Public Document Pack

Cabinet

Monday 5 February 2024 at 10.00 am
Conference Hall - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Please note this will be held as a physical meeting which all Cabinet members will be required to attend in person.

The meeting will be open for the press and public to attend or alternatively can be followed via the live webcast. The link to follow proceedings via the live webcast is available HERE

Membership:

Lead Member Councillors:	**Portfolio**
M Butt (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Tatler (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth
Donnelly-Jackson	Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture
Farah	Cabinet Member for Safer Communities & Public Protection
Grahl	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools
Knight	Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security
Nerva	Cabinet Member for Public Health & Adult Social Care
Krupa Sheth	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action

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

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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

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

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

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 15 January 2024 as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising (if any)

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 Petitions (if any)

To consider any petitions for which notice has been provided, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

Members are asked to note that there are currently no petition(s) due to be presented at the meeting.

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

To consider any reports referred by either the Community & Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees.

Finance & Resources reports

7 Budget & Council Tax 2024-25 7 - 382

This report sets out the Council's budget proposals for 2024 - 25. It also sets out the results of the consultation, scrutiny and equalities processes. Subject to approval by Cabinet, these will form the basis of the budget to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 29 February 2024.

The report also sets out the overall financial position facing the Council for the medium term and highlights the significant risks, issues and uncertainties.

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Lead Member**: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler) **Contact Officer**: Ravinder Jassar, Deputy Director of Finance Tel: 0208 937 1487 ravinder.jassar@brent.gov.uk

Resident Services reports

8 Future of the RSF and new model of support 383 - 444

This report outlines proposals for introducing a new model of support for Brent residents from April 2024, which has been developed through the piloting of Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) projects and guided by a series of Design Principles. The report proposes a single, joined-up model including development of a Community Wellbeing Programme aligned with a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), designed to support residents to be more resilient in the longer term and align more closely with strategic priorities and related projects.

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Lead Member**: Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities and Culture (Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson) **Contact Officer**: Jon Cartwright, Head of Change and Customer Insight Tel: 0202 8937 1742 jonathan.cartwright@brent.gov.uk

9 Highways Footway Maintenance 2023-2026 Report 445 - 456

This report sets out recommendations for Brent's 2023 - 26 footway Maintenance programme through prioritised programmes of footway reconstruction and follows additional discussions with ward councillors on priorities within their area.

(Agenda initially republished to include Appendix 1 of the report on 30 January 2024 with a further amendment published on 2 February 2024)

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Lead Member**: Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action (Councillor Krupa Sheth) **Contact Officer**: Tony Kennedy, Head of Highways Management Tel: 020 8937 5151 Tony.Kennedy@brent.gov.uk

10 Council Tax - Empty and Second Homes Premium 457 - 468

This report sets out for approval changes affecting both Council Tax and Business Rates from 1 April 2024.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities and Culture (Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson)
Contact Officer: Peter Cosgrove, Head of Revenues and Debt
Tel: 020 8937 2307
Peter.Cosgrove@brent.gov.uk

Children and Young People reports

11 Admission Arrangements for Community Schools 2025/26 469 - 490

This report sets out the outcome of the consultation on proposed amendments to the Admission Arrangements for Brent Community Schools for 2025/26 and seeks Cabinet's approval to determine the arrangements, as proposed within Appendix 1 of the report, in February 2024.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
Contact Officer: Shirley Parks, Director - Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy
Tel: 020 8937 4529
Shirley.Parks@brent.gov.uk

12 Outcome of informal consultation on school organisation proposals for Leopold Primary School in Primary Planning Area 4 491 - 530

This report provides Cabinet with a summary of the informal consultation undertaken between November 2023 and December 2023 on the proposal to implement a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School. As a result, the report recommends a move to formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on a phased closure of the provision on the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site and a variation to the Published Admission Number of Leopold Primary School from 120 to 60 to take effect from the 2025/26 academic year.

Ward Affected:
Roundwood; Stonebridge

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
Contact Officer: Shirley Parks, Director - Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy
Tel: 020 8937 4529
Shirley.Parks@brent.gov.uk

Care Health & Wellbeing reports

13 Adult Social Care Charging Policy Consultation Findings 531 - 544

The purpose of this report is to present the outcome of the Adult Social Care Charging Policy consultation, which ran from November to December 2023, following the decision taken by Cabinet in October 2023. to undertake a public consultation on proposed changes to the policy. The report summarises how the consultation was carried out, the number of responses received, a summary of those responses and the recommended changes to the policy following the public consultation process.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Public Health & Adult Social Care (Councillor Neil Nerva)
Contact Officer: Andrew Davies, Head of Commissioning, Contract and Market Management
Tel: 020 8937 1609
andrew.davies@brent.gov.uk

Communities & Regeneration reports

14 Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy 2024 - 26 545 - 578

This report seeks approval to the Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy and accompanying Action Plan for 2024 – 2026.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Safer Communities & Public Protection (Councillor Harbi Farah)
Contact Officer: Kibibi Octave, Director of Communities
Tel: 020 8937 4225
kibibi.octave@brent.gov.uk

15 Exclusion of Press and Public

No items have been identified in advance of the meeting that will require the exclusion of the press or public.

16 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Chief Executive and Member Services or their representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

Date of the next meeting: Monday 11 March 2024



Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public. Alternatively, it will be possible to follow proceedings via the live webcast **HERE**

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LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET
Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 15 January 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Grahl, Knight and Nerva.

Also present: Councillors Hirani and Maurice.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tatler (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth) and Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action).

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 11 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

5.1 Implementation and Operation of Blue Bag Recycling Scheme

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) welcomed Sheila Darr to the meeting, who had been invited to speak in support of a petition containing 3,422 signatures highlighting a number of practical and operational concerns regarding the recently introduced blue bag recycling scheme across the borough. In addressing Cabinet, Sheila Darr began by calling for the scheme to be replaced as it was felt to represent an unworkable extension of the existing blue bin scheme. In seeking to highlight the views of those who had signed the petition, Cabinet was advised of the concerns raised relating to the design and quality of the blue recycling bags, which were felt to be inefficient and as a result discourage residents from recycling. Additionally, Cabinet was advised that many elderly residents had expressed concern regarding the potential consequences of putting non-recyclable material in the blue bags and them not being collected as a result.

In discussing potential GDPR and data protection implications of paper and cardboard containing details such as names and addresses being misplaced due to the unsecure nature of the bags, Sheila Darr also raised concern regarding the protection of residents' personal information and queried how documents containing sensitive information could be suitability disposed of. Furthermore, in emphasising the need for resident support to improve recycling rates, a request was made for the planned review of the scheme to be brought forward and undertaken immediately in order for resident feedback to be taken into account, recognising the level of concern expressed and enabling further research on schemes that had been successful in securing support from local residents across other boroughs. As an example, the suggested use of split recycling bins with removable dividers or retention of the blue recycling bins for paper and card with the provision of smaller recycling bins for tin, plastic and glass were identified as possible alternative solutions.

To conclude, Sheila Darr felt it would be helpful to share examples of the type of comments being raised by other residents across the borough which had been posted on the Nextdoor App in relation to the blue bag scheme. These included concerns regarding stolen bags, the space available in the bags, difficulties for disabled residents and recycling bags not being collected or emptied properly and a lack of assisted support for those residents with specific needs who required assistance.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (responding as Leader of the Council on behalf of Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action) firstly thanked Sheila Darr for attending Cabinet and all those residents who had signed the petition for taking the time to ensure their views were represented. In reiterating the Council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency and work towards the achievement of net zero by 2030, Councillor Butt explained that the changes introduced as part of the blue bag scheme had been designed to increase recycling rates to bring the borough closer to its environmental and climate related goals.

Regarding the specific issues raised as part of the presentation and petition, the Leader reassured residents that the concerns relating to the design and quality of the recycling bags were being addressed with the supplier and confirmed that replacement bags were also available for those reported as damaged along with additional bags for residents requiring increased capacity. In terms of contamination, the Leader advised that the concerns raised relating to the impact of adverse weather conditions on the paper and card being placed in the blue bags when left out for collection was also being monitored with the Council's contractor so that any issues identified could be addressed.

To demonstrate the positive impact that the blue bag scheme was having on recycling rates, Councillor Butt advised that since introduction of the scheme in October 2023 there had been a 264% increase in the recycling rate of paper and cardboard across the borough, with this enabling the Council to also explore opportunities to generate additional income through recycling to mitigate against recent budget cuts and the continued financial pressures being faced by the Council. Regarding the planned review of the scheme, the Leader advised that this had been scheduled to provide an opportunity to fully consider its impact utilising all available evidence in order to consider any changes that may be required as part of

the transition process with it pointed out, in terms of research, that a number of other councils had or were also considering the introduction of similar types of recycling schemes in an attempt to increase their recycling rates.

In concluding Councillor Butt, once again highlighting the Council's climate and environmental commitments, emphasised the importance of waste and recycling as a priority and whilst welcoming the increased levels of recycling being achieved as a result of the scheme advised he would be willing to continue discussions with local residents in relation to any ongoing concerns.

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

There were no references from the Community & Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees submitted for consideration at the meeting.

7. **Quarter 3 Financial Report 2023/24**

In Councillor Tatler's absence (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance, Resources & Reform), Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced the report setting out the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Capital Programme as at Quarter 3 2023/24.

In highlighting the forecast overspend of £13m against the revised General Fund revenue budget at Quarter 3, which was broadly similar to the position reported at Quarter 2, Councillor Muhammed Butt outlined the significant and serious nature of the financial challenges faced by the Council as a result of the current economic environment, government austerity and ongoing pressures in relation to homelessness and the increased demand on temporary accommodation. These pressures had also been compounded by the recent Local Government financial settlement with Brent having received the second lowest settlement in London for 2024-25 and, despite the significant challenges faced, not having been allocated any additional support towards the pressures identified in relation to homelessness. In recognising the seriousness of the position outlined and scale of the financial challenges faced members noted the progress being made in relation to the implementation and identification of further savings proposals alongside the additional measures which had been introduced to control expenditure and maintain financial control.

Members welcomed what were felt to be not only the prudent but also responsible nature of the measures identified in order to ensure the Council remained focussed on maintaining a balanced budget whilst also seeking to safeguard key services and protect residents, given the wider impact of the cost-of-living crisis and economic challenges highlighted, with specific reference made to the ongoing pressures being created as a result of the increase in homelessness and demand on housing supply. In addition, members attention was drawn to the additional pressure on the Housing Revenue Account as a result of current economic conditions, rent limitations imposed during 2023-24 and increased demand on disrepairs, responsive repairs and void works along with the mitigating actions identified in response.

Concerns were also highlighted regarding the lack of clarity provided by the Government regarding the provision of future funding for the Household Support Fund given the importance of support being provided for local residents. Despite this uncertainty, Cabinet welcomed and praised the support continuing to be provided by Council through its Resident Support Fund (RSF) in relation to households struggling with household bills, food, fuel rent, mortgage or council tax arrears. During 2023-24 it was noted that the RSF had supported 2,773 applications awarding a total of £2m to residents with the total Fund consisting of a £3m investment by the Council and £2m allocation from the HSF reactive support fund. Whilst it was recognised that demand would increase over the winter months an assurance was provided that the Council would continue to do everything possible to carry on supporting residents in need and through the cost-of-living crisis. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the ongoing pressures in relation to adult social care, despite the breakeven figure outlined within the report, as a result of issues relating to recruitment, the wider impact of the current complexities in terms of the social care and hospital discharge system and economic conditions affecting providers across the care system. As a result, the ongoing work of all involved in maintaining and delivering such vital services was also commended.

In support of the approach outlined, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the overall financial position as detailed within the report and actions being taken to manage the issues arising.

(2) To note the savings delivery tracker in Appendix A of the report.

(3) To note the Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix B of the report.

(4) To approve the virements set out in section 3.9.11 of the report.

8. **Treasury Management mid-year report 2023/24**

In Councillor Tatler's absence (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance, Resources & Reform), Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) presented a report updating Members on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the financial year 2023-24 which included the Council's investment and borrowing activities and strategy.

Members welcomed the report and prudent approach being delivered in terms of the Council's Treasury Management activity to support delivery of the Council's wider ambitions and priorities given the challenging economic context under which the Treasury Management Strategy was having to be delivered. Having noted the assurance provided that the Council had fully complied with the Treasury Management Indicators set as part of the annual strategy for 2023 - 24, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the 2023-24 Mid-Year Treasury report and approve it being referred on to Council, in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code).

9. **Acquisition of a property in Wembley for the Brent Childrens Care Home Project**

Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) introduced the report, which set out the Council's plans to acquire a property as part of the Children's Residential Home Project.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the way in which the proposed acquisition aligned with the objectives within the Brent Children's Residential Home Business Case approved by Cabinet in May 2023. This included not only supporting the Council in seeking to address the increasing cost of child residential placements for looked after children, with the scheme projected to save the Council approx. £290,000 on an annual basis once operational, but also in delivering the benefits associated with the additional capacity to reduce the need for out of borough placements and enabling more children and young people to receive care closer to home with access to local services and support.

Members welcomed the way in which the insourcing of this scheme would enhance service delivery and in recognising the benefits that the proposal would bring to both young people and the Council, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To approve the acquisition of the property (address detailed in the exempt appendix of the report) in Wembley HA9 with vacant possession to meet the needs of young people as outlined in the Brent Residential Home Business Case approved by Cabinet in May 2023.

(2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Children and Young People, to agree the terms of the purchase and acquire the property subject to financial and legal due diligence, vacant possession and contract.

(3) To note that the completion of the property needs to take place by the end of January 2024 in order to allow sufficient time to renovate the property within the timescales permitted in the grant agreement with the Department for Education (DfE).

10. Northwick Park Public Mortuary Expansion Business Case

In Councillor Krupa Sheth's absence (as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action), Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced the report setting out the Business Case supporting an expansion of Brent Mortuary by 80 storage spaces.

In considering the report, Members noted that Brent, operating under an Inter Authority Agreement with the London Boroughs of Harrow and Barnet, provided a licensed shared mortuary and post-mortem facility covering three of the five boroughs within the HM Coroners Jurisdiction across North London. The site was located on the site of Northwick Park Hospital with the Council and partners having a responsibility to ensure that the premises and facilities met required standards within the Human Tissue Act. Given increasing pressure on capacity, the proposed expansion was designed to ensure the mortuary was able to continue meeting these requirements in support of local residents, the Coroners Service and Metropolitan Police. Members noted that the expansion was being undertaken in collaboration with the London Borough of Barnet and London Borough of Harrow, with Brent's contribution being £900,621 towards the overall cost of £2.63m.

In recognising the importance and Council's ongoing commitment towards ensuring security and dignity in terms of care for the deceased and addressing, in a cost-effective manner, the additional need identified to maintain support for local residents given the sensitive nature of the service, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the need for additional mortuary capacity to meet the standards laid out in the Human Tissue Act 2004.

(2) To support the proposals contained in Option 2 of the options appraisal at paragraph 3.4 of the report as the means of best meeting the requirement for additional mortuary capacity.

(3) Subject to Barnet Council's and Harrow Council's capital contribution confirmation, approve the business case to carry out capital works to expand the public mortuary capacity for a cost of £2.63m.

(4) Subject to Barnet Council's and Harrow Council's capital contribution confirmation, note Brent Council's contribution towards the total project budget is £900,621.

(5) Subject to Barnet Council's and Harrow Council's capital contribution confirmation, approve the use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy to fund Brent Council's contribution as detailed in (4) above.

(6) To approve the delegation of authority to the Corporate Director, Resident Services, in consultation with the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources to amend the project business case should either Barnet Council and/or Harrow Council not receive their respective approvals to contribute towards the cost of the project as set out in this report.

(7) To approve the delegation of authority to enter into the new lease with the NHS to the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources, in consultation with the Corporate Director, Resident Services and Lead Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action should the new lease exceed the Corporate Director's current approval levels as set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, paragraph 11.

11. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

12. Any other urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 10.26 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair

Brent	**Cabinet** 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
	Lead Member - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)

Budget and Council Tax 2024/25

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	23 – See list attached
Background Papers:	Draft Budget 2024/25, Cabinet 16 November 2023
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Minesh Patel Corporate Director of Finance and Resources 020 8937 6528 Email: Minesh.Patel@brent.gov.uk Rav Jassar Deputy Director of Finance 020 8937 1486 Email: Ravinder.Jassar@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26. It also sets out the results of the statutory processes of consultation, scrutiny and equalities analyses. Following consideration by Cabinet on 5 February 2024 these proposals now form the basis of the budget to be agreed by Full Council on 29 February 2024. The report also sets out the overall financial position facing the Council for the medium term and highlights the significant risks, issues and uncertainties.

1.2. Reports on the budget position have been brought to Cabinet throughout the year, most recently in July and November 2023. In January 2024 Cabinet also received the Quarter 3 forecast position for 2023/24, which set out significant in year pressures within the Housing service, resulting in an expected overspend of over £13m. A number of actions were taken to mitigate these pressures, including the creation of a Budget Assurance Panel and the introduction of spending controls to reduce reliance on temporary staff and avoid non-essential expenditure.

1.3. In February 2023, Council agreed the budget for 2023/24, which included £18m of savings, with £4.5m to be delivered in 2024/25. It was estimated in November 2023 that a further £8m of savings would be required in 2024/25 and 2025/26, profiled £3.6m in 2024/25 and £4.4m in 2025/26. As a result, the total estimated savings requirement as of the draft budget in November 2023 was £8.1m in 2024/25 and £4.4m in 2025/26.

1.4. Brent has delivered total cumulative savings of £210m since 2010, and it is clear that over the remainder of the Spending Review period into 2024/25 further savings will be required. The lack of clarity about the future of local government financing makes it hard to be precise about future financial targets, but the estimated savings requirement was calculated to ensure that the Council can set a balanced budget in 2024/25 and 2025/26, within the current MTFS assumptions.

1.5. The provisional local government finance settlement increased core spending power for Brent by 5%, including an increase to the 'referendum limit' for Council Tax to 4.99% (where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care). Like last year, the Government's financing assumption is that all Councils would act on this. The decision on Council Tax will be taken by Full Council, but the budget has been constructed on the basis of a 4.99% rise in the Brent element of Council Tax, which is consistent with the previous position of increasing Council Tax by the maximum amount allowable under the legislation. In addition, this is based on taking into account the rising inflationary pressures that the Council is subject to, the financial position in the round, the need to protect frontline services such as social care and homelessness and the results of consultation through Brent Connects and other meetings held by the date of despatch of this report. Further details regarding decisions on Council Tax, including support for residents that are financially vulnerable, are set out in section six of this report.

1.6. The Mayor of London has announced plans for an increase in his precept of 8.6% (slightly different rules on the limits for the Greater London Authority (GLA) apply due to its role as the police authority) making the overall increase in Council Tax 5.8%. This equates to £2,036.05 at Band D, or the equivalent of £39.15 per week, and the overall increase equates to £2.15 per week.

1.7. The provisional settlement for Brent was below the national and London averages and 1.7% below the September rate of CPI. Therefore, unlike in previous years, the settlement did not provide any additional resources and could have resulted in the need for additional savings proposals. However, due to the prudent approach taken to producing the draft budget in advance of the

settlement, the savings requirement for 2024/25 remains the same as proposed in the draft budget in November 2023.

1.8. However, this settlement also continued to defer many of the spending cuts that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had set out as necessary in his Autumn Statement to return the nation's finances to a sustainable position over the medium term. Therefore, it remains likely that further savings will be required from 2025/26 onwards and this will be kept under review and reported to Cabinet throughout 2024/25. Further details on the changes to the budget development process since the draft budget are set out in sections five and six of this report.

1.9. Given the significant financial uncertainties that have been highlighted throughout this process, this is a balanced and proportionate approach to the demanding choices that must be confronted in budget setting. 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 due to War in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East, high levels of inflation, labour shortages, rising interest rates, the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on residents and businesses in the borough and demographic changes. 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.

1.10. Agreeing the proposals in this report will enable the Council to set a balanced budget in 2024/25 in accordance with its statutory obligations and consistent with the Borough Plan (2023-2027). The plan focuses on how the Council will take forward delivery in the five priority areas being of fundamental importance to Brent and its people:

- Prosperity, Pride and Belonging
- A Cleaner, Greener Future
- Respect and Renewal in Brent
- The Best Start in Life
- A Healthier Brent

1.11. As is customary during the budget setting process, the MTFS will need to ensure it provides a framework to enable and support the delivery of these programmes.

1.12. Aside from the updating of and adjustments to various technical assumptions the key features of this budget are:

- A Council Tax rise of 4.99% for the Brent element, making a Band D Council Tax of £1,564.65. Additionally, the Council will levy a Council Tax precept currently expected to be £471.40 at Band D on behalf of the GLA. Therefore, the total Council Tax at Band D is expected to be £2,036.05, which is an overall increase of 5.8%.
- New budget savings proposals with an aggregate value of £8m, with £3.6m to be delivered in 2024/25 and £4.4m in 2025/26, as set out in

Appendix C (ii). This is an addition to the £4.5m of existing savings for 2024/25 agreed Full Council in February 2023 and set out in Appendix C (i).

1.13 This report is structured as follows:

- Officer recommendations for Cabinet and Full Council to approve;
- Foreword from the lead Cabinet member;
- Strategic overview of the financial and macro-economic climate;
- Summary of the processes taken to develop the budget;
- Update on the 2024/25 revenue budget and review of the key budget assumptions;
- The results of consultation, scrutiny and equalities are set out;
- Updates from the Council's ring fenced budgets, specifically the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG);
- The capital programme is set out, along with the associated capital strategy, investment strategy and treasury management strategy.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

Cabinet

2.1. Agree 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.

2.2. Agree to recommend to Full Council the General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25, as summarised in Appendices A and B.

2.3. Agree to recommend to Full Council the savings proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26, as set out in Appendices C (i) and C (ii).

2.4. Note the Equalities Impact Assessments on the budget proposals, as set out in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv).

2.5. Note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in Appendix D.

2.6. Agree to recommend to Full Council the HRA budget and business plan for 2024/25, as set out in section eight and appendix Q of this report.

2.7. Agree the HRA rents for council dwellings, tenant service charges and garages as set out in section eight of this report.

2.8. 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 this report.

2.9. Note the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of this report.

2.10. Agree 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 of this report and Appendix E, and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix F.

2.11. Agree 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.

2.12. 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.

2.13. Agree to recommend to Full Council the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendices K (i) and K (ii).

2.14. Agree the action plan to implement CIPFA's Financial Management Code and conduct a Financial Resilience Assessment, as set out in Appendix L.

2.15. Agree, and where relevant agree to recommend to Full Council, the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix M.

2.16. Note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section seven and detailed in Appendices N (i) and N (ii).

2.17. Note the legal advice from the Corporate Director of Governance, as set out in Appendix O.

2.18. 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 this report.

Full Council

2.19. Agree 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.

2.20. Agree the General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25, as summarised in Appendices A and B.

2.21. Agree the savings proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26, as set out in Appendices C (i) and C (ii).

2.22. Note the Equalities Impact Assessments on the budget proposals, as set out in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv).

2.23. Note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in Appendix D.

2.24. Note and agree inclusion of the HRA budget and business plan in the overall Council budget for 2024/25 as set out in section eight and appendix Q of this report.

2.25. Agree the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of this report.

2.26. Agree the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new schemes and reprofiling, as set out in section 11 of this report and Appendix E, and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix F.

2.27. Agree 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.

2.28. 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 11.40.

2.29. Agree the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendices K (i) and K (ii).

2.30. Note the action plan to implement CIPFA's Financial Management Code and conduct a Financial Resilience Assessment, as set out in Appendix L.

2.31. Agree the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix M.

2.32. Note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section seven and detailed in Appendices N (i) and N(ii).

2.33. Note the legal advice from the Corporate Director of Governance, as set out in Appendix O.

2.34. Agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix P.

Council Tax recommendations

2.35. In relation to the Council Tax for 2024/25 we resolve:

That the following amounts be now calculated as the Council's element by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

(a) £1,091,619,573 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.

(b) £929,557,820 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

(c) £162,061,753 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the

Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.

(d) £1,564.65 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 103,577, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 11 December 2023, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C		D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£		£	£	£	£	£
1,043.10	1,216.95	1,390.80		1,564.65	1,912.35	2,260.05	2,607.75	3,129.30

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

2.36. That it be noted that for the year 2024/25 the proposed GLA precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the GLA, for each of the categories of dwellings are as shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
314.27	366.64	419.02	471.40	576.16	680.91	785.67	942.80

2.37. That, having calculated the aggregate of the amounts at paragraph 2.35(e) and 2.36, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2024/25 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,357.37	1,583.59	1,809.82	2,036.05	2,488.51	2,940.96	3,393.42	4,072.10

2.38. That it be noted that the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources has determined that the Council element of the basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(a) That the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources be and is hereby authorised to give due notice of the said Council Tax in the manner provided by Section 38(2) of the 1992 Act.

(b) That the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources be and is hereby authorised when necessary to apply for a summons against any Council Taxpayer or non-domestic ratepayer on whom an account for the said tax or rate and any arrears has been duly served and who has failed to pay the amounts due to take all subsequent necessary action to recover them promptly.

(c) That the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources be and is hereby authorised to collect revenues and distribute monies from the Collection Fund and is authorised to borrow or to lend money in accordance with the regulations to the maximum benefit of each fund.

3.0 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1 This report sets out the Council's confirmed budget for 2024/25 following a series of statutory processes of scrutiny, consultation with residents and members, businesses, and other key stakeholders.

3.2 **On top of the £210m of cuts made since 2010, a further £8m is needed between 2024/25 and 2025/26.** It is important from the outset to note that the core funding Brent Council receives from government has decreased by 78% in this same period. This has meant that the funding burden for Brent Council has come principally from Council Tax, Business Rates and Fees and Charges. In other words, local Brent residents.

3.3 The seriousness of the Council's financial position today cannot be understated – with demand for housing, vastly outstripping supply. The picture across the country is grim, with 1 in 5 councils anticipating that they may issue a S.114 notice, effectively ending all spending beyond a bare legal minimum.

3.4 As a Labour administration we have consistently argued that the only limit to our ambition is the golden thread of funding. There is no opposition here to building more council homes, no denial here about the pace of change required to meet the Climate Emergency; nor any refusal to confront the inequalities that the pandemic shone a light on. We must confront reality though – and until a General Election, we will continue to deliver our services within the aftermath of a decade of austerity.

3.5 Brent deserves better than hollowed out public services which have been victim to years of real-term, compound cuts. There is simply no aspect of public

services today that resembles the condition the last Labour government left them in, after years of investment and care. Should the moment come, Brent Council stands ready to renew its public services and build them better than ever, with sustainable long-term financial planning that helps us truly ensure no resident is left behind.

3.6 The evidence of the financial strain on councils has been growing, and since we submitted our budget proposals in November, the Government's provisional settlement for local authorities has provided insufficient funding to meet the severe cost and demand pressures faced by councils of all political colours and types. Councils in London face a £400 million shortfall in funding this year alone, rising to £4 billion across England for this year and next.

3.7 With an expensive adult social care bill as well as soaring levels of homelessness leaving us with a financial pressure worth £13m, balancing our budget and preserving essential services this year has been the hardest task yet. The provisional settlement is particularly poor for Brent. The increase in government support at 5% is the lowest of the London boroughs (excluding the City of London) and is less than the September CPI rate of inflation of 6.7%.

3.8 We have consistently argued that council tax rises have never been the solution to the long-term pressures faced by councils, and yet chronic underfunding leaves councils facing the tough choice about whether to increase council tax bills or face financial instability. The same applies too with Business Rates, which are in dire need of reform in a digital world. As local councillors we are acutely aware of the significant burden any increase places on households and businesses, particularly in a year of economic uncertainty and increased costs.

3.9 Unfortunately, in the words of the Government: ***"At the 2023 to 2024 Settlement, we heard calls from the sector for stability. Now is not the time for fundamental reform****".*

3.10 Local authorities across London know full well that the cost-of-living crisis will not finish in March, and so the Government's decision not to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) beyond March 2024 represents a missed opportunity to provide certainty, both now and for the future, to local authorities and to our most vulnerable residents. The HSF has been a lifeline for many, allowing us to support residents with food and fuel vouchers, grants, and financial support to food aid organisations. We supported over 11,000 families in 2023, as well as investing £32m into our Council Tax Support Scheme with the most substantial programme anywhere in London.

3.11 With the future of the Resident Support Fund, the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, and the HSF in doubt, we must look to new models of support to protect our residents. Reserves can only be spent once and are held to confront unplanned emergencies when they arise. They are not a solution to the long-term financial pressures that councils face, nor is the Government suggestion of a fire sale of public assets.

3.12 This is the sixth one-year settlement in a row for Brent Council, which continues to hamper our financial planning. The Council will continue to fight for long-term resources and certainty – including a multi-year settlement – alongside our sustained efforts to deliver a balanced budget, safeguard frontline services, and ensure no one in our borough is left behind.

3.13 I would like to pay tribute to all those that have shaped the report today; be that at consultation, or through our Brent Connects forums, we value every piece of feedback we receive. Lastly, I'd like to thank the Finance Team and the officers behind this report, without your continued care and stewardship of this council's finance, this authority would not have met the challenges we face today and in the future.

4.0 Strategic Overview

Financial Context

4.1 In February 2023, Council agreed the budget for 2023/24 which included £18m of savings, profiled £13.5m in 2023/24 and £4.5m in 2024/25. In July 2023, Cabinet received an update to the MTFS and as a result of demand and inflationary pressures a budget gap of £8m was identified between 2024/25 and 2025/26. These savings will be in addition to the £210m removed from the Council's budget since 2010 as a result of significant reductions in government funding and the challenges posed by new legislation, at a time when demand for key services is rising. In October 2023 Cabinet received the Quarter 2 forecast position for 2023/24, which set out significant in year pressures within the Housing Service. High levels of demand due to a rise in homelessness and reduction in supply of suitable accommodation are expected to result in an overspend of over £13m.

4.2 A number of immediate and medium-term actions were taken to mitigate these pressures in order to maintain financial control over the current budget position, including the creation of a Budget Assurance Panel to provide additional oversight and scrutiny of its financial position and the imposition of a number of spending controls to provide more assurance over the Council's expenditure decisions and reduce the risk that the budget position deteriorates further. Cabinet received the Quarter 3 report in January 2024, which shows that despite increasing demand and cost pressures the situation has not got worse but further enhanced spending controls are needed to pull the budget back into a balanced position.

4.3 In November 2023 Cabinet received a report which set out a series of new savings proposals totalling £8m which, if approved following consultation and scrutiny, would be implemented in 2024/25 and 2025/26. These proposals, and the budget assumptions set out in this report, will enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26. The savings proposals are summarised in Appendices C (ii) and C (iii) with their associated equalities impact assessments in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv).

Current financial position

Uncertain Economic Environment

4.4 War in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East, high levels of inflation, labour shortages and rising interest rates present the Council with a volatile and uncertain economic environment. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis will impact the residents of Brent and the Council is committed to doing what it can to support those in greatest need. Service demand continues to rise due to demographic changes which affect all age groups and inflationary pressures are causing providers to raise their prices, which impacts the Council as a whole, with particular pressures on adults' and children's social care and the homelessness budgets.

Inflation

4.5 Inflation peaked in October 2022 at 11.1% on the CPI measure and is currently (December 2023) at 4.0%. The Bank of England (BoE) expect inflation to continue to fall, but not to return to its target level of 2% until the end of 2025. RPI, which is often used as the basis for indexation in contracts, peaked at 16.4% in October 2022 and currently (December 2023) stands at 5.2%. It is worth noting that at the time of setting the 2023/24 budget the Bank of England was forecasting that inflation would fall to its target rate of 2% by January 2024. In fact, inflation has not fallen by such a large amount, and this is a contributory factor to the overspend reported in the Quarter 3 report.

4.6 The inflation rates in September 2023 were 6.7% (CPI) and 8.9% (RPI). The September inflation figures are important as they are used for the uprating of much central government expenditure including pensions (under the triple lock) and other welfare payments. The local government finance settlement sets out the government's assumptions on the level of resources available to local government, which it terms Core Spending Power (CSP). The government has uprated local government resources by the September CPI figure and this increase applies to government grants. Business rates for standard rate payers will increase by the 6.7% September CPI figure, but small businesses whose rateable value is less than £51,000 will benefit from a freeze in their business rates, with the government paying the Council compensation for the increase foregone as a result. 2024/25 is the first year that the government has applied different business rate increases to standard and small business rate payers.

Interest Rates

4.7 Having remained at 1% or less since February 2009, interest rates have been rising steadily as the BOE attempts to quell inflation which remains significantly above the BOE's official target of 2%. In December 2023 the BOE decided to keep the base rate unchanged at 5.25%. The latest Monetary Policy report says rates are expected to remain around 5.25% until Q3 2024 and then decline gradually to 4.25% by the end of 2026. Some forecasters predict a swifter cut in base rate to around 3% by late 2025. There is no expectation that interest rates will return to anywhere near 1% in the foreseeable future.

4.8 For the Council, this translates into higher costs of borrowing which in turn will have an adverse impact on the capital programme. For Brent residents, high interest rates will adversely affect the holders of existing mortgages and first-time buyers alike.

Cost-of-Living Crisis

4.9 Since late 2021, the UK has experienced a rise in the costs of living for individuals and businesses. For many Brent residents, this means having to make difficult decisions on how they spend their income, which can have a negative impact on their standard of living.

4.10 In previous years the Council provided various initiatives aimed at supporting residents who may be struggling and enabling Brent and partner organisations to best respond to local needs. These included the Brent Resident Support Fund (RSF), Family Food Fund, Council Tax Support (CTS) and Brent Hubs. In addition, the government provided additional support via the Household Support Fund (HSF).

Financial Support

- The **Brent Resident Support Fund (RSF)** has been in place since August 2020. In the period August 2020 to December 2023, RSF has supported 10,087 households with a total of £14.5 million.

- **Council Tax Support** (CTS): 25,951 households are supported through CTS of which 17,451 are working age and 8,500 are pension age. Pension age residents are entitled to full Council Tax support depending on their income, savings and household composition. The total support given to households is around £32m per annum.

- **Brent Hubs** have supported 3,426 residents with food and fuel needs through referrals to food banks. Brent Hubs have also continued to provide emergency fuel and food support through supermarket and fuel vouchers with over 375 residents receiving on average a £40 voucher.

- Brent received £5.6m of **Household Support Fund** (HSF) in 2023/24. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2023, the **HSF** provided 18,291 households with a total of £5.2m. There is no further support being provided by the government in 2024/25.

- In 2023/24, £1m has also been made available in the form of the **Family Food Fund**, which has supported 1,828 residents. This was a one-off funding which will not be available in 2024/25.

4.11 The Government is no longer providing support to residents via the Household Support Fund in 2024/25 and the poor local government finance settlement for Brent means that the Council has had to reduce the level of support available in 2024/25. As a result, a new model of support for Brent residents has been developed through the piloting of Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR)

projects and guided by a series of Design Principles. Details of the new proposal are set out in a report on the same agenda. In summary the report proposes a single, joined-up model including development of a Community Wellbeing Programme aligned with a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), designed to support residents to be more resilient in the longer term and align more closely with strategic priorities and related projects. £1m of recurring funding has been allocated in the MTFS to support this new model.

Local Government Finance Settlement (18 December 2023)

4.12 The 2024/25 settlement is the sixth annual one-year settlement for local government and continues the trend of the last 13 years of real terms cuts to funding. One-year settlements are necessary when there is only a single year's funding remaining within the horizon of the most recent Spending Review, or there is uncertainty over the policy framework for future years. Certainly, there has been for some time, disruption in government which inhibits longer term thinking. But the consequences for local government are significant in terms of short-term planning and obstacles to much-needed service transformation.

4.13 Ministers have said they have delivered an above-inflation increase in councils' Core Spending Power next year with an increase of 6.5% in cash terms.

4.14 The broad policy approach for the settlement is once again four-fold:

- a uniform roll-over for the core elements of the settlement, preserving current distributions, and continuation of other features (such as enhanced business rates retention in some areas, and support to eliminate so-called 'negative Revenue Support Grant')

- extra funding for priority services, namely Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care (announced in the Autumn Statement 2022)

- striking a balance between raising resources locally for funding pressures and protecting local taxpayers, through council tax referendum principles

- a further one-off funding guarantee, which acts as a fallback to ensure that all councils see a minimum 3% increase in their Core Spending Power before they take decisions on council tax levels.

4.15 The declared aim is stability for budgeting purposes (which in turn requires a delay to all significant policy changes). There are no new resources for service provision, arising from the 2023 Autumn Statement and any nominal increase in funding available to the Council is predicated on the Council raising its council tax by the referendum limit of 2.99% and levying an adult social care precept of 2%.

4.16 The provisional settlement is particularly poor for Brent. The increase in government support at 5% is the lowest of the London boroughs (excluding the City of London) and less than the September CPI rate of inflation of 6.7% used as the basis for uprating most grants. While the government recognises in the

Index of Multiple Deprivation that Brent has higher levels of deprivation than many authorities, Brent's increase in Core Spending Power is 1.5% less than the national average of 6.5% and also less than the London average of 6.3%. Indeed, the settlement is so poor for Brent that the government has had to make a Guaranteed Funding payment to keep the total value of the settlement at this safety net level.

4.17 Viewed in the round, the Council has a total level of increase that is little different to the MTFS position, which was cautious. The headline cash increase of 5% is low compared to the rest of the country (6.5%) and London (6.4%). Inflation was 6.7% in September 2023, where the indexation on most of our contracts are based upon, so this settlement represents a real terms cut in resources.

4.18 Last year's settlement offered some certainty for 2024/25 on elements of the overall package. But there was continuing uncertainty on, for example, the future of New Homes Bonus (long overdue for decision and only confirmed for one year in the recent policy statement) and the future of the Services Grant. Overall, the forward look for 2024/25 fell short of a funding guarantee backed by indicative allocations.

4.19 Other than changes to the overall allowance for inflation, no additional funding has been provided in the settlement to tackle issues such as homelessness which are causing significant overspending. None of the funding in the settlement is available to address the current forecast overspend in this area of £13m, which looks set to continue in the new financial year.

4.20 According to IFS calculations, current OBR figures suggest real terms growth in public expenditure budgets of 0.9% over the period 2024/25 to 2028/29. Once the requirements for protected budgets are factored in, this suggests a 1.8% real terms cut in unprotected budgets (such as for local government) over the same period. If inflation is around 2%, this is effectively a series of flat-cash settlements. So, if current plans are sustained, resources will be very tight.

4.21 The timing of the general election this year and the Spending Review which will likely follow, suggest that there may well be at least one further one-year settlement in 2025/26.

4.22 Since the provisional settlement does not provide adequate funding to cover inflationary pressures and offers no new funding to tackle persistent pressures in homelessness, the Council will be under pressure to continue to realise its planned savings whilst taking action to curb its expenditure in order to maintain a balanced budget.

4.23 At this stage, no changes to the draft budget are required as a result of the settlement and the final budget will be presented to Cabinet on 5 February 2024 and then Full Council on 29 February 2024.

4.24 On 24 January 2024, the Government unexpectedly announced a further £600m of funding for local government. £500m of this relates to Social Care Grant for adults' and children's social care – the Council expects to receive

£2.8m of this. The Council is also anticipating a further £0.6m of Guaranteed Funding payments as the Government has raised the guarantee from 3% to 4%. The Council will utilise the additional funding to manage budget pressures as they materialise in 2024/25. This funding is considered one off and therefore does not require a change to the budget assumptions as a result of this announcement. At the date of despatch of this report, the Final Local Government Finance Settlement has yet to be released and these figures are therefore subject to change.

5.0 Budget Development Process 2024/25

5.1 The budget development process for the Council to set its budget and council tax for 2024/25 was as follows:

- Meetings involving Cabinet and Corporate Management Team members to consider the key service and budget issues likely to affect the council in future years;

- Development of budget proposals by officers and relevant Lead Members for individual services within the context of the Borough Plan and the overall resources available;

- Development of the budget approach, based on the updated medium term financial outlook, which was considered by the Cabinet on 16 November 2023;

- The publication of a detailed list of savings proposals at Cabinet in November 2023 for the purposes of consultation, scrutiny and equality analyses;

- Debates through the Budget Scrutiny Task Group of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee;

- Presentations and question and answer sessions at virtual Brent Connects meetings;

- Review of the schools budgets by the Schools Forum;

- Considering feedback from residents, businesses and other key stakeholders, whether received from the online consultation portal or other direct representations; and

- Conducting individual equality impact assessments (Appendix C (iii)) on the budget proposals and a cumulative equality impact assessment (Appendix C (iv)) on the overall budget in order to ensure that the consequences of the budget proposals were properly understood.

5.2 This report updates the position on the core estimates that drive the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions, including the outcome of the final settlement and the consultation, scrutiny and equalities analyses processes.

6.0 Update and Review of Key Budget Assumptions

6.1 The 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement provided details of the core funding allocations for local authorities in 2024/25. The settlement is another one-year settlement, which does not help medium term planning, but there is sufficient information to produce a high-level forecast of government funding in 2025/26. The settlement confirmed the funding announced in the Autumn Statement and the Local Government finance policy statement 2024 to 2025. The key headlines that are relevant for Brent from a budget setting point of view are set out below.

Revenue support grant (RSG) and other relevant grants

6.2 RSG for 2024/25 is £30.89m an increase of 6.62% from the 2023/24 level. This is in line with the September CPI inflation figure.

6.3 Existing allocation methodologies have continued for adult social care funding. For Brent, this includes £13.34m Improved Better Care Fund – fixed at that level since 2022/23 and £29.21m Social Care Grant – an increase of £6.87m (31%). The ASC precept remains 2% - this is intended to provide £3.1m of recurring funding for social care.

6.4 For the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF), Brent's allocation is £5.88m – a £2.73m increase. This arises from a combination of inflation on the existing MSIF grant and the incorporation into MSIF of the workforce grant, which was not previously part of the core spending power grants. As these grants are ring-fenced and must be passed to the service, there is no impact on the MTFS.

6.5 Brent's allocation of Adult Social Care Discharge Grant is £3.12m – an increase of £1.25m. This grant is ringfenced for use on interventions that best enable the discharge of patients from hospital to the most appropriate location for their ongoing care.

6.6 There is no new funding for children's social care or homelessness.

6.7 For other grants there is a 6.7% increase in line with the September 2023 CPI inflation rate. This is therefore not new money, but funding needed to address rising costs across the Council.

6.8 The New Homes Bonus allocation has fallen from £7.91m in 2023/24 to £2.91m in 2024/25. This is a loss of £5m of funds that would otherwise have been used to fund part of the capital programme, specifically the supply of new homes for the provision of temporary accommodation. This reduction is the largest reduction by value in London and is due to the timing of when properties are completed. The large payment in 2023/24 was due to a large backlog of properties that occurred during COVID-19 that were completed in 2022/23.

6.9 Brent will receive a number of one-off grants totalling £1.9m. These include a Guaranteed Funding Payment of £1.34m, which ensures authorities receive a

minimum 4% increase in funding (before council tax decisions) - the significant reduction in the NHB grant is the main driver in requiring this safety net payment – and Service Grant of £0.56m, down 84% on the 2024/25 allocation. At the date of despatch of this report, the Final Local Government Finance Settlement has yet to be released and this particular grant is therefore subject to change.

Council Tax

6.10 The settlement confirmed that Local Authorities will be able to increase Council Tax in 2024/25 by up to 2.99% without a local referendum. In addition, local authorities will be able to levy a 2% adult social care precept. This will provide total recurring funding of £11.3m, of which £3.6m relates to the increase in the tax base and £7.7m relates to the increase in council tax including the adult social care precept.

6.11 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. However, the increase would permanently increase the council tax base income and it would also help to reduce the significant funding pressures in 2024/25 and beyond. Taking into account the unprecedented pressures within social care and the financial position in the round, the recommendation of this report is that the budget should be constructed on the basis of a Council Tax increase of 4.99% in 2024/25.

6.12 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 scheme, which provides over £32m of support for around 26,000 households who are financially vulnerable. In addition, the Council's Resident Support Fund has made available funds for residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

6.13 Since the draft budget was presented to Cabinet in November 2023, a review of collection rates was undertaken as part of the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25, agreed at General Purposes Committee on 11 December 2023. This review determined that the long-term collection rate was still below the Medium Term Financial Strategy target rate of 97.5% and that the cost-of-living crisis is likely to continue to have an impact on collection of Council Tax. The target was due to revert to its previous level in 2024/25 following the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and return to normal debt recovery action. On the basis that this will be kept under review and an update provided to Cabinet in the July 2024 update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, it was considered reasonable at this stage to continue with the assumed increase to the long-term collection rate, whilst acknowledging that this represents a risk with the cost-of-living crisis ongoing. All other budget assumptions for Council Tax remain unchanged from those presented as part of the draft budget.

6.14 Each financial year, the Mayor and London Assembly must prepare and approve a budget for each of the constituent bodies and a consolidated budget for the authority as a whole. At the date of despatch of this report, the Mayor has proposed to increase the GLA precept by 8.6% to £471.40 per Band D property in the 32 London Boroughs. The increase includes a bespoke additional £20 requested by the Mayor of London, and approved by Central Government, to fund TfL services. This would mean that the overall Council Tax would increase by 5.8%.

6.15 These figures are subject to change following the consultation process and confirmation of London Boroughs' tax bases. The final GLA budget will be considered by the London Assembly on 22 February 2024.

Business Rates

Baseline Funding Level

6.16 The Government sets the share of business rates funding that the Council will receive at the Baseline Funding Level (BFL). Under this arrangement, Brent is allowed to keep its share of the business rates that it collects and in addition receives a top up from the national business rates pool to bring funding to the BFL level. In the Local Government Finance Settlement, the BFL for Brent was increased by 4.7% to £95.9m.

Business Rates Multiplier

6.17 In accordance with the regulations, the business rates multiplier should increase by CPI, which was 6.7% in September 2023. The government can however choose to freeze the multiplier. When it does this, it compensates local authorities for the income foregone. As in previous years, the Government has decided to freeze the Small Business Rates Multiplier at 49.9p to protect small businesses from the impact of inflation. However, following changes introduced in the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023, the Standard Business Rates Multiplier has been decoupled from the Small Business Rates Multiplier and is now indexed separately. For 2024/25, the Government decided to increase the Standard Business Rates Multiplier by CPI to 54.6p. The Standard Business Rates Multiplier applies to rateable values of £51,000 or more. In 2024/25 the Government will once again provide an additional grant to compensate for the income lost due to the under-indexation of the multipliers both in 2024/25 and for previous years. This takes the total funding received by Brent under the business rates retention system to £114.2m, a 6.5% increase on 2023/24.

Pooling

6.18 The Government has allowed Local Authorities with a geographic link to form a business rates pool. Brent is part of the Eight Authority Business Rates Pool (comprising the City of London Corporation as well as Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Haringey, Waltham Forest, Brent, Barnet and Enfield) and the settlement confirms that this arrangement will continue. In forming a pool, the group of authorities are seen as a single entity from a business rates perspective and as

a result benefit from retaining and sharing the levy which the City of London and Tower Hamlets would otherwise have to pay. There will continue to be benefits from the pooling arrangement but the amount for 2024/25 will not be known until the statutory returns for all eight authorities have been audited. Final settlement of the pooling benefits will therefore be received in 2025/26 at the earliest. Brent's share of the benefits will be transferred to the general fund with the other business rates income.

Revaluation

6.19 Since 1 April 2023, liabilities for business rates are based on the rateable value of properties on 1 April 2021. This revaluation was the first to take place since 2017 and resulted in either an increase or decrease to the business rates bills for individual businesses in line with the change in the open market annual rental value of the property between 2015 and 2021. The sector with the largest increase in rateable value overall in Brent was the industrial sector, with smaller increases for the retail, office and other sectors. Within each sector, some rateable values will have increased, while others decreased. In 2024/25, some businesses will see further increases to bills as transitional relief provided to reduce the impact of the change to the rateable value is reduced. Following the introduction of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023, future revaluations will take place every three years, with the next scheduled for April 2026.

6.20 Bills will also take into account any other reliefs that a property is eligible for, such as small business rates relief, ensuring that individual businesses are not disproportionately affected by changes to their rateable value.

6.21 Under the business rates retention system, revaluations have a nil impact on the funding received by the Council as the government adjusts the amount receivable by the Council to its Baseline Funding Level. The revaluation can impact on the levy calculation and therefore, changes to levies would be payable within the Eight Authority Business Rates Pool could result in an increase or decrease to the benefit that is generated from the pooling arrangement.

Departmental pressures

6.22 Managing ongoing demand-led pressures remains a key aspect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The existing annual growth assumptions are in fact estimated increases in unavoidable expenditure. Those built into the MTFS cover areas such as contract inflation, pay inflation and demographics (by which is meant meeting the cost of providing existing services for a growing and changing population). These expenditure assumptions represent the annual costs that have to be incurred just to stand still.

6.23 As the two areas most affected by the changes in demography and increasing contractual costs, the Care, Health and Wellbeing and Children and Young People's departments undertook scenario and sensitivity analysis of the effects of different levels of inflation and demographic change. This determined a central case (that is a position between possible best and worst cases), which

has been used as the basis of the contract inflation and demographic changes in these areas.

6.24 There are also considerable pressures in other areas. The unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation is putting considerable pressure on the budget for Residents Services. Concessionary fares are also experiencing substantial increases as usage in London returns to pre-pandemic levels. As the largest contributor to the Freedom Pass scheme, Brent faces a substantial increase in cost with the contribution forecast to rise by £3.6m (34%) in 2024/25. Concessionary fares are part of the Care, Health and Wellbeing budget.

A summary of these growth and cost pressures are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Growth / Cost Pressures

GROWTH		
	2024/25	**2026/26**
Categories	**£000s**	**£000s**
Demographics - CHW	3,608	3,677
Demographics - CYP	1,080	1,651
Demographics - Other (inc. Housing)	900	1,000
	5,589	**6,327**
Inflation - CHW	3,397	2,438
Inflation - CYP	1,506	1,035
Inflation - Other (inc. Housing)	1,455	914
	6,358	**4,386**
Pay	6,500	3,500
Service Changes	14,210	6,486
Grand Total	**32,656**	**20,700**

6.25 The Service Changes heading include increases for concessionary fares, homelessness, capital financing as well as hospital discharges (funded by additional grant) and amounts set side as contingency and for future funding risks.

6.26 The budget for next year is very different to previous years in that directorates will be required to control expenditure within their areas, without seeking additional growth from central budgets when risks or issues emerge that are not already recognised within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Therefore, it is paramount to ensure that all directorates have adequate plans in place for any expected pressures and significant risks.

6.27 It appears that many other London boroughs have not provided budget growth to services in 2023/24 in an attempt to maintain resources and inevitably those services have overspent as they did not have robust plans in place to prevent this. Therefore, the Council needs to have strong plans in place to address the risks facing each service. The following sections set out the pressures,

mitigations and risks expected in 2024/25, as well as medium to long term pressures and mitigations, for each service area.

6.28 The following sections provide commentary on the service pressures and other challenges faced by each department.

Summary of Service Area Pressures

Resident Services

Homelessness

6.29 Homelessness is a significant issue nationally with housing demand increasing rapidly and less supply available, which quickly widens the budget gap. The increase in demand for B&B, Annexes and Emergency Homeless Lets (EHL) is forecast to result in a significant budgetary pressure in 2023/24, which is expected to remain in the coming years. The Housing Needs Service in Brent has seen a 38% increase in a number of homelessness presentation. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic, associated lockdowns and the ban on Private Rented Sector (PRS) evictions may have been a factor in this growth, demand for homelessness services continues to grow. If demand continues at the same rate, the service will receive a total of 8,200 applications per year, an average of 158 applications every week.

6.30 London Councils share some analysis and benchmarking of peers that helps to gauge a position across London. They revealed that Housing pressures are increasing rapidly compared to budgeted levels and that on average Boroughs are projecting to overspend their budgets by 49%. Across London, total number of homelessness presentations has increased by 24%, whilst total number of residents owed a prevention or relief duty has gone up by 15%. A total number of households in temporary accommodation has increased by 13% and a total number of families in Bed and Breakfast hotels rose by 443%.

6.31 Once the Council accepts that a household is eligible as homeless, as defined by legislation, the Relief Duty to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that accommodation becomes available for at least six months is triggered. If the applicant is also deemed to be in priority need, as defined by legislation, there is an immediate statutory duty to secure suitable interim accommodation, pending further enquiries into the application.

6.32 As these issues are London wide, the availability of B&B and Annexe accommodation is severely restricted across the capital, with many Councils being forced to book rooms in commercial hotels to meet statutory duties. This lack of availability of accommodation is resulting in having to use expensive providers and at times outside of Brent, which also causes significant financial pressures to the families placed there due to additional travel costs for children at schools in Brent.

6.33 The supply of settled TA properties, leased from private owners and used to move families out of B&B and Annexe accommodation has also contracted. This

is due to fewer new properties being procured under Private Sector Leasing (PSL) schemes, and owners not renewing the lease for existing stock, when the lease ends.

6.34 London Councils' findings suggest that London's PRS (Private Rented Sector) is affected by multiple factors driving a reduction in the availability of properties for rent. The demand for housing is continuing to increase while supply is reducing across the whole market. Greater reliance on the PRS to house lower income households and increasingly limited housing benefits are making accommodation less affordable and available. It appears to be supply side factors notably taxation, interest rate changes and uncertainties about future regulation that are reducing availability at the lower end of the PRS.

6.35 The type of accommodation provided as TA also has a bearing on entitlement to housing benefit subsidy for the payments made. Where a family occupies more than one room in a hotel and those rooms are not connected only one room will be eligible for subsidy. Depending on whether the accommodation is self-contained (exclusive use of a kitchen, bathroom and toilet) or non-self-contain (one or more facilities is shared), there is a cap on the subsidy entitlement based on the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Payments above the LHA cap are ineligible for HB subsidy.

6.36 The loss of subsidy cost is forecast to rise to £8.9m in 2023/24 (from £3.7m in 2022/23) as rents increase but the LHA remains unchanged at its current level. Benefits paid to those living in TA is limited to 90% of the 2011 LHA rates which, particularly since the pandemic, is significantly less than rents being charged by most private sector landlords today. The subsidy loss is expected to remain high in coming years due to the high level of demand and insufficient supply.

6.37 The government has initially launched a technical consultation seeking views on the approach to the funding arrangements and conditions for the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This has been postponed and 2024/25 allocation has been confirmed to be £7.6m, a 3.6% increase when compared to 2023/24.

Energy

6.38 Volatilities in the energy market are being closely monitored but this is one of the risk areas for the department. For 2023/24, energy costs are currently forecast to be lower than initially feared and are expected to be contained within the allocated budget, however this risk remains for 2024/25.

6.39 Higher utility costs are also impacting operations of leisure centres, which means that a risk of provider failure is increasing. Supporting operators by subsidising their operating costs would create budgetary pressures for the Council and closing sites would also have a significant impact on both communities and income levels. The Council is working closely with the leisure providers to ensure continuity of the affordable service and will continue to monitor its position for 2024/25.

Transport Services

6.40 The provision of sufficient special needs home to school transport is the Council's statutory obligation and Brent Transport Service continues to experience annual net growth in passenger numbers leading to an increase in cost of service delivery. Rising demand linked to the increase in the EHCPs (Educational, Health and Care Plans), as well as prices on taxi routes put considerable pressure on the budget. This obligation is recognised in the MTFS and growth is built in based on prior years' trends and demography forecasts. The service continues to monitor the demand projections and considers mitigations to reduce the impact if necessary, such as commissioning detailed service reviews, route optimisation and alternative means of transport.

Children and Young People (CYP)

6.41 Nationally, pressures faced by CYP departments based on information collated by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) in the summer of 2023 included; increasing pressure on budgets following the pandemic; rising need and complexity of need; challenges in the placement market; workforce challenges; increasing costs in line with the cost of living crisis and rising inflation; rising number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) underfunding of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children care leaver cohorts, and the impact of the changes to the supported accommodation new regulatory regime.

6.42 The challenges faced by the CYP department are largely in line with the national picture and over the past few years the overspends in the department have arisen from rising demand due to the volatility of placement costs; recruitment and retention challenges which has led to a reliance on qualified social worker agency staff and the impact of rising inflation.

6.43 In November 2023, the number of Looked After Children (LAC) was 323 and a challenge remains in Brent that some of the children looked after are older and have needs that are more complex and therefore, are placed in higher cost placements. The current 2023/24 average weekly cost of a residential placement is £6,280, which is £259 higher than the 2022/23 average. In 2023/24, the weekly costs of six residential placements with complex needs, ranged from £10,000 to £14,847. Findings from a survey by the Local Government Association (LGA) in November 2023 showed that nationally, the number of Children's placements costing £10,000 per week or more had risen by 1158% i.e., 120 in 2018/19 compared to 1,510 in 2022/23. The survey also highlighted the most frequent factors driving the high cost of certain placements are a lack of choice in providers, children in care exhibiting challenging behaviours and complex or significant mental health needs.

6.44 Nationally, local authorities continue to struggle to find suitable, local placements and high-cost placements tend to be emergencies and this then leads to private providers charging unjustifiably high prices for placements and making excessive profits. The risk remains that the impact of inflation and the

lack of sufficiency of placements, is likely to see the weekly cost increase further in 2024/25.

6.45 The CYP department also manages the placement costs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) presenting to the borough and the former UASC care leavers represent 35% of the care leaver cohort in Brent who need to be accommodated until the Home Office make a final asylum determination. There is a lack of sufficient funding from the Home Office for this cohort and local authorities are required to manage the shortfalls. Although grant funding is received from the Home Office to mitigate these costs, the funding is not sufficient to cover costs such as specialist age assessment social workers, legal costs, additional personal advisors to manage cases and subsistence costs.

6.46 The national challenge for the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced social work staff remains and has led to a reliance on agency staff in the Localities and Looked After Children & Permanency (LAC&P) teams. Currently across the Localities team, agency staff occupy c33% of the establishment which is a reduction from 44% in 2022/23. This is because of actions such as a weekly Establishment Board created to scrutinise all agency recruitment, corresponding activity to achieve permanency through conversations with agency staff to convert to permanent roles and working in collaboration with neighbouring local authorities on effective and targeted recruitment and retention activity. Caseloads have remained consistently higher than budgeted levels and as of October 2023, there were 2,864 cases managed by the teams which exceeds the budgeted levels of circa 2,500 by 15%. A risk remains if demand continues to grow, this could create added pressures in these areas. Management will continue to monitor the caseload levels and the use of agency staff while continuing the drive to recruit permanent staff.

Care, Health & Wellbeing (CHW)

6.47 Within Adult Social Care, demographic and inflationary pressures, high spend on agency staff, as well as uncertain implications of the fair cost of care and other social care reforms, all pose financial risks to the budget. Whilst the planned social care charging reforms have been delayed from October 2023 to October 2025, the sector must still work to ensure sustainable rates for care are paid with fair cost of care funding from the Government continuing for the next two years.

6.48 Adult Social Care in Brent has already seen rising costs and client numbers in the current year, in particular Supported Living, Nursing and Residential care services. Nursing Care and Supported Living client numbers have both increased by 10% since 2022/23 and average package costs for Residential Dementia Care have increased by 8% at a time when client numbers have grown by 6%.

6.49 Inflation has been higher and is likely to persist longer than originally forecast. Higher inflation has had, and will have, implications for pay. Almost all care workers are paid at, or very close to, the National Living Wage (NLW), or the

London Living Wage (LLW) in London. This means that the labour element will increase in line with the annual increase in the NLW/LLW.

6.50 In 2024/25 the costs of these fee and wage increases plus other financial pressures such as demography and inflation on other adult social care budgets is expected to exceed the extra resources available to adult social care nationally by between £300m and £600m.

6.51 Public Health contracts are also likely to be affected by the rising levels of inflation. The majority of public health services are commissioned from the NHS where the national Agenda for Change pay awards have significantly outstripped uplifts in the public health grant, even before the resolution of industrial disputes.

6.52 Within ASC there has been a challenge with the recruitment and retaining of staff, in particular Qualified Social Workers and Occupational Therapists. This has meant that during 2023/24, 29% of the staffing budget is currently being used to fund agency staff. Work is ongoing to review the agency staff, reducing the number and cost within the department. Without these measures there is a risk to the staffing costs increasing, and that taking a larger percentage of the budget.

Communities and Regeneration

6.53 The highest risk area in Communities and Regeneration is Building Control. Building Control was set a target for income £0.5m higher before the pandemic than they have been able to achieve post-pandemic. In addition, for Building Control there is uncertainty over the impact of the new Building Safety Act which will see a switch to cost recovery basis for some types of works which could limit income. The ongoing economic and regulatory pressures affecting the construction sector are resulting in fewer developments getting to the stage of requiring Building Control approval, leading to an anticipated drop in applications and consequent fee income.

6.54 Beyond Building Control, the directorate is planning to use some of its reserves to maintain service levels in 2024/25. As these reserves start to run out over the next couple of years the directorate will need to either identify new sources of funding or reduce the services it offers. This is a particular challenge in the Regeneration service, which has used one off external funding streams in the past to maintain staffing to help deliver the regeneration of the borough but will need to reduce the level of service provided after 2024/25 if it does not find additional funding.

Overall summary of the budget position

6.55 The main general fund revenue budget for 2024/25 is set out in detail in Appendices A and B. The budget includes £29.8m of growth items and £8m of savings. Provided that the key assumptions set out in this report hold true then expenditure in 2024/25 should be contained within budget. The overall revenue budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 is set out in the table below:

Table 2: Net Revenue Budget

REVENUE BUDGET	2024/25	2025/26
	£m	£m
Service Area Budgets		
Care, Health and Wellbeing	141.5	145.4
Children and Young People	73.4	74.6
Communities and Regeneration	5.5	5.5
Finance and Resources	12.4	14.3
Resident Services	84.3	84.3
Governance	14.3	14.2
Total Service Area Budgets	**331.4**	**338.2**
Central Budgets	55.3	59.2
Total Budget Requirement	**386.7**	**397.4**
Funding		
Business Rates	(114.2)	(117.5)
Revenue Support Grant	(30.9)	(31.8)
Specific Grants	(79.6)	(78.2)
Council Tax	(162.1)	(169.9)
Total Funding	**(386.7)**	**(397.4)**

6.56. At Quarter 3 the Council was forecasting a net overspend of £13m on the general fund budget, arising mainly from pressures on the homelessness budget in Residents Services.

6.57 The Council is anticipating that it will need to fund any shortfall from reserves and that there may be further overspending in 2024/25 on homelessness, which will also be funded from reserves, before homelessness expenditure falls back in line with the current budget. For this reason, there is no need to add in additional growth or to seek additional savings.

6.58 The potential impact has been modelled, with the current assumptions being the central case. The best case would be that management action further reduces the overspend in 2023/24 and results in no further overspend in 2024/25, thus containing the drawn down of reserves to a reduced amount at the end of 2023/24. However, should the current overspending represent the new norm, additional savings would be required in 2025/26 to fund this.

Adequacy of reserves

6.59 Section 25 of Local Government Act 2003 requires the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to report to Council his view of the adequacy of the

reserves and the robustness of the estimates underpinning the budget. To provide context to those assessments, this report provides an overview of macroeconomic context within which the council operates and medium-term economic outlook (section 4), details of the governance (section 5) and scrutiny (section 7) arrangements, and an assessment of compliance with relevant codes and standards (Sections 6.71-6.76).

6.60 As part of the implementation of CIPFA's Financial Management Code, the Council reviewed its approach to reserves. It produced a Reserves Strategy, set out in Appendix K (i), which defines a formal policy to determining the purposes for which reserves will be held and how the amount of those reserves will be calculated. This is closely aligned to the MTFS.

6.61 Whilst reserves are held for a variety of purposes, they can be grouped under two main headings: reserves held for planned and specific purposes and those held to hedge against the unexpected.

6.62 Planned reserves are an intrinsic part of the Council's medium and long term financial planning processes, as they enable funds to be carried across years to fund planned expenditure and to smooth demand that may be uneven over time. Within this heading also fall reserves required by statute or the accounting code of practice. The Council's financial plans will determine the nature and level of these reserves.

6.63 Contingency reserves provide funds to cover uncertain events that may transpire. This includes holding a working balance to cover bumps in the Council's cash flow. Unlike planned reserves, the level of contingency reserves is subjective and requires professional judgment. Indeed Section 25 of Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to report to Council his view of the adequacy of the reserves so that the Council can make an informed decision. To do this, consideration needs to be given to the risks facing the Council, such failure to deliver savings, overspending due to demand pressures, uncertainty over future funding and potential natural disasters. These need to be considered from the perspective of likelihood and impact. Past experience and comparison with similar local authorities, such as other London boroughs, are a means to assess the level at which reserves need to be held. Also, it would not be prudent to set a level of reserves that would guard against all possible eventualities. Some events, like major natural disasters or a second pandemic, are of such calamitous impact that no local authority could be expected to weather them without assistance from central government. Indeed, this is why the government has the Bellwin scheme to support for such events and why it provided substantial support to alleviate the financial effects of COVID-19 pandemic.

6.64 The Council has taken these factors into account and has decided that as a principle 5% of net expenditure should be held as generally usable reserves. This equates to £17.9m (2023/24), £19.2m (2024/25) and £19.7m (2025/26). The details of this assessment are explained further in the Reserves Strategy, at Appendix K (i). These increases will be built into the MTFS to meet the requirement to maintain balances at this level. It is the opinion of the Corporate

Director of Finance and Resources, as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, that this level of generally usable reserves constitutes the amount that is sufficiently robust to maintain the Council's financial sustainability.

6.65 Appendix K (ii) sets out the Council's schedule of earmarked reserves, their purpose and a forecast for the use of each reserve. In accordance with the Council's financial regulations and scheme of transfers and virements, this report sets out the use and purpose of these reserves. In addition, should an overspend arise, it is determined that it can be set against the General Fund balance or the service pressures reserve, which are defined as the Council's generally usable reserves for these purposes. Approval of these arrangements is required for compliance with the Council's financial regulations and scheme of transfers and virements. Should the use of reserves become necessary due to overspending which cannot be contained in 2024/25, this will be funded from reserves, with the assumption that any ongoing overspending will have to be funded by additional savings in 2025/26.

6.66 The Council has considered CIPFA's Resilience Index and the Office of Local Government's Data Explorer, which shows Brent as having the highest level of reserves of its nearest neighbour group and a strong overall financial position. Specific issues with the deficit on the DSG High Needs block and the level of HRA reserves have also been considered.

Robustness of estimates

6.67 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Section 151 officer to report to Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations included in the budget.

6.68 This report sets of the key assumptions (section 4) around growth, inflation and the impact of macro conditions highlighted in the context as well as assumptions in income from fees and charges that align with the economic environment, anticipated demand and the impact of pricing. The Council has made various assumptions around grant funding (Section 6) and considered the impact of reductions in grants such as the New Homes Bonus.

6.69 The Council has used a variety of techniques to ensure that the estimates made in setting the budget are robust. These include revised forecasts of the resources available to the Council, which sets the financial envelope in which the Council has to operate, and identification of areas subject to significant demand and cost pressures. Sensitivity analysis has been used to ascertain the impact of changes to demographics and the level of inflation. A middle case scenario has been used which is the anticipated most likely outcome to determine any growth requirements in these areas. Departmental bids for growth and corporate provisions for cost pressures, such as the pay award, have been subject to challenge.

6.70 The culmination of this work is the identification of the budget gap which will be bridged by savings, which themselves have been subject to challenge by the

Corporate Management Team and members. Finally, the impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement has been reviewed to ensure that the estimates made in the budget remain robust and appropriate.

CIPFA Financial Management Code – Financial Resilience Assessment

6.71 CIPFA recommends that local authorities undertake a Financial Resilience Assessment (FRA) each year. The FRA builds on the one-year assessments required under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 of the robustness of the estimates used in the budget calculations and the adequacy of the proposed levels of financial reserves.

6.72 The Financial Management Code states that "Effective governance and financial management is focused on ensuring that the authority is able to operate sustainably in the long term. This means that the authority needs to look beyond the limited time horizons of its funding arrangements and to consider the longer-term financing of its operations and activities."

6.73 The Financial Resilience Assessment considers long-term financial stability. It does so by considering warning signs such as the symptoms of financial stress and reviewing how effectively the authority manages its finances. This includes explicit consideration of capital resources, reserves, savings plans and the use of performance information.

6.74 The Council undertook a Financial Resilience Assessment after approval of the 2023/24 Budget. That initial assessment found that the Council's finances were in good shape and sustainable over the longer term. There were areas for improvement and the FRA recommended that the Council should focus on longer term planning, given current uncertainties and anticipated problems on the horizon. The Council intends to use the information in this budget report to update its Financial Resilience Assessment to ensure that the Council's benefits from long-term financial sustainability. Further details of the methodology are set out in Appendix L.

Value For Money

6.75 The Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, are required to report in more detail on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure Value for Money (VfM) in respect of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that the Council can deliver its objectives and safeguard public money. This is assessed under the following areas: Financial Sustainability; Governance; and Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

6.76 As is customary, their report is to be presented to Full Council on 29 February to considered at the same time this budget report. The report concluded that there have been no significant weaknesses identified in the Council's VfM arrangements and only improvement recommendations were made. Overall, the commentary from the auditors in respect of financial sustainability is

positive, recognising that in line with significant challenges faced by other local authorities, the Council has been compelled to make tough decisions in order to balance its budget and ensure it maintains its finances on a sustainable footing. The auditors found that the Council's financial planning both short and longer term was based on sound judgements. The report notes that the Council has a good track record in setting and achieving balanced budgets and identifying and responding to financial risks.

7.0 Statutory process of consultation, scrutiny and equalities analyses

Equalities

7.1 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. Each of the budget proposals set out in Appendix C have been subject to an initial equality impact assessment (EIA) to assess their potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics. Where the EIA process identified a disproportionately negative impact with no reasonable mitigation, the proposals were subject to a full EIA. In addition to individual EIAs, a cumulative (or overall) EIA has been produced to assess and understand the potential cumulative and compounding impact on groups with a protected characteristic that arise from either changes across a range of services or a group of savings proposals. These EIA reports are set out in Appendices C(iii) and C(iv), alongside the actual proposals. 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.

Scrutiny

7.2 A Budget Scrutiny Task Group was convened after the Cabinet published the draft budget proposals in September 2023. The task group, made up of members of the two scrutiny committees (Resources & Public Realm and Community Wellbeing) reviewed the proposals, as well as the budget development process, with relevant Lead members, officers and community members. The task group's report and recommendations, attached in full at Appendix D, were agreed by the Resources & Public Realm scrutiny committee on 24 January 2024 as part of the Cabinet's decision making process.

