructure and the skills to access the internet and digital services.

Some service users, mostly older people and disabled people, may not benefit as much from digital services as they are less likely to have access to the internet. This could be due to lack of digital skills, access costs being too high, or, complex needs which makes it difficult for them to access the internet. The digital programme seeks to increase digital inclusion and ensure that groups who need more support to access digital services get the help they need. It does also not take away services from any group. Strengthening our digital services will not disadvantage those who struggle to use them as conventional communication channels will still be available and more council officer capacity will be freed up to support those who need it most.

Additionally, residents with English as a second language and residents in lower social economic groups are less likely to be online. The programme supports these groups to access the internet and increase their digital skills.

To reduce any risk of bias in our work to use data more effectively to help to improve services, Brent has established a data ethics board to ensure that we are ethically and responsibly using data for our residents

3. Is there relevance to equality and the council's public sector equality duty? Please explain why. If your answer is no, you must still provide an explanation.

Yes, when developing the digital strategy due regard has been given to minimise the disadvantages connected to particular protected characteristics. Digital inclusion is a key

driver for the digital programme. Particular consideration has also been given to ensuring accessibility standards are met for all technology solutions.

4. Please indicate with an “X” the potential impact of the policy or proposal on groups with each protected characteristic. Carefully consider if the proposal will impact on people in different ways as a result of their characteristics.

Characteristic	Impact Positive	Impact Neutral/None	Impact Negative
Age	X		
Sex	X		
Race	X		
Disability *	X		
Sexual orientation	X		
Gender reassignment	X		
Religion or belief	X		
Pregnancy or maternity	X		
Marriage	X		

5. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an “X”.

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal <i>is</i> relevant to the council’s public sector equality duty?	X	
Does the policy or proposal relate to an area with known inequalities?	X	
Would the policy or proposal change or remove services used by vulnerable groups of people?	X	
Has the potential for negative or positive equality impacts been identified with this policy or proposal?	X	

If you have answered YES to ANY of the above, then proceed to section B.

If you have answered NO to ALL of the above, then proceed straight to section D.

SECTION B – IMPACTS ANALYSIS

1. Outline what information and evidence have you gathered and considered for this analysis. If there is little, then explain your judgements in detail and your plans to validate them with evidence. If you have monitoring information available, include it here.

A Citizens Online report, “Digital Inclusion in Brent” provides analysis of residents’ digital skills and access to the internet to determine those most likely to be at risk from Digital exclusion in Brent (please see Appendix 1 for some of the report’s findings). A series of recommendations were made to support and mitigate risks for vulnerable residents which have been used to inform our digital programme.

A considerable amount of engagement with residents has already taken place as part of the digital programme and this will be used to help improve digital inclusion in the borough and ensure that different groups are supported. For example, as part of the work to improve the website, surveys and interviews took place with different residents and this has provided insight into how different groups use services and the improvements they need. We have also worked with the voluntary and community sector to understand the needs of the people they support.

The Equality Profile of Brent 2021 provides an equality profile of the Brent population according to the nine protected characteristics named in the Equality Act 2010.

In 2018 the Brent Resident Attitudes Survey (RAS) was undertaken, this comprised face to face interviews with 2,113 residents. The sample was designed to be representative of the borough’s population and is large enough to provide an analysis of digital use by demographic and socio-economic group.

The survey included several questions relevant to the topic of digital inclusion, these included:

- Internet access (frequency/mode);
- Current use of online methods to access services and information;
- Views about likely future use (among non-users).

Based on responses, the RAS estimates that around 9 out of 10 Brent residents (89%) use the internet. The majority of Brent residents use it for more than 2 hours a day. A significant minority - just over 1 in 10 of those surveyed – said they did not use the internet (11%).

The Brent RAS estimate on internet use is broadly in line with Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey estimates, which indicate that around 90% of Brent adults were internet users (as at 2016). The RAS estimates are likely to be more reliable as they are based on a larger sample for Brent (x3). Also, RAS provides a richer data on demographics.

