

London Borough of Brent
Summary of Decisions taken by the Cabinet held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 5
February 2024 at 10am

PRESENT: Councillor Muhammed Butt (Chair), Councillor Tatler (Vice-Chair) and Cououncillors Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Grahl, Knight, Nerva and Krupa Sheth.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Conneely (Chair of Scrutiny Budget Task Group), Georgiou and Molloy.

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1.	Apologies for Absence		Apologies for absence were received from Alice Lester (Interim Corporate Director Regeneration & Communities) with Gerry Ansell (Interim Director Regeneration, Growth and Employment) attending as a substitute.
2.	Declarations of Interest		No declarations of interest were made during the meeting.
3.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting		Cabinet RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 15 January 2024 be approved as a correct record. Eligible for Call-In: No
4.	Matters Arising (if any)		None.
5.	Petitions (if any)		No petitions were submitted for consideration at the meeting.
6.	Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)		There were no items referred from either the Community Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees.
7.	Budget & Council Tax 2024-25	All Wards	Cabinet NOTED the following comments made in advance of considering the main report on the Budget & Council Tax 2024-25: 1. Councillor Conneely, as Chair of the Resources and Public

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			<p>Realm Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Task Group, summarising the main recommendations from the Task Group in relation to the budget process, which had been included as Appendix D to the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report. In introducing the report, Councillor Conneely began by thanking all members of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group along with everyone else who had participated in the scrutiny process. In emphasising that the upcoming financial year would be the most challenging for local authorities across the country, Councillor Conneely reiterated the need for extensive reform of the current way in which local authorities were funded, given the inadequacy of the existing funding regime.</p> <p>Due to the cumulative impact of funding cuts on local government and other public services as a result of austerity over the previous decade Councillor Conneely, in presenting the outcome of the Task Group review, highlighted the importance placed on collaboration between neighbouring local authorities, partners and the voluntary and community sector to not only deliver vital services to residents, but to also counter the competitive environment imposed by discretionary grant funding which positioned councils against each other. This emphasis on collaboration had been reflected in the Task Group recommendations, which included the establishment of a shared outcomes framework with the voluntary and community sector to co-design and co-deliver budget proposals. Furthermore, the Task Group had recommended</p>

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			<p>implementing additional shared service agreements with other local authorities with Councillor Conneely also advising that the Task Group had welcomed the decision to retain use of the New Millenium Day Centre, which would be operating under a new shared service arrangement.</p> <p>Highlighting other key recommendations made as part of the review, Councillor Conneely also referred to the Task Groups support in seeking a better alignment of NHS resources to population need and for increased delegation of budgets and decision making to the Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), in order to better address local need and enable more clinically led collaboration at local level. As part of the wider approach towards addressing the budget challenges identified the Task Group had also been keen to support and recommend the development of a longer term strategic approach towards income generation including yearly action plans and a robust monitoring process to enable the adoption of a more holistic approach (with dedicated cross departmental resource) to investigate and identify additional opportunities to generate income.</p> <p>In concluding, Councillor Conneely once again thanked all those involved for their participation in the review process and commended the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group to Cabinet for consideration as part of the budget setting process.</p>