Consultation

7.3 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. The Council has consulted on the budget options in a variety of ways. Legally, the results of consultation are something that Members must have due regard to in making budget decisions. However, consultation need not legally be the single or even most significant determining factor in choosing between difficult options, although at Brent considerable emphasis is usually placed on the results of consultation.

7.4 The Council conducted a broad consultation process between November 2023 and January 2024 where the budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were presented. This included attendance at all five Brent Connects events and an online consultation on the specific budget proposals.

7.5 The detailed budget proposals were published on the Council's website, inviting comments and feedback through the online consultation portal. A number of people accessed the online consultation and provided responses. Appendix N(i) contains further information about the results of consultation and sets out a summary of emerging themes and other key findings.

7.6 There are various 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, the Chamber of Commerce, and town centre business associations. The consultation on the budget was published in a newsletter that is sent to a large number of Brent businesses, explaining why the views of local businesses were important and how they could have their say.

7.7 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 has therefore been an important part of the consultation process. Invitations to participate in the consultation were sent to all Brent voluntary and community sector organisations. In addition, the consultation was publicised in the CVS Brent newsletter, inviting responses through the online portal.

7.8 In addition to comments made through the online consultation portal, Brent received direct representations from the following organisations- Brent Mencap, Crisis, Sufra and Brent Friends of the Earth. In addition, a letter was received from Barry Gardiner MP. For transparency, these comments are attached in Appendix N(ii) and responses included in Appendix N(i).

7.9 Overall, the most commented theme was the proposed increase in Council Tax. It is acknowledged that increasing Council Tax will be difficult for some households to manage in the current circumstances and section 6 of this report sets out the rationale the Council considered as part of its decision making. In summary, the additional income will provide much needed funding to limit the impact of the significant pressures expected in 2024/25, in particular for the provision of social care and homelessness services, as well as preventing the wholesale cuts to the key services the Council provides that many other Councils are having to consider. In addition, it should be recognised that the Council continues to invest in the Council Tax Support scheme, which provides over £32m of support for around 26,000 households who are financially vulnerable.

7.10 One of the main aims of the consultation and communications strategy was to raise awareness of the Council's financial position, inform residents on how the Council spends its budget and ensure residents, businesses and other key

stakeholders were fully aware of the opportunities to have their say, by knowing how to respond and when the consultation events were taking place. This was delivered through a variety of communication channels, including publicity on the Council's website, media briefings and use of the Council's Facebook and X, formerly known as Twitter, accounts to disseminate reminders and encourage residents to participate.

8.0 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget

8.1 The proposed HRA annual budget for 2024/25 sets out proposed expenditure for housing management services, stock investment, maintenance work and new council housing development programmes, as well as rent and service charge setting proposals for 2024/25.

8.2 The HRA budget is set each year in the context of the 30-year business plan (included in Appendix Q). 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 the HRA can continue to remain financially secure and deliver on its priorities to provide a safe, suitable and secure place to call home.

8.3 After four consecutive years of rent reductions, between 2016/17 to 2019/20, the Government set out its rent policy, which originally allowed rent levels to be increased by CPI plus 1% for the next five years starting from April 2020. However, in light of exceptional inflation levels, government has amended its rent setting policy for 2023/24 to introduce a 7% rent rise limitation, compared to 11.1% if CPI plus 1% was applied. This was estimated to equate to a circa £2m reduction in income in that year. Furthermore, rent increases in 2023/24 did not only affect that financial year, but also have an impact on future rent levels. There is no provision in the current rent regulations to allow anything more than the maximum (CPI+1%) increases in future years. Therefore, a lower rent increase in 2023/24 meant that the base for a rent increase in 2024/25 is also lower and so on for future years. For 2024/25, rents are being increased by CPI plus 1%, which equates to a 7.7% rent uplift.

8.4 The table below shows a snapshot of current average rent levels from occupied properties and the proposed increase of 7.7% for 2024/25. All new re-lets are charged at Formula Rent and new builds are charged at Formula or Affordable Rent that are in line with Greater London Authority (GLA) benchmarks and are adjusted annually in line with rent standards. Updated rent levels are reflected in the current average rent for 2023/24, average rent can change depending on time of reporting. The average proposed rent rate for 2024/25 is £10.32 per week (7.7%) higher than the current financial year.

Tenant Rents for 2024/25

Table 3: Rents

Bed Size	Current average rent 2023/24	Proposed average rent 2024/25 (7.7%)	Rent uplift
	£	£	£
Bedsits	98.49	106.07	7.58
1	117.43	126.47	9.04
2	136.48	146.98	10.50
3	148.19	159.60	11.41
4	162.84	175.37	12.53
5	174.10	187.50	13.40
6+	181.99	196.00	14.01
Average rent	**134.08**	**144.40**	**10.32**

8.5 A rent increase of 7.7% is estimated to result in additional £4.1m of income when compared to current levels of income. This is due to national inflation increasing by 6.7% compared to last year, which is a reflection of current economic climate.

8.6 For tenants in receipt of housing support to help pay their rent, the cost of rent increase will be met by their housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit, unless the level of support is reduced by factors that may apply to individual circumstances such as the benefit cap. Brent Housing Management provide 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. Support options include assessing whether the tenant is claiming all the welfare benefits that they are entitled to, assisting them to claim from the Council's resident support fund and arranging a suitable payment plan. Brent Housing Management endeavour to identify vulnerable tenants and maintain contact with tenants to ensure that they continue to get the required support to sustain their tenancy.

8.7 The net rent amounts exclude service charges. Service charges are recharges to tenants and leaseholders, which are based on the actual costs incurred for providing specific services, such as estate cleaning.

Tenants Service Charges 2024/25

8.8 Individual service charge elements are adjusted to bring them in line with the estimated contract costs of providing these services to tenants in 2024/25. The tables below show a snapshot of the current average service charges for occupied properties, compared to proposed rates, this is analysed below for services provided to tenants. The current average can change depending on

time of reporting, to reflect re-lets and stock movements such as new additions and right to buy sales.

Service charge frozen for 2024/25

8.9 Grounds maintenance service is included within the Council's wider corporate contract. The annual contribution from the HRA is estimated to offset against the HRA's proportion of the contract cost through existing charges.

8.10 The cost of maintenance and servicing for the laundry room is forecasted in line with service charges. Therefore, no increases are proposed for this charge for 2024/25.

Table 4: Service Charges

Service	No. of Properties	Current Average Charge 2023-24	Estimated Average Charge 2024-25	Increase / (Decrease)
		(£/Week)	(£/Week)	%
Grounds Maintenance	4,835	1.32	1.32	0.00%
Laundry	25	2.59	2.59	0.00%

Service charge increases for 2024/25

8.11 The estate cleaning service was transferred in-house in 2019/20, with a commitment to pay staff at the London Living Wage before being integrated into LGPS pay scales. The cost of bringing the service in-house and the associated costs for pay inflations, vehicles, machinery and material is estimated to be under recovered by £0.28m in 2023/24. A phased approach to cost recovery was modelled in previous years to allow service charges to increase over a four-year period. The proposed increase of £1.37 per week in 2024/25 is estimated to result in break-even position in 2024/25.

8.12 The concierge service charge is currently £11.37 per week on average. An increase of £1.90 is estimated to contribute towards inflationary cost pressures of providing this service to blocks in South Kilburn. Contribution towards this service reduces when tenants are re-housed and property is decommissioned for regeneration purposes, resulting in budget pressure as cost of servicing the blocks remain. Cost mitigations are managed through budget reduction in other services such as repairs. New build Council housing blocks that consist of concierge service will receive service charges based on estimated cost and adjusted in following years in line with actual cost incurred. There are currently 92 additional new build properties receiving concierge services in Assembly and Braunston House. Proposed service charges on this block are estimated at £18.83 per week.

8.13 The helpline monitoring service charge is currently £1.93 per week on average. An increase of £0.15 per week is estimated to result in a break-even position for 2024/25.

8.14 Unmetered communal lighting, heating and hot water charges are adjusted annually in line with cost incurred and forecasted energy supplier inflations, reflecting price fluctuations of energy as closely as possible. The past year has experienced unprecedented price movement and volatility with wholesale gas and electricity prices. Cost of gas has experienced increase of 225% and electricity cost has increased by 66%. Total forecasted cost incurred for communal energy is estimated to be under recovered by £0.41m in 2023/24. Uplift on gas charges to tenants in current year 2023/24 was capped at 100%, in order to spread the cost for tenants. Proposed uplift for gas charge is 90% for 2024/25, this will result in an average increase of £21.26 for communal heating and £6.08 for hot water. Proposed uplift for communal lighting is 45%, this will result in an average increase of £1.51 in 2024/25.

8.15 The communal TV aerial repairs and maintenance service charge is currently £0.74 per week on average. An increase of £0.06 per week is estimated to result in a break-even position for 2024/25.

Table 5: Service Charges

Service	No. of Properties	Current Average Charge 2023-24	Estimated Average Charge 2024-25	Increase / (Decrease)
		(£/Week)	(£/Week)	%
Estate Caretaking	4,531	7.82	9.19	17.50%
Concierge	396	11.37	13.27	16.70%
Helpline Monitoring	48	1.93	2.08	7.70%
Communal Lighting	5,313	3.36	4.87	45.00%
Communal Heating	345	23.62	44.88	90.00%
Communal Hot Water	19	6.76	12.84	90.00%
TV Aerial	3,137	0.74	0.80	7.70%

District Heat Network

8.16 Unity Place in South Kilburn hosts the energy centre for the local district heat network for metered billing. It currently supplies heat and hot water to 235 properties and tenants are billed based on actual usage. The current fuel contract runs from 1 October 2022 on a two-year variable rate until 30 September 2024. The Council was eligible to apply for Energy Bills Discount Scheme 2023/24, which provides support to heat networks. Costs for the following year are projected based on previous years usage and reconciliation is undertaken to adjust future charges for variances in billing. Heat tariff for 2024/25 is estimated to be a variable element of £0.10 p/kWh and a standing charge of £0.45 per day, in order to recover costs.

Table 6: Heating

Service	No. of Properties	Current Charge per kWh 2023-24	Estimated Charge per kWh 2024-25	Increase / (Decrease)
		(£p/kWh)	(£p/kWh)	%
Heating Tariff	235	0.12	0.10	(17%)
Standing Charge	235	0.55	0.45	(18%)

Brent Supported Living

8.17 In November 2020, tenants moved in to 11 new independent living homes at Peel Road. These homes are all one-bedroom, self-contained residential flats developed as part of previous New Accommodation for Independent Living (NAIL) programme and are held within the HRA. The properties are fully adapted and the homes benefit from communal facilities, including a garden area. There is access to 24-hour care, allowing residents to contact care staff from anywhere in the building.

8.18 The table below compares the current gross rent levels (including service charges) for these homes against the proposed increase of 7.7% for 2024/25. This equates to an increase of £25.58 per week when compared to the current financial year.

Table 7: Gross Rent

Current Gross Rent 2023/24	Proposed Gross Rent 2023/24 (7.7%)	Proposed v Current Rent
(£/Week)	(£/Week)	(£/Week)
332.21	357.79	25.58

Garage Rent for 2024/25

8.19 HRA currently has 225 occupied garages with an estimated annual income of £0.2m for 2023/24. Cabinet approved a standard rate of pricing during budget setting in 2021/22.

8.20 The table below shows the current standard rate and the proposed uplift of CPI +1 (7.7%) for garage rents.

Table 8: Garage Rents

Garage Charge (net)	Current Standard Rate (2023/24)	Proposed Standard Rate (2024/25) (7.7%)
	(£/Week)	(£/Week)
LBB Tenants & Leaseholder	17.35	18.68
LBB Resident	23.13	24.91
Non - Resident	28.92	31.14

HRA Budget 2024/25

8.21 The proposed budget for 2024/25 is set out in the table below and shows a net balanced budget. The budget movements are as a result of the items summarised below.

Table 9: HRA budget 2024/25

Technical Adjustments	**£m**
Gross tenant rent uplift	(4.6)
Leaseholder service charge uplift to reflect cost incurred	(0.2)
Reduction in service charges for major works in line with profiled works	0.1
Growth	
Pay grade linked increment	0.3
Pay and operational cost inflation on previous year	0.7
Legal resources for disrepairs and income collection	0.2
Repairs contract inflation	1.8
Disrepair and associated temporary accommodation	0.3
Repairs delivery model implementation	1.2
Increased responsive repairs and void costs	0.1
Estate caretaking services cost inflation	0.4
Leaseholder insurance contract inflation	0.2
Council tax and service charge on leased properties	0.2
Bad debt provision	0.1
Saving Target	
Review void standards and active interventions to reduce costs	(0.4)
Reduction in staffing through vacancies	(0.2)
Efficiencies in support services	(0.2)
Total Net Movement	**0.0**

8.22 Rent and service charge increase alone are not estimated to be sufficient to cover inflationary cost uplifts and budgetary demands from services, therefore the budget includes £0.8m in year savings target, in addition to annual efficiency saving targets that are already incorporated into medium-term financial plans.

8.23 In order to address budget gap associated with expenditure on void properties, closer monitoring of void specifications to ensure overspend is reduced is now in place. This has reduced the number of voids requiring extensive refurbishments which have both higher specifications and longer turnaround times. Overall improvements to void turnaround and lettings process is expected to reduce the void rent loss and Council tax liability period. This is estimated to generate £0.4m saving.

8.24 Estimated saving of £0.2m can be achieved through vacant posts within property services, as there is a workforce shortage that have the required levels of expertise.

8.25 Estimated saving of £0.2m is anticipated as a result of general efficiencies and reduced expenditure associated with support services.

8.26 The proposed 2024/25 HRA budget summarised in table below ensures a break-even balance at year end. The opening reserve balance reduced by £1m in 2021/22 due to partially funding a provision for identified capital works to Granville New Homes blocks that have transferred to the HRA from First Wave Housing on 1st April 2022. HRA reserves were used to cover the timing difference and the provision will be released when works commence, returning the HRA reserves to previous value of £1.4m.

Table 10: HRA Budget 2023/24 v Draft Budgets for 2024/25

HRA Budget 2023/24 v Draft Budgets 2024/25	(1) Budgets 2023/24	(2) Draft Budgets 2024/25	(2-1) Variance	Variance Explanation (2-1)
Description	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	
Rents and Service Charge	(57.0)	(61.6)	(4.6)	Tenant rents and service charges offset by rent loss through voids and RTB sales
Non-Dwelling Rents	(0.2)	(0.2)	0.0	Garage rents
Leaseholders' Charge for Services and Facilities	(2.9)	(3.1)	(0.2)	Uplift to reflect increased cost of rechargeable services
Major Works and Other Contribution Towards Expenditure	(1.1)	(1.0)	0.1	Service charge reduction based on profiled major works completion
Total Income	**(61.2)**	**(65.9)**	**(4.7)**	
Repairs and Maintenance	15.0	18.0	3.0	repairs contract uplifts, repairs delivery model and provision for disrepairs offset by efficiency saving target on voids
Supervision and Management	11.9	12.7	0.8	operational cost inflations offset by savings in management and support services
Special Services	6.9	7.3	0.4	estate service maintenance cost inflation
Rent and Rates and Other Charges	1.5	1.9	0.4	council tax and insurance contract inflation
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	15.5	15.5	0.0	
Bad or Doubtful Debts	1.2	1.3	0.1	provision for non-payments

HRA Budget 2023/24 v Draft Budgets 2024/25	(1) Budgets 2023/24	(2) Draft Budgets 2024/25	(2-1) Variance	Variance Explanation (2-1)
Description	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	
Capital Financing and Debt Management	9.2	9.2	0.0	
Total Expenditure	**61.2**	**65.9**	**4.7**	
(Surplus)/or Deficit for the Year on HRA	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	
Housing Revenue Account brought forward	(0.4)	(0.4)	0.0	
(Surplus)/or Deficit on HRA	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Closing balance	(0.4)	(0.4)	0.0	

HRA Stock Improvement and Major Works Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26

8.27 Planned works include refurbishments such as new roofs, windows, lifts, kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems and planned fire safety works. Major works relate to extensive refurbishment programmes, such as the planned major refurbishment of high-rise blocks.

8.28 The Council Housing Asset Management Strategy (AMS) 2022-2026 sets out a vision for responsive repairs, investment, reform and improvement of the stock and its performance. The AMS consists of a 5-year budget requirement totalling £80.8m and has outlined requirements to increase investment in tower blocks over the next two years. The overall major works programme budget has been set at £26m for 2024/25 and £30.4m for 2025/26.

8.29 Tower block funding profile for debt repayment and interest involves mitigating cost reduction of £0.7m in revenue budget to be achieved between 2023 to 2025. Saving targets have been identified in void repairs, disrepair works and staff vacancies. In addition to revenue savings, cost reductions to long-term capital programme have been profiled totalling £33.5m between 2026 to 2048. Budget projections for planned works over this period is £13.5m per annum on average and is estimated to be sufficient by Housing Property Services to enable statutory maintenance works to Council properties to be undertaken.

New Council Homes Programme 2024/25

8.30 The development and management of new council homes and affordable housing remains a key priority in the Council's Housing Strategy and the HRA Asset Management Strategy. The Council has an ongoing commitment to

deliver 5,000 affordable homes in the borough of which 1,700 will be delivered directly by the Council by 31 March 2028. As of December 2023, 844 new homes have been delivered by Council. The forecast capital investment on acquisitions and building new Council homes in 2023/24 is £35m, with a capital budget in 2024/25 set at £31.4m.

Housing General Fund

Temporary Accommodation

8.31 In 2021 two purpose-built developments in Harlesden, Anansi House (92 Units), for families, and Knowles House (57 Units), for single people, became available. These properties were developed specifically to meet the statutory duty to secure suitable interim accommodation for homeless households and replace the use of privately owned Bed & Breakfasts and Annexes.

8.32 The proposal is to hold rents capped at Local Housing Allowance levels. The LHA rates in the UK will be raised to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 after being frozen since April 2020. The new LHA rates are expected to be published in January 2024.

8.33 There is also a proposal to add additional charges to meet all outgoings applying to the Premises including both communal and personal utility water charges, heating charges and Wi-Fi charges.

Once the main housing duty is accepted, a further charge for council tax is proposed. There are 126 units that are band C properties, which has a proposed Council Tax charge of £1,809.82 for 24/25. There are 23 units that are band D properties, which has a proposed Council Tax charge of £2,036.05 for 24/25.

Hillside Rent Setting

8.34 In addition to the dwellings contained within the HRA, the Council also continues to hold dwellings in the General Fund (GF). These dwellings were formerly held by the Stonebridge Housing Action Trust (HAT) and were transferred to Brent Council in August 2007 when the HAT was dissolved. The Council currently owns 324 properties under this scheme and Hillside Housing Trust (part of Hyde Housing Group) manages these properties on the Council's behalf.

8.35 The table below sets out the rent levels for 2023/24, with an average increase of £10.84 per week for 2024/25.

Table 11: Average Rent Increase

	Weekly Rent 2023/24 (£)	Weekly Rent 2024/25 (£)	Increase (£)	Increase (%)
1 Bed Flat	£115.35	£124.23	£8.88	7.7%
2 Bed Flat	£136.56	£147.08	£10.52	7.7%
1 S/croft Elders	£115.35	£124.23	£8.88	7.7%
2 S/croft Elders	£136.56	£147.08	£10.52	7.7%
2 Bed House	£148.32	£159.74	£11.42	7.7%
3 Bed House	£162.55	£175.07	£12.52	7.7%
4+ Bed House	£171.12	£184.30	£13.18	7.7%

8.36 Hillside are also responsible for setting service charges across the stock, including those retained by the Council. The average service charge per week for 2024/25 is set at £8.16 per week, an increase of £0.58 from the 2023/24 average, based on an uplift of 7.7%.

Housing Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

8.37 The Housing PFI refers to 364 units of rented accommodation managed by Hyde under a PFI contract. The stock is made up of a mixture of Temporary Accommodation, Discounted Market Rent and Affordable Rent properties, which are up to 80% of market rates and are capped at the London Affordable Rent (LAR) set by the GLA. As per the cabinet decision on the 17 January 2017 in regards to PFI Housing Tenancy Conversions, Temporary Accommodation units are being phased out with the units being converted into Affordable Rent and Discounted Market Rent properties.

8.38 The proposal is to hold rents capped at Local Housing Allowance levels . The LHA rates in the UK will be raised to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 after being frozen since April 2020. The new LHA rates are expected to be published in January 2024.

Travellers' Site Pitch Rent

8.39 The current weekly pitch rent is £167.37. It is proposed to increase this by 7.7% to £180.26 for 2024/25. Travellers' site pitch rent is estimated to generate an annual income of £0.25m.

9.0 Schools and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

9.1 The final DSG allocations were announced on 19 December 2023 and the proposed budget was endorsed by Schools Forum on 25 January 2024.

Schools Block and Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)

9.2 Brent will receive an increase in mainstream pupil funding of £4.1 million which represents a 1.5% increase compared to 2023/24. This is lower than the national percentage increase of 2.2% but higher than the London average of 1%. The increase in London is lower than the national percentage increase as funding is primarily driven by pupil numbers and London continues to experience a decline in pupil numbers. As in previous years, the Council will continue to set a local funding formula for mainstream schools in 2024/25, although the total funding available will be determined by the national funding formula.

9.3 For the first time, in 2024/25 the Department for Education (DfE) will allocate funding to local authorities on the basis of falling rolls, as well as growth. Local authorities can use this funding to support schools which see a short-term fall in the number of pupils on roll. In December 2023, the DfE will allocate funding through the growth and falling rolls factors at LA Level, based on the observed differences between the primary and secondary number on roll between the October 2022 and October 2023 school censuses.

9.4 The DfE also announced an additional grant for Teachers' pay to contribute towards the 2024/25 pay award. Brent mainstream schools (excluding special schools) will receive each a lump sum of £2,306, a per pupil rate for primary schools of £62, Key stage 3 pupils £86 and key stage 4 pupils £98. There will also be a per pupil free school meal rate of £53 for eligible primary pupils and £77 per eligible secondary pupils. Special schools will be funded at £446 per place. Schools do not need to spend the grant in year.

9.5 Schools continue to feel the impact of rising inflationary costs and increases in energy prices, alongside the 6.5% teachers' pay increase from September 2023, of which the DfE will be part funding 3% via the Teachers' pay grant. The DfE expects schools to fund 3.5% of the increase within existing budgets and will only provide additional funding for costs above this.

9.6 Quarter 2 of the current financial year 2023/24 saw 79% of Brent schools projecting an in-year deficit and 39% of these schools' plan to use over 50% of reserves to balance their budgets. There are also currently 6 schools in deficit with recovery plans in place to recover the deficit.

9.7 The DfE expects schools to manage these pressures within the allocated funding increase of 1.5% expected in 2024/25. A few Brent schools are also experiencing falling rolls and as a result will have significant reductions in funding. This is requiring schools to make strategic decisions to mitigate the impact of this, including the consideration of staffing restructures.

9.8 A new School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028 was approved by Cabinet in October 2023. This sets out steps to support schools with falling rolls, including capping admission numbers, bringing schools together in federations and reducing capacity across the estate.

9.9 In February 2023, the Mayor of London informed all London authorities that he will provide funding at £440 per child for all state-funded primary school children to receive Free School Meals (FSM) for the academic year 2023/24. The Mayor's ambition was that the funding offers all primary aged children access to a meal at least once a day. The funding was at a rate of £2.65 per meal and provision was also made for Kosher meals funded at a rate of £3.50. These rates are above the government's current rate of £2.41 which is to enable schools fund the associated costs such as administrative and staffing costs of delivering additional FSMs. This was intended to be a one-year arrangement only however, the Mayor informed London authorities on the 9 of January 2024 that the funding will continue for the 2024/2025 academic year which will be until July 2025. The proposed price per meal will also increase from £2.65 to £3.00 per meal which is still higher than the government's 2024/25 increased rate of £2.53. The rate for the Kosher meals is yet to be confirmed.

9.10 In 2024/25, the Brent Central Schools' Services Block (CSSB) will see a 0.5% net reduction however there are two elements to the funding of this block i.e., the funding for ongoing responsibilities that local authorities continue to have for all schools will increase by 2.8% (£55k) but the funding for historic commitments which relates to a pensions strain contribution to the corporate budgets will see a 20% decrease (£66k) compared to 2023/24. This will mean that the amount transferred corporately will be reduced.

High Needs Block (HNB)

9.11 In 2024/25, High Needs block of the DSG allocation will be £85 million which is a 3.5% (£2.8 million) increase compared to 2023/24. The NFF will ensure that every local authority receives an increase of at least 3% per head of population, compared to 2023/24, and no more than 5%. Brent will receive just over the minimum 3% increase which is also in line with the London average increase of 3.3%.

9.12 The additional £2.8m is significantly lower than the funding increase received in the past few years. The increase is likely to be insufficient to deal with growing demand for Education health and Care Plans (EHCPs) the main cost driver of the pressure and inflationary increases. It will also not be sufficient to mitigate the brought forward 2022/23 DSG deficit of £13.8m.

9.13 The High Needs Block received a transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block income in 2023/24. Continuing this transfer in 2024/25 would enable potential pressures arising from the growth in EHCPs and inflationary pressures to be mitigated.

9.14 The DfE requires local authorities with an overall DSG deficit to have a Management Plan in place to recover the deficit over a number of financial years. Brent is currently part of the DfE's Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme which provides dedicated support and funding to help local authorities reform their high needs systems and the Council was awarded a £1m grant over two financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The findings for Brent from the DBV programme's analytical phase identified a number of opportunities to tackle rising demand which included supporting the needs of some children

through targeted support in place of an EHCP, ensuring EHCPs are of the right duration (i.e., more time limited EHCPs) and focusing on fewer support hours being put in place when children start school and building support over time as needs develop.

9.15 A Deficit Management Plan agreed by the Schools Forum is still in place with actions being taken to manage demand, improve the sufficiency of places and financial management to recover the deficit in the medium to long term. These include managing demand for EHCPs through a graduated approach in mainstream settings, establishing more SEND provision in the borough including a new special school and developing new Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs). In addition, 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 and continued central government lobbying. The Plan is also reviewed by the DfE.

9.16 Pressures against the HNB has led to there being a £13.8 million deficit in the DSG carried forward from 2022/23 and any further pressures in 2023/24 will increase the deficit position. The statutory override in place to enable local authorities hold deficit balances is due to end in 2025/26, after which the deficit could pose a significant risk to the Council's General Fund balances which are also currently under pressure.

Early Years Block

9.17 Nationally the government announced a £288 million increase for 2024/25 and for Brent, the indicative allocation for 2024/25 is estimated as £35.2 million an increase of £10.8 million compared to 2023/24.

9.18 The reason for the significant increase is because of the government's plans announced in the Spring Budget in March 2023 to expand early years childcare entitlements to take effect between April 2024 and September 2026. Therefore:

- From April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours of free childcare per week (38 wk./y). Disadvantaged children, such as those with parents on low incomes or who have an EHCP, will still be eligible for 15 hours free early education.

- From September 2024, the above will be extended to parents of 9-month to 3-year-olds.

- From September 2025, working parents of 9-month to 3-year-olds will be able to access 30 free hours p/w (38 wk./y).

9.19 The government's proposals include an uplift in the hourly rate paid to providers to deliver existing free hours offers and childminder grants for new childminders. The government will also provide additional investment into setting up wraparound childcare for school-aged children with a pledge that families will be able to access childcare between 8am and 6pm during the school day. These

reforms will see the government spending an additional £4.1bn 2027/28 on free hours and early education. Officers in the Early Years teams in Brent are working with the local sector to ensure that the objectives in the policy are met.

9.20 The 2024/25 uplift will mean that for Brent, the hourly rate for 3 – 4-year-olds will increase from £5.93 to £6.59, the 2-year-old rate will increase from £6.84 to £9.59, and a new hourly rate has been introduced for under 2s which will be £13.07. The maintained nursery schools' hourly rate will increase from £5.18 to £6.27.

9.21 It should be noted that the indicative allocations for these entitlements will be updated following termly headcounts in the summer 2024 and autumn 2024 terms, and the January 2025 census as funding is only paid for places taken up. The key principle of allocating the funding for the Early Years Block remains the same i.e., at least 95% of funding received is allocated directly to providers with the remaining 5% retained for central services.

10.0 Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

10.1 Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to publish an annual 'Pay Policy Statement', setting out their policies in respect of chief officer remuneration and other specified matters. Regard must be had to guidance to be published by the Secretary of State in preparing the statement, which must be approved by Full Council. The Council is then constrained by its pay policy statement when making determinations on chief officer pay, although the statement may be amended at any time by a further resolution of the Full Council. No new guidance has been published since the statement was adopted for 2023/24 and so there are no proposed changes to the statement related to the guidance. The Draft Pay Policy Statement, attached as Appendix P, contains minor updating and cosmetic changes from the Statement adopted by full Council for the last financial year.

11.0 Capital Programme Budget 2023/24 – 2028/29

11.1 The Capital Programme of the Council constitutes an integral component of our medium-term financial strategy and plays a pivotal role in the overarching budget setting process. This program is primarily dedicated to supporting the Council's legal obligations, ensuring the availability of adequate school facilities for children and young individuals. Simultaneously, it emphasises investment in new affordable housing as well as the enhancement of our existing housing stock, town centres, public spaces, and community amenities within the Brent area.

11.2 A critical facet of the Council's successful financial strategy has been the expansion of our capital investment programme over the last 5 years. This expansion has enabled us to generate substantial revenue savings over the medium-term financial planning (MTFP) period and this invest to save option is a key prioritisation criterion for new proposals coming forward. For a comprehensive understanding of our capital strategy, please refer to the Capital and Non-Treasury Investment Strategies provided in Appendices G & H. These

documents delineate our overarching approach to capital investment and how it aligns with the Council's objectives from the Borough Plan.

11.3 The Council's Capital Programme leverages a diverse range of funding sources, including capital receipts, grants, S106 and CIL (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy), reserves, contributions from revenue, and, as a last resort, borrowing. Affordability remains a critical consideration in our borrowing strategy, especially since the Council transitioned to being a net borrower. This shift aligns with our cost-effective approach of utilising internal resources to delay the need for external borrowing. The program encompasses a mix of invest-to-save, grant-funded, and self-financed projects to mitigate treasury risk. Consequently, our strategy emphasises external borrowing as a last resort for funding projects.

11.4 The prevailing economic conditions have had a significant impact on both the affordability and execution of the capital programme. Escalating costs, particularly in the construction sector, have rendered it exceedingly challenging to estimate the potential expenditure associated with development projects in their early phases. Moreover, interest rates have experienced highs of 6.14% throughout the year (30-year PWLB loan) which has applied additional pressure to the affordability of capital schemes. These factors collectively create a complex environment for forecasting future borrowing rates and evaluating the affordability of delivering the capital programme. The budget encompasses numerous schemes that rely on borrowing for financing. These schemes undergo regular scrutiny to ascertain their viability. The primary focus of this capital programme is to ensure optimal value for money while facilitating the delivery of essential services. Our emphasis is on mitigating key risk areas and exploring opportunities for efficiency savings. In the event that schemes face viability challenges, the Council may need to pause them, subject to a later review, reduce their scope, or remove them entirely from the programme to allocate funding appropriately as seen with the Affordable Homes Programme during 2023/24. Decisions of this nature will be duly reported to the Cabinet through project updates and quarterly financial monitoring reports.

11.5 S106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be utilised to undertake major infrastructure projects meeting the conditions or terms for funding. The capital programme includes CIL funded schemes totalling £18.5m from FY2024/25. The total CIL allocation includes contributions towards a major regeneration of Wembley Housing Zones, Picture Palace, College of North West London (CNWL), and some public realm works on Highways, Parks and the Northwick Park Mortuary Expansion.

11.6 The Council has initiated an ambitious Capital Programme, planning to invest approximately £796.8m over a five-year span, from 2024/25 to 2028/29. This investment covers substantial expenditures in both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), aligning with the Council's strategic objectives across the borough. The Council has a Capital pipeline, which currently holds 16 projects with a provisional value of £433.8m. However, these pipeline projects are not included in the Capital Programme presented in Table 1 and Appendix E, but are detailed separately in Appendix F.

11.7 A comprehensive overview of the Capital Programme, categorised by portfolio for the five-year period from 2024/25 to 2028/29, is provided in Table 12. Detailed information about the Capital Programme and its financing can be found in Appendix E.

11.8 The revised budget for the year 2023/24 currently stands at £220.9m. This budget is subject to modifications as new projects receive approval before Full Council in February 2024.

Table 12: Summary Capital Programme

Portfolio	Board (Programme)	2023/24 Budget £m	2024/25 Budget £m	2025/26 Budget £m	2026/27 Budget £m	2027/28 Budget £m	2028/29 Budget £m	Total 2023/24 to 2028/29 £m
Resources: Cllr Shama Tatler	Corporate Landlord	10.1	14.2	19.0	10.8	28.2	0.5	**82.3**
Regeneration, Planning & Growth: Cllr Shama Tatler	South Kilburn	13.6	27.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	**41.1**
Regeneration, Planning & Growth: Cllr Shama Tatler	Regeneration	9.0	64.7	110.4	7.2	0.0	0.0	**191.4**
St Raphael's : Cllr Shama Tatler	St Raphael's	0.8	0.3	19.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	**20.6**
Regeneration, Planning & Growth: Cllr Krupa Sheth	Public Realm	16.3	18.0	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	**41.0**
Public Health: Cllr Neil Nerva	Public Realm	0.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**1.4**
Environment: Cllr Krupa Sheth	Public Realm	10.2	4.6	5.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	**27.8**
Children, Young People and Schools: Cllr Gwen Grahl	Schools	12.4	24.7	26.3	7.3	3.3	0.0	**73.9**
Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security: Cllr Promise Knight	Housing GF	96.9	103.1	47.6	30.7	3.6	0.0	**282.0**
Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security: Cllr Promise Knight	Housing HRA	49.9	57.3	100.3	33.3	9.9	0.0	**250.7**

Portfolio	Board (Programme)	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Budget	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget	Total 2023/24 to 2028/29
Adult Social Care: Cllr Neil Nerva	Housing GF	1.5	3.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	**5.0**
Adult Social Care: Cllr Neil Nerva	Housing HRA	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.1**
TOTAL		**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.0**	**6.5**	**1,017.7**

11.9 The Capital Programme consists of projects that receive annual approval from the Cabinet, as well as newly endorsed projects within the fiscal year. Typically, new capital schemes and projects are incorporated into the Capital Programme as part of the annual budget allocation process. However, our governance framework allows for the addition of new schemes and projects, including those advanced from the pipeline provision, during the year, contingent upon the requisite approvals.

11.10 The 2024/25 – 2028/29 Capital Programme is underpinned by several pivotal projects, which include:

Corporate Landlord

Civic Centre

11.11 The planned programme of works to the value of c£1.0m for FY2024/25 to FY2025/26 and then £0.5m for future financial years, this will allow for improvement works to the Council's retained estate.

Customer Experience Improvements at the Civic Centre

11.12 The redesign of the face-to-face public spaces in the Civic Centre will allow an improved service delivery to residents and customers. The project works totalling £1.8m includes improvements to accessibility, expanding the Hubs, self-service, Libraries and Arts and Heritage offer whilst also unlocking efficiencies in how customer facing services operate.

Digital Strategy & ICT Investment

11.13 £6.9m is to be invested into Digital Strategy (from FY2024/25 to FY2026/27) with the objective of greater access to information and resident's services, improved access to public Wi-Fi for residents, provision of access to devices and digital skills for traditionally excluded residents, use of data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services, and ensuring staff have access to technology that will enable them to work efficiently and effectively. £5.5m (from FY2024/25 to FY2026/27) is also being invested into IT, the bulk of which will upgrade and replace IT infrastructure for staff.

Libraries

11.14 Kilburn Library will be refurbished with £0.8m worth of improvements planned for the building as well as the garden which is currently underused. An extension will be made to the building and the layout will be reconfigured to create a larger more flexible space for residents. This is due to be completed by March 2025.

Central and North West London College (CNWL) Campus

11.15 A loan of up to £49.9m is to be provided to enable Central and North West London College to acquire and develop a new campus in Wembley Park. The loan would be repaid by way of sale of the college's existing site to a property

developer, which would also result in the delivery of much needed housing to local area as a result. Over 50% of the overall loan budget is in FY2027/28 and this will be reviewed regularly depending on usage required.

Regeneration

South Kilburn Estate Regeneration

11.16 The South Kilburn Regeneration programme will deliver over 2,400 homes of which 50% will be affordable. The programme is around halfway through with 10 sites delivered or on site and 7 sites remaining to be developed. The scheme includes a new larger high quality urban park, an improved public realm, a new primary school and health facilities, and improved environmental standards and a site-wide energy solution. The budget for the financial year includes project costs on live projects and acquisition costs for obtaining vacant possession. The budget will increase following the individual business cases for each of the remaining sites, which will be presented to Cabinet when site and the financial positions are more known.

11.17 The planned expenditure from FY2024/25 over 5 years is £27.4m for the delivery of homes including infrastructure improvements. The programme is self-financing and is expected to be fully funded by a combination of capital receipts and grants.

11.18 Given the lack of certainty in such a large regeneration scheme, the Council is exploring the usage of a single delivery partner going forward as opposed to using several contractors for each of the schemes not yet started. This could have potential savings and provide certainty for the programme which a project team the appropriateness of this route.

Other Regeneration Projects

11.19 Wembley Housing Zone (WHZ) is a multi-tenure scheme, funded by grants, CIL and borrowing. Planned expenditure from FY2024/25 on is £119.2m.

11.20 The Bridge Park Regeneration project is aiming to deliver improved leisure facilities and other community space. The options and viability for the development is taking place.

11.21 Picture Palace is a local Community regeneration project to help deliver extensive cultural and community uses in the heart of Harlesden town centre. This project is fully funded by SCIL to amount of £3.1m from FY2024/25.

11.22 Grand Union Canal bridge is fully funded by SCIL and has a budget of £6.8m from FY2024/25.

Public Realm

11.23 There will be continued investment in public realm to ensure the infrastructure is fit-for-purpose and achieves our vision of making use of the opportunities presented by developments within the borough.

11.24 The Highways Capital Scheme Programme has an annual £3.5m highways capital maintenance budget to maintain carriageways and structures. The council agreed a further £15.0m investment from FY2022/23 for over four years to be spent on planned maintenance works. These works are on Carriageways and Footways. The total budget for Highways Management in FY2024/25 is £10.3m

Integrated Street Cleansing & Waste Contract Fleet

11.25 There is a further £11.9m budget from FY2024/25 from a total £21m programme budget to purchase fleet required to deliver the Integrated Street Cleansing & Waste Contract, the borrowing costs to fund the asset purchases will be offset by contributions from revenue.

Transport for London (TfL)

11.26 The Council receives a fixed block of capital funding annually from TfL. In FY2023/24, the Council has initially been allocated £1.0m, which comprises the Safer Corridors and Neighbourhoods programme and the Cycle Parking programme. In the absence of confirmed funding allocations for FY2024/25, TfL to publish end of January 2024, the budget assumes the same level of funding as FY2023/24 and will be updated once available.

Parks Improvement Programme

11.27 The Parks Service is investing £2.0m from FY2024/25 to improve various areas of aging infrastructure across the borough's parks; including pathways and playgrounds. They are also seeking to install a number of new welcome notice boards with improved maps of each location, wildflower meadow information boards and to make infrastructure improvements to allotments with new fencing, pathways and new sustainable toilets.

11.28 There are 2 new projects within the Public Realm budget. Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) which is a new grant funded project for electric vehicle public charge points in the Borough for those who do not have private parking with a budget of £1.2m. Northwick Park Mortuary Expansion is a Tri-Borough scheme (Brent, Harrow and Barnet) which will see the expansion of the Northwick Park mortuary to increase facility demands. Brent will administer the project and will use SCIL to cover its share of the costs alongside contributions from Harrow and Barnet.

Schools

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Schools

11.29 The Council has statutory responsibilities in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), that require the Council to ensure that there is suitable provision to meet their needs.

11.30 The Programme will meet this demand via a number of work-streams, including construction of a new build SEND School, Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP), expansion of existing SEND schools and capital improvement projects. The budget includes a key school site, London Road, where designs are underway.

Schools Capital Improvement

11.31 The Council is responsible for 38 community and foundation schools and nurseries across 41 sites in Brent. The Council has a statutory duty to undertake major projects at these schools to ensure the buildings are weather tight and provide a safe environment for education.

11.32 Funding is provided to carry out these works by the Department for Education (DfE) via the School Condition Allocation (SCA). This funding is provided each year based on an assessment by the DfE of high-level building condition need and is provided to meet Brent's local condition priorities across its schools. The Council places SCA monies in a specific capital budget, the School Asset Management Programme (AMP) budget, to meet its statutory requirement.

Relocation of Islamia Primary School

11.33 In September 2022, Cabinet approved capital funding to support the relocation of Islamia Primary School from its existing site in Salusbury Road to the vacant Strathcona Site. The proposed capital investment is up to £10.0m depending on the option chosen with the preferred option expected to cost £9.1m. The relocation proposal requires statutory consultation and, if the proposal proceeds, it will come back to Cabinet for determination in the FY2024/25. Childrens Care Home.

11.34 The Department for Education (DfE) has given a grant of £1.1m for the acquisition of a housing asset that can be used as a children's care home within the Borough. As part of the grant conditions this is to be match funded by the Council, which will be funded by borrowing. The acquisition of an asset is being budgeted between FY2023/24 and FY2024/25.

Housing Programme

11.35 The development and management of both new and existing Council housing remains a primary focus, evident through continuous investment in housing repairs, maintenance, and enhancements. The Housing programme is now entering a crucial phase, marked by the commencement and completion of key projects.

General Fund Housing

11.36 The General Fund is allocated to spend £147.8m over the next five years, starting from FY2024/25, on mixed-use developments. In cases where grants from the Greater London Authority (GLA) are utilised, the properties will be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) upon the completion of the respective scheme.

Fulton Road

11.37 The Council has entered into a long-term lease agreement, spanning 999 years. The acquisition of the development at Fulton Road will result in an additional 294 homes, offering a combination of London Affordable Rent and London Living Rent options within the Wembley Park ward. This site is focused on meeting the current demand for larger family-sized accommodations, with a priority on delivering 3-bedroom homes. The scheme is estimated to cost approximately £85.5m. This development is currently in progress, with work advancing steadily, and we anticipate completion by FY2025/26. Once completed, these units will either be transferred to the HRA or allocated to one of the Council's housing companies.

Aids & Adaptations – Private Works

11.38 The Council has secured £9.9m in Disabled Facilities Grant funding, intended to cover the expenses associated with adapting the homes of vulnerable Brent residents. This initiative is designed to assist individuals in maintaining their residence and quality of life.

Church End regeneration

11.39 The project is about to enter the main works phase, intending to provide 99 homes for affordable rent, with a projected completion date sometime in FY2025/26. £46.9m in capital spending is targeted over the next five years. Church End is one of the Council’s flagship projects and a key priority, aligning with Brent’s Local Plan. This Council’s objective is to rejuvenate the local centre, stimulate the local economy, and offer new housing, workspace, and other amenities to support the local community.

i4B Holdings

11.40 i4B Holdings is actively involved in acquiring properties throughout the borough and purchasing street properties, which are then offered as affordable rented homes. This initiative aims to alleviate the housing pressures in our community, reduce the financial burden, and decrease the number of families in temporary accommodations. The Council plays a role by acting as a lender, providing the necessary funds to balance the equation. Our involvement includes a combination of equity investment and loans to support i4B's provision of PRS accommodation which enables the Council to either prevent or discharge its homelessness duty and therefore reduce temporary accommodation costs. Given the significant demand pressures in temporary accommodation, a new loan and equity facility of £40m will be made available for further street property

or block purchase opportunities to further increase the supply of PRS accommodation in line with its business plan.

11.41 Current plans involve the provision of 25 street properties during FY2024/25, which will expand the Council's temporary accommodation capacity and explore new opportunities for new construction projects. As part of the FY2024/25 Capital Programme, £6.3m expenditure, being the company's remaining drawdown, is earmarked to facilitate these initiatives.

Temporary Accommodation (TA)

11.42 The Edgware Road project is intended to provide 110 affordable homes for temporary accommodation along with five retail units. Presently, the project is at the Pre-construction Services Agreement (PSCA) stage. The planned capital expenditure for the next five years is set at £42.6m. The Council is collaborating with Higgins, the contractor, to finalise the project's design. Progress thus far has faced significant challenges, primarily due to recent legislative changes that have impacted the original design. We are currently exploring all available options to move forward with the project, including the possibility of the Council submitting a fresh planning application. Given the significant demand pressures for TA, the Council has identified a number of void properties within the South Kilburn programme which can be utilised for this provision through meanwhile use. A provisional budget of £0.7m is requested to bring these homes into use.

Housing (HRA)

11.43 Planned expenditure on housing HRA over the next 5 years from FY2024/25 is £200.8m.

New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - 2021-2026

11.44 The New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026 comprises a series of projects currently in the early stages of development across the Council. The combined value of these projects amounts to £69.1m, with expenditure projected over the next five years. Most of these projects have already received planning approvals. The objective is to explore viability through securing partial funding for these initiatives through the GLA's new Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026. Additionally, the Council is actively exploring various alternative delivery options for these schemes.

Major Repairs & Maintenance of council stock

11.45 An overarching objective for the Council has been to meet the government's mandate of ensuring that 100% of social homes adhere to the decent home standard. To accomplish this, the Council has made significant investments in its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties, ensuring that they not only meet but also consistently maintain the decent homes standard.

11.46 The Council remains dedicated to investments in repairs, maintenance, and enhancements to extend the lifespan of its assets. The HRA Capital Programme outlines planned expenditures amounting to £67.5m over the upcoming years.

Watling Gardens

11.47 The Watling Garden project comprises 125 units and is presently under construction, making substantial progress. Over the next five years, total capital expenditure of £37.3m has been allocated to this project. The scheme aims to provide a combination of social housing and shared ownership units. However, due to changes in legislative requirements related to the inclusion of a second staircase, the anticipated completion date has been extended by nine months. We now expect the project to be completed in early FY2026/27

.

Acquisitions at Neville and Winterleys and Grand Union Phase 2

11.48 The Council has initiated two acquisition schemes at Neville and Winterleys, as well as Grand Union Phase 2, which will provide 101 and 115 affordable units, respectively. The projected expenditure for these two schemes over the next five years amounts to £17.9m. Historically, acquisition schemes have proven to be highly economically viable for the Council, facilitating cross-subsidisation within the capital program. Moreover, these schemes have yielded highly favourable outcomes for the residents of Brent.

St Raphael's

11.49 The Council has made a substantial commitment to enhance the overall quality of the estate through a £19.8m investment over the next five years. This investment will be directed towards improvements in various aspects, including the care and maintenance of the estate, targeted enhancements of green spaces, improved waste management, parking facilities, and the establishment of a new community centre.

Statutory Capital & Treasury Reports

11.50 In recognition of the importance of capital investment in asset and treasury management to Council activities, CIPFA and central government have compiled codes of practice and regulations for Councils to follow. These ensure that Councils have effective processes and practices in place to control, manage and govern capital investment decisions, that include borrowing and treasury management practices.

11.51 The requirement on local authorities in relation to this statutory guidance is that they should "have regard" to such guidance and each year must produce a number of documents/strategies for approval by council or a nominated body.

11.52 The various statutory reports are as follows:

- Capital Strategy (high-level report covering the basics of capital programme, treasury management and investments for service commercial reasons) – Appendix G.

- Non-Treasury Investment Strategy (disclose the contribution that investments make "towards the service delivery objectives and / or place making role of the local authority – Appendix H.

- Treasury Management Strategy (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. The strategy outlines a framework within which the Council manages its cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks – Appendix I.

- Minimum Revenue Provision (the process for calculating the annual charge to the revenue account of provision to repay debt incurred in respect of capital expenditure financed by borrowing or other long term credit arrangements (such as PFI) – Appendix J.

11.53 The statutory capital and treasury reports have been included here for noting in Appendices G – J.

12. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

12.1 Section seven of this report provides more details of the statutory consultation process with regards to setting the 2024/25 budget.

13. Financial Considerations

13.1 The Council's financial position has been set out in this report and Members are under a legal obligation to set a balanced budget. In doing so they are obliged, under normal administrative principles, to take into account the various relevant factors, particularly in respect of consultation and equalities. In doing so Members are, of course, entitled to exercise their political judgement, paying regard to the relevant factors rather than being absolutely determined by them.

13.2 The budget report sets out a comprehensive picture of the council's finances over the short, medium and long term to assist in the decision making process in setting the 2024/25 budget.

13.3 In considering the budget report, a key consideration should be the delivery of the savings programme as it presents substantial management challenges. Again, considerable management attention has been, and is being, devoted to ensure that these can be delivered, but it is important to stress again the inherent risks in delivering such a complex programme.

13.4 In addition to the risk of delivery of the savings programme, there remains considerable uncertainty on the future of Local Government funding from 2025/26. In consequence, and following a comprehensive review of budget

assumptions, the general reserve is expected to increase from £17.9m to £19.7m to ensure that the Council continues to follow the principle set out in section six regarding the appropriate level of generally usable reserves. This level is still relatively low for London, but is not unreasonable.

13.5 That said, the budget now proposed is realistic and affordable, albeit challenging. The increases in Council Tax set out, if agreed, will generate significant additional revenue over time, minimising the number of difficult new decisions about funding for specific services to be proposed. If agreed, this budget would provide for affordable services in 2024/25.

13.6 Formally, this section of the report is the report of the Section 151 officer to which the Council is required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard confirming that if the budget as proposed were to be agreed the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations are robust and the proposed financial reserves are adequate. The Section 151 officer concludes that the proposed level of reserves are adequate and the estimates underpinning the proposed budget are robust.

14.0 Legal Considerations

14.1 These are set out in Appendix O.

15.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

15.1 Section seven of this report provides more details of the approach to complying with the Equalities Act 2010 and the outcome of equalities impact assessments.

16.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

16.1 Climate change and environmental considerations are taken into account as part of the budget development process. Each of the savings proposals set out in Appendix C will have regard to these considerations as they are developed.

17.0 Human Resources Considerations

17.1 Of the proposals identified in Appendix C, there are some where there is a potential impact on staffing and could be subject to redundancy.

17.2 The Council will apply its Managing Change Policy and Procedure in the application of all restructuring arrangements which have an impact on staff, consulting with staff and trade union representatives accordingly.

18.0 Communication Considerations

18.1 Section seven of this report provides more details of how the budget proposals have been communicated with residents, businesses and other key stakeholders.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix C (i)	Existing Savings 2024/25
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Appendix A: Overall Revenue Budget 2024/25

The table below sets out the revenue budget for each directorate in 2024/25 and how this has changed from the 2023/24 budget.

	2023/24 Current Budget £m	Growth £m	Savings £m	Technical Adjustments £m	2024/25 Approved Budget £m
Service Area Budgets					
Care, Health and Wellbeing	134.1	8.2	(0.7)		141.5
Children and Young People	72.5	2.8	(1.9)		73.4
Communities and Regeneration	6.0	0.0	(0.5)		5.5
Finance and Resources	13.1	0.0	(0.7)		12.4
Resident Services	83.3	2.8	(1.9)		84.3
Governance	14.5	0.1	(0.4)		14.3
Total Service Area Budgets	**323.6**	**13.9**	**(6.1)**	**0.0**	**331.4**
Central Budgets	34.8	18.7	(2.5)	4.3	55.3
Total Budget Requirement	**358.4**	**32.7**	**(8.6)**	**4.3**	**386.7**
Funding					
Business Rates	(107.2)			(7.0)	(114.2)
Revenue Support Grant	(29.0)			(1.9)	(30.9)
Specific Grants	(71.4)			(8.2)	(79.6)
Council Tax	(150.8)			(11.3)	(162.1)
Total Funding	**(358.4)**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**(28.3)**	**(386.7)**

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Appendix B: MTFS Model

CHANGES TO THE BUDGET YEAR-ON-YEAR	BUDGET 2023/24 £m	ADJUSTMENTS Growth £m	Savings £m	Technical £m	BUDGET 2024/25 £m	ADJUSTMENTS Growth £m	Savings £m	Technical £m	BUDGET 2025/26 £m	Relative Changes 2023/24 to 2024/25
Base Budget	358.4				358.4				386.7	
Growth										
Demographics										
- Care, Health and Well-Being (CHW)		3.6			3.6	3.7			3.7	
- Children and Young People (CYP)		1.1			1.1	1.7			1.7	
- Other Departments		0.9			0.9	1.0			1.0	
Sub-total		5.6			5.6	6.3			6.3	
Inflation										
- Care, Health and Well-Being (CHW)		3.4			3.4	2.4			2.4	
- Children and Young People (CYP)		1.5			1.5	1.0			1.0	
- Contracts		1.5			1.5	0.9			0.9	
Sub-total		6.4			6.4	4.4			4.4	
Pay Award		6.5			6.5	3.5			3.5	
Service Changes		14.2			14.2	6.5			6.5	
		32.7				**20.7**				
Savings										
Service Transformation			(2.9)		(2.9)		(1.8)		(1.8)	
Restructure			(1.3)		(1.3)		(0.7)		(0.7)	
Reduction in provision			(0.4)		(0.4)		(1.0)		(1.0)	
Procurement			(1.7)		(1.7)		0.0		0.0	
Income generation			(1.0)		(1.0)		(0.6)		(0.6)	
Digital			(0.8)		(0.8)		(0.4)		(0.4)	
Corporate items			(0.5)	4.3	3.8		(0.5)	(5.1)	(5.6)	
			(8.6)				**(4.9)**			
	358.4				**386.7**				**397.4**	
Funding										
Business Rates	(107.2)			(7.0)	(114.2)			(3.3)	(117.5)	
Revenue Support Grant	(29.0)			(1.9)	(30.9)			(0.9)	(31.8)	
Specific Grants	(71.4)			(8.2)	(79.6)			1.4	(78.2)	
Council Tax	(150.8)			(11.3)	(162.1)			(7.8)	(169.9)	
	(358.4)				**(386.7)**				**(397.4)**	

MTFS ASSUMPTIONS	
Growth	The growth proposals in the budget are largely responsive in nature rather than introducing new service provision. This is a direct result of the volatile and unpredictable economic climate faced by the Council where high inflation and rising demand and demographic pressures increase the cost of providing existing services to current service standards.
Demographic Growth	This largely relates to changes in the make up of the population due to ageing (CHW) and demand pressures on the placements, transitions, homecare and children with disabilities budgets (CYP).
Inflation	General inflation remained high with CPI in September 2023 at 6.7%. Specific inflationary pressures are being experienced in social care where rising demand and a shortage of supply puts upwards pressure on prices. Also the war in Ukraine has pushed up energy and food costs. These inflationary pressures have direct effects on goods bought by the council and indirect effects via increased prices for services and supply contracts.
Pay Award	As a response to inflation and the cost of living crisis, pay awards are anticipated to be higher than the norm in recent years. If future pay awards are based on flat rate increases, this tend to increase the cost of the pay award at Brent due to extra London weighing and the associated increase in national insurance and pensions on costs.
Service Changes	These are unavoidable changes resulting from new burdens, increases in ringfenced grants and externally driven changes to service levels.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Contingency	7.9	1.6
Residents Support Fund	(2.0)	
ASC Grant - Hospital Discharge	1.2	
Future Funding Risks	1.2	
Capital Programme Financing	1.2	1.2
Public Health	0.4	0.7
Concessionary Fares (Freedom Passes)	3.5	2.5
Temporary Accommodation	0.5	0.5
IT Licencing	0.1	
Audit Fees	0.3	
	14.2	**6.5**

Savings - Full Details in Appendix C	New savings proposals for agreement total £8m (split £3.6m in 20924/25 and £4.4m in 2025/26). These are in addition to the savings of £4.5m deferred in the 2023 Budget Report which will be delivered in 2024/25.
Service Transformation	These savings involve changing methods of service delivery to match current demand levels whilst delivering the service in the most efficient, effective and economic manner.
Restructure	Savings which require changes to the staffing establishment
Reduction in provision	A number of savings where the level of provision will be reduced. Whilst as a matter of policy the Council aims to avoid cuts to frontline services, in order to balance the budget a number of small cuts to service provision have been proposed where the impact on service users will be minimal.
Procurement	Efficiency savings arising from securing better value for money and lower prices for contracts let by the Council without an adverse impact on service quality or the level of service provision.
Income generation	This saving largely relates to increased rents and parking charges at the Civic Centre to secure additional external income.
Digital	Better use of software and digital transformation will result in efficiency savings, whilst improving the customer experience.
Corporate items	This heading holds a £0.5m technical adjustment relating to employer pension contributions.
Funding	

RSG	The 2024/25 RSG allocation of £30.9m has been calculated by uprating the 2023/24 amount by an indexation factor based on the September CPI inflation increase of 6.7%. It is anticipated that future years will be calculated in the same way.
Business Rates	The Government has introduced separate standard and small business rates multipliers. The standard multiplier has been uprated by the 6.7% September CPI rate. The small business multiplier has been frozen with local authorities compensated for the loss of additional income via s31 grant based on the yield if the multiplier had increased by the September CPI rate. The rating list has been revalued with effect from April 2023. To keep the effect of the revaluation revenue neutral, the increase in the retained business rates share has been reduced to zero by reducing the amount of the top up thus keeping the Baseline Funding Level unchanged.
Council Tax	The increase in Council Tax income arises from a 3% increase in Council Tax and a 2% adult social care precept. This is coupled with other changes - an increase in the tax base and reduction in the assumed collection rate.
Specific grants	The government has uprated some existing grants, but not introduced any new grant funding for pressure points such as social care and homelessness. The value of the services grant has continued to decline and is not expected to continue beyond 2024/25. Brent received £0.746m of one-off funding guarantee grant as a result of a substantial reduction in New Homes Bonus (down £5m from £7.91 in 2023/24). These grants are not included in the MTFS as there is no certainty that they will continued to be received in the future.

SPECIFIC GRANTS	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**Difference**
Specific Grants	£m	£m	£m
Improved Better Care Fund	13.3	13.3	0.0
Social Care Grant	22.3	29.2	6.9
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	3.1	5.9	2.7
ASC Discharge Fund	1.9	3.1	1.2
Total Social Care Grants	**40.7**	**51.5**	**10.8**
Services Grant	3.4	0.6	- 2.9
Other Grants	27.3	27.5	0.2
Total Specific Grants	**71.4**	**79.6**	**8.2**

APPENDIX C (i)

SUMMARY OF
BUDGET SAVINGS
PROPOSALS 2023/24 - 2024/25

Appendix A: Summary of Budget Proposals 2023-24

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH01	Homecare Reductions	Service Transformation	Post Covid increases in homecare, driven by increased need and hospital discharge, introduce new reablement service and reduce double handed care packages to manage demand and increase independence	1,200	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH02	Not in-sourcing Reablement	Service Transformation	Commission a reablement service through the market, which will deliver the same benefit for residents and for demand, but will cost substantially less to deliver than bringing the service in house	1,300	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH03	Reduction in cost of Learning Disability Placements	Service Transformation	Proposal to support more people with a Learning Disability to live as independently as possible and to continue to reduce Residential Placements	600	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH04	Extra Care Void Saving	Service Transformation	Reduce the number of care home placements, reversing the increase driven by health during Covid, re-focusing on extra care placements filling voids and new extra care schemes as alternatives that promote more independence	250	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH05	Mental Health Placements	Service Transformation	Working closely with housing and secondary MH services to improve the recovery pathway post Covid, in particular reducing supported living placements and increased access to General Needs accommodation	470	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH06	Reductions in Staffing	Restructure	Deliver the plan to increase the number of permanent staff in a very challenging recruitment market and reduce the Adult Social Care agency staffing	270	
Adult Social Care & Health	2023-24 AH07	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	ASC - online forms, single view dashboards, integration of applications with Mosaic, assistive technology. Electronic document management. Direct payments automation and reduction in overpayments; and potential for increased alignment with CYP DP team. Automation of manual case review processes.	175	
Sub-total					**4,265**	**-**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP01	Early Help	Restructure	Savings proposals will be a combination of establishment savings achieved by deleting posts and reducing some commissioned services.	240	
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP02	Inclusion and Virtual School	Reduction in provision	Reducing the Supporting Young People Contract, ('Connexions').	80	
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP03	Localities - Care Packages reduction	Reduction in provision	Care package reductions for families receiving support from the 0-25 children and young people with disabilities teams	365	
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP05	Looked after Children and Permanency	Restructure	Review of agency worker usage and implementation of a vacancy factor		510
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP06	Forward Planning Performance & Partnerships	Procurement	Proposed savings will be made through the commissioning of placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers		860
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP07	Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Restructure	Savings will be made through the management of vacant posts and a reduction of the CYP training budget.	121	
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP08	Setting and School Effectiveness	Restructure	Proposed savings will be made by a reduction in staffing costs within the core school effectiveness team.	34	
Children & Young People	2023-24 CYP09	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	Admin - case management, RPA, Mosaic enhancement (alerts), electronic document management, removing manual processes and excel. Schools admissions chatbots/virtual agents. Direct payments automation and reduction in overpayments; potential for increased alignment with ASC DP team. CAMS dashboard.		200
Sub-total					**840**	**1,570**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR01	Planning Service Staff	Restructure	Reduce planning staff by 5% (3.5 FTE) achieved by natural turnover/deletion of vacant posts. Would impact ability to provide planning service and policy framework.		205
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR02	Brent Works / Brent Start	Restructure	Proposal to combine advisors across both Brent Start and Brent Works via turnover / vacancy management	35	
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR03	Brent Start Programme Leader	Restructure	Proposal to merge a position with another programme to delete this provision in Brent Start via vacancy management	24	
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR04	Regeneration Capitalisation	Restructure	Opportunity for further capitalisation for 4 years, whilst Wembley housing zone schemes are built		75
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR05	Town Centre managers	Restructure	Reduction of one Town Centre manager.	68	
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR06	Strategy & Engagement restructure	Restructure	Reduction in IAG Contract. Non appointment of new posts identified in the new structure	55	
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR07	Communications restructure	Restructure	Reduce the cost of Communications by moving to a business partnering model	100	
Communities & Regeneration	2023-24 CR08	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	Automation, chatbot, virtual agents. Dashboards for contract monitoring and demand management. Any changes to structures, alignment and commissioned services from Employment and Skills OBR. IoT e.g. potholes, better tech for field officers (Powerapps) to increase efficiency.	50	
Sub-total					**332**	**280**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Resident Services	2023-24 RS01	Removal of first class envelopes from the Civic Centre	Service Transformation	Removal of first class envelopes from Civic Centre to reduce postage spends. First class postage will remain available in the Post Room but only for those requiring first class postage	64	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS02	Staffing changes	Restructure	Staffing changes across the Improvement & Performance Team and the Digital Post Room teams. Duties to be covered by existing staff once re-evaluation of JD's and staff consultation has been carried out	86	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS03	IEG and Resilience contract reduction & Staffing reductions due to systems automation	Digital	Reduction in the usage of the Resilience contract and creation of in house applications to replace IEG	262	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS04	Online diary and reporting system and booking citizenship ceremonies	Digital	Online diary and reporting system equivalent to current product bought in house use of corporate. Online booking Citizenship ceremonies incorporating facility for payment for private ceremonies	11	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS05	Staff reorganisation	Restructure	Staff reorganisation in the Revenue & Debt team	210	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS06	Reduction in licensing, corporate printing, supplies and services, delivery of ICT roadmap, staffing	Digital	• Reduction in licensing spend through applications rationalisation • Reduction in corporate printing spend through continued move to digital options • Reduction in ICT and Transformation supplies and services spend • Reduction in Brent's contribution to the shared ICT service through realisation of savings through delivery of roadmap projects • Reduction in staffing in Transformation service	418	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS07	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	Online forms, chatbot/virtual agent, RPA, further reduction in print, aligning systems	300	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS08	Libraries stock	Reduction in provision	Reduction in Libraries stock budget	62	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS09	Increase Council Owned Temporary Accommodation Portfolio	Service Transformation	Build a new Temporary Accommodation scheme of up to 100 units (similar to Anansi House), providing better quality and more affordable accommodation for people who would otherwise be in private sector nightly paid accommodation	350	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS11	Temporary Accommodation (TA)	Service Transformation	Increase portfolio of Council Managed Temporary Accommodation	86	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS12	Street Light Dimming	Reduction in provision	Proposal for Street Light Dimming. Identify areas where lighting levels can be reduced to secure energy cost savings	60	

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Resident Services	2023-24 RS13	Waste disposal – Education and outreach insourcing	Service Transformation	Reduction in residual waste stream in order to secure increased recycling rates and reduced waste disposal payments to WLWA	250	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS14	Review Payments to WLWA	Service Transformation	This proposal seeks to recover any over-payment of waste disposal charges made by Brent that may be retained by WLWA and held as reserves by that organisation.	100	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS15	Increased use of Proceeds Of Crime Act	Restructure	Subsidise Regulatory Services area with use of POCA income	300	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS16	RLS related - Environmental Services Review	Restructure	Environmental Services review staff structures as part of RLS Phase 2 review	150	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS17	RLS related -Review of BTS	Service Transformation	Detailed service review, route optimisation and alternative means of transport	1,200	
Resident Services	2023-24 RS18	RLS Related - Negotiate RLS cost reduction	Procurement	Potential to reduce cost as part of RLS competitive dialogue tendering approach		200
Resident Services	2023-24 RS19	RLS related - Rationalisation of Environmental service budgets	Restructure	A rationalisation of the budgets within Environmental Services has taken place in anticipation of the savings required for the RLS project.	130	
Sub-total					**4,039**	**200**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR01	Reduction in staffing	Restructure	Savings will be made from the creation of a centralised Oracle support function in IT, a proportion of Head of Finance management oversight of master data and systems control is no longer required	252	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR02	Digital / Transformation Savings	Digital	Digital Transformation will enable automation of transactional activity across the whole of the Finance function and improvements in management self serve as a result of Oracle Cloud enhancements which will deliver savings	250	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR03	External support for Internal Audit activity	Procurement	Reduce use of external support to internal audit service	23	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR04	Civic Centre Office Let	Income Generation	Lease further floors of the Civic Centre to external organisations / tenants to generate revenue	-	680
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR05	Increase car park/EVCP charge	Income Generation	Considered feasible to increase civic centre parking charge and also charging rate for EVCP provision without impacting demand.	100	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR06	Security Service Transformation	Service Transformation	Service transformation to be implemented following the detailed review of security provision across all Brent's operational buildings after staff TUPE'D across from the previous out-sourced provider in summer 2021	300	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR07	Rationalise soft FM service	Service Transformation	Rationalising soft FM services (cleaning) to meet reduced portfolio demand	150	
Finance & Resources	2023-24 FR08	Commercial Staffing Review	Restructure	Review capitalisation of staffing costs and replace interims with permanent staff	50	
Sub-total					**1,125**	**680**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Governance	2023-24 GOV01	Reduction in staffing via restructure	Restructure	Proposed savings to be made from reduction in posts and more efficient allocation of tasks	89	
Governance	2023-24 GOV02	Restructures in HR	Restructure	This saving would introduce a new model for advisory support in HR and reduce the number of advisory posts in HR by one in 2023/24 and by one in 2023/24.	85	
Governance	2023-24 GOV03	Reduce Corporate Learning and Development Budget	Reduction in provision	Reduction in budget held by HR for Corporate training	40	
Governance	2023-24 GOV04	Administrative and Miscellaneous Efficiencies	Service Transformation	Increased advert via Linkedin for recruitment advertising - reduction in publications	12	
Governance	2023-24 GOV05	Increase income target for recoverable legal work costs	Income generation	S106 and other third party income increase	30	
Governance	2023-24 GOV06	Reduce Legal Fees Budget	Service Transformation	Reduce the provision in the legal budget for payment of court fees and the costs of advice and representation by barristers in cases brought by or against the council	50	
Governance	2023-24 GOV07	Cessation of DX Postal service	Service Transformation	This savings would involve discontinuing use of the legal document exchange service through which documents for the court, barristers chambers and solicitors firms are currently sometimes despatched	3	
Governance	2023-24 GOV08	Miscellaneous expenses reduction	Service Transformation	Miscellaneous expenses reduction. This saving would remove a budget utilised for unplanned overhead expenses	19	
Governance	2023-24 GOV09	Administrative and Miscellaneous Efficiencies	Restructure	This proposal concerns aligning salary budgets with the establishment	22	
Governance	2023-24 GOV10	Procurement restructure	Restructure	Review structure of the Procurement team with overall impact leading to a reduction in the establishment by 1 FTE		50
Governance	2023-24 GOV11	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	Electronic document management, further implementation of DocuSign, sharing documents with external parties via M365, chatbots for routine HR and Legal queries		75
Sub-total					**350**	**125**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Corporate	2023-24 CORP1	Digital / Transformation Savings	Service Transformation	Commissioning, Performance and Communications review	600	
Corporate	2023-24 CORP4	Procurement savings	Procurement	To be managed by the Commissioning and Procurement Board. All contracts on pipeline will come to the board to review contract specifications in order to deliver savings	449	51
Corporate	2023-24 CORP5	CMT Savings	Restructure	Savings from June 2022 CMT Restructure	200	
Corporate	2023-24 CORP6	RLS related - Environment department saving	Restructure	A rationalisation of the budgets within Environment has taken place in anticipation of the savings required for the RLS project.	1,300	
Corporate	2023-24 AH08	Technical Adjustment - recurring grant funding	Service Transformation	Recognition of grants not previously budgeted for in the MTFS.		1,500
Sub-total					**2,549**	**1,551**

Department	Reference	Project/Proposal	Category	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
SUMMARY OF SAVINGS PROPOSALS BY DIRECTORATE						
Adult Social Care & Health					4,265	-
Children & Young People					840	1,570
Communities & Regeneration					332	280
Resident Services					4,039	200
Finance & Resources					1,125	680
Governance					350	125
Corporate					2,549	1,551
Grand Total					**13,500**	**4,406**