The RAS estimates that the majority of internet users in Brent access it via a smart phone (85% of users).

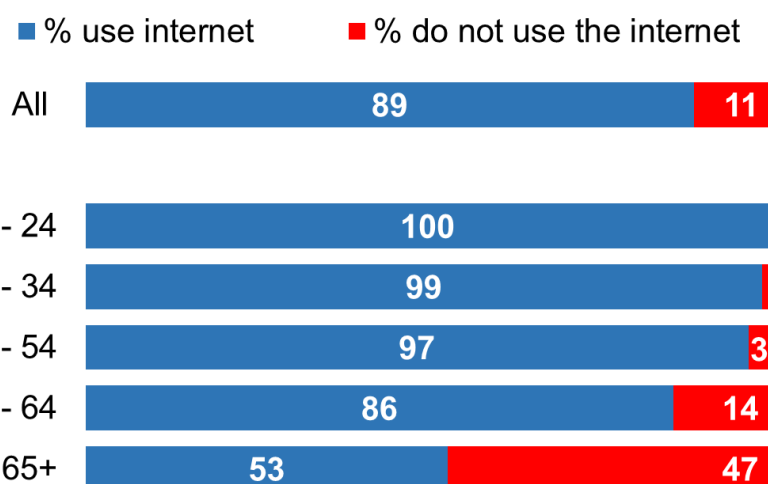
A further RAS is due to be undertaken soon and the findings of this survey will be used to further target and develop digital solutions and work to address digital exclusion.

2. For each “protected characteristic” provide details of all the potential or known impacts identified, both positive and negative, and explain how you have reached these

conclusions based on the information and evidence listed above. Where appropriate state “not applicable”.

AGE

Details of impacts identified	<p>In 2020, the median age of Brent population was 36 – four years lower than the national average. The population is expected to age in the future: the number of residents aged 65 and over is expected to increase 78% between 2020 and 2040 – an increase of 33,000 older residents (Equality Profile of Brent 2021)</p> <p>According to the Digital inclusion in Brent 2020 report, it is estimated that 6.8% (17,600) of the population of Brent do not use the internet. The data also shows that 75% (13,241) of the non-internet users are over the age of 65. This means that older residents are more likely to require extra support to access online services so may not benefit from changes in this proposal as much as other age groups. However, this proposal aims to add additional services so there will be no loss of existing services. Also, the technology will free up officer time so there will be extra resources available to support residents. The programme will also increase digital inclusion by increasing connectivity in the borough and the digital skills of residents. Digital Champions will be on hand to support those who need extra help.</p> <p>Brent staff members will have to adapt to using new technologies which may be more challenging for some older colleagues. The Council has invested and partnered with Microsoft to offer over 20,000 hours of digital training for staff across the council, supporting new skills for improved services. There are existing support systems available for colleagues who will need more help in adapting to the change and there will be additional learning and development available to support and up skill officers.</p> <p>The Brent RAS estimates that internet use is strongly related to age, which is consistent with national studies: whilst almost all young adults in Brent use the internet, just 53% of the over 65s use the internet.</p>
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Source: Brent Council, Resident Attitudes Survey 2019 (sample size 2,113)

Older people may also be positively impacted by this proposal as some of the technology will enable an improved quality of life for some residents. The Council will develop guidance on digital inclusion setting out the accessibility standards new technology needs to comply with and to help services plan the provision for vulnerable customers as access arrangements change. Additionally, we will be developing 3rd party access so that the community and voluntary sector can access services for residents who need additional support.