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			<p>2. Councillor Georgiou, who began by echoing the concerns expressed at the challenging nature of the financial pressures faced by local authorities, created by a combination of factors such as the significant underfunding of local authorities, Brexit, and the economic mismanagement of the current Conservative Government. Compounding these factors, Councillor Georgiou felt that the current position had also been adversely impacted by spending decision taken by the current Council Administration, such as those related to Civic Centre improvements and the pursuit of what he regarded as unviable development schemes.</p> <p>Whilst recognising the need for difficult decisions in order to provide a balanced and sustainable budget, Councillor Georgiou advised he was keen to ensure that residents priorities were at the forefront of the proposals being considered, with the Liberal Democrats Group therefore intending to propose a number of amendments at the upcoming Council meeting seeking to address areas of ongoing concern identified by residents including street cleanliness, youth provision and the climate emergency.</p> <p>Given the proposed increase in Council Tax, Councillor Georgiou felt there was a need for the Council to ensure that funding collected locally was refocussed and prioritised on local areas of concern, including:</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Cleansing – with concerns highlighted in relation to the new intelligence-led approach to street cleaning and the need for additional investment; • Waste collection and recycling – with ongoing concerns highlighted regarding the operation of the blue bag recycling scheme and the option of wheelie bins therefore being sought as an alternative; and • Focus in addressing the supply and cost pressures relating to temporary accommodation through the provision of more genuinely affordable housing developments and introduction of more stringent planning policies in relation to the Council’s affordable housing targets. <p>To conclude, Councillor Georgiou felt there was a need for a clear commitment from any potential incoming government to ensure that the necessary reforms required to local government funding were introduced in order to address the challenging financial position faced across the sector and provide the necessary reassurance concerning the future of local government services.</p> <p>Having expressed disappointment at the lack of engagement by the Liberal Democrats Group in the Scrutiny Budget Task Group process, the approach taken and recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group were welcomed and supported by Cabinet who RESOLVED:</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1115 437 2085 544">(1) To recommend to Full Council an overall 4.99% increase in the Council’s element of Council Tax for 2024/25, with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 2.99% general increase. <li data-bbox="1115 584 2085 691">(2) To recommend to Full Council the General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25, as summarised in Appendices A and B of the report. <li data-bbox="1115 730 2085 837">(3) To recommend to Full Council the savings proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26, as set out in Appendices C (i) and C (ii) of the report. <li data-bbox="1115 877 2085 984">(4) To note the Equalities Impact Assessments on the budget proposals, as set out in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv) of the report. <li data-bbox="1115 1024 2085 1098">(5) To note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in Appendix D of the report. <li data-bbox="1115 1137 2085 1244">(6) To recommend to Full Council the HRA budget and business plan for 2024/25, as set out in section eight and appendix Q of the report. <li data-bbox="1115 1284 2085 1358">(7) To agree the HRA rents for council dwellings, tenant service charges and garages as set out in section eight of the report.

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			<p>(8) To agree the rents set under the Housing General Fund for Brent Housing PFI and traveller’s site pitches and to note the rents for Hillside dwellings as set out in section eight of the report.</p> <p>(9) To note the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of the report.</p> <p>(10) To recommend to Full Council the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new schemes and reprofiling, as set out in section 11 and Appendix E of the report and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix F of the report.</p> <p>(11) To recommend to Full Council the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendices G, H, I and J of the report.</p> <p>(12) To agree for a new loan and equity facility of up to £40m to be made available to i4B Holdings Ltd for the provision of PRS accommodation in line with the Temporary Reform Accommodation plan as set out in section 11.38 of the report.</p> <p>(13) To recommend to Full Council the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendices K (i) and K (ii) in the report.</p>

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			<p>(14) To agree the action plan to implement CIPFA’s Financial Management Code and conduct a Financial Resilience Assessment, as set out in Appendix L of the report.</p> <p>(15) To agree, and where relevant recommend to Full Council, the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix M of the report.</p> <p>(16) To note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section seven and detailed in Appendices N (i) and N (ii) of the report.</p> <p>(17) To note the legal advice from the Corporate Director of Governance, as set out in Appendix O of the report.</p> <p>(18) To note the decision of the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to continue as part of the Eight Authority Business Rates pool in 2024/25 as set out in section six of the report.</p> <p>To also note and approve the specific recommendations identified for consideration by Full Council as detailed in section 2.19 – 2.38 of the report.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: No (report and recommendations to be referred to Council)</p>
8.	Future of the RSF and new model	All Wards	Cabinet RESOLVED:

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	of support		<p>(1) To agree the proposed model for resident support, including a Community Wellbeing Programme and refreshed Resident Support Fund and Crisis Response Fund (CRF) as detailed from section 4.21 in the report.</p> <p>(2) To agree that:</p> <p>(a) the access criteria for the Community Wellbeing Service (detailed from section 4.24 of the report) be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Director of Public Health; and</p> <p>(b) authority to amend the award criteria for RSF and CRF funds be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities and Culture.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p> <p>Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24</p>
9.	Highways Footway Maintenance 2023-2026 Report	All Wards	<p>Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the 2023 - 26 Planned Footway Maintenance Programme as set out in Appendix A of this report.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p> <p>Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24</p>

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10.	Council Tax - Empty and Second Homes Premium	All Wards	<p>Cabinet RESOLVED</p> <p>(1) To approve the Council’s National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Discretionary Scheme in relation to 2024 - 25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and pursuant to the Council’s powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended.</p> <p>(2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resident Services in consultation with the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources to implement the discretionary schemes as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.</p> <p>(3) That from 1 April 2024 in accordance with the provisions of The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. introduces the council tax premium of an additional 100% for those domestic properties empty for longer than 1 year. ii. maintains the council tax premium of 200% in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years. iii. maintains the council tax premium of 300% in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 10 years. iv. from 1 April 2025, introduces a premium of 100% to domestic properties determined to be applicable

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			<p align="center">Second Homes.</p> <p>(4) To note the communication campaign (as detailed within section 3.3.16 of the report) to highlight to owners of empty property how the council may be able to help them make better use of their property.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p> <p>Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24</p>
11.	Admission Arrangements for Community Schools 2025/26	All Wards	<p>Cabinet RESOLVED</p> <p>(1) To note the outcome of the consultation.</p> <p>(2) To agree the proposed reductions of the Published Admission Numbers at Fryent Primary School and Mitchell Brook Primary School.</p> <p>(3) To determine the admission arrangements, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p> <p>Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24</p>
12.	Outcome of informal consultation on school organisation proposals	Harlesden & Kensal Green;	Cabinet RESOLVED to approve a period of formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on proposals to:

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	for Leopold Primary School in Primary Planning Area 4	Roundwood; Stonebridge	<p>(a) seek a variation to reduce Leopold Primary School’s Published Admission Number (PAN) from 120 to 60 from September 2025; and</p> <p>(b) implement a phased closure of provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School between September 2025 and the end of July 2027.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p> <p>Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24</p>
13.	Adult Social Care Charging Policy Consultation Findings	All Wards	<p>Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the changes to the Adult Social Care charging policy following the completion of the public consultation, specifically to -</p> <p>(a). Apply a 10% discretionary enhancement to the minimum income guarantee for those receiving non-residential or nursing care.</p> <p>(b). Increase the hourly rate charged for homecare for self-funders from £12.97 per hour to the cost of commissioning care. This is currently £20.50 per hour for contracted services, or £17.50 an hour for spot packages.</p> <p>(c). Agree that an annual uplift is applied to the hourly rate charged for homecare in line with the increase given to providers, so</p>

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			<p>that the charge continues to reflect the amount paid to providers on an hourly basis.</p> <p>(e). Increase the amount charged to service users if they cannot have a light touch financial assessment, to a new average contribution (£32.52 per week).</p> <p>(f). Charge people the full cost of their care if their financial assessment cannot be completed within four weeks. Safeguards will remain in place where this is due to a physical or cognitive impairment.</p> <p>(g). Charge homecare service users their client contribution for up to seven days during a hospital admission.</p> <p>(h). Charge service users their client contribution for 28 days after being admitted to hospital from a residential or nursing home.</p> <p>(i). Agree the changes to the charging policy will be implemented from April 2024 onwards with a two-month minimum transition period to implement the new arrangements.</p> <p>(j) Agree that final arrangements for implementation of the policy be delegated to the Corporate Director Care Health & Wellbeing.</p> <p>Eligible for call-in: Yes</p>

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			Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24
14.	Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy 2024 - 26	All Wards	Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Safer Brent - Community Safety Strategy, and Action Plan. Eligible for call-in: Yes Deadline for submission of call-in: 6pm on Monday 12 February 24
15.	Exclusion of Press and Public		There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.
16.	Any other urgent business		There were no items of urgent business.