2024/25 & 2025/26
SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Dept	Reference No.	Project/ Proposal	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Care, Health & Wellbeing	2024-25 CHW01	Technology Enabled Care	Enabling residents to self-manage their health and well-being, including preventing and reducing the need for care and support through technology so they can stay independent and well in their homes and communities	100.0	350.0
Care, Health & Wellbeing	2024-25 CHW02	Managing demand at the front door, prevention and early intervention	Managing demand and complexity of support to 23/24 with a consistent prevention and reablement offer and a focus on Care Act statutory responsibilities including integrated market management	365.0	365.0
Care, Health &	2024-25 CHW03	Continuing sustainable long-term	Reducing expenditure in mental health and learning disability including	275.0	275.0
Care, Health &	2025-26 CHW01	Reduction in building based	Developing a wider range of day opportunities with partners and communities		500.0
Care, Health &	2025-26 CHW02	Review of housing related	Reduction of contract value at 3 year break point for Homeless and ex-		500.0
Care, Health &	2025-26 CHW03	Workforce Efficiency	Commitment to reducing staffing cost across the Care, Health and Wellbeing		300.0
Children &	2024-25 CYP01	Reduce the value of the contract	The current contract ends on 31 March 2024. The planned contract value from	56.0	
Children &	2024-25 CYP02	Additional controls to better	Additional controls to better manage spot purchasing of specialist	50.0	
Children &	2024-25 CYP03	Utilising DSG to fund eligible	Utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant to fund eligible services currently	50.0	
Children &	2024-25 CYP04	Reduction in school improvement	Reduction in budget identified for targeted school improvement activity. The	50.0	
Children &	2024-25 CYP05	Freeman Family Centre – contact	A new organisation will be taking over tenancy of the Freeman Centre. The	100.0	
Children & Young People	2024-25 CYP06	Offsetting overheads/management costs within Early Help through delivery of the Best Start for Life programme. (Early Help)	To offset some Early Help staff costs using the Best Start for Life programme funding.	70.0	
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP01	Review of the Willow Nursery delivery model	Review the Willow Nursery delivery model to ensure the provision is sustainable without funding from the General Fund.		250.0
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP02	Set up and run new residential children's home. (Forward Planning Performance and	Reduction in the placement budget for Looked After Children through operating a new residential children's home in Brent		290.0
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP03	Reduction in management capacity within Early Help and Localities. Redefining early help and bringing early help practitioners under the management of social care teams – particular focus on restructuring edge of care work. (Early Help / Localities)	Reduction in management capacity within Early Help and Localities, through service realignment. This will entail a restructure and HR consultation. This will result in fewer handoffs for families and a more seamless step up and step down. Equivalent of up to 6 FTE. Review will also consider replacement of some social work posts with business support replacements where safe to do so.		330.0

2024/25 & 2025/26
SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Dept	Reference No.	Project/ Proposal	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP04	Short breaks – selling increased respite bed nights at the Council-run Short Break Centre to other local authorities. (FPPP/Localities)	The proposal is that the Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre could generate further income by selling additional respite bed nights to other local authorities. Income generation. Current income target is £140k. Ensure centre capacity is managed effectively to allow an increase of bed nights sold by an additional 52 nights per annum.		40.0
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP05	Reduce the Family Wellbeing Support service contract by 10% when it expires. (Early Help)	To reduce the Family Wellbeing Centre (FWC) support service contract by 10% Contract currently operated by Barnardo's that provides a range of support services for families from the FWCs including general advice and parenting support. Contract expires in November 2024.		64.0
Children & Young People	2025-26 CYP06	Reduce general fund contribution to commissioned services	Reduce general fund contribution to commissioned services that support children's school readiness and health and wellbeing through a joint commissioning approach within the ICP.		500.0
Communities & Regeneration	2024-25 CR01	Volunteering Platform	Not to procure a new Volunteering Platform	20.0	
Communities & Regeneration	2024-25 CR02	Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies	Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies	150.0	
Finance & Resources	2024-25 FR01	Increase Civic Centre Car Park Charging Tariffs in line with inflation/local prices	The current Civic Centre Car Park charging tariffs were introduced in September 2022. There is an opportunity to increase the car park charging tariffs in line with inflation and the rates charged at other car parking facilities within the vicinity of the Civic Centre from April 2024.	100.0	
Finance & Resources	2024-25 FR02	Property Strategy to maximise rental return on council assets	A new Property Strategy will allow the council to maximise the opportunity of increasing revenue from its assets. A starting target which we would endeavour to increase over time.	50.0	
Finance & Resources	2024-25 FR03	Delete three vacant posts	The current finance establishment has a number of vacancies. It is proposed to delete three posts that are currently filled by agency workers. Digital transformation will lead to improvements in self service to enable further transactional activity to be reduced.	250.0	
Governance	2024-25 G01	Training budget reductions	Local training budgets have not been fully utilised in several teams and for the Member Development Programme. It is proposed to reduce these budgets accordingly. In both cases there has been an increase in in-house provision of training and therefore less dependence on purchasing from external organisations.	15.0	
Governance	2024-25 G02	Member allowances	A reduction to reflect the reduction in the number of councillors as a result of the boundary review	50.5	

2024/25 & 2025/26
SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Dept	Reference No.	Project/ Proposal	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Governance	2024-25 G03	Elections Legal provision	Currently the elections team have budgets to fund the extra legal support that might be necessary were there to be a challenge related to electoral registration or an election. Most years this has not been used. It is proposed in future to rely on the reserves that have been established for elections and call on those should such a challenge occur.	14.3	
Governance	2024-25 G04	Miscellaneous overheads	This reduction is to reflect existing underspends on stationery and mail	2.7	
Governance	2024-25 G05	Review of support arrangements in Executive and Member Services	There is scope to reduce the amount of administrative support provided within the service.	10.0	
Governance	2024-25 G06	Legal Services – change approach to training posts	Currently Legal Services has three traditional graduate level trainee solicitor posts. It is proposed to reduce this to one post. As trainees are a valuable source of recruits to qualified posts, it is proposed to over time to convert two existing Legal Assistant posts to solicitor apprentice posts. These require a lower level of qualification, and the Apprentice Levy can be used to fund the qualification element of the training.	41.5	
Governance	2024-25 G07	Increase income target for services to schools and for legal charges to third parties	Income from these sources has increased, for example through more schools buying into the services available from the Governance Department and work undertaken in relation to developments.	42.2	
Governance	2024-25 G08	Realign graduate budget	The number of graduates recruited under the council's programme is variable and as appointments are made part way through the financial year the precise costs are unpredictable. A smoothing reserve has therefore been established to manage this issue and it proposed that the core budget be reduced accordingly. The proposed reduction for 2024/25 is part of an overall £15k reduction already partly implemented.	5.0	
Governance	2024-25 G09	Discontinue use of underutilised IT on-line systems/services	A review has identified several underutilised resources across the Governance department and ceasing to subscribe to these will enable savings to be made.	52.8	
Governance	2025-26 G01	Review of support arrangements in Executive and Member Services	There is scope to reduce the amount of administrative support provided within the service.		60.0
Governance	2025-26 G02	Legal Services – change approach to training posts	Currently Legal Services has three traditional graduate level trainee solicitor posts. It is proposed to reduce this to one post. As trainees are a valuable source of recruits to qualified posts, it is proposed to over time to convert two existing Legal Assistant posts to solicitor apprentice posts. These require a lower level of qualification, and the Apprentice Levy can be used to fund the qualification element of the training.		45.0

2024/25 & 2025/26
SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Dept	Reference No.	Project/ Proposal	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Governance	2025-26 G03	Increase income target for services to schools and for legal charges to third parties	Income from these sources has increased, for example through more schools buying into the services available from the Governance Department and work undertaken in relation to developments.		23.8
Governance	2025-26 G04	Changes to the Health and Safety team	It is proposed to reduce the health and safety team by one post to reflect lower demand due to changes in the way training on Health and Safety is delivered and to the type of incidents in which the central team are required to be involved. Change in approach to schools inspections.		57.0
Governance	2025-26 G05	Discontinue use of underutilised IT on-line systems/services	A review has identified several underutilised resources across the Governance department and ceasing to subscribe to these will enable savings to be made.		16.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS01	Increased use of automation	Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all RS departments (focusing on transactional services) with efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income.	150.0	150.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS02	Business support efficiencies.	Reduction in business support posts through alignment of support functions across Resident Services, combined with improved forms and integration with back-office systems.	157.0	122.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS03	Mobile telephony contract	Saving through new contract for mobile telephony	200.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS04	Licensing	Savings through application rationalisation and license management	113.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS05	Registration and Nationality - Income generation	Fee Increase 24/25 following an income freeze for 23/24	20.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS06	Libraries and Heritage - realignment of managerial responsibilities and posts	The restructure will focus on maximising income generation and delivering savings in 2024/25 – 2025/26.	48.0	48.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS07	Community Hubs - Reduction in provision	Deletion of a vacant post within Community Hubs	40.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS08	Revenue and Debt	To not recruit to vacant posts / move to digital – self-service / reduction in usage of Resilience Contract	65.0	65.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS09	Customer Services and Assessments	Reduction in Benefit Assessment processing costs due to impact of Universal Credit (UC)	61.0	61.0
Resident Services	2024-25 RS10	Implementation of borough wide (except Wembley Park) selective licensing scheme	This is extra income into the General Fund and therefore has no negative impact on staff and service users. It is also not politically difficult to deliver. However, it is dependent upon approval by the Secretary of State.	100.0	

2024/25 & 2025/26
SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Dept	Reference No.	Project/ Proposal	Headline Description of Savings Proposal	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Resident Services	2024-25 RS11	Increased subscription to the bulky waste service	A saving to account for an established increase in demand for the bulky waste collection service from around 350 requests when Veolia were operating the service to around 650 requests per month currently	10.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS12	Increased subscription and £5 charge increase with respect to the garden waste service	To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of £100,000	100.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS13	Review of the Parks service	Create a programme of organised cultural and entertainment events in parks to include a revision of fees and charges.	70.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS14	Rental of Parks building space	To review existing unused property space within parks.	30.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS15	Licensing / sponsorship schemes in Parks	Offer space for advertising in parks.	40.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS16	Increase tennis/sports bookings	Create and advertise a revised sports booking programme that encourages better take up and which offers new activities.	20.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS17	Grave tending / additional vaults in cemeteries	Offer a paid for grave tending service for families that may not be able to access the Brent cemeteries.	40.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS18	Mortuary / Bereavement / Funeral Initiatives	A range of small income generating initiatives across our bereavement services	20.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS19	Cashless Parking opt In Reminders	The Council generating income through optional text reminders, which is expected to generate income in the region of £80k per annum.	100.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS20	RLS Contract Efficiencies Post Year 1	Review of savings and efficiencies potential once the new contract operations have settled after year 1.	100.0	
Resident Services	2024-25 RS21	Removal of vacant posts	An ongoing assessment of the need to recruit to vacant posts and whether these can be removed and the tasks accounted for in different ways.	200.0	
			Total	**3,604**	**4,412**
			Grand Total	**8,016**	

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EQUALITY ANALYSIS

1. 24/25 CHW03: Review current Packages of care to support clients to live more independent lives

2. 25/26 CHW01: Development of a more dynamic day support offer

3. 25/26 CHW02: Review of Housing Related Support Contracts

4. 24/25 CYP01: Contract for the Provision of a Targeted Service that Promotes Education, Employment and Training for Young People

5. 24/25 CYP04: Reduction in school improvement funds in Setting and School Effectiveness Service

6. 24/25 CYP05: Looked After Children Services

7. 25/26 CYP01: Reduce provision from Council-run Willow Nursery (Early Help)

8. 25/26 CYP05: Barnado's Family Wellbeing Centre support service contract reduction

9. 24/25 RS13: To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of £100,000

10. To increase Council Tax by 4.99% in 2024/25

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**24/25 CHW03: Review current Packages of care to support clients to live more independent lives**
DEPARTMENT:	**Adult Social Care**
TEAM:	**Learning Disabilities, Mental Health & Provider Services**
LEAD OFFICER:	**Leon Gooding**
DATE:	**27th December 2023**

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.

Background:

In keeping with the principles of the Care Act, and the Mental Health Act. Brent Council will in partnership with health colleagues, continue to review those clients currently subject to Section 117 aftercare, receiving high costed packages of care (POC). The aim being to ensure the package is proportionate, safe and prevents learned dependencies by empowering clients to live more independent lives through increasing opportunities in the communities.

Section 117 MHA requires Integrated Care Boards (ICB) and local Adult Social Care Authorities to provide aftercare services to individuals who have been compulsory detained in a hospital for treatment under sections 3,37,45A,47 or 48 of the Mental Health Act.

Aftercare services are services which are intended to meet needs arising from or related to an individual's mental condition, to prevent relapse and or the need for readmission to a psychiatric hospital for treatment of the mental disorder.

In Brent we have a standing funding agreement of 60% - 40% split (ASC funding the 60%)

As a result of the client's needs and associated risks, clients in this cohort tend to be some of our highest costed POC. Those POC are usually but not always

accommodation based with an attached daily support function. Whilst a high level of support may have been appropriate as part of the initial discharge plan, if the initial POC was implemented appropriately, that level of need and risk should reduce in all but those with the most intrenched illness, those with organic mental disorders or the elderly.

117 clients are entitled to regular reviews under both the Care Act and Mental Health Act. Whilst the reviews do take place regularly, usually annually, they have not always been completed in keeping with the social care model of empowerment (Care Act Principles) rather in keeping with the medical model. This model focuses on the impact and management of the illness often leading to dependency on medication and those charged with prescribing and monitoring the medication, creating loss of independence, choice, control. This is alongside an increased dependency on the placement.

Proposal:

Through targeting this client group, we believe we can empower clients, whilst reducing the financial impact on the funders.

There will be 4 elements.

1) Review current packages of care in partnership with the client, family members, carers and statutory partners.
2) Identify alternative packages with above partners.
3) Implement new package of care closely monitoring alongside relevant health care provider for an agreed transitions period.
4) Review annually or as required.

Outcome:

Savings will be achieved in two ways.

1. Supporting appropriate clients to step down from high cost, high support environments into less intense, lower supported environment by identify and engaging with community based support networks, with a focus on socialization, training and or employment.

2. Where a client cannot proceed as above, consider shared lives living arrangements combined with community based support.

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

We have currently identified 387 clients across he service subject to section 117 MHA who will be assessed as part of this process

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. The proposal will have an impact on s117 clients with a diagnosis of mental health or learning disabilities across age range and gender.

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**	**x**	
Sex		**x**	
Race	**x**		**x**
Disability *	**x**		**x**
Sexual orientation		**x**	
Gender reassignment		**x**	
Religion or belief		**x**	
Pregnancy or		**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 *is* 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

6. 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.

The aim of this focused piece of work is to positively impact on individual service users lives, supporting then to move beyond the care of ASC or take a more proactive role in the management of their care in partnership with the care provider.

The age and cultural breakdown of the identified client group is as follows:

7%= 18-25 years old.
71%= 26-64 years old
22%= 65-84 years of age

The cultural breakdown is as follows:

37% British Asian
28% British Black
23% British White
12% Other

7. 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	The focus will primarily be on working age clients between 18 – 65. Major impact will be a move away from dependency on ASC empowering individuals to take increased control of their lives

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	All clients in this group will have a diagnosed metal illness or a learning disability. Therefore there may be a period of initial deterioration however clients will be supported through and post any relapse to a situation where they are able to move away from dependence on ASC empowering individuals to take increased control of their lives as appropriate.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	77% of this client group identify as none white British. Therefor those of ethnic minorities background ewill be impacted. However as the aim of the process is to empower, giving clients choice and control the impact will be positive.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	The impact on both genders will be the same with mitigation plans for female service users applied as assessors agree as needed.

Details of impacts identified	The impact on both genders will be the same with mitigation plans for female service users applied as assesssors agree as needed.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	N/A

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	N/A

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	N/A

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	N/A

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	N/A

8. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No Brent MH& LD services will continue to ensure clients care and support needs continue to be met.

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

All clients currently subject to s117 MHA will be have been made aware of the requirements on ASC & ICB to regularly review any packages of care at the time they were placed on S117.

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

None identified

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

Following any changes to current POC, clients will be reviewed over the following 6 weeks. Any negative impact to mental health state will be identified and responded to by the relevant service as is the current situation

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

As above reviews post any changes to POC

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.

The primary aim of the project is to empower individuals with a mental health or learning disability diagnosis to have more control over their lives, by moving away from a maintenance model, supporting individual in their current state to support personal and emotional growth. Offering this client group the opportunity to thrive. As will all adults there will be challenging times in individual clients lives and ASC will continue to support clients through these times, with the aim of supporting clients to learn from these experiences, as opposed to protecting them from these experiences, in keeping with the human experience.

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

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Leon Gooding, Head of Learning Disability and Mental Health
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**25/26 CHW01: Development of a more dynamic day support offer**
DEPARTMENT:	**Adult Social Care**
TEAM:	**Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management**
LEAD OFFICER:	**Andrew Davies**
DATE:	**22nd November 2023**

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

Overview

Brent Council is proposing to develop a more dynamic day support offer, that creates a more varied and cost-effective offer to people receiving day services.

There are two elements to the proposal. Firstly, a strategic shift to promote a sessional use of day opportunities and a more flexible offer; individuals and their families, dependent on their care needs will have the choice of support through building based and/or more community-based offers. Secondly, to deliver this the proposal includes closure of the New Millennium Day Centre, offering people attending that centre alternative service provision.

Before doing this, the two strands of work will be engaged and consulted on. Specifically, changes proposed for the New Millennium Day Centre will be formally consulted on with those who use the centre, their families or carers and staff. The consultation will be targeted at those directly affected by the proposed closure but will also be made available to wider interest groups, Adult Social Care service users and the public in Brent.

It has been confirmed, following the completion of the public consultation, that New Millennium Day Centre will remain open. However its use will change as it will become the new location for the community wellbeing project that is currently being delivered from Bridge Park. Further work will be done in the coming months with users at New Millennium to determine how adult social care services will continue to be delivered from the site, using valued resources such as the art room and kiln, but being co-located with the community wellbeing project. A further consultation and engagement exercise will be planned to do this work, and service users will be properly informed of this plan in the coming weeks.

The wider proposals for a strategic shift to develop more community based, flexible opportunities will be engaged over through the co-production of a new strategy for day opportunities. This will include all interested parties in Brent, with the materials being made available on line and with targeted sessions for those who already use services and their families or carers, interest groups such as those who represent older or disabled people and the providers of services.

Proposal

Day opportunities provide a vital part of many service users' care, ensuring that their wider health and wellbeing is supported alongside personal care needs. When the right care is provided this can increase the level of independence someone has and meet their holistic needs in a person-centred way.

The wrong care however can have the opposite effect, and more traditional forms of day care can increase the level of dependency unnecessarily and replace involvement in wider society that people could have through employment, volunteering or involvement in other parts of community life and culture.

Traditional services can also be limited in the way that they meet people's personal or cultural preferences, something that is incredibly important in a borough as diverse and ever changing as Brent.

The proposal is to develop a more varied and cost-effective offer for the people in Brent. This will promote sessional use of day opportunities and a more flexible offer. Individuals will continue to have access to building based services but will also have greater access to more community-based offers. Some people will be able to have a direct payment and use this to purchase the day opportunities that they wish to attend, when they want to attend them, including accessing services in the evenings and weekends if this fits with their care and support needs.

This savings proposal builds on work already underway and will consolidate this into a co designed day opportunities strategy with people who use services, their families, and the wider voluntary and community sector, alongside wider council provision at a neighbourhood level. It will include an expansion of provision in the north of the borough with the provider market offering more sessions where there is a lack of provision, particularly for older people.

The proposal includes transitioning some people from the New Millennium Day Centre and offering people attending that centre alternative service provision, either within Brent's in-house service based at John Billam Resource Centre if that will meet their needs, or from an external provider and/or other community activities. This can be a commissioned service, or where appropriate, paid for with a direct payment so that the person can purchase their own day support in the most flexible way.

Savings will be achieved in two main ways:

(i). The proposed transition to a single council owned day service through the closure of the New Millennium Day Centre, with some service users transferring to the John

Billam Resource Centre or external day opportunities providers. It is estimated that through reduced staff and building costs, this will save the Council £500k. Whilst the centre will remain open, there will be a saving to the adult social care budget through a reduction in its use, and the running of the building being taken on as part of the community wellbeing project.

(ii). Utilising a wider range of services and creating sessional models of support. Direct Payments will be the primary method of funding care this way, enabling service users to use their personal budgets to commission care that meets their needs in the way that they want. Further work is needed to estimate the savings from this approach, including:

- Full review of service users, to have a clear understanding of the number of people that will require ongoing, traditional care day, for whom a Direct Payment wouldn't be appropriate.
- To understand the saving (even on an average basis) for each person that moves to a Direct Payment.

The reviews will be strengths based and consider all elements of a person's needs including the transport eligibility and requirements. To support this work staff will have access to updated transport guidance and information, advice and guidance on available service provision within the borough.

This model will deliver better outcomes for people as well as delivering savings through:

- Person centred planning that supports individual choice and strengths
- Opportunities to make a positive contribution including employment and volunteering
- Enablement focus including clear links with reablement and travel training
- Accessible community opportunities are available at a range of times including weekends and evenings
- A clear information and advice offer of what is available
- Every person travelling as independently as possible
- Maximised use of community assets
- Focus on flexible support not services, but ensure there is a viable day opportunities market
- Providing support and respite for carers
- Increase the proportion of people who use services and carers, who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like (ASCOF 23/24 Metric 5A)
- Increase the proportion of people who use services who receive direct payments (ASCOF 23/24 Metric 3D)
- Right-sizing day opportunity packages for people, reducing the hours of care that are not benefiting people.
- De-commissioning building base provision where there is no longer demand for it due to alternative, better matched, provision.

14. Who may be affected by this policy or proposal?
There are currently 320 people registered to use day services in Brent. Of these, 68 people currently attend the New Millennium Day Centre for part or all of their support. There are 4,335 people in Brent receiving Adult Social Care services. As the number of people attending day services has reduced since the Covid pandemic it is possible that some of this wider group of social care users may benefit from a service and would/could access it if the service offer changed to better meet their needs. This could include some people already using Direct Payments. The consultation process for the New Millennium Day Centre will ensure that any changes implemented fully take into account service user and carer views. Should the proposal be approved, service users will have their needs reviewed and be supported to find alternative support that meets their needs and promotes independence.

15. 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. The proposals for the New Millennium Day Centre will have an impact on people with a disability and older people who receive a service from the centre. In considering the closure, the impact on these groups has been fully considered. The proposals for the wider market will also impact people with a disability and older people who are eligible for Adult Social Care services and who may currently access services, or may do should that offer change to better meet their needs. Whilst there would be no immediate impact or change of provision, longer term the way their needs are met may change.

16. 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**		**x**
Sex		**x**	
Race	**x**		**x**

Disability *	**x**		**x**
Sexual orientation		**x**	
Gender reassignment		**x**	
Religion or belief		**x**	
Pregnancy or		**x**	
Marriage		**x**	

17. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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.

There are 320 people currently registered to use day services. 68 of these 320 access the New Millennium Day Centre for some or part of their service.

It is the 68 people who will be most affected by the proposed changes as they will be supported to find alternative provision should the New Millenium Day Centre be closed following the consultation. Any alternative service will continue to meet assessed need and take into account the needs of carers. For some people this will continue to be a service provided by Direct Services and for others this could be an

alternative commissioned service, or the use of a Direct Payment to purchase an alternative offer.

The remaining 252 people would be unlikely to notice any immediate impact of the wider changes proposed, as existing service user placements will not be affected. Service users when reviewed may notice workers talking to them about alternative options available but would not be required to make any change to their current service unless this was their preference.

Brent Council holds the following information on those 68 people as follows:

Age profile

18-64 - 49
65-74 - 9
75-84 - 6
85+ - 4

Service user group

Learning Disability - 53
Physical Support and Disability – 7
Older people/disability - 8

Ethnicity

Asian or Asian British - 19
Black or Black British - 20
White - 27

Gender

Male - 37
Female - 31

The profile of the entire 320 people attending services is as follows:

Age profile

18-64 - 236
65-74 - 26
75-84 - 28
85+ - 29

Service user group

Learning Disability - 209
Physical Support and Disability – 99
Memory and Cognition - 8
Mental Health – 2
Sensory Support - 2

Ethnicity

Asian or Asian British - 119
Black or Black British - 94
White - 88

Gender

178 are male (56%)
142 are female (44%)

This differs from the wider Adult Social Care population where 56% of the people accessing services are female and 44% are male.

It is recognised that day opportunities are valued by many people using the services and their carers. The right support can increase independence and meet social, recreational and wellbeing needs. However, some more traditional forms of day service can increase dependency and deprive people of the opportunity to be more involved in their wider community and the opportunities that holds including employment, volunteering or other social and culture experiences. Services can also be limited in the way that they meet people's personal or cultural preferences, something that the proposal seeks to improve.

The proposal for a more dynamic day support offer therefore is made with the intention of creating greater positive opportunities for people within the diverse community.

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	The majority of people using day services are younger disabled people (under 65). Therefore the impact will be predeominantly for this working age cohort rather than older people. Older people are therefore not disproportiantely impacted by this

	proposal but there will be 83 older people using day services who are affected. For the wider group of people attending day services (who do not access New Millennium Day Centre) the impact will be very limited as the plans do not involve existing service users changing their service unless at a future review they choose to access a different offer. For those who use New Millennium Day Centre (19 of the 68 people are 65 and over) the impact will be one of disruption should the centre close as people will be supported to find an alternative service. This will be done following a person centred review and will continue to meet the person's assessed care and support needs.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	The majority of people using day services have a disability and therefore the proposed changes will have a greater impact on disabled people as they are the main cohort accessing the services. For the wider group of people attending day services (who do not access New Millennium Day Centre) the impact will be very limited as the plans do not involve existing service users changing their service unless at a future review they choose to access a different offer. For those who use New Millennium Day Centre (60 of the 68 people have a disability) the impact will be one of disruption should the centre close as people will be supported to find an alternative service. Some of the people will be able to continue to be supported by Direct Services' remodelled offer (using John Billam and the wider community) and therefore may feel less disrupted as some of the staff will be familiar for example. Some already use the John Billam as they have part of their service each week across the two buildings. For others, workers will review their needs and work with the person and their family to find an alternative offer that meets their assessed needs. The intention is this should be flexible and offer the outcomes people need. It is also possible that some people may have further to travel to their new service depending on choice and availability. These impacts will be considered as part of the consultation process and feed into the final decision making.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	Two thirds of the 320 people currently using day services are from an ethnic minority background. People from ethnic minority backgrounds will therefore be impacted by the proposals, but the intention is that many of these impacts will be positive – offering people more choice and flexibility in future should they have a preference for a different service. Current service users will not be impacted unless they choose to make that change. It should also be noted that the proposal aims to provide access to services which can better meet people's cultural needs. A move from the traditional model of day services should better meet some of the needs of people who currently do not, or cannot, attend services because they are not seen to meet their needs appropriately. This will include some of the more recently emerging communities in Brent. Of the 68 people currently accessing New Millennium Day Centre 57% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The impacts will be the same as for people with a disability including disruption should the centre close and some people potentially having further to travel to their new service depending on choice and availability. These impacts will be considered as part of the consultation process and feed into the final decision making and the mitigations will be the same in terms of the support that will be offered to find appropriate alternatives. The intention remains that the alternatives should be positive with more choice and flexibility, with services able to meet needs within local communities.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	Whilst there is a variation, and more male service users currently use day services as a whole, the impacts on both male and female service users will be the same and the same mitigations apply to both females and males. Of the 68 people currently accessing New Millennium Day Centre 54% are male and 46% are female

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	N/A

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	N/A

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	N/A

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	N/A

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	N/A

3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No. The Council will continue to ensure people's assessed care and support needs are appropriately met. The key focus if the New Millennium Day Centre proposal is approved will be to ensure the Council takes steps to minimise the impact on individuals, as outlined above. An individual review of needs will be undertaken for each of the people attending the centre to ensure an alternative is offered.

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

Yes. A number of engagement exercises have informed the development of the proposals and these involved people across a variety of services, forums and providers. A consultation exercise on the proposal to close the New Millennium Day Centre will run for 4 weeks weeks from 4th December 2023. All service users from

the New Millennium Day Centre and their families will be written to offering people a chance to respond to the proposed changes, and there will be a series of meetings to seek feedback from service users and their carers. A questionnaire will also be made available on line to ensure any interested parties, including groups representing disabled people or older people for example, can contribute. For those people who require it, translated copies of the consulation documents will be made available and easy read versions will also be produced.

The wider proposals for a strategic shift to develop more community based, flexible opportunities will be engaged over through the co-production of a new strategy for day opportunities. This will include all interested parties in Brent, with the materials being made available on line and with targeted sessions for those who already use services and their families or carers, interest groups such as those who represent older or disabled people and the providers of services. This work will take between December and March 2024.

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

The New Millennium Day Centre consultation responses and impacts will be analysed to inform the final proposals and decision making.

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

The negative impact of the changes will potentially be for attendees of the New Millennium Day Centre if the proposal to close the centre is approved. For some people they will experience disappointment, loss or concern about a change to their service. Some people may also be required to travel further to an alternative. The mitigation for both of these impacts will be that individual reviews will be undertaken with people and the workers will ensure that the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligations to provide access to an appropriate service. People will continue to get their needs met and workers will consider the location of alternative services when helping people plan. By offering people more flexibility and the opportunity to take a Direct Payment this may reduce the need to travel any further than they currently do.

It is necessary for the Council to ensure it has sustainable services and is able to deliver services within a reducing budget. These proposals will enable Adult Social Care to continue to meet it's statutory requirements, so whilst a small number of people may be impacted by having a change to their service there will be a benefit to the wider population who use Adult Social Care provision in ensuring service provision overall remains viable.

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

Each service user currently attending the New Millennium Day Centre will be monitored through their individual reviews. This will ensure that their needs and outcomes continue to be met.

The alternative offer and outcomes of the 68 people attending the New Millennium Day Centre will be tracked if the service closes. In addition, the wider utilisation of day services will be monitored. In this way any changes or trends over time can be demonstrated, such as increases in the use of Direct Payments.

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.

The potential negative impacts relate to those 68 people currently accessing the New Millennium Day Centre. Despite the potential negative impacts, the intention is to proceed with the consultation on the proposal to close the centre. This is because:

- The Council is required to make savings and maintain sustainable services
- There are positive impacts of the proposal for a wider number of people in Brent including greater choice and flexibility
- The negative impacts can be mitigated as follows:
    - each service user attending the New Millennium Day Centre will have a review to establish their current support needs and ensure alternative provision appropriately meets need
    - the Opportunity to take a Direct Payment will offer flexibility which should limit the need for people to travel further where they do not wish to do so.
    - should the proposal be approved, any specific impacts the consultation highlights will be taken into account during the implementation

The positive impacts relate to a greater choice and flexibility for people who use services. To enhance these, the intention is to ensure there is a good source of information, advice and guidance for people seeking a new service offer. This should be accessible to all service users including those who want to use a Direct Payment and also to staff who will be guiding and supporting service users to find an appropriate service or activity in the community.

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

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Andrew Davies, Head of Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management, Adult Social Care
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	Review of Housing Related Support Contracts
DEPARTMENT:	Adult Social Care
TEAM:	Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management
LEAD OFFICER:	Andrew Davies
DATE:	29th November 2023

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

The council is currently funding six-housing related support (HRS) contracts. The contracts are:

- Homelessness and ex-offenders
- Generic Floating Support
- Handyperson Service
- Mental health accommodation-based Services.
- Domestic violence refuges and single woman with complex needs
- Young person accommodation-based service.

To be eligible for this support individuals are not required to be assessed for adult social care. All these contracts provide a non-statutory service and cover a range of ages.

The proposal is to review these contracts to see where there are areas that could be streamlined, contracts reduced and / or funded from other sources to enable the department to focus spend on Care Act responsibilities. The contracts will be reviewed to consider their impact on outcomes for the residents of Brent, areas of potential duplication with other services, and the responsibilities of other agencies including support that should be provided as part of wider housing support including support linked to housing benefits for some social housing providers. It is not anticipated that any service will cease in its entirety but possibly reduce or be delivered and accessed in a strength-based model.

The outcome of the review and any subsequent contract variations would need to coincide with the 3-year break clause in each contract (April 2025 for all except Generic Floating Support, which is April 2026). The review would also consider the outcome of the review of each contract and the service provided and full consideration of consequences of reducing spend on these services. The outcomes from each service will be reviewed and quality assured and proposals for reductions brought forward for approval.

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

All these contracts are a non-statutory service however the individuals who may be referred or self-refer will have a degree of vulnerability and risk.

Individuals who may be referred to these services include:

- Single Homeless people between ages of 18-60
- Socially excluded individuals.
- Ex-Offenders
- People with substance issues
- Mental health (low level)
- Learning Disability (low level/medium)
- Women fleeing DA who may require some low-level support as part of their resettlement following a move on from a refuge or other safe DA supported accommodation.
- Have an identified need for a Handyperson Service and be unable to undertake these tasks themselves.
- Considered vulnerable due to age, disability, chronic health condition or other social issues.
- Being at risk of exploitation or harm from others, including domestic violence/abuse
- Have a learning disability.
- Young people ages 18-21 who require accommodation and housing related support.

Brent

Across all 6 HRS contracts they deliver a total of 2,820.50 hours of housing related support. 375 units of accommodation are also available across 4 of the contracts.

20. 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. Whilst the review of the contracts is to identify efficiencies such as duplication of services and it is not anticipated that any service will cease in its entirety, as some services may reduce or change it could have an impact on people who use the services from protected groups.

21. 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		**x**	
Marriage		**x**	

22. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

8. 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.

The 6 HRS contracts deliver a total of 2,820.50 hours of housing related support. 375 units of accommodation are also available across 4 of the contracts. This support is intended to be short in duration and should not exceed 2 years for any accommodation-based support. This service is to ensure people are able to manage in the community and is a preventive service.

Age and gender Profile to access the current contracts:

Homelessness and ex-offenders
All ages and not gender specific.

Generic Floating Support
18-60 and not gender specific.

Handyperson Service
50+ and not gender specific.

Mental health accommodation-based Services.
18-65 and not gender specific.

Domestic violence refuges and single woman with complex needs
All ages and female only.

Young person accommodation-based service
18-21 and not gender specific.

The council receive a set of quarterly KPI's that indicate the characteristics of individuals using the service during that period.

The impact on any changes to specific contracts could adversely affect a specific gender or age category should a service be decreased in any way. This could result

in an increased waiting time to be able to access a service. Waiting longer could also increase the level of need and therefore when services are accessed, they are required for longer. This could impact negatively on the length of time an individual may have to wait to access these support services particularly if there were to be a spike in demand.

9. 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	The majority of support hours and accommodation provided from the HRS contracts is for individuals between 18-60. Two contracts provide a service for older individuals, these being, one up to the age of 65 (Mental Health) and one with no upper age limit (Handy person). The Young person's contract only supports individuals between 18-20. The two contracts at each end of the spectrum in terms of age (Handy person and young person's service) also have smaller amounts of support and could therefore be disproportionately affected should these contracts be reduced in any way.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	Whilst the Housing Related Support contracts are not provided specifically for people with disabilities, and our data on the provision of these services for people with disabilities is poor, one of the actions that will be concluded as part of the review will be to undertake some work to identify those people with disabilities using services. This will help gain a better understanding of the potential impacts should changes be made to the services commissioned.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	N/A

SEX

Details of impacts identified	Out of the six contracts only one is gender specific and this being the Domestic violence refuges and single woman with complex needs service. This contract provides 200 support hours per week across 32 units to vulnerable woman.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	N/A

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	N/A

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	N/A

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	N/A

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	N/A

10. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?
No. All of the HRS contracts are a non-statutory service. The main issue with the changes proposed is that the council takes steps to minimise the impact on individuals, as outlined in the EIA, and that these services continue to be provided but this may be achieved in a different way and outside of the current contract.

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

A random selection of 1% of individuals who have recently used, are using or have been in the services over the stated period will be engaged to provide feedback on the quality of the support and its specific outcomes.

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

There is more work to be done on understanding the Housing Related Support cohort of service users, as set out above. Further work will be done to improve the demographic data held and monitoring of services users' characteristics (especially disability) to help inform the review and how services look going forward.

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

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

The impact of the policy will be monitored in a number of ways – • Monitoring the number of service users being referred into each of the contracts. • Monitor the length of time each person utilises the service and what outcomes have been achieved against each contract. • Monitor the age and gender of referrals into each of the contracts. • Monitoring and record the capacity of each service including any waiting lists. Identify any themes from an increased waiting list and work with the providers and other stakeholders to ensure a clear pathway out of the service to ensure maximum capacity at any point in time.

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.

The mitigating actions are set out in this EIA, but include – • No plans to cease any of the contracts in their entirety. • Establishing other ways of delivering the same support where this is a duplication. • Monitoring and evaluating the impact of the changes over time.

SECTION D – RESULT

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

A	**CONTINUE WITH THE POLICY/PROPOSAL UNCHANGED**	
B	**JUSTIFY AND CONTINUE THE POLICY/PROPOSAL**	**x**
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
Improve recording and monitoring of demographic information of service users to inform planning, and shape of HRS contract review.	Better demographic information, to inform decisions around contract review	Andrew Davies	Aug 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Andrew Davies, Head of Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management, Adult Social Care

REVIEWING OFFICER:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Claudia Brown, Director of Social Care

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	24/25 CYP01: Contract for the Provision of a Targeted Service that Promotes Education, Employment and Training for Young People
DEPARTMENT:	Children and Young People
TEAM:	Commissioning and Resouces, Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Service
LEAD OFFICER:	Sharon Buckby, Head of Inclusion Service and Head of Brent Virtual School Tanuja Saujani, Children's Commissioning Manager
DATE:	04/07/2023

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

a. This EIA is in relation to the procurement of a contract for Provision of a Targeted Service that Promotes Education, Employment and Training for Young People

b. The Education and Skills Act 2008 places a duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for young people aged 16 to 19 and for those aged up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Under the Education Act 2011 the local authority retains a duty to encourage, enable and/or assist young people's participation in education or training. The local authority is required to assist the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. Local Authorities are also required to lead the September Guarantee process through which young people are guaranteed a place in education, employment and training after year 11 or 12.

c. The local authority also has a duty to track all young people's participation and regularly report on current activity to identify young people who are not participating in education, employment or training. The DfE guidance and advice to local authority's around Raising the Participation Age (RPA) refers to the local authority's statutory responsibility to promote participation and support young people aged 16 and 17 into education and training. This promotion and support is measured through the DfE quarterly LA scorecard on NEET and 'not known' performance.

d. To deliver the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities the Council commissions an external provider. The current contract is with Prospects Services and expires on 31 March 2024.

The service delivers:

- The Local Authority's statutory duty ensuring young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), aged 16-18 years old and up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, receive relevant information, advice and guidance in order to be supported to a successful transition into post-16 education, employment and/or training. In Brent, this includes those young people who are new to the borough, as well as young people attending out-of-borough Alternative Provision settings, who have been excluded from mainstream school and are vulnerable to becoming NEET. In order to meet these statutory requirements, the local authority has to confirm destinations for over 8000 Brent 16 and 17 year olds on an annual basis to meet the DfE 3 month scorecard requirements. In addition, checks are required every 6 months for those in employment and every 3 months for young people who are NEET.
- a full active tracking, matching and support service for young people into education, employment and training using a client caseload information system.
- an Information Advice and Guidance hub 5 days a week
- a targeted intensive non-statutory service to promote Education, Employment and Training (EET) to vulnerable groups.
- an outreach programme to target those in the NEET cohort, whose situation is currently not known, in order to achieve full participation in education/employment/training

1.5 Since the DfE Scorecard has been published, Brent has consistently achieved quintile 1 performance which signifies it is in the top 30 local authorities in England for combined NEET and not known figures. This performance places Brent second compared with its 10 other statistical neighbours. In 2022/23 Brent's NEET and Unknown and Combined NEET performance measures were good during the reporting period Dec 2022 to Feb 2023 the 3 months average figures (DFE Scorecard will be published later in the year confirming borough quintile performance). Key performance indicators are as follows:

	LA Target 2022/2023	Prospects Achievement 2022/2023
NEET	1.50%	1.40%
Unknown	1.20%	0.90%
NEET & Unknown Combined	2.70%	2.30%

1.6 The proposed new commissioned service will deliver a full tracking service to meet the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities as outlined in parageraph 31 to 3.3 to ensure young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), aged 16-17 years old and up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan receive relevant information, advice and guidance in order to be supported to a successful transition into post 16 education, employment and/or training. In addition the service will also deliver an intensive targeted service to promote Education, Employment and Training (EET) to vulnerable groups.

The vision is that the new service:

- provides high quality impartial information, advice and guidance in relation to services supporting vulnerable young people in making effective transitions into Education, Employment or training
- helps the borough reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment and training and reduce not known (unknown) and ensure that young people are supported to enter and remain in learning or employment.
- Tracks and records all young people's participation post-16 on the Integrated Youth Support System database in order to ensure there is reliable data available centrally on young people at risk of being NEET.
- works closely with the council's statutory provisions including YOS, Inclusion Service, Brent Virtual School and children's services teams to identify young people most vulnearlbe to being in the NEET group.

Officers are recommending a contract term of 5 years (3 years with the option to extend by 2 x 12 months) from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029.

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

Children and Young People
Parents/Carers/guardians
Schools and other education settings
Practitioners working with Childern and Young People

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

Yes

26. 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	Neutral/None	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		

27. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

SCREENING CHECKLIST		
	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

15. 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.

Year - April 2022 – March 2023)

Approximate Statutory Duty Cohorts sizes

	Approx Cohort	Activity Survey	September Offer	NEET / Unk RPA
Year 11	3200	3200	3200	3200
Year 12	4000		4000	4000
Year 13	4100			4000
Total	11300	3200	7200	1120

NEET (DFE cohort Brent Residents)
There are currently 115 young people NEET in Brent (23/06/23) - this fluctuates each month and is in constant churn (young people moving in and out of this category). There is currently 16% of the NEET group that are not available to the labour market due to a range of issues including ill health and a range of complex and multiple issues the young people face.

In 2022 there were 3302 Year 11 and 3980 Year 12 (combined cohort of 7282). The current service successfully supported young people in the borough to obtain offers with 97.6% of young people achieving this.

Year 11 Activity Survey – 2022 Leavers (snapshot date 01/11/22)
There were 3291 young people in this cohort 98.1% are participating, 35 (1.1%) young people not settled (including NEET) and 21 (0.6%) unknown. 37% of the young people from this cohort were educated outside of Brent relying on strong partnership working and multilayer attempts at contacting young people.

16. 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	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support and will impact equally on all young people irrespective of age.
DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
SEX	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit

	from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employmet and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support with a focus on any barriers that they may face to help the overcome them.
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	The service aims to improve outcomes for all young people.

17. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

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

Consultation has been undertaken with internal stakeholders including Children and Young People service areas and the Council's Employment and Skills services to identify any gaps in service provision. The development of the proposed service has been informed by the SEND Strategy 2021-25, the Youth Strategy 2021-23, the Borough Plan Moving Brent Forward, The Brent Black Community Action Plan 2020 (priorities under skills and enterprise, employment and early intervention and The Brent Poverty Commission Report 2020 (under improving local earnings), all of which provided useful insights into the importance of access to education, employment and training opportunities for young people to make successful transition into adulthood. The Brent Local Offer is regularly reviewed with the Parent Carer Forum on the suitability of presentation, content and format to ensure that families can access the right information in the right way to access the appropriate services they need in Brent. This includes information about the information advice and guidance services commissioned by the LA. Service user feedback has been reviewed and incorporated into service development Children and young people will be trained to participate in the formal tender evaluation process and their feedback will help inform the outcome of contract award.

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

N/A

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

This service will align with other support services such as the Council's Employment and Skills service to reduce duplication in the system.

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

Robust contract monitoring processes will be put in place to monitor outcomes and impacts and to inform future delivery. This includes regular feedback from service users, monitoring complaints and compliments received, service data analysis and contract monitoring meetings.

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.

Any provider will be required to maintain diversity monitoring information which will be reviewed as part of the quarterly contract monitoring processes and will inform the future planning of services. Approaches to consultation and engagement will continue to be reviewed with the provider to enhance local services.

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
Establish a clear implementation plan and contract review plan, working with the stakeholders	To mitigate negative impacts	Tanuja Saujani	January 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Tanuja Saujani
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Yasin Patel
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Sharon Buckby, Head of Inclusion Service and Virtual School

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**24/25 CYP04: Reduction in school improvement funds in Setting and School Effectiveness Service.**
DEPARTMENT:	**Children and Young People**
TEAM:	**Setting and School Effectiveness Service**
LEAD OFFICER:	**Jen Haskew**
DATE:	**20 November 2023**

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

Reduction in school improvement funds in the Setting and School Effectiveness Service. The general fund contributes to targeted school improvement activity following the withdrawal of the DfE School Improvement and Brokering grant.

Most of the funding for schools is delegated to school budgets. However, school improvement funds held by the LA are utilised for targeted school improvement activity.

The reduction will not impact on staffing. It will reduce the money available to support schools that need to improve rapidly.

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

Some schools are targeted by the service to make rapid improvement. This fund is used to fund some of the necessary school improvement activity if the school does not have enough funds in their own budget.

Without this funding there may be a negative impact on the quality of some schools that are already struggling to meet required standards.

30. 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.
This funding pays for support for school leaders. It is not targeted directly towards any group with a protected characteristic. If the school pupil outcomes are less than expected, then the required improvement work will be impacted on by a potential lack of available funds. However, this is a reduction in funds not a removal of all funds.

31. 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		**x**	
Marriage		**x**	

32. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

22. 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.

The impact is mitigated by the fact that the funding pays for the leadership of schools and does not contribute directly towards resources for children.

23. 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	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	N/A

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	Potential to impact on quality of education for all pupils in some schools.

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	N/A

24. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?
No

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

No

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

None

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

With a reduction in funding the service will need to deliver within budget.

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

Pupil outcomes Ofsted outcomes

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.

The reduction in funding available will need to be disseminated to the SSES team to enable them to work within available budget. School leaders to be made aware that the service has a reduction in funds.

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
Monitor Ofsted outcomes	Any negative impact to be identified at earliest point and mitigators considered in partnership with school leaders.	JH	Ongoing practice
Monitor pupil outcomes	Any negative impact to be identified at earliest point and mitigators considered in partnership with school leaders.	JH	Ongoing practice

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Jen Haskew
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Shirley Parks, Director of Safeguarding Performance and Strategy
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Shirley Parks, Director of Safeguarding Performance and Strategy

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**24/25 CYP05: Budget Options- Looked After Children Services**
DEPARTMENT:	**CYP**
TEAM:	**Looked After Children and Permanency Service**
LEAD OFFICER:	**Kelli Eboji, Head of Service**
DATE:	**13th December 2023**

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

The proportion of the CYP Department's overall saving requirement in 2024/25, relating to the management of our Contact Services for looked after children is £100,000.

Savings will be achieved by:

Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships(B00180)
£50,000 as a result of a change of tenant responsible for managing services from the Freeman Family Centre. The current contract with Barnardo's is ending and there is scope to reduce this by £50k as part of new contract arrangements with the new tenant/provider.

LACP, Contact Team (B00519)
£50,000 as a result of reducing allocated growth to the existing contact service for children in care which operates from the Freeman Family Centre.

This area of saving is likely to be challenging due to pressures in this area relating to demand outstripping capacity and 1) the use of sessional and agency staff to enable the continued provision of supervised contact for Brent looked after children and 2) the procurement of out of borough contact facilities and supervision to enable supervised contact for children and young people who are living further away and unable to come to Brent for contact. Facilitating contact between children who are looked after and their birth family is the local authority's statutory duty under the Children Act 1989, and therefore any savings made will be reliant on getting the best value for money rather than reducing services to children and families.

Various options are being implemented and explored to achieve these savings, which include:

- Tighter financial controls on outsourced contact resources
- Clearer/tighter commissioning arrangements for external contact resources
- Exploration of increase in the number of permanent contact supervisors within the service to reduce reliance on sessional/agency contact supervisors, compared to outsourcing to external provider, or continuing with a hybrid delivery model.

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

This proposal may affect children who are looked after by the local authority and their families.

35. 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.

The relevance to equality, and our duty, is in relation to children and young people who are vulnerable and in need of protection and support. These children and young people would be placed at further disadvantage if the local authority was unable to support and facilitate contact between the children and their family.

36. 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		**x**	

Marriage		x	

37. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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	

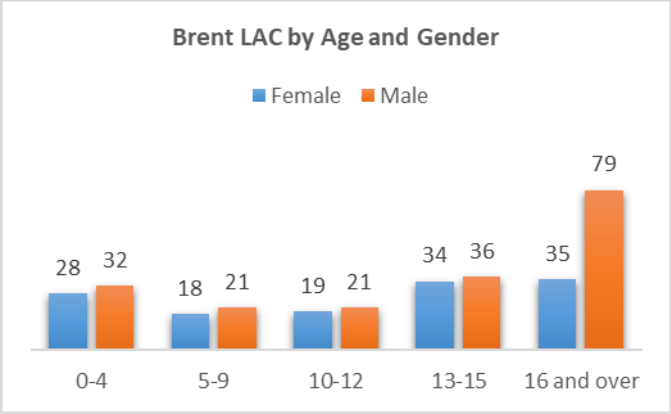
If you have answered YES to ANY of the above, then proceed to section B.
If you have answered NO to ALL of the above, then proceed straight to section D.

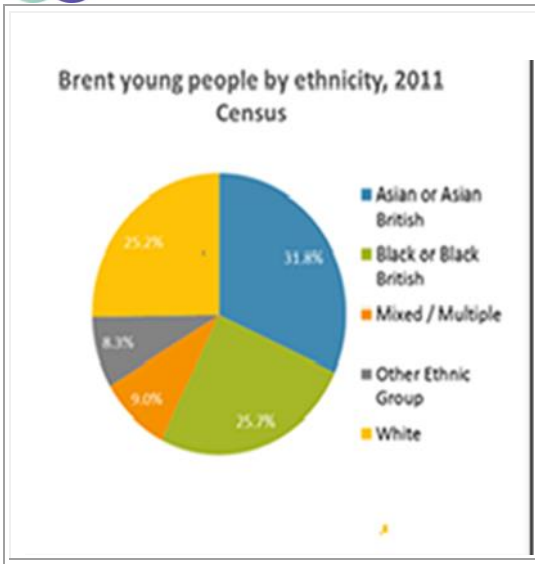
SECTION B – IMPACTS ANALYSIS

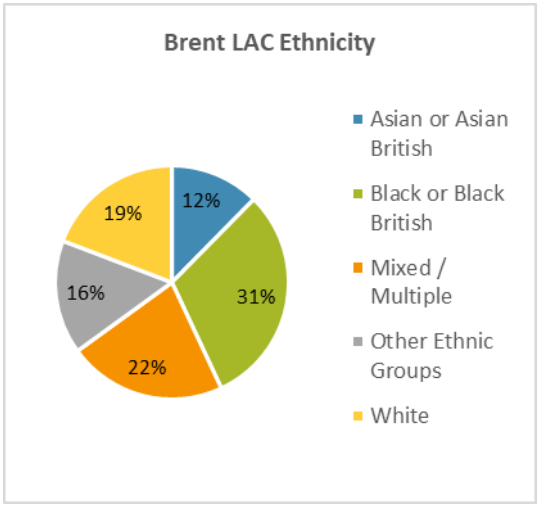
29. Outline what information and evidence have you gathered and considered for this analysis. If there is little, then explain your judgements in detail and your plans to validate them with evidence. If you have monitoring information available, include it here.

Information and evidence is based on the demographic of care experienced children and young people, who are already at a disadvantage because of their early childhood and care experiences.

Brent has 323 looked after children as of the 30/11/2023.







30. 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	The Contact Team provides services for children and young people aged 0-18 years, and therefore any impact of this proposal will affect this demographic more substantially. Negative potential impacts: • **Unable to provide the necessary contact supervision for children and their family**, resulting in children not being able to see their birth family and complaints, legal challenge/Judicial Review, reputational damage for the council. • **Delays in providing contact,** resulting in children not being able to see their birth family and complaints, legal challenge/Judicial Review, reputational damage for the council. • **Increased pressure on social work teams to facilitate and/or source external contact supervisors and venues** where this cannot be managed by the Contact Team within their given resource. Positive impacts: • **Tighter financial controls** in relation to outsourced services will enable enable greater scrutiny of the financial commitments we are entering into, leading to

	savings from efficiency and consistency of provision across CYP services. • **Clearer/tighter commissioning arrangements** for external contact resources will enable greater scrutiny of the financial commitments we are entering into, leading to savings from efficiency and consistency of provision across CYP services. • **Restructuring the balance of permanent and sessional/agency contact workers** gives an opportunity to have greater control over management of contact provision, and potential creates savings due to the reduction of sessional/agency spend.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	n/a

RACE

Details of impacts identified	I have also considered that the negative impact of change, mentioned above, are more likely to impact those children from global majority backgrounds than the population at large, as children from the global majority are over represented with in the looked after population as per tables above.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	n/a

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	n/a

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	n/a

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	n/a

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	n/a

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	n/a

31. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

If the local authority is not able to promote and provide contact services for looked after children, the council could be deemed to be acting unlawfully.

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

No

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

A business case is currently being prepared to look at the different options available to the service in relation to reducing spend by increasing the number permanent contact workers which would reduce the reliance on agency staff. Data is currently being collated from both Finance and Contact services to inform this report.

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

Unfortunately, due to the statutory duty to provide this service, providing contact for children and families is not an option, particularly when the local authority have issued care proceedings and the family court have directed a certain level of contact.

The negative impacts that we have control over is the way in which we organise, staff, commission this service, and the aim with this piece of work is to ensure that the local authority is getting value for money and saving money through efficiencies.

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

Sept-Oct 2023- discussions with team and finance partners and collation of data to inform a Business Case.

Nov-Dec 2023- Business Case to be finalised.

Between January-March 2023 activity will focus on making the changes required

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.

Providing contact for children and families is a statutory duty for the local authority, therefore this will mean that the savings identified will have to be achieved in the way in which we organise, staff, and commission services moving forward, not by ceasing or stopping the provision of contact.
The overall aim of this piece of work is to ensure that the local authority is getting value for money and saving money through efficiencies in the way in which the service is provided, therefore having limited impact on the contact provision directly to children and families.

SECTION D – RESULT

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

A	**CONTINUE WITH THE POLICY/PROPOSAL UNCHANGED**	
B	**JUSTIFY AND CONTINUE THE POLICY/PROPOSAL**	**x**

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
Finalise Business Case	Proposal to Director/Corporate Director re: staffing changes in Contact Team	Kelli Eboji	31/12/2023
Information for all external contact services available in one spreadsheet(including services procured by Localities)		Elena Muller	31/12/2023
Meeting with Localities and Commissioning team to look at commissioning of adhoc external contact services		Kelli Eboji	31/1/2023

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Kelli Eboji, Head of Service
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care

HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**25/26 CYP01: Reduce provision from Council-run Willow Nursery (Early Help)**
DEPARTMENT:	**CYP**
TEAM:	**Early Help**
LEAD OFFICER:	**Serita Kwofie**
DATE:	**19/11/2023**

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

Review the Willow Nursery delivery model to ensure the provision is sustainable without funding from the General Fund as well as with the proposed reduction of the funding from the High Needs Block

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

Willow Nursery includes provision for children with SEND. A new business model could change the offer of the provision for parents, carers and their children. The new business model could also affect staff at the Nursery. The review could reduce the number of places available or increase the offer in the context of the Government's new policy to extend entitlements for 2-year-olds and babies of 9 months of age and upwards from April 2024. Any reduction in childcare capacity, at a time when the government is expanding the free entitlement offer, may make it challenging to meet targets once they are set.

40. 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, there is relevance to equality in relation to gender as women are highly represented in the staff complement in nursey school. Any potential reduction in staff numbers, is likely to disproportionately impact on female staff members. In addition to this, the potential loss of nursery provision will impact some of Brent's most

vulnerable children as the majority of places are held by children who are CIN & CP and or who have additional needs and disabilities.

41. 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		**X**	
Marriage		**X**	

42. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

36. 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.

Evidence will be gathered in order to establish the new delivery model. The proposal may impact negatively upon the community and users of the Nursery as the proposed delivery model may lead to a reduction in the number of universal and targeted places available. In addition, it may also impact on female staff negatively as they form the majority of the workforce.

37. 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	The proposed model may impact on children under 5 by reducing access to good quality childcare and specialist nursery provision.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	Willow Nursery includes a SEND provision. The proposed model may impact upon children with SEND negatively. The setting also has places for CIN and CP children who could also be affected.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	The data on ethnicity breakdown of the children on roll shows over 90% of the children that attend the provision are from an ethnic minority background. Any reduction in number of places will have a disproportionate impact on children from ethnic minority groups.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	Women are highly represented in the staff complement at the Nursery. Any potential reduction in staff numbers is likely to disproportionately impact on female staff members.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	N/A

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	N/A

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	N/A

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	N/A

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	N/A

38. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

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

Engagement with stakeholders is yet to take place, but will consider all groups, particularly those likely to be most affected.

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

- Percentage of female staff at the Nursery.
- Numbers of children with SEND and CIN/CP who attend the Nursery.
- Local childcare sufficiency data which may be required to mitigate against any service reduction.
- Further detail regarding the expanded childcare provision.

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

The proposed model is likely to happen in tandem with the Government's plans to extend free childcare entitlements. From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare. From September 2024, 15 hours of free childcare will be extended to all children from the age of nine months. The new model will take into account potential funding streams that will arise from the expansion of childcare under this scheme.

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

Monitoring will be done by continually reviewing the provision in consultation with staff and users of the Nursery.

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.

The proposal will continue as the budget for the Nursery will be reduced given that it will no longer be supported by the General Fund. Provision will be reviewed and the model of operation amended, with the focus being on reducing any potential negative impact on groups with a protected characteristic.

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
Review options for operating models	Internal decision to be made on most viable option to be taken forward	Serita Kwofie	Jan 2024
Engagement with staff	Consultation to take place and feedback considered.	TBC	Mar 2024
Engagement with Parents and Carers to seek their views	Consultation to take place and feedback considered.	TBC	May 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Serita Kwofie – Head of Early Help
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care

Brent

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	25/26 CYP05: Barnado's Family Wellbeing Centre support service contract reduction
DEPARTMENT:	Children and Young People
TEAM:	Early Help
LEAD OFFICER:	Serita Kowfie
DATE:	28/11/2023

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

To contribute to the agreed savings required we aim to reduce the Barnado's Family Wellbeing Centre (FWC) support service contract by 5% in 2024-25 financial year, and by a further 5% in 2025-26 financial year. This would provide a total saving of £62,169 over 2 financial years. The current Barnado's contract delivers a range of services within the Brent FWCs including:

- Family Support Assistant service providing direct, group and practical support to vulnerable families
- Early Years Worker service providing direct support, parenting programmes and identification of SEND needs
- Crèche provision within each FWC enabling parents to access support services such as parenting programmes, participation forums, and information advice and guidance
- Volunteering programme, providing volunteers at each FWC to help for example with administration, group delivery and peer-to-peer support.

The reduction in the support service contract will focus on the crèche provision and include mitigation options to reduce the impact on service delivery.

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

The existing crèche support service provides as and when workers for the care of young children during for example parenting programmes, participation forums and information, advice and guidance sessions. A reduction in crèche provision could prevent the parents of young children from accessing support programmes due to childcare barriers, meaning some services and support may not be accessible. In general parents accessing the creche are mums from ethnic groups reflecting the local communities the centres are located in.

45. 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, as the reduction in the creche service could limit the accessibility of some services to parents, particularly impacting on women from particular ethnic groups.

46. 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	Neutral/None	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	

47. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

SCREENING CHECKLIST		
	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

43. 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.

After considering the 4 elements of the Barnardo's service contract:

- Reducing the EYW service would not be viable as a x6 workers are attached to each FWC and this would impact on the wider delivery model
- Reducing the FSA service would not be viable as a x6 workers are attached to each FWC and this would impact on the wider delivery model
- Reducing the volunteering programme would not be viable as volunteers are used to co-deliver parenting programmes, cover reception when staff are on leave and provide peer-to-peer support.

Managements view is the reduction of crech provision will have the least impact on service users and the FWC delivery model. This option will also allow us to continue to provide Brent's Early Help offer and linked DfE Suppoting Families, Family Hub and Best Start for Life programmes, whilst making the required savings.

44. 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	The crèche provision enables parents to participate in FWC support services. A reduction in this service could have a negative impact on families with young children who do not have alternative care options meaning some services and support may not be accessible.
DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	The majority of parents accessing the creche are women from global majority ethnic groups. A reduction in creche support could prevent women from particular ethnic groups accessing services and support from the FWC.
SEX	
Details of impacts identified	The majority of parents accessing the creche are women. A reduction in creche support could prevent women accessing services and support from the FWC.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	Not applicable.

45. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No.

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

We will use the Parent and Carer Voice Forum and FWC governance arrangements to gain feedback on the proposed changes from service users. Any proposed service reduction will be agreed in partnership with the provider Barnardo's.

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

None.

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

Not applicable.

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

Monitoring will take place via:

- Ongoing engagement with the Parent Carer Voice Forum
- Reviewing FWC performance data
- FWC governance arrangements
- Barnardo's informal and formal contract monitoring
- Annual Parent/ Carer survey.

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.

Based on the analysis managements view is that a reduction in the crèche provision would have the least impact on service users and to proceed with the contract savings.

A range of mitigation measures to reduce the impact on service users have been identified:

- New processes will be put in place that minimise wasted hours of the crèche, staff are to call parents the day before a session to confirm numbers and ensure the creche is staffed accordingly.
- Reviewing the creche offer where only 1 or 2 children are booked, to support parents to look for alternative childcare such as family or friends. If this is still not viable a childminder could be used which is more cost effective.
- Make more effective use of planning so potentially multiple activities could be delivered at the same time so creche usage could be maximised and the total number of creches needed are reduced.

There will be an extension of free Early Years childcare as reported in the 2023 Budget. Currently, parents who work more than 16 hours a week and earn less than £100,000 are entitled to 30 hours free childcare a week for children aged three to four. From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare. From September 2024, 15 hours of free childcare will be extended to all children from the age of nine months. From September 2025, working parents of children under the age of five will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week. From September 2024, all eligible working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old will be able to access funding for 15 hours per week of education and care for 38 weeks of the year. We expect these changes to benefit families with young children and reduce the need for creche services.

Another option that could be explored is to offset the contract reduction with funding from the Start for Life programme and/ or other grant funding. This option would be

time-limited until March 2025 when funding for this programme ceases, but could give time to find alternative funding sources.

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
Engagement with Parent and Carer Voice Forum	Consultation to take place and feedback considered.	Liz Parton	Ongoing
Engagement with Barnardo's to see their views	Consultation to take place and feedback considered.	Simon Topping	December 2023
Crèche provision procedures to be reviewed	Staff made aware of crèche provision changes.	Simon Topping	January 2024
Make more effective use of planning	Multiple activities taking place at the same time to maximise creche usage	Simon Topping	April 2024
Access and analyse demographic information	Managers are better informed regarding the	Simon Topping	February 2024

for parents accessing the creche	potential impact on protected groups		
Extend early years child care roll out	More childcare options are available for parents	Sasi Srinivasan	Phased April 24 Sept 24 Sept 25

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Serita Kwofie
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Palvinder Kudhail, Director of Early Help and Social Care

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	**2024-25 RS12:To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of**
DEPARTMENT:	**Resident Services**
TEAM:	**Environment and Leisure**
LEAD OFFICER:	**C Whyte**
DATE:	**29/11/2023**

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

This proposal seeks to increase the annual subscription charge to households for the provision of the Council's garden waste collection service. The intention is to increase the fee from £60 per annum to £65 per annum, so a £5 increase for each household that subscribes. With 20,000 subscribers, this will raise an additional £100,000 that will contribute to the Council's corporate savings programme. The service itself is long-established and will remain unchanged.

To account for individual circumstances and any difficulty in meeting costs, a 20% discount already applies if customers are in receipt of the following benefits -

- Council Tax support
- Housing Benefit
- Income related job seekers allowance
- Pension credit (guaranteed rate)
- Income support
- Universal Credit (the Housing element)

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

Anyone who has a need for the service and who may have difficulty meeting the additional cost, though concessions do apply.

50. 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.
It is important to note that the service offered does not create discrimination, harassment or any form of victimisation, rather it promotes the ease of day to day life in the borough and is well-established as a popular service offer to Brent residents and has 20,000 long-standing customers. Concessions already do apply.

51. 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		**x**	
Marriage		**x**	

52. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

50. 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.

This analysis assumes in some cases elderly and disabled residents have a lower income and there is a risk that the increased charge would impact on them.

51. 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	In some cases elderly residents have a lower income and there is a risk that the cost increase would impact on them. It is also assumed elderly residents may be less able to transport garden waste for composting and so may be more reliant on this collection service as an alternative to transporting waste themselves for composting.

DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	In some cases disabled residents have a lower income and there is a risk that the charge increase would impact on them. It is also assumed disabled residents may be less able to transport garden waste for composting and so may be more reliant on this collection service as an alternative to transporting waste themselves for composting.

RACE

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

SEX

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	None identified.

52. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

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

There will be consultation with key stakeholders, and a public consultation undertaken on the Council's budget setting process, of which this will be an constituent proposal.

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

None identified.

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

N/A

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

The Council will continue to monitor levels of subscription to the service, service complaints and any requests for concessionary access to the service, and alterations can be made as necessary.

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.

There may only be a hypothetical adverse impact of this policy on two protected characteristics, but this cannot be certain and relies on very general assumptions about the financial circumstances of individuals within these groups and their ability to pay increased costs, which may be very variable. In mitigation, and to account for individual circumstances and any difficulty in meeting costs, a 20% discount already applies if customers are in receipt of the following benefits - • Council Tax support • Housing Benefit • Income related job seekers allowance • Pension credit (guaranteed rate) • Income support • Universal Credit (the Housing element)

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
n/a			

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Chris Whyte, Director of Environment & Leisure
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Chris Whyte, Director of Environment & Leisure
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Chris Whyte, Director of Environment & Leisure

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	To increase Council Tax by 4.99% in 2024/25
DEPARTMENT:	Council wide
TEAM:	n/a
LEAD OFFICER:	n/a
DATE:	14 November 2023

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

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

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

The council is required to make significant savings in order to deliver a legally required balanced budget. In order to help overcome this it is proposed to increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase. This is the maximum increase allowed by government. The proposal will generate an additional £7.5m of recurring income for the Council and therefore avoid having to make further savings to key council services such as adult social care, children's services, etc.

This will impact on all residents within Brent who are eligible to pay Council Tax. Under the changes that are being made to local government funding, there is more emphasis on generating more funding locally (i.e. becoming more self-determinant). This proposal is linked to one aspect of local government funding where the council has some discretion to raise additional funds by increases to Council Tax.

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

All households in Brent, apart from those eligible for 100% Council Tax discount.

The increase by band and the number of properties affected are shown below.

Band	Amount payable in 2023/24 (Brent share)	Amount payable in 2024/25 (Brent share)	Increase per annum	Increase per month	Increase per week	Total number of dwellings affected
A	£993.54	£1,043.10	£49.56	£4.13	£0.95	6,070
B	£1,159.13	£1,216.95	£57.82	£4.82	£1.11	13,937
C	£1,324.72	£1,390.80	£66.08	£5.51	£1.27	41,228
D	£1,490.31	£1,564.65	£74.34	£6.20	£1.43	38,895

E	£1,821.49	£1,912.35	£90.86	£7.57	£1.75	23,166
F	£2,152.67	£2,260.05	£107.38	£8.95	£2.06	6,502
G	£2,483.85	£2,607.75	£123.90	£10.33	£2.38	3,438
H	£2,980.62	£3,129.30	£148.68	£12.39	£2.86	252

If this proposal is approved it will affect all households in Brent's 133,488 residential dwellings, that will see their Council Tax bills increase, unless they are eligible for 100% Council Tax support. Currently, approximately 20% (26,200 households out of the 133,488) of households in Brent receive full or partial Council Tax support, which means that they will receive full or partial protection from the increase. In addition, those households where there is one eligible adult resident or less (38,808 households), a reduction of up to 50% on their bill will be due.

The Council Tax increase will mean that the budget of Adult Social Care services will grow by a further £3.0m which will enable the service to meet increasing demand of current and future service users, who are among the most vulnerable members of Brent's community. This is a positive impact.

55. 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. This proposal will have both positive and negative impacts on residents and will potentially hit groups with protected characteristics harder. However, since the council tax is applicable to all properties it is not considered that the increase targets any one particular group rather it is an increase that is applied across the board. At the same time because the increase is applied to all properties it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. However, on the latter point there is a council tax support scheme that offers support to vulnerable people and people on low incomes that may cover up to 100% of the council tax for both pensioners and those of working age. In addition, the Brent Resident Support Fund (RSF) provides further assistance to vulnerable residents, including but not limited to help with the cost of their Council tax bill.

56. 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	Neutral/None	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**	

57. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an "X".

SCREENING CHECKLIST		
	YES	**NO**
Have you established that the policy or proposal *is* 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

57. 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.

The council has analysed the statutory council tax base return which shows the total number of households that are required to pay council tax and the households who are eligible for council tax support.

Other than this it is not possible to conduct further impact analyses as the proposed Council Tax increase will affect households in Brent in different ways based on their financial circumstances. However, low income households are likely to be protected as they will see increases in their Council Tax support which will either fully or partially offset this increase. The council tax support scheme is also proposed to be reviewed and further analysis on the cumulative impact will be assessed.

58. 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	N/A
DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
SEX	

Details of impacts identified	N/A
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	N/A

59. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

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

Yes to both. Significant engagement / consultation is planned between December 2023 and February 2024 ahead of the decision being made by full council on 29 Feburary 2024.

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

None required

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

If the proposal is rejected, the Adult Social Care budget will not grow by £3.0m, which could pose challenges to the service to meet growing demand of current and future service users. Failure to meet the increasing demand and diverse needs of current and future service users would have a negative impact on those most at need. It will also likely lead to increased crisis costs and further impact upon budget pressures. The 2.99% increase in Council Tax for general use should have a positive impact on some equality groups as it prevents an additional reduction of £4.5m in the Council's budget. Without a specific alternative proposal the exact benefit to specific groups of residents, staff and external stakeholders is uncertain, but a reduction in budget at short notice will limit the scope of the Council to reduce the impact on services used by vulnerable groups of people. While the Council Tax proposal will increase the financial pressure on some households, the Council Tax support scheme will partially or fully mitigate this impact for those households who are living on low incomes and are eligible for Council Tax support. Further, single households will have the impact mitigated by the 25% discount offered to single households.

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

If the Council Tax proposal is approved, the Council will continue to monitor the impact on equality groups to ensure that any unexpected consequences and/or adverse impact are promptly identified and mitigated. This will take place when the new council tax support scheme is implemented.

The existing powers under Section 13A of the Local Government Act 1992 allow the Council to reduce Council Tax by up to 100%. The process for applying is detailed on the Council's website.

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.

It is proposed to continue with the proposal. The reason for this is that the Council Tax increase will help to protect front line services, reduce the amount of savings required and provide much needed additional growth for the Adult Social Care budget. The Council Tax increase proposed is equivalent to approximately £7.5m of additional funding. If this funding was not available, services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care would have to be significantly reduced. Brent has processes in place for applying a Council Tax support/reduction/exemption to those eligible, therefore whilst this increase will impact across the board, it is anticipated that the impact will be proportionate dependent on an individual's circumstances and whether they receive a Council Tax support/reduction/exemption.