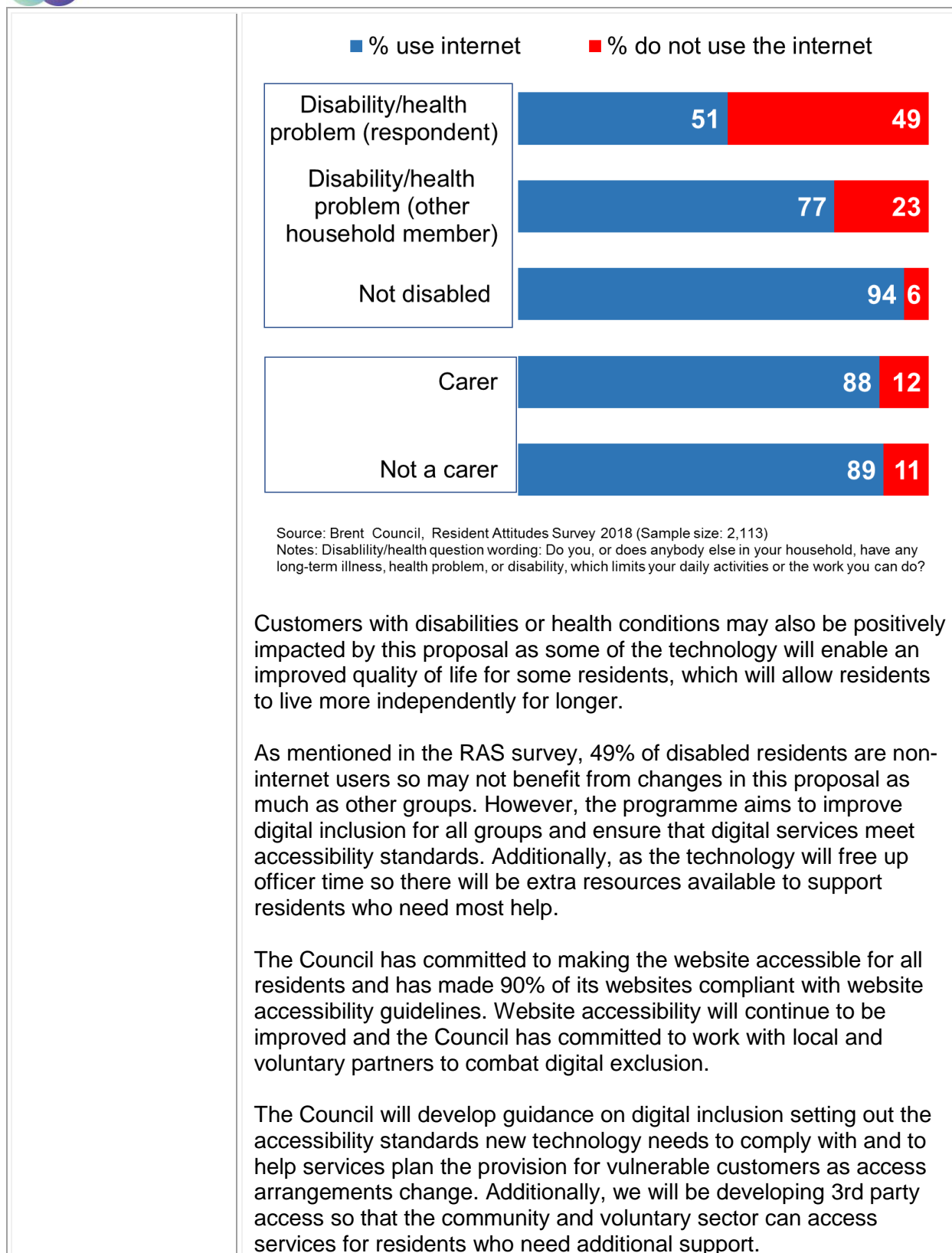
DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified

Around one in seven Brent residents have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day-activities in some way. The prevalence of disability rises sharply with age: more than half of all residents aged 65 and over had a long-term health problem or disability (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).

The Brent RAS estimates that internet access is strongly related to disability/poor health (49% of residents with disability/health problem are not accessing the internet). This is likely to be related to the findings on age as prevalence of disability and poor health rises with age. These may include but are not limited to residents with learning disabilities, mental health conditions or severe physical disabilities or health conditions, as well as customers with hearing impairments (incl. BSL users) and/or visual impairments.

The Brent RAS estimates that carers are as likely as non-carers to use the internet.



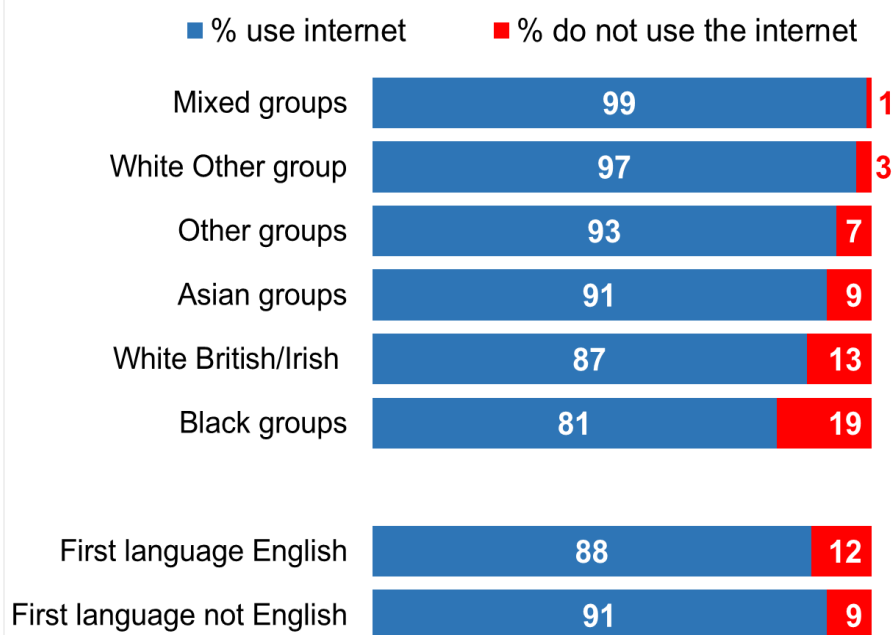
RACE

Details of impacts identified	Almost two thirds (64%) of the Brent population are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).
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BAME customers who do not have English as their first language may face access barriers or be unable to self-serve without alternative languages being available for translation. However, the council is able to arrange translation or interpreting services and/or alternative formats on request through its corporate translation and interpretation contract.

The Brent RAS estimates that internet use levels are highest for residents from mixed ethnic groups and lowest for black residents and that first language has little bearing on internet usage.

The Digital Programme will help increase digital inclusion for all Brent residents, including those from a BAME background.



Source: Brent Council, Resident Attitudes Survey 2018 (Sample size: 2,113)

Dollis Hill, Harlesden and Stonebridge wards have the highest levels of digital exclusion in the borough of Brent according to the Citizens Online report and have high levels of ethnic diversity. Please see figure 1 below for illustration of digital exclusion and connectivity on map. According to the ONS 2011 census, on average the demographic of the population in the 3 wards is made up of 69% BAME residents. This means residents from these areas are less likely to be able to access new online services. However, this proposal will likely have a positive effect on residents as the digital strategy looks to reduce inequality in the following ways:

- In Harlesden, work is being done with Community Fibre to increase connectivity for local businesses through targeted engagement and SME business specific contracts. Work is also being done with Open reach to increase connectivity across NW10 to improve connectivity for residents across our most digitally excluded wards as mentioned above.

- The residents support fund will provide additional support to disadvantaged residents who may not have IT equipment to be able to access online services.
- Over 2000 residents will have access to classroom based digital skills training through Brent Start.
- There will be over 20,000 hours' worth of self-study digital skills training to all residents.
- There will be 500 trained digital champions across Brent to support residents in developing their digital skills.