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
Review impact of council tax increase	Better understanding of negative impacts	Peter Cosgrove	April – June 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Peter Cosgrove, Head of Revenues & Debt
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Ravinder Jassar, Deptuy Director of Finance
OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR:	Thomas Cattermole, Director of Customer Access

Cumulative Equalities Assessment: Budget Proposals 2024/25

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this equality assessment is to provide an analysis of the likely impact of the council's budget savings proposals on residents and community groups with 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership[1], race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity. Section 149, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires the council in the exercise of its functions to have regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the act;
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The council is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. It seeks to ensure that all residents, employees and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services and fair and equal opportunities. This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes.

Approach to considering equalities

The budget savings proposals have all been subject to an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) screening, which helps to establish their relevance to the council's equalities duties and determine whether a full EIA is required. The screening assesses the potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics. Guidance and training were issued to all officers on how to undertake an EIA. A full EIA was not required where it was clearly demonstrated that there were no negative equality impacts. However, EIAs are living documents and as projects/proposals develop, and further evidence of impacts becomes available, if any unforeseen impacts emerge, they should be reviewed.

This document highlights the equality impacts for the 2024-25 budget proposals. Individual EIA screenings for each proposal and full Equality Impact Analyses are attached.

Ten proposals have been identified as requiring a full EIA. The equality impacts concerned with these proposals are summarised in this report. The Council must carefully consider and have regard to the impact of its savings proposals on the PSED; and take a reasonable and proportionate view regarding the overall impact and seek to mitigate impacts where possible.

It is important to note that in some cases, assessments have indicated both a negative and positive impact. In these instances, it has been highlighted that short term impacts of the proposal may be negative for certain groups, however over time, they will bring about improvements for clients and service users.

Overall Assessment

No direct discrimination has been identified as a result of the budget proposals. A significant proportion of the savings proposals may have a negative impact on equality of opportunity and may have a negative impact on opportunities to promote good relations, however measures have been identified to mitigate this.

These impacts will be kept under review. The proposed budget saving proposals are considered reasonable and have shown due regard to the PSED.

2 DEMOGRAPHY OVERVIEW

Key facts about Brent's demographic profile are taken from the data sources **Population change in Brent** and the **Equality profile of Brent.** They show the make-up of the borough, help us to identify potential impacts; and identify the increasing pressures and demand for council services.

- Brent is home to approximately 339,800 residents and is the fifth largest borough in London.
- The borough has a population density of 7,859 people per square kilometre – the 14th highest density in England, and the highest in Outer London.

- The borough's population has grown by 28,600 since the last census in 2011, a rise of 9%. This compares with an increase of 8% across London and 6% across England & Wales. This represents a new historical high in the size of the borough's population.

- In common with other London Boroughs, Brent has a younger age profile when compared with England & Wales, characterised by more adults aged 20-44 and fewer older residents. Around 12% of Brent residents were aged 65 and over compared with 19% nationally.

A summary of the key protected characteristics in Brent are as follows:

Age

- In line with wider trends, the population is ageing with 29% of residents being aged 50 or over, which is up from 25% in 2011. The number of over 50s has increased by 20,800 since 2011, a rise of 27%. In contrast, the number of children under five has fallen by -2,400, a drop of 11%. This is consistent with a downward trend in birth rates in recent years. Similar patterns are evident across London, and nationally.

Disability

- In Brent, 41,163 residents declared disability under the Equality Act. This comprises of 12 per cent of the total borough population. The largest number of people who declared disability (8,398) comes from those who declared their ethnicity as White British which are the third largest community in the borough.

Gender reassignment

- A total of 3,611 adults in Brent responded 'no' to the question 'Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?' Of this group, more than half provided no further detail about their gender identity (1,947 residents), with 782 identifying as a trans man and 613 identified as a trans woman. The transgender population has a slightly younger age profile when compared to the population generally. The percentage who are transgender was highest among the 35-44 age group (1.7%) and lowest among those aged 75 and over (0.6%). By sex, men were more likely to identify as transgender than women (1.5% of males vs. 1.1% of females).

Note: given the fact that some chose did not answer the question, and less than half provided write-in details about their gender identity, these statistics provide minimum estimates of groups within Brent's transgender population.

Marriage and civil partnership

- In 2021, just over 4 in 10 people (43.3%) said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 43.5% in 2011. The percentage of adults in Brent that had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership increased from 6.2% to 6.5%.

Pregnancy and maternity

- Brent has relatively high birth rates. In 2018, there were 4,705 births in Brent – which equates to 68.1 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 – well above the national rate (59.2). Three quarters of all births in Brent were to women born outside the UK (75%) – this is the highest rate in England and Wales, reflecting the diversity of the borough's population (awaiting update from Census 2021).

Race

- Brent has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country. The majority of residents are from ethnic minority groups: 19% are from White minority groups and 65% are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups (the 2nd highest rate in England & Wales, after Newham at 69%). Brent and Newham have the smallest White British populations nationally (15%).

Religion or belief

- The borough's three largest religious groups are Christian (39%), Muslim (21%) and Hindu (16%). Overall, 82% of residents had a religion – the fourth highest rate in England and Wales. The borough has the second largest Hindu population in England and Wales, and the 10th largest Muslim population (as a percentage of the population). Other smaller, but significant, religious groups in Brent include, Jewish (1.1%); Buddhist (0.9%); Jain (0.7%) and Sikh (0.5%) populations. Brent has the 2nd largest Jain population in England & Wales after Harrow.

Sex

- The Brent population is 49% male and 51% female. Women comprise just over half (51%) of the population but make up a higher proportion of the elderly population: 59% of those aged 80 and over are female and this rises to two thirds for the over 90s (67%)

Sexual orientation

- Statistics In Brent, 85.1% of adults identified as straight or heterosexual and 3.2% identified with a LGB+ orientation. The remaining 11.7% chose not to answer the sexual orientation question. Of all those who did answer the question, 96.4% identified as straight or heterosexual and 3.6% identified as LGB+.

3 IMPACT OF SAVING PROPOSALS

Summary 24/25 budget proposals

Although initial equality screenings have been undertaken to ascertain impact in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), some of the proposals are in their formative stages and are still to be developed or are subject to consultations. Consequently, as the proposals are developed further equality analysis will be undertaken to assess the PSED. It is important to note that several of the proposals have identified no impact on the PSED. Where a full equality impact assessment has been carried out, this is noted next to the proposal.

The proposals are:

2024-25 CHW01 Technology Enabled Care: Enabling residents to self-manage their health and well-being, including preventing and reducing the need for care and support through technology so they can stay independent and well in their homes and communities. This should be beneficial for service users and further consultation is being carried out. This will require digital confidence and specialist capability and capacity to support the programme. Although this programme should empower and support service users, it would be advisable for this assessment to be kept under review following consultation exercises and co-production with service users.

2024-25 CHW02 Managing demand at the front door, prevention and early intervention: Managing demand and complexity of support with a consistent prevention and reablement offer and a focus on Care Act statutory responsibilities including integrated market management. As part of business as usual, the service will continue to review clients currently receiving packages of care and direct payments. This will include all reviews including the clients currently receiving high cost packages of care and ensuring the packages are more proportionate and meeting wellbeing principles.

2024-25 CHW03 Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence: Reducing expenditure in mental health and learning disability including transitions so Brent benchmarks in the middle quartile with comparator authorities. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2025-26 CHW03 Workforce Efficiency: Commitment to reducing staffing cost across the Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate.

2025-26 CHW01 Reduction in building based provision of access to volunteering and employment opportunities: Developing a wider range of day opportunities with partners and communities and reducing building-based provision. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2025-26 CHW02 Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties: Reduction of contract value at 3-year break point for Homeless and ex-offenders. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2024-25 CYPO1 Contract for the Provision of a Targeted Service that Promotes Education, Employment and Training for Young People. The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employment and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support and will impact equally on all young people irrespective of age.

The current contract ends on 31 March 2024. The planned contract value from April 2024 onwards is £565,000 per annum (reflecting a previous saving of £80K). A 10% saving is proposed when the contract is re-procured. This will be targeted at the non-statutory element of the contract. Reduction of services will be in bespoke projects for targeted groups and the ending of a service for children who arrive from overseas in Year 11 and are placed currently in specialist English as an Additional Language provisions. The assessment indicates that this will have limited impact, as the majority of 16-18 year old NEETs per year, fall into the statutory area and will continue to receive targeted support. Additionally, links with other funded initiatives in Brent that address NEET are being utilised. It would be advisable for this assessment to be kept under review to monitor and evaluate the impact of reducing the non-statutory elements of the service contract. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2024-25 CYP02 Additional controls to better manage spot purchasing of specialist assessments required for child care proceedings cases (Localities / LACP / Early Help): Practitioners undertaking their own assessments, better due diligence of contracts, reviewing support packages.

*2024-25 CYP03 Utilising DSG to fund eligible services currently funded from the General Fund. Setting and School Effectiveness / Inclusion / Early Help***:** A review of Early Years functions that are funded through Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) across Setting and School Effectiveness, Early Help and Inclusion Service is being undertaken to reduce duplication. This will result in some DSG savings (1FTE equivalent) which will be repurposed to fund capacity in the Performance Management and Information Team that is eligible to be funded by DSG.

2024-25 CYP04 Reduction in school improvement funds in Setting and School Effectiveness Service. Setting and School Effectiveness: Reduction in budget identified for targeted school improvement activity. Could impact on available support for planned work with schools in relation to disproportionality. The general fund contributes to the team following the loss of the School Improvement and Brokering grant. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2024-25 CYP05 Freeman Family Centre – contact activity Early Help / LACP: The Young Brent Foundation are taking over tenancy of the Freeman Centre. The current contract with Barnardo's is ending and there is scope to reduce this by £50k as part of new arrangements with YBF. The other £50k will be found by reducing allocated growth to the existing contact service for children in care which operates from the Freeman Family Centre. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2024-25 CYP06 Offsetting overheads/management costs within Early Help through delivery of the Best Start for Life programme. (Early Help): The 3 year programme started in April 2023. There is scope to offset general fund management costs that support the volunteer programme and the centralised co-ordination of the parenting offer. When the programme ends there will be a 70k budget gap that will need to be filled from the service through other service reductions or other grant funding available at that time.

2025-26 CYP01 Reduce provision from Council-run Willow Nursery (Early Help): Reduce provision from 98 to 68 children, focusing solely on provision for children with SEND. This could result in the deletion of 7 posts achieving a saving of £250k. Other vacancies in the local early years sector should be able to absorb the impact of the service reduction for those families affected. Further detailed consideration will be given to the impact on the existing staffing structure and current leadership arrangements which may reduce this saving. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2025-26 CYP02 Set up and run new residential children's home. (Forward Planning Performance and Partnerships / Looked After Children and Permanency): Reduce allocated growth to the department for children's placements.

2025-26 CYP03 Reduction in management capacity within Early Help and Localities. Redefining early help and bringing early help practitioners under the management of social care teams – particular focus on restructuring edge of care work. (Early Help / Localities):

This will entail a restructure and HR consultation. This will result in fewer handoffs for families and a more seamless step up and step down. Equivalent of up to 6 FTE. Review will also consider replacement of some social work posts with business support replacements where safe to do so.

2025-26 CYP04 Short breaks – selling increased respite bed nights at the Council-run Short Break Centre to other local authorities. (FPPP/Localities): Income generation. Current income target is £140k. Ensure centre capacity is managed effectively to allow an increase of bed nights sold by an additional 52 nights per annum.

2025-26 CYP05 Reduce the Family Wellbeing Support service contract by 10% when it expires. (Early Help): Contract currently operated by Barnardo's that provides a range of support services for families from the FWCs including general advice and parenting support. Contract expires in November 2024. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2025-26 CYP06 Reduce general fund contribution to commissioned services that support children's school readiness and health and wellbeing through a joint commissioning approach within the ICP. Contribution towards speech and language therapy contract for delivery within Family Wellbeing Centres (FWCs). Also, contribution towards targeted mental health support contract. This may be a combined health/public health input to reach this target.

*2024-25 CR01 Volunteering Platform***:** Not to procure a new Volunteering Platform.

2024-25 CR02 Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies: Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies.

2024-25 FR01 Increase Civic Centre Car Park Charging Tariffs in line with inflation/local prices The current Civic Centre Car Park charging tariffs were introduced in September 2022: There is an opportunity to increase the car park charging tariffs in line with inflation and the rates charged at other car parking facilities within the vicinity of the Civic Centre from April 2024.

2024-25 FR02 Property Strategy to maximise rental return on council assets: A new Property Strategy will allow the council to maximise the opportunity of increasing revenue from its assets. A starting target which we would endeavour to increase over time.

2024-25 FR03 Deletion of three vacant posts: The current finance establishment has a number of vacancies. It is proposed to delete three posts that are currently filled by agency workers. Digital transformation will lead to improvements in self-service to enable further transactional activity to be reduced.

2024-25 G01 Training budget reductions: Local training budgets have not been fully utilised in several teams and for the Member Development Programme. It is proposed to reduce these budgets accordingly. In both cases there has been an increase in in-house provision of training and therefore less dependence on purchasing from external organisations.

*2024-25 G02 Member allowances***:** A reduction to reflect the reduction in the number of councillors as a result of the boundary review.

2024-25 G03 Elections Legal provision: Currently the elections team have budgets to fund the extra legal support that might be necessary were there to be a challenge related to electoral registration or an election. Most years this has not been used. It is proposed in future to rely on the reserves that have been established for elections and call on those should such a challenge occur.

2024-25 G04 Misc overheads: This reduction is to reflect existing underspends on stationery and mail.

2024-25 G05 Review of support arrangements in Executive and Member Services: There is scope to reduce the amount of administrative support provided within the service.

2024-25 G06 Legal Services change approach to training posts: Currently Legal Services has three traditional graduate level trainee solicitor posts. It is proposed to reduce this to one post. As trainees are a valuable source of recruits to qualified posts, it is proposed over time to convert two existing Legal Assistant posts to solicitor apprentice posts. These require a lower level of qualification, and the Apprentice Levy can be used to fund the qualification element of the training.

2024-25 G07 Increase income target for services to schools and for legal charges to third parties: Income from these sources has increased, for example through more schools buying into the services available from the Governance Department and work undertaken in relation to developments.

2024-25 G08 Realign graduate budget: The number of graduates recruited under the council's programme is variable and as appointments are made part way through the financial year the precise costs are unpredictable. A smoothing reserve has therefore been established to manage this issue and it proposed that the core budget be reduced accordingly. The proposed reduction for 2024/25 is part of an overall £15k reduction already partly implemented.

2024-25 G09 Discontinue use of underutilised IT on-line systems/services: A review has identified several underutilised resources across the Governance department and ceasing to subscribe to these will enable savings to be made.

2025-26 G01 Review of support arrangements in Executive and Member Services: There is scope to reduce the amount of administrative support provided within the service.

2025-26 G02 Legal Services change approach to training posts: Currently Legal Services has three traditional graduate level trainee solicitor posts. It is proposed to reduce this to one post. As trainees are a valuable source of recruits to qualified posts, it is proposed to over time to convert two existing Legal Assistant posts to solicitor apprentice posts. These require a lower level of qualification, and the Apprentice Levy can be used to fund the qualification element of the training.

2025-26 G03 Increase income target for services to schools and for legal charges to third parties: Income from these sources has increased, for example through more schools buying into the services available from the Governance Department and work undertaken in relation to developments.

2025-26 G04 Changes to the Health and Safety team: It is proposed to reduce the health and safety team by one post to reflect lower demand due to changes in the way training on Health and Safety is delivered and to the type of incidents in which the central team are required to be involved.

2025-26 G05 Discontinue use of underutilised IT on-line systems/services: A review has identified several underutilised resources across the Governance department and ceasing to subscribe to these will enable savings to be made.

2024-25 RS01 Increased use of automation: Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all Resident Services departments (focusing on transactional services) with efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income.

2024-25 RS02 Business support efficiencies (link to £57K saving in Customer Access): Reduction in business support posts through alignment of support functions across Resident Services combined with improved forms and integration with back-office systems. Approximate 4 FTE staffing reduction.

*2024-25 RS03 Mobile telephony contract***:** Saving through new contract for mobile telephony.

2024-25 RS04 Licensing: Savings through application rationalisation and license management.

2024-25 RS05 Registration and Nationality – Income generation: Fee Increase 24/25 following an income freeze for 23/24.

2024-25 RS06 Libraries and Heritage - realignment of managerial responsibilities and posts: The restructure will focus on maximising income generation and delivering savings in 2024/25 – 2025/26.

2024-25 RS07 Community Hubs - Reduction in provision: Reduction in provision by 0.5 FTE S01 Hub Advisor.

2024-25 RS08 Revenue and Debt deletion of vacant posts: The drive to improve the self-service portal will enhance the customer experience reducing the need for the vast majority of residents to telephone the Council or visit community hubs. It would be advisable for this assessment to be kept under review, whereby the impact of reduction in posts can be monitored and evaluated over time.

2024-25 RS09 Customer Services and Assessments: Reduction in Benefit Assessment processing costs due to impact of Universal Credit. It is anticipated that there will be a case load reduction in Housing Benefits.

2024-25 RS10 Customer Access Improvement and Performance: Restructure and pooling of administrative functions across Resident Services. Approx 2 FTE Reductions.

2024-25 RS11 Implementation of boroughwide (except Wembley Park) selective licensing scheme: This is extra income into the General Fund and therefore has no negative impact on staff and service users. However, it is dependent upon approval by the Secretary of State.

2024-25 RS12 Increased subscription to the bulky waste service: This accounts for an increase in demand for this service from around 350 requests when Veolia were operating the bulky waste service to around 650 requests per month currently.

*2024-25 RS13 Increased subscription and £5 charge increase with respect to the garden waste service***:** To increase the annual subscription price from £60 to £65 an 8% increase to generate an additional income of about £100,000. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

2024-25 RS14 Commercialisation of parks/events: Create a programme of commercial events in parks to include a revision of fees and charges.

2024-25 RS15 Rental of Parks building space: To commercialise existing unused property space within parks.

2024-25 RS16 Licensing / sponsorship schemes in Parks: Offer space for commercial advertising in parks.

2024-25 RS17 Increase tennis/sports bookings: Create and advertise a revised sports booking programme that encourages better take up and which offers new activities.

2024-25 RS18 Grave tending / additional vaults in cemeteries: Offer a paid for grave tending service for families that may not be able to access the Brent cemeteries.

2024-25 RS19 Mortuary / Bereavement / Funeral Initiatives: An aggregation of a number of small-scale commercialisation opportunities relating to the funeral service.

2024-25 RS20 Cashless Parking opt In Reminders: The Council generating income through optional text reminders, which is expected to generate income in the region of £80k per annum.

2024-25 RS21 RLS Contract Efficiencies Post Year 1: Review of savings and efficiencies potential once the new contract operations have settled after year 1.

2024-25 RS22 Removal of vacant posts: An ongoing assessment of the need to recruit to vacant posts and whether these can be removed and the tasks accounted for in different ways.

Council Tax: *An increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase.* **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed**.

Proposals requiring a full equality assessment.

The proposed savings look to generate income for the Council, or to reduce or restructure service delivery for service users. Nine proposals completed a full equality impact assessment due to the potential impact they may have on service delivery through the reduction or change in the service being provided. Attached to this report are the supporting EIA screenings for each savings proposal as well as the full Equality Analysis (the latter of which are summarised below).

CHW01 (25/26): Reduction in building based provision to support individuals to access services more tailored to meet their needs and interests

There are two elements to the proposal. Firstly, a strategic shift to promote a sessional use of day opportunities and a more flexible offer. Individuals and their families, dependent on their care needs, will have the choice of support through building based and/or more community-based offers. Secondly, the proposal includes closure of the New Millennium Day Centre, offering people attending that centre alternative service provision.

The consultation on the future of New Millennium has concluded and it has been agreed that the New Millennium Day Centre will remain open. However its use will change as it will become the new location for the community wellbeing project that is currently being delivered from Bridge Park. Further work will be done in the coming months with users at New Millennium to determine how adult social care services will continue to be delivered from the site, using valued resources such as the art room and kiln, but being co-located with the community wellbeing project. A further consultation and engagement exercise will be planned to do this work, and service users will be properly informed of this plan in the coming weeks.

***Sessional day opportunities*:** Promoting the use of sessional day opportunities and providing a more flexible offer for the wider group of people attending day services (who do not access New Millennium Day Centre) the impact will be very limited as the plans do not involve existing service users changing their service unless at a future review they choose to access a different offer. However, potential impacts include:

Disability & Age: Overall, majority of people using day services are younger disabled people (under 65). Therefore, the impact will be predominantly for this working age cohort.

Race: Two thirds of the 320 people currently using day services are from an ethnic minority background. People from ethnic minority backgrounds will therefore be impacted by the proposals, but the intention is that many of these impacts will be positive – offering people more choice and flexibility in future should they have a preference for a different service. The proposal aims to provide access to services

which can better meet people's cultural needs. A move from the traditional model of day services should better meet some of the needs of people who currently do not, or cannot, attend services because they are not seen to meet their needs appropriately. This will include some of the more recently emerging communities in Brent.

Service users of the New Millennium Day Centre: The impact of the outlined proposal changes could potentially be negative for attendees of the New Millennium Day Centre. Although the centre will not close, its use will change. For some people they will experience disappointment, confusion, loss or concern about a change to their service. Some people may also be required to travel further to an alternative. Potential impacts on protected groups include:

Disability & Age: For those who use New Millennium Day Centre (19 of the 68 people are 65 and over) the impact will be one of disruption should they not be able to use the centre as they do not and be supported to find an alternative service. Any change to service provision will be completed following a person-centred review and will continue to meet the person's assessed care and support needs. Some of the people will be able to continue to be supported by Direct Services' remodelled offer (using John Billam and the wider community) and therefore may feel less disrupted as some of the staff will be familiar, for example. For others, workers will review needs and work with the person and their family to find a suitable alternative. It is possible that some people may have further to travel to their new service depending on choice and availability. These impacts will be considered as part of the consultation process and feed into the final decision making. As New Millennium Day Centre will remain open, some if not all current service users will in all likelihood be able to continue using the building in some form once the review of their care needs has taken place.

Race: Of the 68 people currently accessing New Millennium Day Centre, 57% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The impacts will be the similar to those with a disability, including disruption should the centre close and some people potentially having further to travel to their new service depending on choice and availability. These impacts will be considered as part of the consultation process and feed into the final decision making and the mitigations will be the same in terms of the support that will be offered to find appropriate alternatives. The intention remains that the alternatives should be positive with more choice and flexibility, with services able to meet needs within local communities.

Overall impact: The potential negative impacts relate to those 68 people currently accessing the New Millennium Day Centre. However, for the wider group of people attending day services (who do not access New Millennium Day Centre) the impact will be less and in some instances positive, as the plans do not involve existing service users changing their service unless at a future review they choose to access a different offer. The positive impacts relate to a greater choice and flexibility for people who use services. To enhance these, the intention is to ensure there is a good source of information, advice and guidance for people seeking a new service offer. This should be accessible to all service users including those who want to use their Direct Payments and also to staff who will be guiding and supporting service users to find an appropriate service or activity in the community.

The mitigation for negative impacts will be that individual reviews will be undertaken with people and the workers will ensure that the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligations to provide access to an appropriate service. People will continue to get their needs met and workers will consider the location of alternative services when helping people plan.

CHW02 (25/26): Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties

The council is currently funding six-housing related support (HRS) contracts: Homelessness and ex-offenders, Generic Floating Support, Handyperson Service, Mental health accommodation-based Services, Domestic violence refuges and single women with complex needs, and young person's accommodation-based services. The proposal is to review these contracts to see where there are areas that could be streamlined, contracts reduced and / or funded from other sources to enable the department to focus spend on Care Act responsibilities.

Although all these contracts are non-statutory services, individuals who may be referred or self-refer will have a degree of vulnerability and risk. Due to the nature of the services being provided, the impact on any changes to specific contracts could include increased waiting times to be able to access a service which may, in turn, increase the level of need and therefore when services are accessed, they are required for longer. Additionally, this could impact on the length of time an individual may have to wait to access these support services particularly if there were to be a spike in demand. They could also be potential impact on the following protected characteristics:

Age: The majority of support hours and accommodation provided from the HRS contracts is for individuals between 18-60. Two contracts provide a service for older individuals, these being, one up to the age of 65 (Mental Health) and one with no upper age limit (Handy person). The Young person's contract only supports individuals between 18-20. The two contracts at each end of the spectrum in terms of age (Handy person and young person's service) also have smaller amounts of support and could therefore be disproportionately affected should these contracts be reduced in any way.

Sex: Out of the six contracts only one is gender specific: the Domestic violence refuges and single women with complex needs service. This contract provides 200 support hours per week across 32 units to vulnerable women. The impacts would be similar to age in that a reduction in service may lead to longer waiting times and potentially increase the level of support required when accessed.

Disability: In addition to the issues of longer waiting times, which may also increase the level of needed when services are accessed, for disabled service users, there may be impact on their income if they have to pay more towards their care.

Overall impact: The review of the contracts is to identify efficiencies such as duplication of services and it is not anticipated that any service will cease in its entirety but possibly reduce or be delivered and accessed in a strength-based model. Nevertheless, longer

waiting times and a more limited access to the services will impact on service users as highlighted above. Steps will be taken to minimise the impact on individuals, as outlined in the EIA, and services will continue to be provided but this may be achieved in a different way and outside of the current contract.

CHW03 (24/25): Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence

Supporting people with Learning Disabilities and Mental Health to live as independently as possible and assisting them through sustainable long-term care. This includes right sizing care to reduce high expenditure packages in mental health and learning disability, including transitions that also offer more choice and control.

Proposal suggests reviewing current packages of care with clients, their family members, carers and statutory partners with the aim of identifying alternative packages where deemed appropriate. Savings will be achieved by supporting clients to step down from high cost, high support environments into less intense, lower supported environments.

Disability: All clients in this group will have a diagnosed mental illness or a learning disability. Therefore, there may be a period of initial deterioration. However, clients will be supported throughout the process, with the aim that they will be able to move away from dependence on adult social care and are empowered to take increased control of their lives, where appropriate.

Race: 77% of this client group identify as Black, Asian and any other ethnic minority group. Therefore, the impact of the changes proposed will impact on those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds considerably more than those from White British backgrounds. However, the aim of the proposal is to empower clients, providing them with more choice and control – therefore, it is suggested, that in the long term the impact of this proposal will be positive.

Overall impact: Changes to the services are likely to have a negative impact on client users at the beginning. This would be due to potential discomfort for users in the way their care is managed and how the services are being delivered. However, the primary aim of the project is to empower individuals with a mental health or learning disability diagnosis to have more control over their lives. This will be done by moving them away from a maintenance model and supporting their personal and emotional growth. Through regular monitoring of the changes, it is hoped that in the longer term, these proposed changes will have positive impacts on the client group.

CYP02 (24/25): Procurement of contract that provides a targeted service that promotes education, employment, and training for young people

The proposed new commissioned service will deliver a full tracking service to meet the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities to ensure young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), aged 16-18 years old and up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) receive relevant information, advice and guidance in order to be supported to a successful transition into post 16 education, employment and/or training. Additionally, the service will also deliver an intensive targeted service to promote Education, Employment and Training (EET) to vulnerable groups.

Overall impact: The service will provide information, advice and guidance and intensive support for identified vulnerable young people not in education employment and training (NEET) who would benefit from early intensive support and will impact equally on all young people. This proposal has a positive impact on all NEET young people aged 16-18 years old and up to 25 with an EHCP.

CYP01 (25/26): Review the Willow Nursery delivery model to ensure the provision is sustainable without funding from the General Fund

It is proposed that Willow Nursery's delivery model is reviewed to ensure the provision is sustainable without funding from the General Fund as well as with the proposed reduction of the funding from the High Needs Block.

Age: The proposed model would impact children under 5 by reducing access to good quality childcare and specialist nursery provision.

Sex: Women are highly represented in the staff complement at the Nursery. Any potential reduction in staff numbers is likely to disproportionately impact on female staff members.

Race: Over 90% of the children that attend the provision are from an ethnic minority background. Any reduction in the number of places will have a disproportionate impact on children from an ethnic minority background.

Disability: Willow Nursery includes a SEND provision. The proposed model would impact children with SEND negatively. The setting also has places for Children in Need and children on the Child Protection register.

Overall impact: This proposal has a potentially negative impact on the community and users of the Nursery as the proposed delivery model will lead to a reduction in not just the number of universal places available, but also the specialist SEND & Children in Need places. It may also impact on female staff negatively as they form the majority of the workforce. Additionally, any reduction in childcare capacity, at a time when the government is expanding the free entitlement offer, may make it challenging to meet targets once they are set. Furthermore, it is suggested that there are strong sentiments regarding the Nursery within the local community and any changes could result in negative publicity and reputational damage for the Council.

CYP05 (24/25) : Reduction in school improvement funds in Setting and School Effectiveness Service

The proposal is to reduce school improvement funds in the Setting and School Effectiveness Service. The general fund contributes to targeted school improvement activity following the withdrawal of the DfE School Improvement and Brokering grant. The reduction will not impact on staffing, it will reduce the money available to support schools that need to improve rapidly.

Overall impact: This fund is used to fund some of the necessary school improvement activity if the school does not have enough funds in their own budget. Without this funding there may be a negative impact on the quality of some schools that are already struggling to meet required standards. Over time, this may indirectly impact on the students within the school. It is advised that regular monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of this reduction in funds will be necessary.

CYP06 (24/25): Reducing allocated growth to the existing contact service for children in care that operates from the Freeman Family Centre

Proposed savings of £100k will be achieved in two ways. Firstly, the current contract with Barnardo's is ending and there is scope to reduce this by £50k as part of new contract arrangements. Secondly, a further 50k reduction is proposed by reducing allocated growth to the existing contact service for children in care which operates from the Freeman Family Centre. This area of saving is likely to be challenging due to pressures in this area relating to demand outstripping capacity. Facilitating contact between children who are looked after and their birth family is the local authority's statutory duty under the Children Act 1989, and therefore any savings made will be reliant on getting the best value for money rather than reducing services to children and families.

Age: Services are provided for children and young people aged 0-18 years, and therefore any impact of this proposal will affect this demographic more substantially. Potential adverse impacts include being:

- Unable to provide the necessary contact supervision for children and their family, resulting in children not being able to see their birth family and complaints, legal challenge/Judicial Review, reputational damage for the council.
- Delays in providing contact, resulting in children not being able to see their birth family and complaints, legal challenge/Judicial Review, reputational damage for the council.
- Increased pressure on social work teams to facilitate and/or source external contact supervisors and venues where this cannot be managed by the Contact Team within their given resource.

Race: As highlighted in the Equality Impact Assessment, the majority of children and young people are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, so are disproportionately impacted by the suggested proposal.

Overall impact: Reducing service provision is likely to negatively impact on children and young people as outlined above and those from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups. However, providing contact for children and families is a statutory duty for the local authority, therefore this will mean that the savings identified will have to be achieved in the way in which we organise, staff, and commission services moving forward, not by ceasing or stopping the provision of contact.

CYP05 (25/26): To reduce the Barnardo's Family Wellbeing Centre (FWC) support service contract by 10%

It is proposed that the reduction in the support service contract will focus on the crèche provision. The existing crèche support service provides care of young children during parenting programmes, participation forums and information, advice and guidance sessions. Reduction of this service will allow the integral supports offer to continue (e.g. provide Brent's Early Help offer and linked DfE Supporting Families, Family Hub and Best Start for Life programmes), whilst making the required savings. Potential impacts include:

Age: The crèche provision enables parents to participate in FWC support services. A reduction in this service could have a negative impact on families with young children who do not have alternative care options meaning some services and support may not be accessible.

Sex: The majority of parents accessing the creche are women. A reduction in creche support could prevent women accessing services and support from the Family Wellbeing Centre

Race: A significant proportion of parents accessing the creche are from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups. A reduction in creche support is likely to negatively impact users from particular ethnic groups to a greater extent and potentially prevent them from accessing support and services from the Centre.

Overall impact: The crèche provision enables parents to participate in FWC support services. A reduction in this service could have a negative impact on families with young children who do not have alternative care options meaning some services and support may not be accessible. It is also likely to have a larger impact on women from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds. However, this option enables the other provisions to continue without any reductions, therefore have the least impact on service users and the Family Wellbeing Centre delivery model.

RS12 (24/25): To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of £100,000

It is proposed to increase the garden waste fee from £60 per annum to £65 per annum, resulting in a £5 increase for each household that subscribes. With 20,000 subscribers, this will raise an additional £100,000 that will contribute to the Council's corporate savings programme. The service itself is long-established and will remain unchanged.

Age: In some cases elderly residents have a lower income and there is a risk that the cost increase would impact on them. It is also assumed elderly residents may be less able to transport garden waste for composting and so may be more reliant on this collection service as an alternative to transporting waste themselves for composting.

Disability: In some cases disabled residents have a lower income and there is a risk that the charge increase would impact on them. It is also assumed disabled residents may be less able to transport garden waste for composting and so may be more reliant on this collection service as an alternative to transporting waste themselves for composting.

Overall impact: As highlighted above, there may be potential negative impact on service users who are elderly or disabled or from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In mitigation, and to account for individual circumstances and any difficulty in meeting costs, a 20% discount already applies if customers are in receipt of certain benefits (the full list available in the EIA document).

Increase in Council Tax by 4.99% in 2024/25: In order to deliver a legally-required balanced budget, it is proposed to increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase. The proposal will generate an additional £7.5m of recurring income for the Council and therefore avoid having to make further savings to key council services such as adult social care and children's services.

Impact on protected groups: The increase in Council Tax will impact on all residents within Brent who are eligible to pay Council Tax. As the increase has universal application, no particular group is targeted. However, although no protected characteristic is impacted upon more so than another it is likely that some residents who do not qualify for support (i.e. do not meet the threshold to receive financial support), will struggle to pay the additional Council Tax amount.

Overall impact: Although the overall impact has been suggested as neutral, an increase in Council tax will impact on residents and potentially affect those from protected groups harder. However, for the most vulnerable residents, the Council Tax Support scheme will partially or fully mitigate this impact for those households who are living on low incomes and are eligible for Council Tax Support.

Furthermore, single households will have the impact mitigated by the 25% discount offered to single households. Further mitigating actions are also available for residents and are highlighted in under the socio-economic implications section.

4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The table overleaf summarises the potential negative cumulative impacts on groups which have a protected characteristic.

Seven of the Equality Impact Assessments have identified potential for negative impacts. Age and disability, being the most predominant groups impacted upon (6 proposals indicate negative impact), followed by race and sex. Additionally, when reviewing the Equality Impact Assessments, where data is available, it has indicated that a large proportion of service users are from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds. It is, therefore, more likely that this protected group will be impacted to a greater extent, by a reduction or change in services than other users.

Given the nature and number of the proposals put forward impacting these groups, consideration needs to be given to the cumulative impact of all these proposals. As highlighted, it is possible that some individuals will be impacted by more than one of the proposals being put forward and therefore will be more affected by these changes. It is advisable that, where proposals are accepted, the intersectional impacts are monitored and evaluated over time and across services. For example, six proposals indicate an impact on disability, age and are likely to potentially impact on race, and these are spread across Children & Young People, Adult Social Care Directorates and Resident Services. It is possible that some service users belong to more than one protected group and are impacted by more than one of these proposals. Additionally, they may also be affected by the increase in Council Tax.

Reductions in children services including Willow Tree Nursery, Freeman Family Centre and reduction of crèche facilities at the Family Wellbeing Centre also suggest potential negative impacts, particularly with regards to age, disability and race. However, where there is a statutory duty towards the children, the savings identified will have to be achieved in the way in which staff, and commissioned services are provided, not by ceasing or stopping the provision for this cohort.

It is noted that a large proportion of these proposals aim to create sustainable long-term care and support needs. These will, over time, have a positive impact as they aim to provide greater independence to clients. However, these proposals may adversely impact current users in the shorter term**.**

Proposal	Age (e.g. children & elderly)	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage or Civil Partnership	Pregnancy or maternity	Race	Religion or Belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Service Area
Reduction in building based provision to support individuals to access services more tailored to meet their needs CHW01-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	ASC
Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties CHW02-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1	0	ASC
Continuing sustainable long-term care and support promoting independence CHW03 -24/25	0	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	ASC
Procurement of contract promoting education, employment, and training for young people CYP02-24/25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	CYP
Review the Willow Nursery to ensure provisions sustainability without funding from the General Fund CYP01-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	0	CYP
Reduction in school improvement funds in Setting and School Effectiveness Service CYP05-24/25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	CYP
Reduction of allocated growth to the existing contact service for children in care from the Freeman Family Centre CYP06-24/25	-1	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	CYP
Reduction of the Barnardo's Family Wellbeing Centre (FWC) support service contract by 10% CYP05-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	0	CYP

Increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections RS12-24/25	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	RS
Council Tax increase	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Council wide

5 SOCIO–ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Certain groups within the population are more likely than others to live in a low income household. In Brent, survey analysis shows that those living on lower incomes are more likely to be from Black ethnic groups; residents with a disability or long-term illness; older residents; those with no qualifications; those who are not in work; and those who live in social housing.

The proposal regarding increasing council tax has the potential to negatively impact on families and residents from lower socio-economic groups. This will be mitigated by early and accessible communication with residents affected, continuing to offer support for vulnerable residents, and more effective working with partners to ensure resources are used effectively.

The Council is aware of the cumulative impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the support that our residents and service users may require at this time. The following support has been made available:

Financial Support: households across Brent can access financial assistance through the following funds:

- Resident Support Fund: this is available to Brent residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances.
- Discretionary Housing Payment: A one off payment can be provided to assist with rent shortfall, rent deposits and rent in advance if a Brent resident needs to move home.

Certain eligibility criteria needs to be met to access financial support.

Support and Advice: Brent Hubs can provide support and advice to Brent residents who are struggling to pay their utility bills this winter. This can include assistance with completing funding applications for support from local and national schemes, including the Brent Resident Support Fund, referral routes to other advisory agencies who specialise in energy support such as Green Doctors and SHINE,

referral routes to food banks and emergency supermarket vouchers and urgent support with topping up pre-payment gas and electricity meters.

6 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

Of the budget proposals that were subject to an equality screening, several have staffing implications arising from staff restructures or service redesign. Where there are staffing implications for a third party, the council will work with the third party organisation to ensure that the equality implications are understood and appropriate steps taken to minimise any adverse impacts.

To mitigate against compulsory staff redundancies, a number of the proposals will achieve a reduction through giving up vacant posts or through natural turnover. In these cases, it is considered that there will be no impact on characteristic groups.

Whenever the council is required to undertake compulsory redundancies, full EIAs will be undertaken as part of the consultation process. For proposals that include a reduction in the number of posts and redundancy implications, a meaningful assessment on the equality impact is not possible at this stage as no individuals (and therefore protected characteristics) have been identified for assessment. Equality Impact Analysis in these cases will be carried out closer to the commencement of any proposed restructure.

Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings Report

Scrutiny of the Draft Budget Proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26

24 January 2024



Brent

Foreword

The last year has represented one of the worst years for local government finances. Nationwide we are seeing the collapse of councils as the financial viability & stability of local authorities is threatened.

Threatened by local government funding holes which central government fail to close. Threatened by the cumulative impact of another year of austerity, which sees Brent receive one of the smallest increases in government support across London, failing to match inflation. Threatened by imposed competition within the sector which leaves local authorities bidding against each other for essential funding for key services.

Despite the challenges, Brent has chosen to protect the most vulnerable residents, ensuring no staffing cuts to the homelessness teams, investing in community assets instead of selling them, and building a council-owned and delivered children's home, as just a few to mention. This work can be built upon by prioritising collaboration in a genuine partnership model across the sector to combat austerity policies.

On a separate note, I am pleased to see the progress already made by the Council to enhance the mitigations in the draft proposals as a result of the concerns raised by the Task Group in its evidence sessions.

I would like to give my thanks to our local stakeholders and community groups who contributed to this report and to the staff who supported the Task Group.



Cllr Rita Conneely
Chair – Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

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Members of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Budget Scrutiny Task Group was a joint effort between the Council's two scrutiny committees, with representation from both the Resources and Public Realm Committee (RPR) and the Community and Wellbeing Committee (CWB). The Task Group comprised of the following members:

Councillor Rita Conneely – Chair

Councillor Ketan Sheth – Vice Chair

Councillor Anthony Molloy

Councillor Jayanti Patel

Councillor Tazi Smith

Task Group Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were agreed at the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2023:

- Consider the Cabinet's budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26
- Receive evidence from Cabinet Members, senior departmental officers, and any other relevant stakeholders
- Agree a draft report to comment on the budget proposals for submission to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee for ratification and submission to Cabinet.

1. Introduction

Context

1.1. Brent continues to operate in an extremely challenging financial environment, navigating spiralling inflation, high interest rates, increasing demand for some services, insufficient government funding, and the ongoing impacts of the cost of living crisis. The latter has created even more challenges – we have an ageing population with more complex needs and rapidly rising homelessness, with an average of 148 households presenting as homeless every week.

1.2. In July 2023, the Council agreed its revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), outlining that £8m of savings would be required between 2024/25 to 2025/26 to legally balance the budgets of those years. The Council later published its draft Budget in November 2023, revising earlier budget assumptions, and setting out a series of budget proposals totalling £8m which, if approved following consultation and scrutiny, would be implemented in 2024/25 and 2025/26. It also proposed a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (consisting of a 2.99% general increase plus 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept). Nonetheless, the focus in the Budget is centred around delivering efficiency measures, service transformations, cost reductions and generating income whilst protecting front line services, staff and Council priorities as much as possible.

1.3. In addition to the Council's ever growing adult social care costs, the most significant new pressure identified in the Quarter 2 Financial Report 2023/24 was in the temporary accommodation (TA) area resulting in a forecasted overspend of £13.4m in 2023/24 alone (5% of the overall revenue budget). To mitigate this, the Council has been forced to introduce new spending controls and a Budget Assurance Panel to provide additional oversight and scrutiny of its financial situation and prevent its budget position deteriorating further. It has since been confirmed by finance colleagues that the Quarter 3 Financial Report 2023/24 (due to be published in January 2024) will not be materially different in terms of the issues raised in Quarter 2.

1.4. Upon release of the Autumn Statement in November 2023 and the Local Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2023, the Council has since confirmed no changes to the draft Budget will be required. The government updates provide no new funding for general local government services and no additional funding to tackle the persistent overspend pressures in social care and homelessness.

1.5. The Council will therefore be under intense pressure to continue to realise its planned savings whilst taking action to curb its expenditure in order to maintain a balanced budget.

Role of Task Group

1.6. Brent's decision-making framework gives a clear and important role to Overview and Scrutiny in its budget-setting. The process for developing proposals for the budget and capital programme is outlined in the Brent Council Constitution, Part 2, Standing Order 19. This requires that the Cabinet's budget proposals be considered by the Council's Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. After it has scrutinised the proposals, the Committee will then submit a note of its deliberations and comments on the proposals to the Cabinet.

1.7. The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee agreed to scrutinise the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 through a Budget Scrutiny Task Group. This was established at the committee meeting on 6 September 2023.[1]

1.8. The panel held a series of meetings between October and December 2023 to prepare this report. This included closed meetings that discussed the Task Group's own findings, ideas, and recommendations, and evidence sessions with the Cabinet, Corporate Management Team, and our valued partners to consider the main budget pressures, risks, and uncertainties to the Council; test assumptions, modelling and forecasting on which the draft Budget has been built; challenge how resources are prioritised/managed; and consider the overall impact of the proposals on residents and partners. The full list of participants is provided in section 6 of this report.

1.9. For the purposes outlined in the Constitution this report will be considered and agreed by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 24 January 2024. A report from the Committee will then be presented to Cabinet for consideration on Monday 5 February 2024, alongside the report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources on the final budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

1.10. The Task Group seeks to act as a 'critical friend'. Therefore, it is hoped this report will enhance constructive debate on the proposals, where we would welcome the Cabinet's decision to take our recommendations on the proposed budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 forward.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group makes the following recommendations to Cabinet.

Budget Presentation and Communications

Recommendation 1 – Improvements to budget communications:

The Task Group acknowledge the improvements that have been made to the consultation and engagement process following the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review 2023/24, but believes further work is still needed to better communicate to residents what the vision, mission, aims and priority protection areas of the upcoming Budget are. This also includes ensuring communications meet agreed accessibility standards, such as writing documents in plain English in line with the average Brent reading age. These revisions will help build a greater understanding of the priority areas safeguarded in the proposals and enable residents to provide more meaningful/influential consultation feedback. As an example the Task Group received evidence that there was only one proposal from the Housing portfolio as the Council had made a concerted effort to protect housing services and the most vulnerable; Although it could be assumed that an area not featured in the proposals would be protected, such information should be made clearer in the draft Budget for the lay person. **The Task Group recommend that the Council includes a concise, summary page in the Budget (and in future budgets), adopting more accessible language which makes it clear what its vision, aims, and priority protection areas are.**

[1] https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s135401/6.%20Establishment%20of%20Budget%20Task%20Group%20v1.pdf

Recommendation 2 – Developing clearer and concise proposals:

Some of the proposals are generally vague and lack clarity around the possible impact(s) on residents and partners (e.g. 2024-25 CR02, 2024-25 FR02, 2024-25 RS21, 2024-25 CHW03, 2025-26 CHW02 etc.) **The Task Group recommend that the Council review the proposals ahead of publication of the final Budget to ensure that the final proposals and their possible impact(s) can be clearly understood and are accessible to all Brent residents. This review could be actioned collaboratively with a lay-panel (e.g. resident focus group) and in future years by including additional questions in the consultation. These suggestions could also help achieve recommendation 1.**

Recommendation 3 - Alignment with climate action commitments in Borough Plan 2023-27:

Building on the recommendation made as part of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review 2023/24, there still needs to be greater alignment between the draft Budget and the Borough Plan 2023-27, particularly in relation to climate action. The Task Group appreciates changes being made to the corporate reporting template to include a 'Climate Change and Environmental Considerations' section - this good practice should also be applied in the budget setting process. **The Task Group recommend that the Council adopt a 'green budget' which clearly outlines the climate and environment implications of each proposal.** This will assist the Council in its urgent climate commitments, including the goal to become Carbon Net Zero by 2030.

Stronger Partnership Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Recommendation 4 - Shared Outcomes Framework:

Although the Council has understandably prioritised protecting the VCS and frontline services over other areas in its proposed budget, there is scope for stronger partnership working with the sector. During the Stakeholder Session (please see section 3), VCS partners expressed concerns that mitigations proposed in the draft Budget were centred around signposting to the VCS, however there had been no discussion or collaboration around how these mitigations would be delivered or achieved in practice. **The Task Group recommend that the Council explores a shared-outcomes framework with the voluntary sector for the benefit of residents/service users. As part of this work, the Council should urgently discuss and collaborate with the VCS in relation to budget proposals that involve them and/or may have an impact on their service provision. This discussion could build on the Task Group's recommendation from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review 2023/24 which suggested a collaborative strategy with the VCS to enable these organisations to identify and secure new income streams.**

A shared-outcomes approach could avoid future service cuts, avoid service duplication and save the Council money long-term. Additionally, it would ensure that a consistent dialogue is maintained with the VCS throughout each financial year around issues like council budgets rather than the current approach which has meant budget discussions with the sector take place after proposals have already been drafted.

Income Generation

Recommendation 5 – Establishing a strategic approach to income generation:

The Task Group commend the Council's creativity/efforts to generate additional income to bolster its finances, and particularly welcomes proposals such as 2024-25 FR01, 2024-25 RS13, and 2024-25 RS14. However, more could be done to generate even more income. **The Task Group recommend that the Council develops a longer-term, strategic approach to income generation (accompanied with yearly action plans) rather than focusing on piecemeal proposals year to year. The strategy should include a robust monitoring process that enables holistic working across all departments to create synergies for income generation. Specifically, allocating a dedicated, cross-departmental resource to work across the Council to investigate and identify additional opportunities for income generation e.g. compliance with mandatory HMO licensing, compliance with council tax on empty properties, and business rates evasion.**

Establishing a longer-term approach will help the Council to be more resourceful and self-sufficient in the absence of large central government funding pots. Strategic interventions could enable the Council to address areas of improvement in its operations and recoup income that would have been otherwise due, as well as identify new creative ways of generating income. The Task Group however recognise a balanced approach must be adopted that ensures the Council does not become over-commercialised and learns from local authorities that have experienced financial difficulties (i.e. entered s114 territory[2]) due to certain commercial choices.

Recommendation 6 - Renting out Civic Centre meeting rooms:

The Task Group acknowledge the efforts the Council has made to rent out spaces in the Civic Centre to generate additional income, however believes there are additional opportunities that can be realised**. The Task Group recommend that additional space, specifically meeting rooms, in the Civic Centre are made available for external hire given that staff no longer work 5 days per week in the office. To complement this suggestion, some council meetings could be moved outside of the Civic Centre to be held in other community assets in the borough.**

Not only could this recommendation generate additional income, but it could provide residents and businesses with office space and workspace solutions in the heart of the borough. It could also encourage members/officers to increase their use of other community facilities in the borough and spread the Council's visibility more equally throughout the borough.

Recommendation 7 – Implementing additional shared service arrangements:

The Council's efforts to generate additional income by offering shared services to other local authorities are welcomed. Notable examples include proposal 2025-26 CYP04 which intends to sell additional respite bed nights to other local authorities at the Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre. Another instance is the formation of the Shared Technology Services (STS), an IT shared service for the councils of Brent, Lewisham and Southwark, whereby Brent is the host borough for the service. **The Task Group recommend that the Council explores further opportunities for shared service arrangements, learning lessons from its current arrangements and from good practice of the shared service models that already exist across the country.**

It is acknowledged that there is not a single model that suits all councils, localities, or types of service provision, and that this recommendation will take time to scope out. However, if

[2] https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/local-authority-section-114-notices

delivered effectively, the Council would be able to generate additional income, reduce duplication, potentially increase investment in services, and reimagine services to better meet the needs of residents.

Lobbying and Advocacy

Recommendation 8 - Housing Subsidy Loss:

Although the Task Group welcomes the increase to Local Housing Allowance rates via the Autumn Statement 2023, further pro-active work could still be carried out with neighbouring local authorities, London Councils, and the Local Government Association (LGA) to seek reform to the Housing Benefit Subsidy rules. **The Task Group recommend that the Council works with the above mentioned associations to lobby for positive change to the Housing Benefit subsidy rules which currently caps the amount the Council can claim back from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to 90% of the 2011 LHA rates per household for TA provided, and which places financially onerous restrictions on the types of TA the Council can provide to be eligible for housing benefit subsidy.** Such reform would enable Brent to significantly reduce its overspends, and to have access to a wider pool of affordable temporary accommodation to deal with increased demand in homelessness.

Recommendation 9 – Retaining use of New Millennium Day Centre

The Task Group accept that alternative provision will be put in place to mitigate the impacts of ceasing use of the New Millennium Day Centre. It would nevertheless be disappointing to lose a vital space in the borough that brings local communities together and which allows the Council to achieve its 'Borough of Culture' legacy ambitions. **The Task Group recommend that the Council explores options to retain the building for community use.**

Recommendation 10 – Wembley Stadium: 'Community Impact' Ticket Levy:

The Task Group welcome the financial contributions made by Wembley Stadium towards the Council's event day management costs (e.g. cleansing and waste management, highways management, enforcement etc.), however recognise that these contributions do not cover the full extent of the costs incurred by the Council for its operations on event days. **The Task group recommend that the Council explores options with the Stadium for a ticket levy, whereby the Council receives a proportion of each ticket sale in order to fully recover costs incurred or to provide for further enhancement of the Council's event day operations.**

Recommendation 11 - Delegation of budgets and decision making to Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP):

The Task Group note that the success of many of the proposals are dependent on effective partnership working with health partners (e.g. 2024-25 CHW01, 2024-25 CHW03, 2025-26 CHW03, 2025-26 CYP06 etc). It was heard that the established working arrangements and governance in the Brent ICP provide opportunities for closer working between the Council and NHS partners. These working arrangements have enabled health funding to be transferred to Adult Social Care to support residents and the local health and care system. However, the Task Group understand that the centralisation of decisions on NHS budgets away from the borough to North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB) has reduced the ability of the Brent ICP to address local needs and may have increased future demand on the system. For example, in accordance with ICB processes, the ICP has

submitted robust business cases for paediatric continence services, nursing provision for children in special schools, and to manage pressures on CYP and adult mental health services. All of these business cases are still awaiting a decision after many months, while need continues to increase.

The Task Group recommend that the Council continues to advocate and make the case to NWL ICB for both a better alignment of NHS resources to population need and for an increased delegation of budgets and decision making to Brent ICP. Not only would devolution to place allow for more effective collaboration between the Council and local health partners but it would also allow for implementation of service change at greater pace. Additionally, the Task Group is of the view that the ICP is better able than NWL to tailor services to the needs of Brent's diverse communities with greater flexibility to respond to changing needs or circumstances.

3. **Evidence Sessions**

3.1. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group held a series of meetings with Cabinet Members, the Corporate Management Team, and partners to review the suitability of the budget proposals 2024/25 and 2025/26 and to inform its recommendations.

3.2. As part of this process, council officers provided the following reports for consideration:
- Q2 Financial Performance 2023/24
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Draft Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26 (inclusive of the revised MTFS and the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26)

Work Planning Sessions

3.3. The work planning meeting was held on 23 October 2023.

3.4. Task Group members discussed and agreed the approach to be taken to scrutinise the Draft Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26. This consisted of:
- A stakeholder session with key voluntary and community sector partners to analyse the budget proposals and temperature check the impact and assumptions that sit behind them
- An evidence session to review the Council's Treasury Management and borrowing; as well its updated Medium Term Financial Outlook, and the budget proposals put forward for the following directorates: Finance and Resources, Communities and Regeneration, and Resident Services
- An evidence session on the remaining proposals for Governance, Care, Health, and Wellbeing, and Children and Young People
- A final evidence session to hear any additional evidence and to discuss and agree the draft recommendations

3.5. There were a number of areas and themes that the Task Group agreed to review including:
- Brent Council's **Medium Term Financial Outlook,** including the overall financial position
- **The impact of inflation** on Brent Council's budget pressures and performance
- **The impact of rising interest rates** on Brent Council's budget pressures and performance

- **The impact of the uncertainty in government funding** on Brent Council's operations and performance
- **The impact of the cost of living crisis** on Brent Council's budget pressures and performance
- **The impact of Covid-19** on Brent Council's budget pressures and performance.
- Key departmental **overspends and underspends**
- **Service Specific Pressures, Risks, Uncertainties, and Mitigations**
- **Current/future budget assumptions** e.g. income assumptions, spending assumptions etc.
- The **proposed budget development process for 2024/25**
- **The impact of budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26** on service delivery and customer satisfaction
- Council **reserves** and **Reserves Strategy**
- Ringfenced budgets e.g. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**, **Schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**, and the **Public Health Grant**
- The **Capital Programme** of the Council
- Options for **Income Generation and debt collection** e.g. fees and charges, Council Tax, business rates etc.
- **Treasury Management** e.g. investments, borrowing, minimum revenue provision (MRP) etc.
- Budget **Consultation**

3.6. The Cabinet, Corporate Management Team and Statutory Scrutiny Officer were sighted on the scope and content of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review.

Evidence Session 1

3.7. Evidence session 1 was held on 21 November 2023.

3.8. Key attendees included the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Regeneration and Planning, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness, and Renters Security, the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources, the Corporate Director for Communities and Regeneration, and the Corporate Director of Resident Services.

3.9. The session focused on several topics including:
- The Council's renewed MTFS (inclusive of the budget setting process)
- Risk, issues and uncertainties faced by the Council e.g. inflation, interest rates, demand for services and uncertainty in central government funding
- Core budget assumptions
- Income Generation
- Council reserves and the Reserves strategy
- Council Tax
- Housing Revenue Account
- Dedicated Schools Grant
- Capital Programme
- Treasury Management (e.g. approach to council borrowing, minimum revenue provision (MRP) etc.)

3.10. The Task Group also undertook a deep dive exercise into the draft budget proposals for the directorates below:
- Finance and Resources
- Communities and Regeneration

- Resident Services

3.11. This exercise involved assessing the impact of these proposals on residents, analysing the accuracy of the relevant equality impact assessment screenings and discussing whether the proposals were realistic.

Scene-setting

3.12. The Task Group heard evidence of the difficult financial situation facing the Council, with detail provided on the local and national context of the budgetary pressures facing local authorities.

Budget-Setting Process:

3.13. Despite these challenges, it was heard that the budget setting process commenced early with draft proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 being published in November 2023. It was also noted that as part of this process, the Task Group reviewed the Quarter 2 Financial Report in November 2023, and the original MTFS back in July 2023. Nonetheless, publishing the draft Budget in November enabled the Council to observe good practice in conducting robust consultation and engagement with residents and partners ahead of the final Budget being published in February 2024. It also enables the Council to carry out robust equality impact assessments (EIAs) to ensure that none of the proposals as currently developed disproportionately impact residents with protected characteristics. Further EIAs are carried out as appropriate as proposals adopted in the Budget are further developed for implementation.

3.14. The Task Group explored the priority protection areas in the draft Budget. These understandably were centred around the statutory services provided by the Council and supporting those in most need. For example, services in Housing Needs, Children & Young People (CYP) and Adult Social Care (ASC). Nonetheless, the Task Group was provided with assurance that 'cuts' in this draft Budget had been kept to a minimum due to more difficult decisions (e.g. library closures) being taken in earlier budget processes alongside the Council's continued proactivity to generate extra income.

3.15. The Task Group were satisfied with current reserves levels and on the soundness of the Council's reserves strategy.

Core Assumptions:

3.16. The Task Group discussed and sought clarity on the budget assumptions made in the draft Budget and revised MTFS. It was highlighted that scenario modelling and sensitivity analysis had been carried out as part of the budget assumptions, including best case, central case and worst-case scenarios. The central case was used to formulate the budget gap of £8m between 2024/25 and 2025/26. Due to the volatility in the economic environment the Task Group agreed with the Council going with a central case. Nonetheless, it was mentioned that the core assumptions were based on the information currently available to the Council during formation and would be reviewed following details of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

3.17. Since Evidence Session 1 the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023 has been published requiring updates to some of the assumptions made in the renewed MTFS from November 2023. For example, additional funding of £1.7m to ASC will be provided which is above the MTFS forecast. Despite slight changes being required to the assumptions in the draft Budget, it has since been confirmed that no

changes to the £8m savings target are actually required. This is because the Settlement does not adequately provide funding to cover inflationary pressures and offers no new funding to tackle persistent pressures in social care and homelessness. The Council will therefore be under pressure to continue to realise its planned savings whilst taking action to curb its expenditure in order to maintain a balanced budget.

Key Pressure Areas:

3.18. The Task Group noted the pressures in key service areas, namely in:

- CYP – e.g. placements for looked after children and care leavers account for circa £29m, with the average annual cost of a residential placement costing £320k
- ASC – e.g. aging population (approximately 12% of Brent residents are over 65) yet ASC budget has reduced by over £11.3m over the last 5 years
- Temporary Accommodation - 22% increase in homelessness demand, costs of temporary accommodation and Housing Benefit subsidy loss

Income Generation:

3.19. The Task Group sought assurances that the Council's proposed Fees and Charges maximised income generation and were relative to neighbouring boroughs. It was reiterated that Fees and Charges are reviewed on a yearly basis, which includes benchmarking activities and assessing market demand. It was, however, stressed that comparisons to inner London boroughs were not relevant to Brent, as these boroughs would be able to charge higher fees due to their location.

3.20. The Task Group also explored whether the Council is doing enough to generate additional income from enforcement activity. For example, Business Rates collection was discussed, and the need for additional enforcement to be carried out, specifically on commercial buildings deliberately left unusable and vacant. The Task group questioned whether it was worth creating additional resources for more thorough enforcement to take place around the collection of Business Rates.

DSG:

3.21. Although progress was acknowledged around the current management of the DSG deficit (e.g. the £1m provided to Brent as part of the 18 month Delivering better Value (DBV) in SEND Department for Education programme to support the Local Authority to return to an in-year balance), the Task Group had concerns around this budget pressure;- especially pertaining to the potential implications around local authorities not being able to hold DSG deficits after the 2025/26 financial year. This could mean Brent's deficit may have to be funded using General Fund reserves which is a major risk and added pressure to the Council's financial resilience.

HRA:

3.22. The Task Group noted comments that significant costs reductions are required in the Housing Revenue Account. This consists of £3.1m in 2024/25. The Group also noted the major challenges for the HRA which included the following:

- Rising inflation is affecting all expenditure types and contract costs
- Increased utility costs to be passed on to tenants and leaseholders
- No funding available in the account for carbon reduction work, fire safety or remediation works
- Rising cost of living impacting rent collection rates
- A 7% rent rise limitation for 2023/24 impacting 2023/24 and future rent levels

Capital Programme:

3.23. The Task Group noted the uncertainty within the capital programme because of factors such as inflation, making the viability of ongoing schemes challenging. For example, the financial environment has meant that grants which the Council had access to had not increased to reflect the increased costs as a result of inflation. It was also noted that the pressures in the capital programme have been further exacerbated by building safety regulations, meaning further slippages in schemes.

3.24. It was noted that such schemes which are no longer viable will need to reduce in scope, be paused, or discontinued. The Task Group acknowledged this but stressed the need for viability assessments to consider money saved elsewhere for the Council e.g. schemes which increase social housing stock and which relieve overspend pressures in Housing/temporary accommodation.

Treasury Management:

3.25. The Task Group received evidence on the Council's approach to treasury management and borrowing (including MRP). It was explored why the Council is borrowing to build housing. It was explained that borrowing made it easier for the Council to build social housing at affordable rates for residents. The panel endorsed this approach and were happy to see continued investment in this area.

3.26. Specifically, the Task Group were assured that the approach to MRP remains prudent and compliant with the statutory guidance for MRP.

3.27. Since Evidence Session 1 the Task Group Chair has met with the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee and the Independent Chair of the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee to discuss the Council's Treasury Management. The Task Group are satisfied with the prudence of the Council's Treasury Management.

Finance and Resources

3.28. A total of £400k savings are proposed in the Finance and Resources Directorate for 2024/25.

Increasing Civic Centre Car Park Charging Tariffs:

3.29. It was confirmed that the proposal made around this in the 2023/24 budget was achieved. Task Group members also questioned whether electric cars were also subject to charges in the Civic Centre Car Park. It was confirmed electric vehicle spaces are charged by the Council.

Property Strategy to maximise rental return on council assets:

3.30. The Task Group challenged the soundness of this proposal and questioned what evidence existed that partners would take on council-owned businesses at market rent. The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources provided assurances around this, stating that the proposal was prudent and not overly ambitious.

3.31. It was acknowledged that the £50k income target took into consideration that community usage of buildings would be treated differently. Rental and management options will be explored further in the coming months; The draft Property Strategy will

be presented to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 27 February 2024 to review whether it is fit for purpose for residents and partners.

Communities and Regeneration

3.32. A total of £170k savings are proposed in the Communities and Regeneration Directorate for 2024/25.

Volunteering platform:

3.33. It was confirmed that the discontinuation of the volunteering platform would not disproportionately impact young people in accessing volunteering opportunities. Alternative provision was highlighted such as the Mayor of London's volunteering platform. Additionally, it was stated that the Council worked with an independent organisation Social Change Agency who agreed with the Football Association to introduce a new online resource for Brent called 'Brent Giving'. This platform will also act as a volunteer brokerage tool and will replace the volunteering platform in question.

Reducing the headcount in Communities and Regeneration:

3.34. The Task Group questioned what impact the reduction in headcount, specifically the deletion of vacant posts within the Community Engagement team, would have on the delivery of the upcoming Community Engagement Framework. It was acknowledged that there has been a recent change in Corporate Director and the details of this saving will be informed by which roles are needed to achieve the Council's community engagement commitments.

Resident Services

3.35. A total of £2.1m savings are proposed in the Resident Services Directorate for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

3.36. It was confirmed that a holistic approach was taken to identify savings across the entirety of the directorate to ensure service areas such as Housing were protected as far as possible from cuts. The use of technology was also prioritised in the proposals to offset the need for forced redundancies which do not feature in the proposals.

Housing proposals:

3.37. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness, and Renters Security confirmed that the proposed draft Budget makes a concerted effort to adequately protect and safeguard housing services.

3.38. The Task Group went on to confirm whether the departments under the lead member's remit were utilising the grants available to generate additional income to improve services. It was confirmed this was the case, although the decisions on what grants to apply for were aligned with political priorities.

TA overspends:

3.39. The Task Group noted the seriousness of the current in year TA overspends and the financial implications that this will continue to have in future years. In discussing potential mitigations, the Task Group explored the potential impact the current expansion of universal credit could have on the Housing Benefit Subsidy Loss shortfall. For example, whether it was possible to transfer residents in TA from Housing Benefit

to Universal Credit to plug the shortfall created by Housing Benefit subsidy loss. It was confirmed that TA was not eligible for Universal Credit.

Community Hubs:

3.40. The Task Group questioned whether there were any plans to reduce the amount of Community Hubs. It was confirmed that this was not the case, and that hub buildings were not costly to run from a facilities management perspective.

ICT Solutions:

3.41. Assurances were provided around the achievability of this proposal where it was stated that the licences to realise this proposal had already been identified.

Libraries and Heritage - realignment of managerial responsibilities and posts:

3.42. Although this saving was noted, it was questioned whether other savings could be made around library services, specifically around reducing provision. It was noted a political decision had specifically been made to protect libraries from cuts (leading to reductions in operating hours) due to the wider implications on residents as some libraries are community hubs.

Generating income from Parks through organised cultural and entertainment events:

3.43. The Task Group welcomed this proposal considering that this was a recommendation of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review 2023/24 to further achieve 'Borough of Culture' legacy commitments.

Rental of Parks' building space:

3.44. It was questioned whether investment was needed in any of these assets to realise the saving. In response, it was stated that a business case could be presented to finance colleagues, if needed. Although it was acknowledged that the £30k saving was identified by an external company, the Task Group still had concerns whether this saving was financially worthwhile.

3.45. Despite this the Group welcomed investment in council assets to keep them in use, especially where matched funding is provided from other sources.

Increasing tennis/sports bookings:

3.46. The achievability of this proposal was questioned due to intelligence within the Task Group of tennis grounds being continually broken into and used free of charge. Although this concern was acknowledged, it was stressed that this proposal would enable the courts to be properly marketed with a simpler booking system.

Evidence Session 2

3.47. Evidence session 2 was held on 23 November 2023.

3.48. Key attendees included the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Regeneration and Planning, the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources, the Corporate Director for

Governance, the Corporate Director for Care, Health, and Wellbeing, and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People.

3.49. The Task Group undertook a deep dive exercise into the draft budget proposals for the directorates below:

- Governance
- Care, Health, and Wellbeing
- Children and Young People

3.50. This exercise involved assessing the impact of these proposals on residents, analysing the accuracy of the relevant equality impact assessment screenings, and discussing whether the proposals were realistic.

Governance

3.51. A total of £435.8k savings are proposed in the Governance Directorate for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

3.52. The Task Group heard that legal services were likely to face the greatest impact from the proposed savings for the directorate, particularly in relation to general available resource. Implications included a potential loss of support for senior officers resulting in higher workloads. This will be mitigated by recruiting more experienced staff, compensating staff for any extra workloads and exploring outsourcing ad-hoc counsel that legal services provide.

3.53. The Group considered the solutions/mitigations put forward as feasible but stressed concerns for potential staff burnout and subsequent issues such as sick and stress leave. The Corporate Director of Governance acknowledged these.

Care, Health, and Wellbeing

3.54. A total of £3.03m savings are proposed in the Care, Health, and Wellbeing Directorate for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

3.55. It was highlighted that the majority of the proposals are centred around service transformation with an emphasis on technology-based services and provision to assist with increased demand in services and caseloads. This led the Task Group to question whether the Council were taking advantage of partnership opportunities and the grants offered by central government for digital transformation. In response to the issues raised, specific funds provided by the NHS and current examples of exceptional partnership working with companies such as BT, Amazon and Microsoft were highlighted.

ASC:

3.56. The Task Group were informed that ASC is the highest spend for the Council, whereby a substantial proportion of the budget goes towards statutory services which the Council has a responsibility to deliver under the Care Act.

Public Health:

3.57. The Task Group questioned how much unspent money there was in the Public Health reserve. It was confirmed that the Council has £10m in reserves of which £6m is ringfenced for prevention work. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public

Health added that the Public Health grant has gone up by 1-2% which is not in line with inflation. However, the Council are still expected to meet the increased costs of contracts, including potential in-year increases resulting from NHS uplifts, meaning some funds need to be held back to allow for this.

3.58. It was confirmed that the public health grant is ring-fenced with clear criteria on how it can be spent.

Reducing building-based provision and day care opportunities:

3.59. It was highlighted that approximately only 80 people are accessing the New Millennium Day Centre and that the proposed saving aims to reassess how the service can be used more effectively. Options already exist to use other services including at the John Billam Resource Centre.

Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence – reducing high expenditure packages in mental health and learning disability:

3.60. The Task Group questioned whether reducing Mental Health services would lead to pressures on other services (e.g. Housing Needs and Homelessness provision). The Group were reassured that the proposal put forward is about re-assessing packages for areas such as supported living, and specific individual cases, rather than reducing overall service provision.

3.61. It was stressed that the proposals will also improve the use of direct payments and the possibility to access certain services at reduced costs by examining different options for service delivery (e.g. utilising more enhanced technology and digital support).

Children and Young People

3.62. A total of £1.85m savings are proposed in the Children and Young People Directorate for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

3.63. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools stated the proposals put forward for the department demonstrated that Brent have made effective use of the institutional knowledge ranging from targeting services, streamlining processes, effective budget management, and learning from other local authorities' good practice. It was stressed that outsourcing Children's Services vulnerably exposes the Council to the whims of the market, hence the proposal to build a flagship residential children's home.

3.64. The Task Group acknowledged the excellent work by the directorate in relation to grants provision (e.g. delivering services in collaboration with other local authorities) and in securing grants which has helped supplement the Budget. Reassurances were provided that dedicated resource/time will continue to be allocated for staff to secure grant funding. The Task Group welcomed these lessons being shared with other council departments, especially Care, Health, and Wellbeing.