Digital connectivity and exclusion maps:

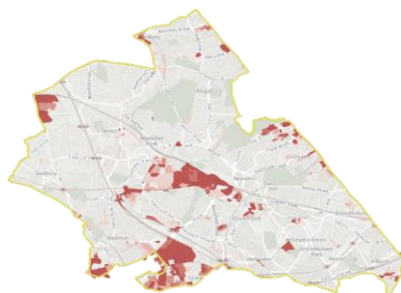


Figure 1: GLA connectivity map of Brent

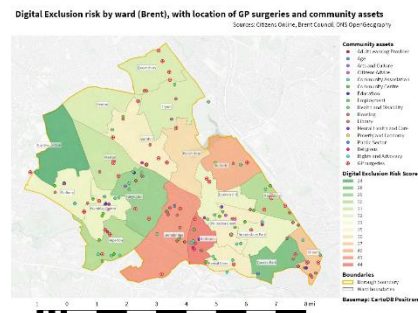


Figure 2: Digital exclusion risk by ward

*The areas shaded in red show low levels of digital connectivity in figure 1 and the areas shaded in red and orange show a higher risk of digital exclusion in figure 2.

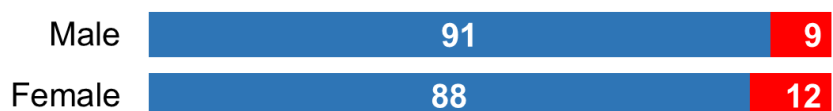
SEX

Details of impacts identified

The gender split in Brent population is 51% male and 49% female (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).

The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people of all sexes.

The Brent RAS estimates that internet user rates in Brent are similar for men and women.



Source: Brent Council, Resident Attitudes Survey 2018 (Sample size: 2,113)

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	<p>Approximately 7.4% of Brent residents identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).</p> <p>The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people of any sexual orientation.</p>
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PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	<p>Brent has relatively high birth rates. In 2019, there were 4,919 live births in Brent – which equates to 72.6 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).</p> <p>The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people affected by pregnancy and maternity.</p>
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RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	<p>82% of Brent residents identify as having a religion or belief (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).</p> <p>The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people of all religions or beliefs.</p>
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GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	<p>The Government Equalities Office tentatively estimates that around 0.3-0.8% of the UK population are transgender. In Brent this would equate to between 1000 and 2600 people (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).</p> <p>The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people who have undergone gender reassignment.</p>
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MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	<p>The 2011 Census found that around 43% of Brent residents were married and 0.3% were in a civil partnership. In 2017, 902 marriages or civil partnerships took place in Brent – of these, 23 (2.5%) were same sex marriages or civil partnerships (Equality Profile of Brent 2021).</p> <p>The Digital Strategy aims to provide assistance and support to all client groups, including people of all partnership arrangements.</p>
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3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

4. Were the participants in any engagement initiatives representative of the people who will be affected by your proposal and is further engagement required?

The Brent Resident Attitudes Survey (RAS) sample was designed to be representative of the borough population and is large enough to provide an analysis of digital use by demographic and socio-economic group. The survey comprised of face to face interviews with 2,113 residents.

The Citizens online report involved engagement with voluntary and community sector organisations in Brent and local businesses.

Residents were also engaged with specific projects in the Digital Programme, including:

- the CYP pathways application engaged with Brent care leavers
- the website redesign project engaged with local residents
- Digital inclusion action plan involved work and engagement with leaders from the community and voluntary sector

5. Please detail any areas identified as requiring further data or detailed analysis.

See section C

6. If, following your action plan, negative impacts will or may remain, please explain how these can be justified?

There are no remaining negative impacts. Delivery of the Digital Strategy is overseen by the Customer and Digital Board which meets monthly and it will continue to ensure that the impact of the strategy is monitored and any potential negative impacts mitigated.

7. Outline how you will monitor the actual, ongoing impact of the policy or proposal?

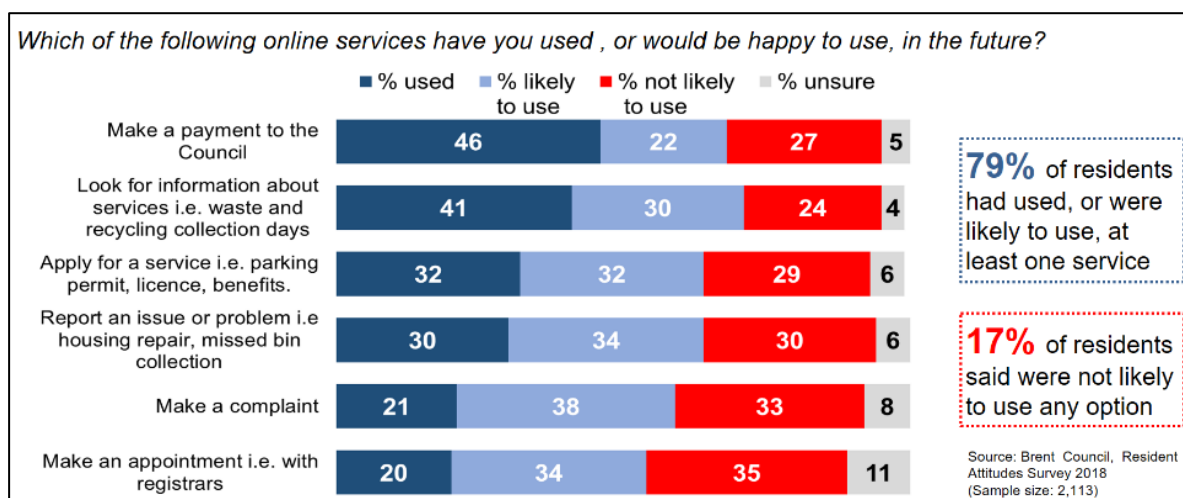
Operational delivery of the Digital Strategy is overseen by the Programme Delivery Board which meets monthly. At a more strategic level, this is then overseen by the Customer and Digital Board which also meets monthly.

SECTION C - CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis above, please detail your overall conclusions. State if any mitigating actions are required to alleviate negative impacts, what these are and what the desired outcomes will be. If positive equality impacts have been identified, consider what actions you

can take to enhance them. If you have decided to justify and continue with the policy despite negative equality impacts, provide your justification. If you are to stop the policy, explain why.

Our approach to online services and support is shaped by knowledge of those more likely to be digitally isolated, but with equal consideration for evidence showing that a majority of residents have already used Brent's online services, or say they are likely to use them in future (see below chart, Brent RAS). By developing online offers that make the lives of most residents easier - such as enabling them to do things more efficiently or 'on the go' - we are helping to make online residents' first choice for interacting with the council, thereby releasing capacity in traditional channels that can be prioritised for residents who need additional support.



The Strategy recognises that a significant minority of Brent residents (1 in 10) are digitally excluded and its intention is to increase digital inclusion and support these residents.

1. The Digital Strategy promotes inclusion, provides opportunities for more residents to gain digital skills and aims to improve the customer experience. Access to support for improved digital skills will be available to Brent residents and council officers, this will include:
 - Digital champions to support residents to improve their digital skills
 - Digital skills courses for residents
 - A business support fund to help businesses with their digital skills and online presence
 - Eight digital skills apprentices to demonstrate our commitment to encouraging digital employment opportunities in Brent
 - Digital skills training for all staff, including Digital Accessibility fundamental training, to support a culture of life-long digital learning within the workforce and when working with residents
2. The Community Hub Model has been designed to provide support for residents with complex needs who may find it challenging to access services. The hub approach aims to engage a wide range of residents in an accessible and inclusive environment and provide support to get them online.