Building a new Residential Children's Home:

3.65. The Task Group questioned the achievability of building a new residential children's home in the borough and whether such a project would be affordable to the Council. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools assured the Group that there was a separate fund for the project and that the Council had the funding

assurances for this. Residential care costs are extremely high, so having a Council-owned home would be more cost-effective by significantly reducing the cost of care per child. Also, it would enable a higher level of security for residents and ensure private firms do not profit at the detriment of the Council.

Usage of school premises and under used buildings:

3.66. The Task Group sought further information on school premises and other under used buildings and whether there was a possibility of generating additional income by using these spaces for community use. The Group were informed that some schools rely on this type of income i.e., renting football pitches, but not all schools participate in such schemes. It was stated that the use of such buildings and open spaces is dependent on governors of schools and the Council's role is solely to share good practice. The Task Group acknowledged this and encouraged further exploration of the Council's role in supporting schools to share good practice in this area.

Reductions in School Improvement Funds (SIF):

3.67. The Task Group sought assurances that a reduction in school improvement funds (including staffing) would not impact on education and delivery. The Corporate Director for Children and Young People reiterated that cuts were centred around a central government decision to reduce the School Effectiveness grant as the Department of Education (DfE) believe many schools and academy trusts are already providing these functions. The Group were therefore assured that School Effectiveness resource moving forward should be satisfactory.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs):

3.68. The Task Group raised significant concerns around the ballooning rates of ECHPs in the borough, their costs and general provisions. It was acknowledged by both cabinet members and officers that ECHPs create additional financial and resource pressure on the department, thus creating substantial backlogs. Taking this into consideration, assurances were sought on whether the Council had enough staff to review the plans. It was confirmed that current levels were manageable, although the department would like to reduce caseloads whilst increasing quality levels, leading to higher resident satisfaction and improved performance.

3.69. It was also highlighted to the Group that this workstream is funded through the DSG; Should local authorities not be able to hold DSG deficits beyond 2025/26, this is likely to have detrimental impacts on the Council as any overspend in the service would not be allowed to continue and would likely have to be covered by the General Fund.

Stakeholder Session

3.70. This session was held on 30 November 2023 and attended by colleagues from the VCS and business sectors (a full list of external witnesses who contributed to this report is outlined in section 6 of this report). The Deputy Director of Finance and Director of Communities were also present to provide independent support to the Task Group.

3.71. The Deputy Director of Finance opened the session with an overview of Brent's current financial situation. Key highlights included the main financial pressures faced by Brent:

- Rising demand for services, especially in the Care, Health, and Wellbeing, and Children and Young People directorates

- Rise in homelessness, and the associated overspends in temporary accommodation in the current budget to deal with the issue (as it currently stands approximately overspend of £13 million which totals 5% of the Councils budget).
- Inflation
- Uncertainty/lack of central government funding

3.72. The Task Group then sought to understand stakeholder views on the proposals and any potential gaps in the draft Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26; explore their experiences, pressures and priorities, and where they believe Council investment should be targeted over the next two years and beyond.

3.73. Key concerns raised by our stakeholders included:

- **Vagueness of proposals –** need for the Council to better communicate the impact of the proposals especially due to their importance and potential detrimental impact on residents. The ambiguity in the proposals not only makes it difficult for residents to understand what the Council's plans are but also for local councillors to provide useful advice to residents in their wards. This oversight can be corrected by providing more detail of the impact under each proposal and listing alternative services that can be accessed should the proposals proceed.

- **Achievability/soundness of proposals –** i.e. whether proposals such as 2024-25 CHW01, 2024-25 CHW02, 2024-25 CHW03 are actually achievable due to their reliance on partners.

- **Safeguarding the 'most vulnerable' –** with the level of proposed cuts in the proposals, stakeholders questioned whether it is possible to safeguard the most vulnerable in the borough. In explaining this view, increased homelessness in the country/borough, and the increased gatekeeping of temporary accommodation was highlighted as an exacerbating factor. Also, it was noted that crucial services, such as Elder's Voice, are coming to an end or have been discontinued which leaves gaps in provision for vulnerable cohorts.

- **Visible 'cost shunting'** – i.e. signposting to the VCS in the proposals without any discussion or consideration with the VCS around their capacity to meet any increases in demand. This also raised questions about the achievability of such proposals.

- **Limited financial support/investment into VCS and business sector –** concerns were raised about the limited financial support given to both sectors and the lack of proposals around this in the draft Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26. It was acknowledged that this could relate to the lack of clarity in the draft Budget around what the Council's priority protection areas are. This issue was raised last year around the need for a clearer narrative and vision around budget.
- **Robustness of Equality Impact (EI) screenings –** concerns were raised about proposals such as 2024-25 CHW01, 2024-25 CYP06, 2024-25 identifying no disproportionate adverse impacts on particular groups with 'protected characteristics'.

- **Alignment with strategic priorities in the Borough Plan 2023 - 27 –** similar to last year, concerns were raised around the draft Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26 not being as strategically aligned with the priorities set out in the Borough Plan, mainly our climate commitments, including our goal to become Carbon Net Zero by 2030. For example, it was highlighted that the Council better demonstrate the impact of relevant proposals on emissions. Additionally, it was identified that some of the

proposals impact early years support and therefore contradicting the Council's strategic priority 'The Best Start in Life'.

- **Proposed 4.99% increase in Council Tax** - if approved this could result in many more residents slipping into poverty and homelessness. Key initiatives such as the Council Tax Support Scheme received honourable mentions due to it being one of the most generous schemes in London. However, it was stated by the Deputy Director of Finance that should Brent Council ever issue with a section 114 notice, initiatives such as the Council Tax Support scheme would be at risk of abolition due to the necessity to only prioritise statutory services in these circumstances.

- **Ceasing the use of New Millennium Day Centre** – although it was acknowledged alternative service provision will be provided and that this is an NHS asset, there is still concern around losing the use of this asset for the benefit of local communities, specifically vulnerable residents who currently access it.

- **Consultation and Engagement** – similar concerns raised last year, stakeholders reiterated the need to carry out additional bespoke engagement with vulnerable residents/service users. It was highlighted that the current budget consultation and engagement process is not fit for all residents. For instance, online surveys and attending in person/online meetings are not always suitable for many vulnerable residents. The Council could learn lessons and work in partnership with the VCS to establish an effective approach to consultation and engagement.

- **Accessibility –** similar to the above point and views raised by the VCS last year, more work is needed to improve the standard of accessibility of budget communications to residents with support needs (e.g. disabled residents) in communicating the proposals e.g. robust BSL interpreter/language support.

3.74. Our stakeholders' priorities for Council investment included:

- Additional investment into the VCS which could include financial assistance (e.g. longer-term grant funding for VCS) and/or community assets (with capped peppercorn rents) to the sector to help alleviate the financial burdens faced in a volatile economic environment. An example cited for exploration was transforming abandoned properties on Brent's high streets for community use. This type of initiative could assist with building a better offer for residents/service users.

- Better partnership working with the voluntary sector to represent the value it brings to residents of Brent and the money the sector saves the Council. A start to better partnership working could be relooking at the draft proposals that suggest signposting to the VCS, using evidence collated by the VCS, to make sure they are fit for purpose. Also, exploring a shared-outcomes framework between the Council and the sector for the benefit or residents/service users.

- Increased accessibility support to ensure those with specific needs (e.g. disabled residents) receive adequate assistance to navigate the process of digital form-filling. This could help avoid obstructions to such residents in accessing extra funds and entitlements, especially important during a cost-of-living crisis.

- Clearer alignment between climate commitments and early years commitments in the budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Final Evidence Session

3.75. The final evidence session was held on 11 December 2023.

3.76. Key attendees included the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, the Corporate Director of Communities and Regeneration, the Corporate Director of Children and Young People, the Corporate Director of Governance, the Corporate Director of Resident Services, and the Director of Public Health.

3.77. At this meeting, the Task Group discussed and agreed the provisional recommendations that would be made to Cabinet and Full Council, based on all of the evidence heard to date. For transparency purposes, it was highlighted by the Chair that possible amendments and changes are likely to be made to the recommendations discussed ahead of reviewing and digesting additional evidence outside of this meeting. Any additions would be reflected in this final report.

3.78. Final recommendations can be found in section 2 of this report.

4. Other Meetings

4.1. Outside of the sessions detailed in section 3, the Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group met with the Independent Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee, the Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee and the Director of the Integrated Care Partnership to seek further intelligence, clarity, and assurances on the evidence provided by cabinet members/council officers as part of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review.

4.2. Additionally, the Chair held a drop-in session for backbench councillors to provide their thoughts and insights on the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Given the extremely challenging circumstances that local authorities are facing with regards to budget pressures and financial planning, the Task Group agree that the Council has correctly balanced its responsibilities and risks and continues to maintain a prudent financial position despite ongoing austerity, financial uncertainty, and economic turmoil.

5.2. The Task Group commends the Council's creativity in identifying additional savings of £8m that will be applied over the next two financial years and its success in limiting the impact of these savings on service reductions and cuts to frontline services.

5.3. Despite the Council's great efforts, the persistent funding reductions from central government and the impact on the Council cannot be overstated. The Council continues to find itself in a position where it must do more with less. For instance, the £8m savings identified in the draft Budget are in addition to the £210m savings that have been delivered since 2010. During this period the Council has also experienced an increased demand for services with key pressures to navigate, such as high levels of inflation, high interest rates, delays in funding reforms and the ongoing impacts of the cost of living crisis. Consequently there is a high risk that the Council may need to

cut vital provision to meet its legal obligations in setting a balanced budget, should government not intervene and deliver overdue funding reforms in the sector.

5.4. The latest Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, published in December 2023, is an extra blow to Brent as we will experience the lowest increase in government support across London boroughs (excluding the City of London). It does not adequately provide funding to cover inflationary pressures and offers no new funding to tackle persistent overspend pressures in social care and homelessness. Therefore, the Council will be under pressure to continue to realise its planned savings, with no choice but to curb its expenditure and increase its Council Tax by the maximum of 4.99% to desperately bring in funding to maintain vital services.

5.5. Partnership working is crucial for the Council within this extremely challenging financial environment, particularly with the VCS. It is important to recognise that such partners are also struggling in this current environment, where it is vital to establish a realistic, collaborative strategy with the sector to help realise our savings and ensure quality support is still available to our communities. Additionally, more progress can be made to make the draft Budget clearer. This includes specifically highlighting priority protection areas, ensuring that the language used to describe the impacts on residents/partners under the proposals is more accessible and concise, as well as add 'climate and environment implications' under each proposal in line with our fast-approaching climate action commitments.

5.6. We would also like to stress our feedback from last year's Review around the importance of continued lobbying with London Councils for funding reforms (inclusive of multi-year financial settlements); the need for identifying/developing additional opportunities to generate additional income/grant funding to help reduce overspend areas; and leveraging funding from our anchor institutions to deliver on joint initiatives for the common purpose of enriching our residents' lives.

5.7. In summary the Task Group supports the draft Budget, subject to the outcomes of final consultation and the acceptance of the recommendations outlined in section two of this report. Should our recommendations be accepted, we encourage the Cabinet to closely monitor their progress and to provide regular updates to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to ensure they are achieved in their entirety.

5.8. This report is not the end of the budget scrutiny process and we look forward to discussing our recommendations and the budget as a whole at future meetings.

6. Participants

We commend the Council for the prudent, tough financial decisions it has taken in recent years to ensure we have achieved a balanced budget, despite facing significant cuts to local government funding.

We would like to thank the following members for giving up their time to take part in this process, and also to the many council officers who worked extremely hard to support and provide us with information and advice when needed:

- Councillor Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council
- Councillor Shama Tatler – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform, Regeneration & Planning
- Councillor Promise Knight – Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security
- Councillor Gwen Grahl – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools

- Councillor Neil Nerva – Cabinet Member for Public Health & Adult Social Care
- Cllr Jumbo Chan – Chair, Audit & Standards Committee
- David Ewart – Independent Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee
- Kim Wright – Chief Executive
- Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources
- Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services
- Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration
- Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance
- Rachel Crossley – Corporate Director, Care, Health & Wellbeing
- Nigel Chapman – Corporate Director, Children & Young People
- Ravinder Jassar – Deputy Director of Finance
- Tom Shakespeare – Integrated Care Partnership Director
- Melanie Smith – Director of Public Health
- Janet Latinwo – Head of Strategy & Partnerships
- Tom Pickup – Policy, Partnerships and Scrutiny Manager
- Jason Sigba – Strategy Lead, Scrutiny
- Chatan Popat – Strategy Lead, Scrutiny

The Task Group would also like to thank the following valued partners and stakeholders, who contributed to our discussion to ensure robust consideration of the budget proposals:

- CVS Brent
- Crisis Skylight Brent
- Brent Friends of the Earth
- Brent Mencap
- Brent Parks Forum
- Brent Youth Parliament
- SUFRA North West London
- West London Business

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Appendix E

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio	Capital Board	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
			£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Resources: Cllr Mili Patel	Civic Centre - Capital	Corporate Landlord	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	**5.5**
	Digital Strategy - Capital	Corporate Landlord	3.8	4.4	2.1	0.5	.	.	**10.8**
	Energy - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.6	0.2	.	.	.	.	**0.8**
	ICT - Capital	Corporate Landlord	2.4	5.6	2.3	1.4	.	.	**11.6**
	Libraries - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.6	2.5	.	.	.	.	**3.1**
	Oracle Cloud Programme - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.4	0.1	0.0	.	.	.	**0.6**
	CNWL - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.0	0.0	13.7	8.5	27.7	.	**49.9**
	Equipment for Flexible Working - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.1	0.1	.	.	.	.	**0.2**
	Family Wellbeing Centre - ICT Infrastructure - Capital	Corporate Landlord	0.1	0.2	.	.	.	.	**0.3**
Regeneration, Planning & Growth: Cllr Shama Tatler	South Kilburn Phase 3a - Capital	South Kilburn	0.2	6.2	.	.	.	.	**6.4**
	South Kilburn Phase 3b - Capital	South Kilburn	1.5	2.9	.	.	.	.	**4.4**

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

	South Kilburn Phase 4 - Capital	South Kilburn	4.0	6.7	.	.	.	.	**10.7**
	South Kilburn Phase 5 - Capital	South Kilburn	1.0	1.1	.	.	.	.	**2.1**
	South Kilburn Phase 6 - Capital	South Kilburn	2.6	0.3	.	.	.	.	**2.9**
	South Kilburn Phase 7 & 8 - Capital	South Kilburn	3.6	8.9	.	.	.	.	**12.5**
	South Kilburn Legacy - Capital	South Kilburn	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.1	.	.	**1.0**
	South Kilburn Energy - Capital	South Kilburn	0.3	0.9	.	.	.	.	**1.2**
	Grand Union Canal Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge	Regeneration	0.1	1.0	5.8	.	.	.	**6.9**
	New Homes Bonus - Capital	Regeneration	0.0	.	.	.	.	.	**0.0**
	Housing Zones - Capital	Regeneration	5.1	56.0	56.0	7.2	.	.	**124.3**
	S106 Affordable Workspace - Capital	Regeneration	0.1	0.4	.	.	.	.	**0.5**
	Harlesden Regeneration - Capital	Regeneration	0.8	4.1	0.8	.	.	.	**5.7**
	Morland Gardens - Capital	Regeneration	0.7	.	.	.	.	.	**0.7**
	Bridge Park Regeneration - Capital	Regeneration	1.2	2.0	46.1	.	.	.	**49.3**

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

	SCIL - Capital	Regeneration	1.2	1.2	1.8	.	.	.	**4.2**
St Raphael's : Cllr Shama Tatler	St. Raphael's Estate Regeneration - Capital	St Raphael's	0.8	0.3	19.5	.	.	.	**20.6**
Regeneration, Planning & Growth: Cllr Shama Tatler	Landscaping - Capital	Public Realm	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	.	**0.9**
	Highways Management	Public Realm	10.7	13.7	6.0	.	.	.	**30.4**
	Healthy Streets & Parking	Public Realm	2.1	1.7	0.5	.	.	.	**4.3**
	Healthy Streets & Parking - S106	Public Realm	1.2	0.4	.	.	.	.	**1.6**
	Healthy Streets & Parking - Parking	Public Realm	0.0	0.1	.	.	.	.	**0.1**
	Healthy Streets & Parking - TfL	Public Realm	2.0	1.6	.	.	.	.	**3.6**
Public Health: Cllr Neil Nerva	Sports & Culture - Capital	Public Realm	0.1	1.2	.	.	.	.	**1.3**
Environment: Cllr Krupa Sheth	Parks - Capital	Public Realm	1.1	1.5	0.5	.	.	.	**3.1**
	Environmental Health - Capital	Public Realm	9.1	3.0	4.5	1.0	1.0	5.9	**24.5**
Children, Young People and Schools: Cllr Gwen Grahl	Children & Youth Facilities - Capital	Schools	1.2	1.2	2.0	.	.	.	**4.4**
	Phase 3 Permanent Primary - Capital	Schools	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	.	**2.2**
	SEND Expansion - Capital	Schools	6.5	20.0	12.6	4.0	.	.	**43.1**

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

	School Capital Improvement - Capital	Schools	4.2	3.1	11.3	2.9	2.9	.	**24.4**
Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security: Cllr Promise Knight	Empty Property - Capital	Housing GF	1.8	1.4	0.7	.	.	.	**3.9**
	Aids & Adaptations - Capital	Housing GF	5.3	7.6	2.3	.	.	.	**15.2**
	Mixed Development - Capital	Housing GF	2.3	15.9	24.6	6.5	.	.	**49.3**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 3 (GF) - Capital	Housing GF	24.9	2.1	17.0	21.8	3.6	.	**69.4**
	Feasibility 1 - Capital	Housing GF	0.3	0.7	0.2	.	.	.	**1.2**
	Housing Infrastructure Fund - Capital	Housing GF	4.1	0.1	.	.	.	.	**4.2**
	PRS I4B - Capital	Housing GF	5.8	46.3	.	.	.	.	**52.1**
	Supported Living - Capital	Housing GF	0.5	0.8	.	.	.	.	**1.3**
	In Borough Acquisition Strategy - Capital	Housing GF	52.0	28.2	2.8	2.5	.	.	**85.5**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026	Housing HRA	0.4	1.6	47.7	9.9	9.9	.	**69.5**
	RTB Affordable Housing - Capital	Housing HRA	19.6	8.0	6.3	3.8	.	.	**37.7**
	Enfranchisement - Capital	Housing HRA	0.2	1.0	.	.	.	.	**1.2**

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 1 – Capital	Housing HRA	0.9	0.4	0.4	1.0	.	.	**2.7**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 2 - Capital	Housing HRA	0.1	.	.	.	.	.	**0.1**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 3 - Capital	Housing HRA	2.2	5.0	0.0	.	.	.	**7.2**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 4 - Capital	Housing HRA	1.2	0.3	0.1	.	.	.	**1.6**
	New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - Phase 5 - Capital	Housing HRA	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.1	.	.	**0.9**
	Major Repairs & Maintenance - Capital	Housing HRA	14.6	26.0	30.4	11.0	.	.	**82.0**
	Major Repairs & Maintenance - Adaptations - Capital	Housing HRA	0.8	.	.	.	.	.	**0.8**
	New Council Homes Programme - Capital	Housing HRA	9.8	14.5	15.3	7.4	.	.	**47.0**
Adult Social Care: Cllr Neil Nerva	NAIL (HRA) - Capital	Housing GF	1.5	3.0	0.5	.	.	.	**5.0**
Adult Social Care: Cllr Neil Nerva	NAIL (HRA) - Capital	Housing HRA	0.1	.	.	.	.	.	**0.1**
Total			**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.1**	**6.4**	**1,017.7**

Appendix E

Detailed Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Funding Sources	Grants & Other Contributions	42.9	52.9	33.6	7.3	3.3	.	**140.0**
	S106 & CIL	8.0	27.5	16.7	0.0	0.0	.	**52.2**
	Capital Receipts	10.6	1.8	26.0	19.5	26.1	.	**84.0**
	Reserves	1.8	2.7	1.3	1.4	.	.	**7.0**
	Major Repairs Allowance	15.0	22.6	21.4	.	.	.	**58.9**
	Revenue Contribution	8.6	11.6	1.7	9.0	0.5	.	**31.3**
	Prudential Borrowing	134.1	199.3	234.9	53.4	16.1	6.4	**644.2**
		220.9	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.1**	**6.4**	**1,017.7**

Pipeline Project ID	Project Name	Portfolio	Programme and purpose of scheme	Proposed Budget (M)	Funding Proposals (M)	Business Case to CPB	Borough Plan Objectives	Strategic Alignment	Statutory Obligations	Risk	Financial Return	Demand Management	Rating
Corporate Landlord													
PL021	Land & Property strategic acquisitions (general)	Corporate Landlord	**Strategic Acquisitions**: Papers will be taken forward to the Capital Programme Board when strategic land opportunities arise and are developed within regeneration areas. The key focus areas are Alperton and Staples Corner.	44.5	Ongoing	Ongoing	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent -**Invest in new land ownership opportunities to deliver more joined up projects and services with localities and neighbourhoods.	Borough Plan Local Plan	None	1. Opportunities are market led and this difficult to predict 2. Generally investment opportunities in the targeted areas are popular as property assets are high performing or present good asset-management potential (re-development etc.)	Some opportunities will have income as part of the asset opportunity - this will be assessed on a case by case basis	Local Plan identifies these areas as in need of growth and regeneration to deliver benefits and help to accommodate significant numbers of new homes to meet housing targets	2
PL060	Swimming Pool Energy Efficiency Works **NEW**	Corporate Landlord	**Swimming Pool Energy Efficiency Works:** An application has been made to the Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase II for capital grant funding provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Sport England. The purpose of the grant is to provide local authorities with financial support to improve the energy efficiency of public facilities with pools in the medium to long term. Brent has included three public swimming pools within its application for funding from the Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase II. These pools are: Vale Farm Sports Centre, Willesden Sports Centre and Wembley Leisure Centre (privately owned). The Council has applied for up to £581,888 in grant funding of which, we may be successfully awarded all, some or none of the grant applied for. Should the Council be successfully awarded funding, it will be notified in January 2024 with the project delivery period running through until March 2025.	0.6	Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase II	Mar-24	**A Healthier Brent -** •Tackling Health Inequalities •Localised Services for Local Needs **Thriving Communities -** •Enabling our Communities	Brent's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2010 to 2015 Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy	None	The key risk for the feasibility of this project is that it is entirely dependent on the award of grant funding from the Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase II. Should funding not be awarded, the project will be unlikely to go ahead.	By ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of Brent's swimming pool provision, this will secure ongoing income from leisure-related swimming in the borough and potential to grow participation.	Provision for swimming across the borough of Brent is critically low, with just three community accessible pools. In line with national trends, these swimming pools have been put at increased risk of closure or forced to operate reduced programmes to combat ever-increasing energy and utilities costs. The council recognises the demand for community swimming pools within the borough and have managed to keep the pools open throughout the return from the pandemic but have sustained significant financial losses in doing so.	1
PL061	Energy Efficiency Measures Works across the Corporate Estate, to achieve Net Zero by 2030 **NEW**	Corporate Landlord	**Energy - Capital -** The Council has a target to reach net zero emissions from its own corporate estate by 2030 as stated in Brent's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.To achieve this the council needs to reduce the carbon emissions from its corporate buildings as far as possible by implementing all available energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures. The key measures are: •insulation (external and internal wall, loft, and draught exclusion) •window glazing •LED lighting •Building Management System (BMS) upgrades •Solar (PV) panels on roofs and heat pumps (most likely to be Air-Source Heat Pumps, or in some cases Ground-Source Heat Pumps). The Council has made good progress in reducing its Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) emissions across its estate, with Council corporate buildings emissions falling by 62% from 2010/11 (our data baseline year) to 2021/22 (the most recent year data currently available). Much of those savings were achieved by the move away from many older buildings to the Civic Centre, and by the decarbonisation of the national grid.	9.6	PSDS / Capital Borrowing	TBC - Depending on PSDS Grant Bid Outcome	**A Cleaner, Greener Future.** • A Cleaner Borough • Climate-friendly, Sustainable Borough • Keeping Brent on the Move	Brent Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy target to do all in its gift achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, including leading by example achieving net zero by 2030 across its own corporate estate.	None	PSDS grant scheme ends or is suspended meaning future grant is unavailable. Future PSDS phase bids are unsuccessful meaning grant is unavailable. - Alternative sources of funding will be required, which could be interest free loans, combined with increased (up to 100%) Council own funds required. Cost estimates calculations in this report and spreadsheet are based on inaccurate assumptions (which are as stated in the notes within the spreadsheet). Future Inflationary cost increases are high, so that costs are underestimated. -Costs estimates should be reviewed and updated annually.	The energy cost savings that could be achieved by the completion of the energy efficiency measure works on corporate sites between 2025/26 and 2028/29.	None	2
PL051	Commercial Property Asset Management Programme	Corporate Landlord	**Asset Management Programme:** The commercial property portfolio are key resources for the Council to provide economic return and public value. The commercial portfolio generates circa £3m rental income per annum from around 190 business and third sector lettings, which includes a number of multi-let buildings. In order to be kept in good use they require an inflow of financial capital for their maintenance, repairs, refurbishments and upgrades where needed for the purposes of maintaining or upgrading the stock of physical capital over time.	0.8	Capital borrowing	TBC	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent -** Investing in our commercial property portfolio will improve our offerring to local businesses to better support our high streets by increasing footfall.	This proposal aligns with the Council's Borough Plan – the provision and supply of good quality accommodation for organisations impacts on all priorities.	The project would help fulfil the statutory obligations of health and safety in respect of the Council's landlord responsibilities, as well as supporting the accurate reporting of property values for statutory accounting purposes which relies on accurate stock condition information.	None identified. There are risks in not carrying out the project as mentioned in the main body of the report.	None	Economic and social changes are having an impact on supply and demand for properties i.e. increasing demand from all sections of the community.	1
Corporate Landlord Total				55.5									
Housing Care Investment Board													
PL012	St Raphael's estate	HCIB	**Mixed Development:** Brent's Housing Strategy for the period 2014-2019 outlines that the St Raphael's project aims to not only enhance existing housing and public spaces but also contribute to new housing supply. This project presents an opportunity to bring about fundamental improvements in the area, encompassing upgrades to housing and local infrastructure. Depending on whether the approach involves infill or redevelopment, these improvements have the potential to positively impact the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the Borough. The significant financial gap in the viability of redevelopment makes it necessary to prioritise infill development, which does not require a public ballot. The design work for Phase 1 of the project began in the summer of 2020/21, with a planning submission made in February 2023, and a decision expected in April 2024. It is important to note that the subsequent phases of the proposal, which involve substantial regeneration efforts, will only proceed once the development approach for Phase 1 has been finalised.	100.0	AHP Grant	TBC	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent -** Increase and improvement in housing supply and reduction in number of households in temporary accommodation. **Thriving Communities -** There was an increase in resident involvement ahead of the decison between redevelopment or infill.	Borough Plan 2021-2022 Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 Poverty Commission Housing Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025	St Raphs development will provide the following statutory provision: - Housing for families in Brent	1. Subject to planning permission 2. Cost of development - prices have increased following pandemic 3. Possiblity of residents objecting proposals	Schemes - partially funded by GLA. This assumes a resonable cost to build, however if development prices increase, viability will be challenged.	The provision of affordable housing is linked to the future need hilighted by housing waiting list.	4

PL044	New Council Homes Programme	HCIB	**New Council Homes Programme:** The council has successfully negotiated a reduction in the number of units from 701 to 572 for the GLA's Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026, while maintaining the same grant allocation of £111m. This adjustment was primarily necessitated by an increase in inflation and construction costs. The council's initial bid was structured with the goal of achieving a break-even point for each project within 60 years from practical completion. However, the total estimated scheme costs to deliver 572 new homes have now been revised to approximately £214.4m.	214.4	AHP Grant	Ongoing	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent** - increase and improvement in housing supply; reduction in number of households in temporary accommodation or homeless in the borough. **Thriving Communities** - there is an increase in resident involvement ahead of all new developments	Borough Plan 2021-2022 Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 Housing Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025	NCHP will provide the following statutory provision: - Housing for families in need in Brent	1. Subject to planning permission 2. Cost of development - prices have increased following pandemic 3. Possiblity of residents objecting proposals 4. Availability of sites	Schemes - partially funded by GLA. This assumes a resonable cost to build, however if development prices increase, viability will be challenged.	The provision of affordable housing is linked to the future need hilighted by housing waiting list.	4
Housing Care Investment Board Total				314.4									
Public Realm													
PL046	Barham Park	Public Realm	**Improvements to Barham Park:** There is a need to improve the buildings and landscaped grounds at Barham Park. Funding required for a strategic review and the refurbishment of the Barham Park Estate, estimated at £1m to £3m **Status Jan 24:** We are awaiting the completion of a surveyor-led review of the building which will inform intended works. The spread of expenditure for the years of the programme will be clearer after the review, but more probable that the cheaper option of maintenance only will be the selected option which will be c£1m	1.0	SCIL, S106, Council capital - TBC	Mar-24	**Thriving Communities -** Improved building and grounds at this community hub will encourage visitors and participation, support community cohesion and increased resident satisfaction **A Healthier Brent** - Provision of community space and attractive grounds encourage visitors, walking and supports the health of Brent Residents and reduce health inequalities.	Borough Plan 2021-2022, Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030	Local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a range of services to their communities.	1. Dependant on a strategic review of existing facilities and identifying improvements to the building and grounds.	The capital investment is necessary to maintain the building and grounds for continued use as important community space, retaining income to the Barham Park Trust for which the Council is the sole trustee.	Barham Park is an important community hub providing a range of services and recreational activities. There is a growing need for the renovation of the building and grounds to address deterioration, reduce energy costs, and the risk of a loss of tenants including the ACAVA charity, Barham Community Library, the Veterans Club, Tmu Samaj and the Children's Centre.	2
PL056	Wembley High Road – Carriageway reconstruction	Public Realm	**Wembley High Road Carriageway Reconstruction –** The carriageway surface is suffering from accelerated deterioation. Structural investigations, to identify structural issues with the carriageway build-up that is causing accelerated deterioration, was completed in Dec 23 and the detailed design has been sent to our contractor for estimating. This will be back at the end of January 24. The investigaiton concluded ground water issues eroding the sub surface and movement in the sub structure. The resolution is to install a complete new drainage infrastructure and full reconstruction along sections of the road where weaknesses have been identified. The estimate for remedial measures is yet to be confirmed. The costs will be covered from the £15m additional Brent investment in highways. For 2024/25 £1m has been allocated to Principal Roads. and Brent will also submit a bid to TfL for Principal Roads funding following indication this will be available again from 2024/25.	TBC	Brent Capital from £15m investment in Highways	TBC	**A Cleaner, Greener Future** - This Investment will reverse the decline and degradation of the carriageway and prevent reactive maintenance costs in future years therefore an invest to save scheme.	Borough Plan	Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 places a duty on the council as highways authority to maintain the public highway. Breach of this duty can render the council liable to pay compensation if anyone is injured as a result of failure to maintain the highway. There is also a general power under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980 to improve highways.	The carriageway is deteriorating rapidly with sections cracking, sinking and multiple potholes developing. "Make safe" repairs are only lasting a limited period and sections of the road is at risk of having to be closed if the surface deteriorates to a state where it is considered unfit for traffic. This will create widespread disruption throughout the area, which will increase further on Wembley Event days.	1.Avoidance of risk of claims 2.Economic damage due to road closures causing disruption and congestion. 3.Impact on Highways maintenance revenue budget through continuous make safe repairs.	None	2
PL057	Green Corridor Infrastructure Improvements in the two Green Neighbourhoods and supporting active travel	Public Realm	**Green Corridor Infrastructure Improvements in the two Green Neighbourhoods**: The council is taking a progressive and pioneering approach to tackling the climate and ecological emergency through the delivery of several Green Neighbourhood pilots (the first phase being Church End & Roundwood; and Kingsbury). Distinct overall 'visions' have emerged for the approach in these two pilot areas. In Church End and Roundwood in particular, there is significant potential for developing an area-wide focus on 'Green Corridors' to promote the healthy streets agenda, enhancing and linking green and active infrastructure. **UPDATE JAN 24** Costings to contractors have been requested and once these are received a business case will be brought to IOWG (for potential CIL funding) and the CPB for project approval reviews. With reduced TfL funding there is also a need to invest in our infratructure to support walking and cycling in the wider borough and it is anticipated that £4m will be required over the next 4 years.	1.5	SCIL	Mar-24	**A Cleaner, Greener Future** This investment will boost the council's current flagship climate programme (the Green Neighbourhoods) and will contribute to the desired borough plan outcomes of both: 'considerable and measurable progress made in the borough's journey to reaching net zero carbon emissions' and 'promote a cleaner more attractive borough, improving biodiversity in our streets and parks, through greening and sustainability projects including tree planting and the development of new and different habitats'	Brent Borough Plan 2023-2027 Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 Brent Long Term Transport Strategy 2015-2035 Brent's Third Local Implementation Plan 2019-2041	The Climate Change Act 2008 (the Act) is the statutory basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. The Act places a legal duty on central government to set legally binding targets to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050 The Greater London Authority Act 1999 ("the GLA Act") requires that in exercising any function, London local authorities must have regard to the Mayor's Transport Strategy which sets out the transport policy framework for London.	There is a risk to the council achieving its aspirations to become a carbon neutral borough if its flagship pilot programme does not have sufficient financial support to be implemented. Schemes should be developed and implemented alongside the community wherever possible, to minimise risk of public opposition. Identified climate risk specific to Brent is set out in more detail in our Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, this includes a risk assessment public health, infrastructure and the natural environment in Brent.	There is no specific financial return the risk posed by climate change and poor public health result in significant costs to the UK economy. The programme will support the wider Council objectives to encourage sustainable travel, improve air quality, the local economy and community health and general well-being.	The Green Corridors element of the Green Neighbourhoods programme seeks to build on our existing Transport for London LIP funded corridors and neighbourhoods improvements programme, with the aim of improving people's health and wellbeing and facilitating social inclusion. The focus will be on delivering comprehensive, 'high impact' schemes, implemented over wider areas to address multiple issues and bring about a greater range of benefits to more people.	2
PL058	Parks Infrastructure Improvements	Public Realm	**Park Infrastructure Improvements:** A large number of pathways in parks are failing; with edging falling away and tree root incursion. These are a health and safety issue requiring investment. At least two of our pavilions are suffering from high deterioration internally, meaning that we cannot rent or use them and gain any income. The aviary at Roundwood has subsidence and requires structural repair and the toilets at Roundwood need to be demolished and alternative provision made in the bowling green area, reducing the opportunity for ASB and vandalism. The Service continues to assess any potential external funding to cover the costs of these works, and in the understanding that whilst works are to be funded through Council borrowing, that the Council is unlikely to commence these works,	2.0	Capital Borrowing	Feb-24	**A Cleaner, Greener Future -** This investment will help make our parks more sustainable for increased use by the local community. **A Healthier Brent -** Investing in the infrastructure will allow for more residents to access our open spaces and seek opportunities for improved physical and mental wellbeing.	Borough Plan Brent-climate - ecological-emergency-strategy-2021-2030	None	1) Without investment our pathways are becoming heath and safety risks for visitors leading to increased insurance claims for trips and falls and closure of pathways that cannot be used. There is no other source of funding for this kind of infrastructure. 2)The toilet block in Roundwood is one of the few remaining in our parks. It has been closed for the last year, leading to high levels of complaints and public dissatisfaction. 3) The internal stairs and upstairs floor at the pavilion in Vale Farm in particular, are disintegrating, creating a health and safety risk and putting the structure of the building at risk. We cannot hire out the building in its current condition and to not invest in repair, means we risk being able to meet income targets set out for 2024/25 FY.	The provision of improved sports facilities will result in an increase in activities and revenue generated from charges, which will be detailed in the business case.	Brent has a growing population and demands for community sports provision in our parks will increase in future years.	2
PL020	Sports Programme	Public Realm	**Green spaces:** Improvement works to a range of grounds (including football, cricket and rugby) and their facilities, feasibility studies and longer-term improvement works. Discussions with Middlesex FA have also raised the possibility of match funding to allow us to improve the quality of many more of our pitches than previously anticipated. The Service continues to assess any potential external funding, or savings elsewhere to mitigate the cost, to cover the costs of these works, and in the understanding that whilst works are to be funded through Council borrowing, that the Council is unlikely to commence these works.	1.1	Capital Borrowing	Mar-24	**A Healthier Brent -** Provision of high-quality sports facilities encourages physical activity, helps to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the community and seeks to reduce health inequalities.	Borough Plan 2023-2027	None.	Without investment, many community clubs will seek to play their games elsewhere and issues with pitch quality have already led to the cancellation of many games last season, leading to a loss of income to the Parks Service and reduced opportunities for grass roots sports provision.	The provision of improved sports facilities will result in an increase in activities and revenue generated from charges, which will be detailed in the business case.	Brent has a growing population and demands for community sports provision in our parks will increase in future years.	1
Public Realm Total				5.6									
Regeneration													

PL031	Neasden Connectivity and Place Making Improvements	Regeneration	**Strategic Transport:** The proposal is to improve the character and connectivity in Neasden town centre to enhance the public realm, increase footfall, increase active travel and support businesses.	3.2	SCIL, S106, TfL - TBC	Apr-24	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent** **A Cleaner, Greener Future** **A Healthier Brent**	Borough Plan Draft Long Term Transport Strategy Draft Local Plan	Statutory requirement to provide a spatial strategy for the area; this is part of the delivery of the adopted Local Plan.	Price inflation/materials	None directly; would be SCIL eligible	Once Neasden Growth Area gets into delivery, population of Neasden will increase	2
PL059	Church End Masterplan IDP Improvements (Phases 1 & 2) **NEW**	Regeneration	**Church End IDP Masterplan Improvements (Phases 1 & 2):** Transport and placemaking infrastructure improvements identified in adopted CEGA Masterplan SPD and IDP required to support regeneration and growth including 1300 new homes in the area; Phase 1 focus is on the High Street area and Phase 2 the route south to Harlesden; 1) Junction, crossing and traffic improvements 2) Public realm (pedestrian links, wayfinding, lighting) 3) Protected cycle lanes, tree planting, SUDS.	10.0	SCIL, GLA	Apr-24	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent** **A Cleaner, Greener Future** **A Healthier Brent**	Borough Plan Local Plan Long Term Transport Strategy	Statutory requirement to provide a spatial strategy for the area; this is part of the delivery of the adopted Local Plan. Improvements would consequentially contribute to local authorties highways obligations	Build cost inflation; design and construction risks; contractual risks.	Potential to catalyse development in CEGA area for new housing and employment floorspace, with associated economic benefits and increase in local tax base	Church End is an identified growth area and infrastructure investment is required to supoort the needs of a growing population	4
Regeneration Total				13.2									
Schools													
PL048	Post-16 Skills Resource Centre & SEND School Expansion	Schools	**Post-16 Skills Resource Centre-** To develop a post-16 resource centre at Airco Close and horticultural centre at Welsh Harp to support young people aged 16 – 25 with SEND.	22.0	SCIL, Basic Need Grant, High Needs Capital Grant	**Cabinet** Mar-24	**The Best Start in Life** - supporting the continued development of young people by providing new skill opportunities for them to succeed. **Prosperity and Stability in Brent** - easing cost of living crisis through providing young people with SEND employable skills and abilities	The Brent SEND Strategy 2021-2025 The Brent Youth Strategy 2021-2023	The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a new legislative framework for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND.. The reforms aimed to increase protection for young people with SEND and to promote a greater focus on outcomes and preparing for adulthood.	Increasing inflation costs and its impact on the construction industry (resources, materials, deliveries)	None directly	The School Place Planning Strategy Refresh, agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, evidences the growing demand for places that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The rationale for a Post 16 Skills Resource Centre is supported by the changing demography, with increasing numbers of young people with SEND.	4
Schools Total				22.0									
South Kilburn Regeneration													
PL026	South Kilburn Schools	South Kilburn Regeneration	**South Kilburn Regeneration:** Provision of sufficient school places for both primary and nursery children; new school building in Austen/Blake redevelopment, part of the masterplan.	16.3	SCIL	Mar-24	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent** **A Cleaner, Greener Future** **A Healthier Brent**	Borough Plan South Kilburn masterplan SPD South Kilburn Landlord Offer Draft Local plan	To provide schools for children's education	Procurement of a contractor. Agreeing design with schools Planning risk. Viability risk.	None directly. School element would be SCIL eligible.	Increasing population in the area; landlord offer was on basis of the masterplan	3
PL013	Open Spaces and public realm improvements (e.g. NWCC, Carlton Vale Boulevard)	South Kilburn Regeneration	**South Kilburn Regeneration:** Delivering high quality open spaces across the area, including on site of existing schools. In addition, improved connectivity through the masterplan area, and improved local infrastructure including Carlton Vale Boulevard. NWCC public realm contribution from SIL (£4.9m) agreed by Cabinet April 2021.	6.8	SCIL	Feb-24	**Prosperity and Stability in Brent** **A Cleaner, Greener Future** **A Healthier Brent**	Borough Plan South Kilburn masterplan SPD South Kilburn Landlord Offer Draft Local plan	Statutory requirement to provide a spatial strategy for the area. Once adopted the Local Plan will become part of the statutory development plan	Procurement of a contractor	None directly SCIL eligible.	Increasing population in the area; landlord offer was on basis of the masterplan.	2
South Kilburn Regeneration Total				23.1									
Grand Total				433.8									

Priority Ranking: 5 = high priority and 1 = low priority

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Appendix G

Capital Strategy Report 2024/25

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Capital Strategy Report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure; capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It has been written in an accessible style to enhance members' understanding of these technical areas.

1.2 Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Council for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.

2.0 Capital Expenditure and Financing

2.1 Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property, vehicles or other assets that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £10,000 are generally not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year. A review is currently being undertaken as to appropriate de-minimus level below which capitalisation will not take place. Details of the Council's policy on capitalisation is set out in the annual Statement of Accounts.

2.2 In 2024/25, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £318.3m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
£m	**Forecast**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	
Corporate Landlord	10.1	14.2	19.0	10.8	28.2	82.3
South Kilburn	13.6	27.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	41.1
Regeneration	9.0	64.7	110.4	7.2	0.0	191.4
St Raphael's	0.8	0.3	19.5	0.0	0.0	20.6
Public Realm	26.6	23.8	11.7	1.0	1.0	64.2
Schools	12.4	24.7	26.3	7.3	3.3	73.9
Housing GF	98.4	106.1	48.1	30.7	3.6	286.9
Housing HRA	49.9	57.3	100.3	33.3	9.9	250.8
Total Capital Programme	**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.0**	**1,011.2**

2.3 The Capital Programme comprises of projects approved by Cabinet from previous year budget setting, new projects approved in year and being brought forward including those promoted from the pipeline provision.

2.4 The main General Fund capital projects between 2023/24 and 2027/28 include the Council Homes Programme £224m; Housing Zones Regeneration Programme £125m; Bridge Park Regeneration £49m; Schools capital programme £74m and Development of College North West London £49m. The Council also plans to incur capital expenditure on investments, which are discussed in more detail within the Investment Strategy for 2024/25.

2.5 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account which ensures that council housing does not subsidise, or is itself subsidised, by other local services. HRA capital expenditure is therefore recorded separately and includes the building of new homes as well as expenditure on improving and maintaining council homes over the planned period. Total planned expenditure between 2023/24 and 2027/28 is expected to be £170m.

2.6 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing and Private Finance Initiative). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
£m	**Forecast**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	
Grants & Other Contributions	42.9	52.9	33.6	7.3	3.3	140.0
S106 & CIL	8.0	27.5	16.7	0.0	0.0	52.2
Capital Receipts	10.6	1.8	26.0	19.5	26.1	84.0
Reserves	1.8	2.7	1.3	1.4	0.0	7.0
Major Repairs Allowance	15.0	22.6	21.4	0.0	0.0	58.9
Revenue Contribution	8.6	11.6	1.7	9.0	0.5	31.3
Prudential Borrowing	134.1	199.3	234.9	53.4	16.1	637.8
Total Capital Financing	**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.0**	**1,011.2**

2.7 Excluding external sources and the Council's own resources, the remainder of assets are funded from debt. As with any debt, it must be repaid over time, and for a local authority there is a statutory requirement to set aside "Minimum Revenue Provision" (MRP) in each year's budget for debt repayment. Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP to 2027/28 is as set out in the table below.

Table 3: Funds available for the replacement of debt

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
£m	**Forecast**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	
MRP	15.5	18.2	20.6	22.8	24.3	**101.4**
Capital Receipts	10.6	1.8	26.0	19.5	26.1	**84.0**
Total	**26.1**	**20.0**	**46.6**	**42.3**	**50.4**	**185.4**

2.8 The Council's full minimum revenue policy statement is presented as an Appendix to the annual Council Tax and Budget Setting Report.

2.9 The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase to £1.35bn during 2024/25 and to £1.59bn by 2027/28. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement

£M	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Opening CFR	1,146.1	1,261.9	1,442.1	1,655.4	1,685.1
Capital Expenditure	220.9	318.3	335.5	90.5	46.0
External resources	(50.9)	(80.4)	(50.3)	(7.3)	(3.3)
Own Resources	(35.9)	(38.7)	(50.3)	(29.8)	(26.6)
MRP	(15.5)	(18.2)	(20.6)	(22.8)	(24.3)
Soft Loans Repaid (Capital)	(2.8)	(0.9)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
Closing CFR	**1,261.9**	**1,442.1**	**1,655.4**	**1,685.1**	**1,675.8**

3.0 Capital Programme Governance and Prioritisation

3.1 The capital programme is updated annually for new schemes, revised profiling, slippage and changes in expenditure projections. The capital programme and capital pipeline proposals 2024/25 report sets out the indicative capital programme that will be presented to Council in February 2024 as part of the annual budget setting cycle.

Pipeline Schemes

3.2 During the year the individual capital sub-boards (led by Operational Directors) developed a comprehensive list of opportunities and proposals for future aspirational capital investment to meet the council's strategic objectives. These outline bids are then collated by the Capital Programme Management Office. For 2024/25 this process has culminated in the assimilation of 16 individual outline capital proposals with a total value of £433.8m. At this stage these strategic pipeline schemes are only indicative and do not yet form part of the main programme as there is a requirement that individually they will still go through the normal approval routes (i.e. Sub-board, Capital Programme

Board or Cabinet). Furthermore, officers will be required to produce detailed business cases, undertake feasibility and consult as appropriate before getting to this stage.

Capital Programme Board

3.3 This Board is the main forum for reviewing the financial viability of the new capital bids and monitoring of existing programme. The Board reviews all capital investment and new opportunities, oversees and maintains the list of pipeline schemes and ensures outcomes are aligned with Council's aspirations and reflective of the circumstances within Brent. The board also ensures that all projects have a viable business case and that value for money (VfM) will be delivered for the Council.

Prioritisation criteria

3.4 The general criteria for scoring proposals are summarised below, higher scores were applied based on the following criterion:

- **Strategic Alignment** - How the scheme meets the outcomes of a key service objective as stated in a strategy document, business plan or action plan.
- **Statutory Obligations** - How the delivery of a scheme is essential to ensuring the Council meets the statutory need and without the project, the Council would otherwise be at risk of failing to meet.
- **Risk** - Whether the success of the project is dependent on mitigating high associated risks
- **Financial Return -** Whether the scheme generates ongoing revenue savings, a capital receipt or attract external funding (partial or fully).
- **Demand and Demographic Changes** - whether the scheme is required following a change in demographic, economic or social change that impact the borough and will reduce the demand for services in the borough.

4.0 Asset management

4.1 To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has a Housing Asset Management strategy in place and a Property Asset Management Strategy under review. The strategies provide a planning tool which ensures the assets are well managed and maintained in order to maximise the benefits for local residents.

5.0 Asset disposals

5.1 When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. The Council is currently also permitted to spend capital receipts on service transformation projects until 2024/25. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts.

5.2 The Council plans to receive £10.6m of capital receipts in the current financial year. A significant proportion of these arise from asset disposals on the South Kilburn site as well as housing sold under the right to buy (RTB) scheme. The capital receipts expected in future financial years are as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts

£M	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Asset Sales	10.6	1.8	26.0	19.5	26.1
Loans Repaid	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.8
TOTAL	**20.5**	**11.7**	**35.9**	**29.3**	**35.9**

6.0 Treasury Management

6.1 Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account.

6.2 The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

6.3 On 31st December 2023, the Authority held £828.0m of borrowing (£758.0m long term and £70.0m short term) at an average rate of 4.0% and £135.5m of cash investments at an average rate of 5.3%.

7.0 Borrowing strategy

7.1 The Council's main objectives when borrowing is to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between short-term loans at higher rates (currently available at around 5.60% to 6.00%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is lower (PWLB Standard Rate currently around 4.35% to 5.37%). The Authority does not borrow to invest for the primary purpose of financial return and therefore retains full access to the Public Works Loans Board.

7.2 Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, PFI liabilities and leases are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

£M	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	707.6	697.2	686.9	676.5	666.1
Capital Financing Requirement	1,261.9	1,442.1	1,655.4	1,685.1	1,675.8

7.3 Statutory guidance prescribes that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from Table 6, the Council expects to comply with this regulation.

8.0 Affordable borrowing limit

8.1 The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 7: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt

£M	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Authorised Limit	1,700.0	1,700.0	1,800.0	1,900.0	1,900.0
Operational Boundary	1,500.0	1,500.0	1,600.0	1,700.0	1,700.0

8.2 Further details on borrowing are contained within the Council's treasury management strategy.

9.0 Investment strategy

9.1 Treasury investments balances arise from receiving cash before it is required to be paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

9.2 The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield and to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and

property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 8: Treasury management investments

£M	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Short term investments	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Long term investments	-	-	-	-	-

9.3 Further details on treasury investments are contained within the Council's treasury management strategy.

9.4 **Risk management:** The effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of the Council's treasury management activities. The treasury management strategy therefore sets out various indicators and limits to constrain the risk of unexpected losses and details the extent to which financial derivatives may be used to manage treasury risks.

9.5 Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. Reports on treasury management activity are presented quarterly to Cabinet and Full Council, whilst the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

10.0 Investments for Service Purposes

10.1 The Council makes investments to assist local public services, including making loans to council subsidiaries to promote economic growth. In light of the public service objective, the Council is willing to take more risk than with treasury investments, however it still plans for such investments to break-even after all costs.

10.2 Decisions on service investments are either made by Cabinet or under delegated authority, or set down in the approved investment strategy. Most loans and shares are capital expenditure and purchases will therefore also be approved as part of the capital programme. Further details on service investments are contained within the investment strategy.

10.3 The risk of incurred unexpected losses is managed by working closely with counterparties and through the securing the loans where necessary, which would allow the Council to recover significant funds in the event of a default. A limit of £550m is

placed on total investment for service purposes, to ensure that plausible losses could be absorbed within budgets or reserves without unmanageable detriment to local services.

10.4 The proposed budget includes sums for investment in the Council's subsidiary i4B for the acquisition of properties as part of the Council's temporary accommodation reform plan. These schemes aim to alleviate affordable housing pressures. A development finance loan to United College's Group to assist with cashflow pressures around their campus redevelopment has also been included. An additional £2.3m loan facility was agreed in the Q2 2023/24 Financial Report, towards the Refugee Housing Programme.

11.0 Commercial Activities

11.1 The Council has previously invested in property, both to support regeneration and community assets, whilst also securing a financial return. The Council does not at present or in the future invest in commercial property for the purpose of making a profit. Such properties are currently valued at £309.2m and generating £2.3m per annum in rental income. Over time the use of these assets may change as new priorities are confirmed and assets are repurposed to contribute to the delivery of new strategic priorities.

Table 9: Property asset types and income generated

Asset Types	**Value £**m	**Income PA £**m
Operational	228.1	1.8
Commercial	0.0	0.0
Community Groups	79.8	0.5
Education	1.2	0.0
Total	**309.2**	**2.3**

11.2 The principal risk exposures include voids, diminution of capital values, etc. These risks are managed by the existing risk management framework. In order that property investments remain proportionate to the size of the authority they are under constant review and contingency plans are in place should expected yields not materialise. The Corporate Director for Finance and Resources is responsible for governance and due diligence on these investments.

12.0 Other Liabilities

12.1 In addition to debt of £707.6m detailed above, the Council is committed to making future payments to cover its pension fund deficit (valued at £162.0m – Report March 2022).

13.0 Revenue Budget Implications

13.1 Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP payments are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Table 10: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of net revenue stream to financing costs

	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Financing costs (£m)	26.6	39.1	50.7	57.6	59.3
Proportion of net revenue stream %	7.4%	10.2%	12.8%	14.1%	14.2%

13.2 Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future. The detailed information contained within the Treasury Management Strategy and the Budget & Council Tax Report 2024/25, as well as the prudential indicators included above demonstrates how the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources is satisfied the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable, and sustainable.

14.0 Knowledge and Skills

14.1 The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. The Council also pays for junior staff to study towards relevant professional qualifications including CIPFA for example.

14.2 Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach can be more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

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Non-treasury Investment Strategy Report 2024/25

Introduction

1. The Council invests its money for three broad purposes:

   - because it has surplus cash as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example when income is received in advance of expenditure (known as **treasury management investments**);
   - to support local public services by lending to or buying shares in other organisations (**service investments**); and
   - to earn investment income (known as **commercial investments** where this is the main purpose).

2. This investment strategy meets the requirements of statutory guidance issued by the Government in January 2018.

3. The statutory guidance defines investments as "all of the financial assets of a local authority as well as other non-financial assets that the organisation holds primarily or partially to generate a profit; for example, investment property portfolios." The Council interprets this to exclude (a) trade receivables which meet the accounting definition of financial assets but are technically not investments; and (b) property held partially to generate a profit but primarily for the provision of local public services. This aligns the Authority's definition of an investment with that in the 2021 edition of the CIPFA Prudential Code, a more recent piece of statutory guidance.

Treasury Management Investments

4. The Council typically receives its income in cash (e.g. from taxes and grants) before it pays for its expenditure in cash (e.g. through payroll and invoices). It also holds reserves for future expenditure and collects local taxes on behalf of other local authorities and central government. These activities, plus the timing of borrowing decisions, lead to a cash surplus which is invested in accordance with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The balance of treasury management investments is expected to fluctuate between £20m and £150m during the 2024/25 financial year.

5. The contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the Council is to support effective treasury management activities.

6. Full details of the Council's policies and its plan for treasury management investments are covered in a separate document, the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.

Service Investments: Loans

7. The Council lends money to its subsidiaries, local businesses, local charities, municipal waste authorities and academies to support local public services and stimulate local economic growth.

8. An invest to save loan was given to the West London Waste Authority which is the statutory body responsible for waste disposal in a number of West London boroughs. The funding assisted the development of a new waste treatment facility. The loan is expected to be repaid back by December 2041.

9. The Council's existing loan to First Wave Housing Limited has been used to support the provision of affordable accommodation and improve the provision of permanent housing as a registered provider. Further loan facilities may be advanced to First Wave Housing if suitable opportunities are presented. The loan to the Council's other subsidiary, i4B Holdings Ltd, has been used to purchase properties as part of the Council's temporary accommodation reform plan.

10. The School and Academies Loan Scheme has helped support significant improvements to school facilities ensuring the buildings are suitable for modern teaching and learning and accessible for pupils with disabilities.

11. The Council is planning to provide a cashflow loan to United Colleges Group, to help facilitate the development of their new campus in Wembley. Funds are currently expected to be drawn down between December 2025 and June 2026, although this may be subject to change if there are delays in the submission of related planning applications related to the existing blocks being sold as part of the process.

12. **Security:** The main risk when making service loans is that the borrower will be unable to repay the principal lent and/or the interest due. In order to limit this risk, and ensure that total exposure to service loans remains proportionate to the size of the Council, upper limits on the outstanding loans to each category of borrower have been set as follows:

Table 1: Loans for service purposes in £ millions

Category of borrower	**2023/34**	**2024/25**
	Forecast Balance owing	**Approved Limit**
Subsidiaries	256.4	400.0
Local businesses	0.2	10.0
Schools, Academies and Colleges	0.8	55.0
Waste Authority	14.4	20.0

Local Charities	-	10.0
Housing Associations	-	50.0
Local Residents	-	5.0
TOTAL	**271.8**	**550.0**

13. Accounting standards require the Council to set aside loss allowance for loans, reflecting the likelihood of non-payment. The figures for loans in the Council's statement of accounts have been shown net of this loss allowance since 2019/20. However, the Council makes every reasonable effort to collect the full sum lent and has appropriate credit control arrangements in place to recover overdue repayments. The loss allowance to date has been immaterial.

14. In addition to lending service loans, the Council may consider the following service investments:

- Lending to Joint ventures (JVs), Associates and Similar entities: The Council can invest in such organisations where there is minimal risk. Moreover, there are instances when the Council is de facto required to invest or to deliver an alternative scheme.
    - The Council currently has a JV arrangement with London & Newcastle Capital Ltd and have established the Queens Park Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) for the purpose of regenerating the South Kilburn area.
- The Council may lend to Companies or Charities, which are not wholly owned, which deliver services supporting the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The loans must be on a commercial basis and that the Council must require assurances that the loan principal will be repaid. Risk assessment of any proposed lending will be in accordance with the methods set out in paragraph 16.
- The Council may make small loans to organisations that are at a higher risk to support the local economy, possibly in relation to a complex regeneration scheme. Such loans, regardless of the amount, will require a delegated approval report, signed off by the Director of Finance & S151 Officer in conjunction with the Cabinet Member responsible for Finance. Risk assessment of any proposed lending will be in accordance with the methods set out in paragraph 16.
- **Working Capital Facilities:** These are explicitly not capital expenditure because they exist to manage cashflows and such facilities are short term in nature. The Council can loan on a commercial basis to organisations and the approval process is via the Director of Finance &

S151 Officer, who depending on the size of the loan may choose to request additional approval from the relevant Cabinet Member for Finance. Regular reviews of cashflow of any entities receiving such a loan are a requirement, taking place no less than on a quarterly basis. It is anticipated that the majority of such facilities would take in relation to wholly owned companies or JVs, and that they would be on a commercial basis. However, where they are not on commercial terms, additional approval from the relevant Cabinet Member for Finance, depending on the size of the loan, should be sought. One key aspect that must be considered in relation to working capital is that the cashflow review is not just for the demonstration of the financial health of the borrower and ability to repay (plus interest), but to ensure that the loan is not being used for capital purposes. Such a facility would operate via an on-lending agreement and drawdowns would be supported by relevant documentation. Currently the Council provided i4B a working capital facility.

Since working capital facilities are not capital expenditure, accounting for the facility under IFRS 9 means that a revenue charge will be recognised for the expected credit loss and therefore would impact Council balances.

15. All lending to Companies whether Council owned or not will require a formal on lending agreement.

16. **Risk assessment:** The Council assesses the risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding service loans by undertaking various financial checks and utilising specialists (where required) to advise on technical aspects of the investment. Projects funded by service loans are monitored within the Council's existing capital programme and governance reporting regime. The following risk assessment methods are used:

- Evaluation of business plans/cashflow forecasts
- Ability to demonstrate repayment of principal and interest
- Use of credit ratings and financial data
- Wholly owning the company having a sizeable share in company
- Council having first right to call on assets in the event of default / charge on assets (relevant for i4B Holdings Ltd)
- Obtaining assurance that there is sound governance and in controls in place
- Determination of an exit strategy
- Use of external advisors for accounting/taxation; legal (including Subsidy Control); and technical advice
- Use of on-lending / loan agreements to manage the respective transaction and financial monitoring of such agreements

17. The Council will consider other risk assessment methods as deemed appropriate and available at the time of the risk evaluation.

Service Investments: Shares

18. The Council does not hold any service investment shares. However, the Council may consider the service investment shares in the future should an opportunity arise with a wholly owned company or other companies.

19. **Security:** One of the risks of investing in shares is that they fall in value meaning that the initial outlay may not be recovered. To limit this risk and ensure that the total exposure of service investment shares remain proportionate to the size of the Council.

20. Investment shares will be subject to an expected credit loss assessment under IFRS 9.

Commercial Investments: Property

21. The Council does not at present or in the future invest in commercial property for the purpose of making a profit.

Other categories of investment

22. **Loan Commitments and Financial Guarantees:** Although not strictly counted as investments, since no money has exchanged hands yet, loan commitments and financial guarantees carry similar risks to the Council and are included here for completeness.

23. I4B currently has loans of £182.0m outstanding with the Council at varying rates of interest and maturity dates depending on the date of the initial loan draw down. A further £12.0m of loan finance was available as at the 31st of December 2023. A new £40m loan facility is proposed with i4B to support the provision of private rented sector accommodation in light of the demand pressures in temporary accommodation.

24. United College Group (UCG) currently has a £30m loan facility on standby under a commercial loan agreement with the option to extend to £50m. No loans have been drawn to date. The first loan drawdown is expected to take place in 2027/28.

Capacity, skills and Culture

25. The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making recommendations and decisions on Treasury Management investments and Service Investments. The Council pays for junior staff to study towards relevant professional qualifications including

CIPFA and all senior members of the finance team are qualified accountants. In conjunction with the knowledge and skills of Council staff, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach can be more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

26. Our retained advisors provide a comprehensive training and awareness programme for elected Members, including training in relation to scrutiny of the Treasury Management function and the annual Statement of Accounts. The training programme covers, Local Government Finance, Corporate Governance, The Role of the Governance / Audit Committee and capital Programme Prioritisation.

27. The Council's treasury activity (including investments and borrowing) is reported to the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and full Council twice a year via a mid-year report as well as the full year outturn report.

Investment Indicators

28. The Council has set the following quantitative indicators to allow elected members and the public to assess the Council's total risk exposure as a result of its investment decisions.

29. **Total risk exposure:** The first indicator shows the Council's total exposure to potential investment losses. This includes amounts the Council is contractually committed to lend but have yet to be drawn down and guarantees the Council has issued over third-party loans.

Table 2: Total investment exposure (£m)

Total investment exposure	**2022/23 Actual**	**2023/24 Forecast**	**2024/25 Forecast**
Treasury management investments	116.2	20.0	20.0
Service investments: Loans	256.4	256.4	296.4
Commercial investments: Property	-	-	-
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	**372.6**	**276.4**	**316.4**
Commitments to lend	62.1	62.1	50.0
TOTAL EXPOSURE	**434.7**	**338.5**	**366.4**

30. **How investments are funded:** Government guidance states that these indicators should include details of how investments are funded. Since the Council does not normally associate particular assets with particular liabilities, this guidance is difficult to comply with. However, the following investments could be described as being funded by borrowing. The remainder of the Council's investments are funded by usable reserves, grants and other income.

Table 3: Investments funded by borrowing (£m)

Investments funded by borrowing	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Forecast
Service investments: Loans	256.4	256.4	296.4
TOTAL FUNDED BY BORROWING	**256.4**	**256.4**	**296.4**

31. **Rate of Return:** This indicator shows the investment income received less the associated costs, including the cost of borrowing where appropriate, as a proportion of the sum initially invested. Note that due to the complex local government accounting framework, not all recorded gains and losses affect the revenue account in the year they are incurred.

Table 4: Investment rate of return (net of all costs)

Investments net rate of return	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Forecast
Treasury management investments	4.1%	5.0%	4.0%
Service investments: Loans	3.7%	3.7%	4.0%
Commercial investments: Property	-	-	-

Table 5: Other investment indicators

Indicator	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Forecast
Debt to net service expenditure ratio	2.42	2.15	2.05
Commercial income as a % of net service expenditure ratio	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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Appendix I - Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25

Introduction

1.0 Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.

2.0 Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

3.0 Investments held for service purposes are considered separately within the Investment Strategy.

External Context

4.0 The impact on the UK from higher interest rates and inflation, a weakening economic outlook, an uncertain political climate due to an upcoming general election, together with war in Ukraine and the Middle East, will be major influences on the Council's treasury management strategy for 2024/25.

5.0 The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate to 5.25% in August 2023, before maintaining this level for the rest of 2023. In December 2023, members of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted 6-3 in favour of keeping Bank Rate at 5.25%. The three dissenters wanted to increase rates by another 0.25%.

6.0 The November quarterly Monetary Policy Report (MPR) forecast a prolonged period of weak Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth with the potential for a mild contraction due to ongoing weak economic activity. The outlook for CPI inflation was deemed to be highly uncertain, with near-term risks to CPI falling to the 2% target coming from potential energy price increases, strong domestic wage growth and persistence in price-setting.

7.0 Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures showed CPI inflation was 3.9% in November 2023, down from a 4.6% rate in the previous month and, in line with the recent trend, lower than expected. The core CPI inflation rate declined to 5.1% from the previous month's 5.7%, again lower than predictions. Looking ahead, using the interest rate path implied by financial markets the BoE expects CPI inflation to continue falling slowly, but taking until early 2025 to reach the 2% target before dropping below target during the second half 2025 and into 2026.

8.0 ONS figures showed the UK economy grew by 0.1% between July and September 2023. The BoE forecasts GDP will likely stagnate through 2024. The BoE forecasts that higher interest rates will constrain GDP growth, which will remain weak over the entire forecast horizon.

9.0 The labour market appears to be loosening, but only very slowly. The unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.2% between June and August 2023, from 4.0% in the previous 3-month period, but the lack of consistency in the data between the two periods made comparisons difficult. Earnings growth has remained strong but has showed some signs of easing; regular pay (excluding bonuses) was up 7.3% over the period and total pay (including bonuses) up 7.2%. Adjusted for inflation, regular pay was 1.4% and total pay 1.3%. Looking forward, the MPR showed the unemployment rate is expected to be around 4.25% in the second half of calendar 2023, but then rising steadily over the forecast horizon to around 5% in late 2025/early 2026.

10.0 Having increased its key interest rate to a target range of 5.25-5.50% in August 2023, the US Federal Reserve appears now to have concluded the hiking cycle. It is likely this level represents the peak in US rates following a more dovish meeting outcome in December 2023.

11.0 US GDP grew at an annualised rate of 4.9% between July and September 2023, ahead of expectations for a 4.3% expansion and the 2.1% reading for Q2. But the impact from higher rates has started to feed into economic activity and growth will weaken in 2024. Annual CPI inflation was 3.1% in November.

12.0 Eurozone inflation has declined steadily since the start of 2023, falling to an annual rate of 2.4% in November 2023. Economic growth has been weak, and GDP was shown to have contracted by 0.1% in the three months to September 2023. In line with other central banks, the European Central Bank has been increasing rates, taking its deposit facility, fixed rate tender, and marginal lending rates to 3.75%, 4.25% and 4.50% respectively.

Credit outlook

13.0 Credit Default Swap (CDS) prices were volatile during 2023, spiking in March on the back of banking sector contagion concerns following the major events of Silicon Valley Bank becoming insolvent and the takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS. After then falling back in Q2 of calendar 2023, in the second half of the year, higher interest rates and inflation, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and conflict in the Middle East, have led to CDS prices increasing steadily.

14.0 On an annual basis, CDS price volatility has so far been lower in 2023 compared to 2022, but this year has seen more of a divergence in prices between ringfenced (retail) and non-ringfenced (investment) banking entities once again.

15.0 Moody's revised its outlook on the UK sovereign to stable from negative to reflect its view of restored political predictability following the volatility after the 2022 mini-budget. Moody's also affirmed the Aa3 rating in recognition of the UK's economic resilience and strong institutional framework.

16.0 Following its rating action on the UK sovereign, Moody's revised the outlook on five UK banks to stable from negative and then followed this by the same action on five rated local authorities. However, within the same update the long-term ratings of those five local authorities were downgraded.

17.0 There remain competing tensions in the banking sector, on one side from higher interest rates boosting net income and profitability against another of a weakening economic outlook and likely recessions that increase the possibility of a deterioration in the quality of banks' assets.

18.0 However, the Council's counterparties remain well-capitalised. The Council will continue to utilise our Treasury adviser's advice on both recommended institutions and maximum duration, as well as reflecting economic conditions and the credit outlook in our approach.

Interest rate forecast (Dec 2023)

19.0 Although UK inflation and wage growth remain elevated, the Council's treasury management adviser Arlingclose forecasts that Bank Rate has peaked at 5.25%. They forecast the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee will cut rates in the medium term to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second-round effects. Arlingclose sees rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by mid 2026.

20.0 Arlingclose expects long-term gilt yields to be broadly stable at current levels (amid continued volatility), following the decline in yields towards the end of 2023, which reflects the expected lower medium-term path for Bank Rate. Yields will remain relatively higher than in the past, due to quantitative tightening and significant bond supply. As ever, there will undoubtedly be short-term volatility due to economic and political uncertainty and events.

21.0 For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate of 4%, and that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 5.5%.

Local Context

22.0 At 31st December 2023, the Council held £828.0m of borrowing (£758.0m long term and £70.0m short term) and £135.5m of investments. This is set out in further detail at ***Appendix 2***. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2025	31/03/2026	31/03/2027
	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement	1,146.1	1,261.9	1,442.1	1,655.4	1,685.1
Other debt liabilities*	36.2	32.5	74.9	70.4	67.7
Loans CFR	**1,182.3**	**1,294.4**	**1,517.0**	**1,725.8**	**1,752.7**
(less) External borrowing**	(781.0)	(707.6)	(697.2)	(686.9)	(676.5)
Internal (Over) Borrowing	**401.3**	**586.8**	**819.8**	**1,039.0**	**1,076.2**

(less) Balance Sheet Resources	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)
New borrowing (or Treasury Investments)	**(116.5)**	**69.0**	**302.0**	**521.2**	**558.4**

* Leases and PFI liabilities that form part of the Council's total debt
** shows only loans to which the Council is committed and excludes optional refinancing

23.0 The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. The Council's strategy has been to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing. This means the Council has minimised its interest costs by utilising internal resources over the short term instead of undertaking more expensive external borrowing. As our internal resources are being depleted, there is an increasing need for the Council to undertake new external borrowing to fund the capital programme. However, whilst deferring external borrowing and using internal resources minimises debt interest costs, internal resources will need to be replenished at a later date. This could expose the Council to interest rate risk whereby interest rates could be higher (or lower) than the present day.

24.0 The Council will need to borrow up to £503.7m over the forecast period to support the financing of the capital programme. Table 2 sets out the Councils current and future years capital programme and capital financing.

25.0 CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Council's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2024/25.