There are currently six community hubs operating in Harlesden, South Kilburn Willesden, Wembley, Kingsbury and The Living Room, based on St Raphael's estate.

Digital support is a key element of the community hub core offer, the hub network aims to ensure positive outcomes for older people and disabled people who may require digital support to participate online.

3. Alongside the Digital Strategy, the Council is undertaking a Customer Access Review which aims to ensure that customers have the access, confidence and skills to engage with the Council digitally. One of the priorities of the review is to ensure services are automated at every opportunity so that resources can be prioritised to support customers who need additional assistance.

As part of the review, front line staff in contact centres, the customer service centre, community hubs and libraries will be trained to:

- Identify characteristics and situations which indicate complex needs with empowerment to provide additional support including delivery of appointment advocacy and hub referral services
 - Ensure that more customers are 'getting online' through 'assisted digital support' available across all access channels. Consistent services will be provided face to face ranging from light touch support/access to equipment to full support provided through side by side assistance
4. We plan to capture equality data in My Account so that we can identify patterns and intervene at the right time for residents to support them.
 5. We will make full use of our data ethics board. Brent has established a data ethics board whose membership is drawn from external data subject matter experts and internal senior managers. Where the council is embarking on a project which will change the way in which we use data, we use the Open Data Institutes' ethics canvas to describe the impacts of the data use to ensure that we are ethically and responsibly using data for resident benefits. The ethics board reviews each canvas and provides feedback and recommendations on the data use.

There are many positive impacts from the strategy on Brent residents, which include:

- Residents will be able to access more services online at a time and place that is convenient for them, and on a device of their choosing
- Businesses will be able to access services in one place when and where it suits them
- Enable greater access to services for residents who need more support as they can use trusted third parties to help them access their digital services
- Quicker and easier access to information
- Increased digital inclusion; increased digital skills and access to the internet

- More support for residents who need additional support to use online channels

SECTION D – RESULT

Please select one of the following options. Mark with an "X".

A	CONTINUE WITH THE POLICY/PROPOSAL UNCHANGED	X
B	JUSTIFY AND CONTINUE THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	
C	CHANGE / ADJUST THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	
D	STOP OR ABANDON THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	

SECTION E - ACTION PLAN

This will help you monitor the steps you have identified to reduce the negative impacts (or increase the positive); monitor actual or ongoing impacts; plan reviews and any further engagement or analysis required.

Action	Expected outcome	Officer	Completion Date
Where appropriate, user testing will involve older people and people with a disability who are less likely to be online	Better understand the user requirements specific to these groups	Rehana Ramesh, Digital Transformation Lead	Ongoing
Ongoing monitoring of equalities through residents accessing Community Hubs and take-up of digital skills training	Continuous monitoring of the equalities implications of the strategy which will inform insights for implementation	Mohammed Jama, Brent Hubs Manager	Ongoing
All projects that will affect residents or staff will have an individual equality impact assessment. We will proactively capture and gather EIA data from residents.	Improved and updated understanding of the affect of the programme on different groups so we can continue to use evidence based enhancements to the programme.	Rehana Ramesh, Digital Transformation Lead	Ongoing
Additional training to be made available to colleagues who need support to use new technologies.	This will help identify colleagues with lower levels of IT literacy. Support packages can be created to reskill colleagues and should allow for more resources to be available to support residents.	Rehana Ramesh, Digital Transformation Lead	Ongoing

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Ibrahim Fahiye
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Rehana Ramesh

**HEAD OF SERVICE
/ Operational
Director:**



Sadie East,
Director of Transformation

Appendix 1 – findings from Citizens Online Report August 202, “Digital Inlcusion in Brent”

Adults in Brent: Digital Exclusion Stats:

- 19% have no laptop
- 7% have no internet access at home
- 6% have no foundation digital skills
- 18% don't have essential digital skills for life
- 11% only use a smartphone to go online
- 7% are offline