Table 2: Capital Programme

£m	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**Total**
Corporate Landlord	10.1	14.2	19.0	10.8	28.2	82.3
South Kilburn	13.6	27.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	41.1
Regeneration	9.0	64.7	110.4	7.2	0.0	191.4
St Raphael's	0.8	0.3	19.5	0.0	0.0	20.6
Public Realm	26.6	23.8	11.7	1.0	1.0	64.2
Schools	12.4	24.7	26.3	7.3	3.3	73.9
Housing GF	98.4	106.1	48.1	30.7	3.6	286.9
Housing HRA	49.9	57.3	100.3	33.3	9.9	250.8
Total Capital Programme	**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.0**	**1,011.2**
Financed by						
Grants & Other Contributions	42.9	52.9	33.6	7.3	3.3	140.0
S106 & CIL	8.0	27.5	16.7	0.0	0.0	52.2
Capital Receipts	10.6	1.8	26.0	19.5	26.1	84.0
Reserves	1.8	2.7	1.3	1.4	0.0	7.0

Major Repairs Allowance	15.0	22.6	21.4	0.0	0.0	58.9
Revenue Contribution	8.6	11.6	1.7	9.0	0.5	31.3
Prudential Borrowing	134.1	199.3	234.9	53.4	16.1	637.8
Total Capital Financing	**220.9**	**318.3**	**335.5**	**90.5**	**46.0**	**1,011.2**

26.0 Table 3 details the cost of delivering the Council's capital programme as well as servicing existing debt relating to past capital programmes.

Table 3: Capital financing costs

£m	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
Interest Payable	25.34	26.54
Debt expenses	0.14	0.14
MRP	9.75	9.75
Sub-total	**35.23**	**36.43**
Interest receivable	(11.39)	(11.39)
Total Capital Financing Budget	**23.84**	**25.04**

Liability Benchmark

27.0 To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

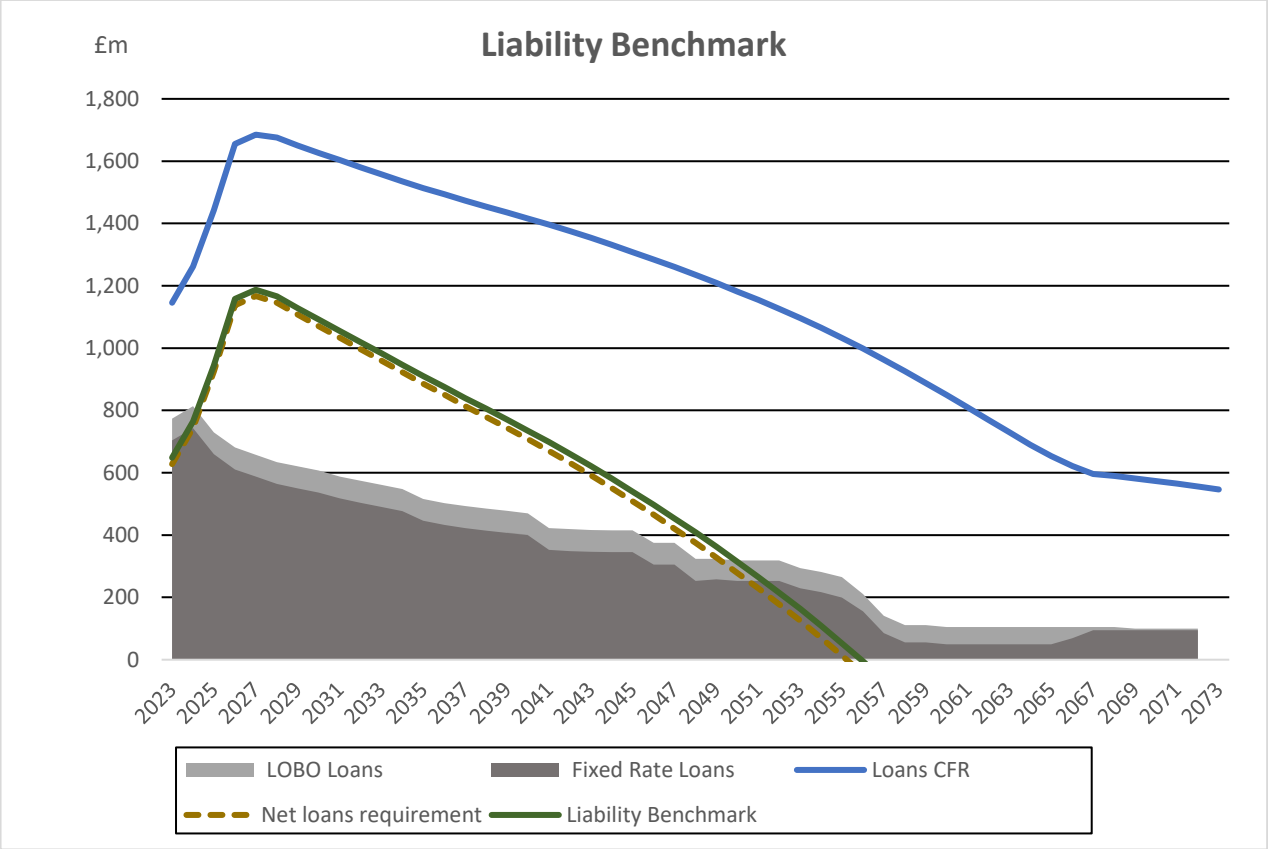
28.0 The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Liability benchmark

	31/03/2023	**31/03/2024**	**31/03/2025**	**31/03/2026**	**31/03/2027**
	Actual	**Forecast**	**Forecast**	**Forecast**	**Forecast**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
Loans CFR	1,182.3	1,294.4	1,517.0	1,725.8	1,752.7
(less) Balance Sheet Resources	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)
Net loans requirement	**664.5**	**776.6**	**999.2**	**1,208.0**	**1,234.9**
Liquidity Allowance	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0

Liability Benchmark	**684.5**	**796.6**	**1,019.2**	**1,228.0**	**1,254.9**

29.0 Following on from the medium-term forecasts in Table 4, the long-term liability benchmark assumes Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) on new capital expenditure based on a 5–50-year asset life and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2.5% a year. A higher asset life will be used where a professional opinion has been obtained. The chart below shows the profile of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reducing by the MRP together with the maturity profile of the Council's existing borrowing.



30.0 The Loan CFR (Blue lines) represents the need to fund capital expenditure through borrowing. The Liability benchmark (Green Line) represents the level of borrowing requirement once reserves and working capital has been considered. Where the liability benchmark exceeds the Council's current borrowing levels (Grey area), this indicates the real need to borrow. The liability benchmark assumes LOBO loans will be held to maturity and the Lender not to exercise early repayment. In reality the Lender could exercise the call option for early repayment.

Borrowing Strategy

31.0 As of 31 December 2023, the Council holds £828.0m million of loans, an increase of £47.0m compared to balances held at the start of the financial year (£781.0m). The balance sheet forecast in Table 1 shows that the Council expects to borrow up to £558.4m by 2026/27, however, this is largely dependent on how the capital programme progresses. The Council may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund

future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £1.7 billion.

32.0 **Objectives:** The Council's main objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

33.0 **Strategy:** Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. Interest rates have increased across the yield curve over the past year. The Council will continue to work closely with our Treasury advisors Arlingclose to ensure borrowing occurs at optimal points avoiding the worst of the market volatility. Short-term interest rates are currently at a 15-year high but are expected to fall in the coming years and it is therefore likely to be more cost effective over the medium-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. The Council's Borrowing Strategy is to maintain its debt portfolio Pool Rate within this range of 3-4%. As at 31st December 2023 the average Debt Pool Rate (excluding PFI) was 4.01%.

34.0 To ensure long term stability of the debt portfolio, a proportion of the portfolio will be funded by long term borrowing using a little and often approach. Where is affordable, this can help provide certainty to ensure the ongoing viability for capital programme schemes in these volatile markets.

35.0 **Sources of borrowing:** The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- HM Treasury's PWLB lending facility (formerly the Public Works Loan Board)
- UK Infrastructure Bank Ltd
- Any institution approved for investments (see below)
- Any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- Any other UK public sector body including the Greater London Authority
- UK public and private sector pension funds (except the local Brent Pension Fund)
- Capital market bond investors
- Retail investors via a regulated peer-to-peer platform
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

36.0 **Other sources of debt finance:** In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- Leasing
- Hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- Sale and leaseback
- Similar asset-based finance

37.0 **Municipal Bonds Agency:** UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association as an alternative to the PWLB. It issues bonds on the capital markets and lends the proceeds to local authorities. This is a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a guarantee to refund their investment if the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report by the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance.

38.0 The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but will consider long-terms loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will review the appropriateness of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code. PWLB loans are not available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield. The Council has not undertaken such borrowing and has no plans to in future, which ensures continuing access to PWLB borrowing facilities.

39.0 In addition to the above, the Council may borrow short-term loans to cover temporary cash flow pressures from other Local Authorities or public sector bodies and banks.

40.0 The Council may arrange forward starting loans, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

41.0 **LOBOs:** The Council holds £70.5m of LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. None of the Council's LOBOs have option dates during 2024/25. Due to higher market rates, there is now an elevated risk that some existing LOBO's may require refinancing at higher rates or will require repaying upon future break dates. The Council will assess the financial implications of the best approach and either repay the LOBO loan using existing cash resources (where applicable) or raise new loans.

42.0 **Short-term and variable rate loans:** These loans leave the Council exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below. Financial derivatives may be used to manage this interest rate risk (see section 77 below).

43.0 **Debt rescheduling:** The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk. Current high interest rate environment gives rise to favourable rescheduling opportunities. Such opportunities will be kept under review by Officers. Any decision to undertake debt rescheduling will be the

subject of a separate report by the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance.

Treasury Investment Strategy

44.0 The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the first half of 2023/24, the Council's treasury investment balance has ranged between £56.1m and £122.0m. When cash balances are high the Council will defer the decision to borrow for the capital programme until such time cash balances deplete. Cash balances are forecasted to reduce over time as the Council is a net borrower.

45.0 **Objectives:** The CIPFA Code requires the Council to invest its treasury funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Council will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested. The Council aims to be a responsible investor and will consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when investing. The ESG Policy is discussed below.

46.0 **Strategy:** As demonstrated by the liability benchmark above, the Council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments will therefore be made primarily to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments such as Local Authority deposits or Money-Market Funds. Cash invested beyond the liquidity duration will be in accordance with the investment instruments set out in Table 5. However, it is anticipated that the Council will not have significant cash balances to invest into long durations. The Council will maintain a minimum investment balance of £10m to ensure the Council complies with the requirements to be a professional client under MIFID II regulations.

47.0 **ESG Policy -** Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are increasingly a factor in global investors' decision making, but the framework for evaluating investment opportunities is still developing and therefore the Council's ESG policy does not currently include ESG scoring or other real-time ESG criteria at an individual investment level. When investing in banks and funds for greater than a year, the Council will prioritise banks that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking and funds operated by managers that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance and/or the UK Stewardship Code.

48.0 Currently, the majority of the Council's surplus cash remains invested in short-term money market funds. The average rate of interest received on short-term investments during the year to December 23 was 5.3% with an average duration of 1 day and an average weighted risk rating of A+. Due to the Council's borrowing requirement, there is unlikely to be scope to improve the short-term investment returns achieved as liquidity of the surplus funds will play a key role.

49.0 **Business models:** Under the new IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Council's "business model" for managing them. The Council aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

50.0 **Approved counterparties:** The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 5, subject to the limits shown.

Table 5: Investment Limits

	Credit Quality	Cash limit	Time Limit
Any single organisation, except a Government entity	A- Or equivalent	£20m	n/a
UK Government	Any	Unlimited	50 years
Local Authorities & other government entities	Any	Unlimited	25 years
Banks (unsecured)*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	13 months
Building Societies (unsecured)*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	13 months
Registered providers and registered social landlords*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	5 years
Secured investments*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	5 years
Money market funds*	A- Or equivalent	Lower of 5% of total net assets of the fund or £20m	n/a
Strategic pooled funds*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	n/a
Real estate investment trusts*	A- Or equivalent	£20m	n/a
Other Investments*	A- Or equivalent	£50m	5 years

51.0 **Minimum Credit Rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. The Council uses the lowest rating quoted by the main rating agencies, as recommended by CIPFA. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be considered. Within these criteria the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources will have discretion to accept or reject individual institutions as counterparties based on any information which may become available.

52.0 **Government:** Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Government are deemed to be zero credit risk due to its ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

53.0 **Banks and building societies (unsecured):** Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. There is no upper limit to the maximum credit loss that the Council could suffer in the event of a bail-in scenario. See section 61 below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts. Investments in unsecured deposits will be limited to £20m.

54.0 **Registered providers (unsecured):** Loans to, and bonds issued or guaranteed by, registered providers of social housing or registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (in England), the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland). As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed. Investments with registered providers will be limited to £20m in 2024/25.

55.0 **Secured investments:** Investments secured on the borrower's assets, which limits the potential losses in the event of insolvency. The amount and quality of the security will be a key factor in the investment decision. Covered bonds and reverse repurchase agreements with banks and building societies are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used. The combined secured and unsecured investments with any one counterparty will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments. The Council and its advisors remain alert for signs of credit or market distress that might adversely affect the Council. Investments in secured deposits will be limited to £20m.

56.0 **Money market funds (MMFs):** Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Council will take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash at all times. Deposits will not exceed 0.5% of the net asset value of the MMF. In addition, each Fund will be limited to a maximum deposit of £20m.

57.0 The investment strategy will provide flexibility to invest cash for longer periods in order to access higher investment returns. The upper limit for lending beyond a year is £50m. In practice, lending for more than one year will be only to institutions of the highest credit quality and at rates which justify the liquidity risk involved. Marketable instruments may have longer maturities, though the maturity will be considered in conjunction with the likely liquidity of the market and credit quality of the institution. Other than UK Central Government the Council may invest its surplus funds subject to a maximum duration of 25 years.

Alternative investment options will include:

58.0 **Strategic pooled funds:** Bond, equity and property funds that offer enhanced returns over the longer term but are more volatile in the short term. These allow the

Council to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments. Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Council's investment objectives will be monitored regularly. Although considered as pooled funds, MMF's are discussed separately in section 56. The Council currently has no investments in Pooled Funds (other than MMFs) at present but may make prudent use of them in the future. Investments in pooled funds will be limited to £20m in 2024/25. A Statutory Override is in place until 31 March 2025 to mitigate the accounting valuation risk impacting on the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Account. Once the Override expires any fair value gains/losses will need to be recognised in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Account thus impacting on the Councils reserve balances.

59.0 **Real estate investment trusts (REITs):** Shares in companies that invest mainly in real estate and pay the majority of their rental income to investors in a similar manner to pooled property funds. As with property funds, REITs offer enhanced returns over the longer term, but are more volatile especially as the share price reflects changing demand for the shares as well as changes in the value of the underlying properties. The risk with any investments in REITs is that shares cannot be withdrawn but can be sold on the stock market to another investor which leaves the Council open to market risk. Investments in REITs will be limited to £20m in 2024/25.

60.0 **Other investments:** This category covers treasury investments not listed above, for example unsecured corporate bonds and company loans. Non-bank companies cannot be bailed-in but can become insolvent placing the Council's investment at risk.

61.0 **Operational bank accounts:** The Council may incur operational exposures, for example though current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Council maintaining operational continuity. The Council banks with National Westminster Bank (NatWest) who meet the Council's minimum credit criteria. Should Natwest's creditworthiness deteriorate below the Council's minimum credit criteria, then as far as is consistent with operational efficiency, no money will be placed with NatWest and credit balances in the various Council accounts will be kept to a minimum level.

62.0 **Unrated Counterparties**: For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made either (a) where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality; or (b) to a maximum of £200,000 per counterparty as part of a diversified pool e.g., via a peer-to-peer platform.

63.0 **Risk Assessment:** Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Council's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. Any institution will be suspended or removed should any factors give rise to concern, and caution will be paramount in reaching any investment decision regardless of the

counterparty or the circumstances. Should an entity's credit rating be downgraded so that it does not meet the Council's approved criteria then:

- No new investments will be made.
- Full consideration will be made to the recall or sale of existing investments with the affected counterparty.

64.0 Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as "negative watch") so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

65.0 **Other information on the security of investments:** The Council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Council's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

66.0 Having an appropriate lending list of counterparties, remains critically important to protecting Brent's cash investments. A list of extremely secure counterparties would be very small, and the limits with each would be correspondingly high. This would expose the Council to a risk of an unlikely but potentially large loss. This arises because the arrangements for dealing with banks in difficulty now require a loss to be imposed on various categories of liabilities of the banks to allow the bank to recapitalise itself and continue in business (sometimes referred to as bail in).

67.0 When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2022; 2008 and 2020, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. This will cause a reduction in the level of investment income earned but will protect the principal sum invested.

68.0 **Reputational Risk:** The Council is aware that investment with certain counterparties, while considered secure from a purely financial perspective, may leave it open to criticism, valid or otherwise, that may affect its public reputation, and this risk will therefore be considered when making investment decisions.

69.0 **Investment limits:** The Council's revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £471.2 million on 31st March 2024. In order that no more than 10% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government and Council subsidiaries) will be £20 million. A group of banks under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes.

Liquidity management: The Council uses internal purpose-built cash flow modelling tools to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Council's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast. The Council aims to spread its liquid cash over at least two providers (e.g., bank accounts and money market funds) to ensure that access to cash is maintained in the event of operational difficulties at any one provider.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

70.0 The Council measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

71.0 **Security:** The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Table 6: Credit risk indicator

Credit risk indicator	**Target**
Portfolio average credit rating	A

72.0 **Liquidity:** The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

Table 7: Liquidity risk indicator

Liquidity risk indicator	**Target**
Total cash available within 3 months	£20m

73.0 **Interest rate exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Table 8: Interest rate risk indicator

Interest rate risk indicator	**Limit**
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	£5m
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	£5m

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates.

74.0 **Maturity structure of borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of borrowing will be:

Table 9: Refinancing rate risk indicator

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	40%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	40%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	40%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	60%	0%
10 years and within 20 years	75%	0%
20 years and within 30 years	75%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	75%	0%
Over 40 years	75%	0%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. LOBOs are classified as maturing on the next call date i.e., the earliest date that the lender can require repayment.

75.0 **Principal sums invested for periods longer than a year:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end will be:

Table 10: Price risk indicator

Price risk indicator	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£50m	£50m	£50m

Related Matters

76.0 The CIPFA Code requires the Council to include the following in its treasury management strategy.

77.0 **Financial Derivatives:** A Derivative is a contract between two or more parties to hedge against the risk associated with the performance of an underlying asset. Local authorities have previously made use of financial derivatives embedded into its loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk.

78.0 The general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e., those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

79.0 The Council will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Council is exposed to. Additional risks presented,

such as credit exposure to derivative counterparties, will be considered when determining the overall level of risk. Embedded derivatives, including those present in pooled funds and forward starting transactions, will not be subject to this policy, although the risks they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

80.0 Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria. The current value of any amount due from a derivative counterparty will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.

81.0 In line with the CIPFA Code, the Council will seek external advice and consult with Members before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications however there are no current plans to enter this type of arrangement. This will include analysis of the impact on interest rate, refinancing, counterparty, market, regulatory and legal risks, together with an assessment on the effectiveness of the derivative.

82.0 **Housing Revenue Account:** On 1st April 2012, the Council notionally split each of its existing long-term loans into General Fund and HRA pools. In the future, new long-term loans borrowed will be assigned in their entirety to one pool or the other. Interest payable and other costs/income arising from long-term loans (e.g., premiums and discounts on early redemption) will be charged/ credited to the respective revenue account. Differences between the value of the HRA loans pool and the HRA's underlying need to borrow (adjusted for HRA balance sheet resources available for investment) will result in a notional cash balance which may be positive or negative. This balance will be measured each month and interest transferred between the General Fund and HRA at the Council's average interest rate on investments, adjusted for credit risk.

83.0 **Markets in Financial Instruments Directive:** The MiFID II regulations took effect from January 2018 which saw the council reclassified as a retail client with the opportunity to opt up to professional client status. Retail clients have access to increased protection however this would be balanced against potentially higher fees and access to a more limited range of products. The Council has opted up to professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisors, banks, brokers and fund managers. Given the size and range of the Council's treasury management activities, the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources believes this to be the appropriate status for the Council's treasury management activities.

84.0 **Financial Implications:** The draft capital financing budget of £25.0m for 2024/25 has been calculated based on the reduction in balances available for investment and the increased external borrowing required.

85.0 **Other Options Considered:** The CIPFA Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Council believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Table 11: Alternative Strategies

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

Appendix 1 – Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast – 19th December 2023

Economic Updates

- UK inflation and wage growth remain elevated but have eased over the past two months fuelling rate cuts expectations. Near-term rate cuts remain unlikely, although downside risks will increase as the UK economy likely slides into recession.

- The MPC's message remains unchanged as the Committee seeks to maintain tighter financial conditions. Monetary policy will remain tight as inflation is expected to moderate to target slowly, although some wage and inflation measures are below the Bank's last forecasts.

- Despite some deterioration in activity data, the UK economy remains resilient in the face of tighter monetary policy. Recent data has been soft but mixed; the timelier PMI figures suggest that the services sector is recovering from a weak Q3. Tighter policy will however bear down on domestic and external activity as interest rates bite.

- Employment demand is easing. Anecdotal evidence suggests slowing recruitment and pay growth, and we expect unemployment to rise further. As unemployment rises and interest rates remain high, consumer sentiment will deteriorate. Household and business spending will therefore be weak.

- Inflation will fall over the next 12 months. The path to the target will not be smooth, with higher energy prices and base effects interrupting the downtrend at times. The MPC's attention will remain on underlying inflation measures and wage data. We believe policy rates will remain at the peak for another 10 months, or until the MPC is comfortable the risk of further 'second-round' effects has diminished.

- Maintaining monetary policy in restrictive territory for so long, when the economy is already struggling, will require significant loosening in the future to boost activity.

- Global bond yields will remain volatile. Markets are currently running with expectations of near-term US rate cuts, fuelled somewhat unexpectedly by US policymakers themselves. Term premia and bond yields have experienced a marked decline. It would not be a surprise to see a reversal if data points do not support the narrative, but the current 10-year yield appears broadly reflective of a lower medium- term level for Bank Rate.

- There is a heightened risk of fiscal policy and/or geo-political events causing substantial volatility in yields.

Interest Rate Updates

- The MPC held Bank Rate at 5.25% in December. We believe this is the peak for Bank Rate.

- The MPC will cut rates in the medium term to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second-round effects. We see rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by mid-2026.

- The immediate risks around Bank Rate have become more balanced, due to the weakening UK economy and dampening effects on inflation. This shifts to the downside in the short term as the economy weakens.

- Long-term gilt yields are now substantially lower. Arlingclose expects yields to be flat from here over the short-term reflecting medium term Bank Rate forecasts. Periodic volatility is likely.

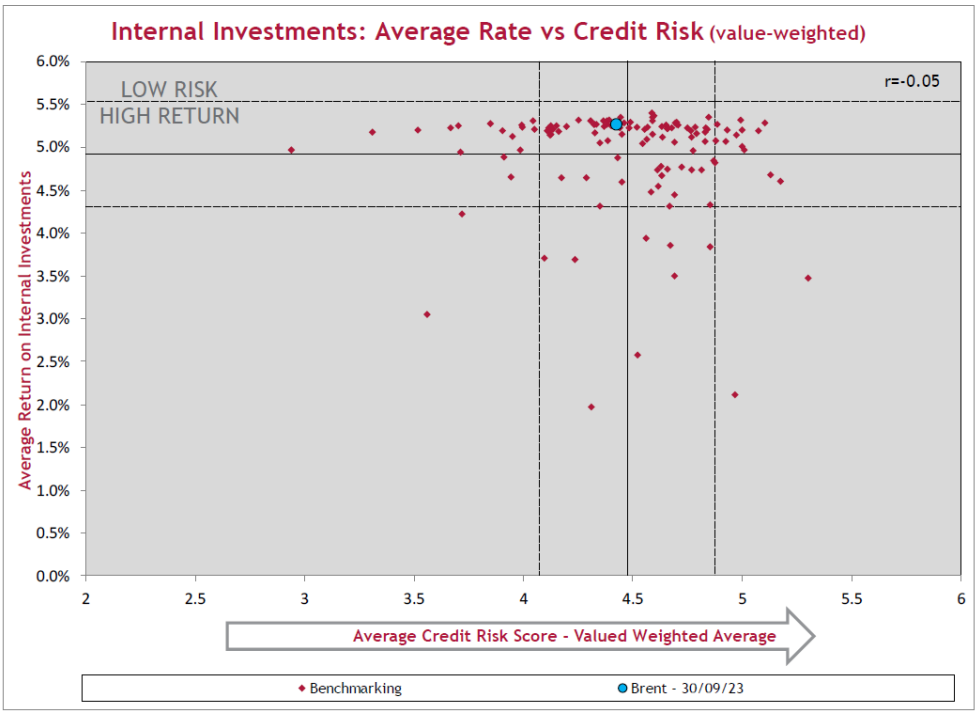
	Current	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.15	4.80	4.30	4.10	3.80	3.50	3.25	3.05	3.05
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.77	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.72	3.75	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.75	3.65	3.60	3.65	3.70
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	4.16	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.25
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.76	3.80	3.85	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.95	3.95	3.95
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00

PWLB Standard Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.00%
PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.80%
PWLB HRA Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.40%
UKIB Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.40%

Appendix 2 – Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position

	31/12/2023 Actual Portfolio £m	31/12/2023 Average Rate %
Long-term borrowing		
Public Works Loan Board	592.5	4.0%
LOBO's	70.5	4.6%
Other loans	95.0	2.4%
Short-term borrowing		
Local Authorities	70.0	5.7%
Total External Borrowing	**828.0**	**4.0%**
Other long-term liabilities:		
Private Finance Initiative	26.9	-
Finance Leases	7.7	-
Total other long-term liabilities	**34.6**	
Total gross external debt	**862.6**	
Treasury investments:		
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	**-**	**-**
Government (incl. local authorities)	**50.5**	**5.27%**
Money Market Funds	**85.0**	**5.32%**
Total treasury investments	**135.5**	**5.30%**
Net debt	**727.1**	

Appendix 3 – Internal Investments: Average Rate vs Credit Risk



A credit rating of 4 is equivalent to credit score of AA-. The Council has a target rating of A which is a rating of 6. The current portfolio has a credit rating of A+ (Credit score 5) which exceeds our target rating.

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Minimum Revenue Provision – 2024/25

1. Where the Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), although there has been no statutory minimum since 2008. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to have regard to the former Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision (the MHCLG Guidance) most recently issued in 2018.

2. The broad aim of the MHCLG Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is either reasonable commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits, or, in the case of borrowing supported by Government Revenue Support Grant, reasonably commensurate with the period implicit in the determination of that grant.

3. The Guidance requires Full Council (or a delegated body) to approve an MRP policy statement in advance of each financial year and recommends a number of options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP.

4. In accordance with the current guidance for the calculation of MRP the following policy for non-HRA assets will be applied with effect from 1 April 2024:

    a. For supported borrowing, the Council will use the asset life method (Option 3) and an 'annuity' approach for calculating repayments. Based on the useful economic lives of the council's assets, a single annuity has been calculated, which results in the outstanding principal being repaid over the course of fifty years. The interest rate applied under this approach is 5.00% (fixed for the duration of the debt).

    b. For prudential borrowing incurred after 1 April 2008, the Council will adopt Option 3, 'the asset life method', and an 'annuity' approach for calculating repayments. This option allows provision for repayment of principal to be made over the estimated life of the asset, stated in Table 1, and using an interest rate equal to the average relevant PWLB rate for the year of expenditure. The use of the 'annuity' method is akin to a mortgage where the combined sum of principal and interest are equalised over the life of the asset.

5. Where the PWLB rate is unknown the MRP for future years prudential borrowing will be based on the assumed rate of borrowing for the respective asset.

6. MRP on purchases of freehold land will be charged over 50 years. MRP on expenditure not related to fixed assets but which has been capitalised by regulation or direction will be charged over 20 years.

7. For existing assets MRP is charged in the financial year following the one in which the expenditure was incurred.

8. For newly constructed assets that have been financed through borrowing, MRP commences in the financial year following the year the asset first becomes operational. “Operational” is defined as when an asset transfers from “Assets under Construction” categorisation to an “Assets in Use” category under normal accounting rules.

9. In accordance with Regulations the Council reserves the right to charge a £nil MRP where:

   a) the Capital Finance Requirement (CFR) is nil or negative on the last day of the preceding financial year; or

   b) an overpayment has occurred in the previous financial year equivalent to the current year’s charge. Where an offset of the previous years overpayment takes place this will be disclosed and reported to Full Council at the earliest opportunity.

10. For capital expenditure loans to third parties that are repaid in annual instalments the Council will make nil MRP and will use the capital receipt arising from the principal repayments to reduce the CFR unless where:

    (a) No loan capital repayments have been received by the Council in year thus requiring a MRP charge equivalent to the loan repayment;

    (b) the loan is an investment for commercial purposes and no repayment was received in year; or

    (c) an expected credit loss was recognised or increased in-year.

11. In years where there is no principal repayment on loans that are investments for commercial purposes, MRP will be charged in accordance with the MRP policy for the assets funded by the loan, including where appropriate, delaying MRP until the year after the assets become operational. Sufficient MRP will be charged to ensure that the outstanding CFR on the loan is no higher than the principal amount outstanding less the expected credit loss. This option was proposed by the government in its recent MRP consultation and in the Council's view is consistent with the current regulations.

12. For assets acquired by leases or the Private Finance Initiative, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

13. Where former operating leases have been brought onto the balance sheet due to the adoption of the IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or incentives, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the total charge to revenue remains unaffected by the new standard.

14. MRP will include a charge equal to any capital lifecycle additions within the lease.

15. No MRP will be charged in respect of assets held within the Housing Revenue Account but depreciation on those assets will be charged instead in line with regulations.

16. No MRP charge is made where a capital receipt is available to apply to repay debt if the capital receipt is equal to or greater than the intended MRP payment had a capital receipt not existed.

17. The Council reserves the right to make a voluntary MRP to accelerate the repayment of debt.

18. The asset lives which will be applied to different classes of assets are shown in table 1, however, the Council reserves the right to determine useful life periods and prudent MRP in exceptional circumstances where the recommendations of the guidance would not be appropriate.

Table 1: Asset lives

Asset Type	**Years**
Vehicles and equipment	5 to 10 years
Highway Infrastructure Assets	25 years
Acquisition of or enhancement to buildings	30 to 40 years
New construction	60 years
Purchase of land	50 years

19. Asset lives will only exceed the maximum useful life of 50 years as stated under the Regulations for debt write down in two scenarios:

    (a) where the Council has an opinion from an appropriately qualified professional advisor that an asset will deliver service functionality for more than 50 years then the life suggested by its professional advisor will be used; and

    (b) for a lease or PFI asset, where the length of the lease/PFI contract exceeds 50 years. In this case the length of the lease/PFI contract will be used.

20. Based on the Council's latest estimate of its capital financing requirement (CFR) on 31st March 2024, the MRP budget for 2024/25 has been set at £18.2m.

BRENT RESERVES STRATEGY

What are reserves?

CIPFA states in the *Financial Management Code* that “the aim of the authority’s financial reserves is to provide funding for investment in future activities and to act as a safety net in case of short-term financial challenges.”

What is a reserves strategy?

The *Reserves Strategy* defines the level and purposes for which the Council holds reserves. It consists of three key elements:

1. ***Strategy***: what the Council is seeking to achieve through holding reserves;

2. ***Financial Planning***: linking the level of reserves with plans for their use over the period of *Medium Term Financial Strategy* (MTFS); and

3. ***Operational Framework***: how the Council determines the level of reserves, manages those reserves and plans for their use in line with best practice and statutory requirements.

Together these elements set out the Council’s ambition for reserves, the nature of that ambition and how we will provide assurance.

STRATEGY

Why do we need a reserves strategy?

The Council plans its finances over the short term, medium and long term so that it has adequate resources to deliver services for the residents of the borough. As a large, complex organisation, there will always be variations between our actual spending/income and our plans due to variations in demand, demographic change, changes in costs and the funding decisions of third parties as well as the need to deliver projects and investments spanning more than one financial year.

To ensure we can manage these financial risks, whilst being able to maintain services, requires that the Authority holds funds in reserve to meet these costs as and when they arise and to deal with any unexpected emergency that may occur. A reserves strategy enables us to do this in a planned way.

Do we have to have a reserves strategy?

The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 32 and 43 of the *Local Government Act* 1992 require precepting authorities and billing authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

There are other safeguards in place that help to prevent the Council from over-committing itself financially. These include:

a) The balanced budget requirement (*Local Government Act* 1992 s32 and s43);

b) Chief Finance Officer's duty to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (*Local Government Act* 2003 s25) when the Council is considering the budget requirement;

c) Legislative requirement to make arrangements for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs (*Local Government Act* 1972 s151);

d) The requirements of the *Prudential Code*;

e) Auditors' consideration of whether the audited body has established adequate arrangements to ensure that its financial position is sustainable. Financial sustainability is covered as part of the *Value for Money Audit*; and

f) CIPFA's *Financial Management Code* requirement that the effective management of reserves is reviewed as part of a formal Financial Resilience Assessment (FRA).

These requirements are reinforced by section 114 of the *Local Government Finance Act* 1988, which requires the Chief Finance Officer to report if there is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the Council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.

Whilst it is primarily the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer to maintain a sound financial position, the external auditors will, as part of their wider responsibilities, consider whether the audited body has established adequate arrangements to ensure that its financial position is soundly based. However, it is not the responsibility of the external auditors to prescribe the optimum or minimum level of reserves for the Council.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

How does it fit with our other strategies?

The *Reserves Strategy* is part of a suite of supporting strategies that supplement the *Borough Plan* and the *Medium Term Financial Strategy*. These detailed strategies provide an additional level of granularity that helps to create a bridge between the over-arching strategies and operational delivery plans

CIPFA's *Prudential Code* requires the Chief Finance Officer to have regard to affordability when making recommendations about the future capital programme. Such consideration includes the level of long-term revenue commitments. Indeed, in considering the affordability of its capital plans, the Council is required to consider all of the resources available to it and estimated for the future, together with the totality of its capital plans and revenue forecasts for the forthcoming year and the following two years.

There is a requirement for three-year revenue forecasts across the public sector and this is achieved through the *Medium Term Financial Strategy* and the annual budget.

The 2021 Autumn Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR21) provided details of proposed government support for a three-year timeframe, but with only a one-year detailed financial settlement. This creates uncertainty over future funding and provides limited information for planning over the medium term the use of balances and reserves.

How are the level of reserves set?

CIPFA's Local Authority Accounting Panel does not accept that there is a case for introducing a generally acceptable minimum level of reserves. Instead, it is for the Council, on the advice of its Chief Finance Officer, to make its own judgement on such matters, taking into account all relevant local circumstances. What are relevant circumstances will vary between areas. A well-managed organisation with a prudent approach to budgeting should be able to operate with a minimal level of general reserves which are appropriate to the risks (both internal and external) to which it is exposed. In assessing the appropriate level of reserves, a well-managed organisation will ensure that the reserves are not only adequate, but also are necessary.

It is worth noting that not all reserves are usable. Some reserves arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practice. These are termed 'unusable reserves' as they cannot be used for any other purpose. They are not considered further as there is no need to set their level and no discretion over their creation, purpose or usage.

Types of Reserve

When reviewing the medium term financial plans and preparing the annual budgets, the establishment and maintenance of reserves should be considered. These can be held for five main purposes:

a) **Working Balance** - to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing – this forms part of general reserves.
b) **Contingency Reserve** - to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this forms part of general reserves.
c) **Sinking Fund and Smoothing Reserves** – these allow a response to uncertainty in the economic climate and provide assurance on the safety of the Council's financial assets. These are closely linked with the *Treasury Management Strategy* and *Capital Strategy* - these form part of general reserves.
d) **Statutory and Ring-fenced Reserves** – these are held for specific purposes, often set by statute. Examples include grant funding where the expenditure has yet to be incurred (Capital Grants Unapplied), the HRA Balance and the Schools Balances. Although these are legally part of the general reserves, the restrictions and limitations on their use mean that they should be accounted for separately and not viewed as generally usable.
e) **Earmarked Reserves** – these represent a means of building up funds to meet known or predicted requirements, such as planned

investment, capital projects and change programmes; earmarked reserves are accounted for separately and viewed as largely not generally usable. They remain legally part of the general reserves.

In addition the Council holds the following two usable reserves:

a) **Major Repairs Reserve** – this reserve records the unspent amount of HRA balances for capital financing purposes in accordance with statutory requirements for the reserve. This is an HRA specific reserve.
b) **Capital Receipts Reserve** – this reserve holds the proceeds from the sale of assets, and can only be used for those purposes specified in the capital finance and accounting regulations.

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

When establishing reserves, there needs to be compliance with the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting* and in particular, the need to distinguish between reserves and provisions.

The split of reserves into five categories is helpful as each category has its own nature, purpose and planned usage that can be used to determine the required level of reserves.

Working Balance

The cash flow forecast is key to understanding the level of reserve required to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows. The overall size of the net expenditure budget should be used as the reference point for determining the percentage required to be retained as the working balance.

Contingency Reserve

Determining a suitable level of reserve to cover the unexpected is an inexact science. At best this will be an estimate created using risk management techniques to determine the likelihood and impact of potentially disastrous events. Past experience demonstrates the ability of the Council to deliver savings, while dealing with resource reductions and demographic and other demand changes. How these issues have been tackled without overspending the budget will be an important consideration in deciding how much needs to be set aside in reserves as contingency. A reasonableness check also needs to be considered - retaining adequate funds to cover a calamitous event such as a second pandemic may be overly cautious and therefore not prudent as it ties up scarce resources unnecessarily. The contingency requirement should be referenced to a percentage of net expenditure.

The first two types of reserve, although different in nature, involve dealing with the unplanned and unexpected. The Council also hold reserves for planned purposes. It defines these usable reserves under the following headings:

- Ring-fenced and Statutory
    - HRA
    - Schools
    - COVID
- Capital
- Investment
- Sinking and Smoothing
- Service reserves
- Transformation
- General Fund Balance

When considering reserves held for specific purposes that could be freely utilised to fund unexpected expenditure, only the final three headings (service reserves, transformation and the general fund balance) can be used without limitation. The other reserves are either restricted to a specific use or already committed. Theoretically, the General Fund balance could be viewed as the working balance, whilst the other two types of reserve constitute amounts available for contingency purposes.

As stated already, the reference point for determining the target level for the working balance and contingency reserves should be a percentage of net expenditure. The end result will be a single target percentage of net expenditure that should be held. Although CIPFA oppose an arbitrary figure, 5% is widely used in local authorities as such a target. This is viewed as a starting point and tested for adequacy by considering past data and future forecasts. When considering past experience, use has been made of both benchmarking data for other London boroughs, provided by London Councils and CIPFA's Financial Resilience Index, and historic data for the Council. The comparative data shows that the level of reserves at Brent is good and provides strong foundations for long-term financial sustainability.

An analysis has been undertaken of the percentage of over- or under-spend that the year-end outturn represents of the Council's net budget. This shows that at no point in the last 20 years did any year-end overspend equate to as much as 2% of the net expenditure budget. Looking to the future, funding uncertainty, cost drivers, demand pressures and demographic changes have been considered. Further factors such as the effects of COVID-19 and the current high levels of inflation have also been taken into account. The conclusion of this work is that 5% is a reasonable minimum level of general reserves based on past experience and future expectations.

Uncertainty and Smoothing Reserves

At Brent, reserves for insurance, redundancy and welfare reform are examples of this type of reserve. Each is set on the basis of an individual calculation that takes in to account relevant factors and local circumstances. The *Reserves Strategy* recommends that this policy continues with a requirement to demonstrate need and

adequacy are a part of the working paper for the calculation of any reserve under this heading.

Statutory and Ring-fenced Reserves

As these arise from circumstances largely prescribed by statute, there is no need to provide further policy on their level or use. The Council divides these reserves between s106/CIL, Ring-fenced and capital reserves. They are presented in the accounts as part of the earmarked reserves.

Earmarked Reserves

Under this heading fall service specific reserves including carry forwards and more general amounts set aside for transformation, service pressures and future funding risks. The need for and level of these reserves should be justified by a calculation demonstrating the requirement for the reserve, its intended purpose, how its level has been determined and plans for its profiled release. This should be aligned with corporate plans and strategies such as the *Borough Plan*, the *MTFS* and the *Capital Strategy* as appropriate. All earmarked reserves should be reviewed annually as part of the closure of the accounts.

MONITORING

The level of all reserves is kept under continuous review by the Director of Finance. This is achieved through revisions to the *Medium Term Financial Strategy* and the budget monitoring reports. Periodic updates will be provided to the Cabinet and the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee. The planned level of reserves will reported to the Council annually via the *Budget Report*.

USE OF RESERVES

The maintenance and use of reserves play a key role in long-term financial sustainability. Just as the creation and maintenance of reserves arises in a structured way through the Council's financial planning process, so the release of reserves needs to be subject to a similarly planned and controlled process. Such a process is provided by the *Scheme of Transfers and Virements,* which sets out specific requirements for the use of reserves. The main points are:

1. Reserves cannot be used to fund overspends without a plan

   Section 3 of the Scheme of Transfers and Virements requires that "Reserves must not be used to fund ongoing overspends unless there is an agreed, realistic plan to eliminate the overspend before the reserve is exhausted (this applies to all reserves, both earmarked and non-earmarked). The Director of Finance must review planned uses of reserves to ensure that these are not being used to hide or obscure systemic overspends. The Director of Finance must report to Full Council report any areas with inadequate plans to address overspends."

2. Budget report must identify the reserves against which overspends can be charged

   Section 3 of the Scheme of Transfers and Virements states that "In certain circumstances where such overspends on Funds arise, there is a choice as to which reserve the charge should be made. The annual Budget Report will identify which reserves overspends will and will not be charged against, for approval by Full Council. In the event of inadequate reserves to fund overspends, the Director of Finance may have to use additional reserves to fund overspends, any such action is to be reported to Full Council. "

3. Budget report must specify how reserves are to be used

   Section 6 of the Scheme of Transfers and Virements directs that "Reserves have been established to aid the smooth running of the Council's finances, and it will be normal to charge costs to those reserves subject to financial regulations and local procedures and policies. Further, the council has capital monies, such as capital grants and capital receipts held in the council's useable reserves. The Schedule of Earmarked Reserves in the Budget Report must specify how the council's useable reserves are to be used, including if they can be used to fund overspends, and this needs to be approved by Full Council as part of the Budget Report. Officers may make transfers from these reserves up to the amounts in the Budget Report for the specified purposes."

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BRENT RESERVES	PURPOSE AND PLANNED USAGE	Actual 31/03/2023 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2024 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2025 £m
BALANCES						
General Fund Balance	This both provides the Council's working balance and represents an amount held against unexpected overspends or failure to identify sufficient savings to balance the budget in year. On a net budget of £358m, even a 2% variance would rapidly erode this and would leave the Council dangerously exposed. For this reason the Council aims to retain at least 5% of its net expenditure as a contingency reserve.	(17.9)	(1.3)	(19.2)	(0.5)	(19.7)
Schools Balances	Balance carried forward of Dedicated Schools Grant delegated to individual schools. Forecast to decline in response to school funding pressures and not directly in the control of the Council.	(15.0)	5.0	(10.0)	0.0	(10.0)
Housing Revenue Account Balance	This is the accumulated surplus of income over expenditure for the HRA. This can only be used for the HRA. The balance is used as a contingency against overspending and unexpected events that affect the HRA. The forecast for 2024/25 is for reversing the Granville provision when the works commence.	(0.4)	0.0	(0.4)	0.0	(0.4)
TOTAL BALANCES		**(33.3)**	**3.7**	**(29.6)**	**(0.5)**	**(30.2)**
CAPITAL RESERVES						
Capital Receipts Reserve	The proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets. Capital receipts can only be used to finance new capital expenditure, to provide loans or grants or to repay debt. They cannot be used to fund revenue expenditure.	(15.4)	2.6	(12.8)	(8.0)	(20.8)
Major Repairs Reserve	The unspent amount of the Major Repairs Allowance provided for capital renewal of HRA properties.	(2.9)	0.0	(2.9)	0.0	(2.9)
Capital Grants Unapplied	Capital grants received from central government agencies unapplied as not yet used to fund capital projects. Major elements include Basic Needs Grant for additional school places, School Condition Grants, DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant and others.	(112.0)	24.3	(87.7)	34.3	(53.4)
TOTAL CAPITAL RESERVES		**(130.3)**	**26.9**	**(103.4)**	**26.3**	**(77.1)**
EARMARKED RESERVES						
Capital and other statutorily ring-fenced reserves						
S106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	This reserve is made up of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 planning contributions made under legally binding agreements. The accumulated S106/CIL receipts that have not yet been spent are committed to finance planned capital expenditure, as set out in the *Capital Strategy* . Community Infrastructure Levy is made up of an amount paid over to the Mayor of London on a quarterly basis (MCIL), and an amount retained by the Borough (BCIL). BCIL is divided into Strategic CIL (SCIL) for use borough-wide, and a local amount termed Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL). A Cabinet decision is required to allocate Strategic CIL to finance new capital expenditure before it can be added to the Brent capital programme. There is also an allowance for administration costs which can be deducted from CIL. The S106 reserve balance at 31 March 2023 was £17.5m. The majority of this is committed to financing capital expenditure, with some revenue projects also benefitting. The reserve must be used to offset the impact of new development (there are some very specific exceptions which apply to some older S106 agreements, but these will invariably be very restrictive in any event). There are limits to the discretion as to what S106 contributions can subsequently be used to finance which are written into the individual S106 legal agreements. The balance on each category at 31 March 2023 was: £m SCIL (139.9) NCIL (16.1) BCIL **(156.0)** MCIL (6.9) Admin (1.4) Total CIL **(164.3)** S106 (17.5)	(181.8)	(28.5)	(210.3)	(9.0)	(219.3)

BRENT RESERVES	PURPOSE AND PLANNED USAGE	Actual 31/03/2023 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2024 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2025 £m
	Total S106 & CIL **(181.8)**					
Ring-fenced						
HMO Licensing	Income is received on a five yearly cycle and released annually to meet expenditure. The service does not have a mainstream budget for this activity, and the reserve is ring-fenced by law and operationally required to match the different cycles of income and expenditure. Forecast for 2023/24 is additional licences income over budget to be transferred to reserves to cover future years costs	(2.5)	(0.4)	(2.9)	0.0	(2.9)
HRA Earmarked	This reserve has been set aside to cover contingent liabilities for insurance claims.	(1.7)	0.0	(1.7)	0.0	(1.7)
Public Health	Reflects carry forward of ring fenced funds for Public Health	(10.6)	0.0	(10.6)	4.0	(6.6)
Edward Harvist Trust	Brent distributes grant monies from the Edward Harvist Trust	(0.2)	0.0	(0.2)	0.0	(0.2)
Total Ring-fenced		**(15.0)**	**(0.4)**	**(15.4)**	**4.0**	**(11.4)**
Capital Finance Related						
South Kilburn	This reserve smooths annual payments on the programme, which is any given year may be more or less than the budget. It is allocated to South Kilburn and, assuming that the remaining 7 years of the programme run to budget, will be spent in full.	(5.6)	0.0	(5.6)	0.0	(5.6)
General Fund Capital funding	This reserve is used to finance existing or future expenditure on projects within the Capital Programme.	(59.1)	5.0	(54.1)	15.0	(39.1)
Total Capital Finance Related		**(64.7)**	**5.0**	**(59.7)**	**15.0**	**(44.7)**
Total Capital and other statutorily ring-fenced reserves		**(261.5)**	**(23.9)**	**(285.4)**	**10.0**	**(275.4)**
Committed reserves						
Sinking fund and other smoothing reserves						
PFI	In the financial models for the council's PFIs, income and expenditure do not match in any given year. This is normal under such arrangements, as the PFI contractor is bearing the up-front cost of the capital investment. This reserve is ring-fenced to provide funds to cover this mismatch.	(5.0)	0.6	(4.4)	0.7	(3.7)
UC staffing	This reserve is fully committed to paying for staff working on Housing Benefit claims. As more cases transfer to Universal Credit, managed by the DWP, less staff will be required to work on Housing Benefit claims.	(0.4)	0.2	(0.2)	0.2	(0.0)
Redundancy	The reserve is used to fund redundancy costs. Without it, many planned savings would take a year longer to start delivering their benefits (assuming that the average redundancy cost is about one year's salary).	(1.7)	0.0	(1.7)	0.0	(1.7)
Insurance	The insurance reserve sets aside funds to cover self-insured items and any excesses on externally insured cover. This differs from the Insurance provision which covers amounts set aside upon review by the Council's insurance actuary to make sure that we have enough to deal with the pipeline of known cases that are not yet settled.	(5.3)	0.0	(5.3)	0.0	(5.3)
Business Rates Equalisation Reserve	This reserve is used to manage volatility in the amounts retained within the council tax and business rates retention regimes, in particular the impact of backdated revaluation appeals, appeals relating to Material Change of Circumstances and collection rates.	0.0	(1.9)	(1.9)	(9.6)	(11.5)
Total Sinking fund and other smoothing reserves		**(12.4)**	**(1.1)**	**(13.5)**	**(8.7)**	**(22.2)**

BRENT RESERVES	PURPOSE AND PLANNED USAGE		Actual 31/03/2023 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2024 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2025 £m
Total Committed reserves			**(12.4)**	**(1.1)**	**(13.5)**	**(8.7)**	**(22.2)**
Other earmarked reserves							
Service reserves							
Care, Health & Wellbeing	This reserve is comprised of: Brent NHS S256 Agreement - Joint Investment Funding. Agreement with the Council for joint programmes across health and social care. Other reserves including MHCLG Community Champions This includes balance of grants for CNWL Mental Health Supplement and Reablement and LD DHSC Community Discharge Grant	(6.4) (2.8) (0.2) **(9.5)**	(9.5)	0.0	(9.5)	0.0	(9.5)
Children and Young People	- £1.3m relates to the ring-fenced DSG held against this reserve. The overall DSG is in deficit, however the DfE requires the historic deficit balance against the DSG to be held against the unusable reserves i.e. £15.1m carried forward from 2022/23 and at the removal of the statutory override, the £1.3m will be offset against the historic deficit. - £1.4m of this reserve is linked to a combination of previous and current government grants, including the Youth Justice fund grant, troubled families programme, Best Start for life programme and MOPAC grants.		(2.7)	0.8	(1.9)	0.2	(1.7)

BRENT RESERVES	PURPOSE AND PLANNED USAGE		Actual 31/03/2023 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2024 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2025 £m
Resident Services	This reserve is comprised of: Customer Services and Libraries: - Community Hubs (play key role in responding to Poverty Commission's recommendations) - Council Tax Improvement project (covers system replacement) Transformation: monies set aside to fund a contribution to investments in improving the condition of the roads and pavements and transformational project work to improve the department's ability to generate future income. Proceeds of Crime Act: historic income from Proceeds of Crime Act which is subject to a ringfence and is planned to be used to fund financial investigators and enforcement officers Cemeteries Maintenance: to fund the long term maintenance of cemeteries. Some fees & charges income in the years that burial plots are sold are set aside to fund a proportion of the maintenance in the future – (i) any large maintenance expenditure that cannot be funded by in-year income and (ii) ongoing maintenance costs once cemeteries are full and no longer receiving income Environmental Services: this contains external funding to which there will be ring-fences on policy purposes (e.g. for Community Protection Team and shared reserve with Harrow for Trading Standards Service. Otherwise, the reserves allow the services in question to operate with a degree of flexibility in responding to issues. This includes MHCLG Rogue Landlord Enforcement Grant Client Affairs	(0.2) (0.1) (1.5) (1.3) (2.0) (6.1) (0.4) (0.5) **(12.1)**	(12.1)	(1.1)	(13.1)	1.0	(12.1)
Communities and Regeneration	This is comprised of reserves for Regeneration (£3.2m), covering a range of services from masterplanning to Covid-19 recovery initiatives and Communities (£3.3m), comprising of multiple grants, including Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Resettlement Scheme and various community projects. These are earmarked for various specific projects and initiatives.		(6.5)	1.6	(4.8)	0.4	(4.5)
Governance	This reserve is earmarked for specific projects and the local elections.		(1.8)	0.0	(1.8)	0.0	(1.8)
Finance and Resources	This reserve is held for investigations.		(0.9)	0.0	(0.9)	0.0	(0.9)
Total Service reserves			**(33.5)**	**1.4**	**(32.1)**	**1.6**	**(30.5)**

BRENT RESERVES	PURPOSE AND PLANNED USAGE	Actual 31/03/2023 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2024 £m	Movement £m	Forecast 31/03/2025 £m
Budget stabilisation						
Future funding risks	This is a general reserve to cover any future service pressures, such as demand pressures and demographic changes, which are in excess of any provision already made in the annual budget and future funding risks relating to the one-year front-loaded local government finance settlement, changes to the business rates revaluation methodology and the Government's 'levelling up' agenda, which is widely expected to move resources away from London. As per the Quarter 3 forecast, the Council is expecting to overspend against the General Fund budget by £13m overall. It is therefore forecast to utilise this reserve to bring the budget into a breakeven position.	(19.2)	13.0	(6.2)	0.0	(6.2)
Transformation	This is a reserve to cover projects which will bring future financial benefit to the Council, including but not limited to: transformation projects, change projects and invest-to-save projects.	(1.0)		(1.0)	1.0	0.0
Total Budget stabilisation		**(20.2)**	**13.0**	**(7.2)**	**1.0**	**(6.2)**
Total other earmarked reserves		**(53.7)**	**14.4**	**(39.3)**	**2.6**	**(36.7)**
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES		**(327.6)**	**(10.7)**	**(338.2)**	**3.9**	**(334.3)**
GRAND TOTAL		**(491.2)**	**20.0**	**(471.2)**	**29.6**	**(441.6)**

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APPENDIX L

Financial Management Code: Financial Resilience Assessment

Purpose

Financial management is at the heart of ensuring an organisation's financial sustainability and the continued provision of public services. Financial resilience is a key component of CIPFA's Financial Management (FM) Model and provides an assessment of the financial sustainability of a council and its ability to withstand financial shocks. CIPFA's Financial Management (FM) Code recommends that local authorities undertake a financial resilience assessment (FRA) each year. The FRA builds on the one-year assessments required under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 of the robustness of the estimates used in the budget calculations and the adequacy of the proposed levels of financial reserves.

Factors for assessing financial resilience

Routine — *Getting routine financial management right*

The first step is simply to ensure that the authority's basic financial management systems are working effectively, and that the authority's financial performance and position is reported regularly and effectively to the CFO and to the leadership team.

Capital — *Planning and managing capital resources well*

The authority's ability to maintain these assets so as to ensure and to enhance their role in the delivery of services is crucial to its financial resilience. If housing, libraries or leisure centres fall into disrepair, for example, such that they are no longer able to fulfil their primary purpose, then the authority's ability to deliver the associated services is impaired and it has resources tied up in assets that it cannot use.

Consequently, planning and managing the use of the authority's capital resources – particularly its infrastructure assets – is vital. This includes understanding the role that these assets play in the delivery of services and ensuring that the authority's asset base remains fit for purpose.

Performance — *Using performance information effectively*

In order to assess the authority's ability to withstand financial pressures, it is important to understand how well it is performing currently and how any financial challenges are likely to impact on this performance.

Authorities have a broad range of internal performance information available to them, from income and expenditure data to information on activity levels and service user satisfaction. This information can be collated to understand critical factors such as the unit cost of services, trends in service user satisfaction, and many more.

Another practical way to assess the authority's financial and operational performance is to compare the authority's costs, income, activities and performance with those of similar authorities or organisations. This is especially useful for factors such as the unit costs of services, which are more readily comparable than absolute costs or activity levels.

Savings — *Having clear plans for delivering savings*

The authority needs a single, consolidated and regularly updated mechanism that tracks its savings plans. This should include the savings that have been agreed,

how they will be monitored and the extent to which they have been achieved. These savings should also be built into the authority's annual budget and its medium-term financial plan.

Reserves *Managing reserves well.*

The aim of the authority's financial reserves is to provide funding for investment in future activities and to act as a safety net in case of short-term financial challenges. Consequently, limited use of reserves to support the delivery of a clear and transparent savings programme is perfectly acceptable.

Financial Resilience Assessment for the London Borough of Brent 2023/24

The results of the Financial Resilience Assessment are summarised in the table below:

Factor	Rating	Assessment	Improvements
• The funding gap as a percentage of net revenue expenditure (NRE) over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Good	The Council regularly reviews its MTFS assumptions and undertakes financial modelling, including sensitivity analysis and scenario planning to identify any funding gap. This information is regularly reported to chief officers and members.	Closer alignment of savings proposals and the broader financial context with policy objectives both when formulating proposals and when articulating the financial constraints to members and chief officers
• Savings delivered as a percentage of planned savings	Good	Past performance on savings delivery is good, with a blip during the COVID-19 pandemic which was quickly rectified. Savings are occasionally deferred to a future year when they are then delivered.	Improvement can be made to the definition of savings both by categorising savings into clear types and aligning savings to policy direction set out in the Borough Plan.
• Over/underspend relative to net expenditure	Good	Overall, the Council consistently breaks even through the planned use of budgeted contingency set aside to smooth variances in the budget. This gives a strong indication of the Council's ability to forecast and deliver a balanced budget.	This is a particularly strong area. The only improvement would be to take a cautious and prudent approach to monitoring expenditure given the present uncertain and challenging economic environment.
• Useable reserves as a percentage of net revenue budget	Good	The Council has a Reserves Strategy which defines the type and usage of its reserves and sets the minimum level of general fund balance that must be maintained. The use of reserves is planned and reserves are reviewed to ensure their adequacy.	This is a strong area. The only improvement would be to focus on ensuring that when the adequacy of the reserve balances is reviewed, due weight and consideration is given to the financial challenges presented by the current economic environment.

Factor	Rating	Assessment	Improvements
• Council tax as a percentage of income	Good	Council tax provides a relatively large share of the Council's revenue resources at about 44% of the total. The ability to set council tax is restricted by the referendum limit, but members do need to consider the political and financial implications of setting the main council tax and any adult social care precept. Collection levels impact on available resources and are monitored.	The Council needs to monitor collection levels which have not bounced back to pre-COVID levels and look set to be further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.
• The cost of total borrowing as a percentage of NRE	Good	The Capital Financing Requirement and borrowing are increasing at a pace. Servicing costs however remain relatively unchanged in terms of percentage of net revenue expenditure.	The Council needs to more robustly forecast its future capital financing requirements and the cost of serving future debt, given the rapid rise in interest rates. It also needs to consider the viability of projects and the scope for invest to save in support of corporate policies and savings delivery.
• Routine Financial Management	Good	The Council has robust management accounting arrangements which produce monthly reports to departmental management teams and quarterly Financial Monitors for chief officers and members.	Reporting and accounting arrangements for Central Items, particularly the 'big ticket' items (Housing Benefits and the Collection Fund) need to be improved to facilitate regular in-year monitoring and reporting in these areas.
• Performance Management	Satisfactory	The Council has good performance management systems that provide timely information to chief officers and members. The performance information should be more clearly linked to the periodic financial modelling resulting in a clearer vision of the big picture. Benchmarking is undertaken by Finance staff, but it is ad hoc and targeted rather than	Performance, financial and risk management information need to be aligned and cross referenced to provide a full picture of the Council's service delivery. Benchmarking needs to be put on a more regular and formal basis, using tools such as dashboards.

Factor	Rating	Assessment	Improvements
		systematic and comprehensive. Risks have been incorporated into the MTFS, but performance, financial and risk management information are not joined up to provide a coherent overview of the Council's position.	
• Links to Other Plans	Satisfactory	The Council has plans that set out its policy direction over the term of the administration (Borough Plan) and forward financial plans (MTFS, Capital Strategy). Links between the various plans should more clearly be articulated to ensure a joined up policy and financial framework.	The core strategy and planning documents need to be aligned and the links between the documents need to be articulated. At a practical level, when savings or growth proposals are put forward, they need to be set in the context of the corporate policy direction set out in the Borough plan. Responsive requirements should be recognised.
• Effective Medium and Long-Term Planning	Satisfactory	The Council has detailed and robust medium term financial plans and in a limited number of areas, such as the HRA, longer-term plans. Longer term planning (5-10 years) is an area that requires improvement.	The MTFS needs to cover a consistent period (say next year plus three future years) A long-term financial strategy should be introduced to capture at a high-level areas that can be quantified over a period beyond the MTFS.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	GOOD	There are a number of areas where the Council is performing strongly and the areas that have not been rated 'good' should not impact on the overall financial sustainability of the Council.	

Conclusion

The Financial Resilience Assessment is positive with seven areas assessed as good and three areas viewed as satisfactory. In no area was the council found to be deficient. The 2023/24 FRA made a number of recommendations for improvements which have been actioned. In particular, this report demonstrates closer alignment of policy and financial strategy in the savings proposals and recognition of the need for longer term planning and robust financial monitoring in the current challenging economic environment.

Brent Council Fees and Charges Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. By using its powers to charge for goods and services and imposing fines, fixed penalties and other such financial sanctions, Brent Council is able to generate additional income to support investment in services and/or reduce the overall level of expenditure to be met by local taxpayers.

1.2. The aim of this Fees and Charges Policy is to ensure that the Council makes use of all the powers available to it in order to recover the full cost of providing services. In using these powers however, the Council will wish to take care to ensure that the consequences of charging on individuals, the wider aims of the Council itself and / or organisations do not adversely impact on those who are vulnerable or in difficulties.

2. Background

2.1. The overriding aim of the charging policy is to maximise income generation and collection to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of the community the council serves, whilst ensuring a fair price for all services reflecting the ability of the community to pay and the relative demand for the service. Maximisation of income, following a decision to charge, is also dependent on a charge being raised and that amount being collected, both in a timely way.

Legal Position

2.2. The majority of the Council's statutory services, Building Control being a key exception, are funded directly from the Council's other main sources of revenue, i.e. government grants and local taxation.

2.3. Income received by Brent from fees and charges is generated by both statutory and discretionary services. Where fees and charges apply to statutory services these are often set nationally, for example, some planning and licensing fees.

2.4. The remaining income generating services where the Council levies fees and charges are of a discretionary nature. Discretionary services are those that an authority has the power to provide but is not obliged to. They include services provided directly to the public in general such as leisure services as well as charges for the costs incurred by the council (such as legal costs) when entering into planning or highways agreements with specific persons.

2.5. The legal powers that the Council has to raise fees and charges are set out in the final section of this policy.

3. Managers' Guidance

Overview

3.1. The Managers' Guidance has been written to provide information to managers in Brent Council responsible for applying fees and charges to goods and services delivered. The aim is to encourage a consistent and cost effective approach to the setting of charges for services provided by:

a. Specifying the process and frequency for reviewing existing charges for all areas of the council's work for which charges could in principle be set
b. Providing guidance on the factors that need to be taken into consideration

when charges are being reviewed
c. Requiring more active use of market intelligence when setting charges
d. Establishing parameters for calculating different levels of charges
e. Recommending the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges consistently across the council

Cost of Living Crisis

3.2. In response to the cost of living crisis facing Brent's residents and the current high levels of inflation and economic uncertainty, supplementary guidance was issued to managers on how to step fees and charges for 2023/24. This recognised that whilst the Council was facing substantial increases in costs, Brent's residents were also facing a similarly challenging economic environment. Whilst a freeze in fees and charges increases would not be affordable, the guidance advised managers to take a holistic approach which reviewed any proposed price increases in the round considering the effect on both the Council and its customers.

3.3. The supplementary guidance recommended a step-by-step approach to considering the extent to which the cost of providing the service was increasing for the council and the cost pressures faced by the Council's customers. These factors and any other pertinent issues would then to be considered together to determine an appropriate increase in prices. This approach permits managers to avoid following the normal full cost recovery approach if they can manage a lower level of increase within their budget. The intention was that for most fees and charges, where the Council has freedom to set the increase, the proposed increase will be below current levels of inflation.

3.4. The supplementary guidance applies only to setting fees and charges for 2023/24 and does not permanently vary the Council's policy on setting fees and charges, which is set out in this appendix. The cost of living crisis will be considered when setting fees and charges next year, but at this stage it is unclear whether there will need to be any departure from the normal process to set price increases.

Calculation of Fees and Charges

3.5. Fees and charges raised must be based on the full cost of the service. Charges cannot be set at a level to recover more than cost if that is all the Council has the legal power to do, but the definition of cost includes direct costs of service provision together with overhead and central costs. The cost recovery limit applies to the overwhelming majority of services which the Council can set a charge for. If, however, the Council has the legal power to do so careful consideration should be given to charging more than the full cost of the service. For example, charging could be used as a tool to manage excess demand for limited spaces on leisure centre classes. In overview there are 3 ways in which fees and charges may be set:

a. Fees and charges prescribed by legislation, usually in a regulatory context, and varied from time to time which the person liable has an obligation to pay;
b. Fees and charges reviewed and set by members (e.g. Individual Cabinet Members, Cabinet or Full Council) from time to time (usually annually); and
c. Fees and charges reviewed and set by officers from time to time acting under delegated powers.

3.6. As part of the annual budget cycle each department will carry out a recalculation of existing fees and charges together with opportunities to raise additional income from new areas of charging, and present proposals for revised charges.

Approvals

3.7. In broad terms setting fees for regulatory services (i.e. licensing, planning, etc) are non-executive functions. These therefore need to be submitted to Full Council for approval. Full Council can, however, delegate this function to a committee, officer etc.

3.8. Fees and charges for discretionary services are usually executive functions and therefore need to be approved by Cabinet or Cabinet Members. Cabinet and Cabinet Members can, however delegate this function.

Concessionary Charging

3.9. The purpose of offering concessions must be to support council priorities. Generally the reasons for operating concessionary charges will fall into one of two categories: to influence the level of demand for a service or to reflect the circumstances of service users. Concessions must also be reviewed at least on an annual basis, to confirm both the level of subsidy and also their ongoing relevance.

3.10. The Finance Department will maintain a list of concessions in operation and keep under review requests for concessions to be offered. For customer / clients who cannot pay, action must be taken to ensure that there are sufficient safeguards in place to allow access to service, and that appropriate steps are taken to recognise the realistic payment capacity of vulnerable individuals.

3.11. Concessionary charges should not normally apply at times when it would result in a loss of income from customers paying the full charge, unless prior approval has been given by a senior Council officer.

3.12. No concessions will be provided to non-Brent residents.

Education related services

3.13. With regards to education related services, services and packages will be based around the academic year and not on the municipal financial year.

VAT

3.14. Managers must ensure that the correct treatment of VAT is applied to the fees and charges they are responsible for. The correct treatment should be agreed with Finance in advance of application.

Other statutory requirements

3.15. Managers must also ensure that when setting fees and charges or reporting to members they are aware of any special statutory requirements that need to be complied with. For example, before changes to some fees and charges can be implemented, there may be a statutory requirement to consult and/or publish a notice in a local newspaper.

4. Payment Methods

4.1. All collection methods and payment terms must be effective, efficient and appropriate for the service. The preferred methods of payment are those direct to the bank such as direct debits and standing orders.

4.2. Wherever practical to do so payment for services provided should be sought in advance to minimise debt recovery issues.

4.3. The full cost recovery analysis will need to factor in the cost of processing payments and that some payment methods are preferred.

5. Equality impact Assessments

5.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its functions to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.

5.2. Before the Council exercises its fees and charging powers, the impact on individuals or groups of individuals who share a protected characteristic must be carefully considered and properly factored into the decision making process using the Council's EA screening template.

6. Review of Policy

6.1. This Policy is to be reviewed a minimum of every two years to ensure consistency with wider council and departmental objectives and priorities.

7. Fees and Charges - Legal Powers

7.1. Under the Localism Act 2011 there is a general power of competence which explicitly gives councils the power to do anything that an individual can do which is not prohibited by other legislation. This activity can include **charging** (i.e. to recover the costs of providing a discretionary service which the person has agreed to) or can be undertaken for a commercial purpose (i.e. to generate efficiencies, surpluses and profits) through a special purpose trading company. This is what is more commonly known as **trading**. Charging and trading activities can be aimed at benefiting the Council, the borough or its local communities.

7.2. These powers are in addition to similar powers set out in the Local Government Act 2003. The 2003 Act empowers councils to charge for any discretionary services (i.e. services councils have the *power* to provide but do not have a *duty* to provide by law) on a cost recovery basis. For example, the Council could decide to provide a new discretionary service, that is an addition to or enhancement of a statutory service, and then charge for it.

7.3. The 2011 Act power and the 2003 Act power cannot be used where charging is prohibited or where another specific charging regime applies. Statutory guidance published in 2003 outlines how costs and charges should be established and that guidance remains in force (see: '*General Power for Best Value Authorities to Charge for Discretionary Services'*, ODPM, 2003). The Council must have regard to the guidance when charging for discretionary services under the 2003 Act.

7.4. In particular, the guidance contains useful advice on setting charges. It explains that for each discretionary service for which a charge is made, councils need to secure that, taking one year with another, the income from charges for that service does not exceed the costs

of provision. The requirement to take one year with another recognises the practical difficulties council will face in estimating the charges. It establishes the idea of balancing the books over a period of time (not less than 1 year and no more than 3 years). Any over or under recovery that results in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed by the council when setting its charges for future periods so that over time income equates to costs.

7.5. The 2003 Act also enables councils to trade in activities related to their functions on a commercial basis with a view to profit through a company.

7.6. Under the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 councils also have powers to enter into agreements with each other and a long list of designated bodies. These activities are not limited to cost recovery and a profit can be generated from these activities.

7.7. In terms of leisure and recreational facilities, section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits councils to charge for these beyond cost recovery limitations.

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Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	**EARLY HELP**		
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 0 to 2 Years 8am to 4pm	£280.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 0 to 2 Years 9am to 3pm	£210.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 0 to 2 Years 8am to 6pm	£350.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 2 to 3 Years 8am to 4pm	£260.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 2 to 3 Years 9am to 3pm	£195.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 2 to 3 Years 8am to 6pm	£325.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 3 to 4 Years 8am to 4pm	£235.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 3 to 4 Years 9am to 3pm	£180.00
Children and Young People	Early Help	Childcare Nursery places (Willows Nursery) 3 to 4 Years 8am to 6pm	£295.00
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	**GORDON BROWN OEC**		
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Residential stays for Brent Schools	£224.66
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Residential stays for non Brent Schools	£236.76
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Non-residential day visit for non Brent Schools	£16.95
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Non-residential day visit for Brent Schools	£16.95
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Holiday Activities (per child, per day)	£29.95
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Childrens Laser Party (per child)	£20.00
Children and Young People	Gordon Brown OEC	Weekend groups	£90.00
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	**SETTING AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS SERVICE**		
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Brent Music Service Instrumental/vocal tuition	£778.75
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Brent Music Service Large group tuition	£862.75
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Brent Music Service Music's Cool' where class teacher remains with BMS teacher	£1,824.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Brent Music Service Music's Cool' where BMS teacher provides PPA cover	£2,324.75
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Brent Music Service Wider Opportunities	£1,249.25
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Maintained Brent Schools 1-50 Pupils	£1,426.70
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Maintained Brent Schools 51-100 Pupils	£1,815.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Maintained Brent Schools 101-200 Pupils	£2,142.80
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Maintained Brent Schools 201-3000 Pupils	£2,593.80
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Non Brent Schools 1-50 Pupils	£1,504.80
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Non Brent Schools 51-100 Pupils	£1,996.50
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Non Brent Schools 101-200 Pupils	£2,442.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Annual package. Non Brent Schools 201-3000 Pupils	£2,852.30
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Pay as you go rate Maintained Brent Schools (blended course rate) Half Day/Twilight	£121.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Pay as you go rate Maintained Brent Schools (blended course rate) 2 Session/Full Day Courses	£247.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Pay as you go rate Non Brent Schools (blended course rate) Half Day/Twilight	£132.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Compliance and Governor Training Pay as you go rate Non Brent Schools (blended course rate) 2 Session/Full Day Courses	£258.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Moderation of Teacher Assessment - One Form of Entry	£440.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Moderation of Teacher Assessment - Two Forms of entry	£550.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Moderation of Teacher Assessment - Three Forms of Entry	£660.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Moderation of Teacher Assessment - Four Forms of Entry	£770.00
Children and Young People	Setting and School Effectiveness Service	Moderation of Teacher Assessment - Five Forms of Entry	£880.00
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	**SHORT BREAK CENTRE**		
Children and Young People	Short Break Centre	Respite Care - Other LA (Weekday) 3pm - 9am	£735.00
Children and Young People	Short Break Centre	Respite Care - Other LA (Weekend - Friday, Saturday, School Holidays 24 hours, Sunday 3pm - 8am)	£882.00
Children and Young People	Short Break Centre	Respite Care - Other LA (Weekday, 2:1 Care)	£1,053.00
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**BUILDING CONTROL**		
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table A - Charges for the erection of one or more new dwelling units (<250m2) Full Plan charge ranging from 1 - 15 units	£2,241.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table A - Charges for the erection of > 15 units or units > 250m2) Full Plan & Inspection charge	£162.45
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table C (Domestic Alterations)	£267.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table D (Other Works)	£491.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Demolition Notices	£534.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Dangerous Structures	£320.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Copy of Decision Notice (Post 2002)	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Copy of Section 25 PHA certificate/notice	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Existing Premises Name Change -Single house or premises per property	£267.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Existing Premises Name Change –Multiple property involving more than one premises / address.	£267.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Existing Premises - Street Name Change	£1,067.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Existing Premises - Regularisation of previously unauthorised use of address / Retrospective application.	£1,601.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Multi Storey Extension)	£1,174.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Loft Conversions)	£875.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Basement Extension)	£1,174.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Single Storey Extension)	£918.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Multi Storey Extension)	£1,174.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Loft Conversions)	£875.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Building Regulations Table B (Domestic Basement Extension)	£1,174.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Conversion of Existing Building Into Self-Contained Flats/Dwelling Units - Single Unit	£896.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Retrieval of Microfiche Record	£36.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Correspondence requiring technical research / review of casefile	£142.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Complex queries requiring extensive research – individually assessed. Per Hour	£178.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Completion Certificates Pre 2002 -£80.00 PLUS £20.00 Retrieval	£213.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Completion Certificates Post 2002	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Copy of Decision Notice (Pre 2002)	£128.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Copy of Decision Notice (Post 2002)	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Providing Copy of SNN Decision Notice + Agreed Plans (where available)	£178.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Copy of AI Final Certificate per plot (where available)	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Confirmation regarding LA acceptance of CPS record	£89.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Cancellation / Withdrawal Charge BEFORE validation	£178.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Cancellation / Withdrawal Charge AFTER validation	£267.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Cancellation / Withdrawal Charge AFTER Plans / Details or Calculations checked	Min £250 or 50% of building notice charge
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Calculation of refund following request where charge exceeds expenditure – refer to Fee Regulations.	£178.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Additional charge in respect of cancellation / non-payment / bounced cheque (refer to drawer)	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Cross Boundary working (including site inspections and Host Borough Administration Charge)	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Supplementary Charge per hour	£213.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Resurrection Charge (or 50% whichever is greater)	£533.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Dangerous structures - Surveying Costs (09:00 to 17:00) Mon-Fri	£213.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Dangerous structures - Surveying Costs (17:00 to 09:00) Mon to Fri, Weekends and Bank Holidays (min 2 hours)	£267.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Dangerous structures - Mileage	£1.25
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Dangerous structures - Charge where excessive number of visits required to gain compliance	£356.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Certify and Service of formal DS Notice	£534.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Court Action (minimum fee)	£889.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Removing Danger, shoring or hoarding in accordance with London Building Acts	15% of contractors net costs
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Brent Administration costs in respect of contract, supervision of works, payments, etc.	15% of contractors net costs
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	SOL numbers confirmation of address for Land registry	£107.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Existing Premises - Providing Copy of SNN Decision Notice + Agreed Plans (where available) charge per application.	£213.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 1-2 plots)	£352.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 3-5 plots)	£534.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 6-10 plots)	£715.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 11-20 plots)	£1,067.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 21-50 plots)	£1,601.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 51-100 plots)	£2,486.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property 100+ plots plots)	£2,486.00
Communities and Regeneration	Building Control	Street Naming & Numbering (New property additional charge where this includes naming a street)	£715.00
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**PLANNING**		
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 1 - Householder (extensions and alterations to a dwelling) (written response)	£150.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 2 - Small Minor development (I home / up to 99 sqm) (written response)	£345.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 3 - Medium Minor development (2 to 4 homes/ 100 – 499 sqm) - written and meeting	£1,330.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 4 - Large Minor development (5 to 9 homes / 500 – 999 sq.m.) - written and meeting	£2,350.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 5 - Major development (10 to 24 homes / 1,000 - 1,999 sqm) - written and meeting	£5,750.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 6 - Large major development (25 to 49 homes / 2,000 - 3,999 sqm) - written and meeting	£6,850.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 7 - Medium major development (50 to 149 homes / 3,000 - 4999 sqm) - written and meeting	£9,400.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 8 - Strategic development (150 units + / 5,000 sqm) - written and meeting	£12,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Pre-app 9 - Reserved matters (pursuant to an outline consent) - written and meeting	Half full price
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Meeting (Pre-app 1 to 2)	£150.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Revised submission from same applicant within 6 months of written feedback (Pre-app 2 to 8)	Half full price
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Multiple options for pre-application request (pre-app 2 to 8)	Half full price
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Issue related meeting - Major development (10+ homes, 1,000+ sqm)	£2,300.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Presentation to Planning Committee	£2,300.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Copies of planning decision notices	£30.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Copies of archived documents	£30.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	Confirmation of compliance with clauses in a S106	£550.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Planning Negotiation Fee - Simple (1-3 obligations)	£1,005.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Planning Negotiation Fee - Moderate (4-7 obligations)	£1,710.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Planning Negotiation Fee - Complex (8+ obligations / review mechanisms)	£2,350.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Planning Negotiation Fee - Simple Deed of Variation	£500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Non-financial contribution (Per each HoT) that's not specific under 10 units or under 1,000 sqm	£555.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Non-financial contribution (Per each HoT) that's not specific between 10-100 units or between 1,000- 10,000 sqm	£835.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Non-financial contribution (Per each HoT) that's not specific between in excess of 100 units or in excess of 10,000 sqm	£1,110.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Standard Simple Obligation	5% of the total financial contribution amount up to £100,000
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Standard Moderate Obligation	3% of the total financial contribution amount on the remainder of the contributions between £100,000 and £1 million
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - General - Standard Complex Obligation	1% of the total financial contribution amount on the remainder of the contributions over £1 million. Total fees capped at £100,000 per development

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Viability Review	£1,465.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Sustainability	£980.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Energy	£980.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Sustainability and Energy	£1,960.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Travel Plan	£2,090.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Car Club (Off Site)	£980.00
Communities and Regeneration	Planning	S106 Monitoring Fee - Specific - Training and Employment	£980.00
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**BRENT START**		
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and skills - Accredited courses	£4.00
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and Skills - Personal and community development learning	£5.55
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and Skills - Personal and community development learning - concessions (A)	£2.77
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and Skills - Personal and community development learning - concessions (B)	£1.39
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and Skills - targeted community development courses	£4.00
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Learning and Skills - targeted community development courses - concessions (A)	£2.03
Communities and Regeneration	Brent Start	Room hire	£42.68
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**LAND CHARGES**		
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	Full Official Search (LLC1 and CON29 2016)	£320.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	Full Official Search and each additional Parcel	£65.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	LLC1	£92.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	LLC1 Additional Parcel	£30.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	CON 29 - 2016	£230.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	Con 29 - 2016 each additional Parcel	£35.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	CON 29O requested each question submitted with LLC1 and CON 29 - 2016 forms	£35.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	CON 29 O each question requested separately	£46.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	Copy Search of replies	£46.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges	CON29 O requested separately for each additional parcel	£35.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges - EIR	CON29 2016 Individual first question	£30.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges - EIR	CON29 2016 Individual each additional question	£3.50
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges - EIR	CON29 2016 Individual All questions listed on our website under Environmental Informational Regulations details 'Local Land Charges	£115.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges - EIR	CON29 2016 Individual each additional parcel	£7.00
Communities and Regeneration	Land charges - EIR	Copy of replies CON29 2016 individual replies	£20.00
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**COMMUNICATIONS**		
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Film Licence	£100.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Location Fees (high) per day	£5,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Location Fees per day (Medium)	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Location Fees per day (low)	£2,000.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parking Fees (per parking bay suspension)	£60.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Full Page Advertising in Your Brent Magazine	£1,770.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Half Page Advertising in Your Brent Magazine	£973.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Quarter Page Advertising in Your Brent Magazine	£643.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Eighth Page Advertising in Your Brent Magazine	£275.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Late Notice Admin Fee	£160.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Additional/Film Officer time fee/site visits/ per hour	£75.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Film Officer out of hours fee weekdays (between 9pm-7am) and all weekend per hour	£160.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	No Notice of Objection (subject to online payment system going ahead)	£70.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks A Filming (large crew): Roundwood Gladstone Barham Park Fryent Country Welsh Harp	£3,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks A Filming (medium crew): Roundwood Gladstone Barham Park Fryent Country Welsh Harp	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks A Filming (small crew): Roundwood Gladstone Barham Park Fryent Country Welsh Harp	£2,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks B Filming (large crew) All other park and recreation grounds	£3,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks B Filming (medium crew) All other park and recreation grounds	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks B Filming (small crew) All other park and recreation grounds	£2,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Parks Unit base	£850.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Brent Civic Centre	£7,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Cemeteries / Libraries / Sports Centres (large crew)	£3,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Cemeteries / Libraries / Sports Centres (medium crew)	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Cemeteries / Libraries / Sports Centres (small crew)	£2,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Willesden Sports Centre (large crew)	£3,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Willesden Sports Centre (medium crew)	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Willesden Sports Centre (small crew)	£2,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Housing Estates (large crew)	£3,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Housing Estates (medium crew)	£3,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Housing Estates (small crew)	£2,000.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Temporary structures	£250.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Cherrypickers / Cranes / Mobile platforms	£300.00 + 100 per sqm deposit
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Scaffolding	From £211.00 + 100 per sqm deposit for two weeks
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Stage 3 Traffic management per location	£600.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Full road closure	£2,500.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Highways officer site visit per hour	£250.00
Communities and Regeneration	Communications	Drone admin fee per application	£250.00
COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION	**CONFERENCE AND EVENTS**		
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Grand Hall 10 hours hire package (Monday to Sunday)	£7,139.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Grand Hall 12 hours hire package (Saturday and Sunday only)	£9,801.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Grand Hall additional set up or de-rig hire (per hour)	£363.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Grand Hall bank holiday surcharge fee	£1,246.30
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Grand Hall (per hour, min 6 hours required)	£726.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Conference Hall (per hour, min 5 hours required)	£314.60
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	The Bridge (available only with the Grand Hall)	£605.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	One Board Room (per hour)	£49.50
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Two Board Rooms together (per hour)	£99.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Three Board Rooms together (per hour)	£148.50
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Four Board Rooms together (per hour)	£198.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Foyer stall hire (8 hours)	£187.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Day Delegate Rate (with sandwich lunch and 3 servings of tea and coffee) per person, min numbers apply	£75.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Day Delegate Rate (with finger buffet lunch and 3 servings of tea and coffee) per person, min numbers apply	£75.00
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Charitable discount. A discount of 20% - 50% on Conference Hall and Board Rooms hire are available for charitable purpose events that are closely aligned to the Council's Borough Plan and will benefit the borough and its local residents.	25% - 50%
Communities and Regeneration	Conference and Events	Discretionary discount on Conference Hall and Board Rooms hire - during quite time to attract bookings	10% - 20%
GOVERNANCE	**LEGAL SERVICES**		
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Loft cellers garden	£1,694.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Deed of rectification	£715.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Single Lease extension for enfranchisement of a single house	£1,566.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Collective Enfranchisement	£1,682.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. License for Alteration	£990.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - S106 Agreements.	£2,250.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Section 38 and Section 278 Agreements.	£3,465.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions, Lease	£785.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. Licence to Assign	£850.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. Licence for alteration	£850.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. Licence to underlet	£850.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. Collaboration Agreement	£1,955.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. Development Agreement subject to Lease	£3,910.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions. S123 LGA Notice	£390.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Single Lease extension for enfranchisement of a single house	£1,641.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Single Lease extension for enfranchisement of a single house	£1,671.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions, Lease	£1,045.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Commercial Property Transactions, Lease	£1,175.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Collective Enfranchisement	£1,660.00
Governance	Legal Services	Third Party Charges for Legal Work - Housing Management - Residential Conveyancing. Collective Enfranchisement	£1,690.00
Governance	Legal Services	S106 Legal Admin fee	£1,925.00
Governance	Legal Services	S106 Legal Fee (per hour)	£253.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PRIVATE HOUSING SERVICES**		
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Houses in Multiple Occupation Mandatory licences	£840.00
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Houses in Multiple Occupation Additional licences	£840.00
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Other Houses Selective licences	£640.00
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Admin charge for Work in Default	30% of cost of works or minimum of £150
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Notices	£330.00
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	Specifications for Empty Property Grant	£550.00
Resident Services	Private Housing Services	DFG and SWG Agency Service	16.5% of cost of works or minimum of £66
RESIDENT SERVICES	**LIBRARIES**		
Resident Services	Libraries	Audio Visual loans	£1.00
Resident Services	Libraries	Printing and photocopying charges	£0.20
Resident Services	Harlesden Library	Carolyn Downs' Room - per hour commercial hire charges	£35.00
Resident Services	Harlesden Library	Carolyn Downs' Room - per hour concessionary hire charges	£28.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Education Room - per hour commercial hire charges	£35.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Performance Space- per hour commercial hire charges	£55.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Reading Room- per hour commercial hire charges	£35.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Education Room - per hour concessionary hire charges	£28.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Performance Space- per hour concessionary hire charges	£44.00
Resident Services	The Library at Willesden Green	Reading Room- per hour concessionary hire charges	£28.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**SPORTS**		
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Printing and photocopying charges: Black & White A4	£0.20
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Printing and photocopying charges: Black & White A3	£0.40
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Printing and photocopying charges: Colour A4	£0.75
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Printing and photocopying charges: Colour A3	£1.50
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Scanning (per document)	£3.00
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Charge to purchase USB and upload images	£6.00
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Use of personal camera	£7.50
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Digital Copies (per image): Non-Commercial Use	£7.00
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Digital Copies (per image):Commercial Use	£40.00
Resident Services	Museum & Archives	Research Service (charge per hour for max of 2 hours)	£25.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**SPORTS**		

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Sports	B.Active card (Resident standard card)	£42.00
Resident Services	Sports	B.Active card (Non resident standard card)	£72.00
Resident Services	Sports	B.Active card (60+ or disabled resident Concession)	£6.75
Resident Services	Sports	B.Active card (Resident Concession - 6 months)	£3.50
RESIDENT SERVICES	**CULTURE, SPORTS AND RECREATION**		
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sports Hall Hire - Peak	£65.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sports Hall Hire - Juniors Peak	£45.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sports Hall Hire - Off Peak	£37.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sports Hall Hire - Juniors Off Peak	£27.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Dance Studio Peak	£40.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Dance Studio - Off Peak	£25.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Badminton Court Peak	£12.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Badminton Court - Off Peak	£7.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Table Tennis Peak	£6.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Table Tennis - Off Peak	£4.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership	£27.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - Joint	£45.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - Annual	£275.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - concessions	£22.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - off peak use	£20.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - corporate	£25.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Membership - Junior	£16.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Induction - Adults	£15.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym Induction - Youth 14-16	£7.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym casual use - Adults Peak	£7.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym casual use - Adults Off Peak	£4.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Gym casual use - Youth 14-16	£3.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sauna and Steam - Peak	£7.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Sauna and Steam - Off Peak	£5.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Parties	£110.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Junior Classes /session	£3.75
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Boardroom - Full Day	£70.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Community Suite - Full Day	£150.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Tropics Suite - Full Day	£200.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Syndicate Room - Full Day	£175.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Conference Room - Full Day	£250.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Function Hall - Full Day	£300.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Boardroom - Per Hour	£15.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Community Suite - Per Hour	£30.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Tropics Suite - Per Hour	£40.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Syndicate Room - Per Hour	£37.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Conference Room - Per Hour	£65.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Function Hall - Per Hour	£47.50
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Room Hire Kitchen	£375.00
Resident Services	Culture, Sports and Recreation	Room Hire Servery	£275.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PEST CONTROL**		
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Bedbugs (2 visits)	£241.67
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Bedbugs 5-8 bedrooms (2 visits)	£275.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Cockroaches (1 visit)	£166.67
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Fleas (2 visits)	£224.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Mice (3 visits)	£150.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Rats (3 visits)	£150.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Wasps (1 visit)	£68.33
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest treatment, Pharaoh Ants	£224.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest treatment, Squirrels	£150.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest treatment - appointment missed/treatment not carried out	£48.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Admin fee for offline bookings	£20.83
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Clothes Moths up to 3 bedrooms (2 visits booked online)	£241.67
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Clothes Moths 4 - 6 bedrooms (2 visits booked online)	£275.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Combined rodents and cockroaches (3 visits booked online)	£240.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Any Pest treatment at a house with multiple tenants - Houses in multiple occupation (HMO)	Price on Application
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Bedbugs (4 visits, heavy infestation 1-3 bedrooms)	£416.97
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Bedbugs (4 visits, light infestation 4+ bedrooms)	£500.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Garden Ants (1 visit booked online)	£88.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Pest - Bird Control	100.00-150.00 p/h
Resident Services	Pest Control	Technician Charges per hour	£60.00 - £80.00
Resident Services	Pest Control	Treatment outside of London Borough of Brent	Discretionary Charge to Cover Additional Costs
RESIDENT SERVICES	**ANIMAL WELFARE**	**ANIMAL WELFARE**	
Resident Services	Animal Welfare	Collection and Return of stray dog	£190.00
Resident Services	Animal Welfare	Kennelling Fees per dog	£20.00
Resident Services	Animal Welfare	Vets Fees for Stray Dogs	Recharge at cost
Resident Services	Animal Welfare	Transport of Dog Per Journey	£50.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS**		
Resident Services	Safety at Sports Grounds	Stadium Safety Certification (General/New Style) (Per hour)	£115.00
Resident Services	Safety at Sports Grounds	Stadium Safety Certification (Special) (Per hour)	£115.00
Resident Services	Safety at Sports Grounds	Revision of Safety Certificate (Per hour)	£115.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**		
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Section 50 Licence Application, varies on depth	£495.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 1+2 Roads - DfT Maximum £105	£105.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 1+2 Roads - DfT Maximum £240	£223.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 1+2 Roads - DfT Maximum £130	£130.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 1+2 Roads - DfT Maximum £65	£65.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 1+2 Roads - DfT Maximum £60	£60.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 3+4 Roads - DfT Maximum £75	£75.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 3+4 Roads - DfT Maximum £150	£150.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 3+4 Roads - DfT Maximum £45	£45.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA CAT 3+4 Roads - DfT Maximum £40	£40.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA Section 72 Inspection of defective reinstatement	£48.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA Section 72 Defective reinstatement reported	£68.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA Section 74 charges	varies £100 - £2,500 per day
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA Major offence (discount for early pay)	£500.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	NRSWA Minor offence (discounted for early pay)	£120.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Non-refundable admin charge Domestic Vehicle Crossing	£112.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	non-refundable admin charge Industrial Vehicle Crossover	£112.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Crossings - White Line Access Bar <6m fixed £	£80.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Crossings -White Line Access Bar 6-10m	£134.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Crossings - White Line Access Bar >10m	Price on Application
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Crossings - Markup on Constructing a crossing	Price on Application
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	TM, cost of officer resource at events	£4,057.33
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Temporary Traffic Management Order	£2,580.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Emergency Traffic Management. Order s14(2)	£1,320.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Permanent Orders	£4,300.00
Resident Services	Highways and Infrastructure	Stopping Up Orders	£5,800.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**HIGHWAYS MANAGEMENT**		
Resident Services	Highways Management	Provision of advice on drainage to developers prior to planning application Category A (large scale developments) - initial meeting	£4,805.15
Resident Services	Highways Management	Provision of advice on drainage to developers prior to planning application Category A (large scale developments) - follow-up meeting	£1,372.87
Resident Services	Highways Management	Provision of advice on drainage to developers prior to planning application Category B (other developments) - initial meeting	£3,052.23
Resident Services	Highways Management	Provision of advice on drainage to developers prior to planning application Category B (other developments) - follow-up meeting	£983.86
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PARKS (RECREATION)**		
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Hire of pavilion per hour	£65.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Hire of pavilion per hour after 8pm in Winter, after 10pm in summer per hour	£80.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Partial cost recovery of events in parks - Category 2	£1,250.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Partial cost recovery of events in parks - Category 3	£5,000 - £20,000
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Reinstatement (Refundable deposit)- category 3	£5000 - £20,000
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Reinstatement (Refundable deposit)- category 1 (+£200)	up to £10,000
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Special events hosted by commercial groups	Price on Application
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	£500 -Reinstatement (Refundable deposit)- category 2 (+500)	£560.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Small Events	£75.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Adult Single	£96.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Adult Short Season [13 week pre booked]	£1,155.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Adult Long Season [17 weeks pre-booked]	£1,470.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 11-a-side Single	£59.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 9-a-side Single	£52.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 7-a-side Single	£35.50
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 5-a-side Single	£24.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 11-a-side Short Season [13 week pre booked]	£688.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 11-a-side Long Season [17 weeks pre-booked]	£900.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 9-a-side Short Season [13 week pre booked]	£600.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 9-a-side Long Season [17 weeks pre-booked]	£785.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 7-a-side Short Season [13 week pre booked]	£415.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 7-a-side Long Season [17 weeks pre- booked]	£540.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 5-a-side Short Season [13 week pre booked]	£275.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Soccer Junior 5-a-side Long Season [17 weeks pre-booked]	£360.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Rugby Adult Single	£105.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Rugby junior Single	£62.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Gaelic Adult single (with changing)	£125.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Gaelic Adult single (without changing)	£90.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Gaelic junior single (with changing)	£75.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Gaelic junior single (without changing)	£55.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Hurling Adult single	£125.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Hurling Junior single	£75.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Cricket single	£140.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Cricket Adult [11 week season]	£1,380.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Cricket Junior (11 week season)	£730.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Cricket junior single	£73.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Artificial cricket wicket (Adults) per match	£95.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Artificial cricket wicket (juniors) per match	£60.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Bowls - per green	£2,392.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Bowls - per rink per season	£500.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Tennis Court - adult, per hour	£6.50
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Tennis Court - junior, per hour	£3.50
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Tennis Court - where no more than 50% of players are Adults	£4.50
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Adult training soccer/rugby/Gaelic/Hurling not on a pitch (per 2 hours including changing rooms, excluding floodlights)	£80.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Junior training soccer/rugby/Gaelic/hurling not on a pitch (per 2 hours including changing rooms, excluding floodlights)	£46.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Floodlights per hour	£45.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Unmarked ground school/sports use (Morning or afternoon - 3 hours including changing rooms)	£75.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Hire of changing rooms only (during normal staffing hours)	£65.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Late cancellation fees	25% of the total cost
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Boot camp/ personal fitness sessions (per hour)	£65.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Model Aircraft Licence Fee	£50.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Volleyball	£35.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Netball	£30.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Memorial Plaque	£120.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Memorial bench in a park	£1,600.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity - per container per week	£240.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit for indemnity per container	£560.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Access through park land - hand tools only up to 3 hours	£80.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit - Access through park land - hand tools only	£150.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity through land - vehicle access only (car /van) per week	£130.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit - Indemnity through land - vehicle access only (car /van)	£200.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity - Utility company works	£1,070.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit Indemnity - Utility company works	£5,000.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Scaffold Licence Fee (0-10m)	£280.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Scaffold Licence Fee (10-15m)	£350.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Scaffold Licence Fee (15m+)	£560.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Hoarding Licence Fee(0-10m)	£240.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Hoarding Licence Fee (10-15m)	£345.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Hoarding Licence Fee (15m+)	£560.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Indemnity Skip Licence Fee (per skip per week)	£130.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Skips (fines) Per skip per week	£280.00
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit for skip (per skip)	Based on percentage of the total booking
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposits for scaffolding	Based on percentage of the total booking
Resident Services	Parks (Recreation)	Deposit for hoarding	Based on percentage of the total booking
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PARKS - ALLOTMENTS**		
Resident Services	Parks - Allotments	Allotment type site 126m2 (5 pole) Brent residents	£22.00
Resident Services	Parks - Allotments	Allotment type site 126m2 (5 pole) Non-Brent residents	£32.00
Resident Services	Parks - Allotments	Allotment type site 126m2 (5 pole) for Brent residents (concessions)	£11.00
Resident Services	Parks - Allotments	Charges for additional pole above 5	£22.00
Resident Services	Parks - Allotments	Allotment shed rental fees (annual)	£25.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PUBLIC REALM (WASTE)**		
Resident Services	Shared Contract & Data Hub (Waste)	Garden Waste Collection	£65.00
Resident Services	Shared Contract & Data Hub (Waste)	Bulky Waste Collection (Up to 5 items)	£40.00
Resident Services	Shared Contract & Data Hub (Waste)	Refuse Bin Purchase Charges 140L-360L	£55.00
Resident Services	Shared Contract & Data Hub (Waste)	Refuse Bin Purchase Charges 770L-1100L	£475.00
Resident Services	Shared Contract & Data Hub (Waste)	Bulky Waste Collection (charge per item if more than 5 items)	£6.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**APPLICABLE TO ONLY BRENT RESIDENTS**		
Resident Services	**Applicable to only Brent residents**		
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery	£3,700.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery - Reclaim	£3,900.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery - New Plot	£5,965.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Interment	£1,020.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights - Path side graves Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery	£4,995.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights - Path side graves Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery	£6,850.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Interment - Path side graves	£1,020.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights - Woodland grave for 1 interment (includes 1 tree)	£4,160.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Woodland grave for (1 interment) Interment	£1,020.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Burial rights - Woodland grave for ashes	£3,320.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Woodland grave for ashes Interment	£385.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Grave Reopen	£2,020.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Vault (reopen)	£995.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Common Grave	£1,840.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Cremated Remains In New Half Grave Space Burial Rights & Interment	£2,635.00

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Cremated Remains In existing Grave Space Interment	£385.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Cremated remains in existing vault	£535.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Niche in Columbaria for First Five Years	£1,000.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Brent Residents	Each Additional Five Years for Niche in Columbaria	£500.00
Resident Services	**Applicable to Non Brent residents**		
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery	£7,040.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery - Reclaim	£7,270.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery - New Plot	£8,090.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Interment	£1,815.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights - Path side graves Path side graves Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery	£7,190.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights - Path side graves Path side graves Willesden New, Alperton, Paddington Old Cemetery	£8,206.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Interment - Path side graves (earth)	£1,661.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights - Woodland grave for 1 interment (includes 1 tree)	£6,000.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Burial rights - Woodland grave for ashes	£3,696.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Interment - Woodland grave for ashes	£484.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non-Residents	Grave Reopen	£2,950.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Interment	£2,750.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Burial rights - Cremated Remains In new half grave space	£3,575.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Interment - Cremated Remains In new half & existing grave space	£760.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Cremated remains in existing vault	£500.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Niche in Columbaria for First Five Years	£1,500.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Non Residents	Each Additional Five Years for Niche in Columbaria	£750.00
Resident Services	**Applicable for both Brent residents & non residents**		
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Earth Grave for 3 where applicable	£990.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Shroud timbers & slats	£500.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Grave surround	£260.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Transfer burial rights	£169.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Burial Register search fee	£65.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Chapel hire up to 2 hours	£220.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Saturday burials at Alperton, Paddington and Willesden	£990.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Cancellation of an interment or late arrival of funeral cortege of more than 20 mins	£480.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Memorial [full with Landing]	£520.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Non Residents - Vaults Package Paddington Old Cemetery	£20,000.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Vaults Package Paddington Old Cemetery	£17,500.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Additional Charges	Additional Internment of Ashes	£160.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Headstone / plaque	£426.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Inscriptions / works	£360.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Memorial removal for interment	£490.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Memorial replacement after interment	£490.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Memorial raise and level (full memorials)	£175.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Memorial raise and level (plaques)	£99.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Tree Plaque at Carpenders Park (Inc. VAT) (Single)	£530.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Tree Plaque at Carpenders Park (Inc. VAT) (Double)	£570.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Bench with plaque on to existing landing (Inc. VAT)	£2,700.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Bench Plaques only at Carpenders Park (Inc. VAT - 5 years)	£450.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Grave tendering 1 x per year, all cemeteries except Carpenders Park	£140.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Grave tendering 2 x per year, all cemeteries except Carpenders Park	£205.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Grave tendering 1 x per year, Carpenders Park	£100.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Grave tendering 2 x per year, Carpenders Park	£160.00
Resident Services	Cemeteries - Memorial Permits	Concrete based bench with plaque (inc. VAT not at Carpenders Park)	£4,250.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**FOOD SAFETY**		
Resident Services	Food Safety	Cadaver certificate (3 working days' notice)	£79.50
Resident Services	Food Safety	Cadaver certificate (urgent next day service)	£154.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food Export Health Certificates (3 working days)	£81.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food Export Health Certificates (urgent next day service)	£153.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food destruction certificate	£297.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Freezer breakdown certificate	£297.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Pool water analysis single pool	£266.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Pool water analysis double pool	£452.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Schools Legionella Water Sampling	£1,738.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Schools Drinking Water Sampling	£581.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating re-assessment	£343.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food Business Start-up Scheme	£343.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Food Hygiene Coaching Service	£550.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments exhibition including any treatment from categories B, C or D	£1,596.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments exhibition including any treatment from categories B, C or D per applicant administering	£105.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments - lasers (Cat A)	£961.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments - massage, acupuncture, tattooing etc (cat B)	£783.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments - beauty treatments, etc (Cat C)	£466.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments - manicure, nose and ear piercing, etc (Cat D)	£257.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Special treatments - licence variation including addition or change of therapist	£135.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Primary Authority - bulk purchase (per hour)	£75.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Primary Authority - pay as you go (per hour)	£93.00
Resident Services	Food Safety	Officer Court attendance fees (per hour)	£98.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**		
Resident Services	Environmental Health	Contaminated Land Basic Enquiry	£57.00
Resident Services	Environmental Health	Contaminated Land Residential Property Search	£113.00
Resident Services	Environmental Health	Contaminated Land Commercial Property Search	£225.00
Resident Services	Environmental Health	Part B Permits for Mobile Plant and Solvent Emission Activities. Various fees as per DEFRA's charging Scheme	£190.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**WORK IN DEFAULT**		
Resident Services	Work In Default	Interest charged for Work in Default to property owner	Bank of England rate plus 8%
Resident Services	Work In Default	Works in Default Officer Rate (per hour subject to grade)	£55.00
Resident Services	Work In Default	Works in Default Admin Charge (Single property or shared dwellings)	£167.00
Resident Services	Work In Default	Enforcement Officer hourly rate	£66.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**LICENSING**		

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Licensing	Animal Boarding Licence including inspection (up to 20 animals)	Various fees from £387 to £590
Resident Services	Licensing	Animal Boarding Licence including inspection (over 20 animals)	Various fees from £387 to £545
Resident Services	Licensing	Breeding of Dogs Licence including inspection (with one bitch)	Various prices from £387 to £550
Resident Services	Licensing	Breeding of Dogs Licence including inspection(with more than one bitch)	Various prices from £430 to £650
Resident Services	Licensing	Performing Animals Registration	£450.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Pet Animals (Pet Shop Licence)	£450.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Dangerous Wild Animals	£460.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Leaflet distribution (application)	£235.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Leaflet distribution per person	£90.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Occasional sales (application) (Discretionary reduction of educational, charitable organisations)	£220.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Occasional sales (per person) (Discretionary reduction of educational, charitable organisations)	£12.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Sex establishments	£500.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Street trading (new application)	£84.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Street trading (variation)	£55.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Scrap Metal Site Licence	£710.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Scrap Metal Collectors Licence	£415.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Explosives Registration	Various Fees from £56 - £670
Resident Services	Licensing	Explosives Licence	Various Fees from £56 - £670
Resident Services	Licensing	Film Classification (per 15 minutes)	£70 minimum charge, £15 per 15 minutes thereafter
Resident Services	Licensing	Premises Licence - Licensing Act 2003 (see separate list of fees for specific charges)	Various Fees from £10.50 to £64,000
Resident Services	Licensing	Premises Licence - Gambling Act 2005 (see separate list of fees for specific charges)	Various Fees from £15 - £15,000
Resident Services	Licensing	Marriage Licence (see separate list of fees for specific charges)	Various Fees from £600 to £1,500
Resident Services	Licensing	Licensing Surgeries (to help businesses with applications) per hour	£66.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Enforcement Officer hourly rate	£69.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Other Animal Inspections Fees	£125.00 -£175.00 per hour
Resident Services	Licensing	Pavement Tables and Chairs Licences (to be reviewed subject to new legislation)	£100.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Casual Street Trading for Wembley Event per day	£200.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Casual Street Trading per day	£177.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Casual Street Trading (Discretionary charge for educational, not for profit or charitable organisations	0-£177.00 per day
Resident Services	Licensing	Temporary Shop Front (1-6 Months plus admin fee. New applications receive one months free trading if they pay for five months)	£100.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Temporary Independent Pitch (1-6 Months plus admin fee. New applications receive one months free trading if they pay for five months)	£3.50
Resident Services	Licensing	Permanent Shop Front (12 months plus admin fee)	£1,185.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Permanent Independent Pitch (12 months plus admin fee)	£3.25

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Licensing	Leaflet distribution on Sundays and Bank holidays and Wembley event day	£215.00 + £177.00 per person/ per day
Resident Services	Licensing	Street Trading Renewal Fee	£40.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Surcharge for late application	£35.00
Resident Services	Licensing	Surcharge for late application	£35.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**PUBLIC REALM (HIGHWAYS)**		
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Temporary Crossing – Commercial:	£647.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Crane Oversail	£647.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Crane (mobile platform):	£390.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Scaffold Licence Fee (0-10m)	£273.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Scaffold Licence Fee (10-15m)	£349.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Scaffold Licence Fee (15m+)	£689.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Hoarding Licence Fee(0-10m)	£273.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Hoarding Licence Fee (10-15m)	£349.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Hoarding Licence Fee (15m+)	£689.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Skip Licence Fee	£65.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Building Material licences (Residential)	£192.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Builders Material Licences (Commercial)	£384.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Skip Company - Annual Registration fee:	£327.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Container/Portacabin licences:	£390.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Admin fee for refunds processing	£70.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Temporary Crossing – Domestic	£192.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Crane /mobile platform (per week)	£583.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Building Material licences (Residential/week)	£52.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Builders Material Licences (Commercial/week)	£98.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Container/Portacabin licence (per week)	£174.00
Resident Services	Environmental Enforcement	Dog Fouling Fixed Penalty	£100.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**TRADING STANDARDS**		
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Registration of Premises for Auction	£395.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Primary Authority - bulk purchase (per hour)	£75.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Primary Authority - pay as you go (per hour)	£93.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Verification of Weights & Measures Equipment (per hour)	£77.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Calibration of Weights for Business 9per Hour	£77.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Testing of Working Standards and Testing Equipment for other Las (per hour)	£77.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Extra Staff Member assisting with above W&M fees (per hour)	£49.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Use of Safety Lab (per hour)	£85.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Licence to store explosives	Various Fees from £56 - £670
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Financial Investigator (per hour, plus contract fee)	£49.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc) (England) Order 2014, Full Charge Penalty Notice	Up to £5,000

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Penalty Charge Notice under Part 3, Chapter 3 Consumer Rights Act 2015 (Maximum Penalty)	Up to £5,000
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Full financial penalty issued under the Tenant's Fees Act 2019 (Maximum Penalty)	Up to £30,000
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Full financial penalty issued under the Client Money Protection Schemes for Property Agents (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) Regulations 2019	Up to £30,000
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Enforcement Officer hourly rate	£69.00
Resident Services	Trading Standards	Senior Enforcement Officer hourly rate	£93.00
RESIDENT SERVICES	**REGISTRATION AND NATIONALITY**		
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Bank Holidays any time	£1,000.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Ceremonies held between 7am-9am and 7pm -9pm at any venue	£1,000.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Private Ceremonies (M- F)	£150.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Citizenship Private Ceremony-weekend	£190.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Issue of Letter	£30.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Secure Deposit	£165.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Change of date	£60.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Notice priority fee per notice	£22.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Repository Certificates	£11.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Repository Certificates priority	£35.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Marriages/CPs - Register Office	£46.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Marriages/CPs -Religious buildings	£86.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	General Search	£18.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Correction local authority completed	£75.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Correction General Registration completed	£90.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Space 17	£40.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Foreign divorce - local authority completed	£50.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Foreign divorce -General Register office completed	£75.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Notices Standard	£35.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Notices DRO	£47.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Citizenship	£80.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Ceremonies Internal Monday - Friday Before 4pm	£345.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Ceremonies Internal Monday - Friday After 4pm	£624.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings Internal Saturday Before 4pm	£479.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings Internal Saturday After 4pm	£699.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings Internal Sunday Before 1pm	£587.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings Internal Sunday After 1pm	£771.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Monday - Friday Before 4pm	£534.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Monday - Friday After 4pm	£650.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Saturday Before 4pm	£606.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Saturday After 4pm	£734.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Sunday Before 1pm	£667.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises Weddings external Sunday After 1pm	£867.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* up to 50	£700.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* 51 to 100	£800.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* 101 to 200	£800.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* 201 to 300	£1,000.00

DIRECTORATE	SERVICE CATEGORY	SERVICE PROVIDED	PROPOSED CHARGE £ (Excl. VAT)
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* 301 to 400	£1,100.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* 401 to 500	£1,200.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	License of approved premises for civil marriage or partnership* Over 500	£1,600.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Late Ceremony Fee	£165.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Monday - Friday Before 4pm	£400.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Monday - Friday After 4pm	£679.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Saturday Before 4pm	£534.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Saturday After 4pm	£754.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Sunday Before 1pm	£642.00
Resident Services	Registration and Nationality	Approved Premises external Garden Sunday After 1pm	£815.00
Resident Services	**COMMUNITY PROTECTION**		
Resident Services	Community Protection	Processing of CCTV footage for insurance companies.	£120.00
Resident Services	Community Protection	Public Spaces Protection Order Enforcement Nuisance Vehicles .	£100.00
Resident Services	Community Protection	Enforcement of ASB Tools and Powers . Fixed penalty notices of breach of CPN.	£100.00
Resident Services	Community Protection	Community Safety Officers hourly rate	£51.00
Resident Services	Community Protection	Enforcement of statutory nuisance to residents	£100.00
Resident Services	Community Protection	Enforcement of statutory nuisance to Businesses	£400.00
Resident Service	**FUNERAL SERVICE**		
Resident Services	Funeral Service	Direct Cremation (Unattended Cremation)	£1,065.00
Resident Services	Funeral Service	Baseline Private Funeral Costs	£1,750.00
Resident Services	Funeral Service	Deceased Transfer fee	£275.00
Resident Services	Funeral Service	Baseline Private Funeral Costs	£1,750.00
Resident Service	**PARISH LIAISON SERVICE**		
Resident Services	Parish Liaison Service	Public Health Funeral Administration Fee	£845.00
Resident Services	Parish Liaison Service	Public Health Funeral Storage Fee	£163.00
Resident Services	Parish Liaison Service	Public Health Funeral Officer Search Fee	£324.00
Resident Service	**MORTUARY SERVICE**		
Resident Services	Mortuary Service	Long Stay Charges (daily after 30 days)	£22.00

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Budget Consultation Analysis 2024/25

Summary of key findings

The Budget Consultation 2024/25 was launched on Brent's online Have Your Say platform on 16 **November 2023** with a closing date of the **31 January 2024**. The online consultation provided supporting documents including, draft budget, savings proposals for 2024/25 to 2025/26 and a budget setting video to ensure residents were fully informed of the budget proposals.

The online consultation asked Brent residents to read the Draft Budget Plan for 2024/25, and asked the following questions:

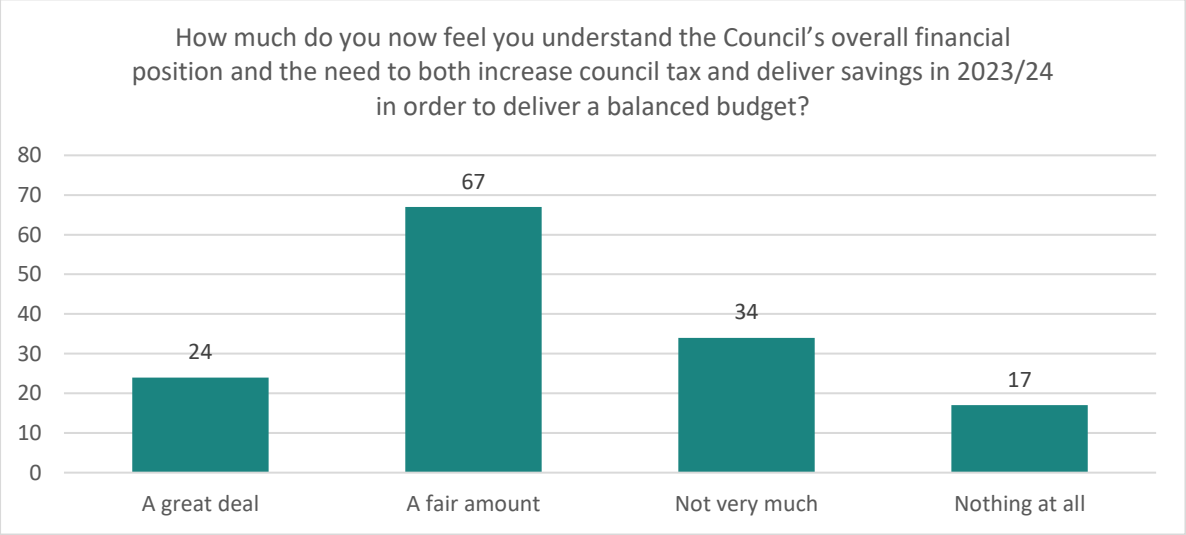
- **Do you have any comments about our draft budget plan?**
- **Having read the draft budget proposals, how much do you now feel you understand the Council's overall financial position and the need to both increase council tax and deliver savings in 2023/24 in order to deliver a balanced budget?**
- **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the budget proposals?**
- **Please provide any other comments you may have on the proposals for the 2023/24 Budget.**
- **If you have any other ideas for ways we could save money, please let us know.**
- **What Council services matter to you the most?**

Consultation responses

As of 25 January 2024, there were 142 responses to the budget consultation survey.

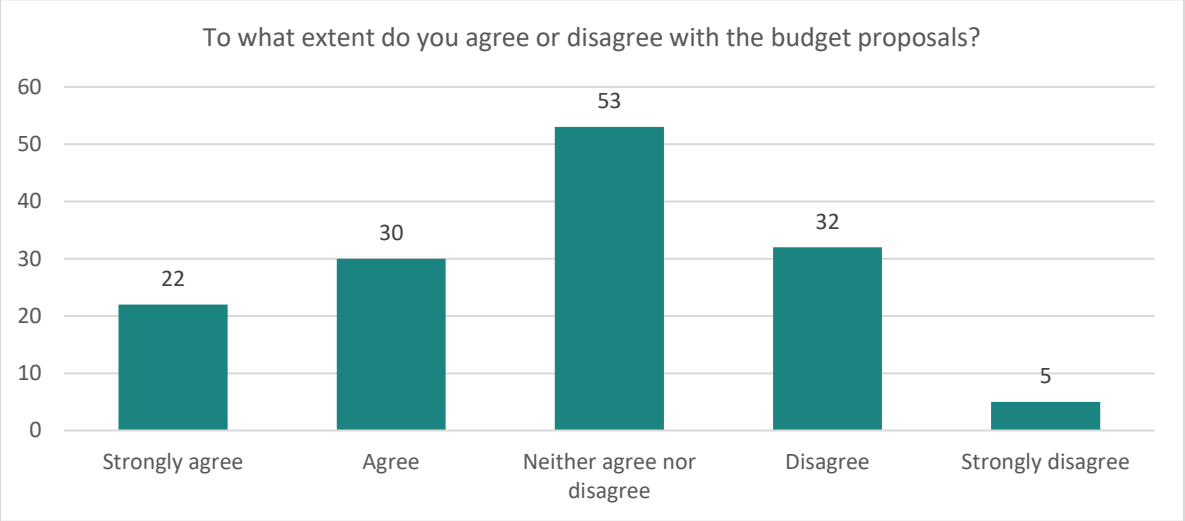
Questions:

How much do you now feel you understand the Council's overall financial position and the need to both increase council tax and deliver savings in 2023/24 in order to deliver a balanced budget?



Nearly twice as many residents felt they understood the council's budget proposals (91, 64%) compared to those that didn't (51, 36%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the budget proposals?



Residents were most likely to neither agree nor disagree with the budget proposals, with 53 (37%) selecting this option. Of those residents who did give a clear preference, they were more likely to pick 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' (52 residents, 37%) compared to those who selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' (37, 26%).

Cross Reference

		Level of agreement				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Level of understanding	A great deal	4	6	3	5	6
	A fair amount	1	24	26	10	6
	Not very much			17	14	3
	Nothing at all			7	3	7

The chart above compares the number of respondents that agreed with the budget with how well those respondents said they understood it. Most residents felt that they understood the budget a fair amount, and either agreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the content.

Comments

Do you have any comments about our draft budget strategy?

This question received 58 comments. Of these comments, some raised concerns about how the increase of council tax would affect people who were low paid, with two particularly highlighting those who were low paid but not eligible for benefits. One respondent praised the council for its work trying to engage with residents, but another found the documents too difficult to read and understand. Two comments were critical about recent developments of new flats. Other points highlighted in individual comments included homelessness, the NHS, mental health, transport, the climate emergency, and adult social care.

Please provide any other comments you may have on the proposals for the 2023/24 Budget.

This question received 75 comments. Overall, the most common theme identified was the concern regarding an increase in Council Tax. Concerns were raised again regarding the cost of living crisis and how the low paid will be able to afford the increase. Other commenters were critical of the council tax banding system, and felt that they didn't see the benefit of any spending increases.

It is acknowledged that increasing Council Tax will be difficult for some households to manage in the current circumstances and section six of the budget report set out the rationale the Council considers as part of its decision making. In summary, the increase will provide much needed funding to limit the impact of pressures expected in 2024/25, in particular for the Adult Social Care department, as well as preventing the wholesale cuts key services that many other Councils are having to consider. In addition, the Council continues to invest in the Council Tax Support scheme, which provides over £32m of support for around 26,000 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 the cost of living crisis.

Feedback and comments captured by the survey were varied and it is clear to see that Brent residents are concerned with what a reduction in spending means for them and their community.

Responses from both questions asking for comments were combined into a word cloud showing the most common words used.



If you have any other ideas for ways we could save money, please let us know.

This question received 68 comments. Money saving ideas that came up more than once were around staff management (redundancies, freezing salaries over £50k, using the apprenticeship levy to upskill existing staff, reducing the use of consultants), increasing fines and enforcement actions (increasing fines for ASB and parking infringements, charging double council tax for unoccupied second homes), and recycling (reducing spend on recent initiatives). A word cloud of the most common responses was generated:



What Council services matter to you the most?

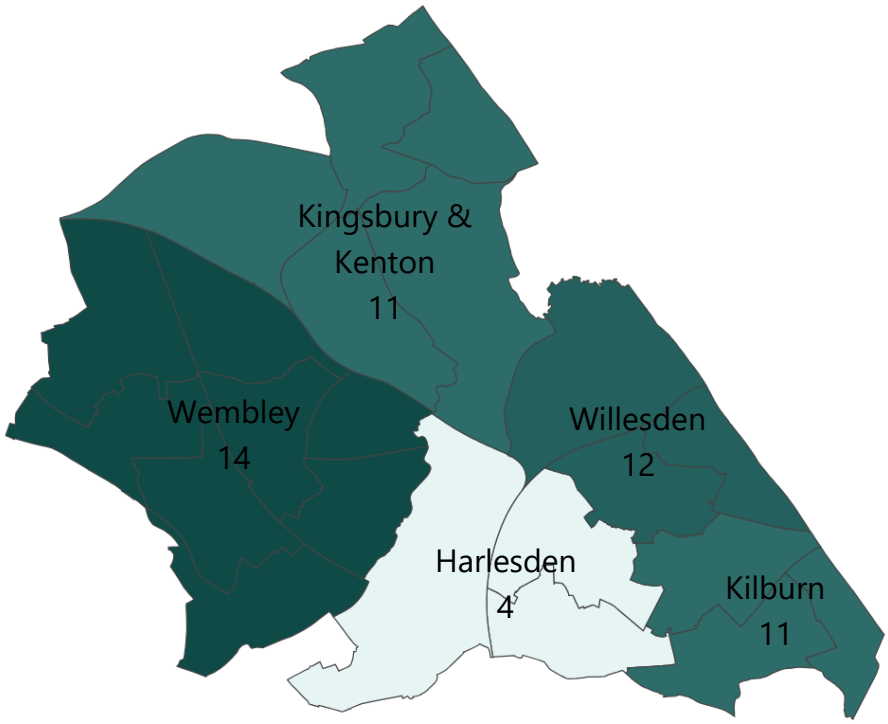
This question received 114 comments. A word cloud of the most common responses was generated:



Equality Monitoring Questions

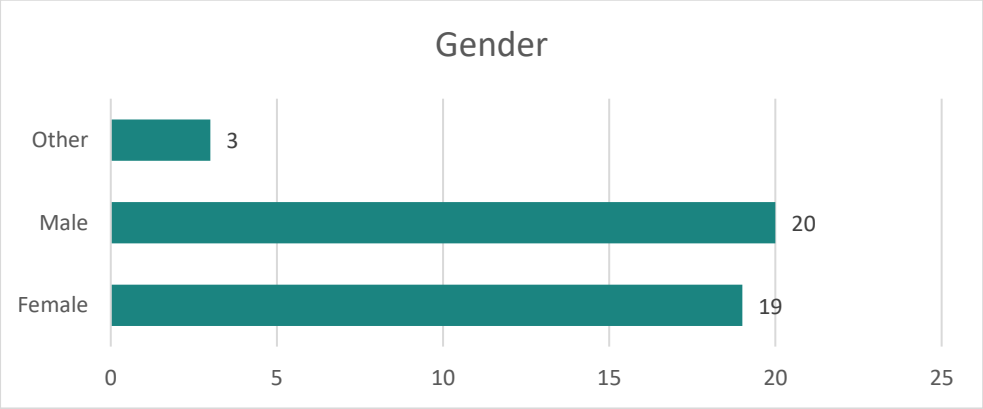
Only 17 of the 142 respondents chose to provide responses to the equality monitoring questions. However, 56 of the 142 residents had equality monitoring questions associated with their CitizenLab (the resident consultation platform) account; this is the data that has been analysed. Because of this low response rate, none of the data is presented as percentages.

Area



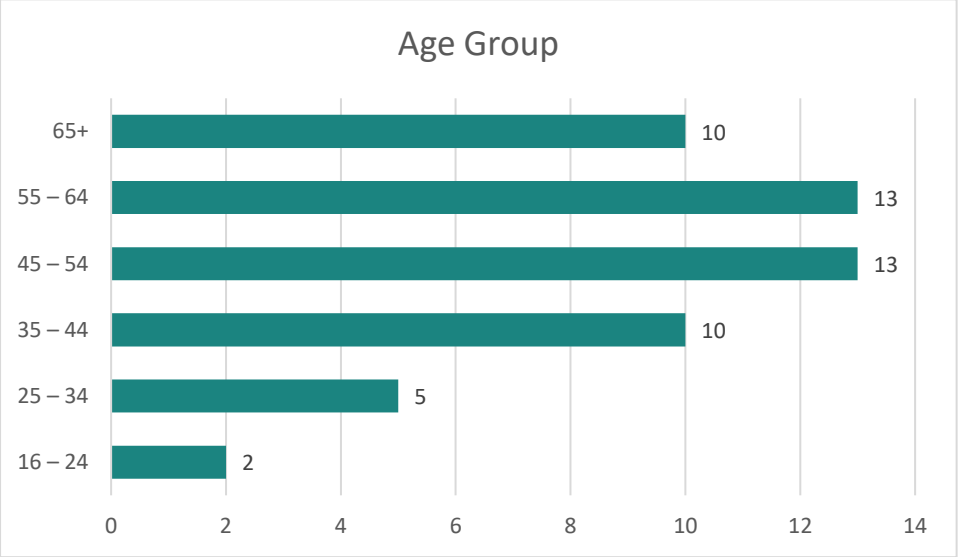
The greatest response was in the Wembley Brent Connects area with 14 responses, slightly over a quarter of the total. The area with the lowest number of responses was Harlesden, with just four surveys completed.

Gender



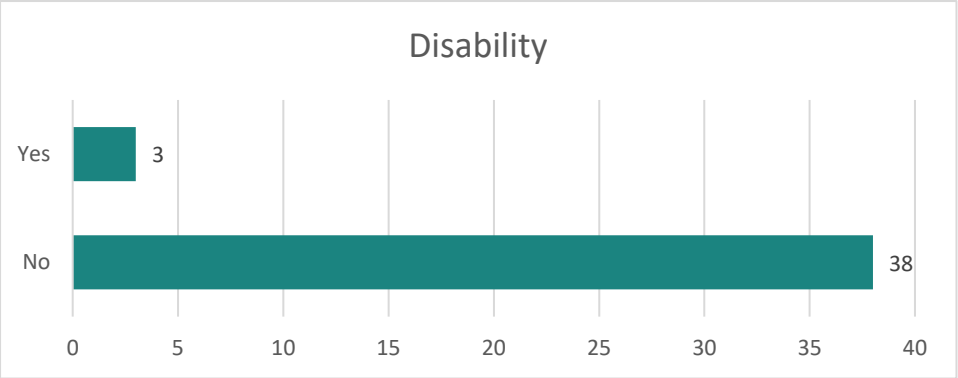
19 respondents identified as female and 20 as male. Three selected other, and 89 declined to complete the question.

Age Group



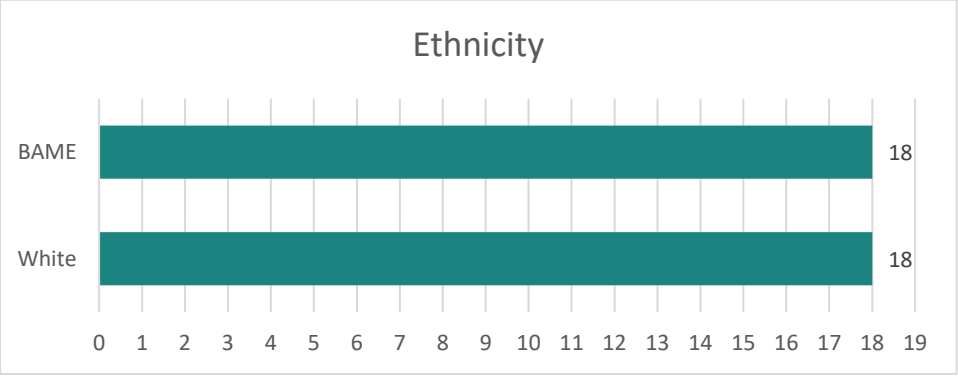
The age of respondents skews slightly older, with the greatest number of respondents (13) being aged between 55 – 64 and 45 – 54. One respondent chose 'Prefer not to say' and 77 declined to complete the question.

Disability



45 respondents completed this question, only three of whom chose to identify as having a disability. Four respondents chose 'Prefer not to say' and 86 declined to answer the question. When asked for additional details, the disabilities was specified as a mental health condition (including anxiety, bipolar disorder and depression), long term illness (including cancer, diabetes, HIV and multiple sclerosis) or Other.

Ethnicity



38 respondents completed this question, the answers of which have been broken down as white/BAME rather than the five major ethnicity categories (Black, Asian, White, Mixed, Other) due to the low rate of responses. Two respondents chose 'Prefer not to say' while 93 declined to complete the question.

Budget Plan – Promotion

Engagement activity	Audience	Dates
Promoted across Brent's Have Your Say platform, Citizens Lab	5,290 registered users	16 November 2023
Promoted in Brent Business newsletter	Over 9,000 subscribers	January 2023
Brent Connects – Winter round	So far residents count is **70**	9 January 2024 11 January 16 January 23 January 29 January

Additional representations

The council have received further representations from community organisations, providing their feedback on budget proposals as part of the consultation. Representation from Mencap, Crisis, Sufra and Brent Friends of the Earth have all responded to the consultation, please refer to ***Appendix N*** (ii) for direct feedback.

- The council's response to Brent Friends of the Earth:

We have significant concerns about the following proposals to make savings.

"To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of £100,000".

The concerns are that more users are put off using the service (which is free in some London boroughs) and are discouraged from gardening, which is an important way that people can individually care for the environment and improve biodiversity. Also that (as identified) this leads to an increase in fly tipping at a time that street cleaning has already been reduced.

It is not envisaged a small increase in the subscription charge will motivate subscribers to leave the service and use less responsible methods of waste disposal. The increase remains modest and reflects the cost of providing this service to those who may have a need for it, and of the significant inflationary pressures that apply with respect to labour, equipment and fuel. The charge represents good value and compares favourably with charges made by other neighbouring authorities, ensures a valuable recycling service can be sustained, and upholds

the environmental principle that the ‘producer must pay’. Home composting remains an additional offer, and people may be motivated to seek that as alternative, which would be welcomed.

"A programme of organised cultural and entertainment events to be organised in parks to generate a new income for the service. This can be supported by a review of existing fees and charges".

As stated, a key risk is that more events will "impact the natural fabric of the park". More commercial events in parks will also reduce access to green space in a borough that is already lacking in green space, with attending health impacts for all. Already in Brent 80% of people live in neighbourhoods deprived of green space. https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/near-you/local-authority/brent#nature

We understand that there is an existing problem of community groups/voluntary organisations being charged rates for running events in parks that they find difficult to meet. This is likely to be exacerbated by competition with commercial providers.

Any enhanced events programme will be properly managed to ensure the natural fabric of our parks and open spaces is fully protected. Large events will be focused on those locations that are able to offer dedicated ‘events fields’ that can be managed for that purpose and which can be reinstated quickly. Sensitive areas will not be used. Our parks and open spaces are important for nature but they are also important locations for sport, recreation and culture activity, and a vital balance must be struck. A fair and equitable schedule of tariffs will encourage all sectors to come forward with proposals for community events. That income can better support the overall management and maintenance of all our parks and open spaces, and ensure these locations sit at the heart of thriving local communities.

"Rental of Parks’ building space".

Parks are public spaces and the more the commercial use of buildings is encouraged, the less accessible they are to potential community initiatives which encourage people of all generations to be more connected to and benefit from the nature that is available in their neighbourhoods.

It is envisaged that any new use of buildings within parks will be fully and properly compatible with the setting. It is hoped that any proposals that come forward will be centred on how the building can be a focus for the park and the community, creating enhancements and other benefits.

"Licensing / sponsorship schemes in Parks"

The marketing of commercial advertising within parks will, again, reduce people's access to and enjoyment of these important nature filled public spaces. We do not go to parks to be bombarded with more advertising, rather to escape and appreciate nature. As well as "visually intrusive" we would describe this as "psychologically intrusive".

It is agreed that any advertising in parks must be minimised, be kept unobtrusive, be in keeping with the natural surroundings, and be prioritised for those more functional or communal locations with the heaviest footfall. This proposal is about creating an improved revenue stream that will further support the management and maintenance of our important parks without detracting from them.

- The Council's response to Brent Mencap

Brent Mencap's priorities

A strategic plan to develop respect for and co-production with voluntary sector partners

Brent Council are currently reviewing recommendations for a new 'Community Engagement Framework' and welcome plans to improve co-production with our voluntary sector partners. The council's community engagement team aim to be accessible and responsive and will continue to look at ways to improve our offer to the community. This includes taking any learning from grant monitoring reports and feeding this into improvement measures.

Brent Mencap Organisational Challenges

The general lack of respect, understanding and recognition shown by Brent Council and the ICP to the income generated, services provided, and contribution made by the Voluntary sector in Brent to the wellbeing and health of Brent people of all ages

Brent Council respects and appreciates the voluntary sector including the broad range of services provided to our communities. We will continue to work to increase trust, respect and confidence with all of our voluntary sector partners.

Children & Younge People EIA's

CYP5 - EIAs were completed for both 24/25 CYP05 and 25/26 CYP05

CYP6 - EIA was completed for 24/25 CYP06.

No EIA was completed for 25/26 CYP06 as the assumption is that the statutory functions the LA carries out will not be affected and children and young people would continue to receive the services that are currently offered, funded through a different source. A risk was noted to services if there was no agreement between the Council and health partners to fund these services. Further equality impact work will be carried out in 24/25 if that risk increases.

CYP04 - EIA was completed for 24/25 CYP04

No EIA was completed for 25/26 CYP04. There is no expected impact on children and young people who are current users of the centre. The proposal is to expand capacity, funded through additional income. The emergency respite bed will remain open and available to a Brent child when required.

Willow Nursery – this refers to proposal 25/26 CYP01 and an EIA was completed for this.

CHW01 Technology enabled Care Transformation

The development and use of an improved Tech Enabled Care offer for people using care services is a key aim for Adult Social Care in Brent Council. It is recognised that engagement

work with service users, carers and provider organisations is required if the implementation of a new approach to TEC is to be successfully implemented in the coming years. This will also need a significant culture change for those who work in social care, and benefits will not be delivered without a shared approach to TEC being fully embedded within social care practice.

This work is starting now, and will develop at pace in the coming months in order to clarify Brent's approach to TEC and implement a new approach in the coming years. There are successful examples of similar projects being undertaken in other areas of the country, and Brent will learn from best practice elsewhere to inform the way we address this.

CHW02 Managing demand at the front door, prevention, and early intervention.

We acknowledge the importance of building on the voluntary sector and understand the need for clear evidence supporting the proposed savings.

The points about the necessity of clear investment in prevention activities and addressing the concerns raised by Mencap regarding the impact on Brent residents are well-taken. We recognise the need for more detailed information on the numbers likely to be affected and enhancing advice and information services in the region.

Going forward we would like to commit to working collaboratively with Mencap, we recognise that their expertise is invaluable, and we believe that a joint effort will lead to more effective and inclusive Adult Social Care initiatives.

As a result, we will arrange further dialogue with Mencap to enhance the effectiveness of the implementations of our proposals.

CWH03 Continuing sustainable, long-term care and support.

As stated above we acknowledge the importance of building on the voluntary sector and understand the need for clear evidence to support this work. We commit to developing our dialogue with the voluntary sector going forward.

The concerns raised by Crisis and Mencap, emphasise the need for careful consideration and collaboration in the decision-making process. Of which we will ensure develops in the next phase of this project.

Direct Payments (DPs) are not mandatory. However, it's crucial to balance this flexibility with an awareness of the wider financial pressures faced by the service. DP offer the greatest choice and opportunities for individuals to personalise their support, however individuals will be able to choose how their provision is delivered. Any adjustments will be agreed with people using services and will consider their well-being and that of their carer. If a person choose to have a DP, support to help them manage their DP will be considered in the review.

The learning disability partnership (LDP) is set to be reviewed and relaunched in the new financial year. As part of this process, it's important to identify a clear focus for the LDP going forward, ensuring that the needs and concerns of individuals with learning disabilities along with the Accessible information Standards AIS) are adequately addressed.

In conclusion, the aim will be to work with people using services and their carer ensuring they are fully engaging with proposal and that the impact on them is minimal.

CHW01 Reduction in Building Based services

The consultation on the future of New Millennium has concluded and it has been agreed that the New Millennium Day Centre will remain open. However its use will change as it will become the new location for the community wellbeing project that is currently being delivered from Bridge Park. Further work will be done in the coming months with users at New Millennium to determine how adult social care services will continue to be delivered from the site, using valued resources such as the art room and kiln, but being co-located with the community wellbeing project. A further consultation and engagement exercise will be planned to do this work, and service users will be properly informed of this plan in the coming weeks

CHW02 Housing related support

Due to the council's financial position it is prudent to review contracts across our portfolio of services. Housing related support services play a vital role in homelessness prevention, supporting those fleeing domestic violence and providing floating support for those with low level mental health needs. The review, which is still to be started, will take into account the demand for these services, but will explore ways to deliver services in a different way and to achieve efficiencies from the services if possible. Stakeholders including organisations working in the voluntary sector will be fully engaged in this process when it starts later in 2024.

RSO8 "Less people and more emphasis on digital self-service" idea fails to recognise the needs of people who have a learning disability, other visual or hearing impairments, few digital skills or confidence, people whose first language is not English or those with poor literacy skills.

The Council's approach is to continue to improve digital services for those who find it easier and more convenient to transact online while also ensuring that support is available by phone or face to face for those who need it. Face to face support is available via our network of community hubs. Through our digital inclusion programme we are providing support for people who want to improve their digital skills and confidence. This includes providing access to devices and data through our Resident Support Fund and our network of digital champions. We are always happy to consider other ways we can make our services accessible to everyone via our Digital Inclusion Network.

The cutting of the volunteer platform

Brent council aim to meet the needs of residents, including through commissioning, in the best way possible and with the supporting evidence held at the time. It is unfortunate that the council volunteer platform was unsuccessful, however, we will continue to explore opportunities to better support the voluntary sector and community led platforms.

FR01 Increase in car parking charges

The recommended method of travel to the Civic Centre is by use of public transport. Where this is not possible, Blue Badge holders can park for free for up to three hours, this provision is not proposed to change.

FR02 and GO6 Market rent proposal/solicitor cut

There might be a misunderstanding of the GO6 proposal, there isn't a solicitor cut. This comment may be referring to our change in approach to trainees, where we convert a couple of legal assistant posts (which don't require a qualification) into apprentice solicitor posts.

The Council take's social value into account when setting rent levels. As part of the Council's new property asset strategy, which is currently being developed, there will be more focus on evidence-based decision making, such as ensuring that social value is demonstrated, quantified, tracked, monitored and delivered where rent discounts are requested.

GO1 Reduction to training for councillors and senior staff. It's shameful that more imagination wasn't shown to identify other training and development needed by them that could have been delivered by local vol sector groups e.g., Domestic Violence, Accessible information Standards Regulations, Carers Rights, Learning disability awareness etc.

The member training programme is determined in consultation with councillors and based on an assessment of their individual and collective training needs.

Training is often provided internally by council officers but is also commissioned externally, including from charities and community groups, as appropriate depending on the topic.

Although not specific training, domestic violence's effects on vulnerable individuals, people with disabilities, and carers would have been included in some of the standards, equity, and adult social care mandatory sessions. This was most recently done last summer. There have also been sessions on specific disabilities, such as; autism, neurology, sight, deafness.

- The Council's response to Crisis

Additional Advice & Support for our Voluntary sector partners

Strategy and Partnerships hold four contracts (Healthwatch Brent, Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Support, Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service and Independent Advice and Guidance). Two of three contracts were uplifted during the 2022/23 procurement exercise to reflect current need and inflationary pressures. The Healthwatch Brent contract was not part of the procurement exercise in 2022/23 and has a current end date of 31 March 2025. Improvements are being made to the contract monitoring process to share impact and outcomes more widely.

The Council already works closely with VCS organisations through the Thematic Leads Network, which provides a structure that seeks to improve collaboration. The Council works very closely with CVS Brent on Income Generation for the Sector. The Council continues to work in partnership with CVS Brent to support voluntary organisations to access new funding opportunities.

Improving Equality Impact assessment

The request for a cumulative equality assessment since 2018 will require significant officer resource. Having re-assessed the resource and capacity of the Equalities Team currently and wider service, delivering this recommendation will not be possible now or in the near future.

Delivering this recommendation would require the team to de-prioritise key and statutory activity, such as the development of new EDI Strategy. Additionally, given the budgetary restraints and challenges, it is not possible to secure additional resource to complete this work.

The committee has received a summary report setting out the cumulative financial impact of cuts since 2018 and this can be made available again.

Managing demand at the front door, prevention, and early intervention

We acknowledge the importance of building on the voluntary sector and understand the need for clear evidence supporting the proposed savings. We regret the oversight in not engaging with the voluntary sector in advance and assure you that moving forward, we will prioritise such consultations to ensure a collaborative approach.

The points about the necessity of clear investment in prevention activities and addressing the concerns raised by Mencap regarding the impact on Brent residents are well-taken. We recognise the need for more detailed information on the numbers likely to be affected and enhancing advice and information services in the region.

Going forward we would like to commit to working collaboratively with Crisis and Mencap, we recognise that their expertise is invaluable, and we believe that a joint effort will lead to more effective and inclusive Adult Social Care initiatives.

As a result, we will arrange further dialogue with Crisis and Mencap to enhance the effectiveness of the implementations of our proposals.

Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence

We recognise the need for careful consideration and collaboration in the decision-making process. Of which we will ensure develops in the next phase of this project.

Direct Payments (DPs) are not mandatory. However, it's crucial to balance this flexibility with an awareness of the wider financial pressures faced by the service. DP offer the greatest choice and opportunities for individuals to personalise their support, however individuals will be able to choose how their provision is delivered. Any adjustments will be agreed with people using services and will consider their well-being and that of their carer. If a person choose to have a DP, support to help them manage their DP will be considered in the review.

The learning disability partnership (LDP) is set to be reviewed and relaunched in the new financial year. As part of this process, it's important to identify a clear focus for the LDP going forward, ensuring that the needs and concerns of individuals with learning disabilities along with the Accessible information Standards AIS) are adequately addressed.

The aim will be to work with people using services and their carer ensuring they are fully engaging with proposal and that the impact on them is minimal.

Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties

Due to the council's financial position, it is prudent to review contracts across our portfolio of services. Housing related support services play a vital role in homelessness prevention, supporting those fleeing domestic violence and providing floating support for those with low level mental health needs. The review, which is still to be started, will take into account the demand for these services, but will explore ways to deliver services in a different way and to achieve efficiencies from the services if possible. Stakeholders including organisations working in the voluntary sector will be fully engaged in this process when it starts later in 2024.

Property Strategy to maximise rental return on council assets

The Council does take social value into account when setting rent levels. As part of the Council's new property asset strategy, which is currently being developed, there will be more focus on evidence based decision making, such as ensuring that social value is demonstrated, quantified, tracked, monitored and delivered where rent discounts are requested. While the Council will provide support, there will be considerable onus on the third and voluntary sector organisations to monitor and demonstrate the social value impact they are having in communities.

This will form part of the evidence base mentioned above. The Council will work closely with local community organisations to establish any adverse equality impact and measures to mitigate.

The asset, once refurbished and remodelled, will accommodate a number of local third and voluntary sector organisations who will serve different parts of the community under a single consortium (Assets for Brent Consortium) to operate a building for the local community.

- The Council's response to Suffra

Advice and Support

The Council does not directly provide debt advice to residents. Nevertheless, the Council recognises the substantial need for such advice across the borough and works with the voluntary sector so that expert debt advisors can provide face to face debt advice to residents from the majority of the Council's hubs and through Citizens Advice Bureau. In addition to support provided by the Council to the voluntary sector the Council is also using social value input from its contractors to further enhance this provision of support to the voluntary sector. In addition, the Council's own staff dealing with those residents who owe the Council may the referred to StepChange online. In terms of monies owed the Council, the Council has in place an Ethical Debt Recovery Policy in which all debt recovery staff are trained, to make sure the individual need of each resident is properly considered. The Council is aware that feedback can never always be positive and so works with its own team and the voluntary sector to monitor the quality of the service provided and is always seeking to understand how any service may be improved. The Council currently delivers face to face services through Brent Hubs across 7 sites around the borough working with over 50 community and voluntary Organisations. Brent Hubs provides the opportunity for organisations to have free access to spaces from which they can deliver their advice services including the NW London Law centre which the Council has provided funds to deliver specialist Immigration advice in the Hubs for residents.

Meals on Wheels

Brent provides a Meals on Wheels service as an emergency provision where required. There is no proposal to remove or reduce this service.

Free School Meals

The Mayor of London has extended free school meals for all pupils in Key Stage 2 for the 2024/25 academic year. There are currently no plans to extend FSMs to children in secondary

schools. The Council does not have funding to provide FSMs to all pupils beyond the Mayor of London's commitment.

Housing & Asylum Seekers

Homelessness is a significant issue not just for Brent, but also across London and nationally, with housing demand increasing rapidly and less supply being available, which quickly widens the gap and creates significant budgetary pressures for Councils.

The Housing Needs Service in Brent has seen a 38% increase in a number of homelessness presentations, whilst the supply of affordable accommodation in the Private Rented Sector has contracted significantly.

The Council receives a Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant from the Government. 100% of this grant is spent on tackling rough sleeping, commissioning services such as the Rough Sleeping Outreach Team, Rapid Assessment Hub and Housing First model. The Council also provides a Winter Shelter, though the cold weather months from January to April. There is also a dedicated service, commissioned through the Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS) to support people who have received a decision on their asylum application under the Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP), to help them to secure accommodation before they are evicted from hotels provided by the Home Office.

However, no additional funding has been provided in the settlement from central government to tackle issues such as homelessness which are causing significant budgetary pressures.

Household Support Fund

Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions on behalf of the UK government, the Household Support Fund aimed to help most vulnerable resident to significant rise in the cost of living.

At Brent, between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2023, this fund provided 13,806 households with a total of £2.5m in support with a further £3.9m expected to be spent by the end of 2023/24.

There is no further support being provided by the government in 2024/25.

Brent has called for urgent clarity as to whether the HSF will be extended beyond 2024. Brent is of the view that the fund must be continued beyond March 2024 for a minimum of a year to help the most vulnerable residents.

- The Council's response to Barry Gardiner, MP for Brent North

Proposal put forward to Brent Council to close the New Millennium Day Centre

The consultation on the future of New Millennium has concluded and it has been agreed that the New Millennium Day Centre will remain open. However its use will change as it will become the new location for the community wellbeing project that is currently being delivered from Bridge Park. Further work will be done in the coming months with users at New Millennium to determine how adult social care services will continue to be delivered from the site, using valued resources such as the art room and kiln, but being co-located with the community wellbeing project. A further consultation and engagement exercise will be planned to do this work, and service users will be properly informed of this plan in the coming weeks.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Kim Wright
Chief Executive
Brent Council
Brent Civic Centre
Engineers Way
Wembley
HA9 0FJ

Our Ref: WL / ZA40965

18 January 2022

Dear Kim,

I have been contacted by several constituents concerned by the proposal put forward to Brent Council to close the New Millennium Day Centre.

I appreciate that the cuts to local councils of over £180 million in the last thirteen years have severely restricted the provision of even essential services. However, I am conscious of the critical importance of the New Millennium Day Centre for many vulnerable constituents.

One constituent informs me that it is a lifeline for his brother, who, now aged 62, has attended since he was 16 years old. During the Pandemic, when he was unable to attend as frequently, his brother would walk aimlessly around the house unable to focus, having not had contact with the medical and mental health professionals at the centre.

It is worth noting that constituents no longer have access to the Stonebridge Day Centre or Strathcona Day Centre because of recent closures.

Alternative sites
In consultation with constituents, Brent Council stated that, "*users of the New Millennium Centre whose needs can only be met at a day centre could also be offered alternative support at the John Billam Resource Centre or another day centre in Brent.*"

There is a considerable distance between the two centres.

Please advise what provision the Council will make to ensure that constituents *whose needs can only be met at a day centre* can in fact attend John Billam.

Cost-benefit
In the attached Budget Options document, it is proposed that the Council will instead offer –

"A *more dynamic day support service... that will operate a hub and spoke model and promote sessional use of day opportunities and move away from building-based day services.*"

And to enable interdependence -

"B*uilding based and/or more community-based offers…and Direct Payments.*"

I am afraid that I am not clear what the alternative represents.

Will the 'hub and spoke model' offer smaller satellite facilities around the borough for communal day care sessions?

T: +44 (0)20 7219 4046 | F: +44 (0)20 7219 2495 | barry.gardiner.mp@parliament.uk |
www.barrygardiner.com

Does ‘community-based services’ include communal day care sessions?
Do day care services simply mean single carer household visitations?

I am concerned that simply offering increased single carer household visitations, which Direct Payments typically enable, as an alternative will not replicate the social benefits of communal care sessions.

I am also concerned that carer household visitations do not foster conditions conducive to developing independent living skills, in direct contrast to a day centre. While household carer visitations can of course be hugely beneficial, I expect that they are less effective at developing independent living skills, simply because they do not encourage people to leave their home or engage with other disabled people in a new environment.

Please could you confirm in more detail what is included in the ‘more dynamic provision’ – is it simply the provision of Direct Payments on a larger scale?

I am told that the proposal would save Brent Council £500,000 – please advise whether this cost analysis takes into account the increase in Direct Payments which would ensue following the closure of the centre.

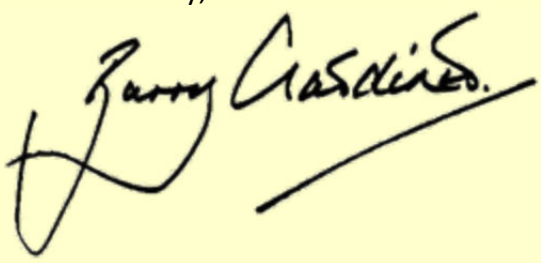
Finally, one incontrovertible benefit of a day centre over community-based services is reliability. The day centre and its opening times are widely known to constituents, ensuring that people will always be clear on when and where they can access the service. It also allows people with physical disabilities to hone their route and transport.

Whereas the new proposal of a day care service with a schedule and location that changes with demand does not afford the same consistency. This is a particularly important point for people with learning difficulties, who are more likely to struggle with computer literacy and an inconsistent schedule.

How will Brent Council guarantee that hard-to-reach users will be continuously aware of the schedule of day care service?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Barry Gardiner
Member of Parliament for Brent North

Brent Mencap Feedback on Brent Council Proposed Budget 2024-5

Priorities and feedback from our Social Prescribing and Health and Well Being Coaching team (who last year supported over 15000 patients in Brent)

The proposed 4.9% increase in council tax will seriously affect some residents. We have a lot more people coming to us who are working but due to cost-of-living crisis are already on the breadline - falling into debt, having to access food banks etc, therefore this planned increase will push them further into debt and poverty so for our patients this drastic increase will have a negative effect on their life and will also go onto impacting their mental health, pushing more children into poverty etc.

The plan to close Millennium day centre, although this may not impact directly on a lot of SPLW patients it will have a significant impact on patients with a LD and others and their carers- often elderly and vulnerable themselves who really value the regular respite.

The team identified other gaps in services:
- Day centres- not enough low-cost ones for elderly/vulnerable residents.
- Meals on wheels- no free or subsidised service
- Floating support for elderly patients- find it difficult to access other services, especially now the Elders Voice service is ending
- Transport for elderly patients
- No Brent Community Law Centre
- No counselling service for DV victims

Please see some relevant case studies

- Elderly pt was struggling at home to cook food, SPLW looked into meals on wheels but could not find any free or heavily subsidised service and due to being on low income and cost of living was not able to afford to pay the cost. SPLW referred to Sufra for hot meals service and community kitchen but is trying to find an alternative for the winter months as patient does not feel steady walking due to slipping on wet leaves.
- Pt attended as they have fallen into debt due to cost of living crisis (bills and shopping increase), pt was very upset as they were working but really struggling and having to skip meals to ensure their children were eating. SPLW referred to IAPT for their mental well-being, food banks for support with food, green doctors to support with energy bills while also applying for RSF to help with incurred debts. Although they had temporary food parcels and some debt cleared their mental well-being is still impacted as they feel their financial situation will not improve due to every increasing costs.
- Team member reported that they have been trying to get through to the assigned housing officer both via email and phone for one of their patients for a couple of months now, but they have received no response. Team member tried contacting customer services to confirm if this officer is still assigned to the patient's case and if there is anyone else they can discuss the case with, but unfortunately they never received a response. Team member stated they feel it's very difficult to make any progress with these cases as the communication with the council is not very good since they often have to chase up housing officers and other relevant professionals within the council which slows down their work.
- Team member reported they find it difficult to support their patients who need help with form filling since there are not many services within Brent that help with completing forms such as PIP and Attendance Allowance free of charge. Those services that provide such support require their vulnerable patients to queue for hours, in some cases without even being seen that day.

Team member reported one such occasion with a vulnerable elderly patient who waited for over 4 hours only to be told they should come the next day.

1. Not enough form filling services available in Brent. CAB is difficult to get through to and feedback on Brent hubs is not always positive - patient tell us they don't always get help they need.
2. We are getting more and more people referred to us who are struggling with their mental health, and they can't always access the services and support needed in Brent- Long waiting times, specific eligibility criteria etc.
3. More access to free services should be available
4. Need more services to support those affected by cost-of-living crisis.
5. Better communication from LBB staff related to housing etc– Team is getting delayed or no response from Brent council departments, such as housing team, social services, and SG team. Even if they action something, we are not informed /they do not reply to emails, so we don't know what's been done and can't update the patient.

Brent Mencap's priorities

- A dedicated form filling service with a clear service spec, clear criteria, regular opening hours with sufficient skilled staff
- A strategic plan to develop respect for and co-production with voluntary sector partners.
- Better more timely and accessible engagement with the voluntary sector and our users which includes officers getting and using evidence from the grant monitoring reports we provide.
- Better funding and spec for floating support services for vulnerable residents- a flexible, person-centred services that doesn't just offer 45 minutes support a week regardless of need.
- A proper strategic plan with resources that commits the Council to fully meet the Accessible Information Standard Regulations (which has been a legal obligation for 6 years) and in the interim, a guarantee that an accessible/ easy-read version of all key documents and leaflets is sent out with other documents to users of health and social care services as minimum .
- Longer term grant funding for the voluntary sector
- A reduction in the use of complicated tender processes for services that the Voluntary sector could deliver.

Brent Mencap Organisational Challenges

- The general lack of respect, understanding and recognition shown by Brent Council and the ICP to the income generated, services provided, and contribution made by the Voluntary sector in Brent to the wellbeing and health of Brent people of all ages.
- Not being treated as equal, knowledgeable partners by the above and not having the voices, wishes and experiences of the people we support heard and acknowledged.
- Gaining long term charitable funding for specialist creative, wellbeing and self-advocacy activities and support for people with a learning disability and other long term health conditions
- Recruiting new local staff through an apprenticeship scheme
- Reducing our energy costs in our building and other green initiatives
- Understanding how AI could improve Brent Mencap and the support and advice we provide.

Brent Mencap's experience of poverty/cost of living on service users/residents in Brent.

Feedback from Social Prescribing and Health and Well Being Coaching team.

1. Increased number of referrals about mental health issues due to worries about cost-of-living.
2. Increase in food bank /food voucher referrals.
3. Increase in referrals applying for resident support fund.
4. Increase in discretionary housing benefits applications.
5. 30%increase in patients citing housing issues overall compared to 22-23. (Homelessness, housing repairs, adaptations, housing applications)

Brent Mencap Areas of concern in the draft budget proposals, and why

Brent Mencaps initial views on the draft budget proposals and impact they are likely to have on our service users/residents, if any. **Please note our comments are based on original proposals sent out where some numbers were duplicated hence, we include proposal title to be clear.**
There has been no report outlining a cumulative equality assessment of budget decisions since 2018 that I've seen. Is it happening?

Re current cuts proposals not all indicate need for an EIA where we believe one should be done eg

Proposal CYP0 could affect children and people with a disability but no EIA is indicated-why? A cut could affect children and young people from BAME backgrounds or SEND children
Similarly, CYP5 and CYP6 could affect children from all communities and possibly children with a disability /parents with a LD and should have EIAs as core offer may not be appropriate for some
Also, FR02 needs an EIA as possible many current tenants are BAME community groups
Selling bed spaces at Ade Adipitan centre to other boroughs could restrict bed availability for Brent children who needs emergency respite- needs an EIA for that
CYP04 re willow nursery provides some specialist support to children and possibly parents with LD so should have an EIA.

CHW01 Technology enabled Care Transformation

- This should have an EIA.
- What if any discussion has been had with partners about this- feels like it will just be imposed on people by some outside consultants who don't know Brent people, no existing draft scope yet. It mentions prevention but no detail given. What internal work has already been done re cultural change? Are staff ready? No consideration given re non digital people likely to be affected or family carers and stress faced.
- There is currently no Brent Council Engagement strategy, so what process will they follow? This will need early engagement and co-production following the Accessible information Standards AIS) regulations to meet users with visual and hearing impairments and those with a LD identified communication wishes and needs. Hence need for EIA.

CHW02 Managing demand at the front door, prevention, and early intervention.

- Very vague about numbers likely to be affected, but there is already not enough advice and information services in Brent to signpost people to (see feedback from social prescribing team above), and people can't continually be referred to the voluntary sector by Council where there are not enough resources in that sector either.
- Brent Residents won't understand any explanations given about not being eligible for Care Act support when they ask for help.

CWH03 Continuing sustainable, long-term care and support.

- Theory may sound good but if people have had support for a long time, any changes will cause users and carers anxiety and stress. No clear figures about amount of people likely to be affected.
- Many users and their carers find managing Direct payments is hard and the amount paid per hour under DPs isn't enough to recruit and train skilled and experienced support workers. People do not have to accept a DP if offered.
- Any consultation and reviews with users must follow the AIS regulations, should meet their identified communication needs and people should not be rushed into a decision.

CW01 Reduction in Building Based services i.e., Millennium

Feedback from self-advocates at Brent Mencap (people with a learning disability)

1. The council took a very long time to answer the questions we asked last year. Why so slow?
2. We have really enjoyed using the Kiln at the Millennium day centre and meeting some of the clients from Tudor Gardens there. They are worried for them if it closes. What will they do?
3. We think it's a shame if the kiln isn't available in future as we love ceramics there.
4. The council never come and ask our views on things, so how will they listen to what people affected by this think about changes?
5. We don't understand how the Council will actually develop any new services with partners and the community. Who will they involve to do this?

Brent Mencap feedback

- Some people have been at Millennium for a long time or transferred from other closed services**.**
- People value seeing their friends, known staff. How will they see friends after?
- The quality of external day services is not great. One carer likely to be affected said, "I don't want my son to spend 2 hours sitting in McDonald's at Wembley Asda".
- There is little or no experience of really co-designing new services in Brent.
- There are no specialist employment support services for people with a LD in Brent . Shaw trust may be good with other groups but have no expertise with people with a LD.
- Timescale is very short won't allow for proper person-centred reviews and consultation following the AIS regulations.
- Not clear what if any advocacy support will be provided to current users to ensure their voice is heard.

- **CHW02 Housing related support.**

This amounts to a 17% cut to a service which prevents vulnerable people needing ASC support, being abused, needing other support or ending up in the criminal justice system.

- **RSO8 "Less people and more emphasis on digital self-service**" idea fails to recognise the needs of people who have a learning disability, other visual or hearing impairments, few digital skills or confidence, people whose first language is not English or those with poor literacy skills.
- **The cutting of the volunteer platform** because of low take up and poor performance raises questions about why it was commissioned , not contract managed robustly and wasted money could have been given to vol sector to support residents in other ways.
- **FR01 Increase in car parking charges** will reduce vol sector ability to afford to participate in community events or meetings if materials or users are needed to be transported there to participate .
- **FR02 and GO6 Market rent proposal/solicitor cut** may affect smaller vol sector groups used to a lower rent or who want a cheap community space. From our organisational experience of going through the process of agreeing a lease with Brent Council and the time and effort it takes, it will be a long time before the income is achieved, especially with the other planned reduction of 1 solicitor elsewhere in the cuts.
- **GO1 Reduction to training for councillors and senior staff**. It's shameful that more imagination wasn't shown to identify other training and development needed by them that could have been delivered by local vol sector groups e.g., Domestic Violence, Accessible information Standards Regulations, Carers Rights, Learning disability awareness etc.

On behalf of Brent Mencap users, staff and Trustees

Ann O'Neill, Executive Director 28/11/2023

Crisis work in Brent

Crisis has been operating in Brent since 2018, following its merger with a small local charity Lift People, which routes in Brent went back to 2005. Earlier in the year, the service relocated to a new and much improved building at the heart of Harlesden. Consequently, self-referrals increased as result of greater visibility.

Alongside direct service delivery to people who are faced with homelessness, Crisis Brent also deliver a varied programme of activities aimed at strengthening local responses to homelessness – under the Ending Homelessness in Brent partnership.

Homelessness in Brent - CHAIN data from 2022-23 shows 373 people were seen rough sleeping in the borough. This represents a 32% increase when compared to the previous year. In August 23 62 people were seen rough sleeping in Brent by the outreach team in comparison with 39 August 22. On average, 40 people per day access the new council Turning Point Service in Brent.

Responding to Brent Budget Proposal

We appreciate the invite by the Budget Scrutiny committee to, once again, submit our feedback on the Budget Proposal.

In developing our response, we have looked at previous Budget Scrutiny Committee Report as well as current proposal and detailed feedback included within this document. There are several key areas that worth highlighting:

- It was encouraging that the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Committee with regards to 2022-2023 budget, have reflected feedback provided by voluntary organisations. However, it was disappointing that those recommendations were not implemented – including around improving Equality Impact Assessment & responding to the challenge of increased costs & risk of sustainability of local groups.
- Overall, budget proposals include additional cuts to key services. There is little evidence, however, within the report to back it up, often in a face of clear trend of increased needs. This raises real concern that this will lead to increased in gatekeeping to key services including ASC & Housing related support.
- There is an assumption that individuals would be directed to voluntary sector to assist in preventing and mitigating demand. However, this is without consultation with the sector and consideration to the investment it would require to ensure its capacity to provide this required support.

Comments on Previous Budget Scrutiny Report Jan 23

Recommendation 5 – Additional Advice & Support for our Voluntary sector partners

- Be interesting to find out if and how council responded to the recommendations as little evidence to support implementation of recommendation to increase value of commissioned contract to reflect cost of living
- There is no collaborative strategy in place
- Policy reg. community assets is still pending – although have been referenced within new proposal

Recommendation 7 – Improving Equality Impact assessment

- Recommendation was not reflected in current year approach as there is no evidence base/ rationale section to support EIA of each proposal (see comments reg. overrepresentation in homelessness and housing needs)

Comments reg. Budget Proposal comments – 23 – 26

Page 4 - Managing demand at the front door, prevention, and early intervention.

- There is lack of evidence to support the proposal. It is not clear, what assumption are made to support the saving. There is a real concern that without grounding the proposal in there is a real risk that the saving would only be achieved through gatekeeping, particular as there is also clear indication that there would be increased pressure on ASC due to population growth. Furthermore, as per recommendation 5 in last year Budget Scrutiny committee report highlighting the need to ensure contract value that safeguards providers, particularly in light of increase in cost of living.

- The proposal is looking to build on voluntary sector in supporting prevention and managing demand but there was no engagement to ascertain Vol. Sector capacity to support proposal. Voluntary sector should have been consulted in advance of developing the proposal.
- Adopting prevention approach often support better outcomes for individuals as well as offering greater value for money. However, there should be clear investment in prevention activities and reallocation of resources to support that. It is not clear that this the approach proposed.
- Our experience is that there is already a need for significant level of advocacy in order to secure care package which can be an indication to likely gatekeeping practice

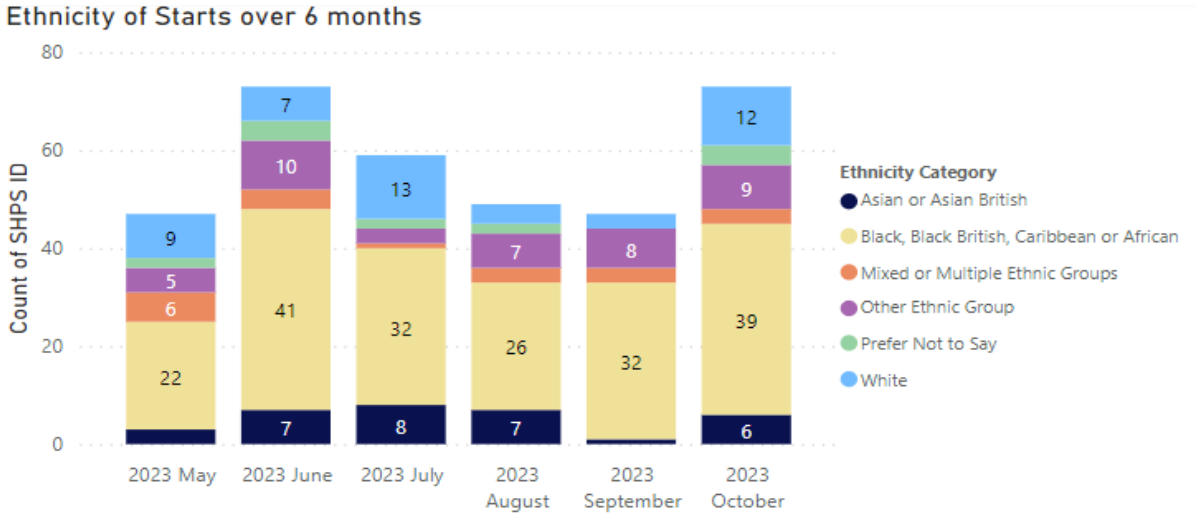
Page 7 - Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence.

- There is a clear lack of consultation of vol. and community professionals working to support this work

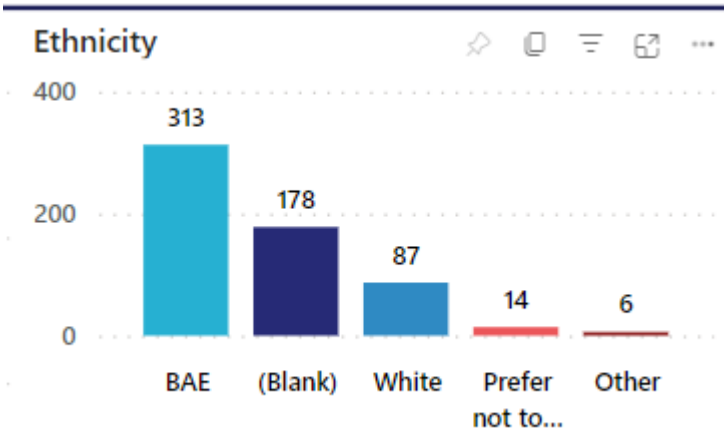
Page 16 - Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties

- Lack of evidence to support this. It is not clear how this align with projected increase in homelessness (see details around increased in homelessness see 7. Single Homeless Prevention Service.pdf (brent.gov.uk)
- No clear what is the current level of voids in services which would support the proposal. This is information that is not shared and should be available to support recommendation.
- It would be helpful going forward for the voids levels to be tracked and made transparent to ensure this precious resource is properly monitored and utilised.
- It is not clear how reduction in contracts cost will be achieved not only because of local trend of growing population and growing need, but also in ensuring Brent' commitment to level of contract that reflect London Living Wage and ensure sustainable providers
- Again, it is disappointing to see narrow approach to consultation; for example it would have been helpful to link with the work of the Homelessness Forum and the Ending Homelessness in Brent partnership. It highlights risk of silo working between ASC and Housing and the tokenistic approach to involvement of vol. and community sector
- Reg. Equality impact screening –BAME are over-represented in the homeless population – as well as people from the LBGBTQ+ community. The recent report for the Community Well-being Scrutiny committee also backs this point.

Single Homeless Prevention Service – Ethnicity Breakdown



Skylight Crisis Brent – breakdown of people on caseload by ethnicity



Page 69 - Property Strategy to maximise rental return on council assets

- Should make more prominently the intention of taking social value into account when setting rent level including this being translated to monetary value.

- Might be wise to do an equality assessment to see who is impacting as certain communities might be affected more then others

- Would be wise to flag up the work around the Picture Palace and the Brent asset … that Brent CVS are leading

Atara Fridler Atara.fridler@crisis.org.uk

Sufra NW London
Response to Brent Council Budget Consultation, December 2023

Sufra NW London is currently supporting 1,300 people every week with food aid alone – this figure is set to increase in the months ahead. We have never been busier in our 10 year history, and feedback from other organisation in the Brent Food Aid Network (BFAN) is similar.

In Brent, the food aid sector has had limited investment over the years, which has meant that it will continue to struggle to develop the capacity it needs to support residents – especially as demand continues to rise. Most food aid organisations are volunteer led and staff and volunteers are experiencing high rates of burn out. Donation levels are falling and access to surplus food stock is dwindling as supermarkets reduce waste upstream. This leaves a bleak picture for the borough's most disadvantaged residents.

It's clear that the £8m in budget cuts planned will further impact Brent residents negatively. Our team is concerned that council tax increases will push more people in Brent into financial crisis, debt and food poverty, which will increase demand for emergency food aid at a time when food banks are already unable to cope with current levels of demand.

We note that one of the solutions presented in the Budget is to provide more residents with access to food vouchers to food banks. However, we strongly feel that this is not a sustainable solution and not in line with the cash first appraoch BFAN is advocating for. Food aid is the most limited way to support people in need of financial support. Food banks are hugely complex, inefficient ways to support guests. More info here: https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cash-first

Our overall recommendation is to allocate more resources to services that support people in poverty and those in need of food aid. The key is not to rely on food aid as a solution but to invest in the following:

Advice and Support: The expansion of Advice Services across the borough, as welfare advisors are best placed to help residents increase their incomes through advice on benefits, housing and support with debts and energy bills. Unfortunately, feedback about Brent Hubs is not always positive. We note that the voluntary sector is well placed to provide advice and support, especially those organsiations that are AQS accredited, as well as smaller organsiations that work hyper-locally with residents who might not be willing or able to appraoch to Council Advisors. However, there needs to be more support provided to the voluntary sector to make this a reality in terms of finance and space to operate services. There also needs to be more accredited Debt Advice in Brent and/or support for VCS organsiations looking to attain such accredition. This support needs to extend beyond CAB, which has limited capacity and reach. BAF grants could be reinstated to support this. Brent doesn't have a law center due to a lack of resources. The NW London Law Centre is over-subscribed and Brent residents are not able to access this service sufficiently.

Meals on Wheels: There needs to be more support available to elderly and disabled residents who struggle to leave their home to access any form of food aid, especially as Adult Social Care budgets continue to reduce. Again, the voluntary sector could support this process, but only with sufficient resourcing and access to space

Free School Meals: The impact of this so far has been significant across London - the return on investment has been calculated to be huge in terms of mental and physical health, social inclusion, family wellbeing,

educational outcomes, and even employment. There is a strong case that this should be expanded to secondary schools and plans should be laid to make this permanent beyond next September. More info here: The Universal Multiplier | National Education Union (neu.org.uk)

Investing in the Voluntary Sector. A relatively small investment here can significantly develop the capacity of communities to support residents experiencing a wide range of vulnerabilities. This is a far more cost-effective way to support residents than spending this money internally on council run services. Investment in the sector will have a multiplier effect and create long term infrastructure, skills and capacity that is currently missing. If done correctly, this is a low-investment, win-win scenario. For example, with access to sufficient office space or cooking facilities, food aid organsiations and community groups could provide a huge amount of emergency support to residents, especailly over winter months when their bills spike. Access to space to operate is a huge concern to the CVS, given the huge rents being charged. The Bridge Park Community Wellbeing Project is a great example of how the sharing of available resources with trusted partners can support a huge number of people in an innovative way at very little cost to the Council.

Housing & Asylum Seekers: Food bank guests are urgently in need of social housing as even affordable rents are not affordable. More homeless shelters are needed to support rough sleepers - numbers are rising and Sufra is often spending significant amounts of money to support guests urgently in need, with the support from the council being slow and not always fit for purpose - poor communication and long delays. Families are often housed inappropriately in a single room, with a lack of amenities - such as a kitchen - which places additional cost pressures on families. The 7-day eviction notice when asylum seekers are granted refugee status is not sufficient time to find suitable accommodation and they can often end up on the street. More resources are urgently needed to support this demographic with the transition. With the removal of HMO licenses, more must be done to guarantee accommodation standards for asylum seekers in Brent.

Household Support Fund: The continuation and expansion of the Household Support Fund will be essential beyond March 2024, as this provides a lifeline to families struggling to makes ends meet.

Brent FOE response to the Draft Budget 2024-6

Following the stakeholders meeting on Brent Council's Draft Budget 2024-6 on 30th Nov, the following is a report on our concerns, as requested by 5th Jan 2024.

Draft Budget 2024/5 & 2025/6
We are concerned that the Draft Buget paper provides a considered context which mentions inflation, economic turmoil, the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, the impact of Brexit etc but makes no mention of the Climate Ecological Emergency (4.2).

It also states (18) that "There are no climate change and environmental considerations arising out of this report". This is despite the clear limitations placed on the council's response to the Climate Emergency by their current financial situation, as well as the specific budget saving proposals with environmental impacts. See below.

We know that the council recognises the Climate and Ecological Emergency, but are very concerned by what these omissions imply - that it is not treating this situation as an emergency, or prioritising consideration of how to respond.

Appendix B - Budget Savings Proposals
We have significant concerns about the following proposals to make savings.

p128 "To increase the annual subscription price for garden waste collections from £60 to £65, an 8% increase to generate an additional income of £100,000".
The concerns are that more users are put off using the service (which is free in some London boroughs) and are discouraged from gardening, which is an important way that people can individually care for the environment and improve biodiversity. Also that (as identified) this leads to an increase in fly tipping at a time that street cleaning has already been reduced.

p130 "A programme of organised cultural and entertainment events to be organised in parks to generate a new income for the service. This can be supported by a review of existing fees and charges".
As stated, a key risk is that more events will "impact the natural fabric of the park". More commercial events in parks will also reduce access to green space in a borough that is already lacking in green space, with attending health impacts for all. Already in Brent 80% of people live in neighbourhoods deprived of green space. https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/near-you/local-authority/brent#nature
We understand that there is an existing problem of community groups/voluntary organisations being charged rates for running events in parks that they find difficult to meet. This is likely to be exacerbated by competition with commercial providers.

p132 "Rental of Parks' building space".
Parks are public spaces and the more the commercial use of buildings is encouraged, the less accessible they are to potential community initiatives which encourage people of all generations to be more connected to and benefit from the nature that is available in their neighbourhoods.

p134 "Licensing / sponsorship schemes in Parks"
The marketing of commercial advertising within parks will, again, reduce people's access to and enjoyment of these important nature filled public spaces. We do not go to parks to be bombarded with more advertising, rather to escape and appreciate nature. As well as "visually intrusive" we would describe this as "psychologically intrusive".

We would like serious consideration to be given to these concerns at a time of a Climate and Ecological Emergency in Brent.

Yours sincerely, Elaine Sheppard

Brent Friends of the Earth Joint Co-ordinator

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ADVICE FROM THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

This appendix sets out in some detail Members' individual responsibilities to set a legal budget and how Members should approach the task. It also reminds Members about the rules concerning pecuniary and other interests.

2. WHEN THE BUDGET MUST BE SET

Under Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, budget calculations have to be made before 11th March, but they are not invalid merely because they are made on or after 11th March. However, it is a legal duty to set the Council Tax by that date and delay in setting the Council Tax will have very serious financial consequences. It will render the Council vulnerable to legal proceedings requiring it to set the tax. In any event, it is important that the tax is set well in advance of 1st April as no sum is payable for Council Tax until 14 days after the date of posting bills. Serious financial losses will accrue very soon from a late setting of Council Tax as income is delayed and interest is foregone.

An important feature of Council Tax is that the statutory budget calculation must be followed exactly. If not the Council Tax resolution will be invalid and void.

3. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX

Section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act (the Act) provides that no amount of council tax may be set before the earlier of the following—
(a) 1st March in the financial year preceding that for which the amount is set;
(b) the date of the issue to the authority of the last precept capable of being issued to it (otherwise than by way of substitute) by a major precepting authority for the financial year for which the amount is set.

This year the GLA meeting at which the precept will be set will take place in the afternoon of the 22 February 2024. In the event that the precept is not issued by the GLA by the time Council comes to make its decision on 29 February, the Council will only be able to calculate the Brent element of the council tax at that meeting. It seems unlikely this situation will arise this year.

Section 67 of the Act permits the setting of the council tax to be delegated to a special council tax setting committee established under that section. In the event that the GLA precept is not available at the time the council sets its budget, a meeting of the committee established under this section would be called so that the council tax can be set by 11 March.

4. NOTICE

There is a requirement to publish notice of the amount set for Council Tax in at least one local paper within 21 days of the Council's decision under section 38(2) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992. There is also a duty to consult with representatives of Non-Domestic Ratepayers about the proposed revenue and capital expenditure before the budget requirement is calculated under section 65 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992.

5. MEMBERS' FIDUCIARY DUTIES

The obligation to make a lawful budget each year is shared equally by each individual Member. In discharging that obligation, Members owe a fiduciary duty to the Council Taxpayer.

The budget must not include expenditure on items which would fall outside the Council's powers. Expenditure on lawful items must be prudent, and any forecasts or assumptions such as rates of interest or inflation must themselves be rational. Powers to spend money must be exercised bona fide for the purpose for which they were conferred and any ulterior motives risk a finding of illegality. In determining the Council's overall budget requirement, Members are bound to have regard to the level of Council Tax necessary to sustain it. Essentially the interests of the Council Taxpayer must be balanced against those of the various service recipients.

Within this overall framework, there is of course considerable scope for discretion within the 2024/25 financial year, especially on the part of the Cabinet. Setting a budget is not the same as deciding what expenditure will in fact be incurred. To budget for expenditure is to estimate likely expenditure and/or make financial provision for such expenditure. However, Members will bear in mind that in making the budget commitments are being entered which will have an impact on future years. Some such commitments are susceptible to change in future years, such as staff numbers which are capable of upward or downward adjustment at any time. Other commitments however impose upon the Council future obligations which are binding and cannot be adjusted, such as loan charges to pay for capital schemes. For some specific proposals within the overall Budgetary framework, Cabinet decisions have already been made. For some other proposals, subject to relevant consultation where necessary, decisions by the Cabinet will need to be made, especially where the making of such a decision would result or would be likely to result in the permanent closure of a facility used by the public or a permanent and significant reduction in the level of services or facilities provided to the public other than where such closure or reduction in service is considered necessary by the relevant strategic director for reasons of health and safety.

In making those subsequent decisions the Cabinet will be required to consider all relevant matters including the results of any consultation and the Council's equality duties. Should the Cabinet (or other decision maker) consider it

appropriate, for example when being asked to make service changes to achieve a budget reduction and having taken into account all relevant facts (including but not limited to the results of any consultation and after due consideration of the Council's equalities duties) they have the option of not making the budget reductions detailed within the overall budget. They will still be required to balance the budget overall using the appropriate constitutional procedures, for example, finding the savings from elsewhere or using reserves and otherwise complying with the Council's rules on budget setting and management.

Only relevant and lawful factors may be taken into account and irrelevant factors must be ignored. A Member who votes in accordance with the decision of his or her political group but who does so after taking into account the relevant factors and professional advice will be acting within the law. Party loyalty and party policy are capable of being relevant considerations for the individual Member provided the member does not dogmatically toe the party line without considering the relevant factors and professional advice and without properly exercising any real discretion.

Under the Brent Member Code of Conduct members are required when reaching decisions to have regard to relevant advice from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and the Monitoring Officer (the Corporate Director of Governance). If the Council should fail to set a budget at all or fail to set a lawful budget, contrary to the advice of these two officers there may be a breach of the Code by individual members if it can be demonstrated that they have not had proper regard to the advice given.

6. ARREARS OF COUNCIL TAX AND VOTING

In accordance with section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act"), where a payment of Council Tax that a member is liable to make has been outstanding for two months or more at the time of a meeting, the Member must disclose the fact of their arrears (though they are not required to declare the amount) and cannot vote on any of the following matters if they are the subject of consideration at a meeting:

(a) Any decision relating to the administration or enforcement of Council Tax.

(b) Any budget calculation required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 underlying the setting of the Council Tax.

(c) Any recommendation, resolution or other decision which might affect the making of the Annual Budget calculation.

Members should note the following points:

(i) These rules are extremely wide in scope. Virtually any Council decision which has financial implications is one which might affect the making of the budget underlying the Council Tax for next year and thus is caught. The former DoE (now DLUHC) shared this interpretation as it made clear in its letter to the AMA dated 28th May 1992.

(ii) The rules do not apply just to full Council meetings but extend to committees and sub-committees of the Council and to the Cabinet.

(iii) Members who make a declaration are not entitled to vote on the matter in question but are not prevented by the section from taking part in the discussion.

(iv) Members will have a defence under section 106 of the 1992 Act if they did not know that the section applied to them (i.e., that they were in arrears to the relevant extent) at the time of the meeting. Thus unwitting Members who for example can prove that they did not know and had no reason to suppose at the time of the meeting that their bank has failed to honour a standing order will be protected should any prosecution arise.

(v) It is not enough to state that a benefit application has been submitted which has not yet been determined, as Members remain liable to pay pending determination.

(vi) Breach of the rules is a criminal offence under section 106 of the 1992 Act which attracts a maximum fine at level 3 on the standard scale, currently £1,000.

Members' attention is also be drawn to the effect of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014 which came into effect on 25 February 2014 which is that where any vote is taken at a Council meeting on setting the budget for the authority, the Minutes of the meeting will record the names of all Councillors present at the vote and how each Councillor voted (for or against) or the fact that they abstained from voting.

7. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members are reminded to consider whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in the setting of the council's budget. If a member has a relevant interest they must disclose the interest at the meeting, subject to the provisions in the Code in respect of sensitive interests. If the interest is:

- a disclosable pecuniary interest; or
- a personal interest which a member of the public knowing the facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice their judgement of the public interest (and it affects their financial position or the financial position of a connected person (as defined in the Code) or relates to a regulatory matter affecting or likely to affect them or a connected person.

The member may not participate in the discussions or vote on the matter, although if the interest is prejudicial but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member may remain for the purposes of making representations or asking questions.

Members should seek early advice to avoid any confusion on the night of the meeting if they consider they have a relevant interest.

Dispensations

The Council's Monitoring Officer may, on written request from a Member, grant a dispensation to relieve the applicant from the restrictions on participation and voting. Dispensation may be granted if:-
- Without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating would be so great a proportion to impede the effectiveness of the meeting;
- The representation of different political groups would be affected and likely to alter the likely outcome of any voting at the meeting;
- Granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Borough;
- Every Member of the Council's Cabinet would be precluded from participating in the meeting;
- It is appropriate to grant a dispensation.

Dispensation may be granted for up to 4 years. A dispensation will mean that the Member to whom it is granted can speak and vote on a matter in which they have a relevant interest. Where the Monitoring Officer is undecided on the best response, and time is not of the essence, the decision could be passed to Audit & Standards Committee for decision. There is no Audit & Standards Committee meeting currently fixed before the budget setting meeting.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES, MONITORING OFFICER AND AUDITORS' POWERS

Director of Finance and Resources and Monitoring Officer

Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 places the Director of Finance and Resources under an obligation to prepare a report (to full Council) if it appears to him that the expenditure the Authority proposes to incur in a financial year is likely to exceed its resources available to meet that expenditure. A failure to take note and act on such a report could lead to a complaint under the Member Code of Conduct. Similarly, the Council's Monitoring Officer is required to report to Full Council if it appears to her that a decision has been or is about to be taken which is or would be unlawful or would be likely to lead to maladministration.

Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Director of Finance and Resources is required to report to the authority on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations required to be made by the Council and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. These are the estimates which the Cabinet is required to determine and submit to Full Council and are contained within this report. However, if the Council were minded to agree a budget based on different estimates e.g. if Council did not agree with the estimates provided by the Cabinet then those estimates which the Council would adopt would effectively become 'the estimates' for the purpose of Section 25 and as such should be subject to a report by the Director of Finance and Resources.

External Auditors' Powers

Section 91 of the Local Government Act 2000 and section 19A of the Audit Commission Act 1998 provide that an External Auditor may issue an "Advisory Notice" if he has reason to believe that an Authority is about to take a course of action which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency. This power is to be used where the matter is significant either in amount or in principle or both.

While the advisory notice has effect it is not lawful for the authority to implement or take the course of action in question unless it has considered the issues raised in the notice and given the auditor notice that it intends to proceed with that course of action in a specified period and that period has expired.

In addition, it is also open to the Auditor to apply for judicial review on any decision of an Authority or failure to act which it is reasonable to believe would have an effect on the accounts of an Authority.

9. SPECIFIC BUDGET ADVICE

Balances and Other Budget Calculations

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 section 31A(2)(b) and (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to calculate as part of their overall budget what amounts are appropriate for contingencies and reserves. The Council faces various contingent liabilities set out in the main budget report. Furthermore, the Council must ensure sufficient flexibility to avoid going into deficit at any point during the financial year. Members will need to pay careful attention to the advice of officers here. As set out previously, under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Director of Finance and Resources is required to report to the authority on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

In addition to advising on the robustness of the estimates as set out above, the Director of Finance and Resources is also required to report on the robustness of the proposed financial reserves. The same advice applies to these as to the other calculations required to be made by the Council.

Having considered the officer's report the Council is then required to *"have regard to the report"* but it is not required to adopt the recommendations in it. However, Members must demonstrate they have acted reasonably if they do not adopt the recommendations.

Localism Act 2011

Sections 72 to 79 and Schedules 5 to 7 of the Localism Act 2011 amended the legislation regarding the calculation of council tax. Schedule 5 of the Localism Act provides for a council tax referendum to be held if an authority increases its

relevant basic amount of council tax in excess of principles determined by the Secretary of State. Authorities will not be able to exceed the Secretary of State's principles without having held such a referendum. The principles applicable for 2024/25 are discussed at paragraphs 6.10 to 6.11 of the main report.

Alternative Proposals

If alternative proposals to those contained in this report are moved at the budget setting meeting, the Director of Finance and Resources will need to consider if the estimates or proposed financial reserves contained in this report are affected and whether a further report (which may be oral) is required under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003. If the Director of Finance and Resources is unable to report on the estimates or the reserves because of the lateness of the alternative proposals then he will not be able to comply with this statutory requirement. The Act does not say what happens if this duty is not fulfilled and nor does it say whether the Council can set the budget without that advice. It follows from this then that there is no express statutory prohibition. However, the authority is at risk of a Judicial Review by an interested person, e.g. a resident, if the Council has failed to have regard to a report of the Director of Finance on the estimates and reserves used for its budget calculations.

Capital Programme

The requirements of the *"Prudential Code"* established in the Local Government Act 2003 are set out in the report.

Expenditure Charged to the Housing Revenue Account

Members will be aware that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is by law to be maintained separately from the General Fund and there are strict rules which determine to which account any expenditure must be charged. There are only very limited areas of discretion here. Members should bear in mind that if they wished to review any current determination which affects the apportionment of charges between the General Fund and HRA, they would need to do so on the basis of an officers' report and specific legal advice. The Housing Revenue Account must be maintained in balance throughout the year and the Council is under a duty to prevent a debit balance in the Housing Revenue Account pursuant to Section 76 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Equalities Legislation

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which requires the Council, when exercising its functions to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination (both direct and indirect discrimination), harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between

those who share a ‘protected characteristic’ and those who do not share that protected characteristic.

A ‘protected characteristic’ is defined in the Equality Act as:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race; (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

Having due regard to the need to ‘advance equality of opportunity’ between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, includes having due regard to the need to remove or minimize disadvantages suffered by them. Due regard must also be had to the need to take steps to meet the needs of such persons where those needs are different from persons who do not have that characteristic, and encourage those who have a protected characteristic to participate in public life.

Complying with the duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as that is allowed by the discrimination law.

Due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations must form an integral part of the decision making process. The Council must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision.

There is no prescribed manner in which the equality duty must be exercised. However, the council must have an adequate evidence base for its decision making. This can be achieved by gathering details and statistics on who use the facilities. A careful consideration of this assessment is one of the key ways in which the Council can show “due regard” to the relevant matters. Where it is apparent from the analysis of the information that the proposals would have an adverse effect on equality then adjustments should be made to avoid that effect (mitigation).

The duty is not to achieve the objectives or take the steps set out in s.149. Rather, the duty on public authorities is to bring these important objectives relating to discrimination into consideration when carrying out its functions. “Due regard” means the regard that is appropriate in all the particular circumstances in which the authority is carrying out its functions.

There must be a proper regard for the goals set out in s.149. At the same time, the council must also pay regard to any countervailing factors, which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. Budgetary pressures, economics and

practical factors will often be important. The weight of these countervailing factors in the decision making process is a matter for the Council.

The equality and diversity implications of budget proposals are considered at all stages of the budget process, from the development of the initial budget strategy, through consideration of individual growth and savings proposals, to the production of service development plans. The processes in place are therefore aimed at ensuring that the budget proposals in this report do not discriminate against communities or individuals because of age, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, or sexual orientation, and support the council in meeting its other duties to promote equal opportunities and good race relations.

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Appendix P

BRENT COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Financial Year 2024/25

April 2024

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BRENT COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Financial Year 2024/25

Purpose

The council's pay policy outlines Brent's policy on pay and benefits for all employees (excluding schools) and has been developed to meet the relevant statutory provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

The pay policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be approved by Full Council in advance of each new financial year.

The pay policy statement can be amended during the course of any financial year, but only by a resolution of the Full Council. The revised version of the statement will be published as soon as reasonably practicable.

Strategic Context

The current and future pay and benefit arrangements are embodied in the council's Workforce Strategy which reflects the Borough Plan priorities. The council's Borough Plan provides the strategic framework for the council's workforce and people priorities.

The overarching objective for the Workforce Strategy is to have a high performing workforce that provides the best services it can and which can truly understand and meet the needs of all our diverse communities to enable the organisation to achieve its goals for the borough.

Key priorities of the Workforce Strategy are:

- Workforce planning;
- Workforce insight and experience;
- Workforce growth and development;
- Workforce ways of working.

These priorities have been determined with the aim of achievement of the overall outcome of having and maintaining a skilled and engaged workforce.

The council is committed to being a good employer and maintaining its excellent track record in employing a diverse workforce which reflects the local community. In order to recruit and retain a high quality workforce, the council will pay its staff at appropriate salary levels to attract and retain staff, throughout the council, particularly those in hard to recruit roles.

Employee Benefits

The council's pay arrangements and terms and conditions play a key role in enabling the council to fully realise its objectives and ensuring the workforce is 'fit for purpose'. The council is committed to fair and equitable pay and benefits arrangements to maintain a flexible, talented and performance focused workforce. The council published its Gender Pay Gap Report on 21 March 2022. This revealed that the overall mean gender pay gap based on data taken from the HR databases on 31 March 2021 was 5.1% and the median gender pay gap was 5%.

All the council's pay arrangements are contained within a single policy document.

Pay Rates and Scales

Pay scales are reviewed annually in line with the relevant national agreements and any changes are usually effective from 1 April or 1 September each year depending on the pay scales applicable to different groups of staff.

The following pay scales have been adopted by the council:

- Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) London Pay Scales (main pay scales)
- Senior Manager Pay Scales (senior managers including Chief Officers)
- Soulbury Pay Scales (Education Psychologists, Advisors and Inspectors)
- Soulbury Pay Scales (Youth and Community Service, Young People and Community Service Managers)
- Teaching Pay Scales (for centrally employed local authority teachers)

Remuneration of Senior Management (Chief Officers)

The council defines its senior management as the top 3 tiers in the management structure. This includes all statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officer roles. It comprises the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Directors.

Currently the pay, expenses and key benefits for the Council Management Team are published on the council's website. The Council Management Team comprises the Chief Executive and the Corporate Directors.

The rates of pay of the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors and other Senior Managers are in accordance with the council's senior manager pay scales. The council may, from time to time, engage senior managers under contracts for services. The council generally will aim to pay such individuals at a rate consistent with the pay of directly employed staff performing a comparable role, although there may be exceptional circumstances which support a higher pay rate for a short-term period to ensure continuity of service and meet any statutory obligations.

Remuneration of Lowest Paid Employees

The council defines its lowest paid employees as those staff paid on the lowest established grade and scale point which in Brent is Scale 1 spinal column point 1 of the Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Pay Scales which is currently £23,457 per annum or the pay of its lowest paid employee where they are on a higher salary which is currently £25,629.

London Living Wage

The council has implemented the London Living Wage. All staff (including Apprentices) are paid at or above the London Living Wage. The Council is an accredited London Living Wage Employer and asks its contractors supplying services to the Council to pay their staff the London Living Wage. As contractors are employers in their own right, the council cannot force contractors to pay the London Living Wage but has built into its procurement procedures a requirement to do so in relation to council contracts where possible. The Council also encourages schools to pay the London Living Wage.

Pay Multiple

The 'pay multiple' is the ratio between the highest paid salary and the lowest/median average salary of the council's workforce. The council's highest paid employee is the Chief Executive. The current median salary is £37,725.

The lowest pay multiple is 1:8.7; the median pay multiple is 1:5.9.

This is within what is regarded as good practice for the median salary multiple as described by Will Hutton in his 2011 Fair Pay Review in the Public Sector which identified multiples at or around 8.00. The council has not set a target for a maximum multiple. The lowest pay multiple has decreased from 1:10:6 in 2016/2017.

Job Grading

Single Status was introduced in 2009 for staff on the main pay scales. Single Status introduced common job evaluation schemes and pay scales for the council's former manual workers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees with the exception of education psychologists, nursery nurses, youth and community workers, chief officers and the chief executive.

There are some staff who transferred to the council from other organisations who have yet to move over to Single Status.

Senior managers including chief officers have locally determined rates of pay which are linked to national negotiations for the determination of pay awards. A revised pay and grading structure for senior managers was introduced on 1 April 2013. The aim of the review was to reduce costs whilst ensuring the council's pay arrangements remained competitive.

Also in 2013, the council rationalised the terms and conditions for senior managers. Those senior management posts which fall within the Joint National Committee (JNC) Chief Officer definition are employed on JNC terms and conditions and all other senior managers are employed on National Joint Committee (NJC) for Local Government Services terms and conditions with some local variations. The senior management posts which fall within the JNC definition are predominately the Corporate Directors and other directors with statutory responsibilities e.g. Section 151 officer. This means that the majority of senior managers have terms and conditions which are largely consistent with those for other staff. A number of changes were also made to the JNC for Chief Officer terms and conditions to align them more with the terms and conditions for all other staff.

Local Conventions for the GLPC Job Evaluation Scheme

Virtually all local authorities and organisations that use the GLPC Scheme have local conventions in place. A convention is the term given to the local interpretation of the wording of a job evaluation scheme, which are usually written down. Without local conventions, evaluators may interpret the scheme's factor level definitions differently.

This exposes the authority to the potential risk of inconsistency and can lead to inaccurate gradings.

The council in March 2013 introduced local conventions to ensure that the scheme is applied consistently and fairly to all employees. These have been reviewed and amended in accordance with refreshed guidance notes on the job evaluation scheme issued by the GLPC in 2016.

Pay on Appointment

All employees are normally appointed on the lowest pay spinal column point for their job evaluated grade. Employees may be appointed at a higher point, where they are currently earning more than the lowest pay spine for the role and/or where it is considered that they already possess the skills and experience needed to justify a higher salary within the grade. Appointment at a higher point on the salary scale has to be authorised by the service Director and the Head of HR or Corporate director responsible for HR.

The council delegates authority to the Senior Staff Appointments Sub-Committee to make appointments to the council of all officers at Director level and above, except for the Chief Executive, in which case a recommendation to appoint is made to Full Council for its final decision to confirm the appointment or not. The starting salary for new appointments to these posts is agreed by the body making the appointment. The starting salary for any other post where the overall remuneration package on new appointment (excluding pension contributions in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme regulations) is to exceed
£100,000 will normally be agreed by full council or a committee of the council unless the Chief Executive agrees otherwise.

Annual Pay Progression

Brent's pay policy is primarily based on evaluated pay grades, each having a salary range comprising a number of incremental points. Other pay grades are nationally prescribed and also have incremental progression arrangements. Most employees incrementally progress through the pay grade for their job. Progression will normally be one increment (pay spine column point) on the 1st of April each year until the top of the grade is reached for those on the main pay scales. Separate arrangements

apply during the first year of service where the start date is between 1 October and 31 March and on the anniversary of joining for those on senior manager pay scales.

Pay progression takes place on an annual basis and can be withheld if there is a disciplinary sanction or where performance is currently being addressed.

Performance Related Pay and Bonuses

Council employees including the Chief Executive and directors do not receive performance related payments or bonuses.

National / Regional Pay Agreements

The council operates the national (JNC/NJC) and regional (GLPC) collective bargaining arrangements for pay and conditions of service for all employees, including senior managers. Pay is increased in line with national and regional pay agreements.

Details of the national pay award for 2024/25 are not yet known. All proposals received from the trade unions will be considered in the context of the public sector pay freeze announced by the Chancellor in the in the 2020 Spending Review.

Market Supplements

The council re-introduced a market supplement policy in 2018 and the General Purposes Committee has agreed recruitment and retention allowances for some social work staff. Individual service areas do not have discretion to apply market supplements or other recruitment and retention payments and there is a governance structure in place to agree any new supplements based on a sound business case.

Fees for Election Duties

Election fees paid to employees (including chief officers) who assist in elections are in line with the rates agreed by the Government whenever general, regional or European elections occur. Where local elections occur fees will be determined using the cross- London agreed rates.

Pensions

All non-teaching employees are able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Teachers are able to join the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Benefits for both schemes are paid in accordance with government regulations. National Health Service employees who transferred to the council under TUPE have access to the NHS Pension Scheme under special provisions agreed as part of the transfer into local

government. Employees joining Public Health after the transfer are employed on Council terms and conditions and do have access to the LGPS.

Payments on Termination of Employment

In the event that the council terminates the employment of an employee on the grounds of redundancy the terms of the council's redundancy and early retirement arrangements will apply. Termination payments are also subject to any caps or repayment requirements introduced by government legislation. Where practicable, and unless the Chief Executive agrees otherwise, termination payments which exceed £100k will normally be agreed by full council or a committee of the council. Where a termination payment includes a special severance payment, due regard will be given to Statutory Guidance on the Making and Disclosure of Special Severance Payments By Local Authorities in England.

Re-employment of Employees

Section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that every appointment to paid office or employment in a local authority shall be made on merit.

The re-engagement of employees including chief officers who are made redundant is subject to the council's re-engagement arrangements (contained within the council's Managing Change Policy). The policy sets out the minimum period a former employee must wait before being eligible to work for the council again, as well as outlining other restrictions.

Employees who are made redundant may not be re-engaged within twelve months of their termination of employment for reasons of redundancy. After twelve months the employee may be re-engaged via the normal recruitment procedures either to carry out similar work or a different job. Re-engagement is subject to the approval of the relevant Director and the Corporate Director, Governance.

Tax avoidance

All permanent Brent staff including senior managers are paid through payroll which means that all taxes are deducted at source. A review of temporary staff is regularly conducted and it is Brent's policy to cover vacancies through the use of approved agency workers or by appointing staff on fixed term contracts. Temporary workers providing services through their own companies will be carrying out projects and generally not covering permanent roles other than in exceptional circumstances e.g. where interim cover is essential whilst a permanent appointment is recruited. Where these situations do occur they will be limited in duration, usually to less than 6 months.

The council's approach to dealing with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) changes to regulations for provision of personal services from April 2017 and further changes to off-payroll working introduced in April 2021, is to use the HMRC online assessment tool to determine the employment status of individuals for income tax

purposes. Most agency workers, consultants and interims are required to pay tax on a PAYE basis, like council employees.

Publication and access to information

Brent's annual Pay Policy Statement will be published on the website where it can be easily accessed. Information about chief officers' remuneration is published on the council's website www.brent.gov.uk in the section Senior Managers' pay.

Appendix Q: Summary of the HRA Business Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 This report includes proposal for HRA rent setting for 2024/25 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. A return to the CPI plus 1% model had helped to 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.

2.7 Due to exceptional inflation levels and cost of living crisis experienced during 2022/23 financial year, Government published a consultation paper that proposed a cap on social housing rent increases for 2023/24 and identified other options for the level of cap, period of cap and its application. The consultation closed on 12 October 2022. On 14 December 2022, Government issued its response to the Consultation and set a ceiling of 7% for 2023/24, compared to 11.1% if CPI plus 1% was applied. This ceiling resulted in an estimated £2m reduction of income when compared to the standard policy of CPI plus 1 (11.1%). Like most other housing providers, difficult decisions were required to reduce costs in order to close the gap between rental income and increasing cost of service delivery. Brent Housing Management services identified £3m worth of cost reductions during budget setting for 2023/24. There will be a reversion to the standard rent setting arrangements from 2024/25.

2.8 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.

2.9 In the context of the 30-year business plan, whilst a CPI plus 1% model helps to provide some stability and certainty, it does not entirely mitigate other risks which are present in the current economic climate. Factors such as the unprecedented increases in energy and material costs, repair and maintenance contracts and anticipated wage increases, mean that any decision to set rents at less than the maximum permitted, provides a significant risk to the sustainability of the HRA. Local authorities still need to cover the inflationary pressures within the HRA whilst delivering on their operational requirements and strategic priorities, some of which are additional legislative requirements, from repairs and maintenance, to building safety, fire safety and decarbonisation. A rent cap or lower than a CPI plus 1% increase combined with increasing costs results in even greater pressure on the HRA and a likely situation of spend exceeding income generated through rent and service charge collection.

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.

2.12 The Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA 2022) introduces fundamental reforms to the law and regulation of building safety, which seek to secure the safety of people in or about buildings and improve the standard of buildings. The scope and impact of the BSA is far-reaching. Its provisions will affect the design, planning, construction, occupation and alteration of future buildings. The Building Safety Regulator will be responsible for all regulatory decisions during the design, construction, occupation and refurbishment of High Rise Buildings (HRBs), which has been defined pursuant to the legislation as buildings over 18 meters or has at least 17 storeys.

2.13 The Council Housing Asset Management Strategy (AMS) 2022-2026 sets out a vision for responsive repairs, investment in high rise blocks, reform and improvement of the stock and its performance. The AMS consists of a 5-year budget requirement totalling £80.8m and spend re-profiling for this has been incorporated into the business plan.

2.14 Brent's high-rise blocks that are being retained require significant investment in terms of external fabric, internal works, and mechanical and electrical services. These high-rise blocks built in the 1960's and 1970's require major works if they are to achieve a further lifecycle beyond 40 years. The external walls of most of these blocks are in poor condition. Without refurbishment, these will deteriorate further and beyond the point of affordable refurbishment. The dwellings are generously sized and with refurbishment will continue to offer good accommodation to residents. The mechanical and electrical services are nearing the end of their usable life. Officers plan to undertake the major refurbishment and fire safety measures such as installing sprinklers. The business plan has incorporated £40m of investment over four years starting from current year 2023/24 on tower block refurbishment programme. The blocks are Kilburn Square, Lodge Court, Manor Court and Windmill Court.

2.15 As part of the South Kilburn regeneration programme, the Gloucester House & Durham Court site has been redeveloped to provide 235 new affordable homes to assured social tenants. These have been 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, provide the billing for heat to the residents. The associated costs are funded by service charges and through the HRA asset management strategy, in line with other communal heating networks.

2.16 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.

2.17 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.

2.18 Decarbonisation works to Council homes, including energy efficiency works that reduce demand for heat, is an important part of the AMS. The AMS plays an important role in the delivery of the Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. Homes account for 42% of direct carbon emissions in the Borough. The target is to achieve an average EPC band B rating by 2030 for Brent council stock, as it is important that the Council leads by example. Energy efficiency works will be important in helping tenants and leaseholders with the cost of living crisis by helping to reduce fuel costs. Supporting households with the cost of living crisis is a key priority in the Council's Draft Climate Strategy Delivery Plan for 2022-2024.

2.19 Whilst major refurbishment work on tower blocks are undertaken, there are opportunities to decarbonise properties to as high a standard as is practicable and achievable targeting at least an EPC B. The five-year Asset Management Plan therefore includes climate emergency works within the tower block programme now rather than having to return in later years with associated disruption and increased costs. The Council has been awarded £1.3m from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding grant. This will provide some contribution towards key energy efficiency measures such as external wall insulation, high performance windows, and renewable energy equipment

2.20 The Council has a commitment to deliver 5,000 affordable homes in the borough by 2028, of which 1,700 will be delivered directly by the Council. As of December 2023, 844 homes have already been delivered by the Council, with more in the pipeline. The current business plan has incorporated the expected delivery of an additional 285 new homes, along with the associated income and expenditure.

2.21 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 HRA, subject to a consultation with residents. The transfer was finalised on 1 April 2022, which involved the transfer of 84 social housing and 1 leasehold property, along with associated income and expenditures to maintain the stock. Remediation works estimated at £15.4m has been incorporated into the business plan.

3. Rent setting proposal for 2024/25

3.1 The table below shows a snapshot of current average rent levels from occupied properties and the proposed increase of 7.7% for 2024/25. All new re-lets are charged at Formula Rent and new builds are charged at Formula or Affordable Rent that are in line with Greater London Authority (GLA) benchmarks and are adjusted annually in line with rent standards. Updated rent levels are reflected in the current average rent for 2023/24, average rent can change depending on time of reporting. The average proposed rent rate for 2024/25 is £10.32 per week (7.7%) higher than the current financial year.

Tenant Rents for 2024/25

Bed Size	Current average rent 2023/24	Proposed average rent 2024/25 (7.7%)	Rent uplift
	£	£	£
Bedsits	98.49	106.07	7.58
1	117.43	126.47	9.04
2	136.48	146.98	10.50
3	148.19	159.60	11.41
4	162.84	175.37	12.53
5	174.10	187.50	13.40
6+	181.99	196.00	14.01
Average rent	**134.08**	**144.40**	**10.32**

3.2 A rent increase of 7.7% is estimated to result in additional £4.1m of income when compared to current levels of income. This is due to national inflation increasing by 6.7% compared to last year, which is a reflection of current economic climate.

3.3 For tenants in receipt of housing support to help pay their rent, the cost of rent increase will be met by their housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit, unless the level of support is reduced by factors that may apply to individual circumstances such as benefit cap. Brent Housing Management provide 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. Support options include assessing whether the tenant is claiming all the welfare benefits that they are entitled to, assisting them to claim from the Council's resident support fund and arranging a suitable payment plan. Brent Housing Management endeavour to identify vulnerable tenants and maintain contact with tenants in order to ensure that they continue to get the required support to sustain their tenancy.

3.4 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.

3.5 It is recognised that cost of living crisis and increased rental charges can have an adverse impact on the level of rent collections. Approximately 37% of rent charges are covered through housing benefit payments in 2022/23, which is estimated at £19.8m. The remaining 63% of income estimated at £34.1m are paid directly by tenants who are in employment or in receipt of universal credit and would be at risk of non-collection.

3.6 Collection rates 2023/24 on average stood at 96%. If this level of rent collection remained consistent for the year, this would result in an additional budget requirement of up to £1.2m in order to allow for risk of non-payments. The Council's Resident Support Fund helps to alleviate some of financial hardship being faced by tenants. However, collection rates are still expected to continue to be impacted. For every 1% drop in collection, the loss of income is estimated at £0.6m. Bad debts have been assumed at 2% of rental income per annum over 30 years, this equates to an average £2.1m rent loss per annum over the course of the business plan.

3.7 Supervision and management costs include allowances for pay inflation uplifts in the business plan. An assumed 6% inflation, similar to current year, is estimated to amount to an additional £0.7m budget requirement in 2024/25. Future pay inflations have been assumed at 6% in year 2, gradually reducing to 3% per annum from year 5 onwards in the business plan.

3.8 Repairs, maintenance and general costs include annual inflationary uplifts. The general cost inflations in the business plan are assumed at 4.4% in year 2, followed by reductions to 3.2% and 2.9% respectively in year 3 and 4, during forecasted reduction to inflation as per Bank of England Monetary Policy. Following years are assumed to increase gradually to 3% from year 5 onwards in business plan.

3.9 Efficiency savings targets are incorporated into the budget setting process and business plan, in line with the Council's overall budget setting process. A 0.5% efficiency target across management and repairs is assumed in the business plan in the first 5 years, followed by 1% per annum over the course of the remaining 25 years, equating to an average saving of £0.3m per annum over 30 years. This saving target is in addition to significant cost reduction of £3m incorporated into budget setting for current year 2023/24, along with further savings targets of £0.8m in 2024/25.

3.10 HRA business plan aims to set aside appropriate funds and incorporate a voluntary debt repayment policy that mirrors the General Fund approach. Calculations involve profiling debt repayments for new builds over 55 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 from

2019/20 onwards, reflecting the period when HRA borrowing exceeded previously set debt cap of £199.3m. In practice, repayments will be possible in years where there is capacity within accumulated operating reserve.

3.11 Operating reserve as at 31st March 2023 was £0.4m, and it is not anticipated to be drawn down while rent increases are set at CPI plus 1%. The opening reserve balance had reduced by £1m compared due to partially funding a provision in 2021/22 for identified refurbishment works to the Granville New Homes blocks that have transferred to the HRA from First Wave Housing on 1st April 2022. HRA reserves were used to cover the timing difference and the provision will be released when works commence, returning HRA reserve to the previous value of £1.4m.

3.12 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 and inflation has further stressed the importance of maintaining adequate level of reserves. Target operating reserve balance has been revised up from 3% to 5% of rental income in the business plan, which is approximately £2.9m in 2024/25. The operating reserve balance is not projected to reduce below £1.4m, however due to increased cost pressures in the current economic climate, current rent cap of 7%, along with increased investment to improve high rise blocks, target reserve levels are projected to be achieved from year 6 onwards, at an estimated reserve balance of £3.5m.

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 at the time.

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. CPI forecast is based on rate in September of previous year.	Rental income uses CPI, all other expenditure is assumed at RPI. CPI 3.4% in year 2, reducing to 2% from year 5 onwards. RPI 4.4% in year 2, reducing gradually to 3% from year 5 onwards.
Minimum Working Balance	Target level of minimum reserve for any overspends	Working balance requirements assumed at 5% of income giving circa £2.9m
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 £144 per week. Rent is adjusted as per government policy. Assumed CPI+1% for duration of business plan
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 estimated at 1% of rent
Bad Debts	Rent arrears that are not collected results in loss of income	Assumed on average 2% of rent

Description	How it impacts the Business Plan	Assumptions used in the Business Plan
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 15 sales per annum
Interest rate on borrowing	Rental income is allocated to financing debt	New debt is assumed at average interest rate of 5%.
Capital Programme - Major Works	Investment to maintain housing stock	Profiling over first 3 years based on Asset Management Strategy. Asumed £15m per annum from year 3 onwards.
HRA Debt Balance	The HRA debt balance as at 31st of March 2023 was £290m.	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 1,700 affordable homes by 31 March 2028	The current baseline business plan assumes 285 new affordable homes with an estimated cost remaining in the business plan of £62m over next 3 years.
Efficiency Savings	Savings contribute towards offsetting budget pressures	0.5% first 5 years then 1% efficiency savings target across revenue costs for management and repairs

5. Sensitivity Analysis

5.1 Alongside the baseline assumptions, sensitivity analysis have been undertaken to explore the impact on reserve balances from 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:

A) Baseline assumptions
B) RPI cost inflation 0.5% higher in years 2 to 4
C) Repairs and major works 1.5% higher than inflation in years 2 to 4
D) Rent freeze imposed from 2025/26 for 4 years
E) Voids and bad debts 0.5% higher from year 2 onwards
F) CPI reduction by 0.5% from year 7 onwards

5.2 The sensitivity analysis demonstrates that:

A) Baseline assumptions avoid deficits over 30 years with a projected reserve balance of £199.6m in year 30, which could potentially be used to reduce debt.

B) Cost inflation to RPI at 0.5% above baseline assumptions between years 2 to 4, is projected to result in reduction to current reserve balance to manage budget pressures in the short term. Projected 30-year reserve balance is £174.3m (£25.3m less than baseline).

C) Repair cost inflations of 1.5% above baseline from year 2 to 4, are projected to reduce existing reserve balances to manage budget pressures in the short term. The reserve balance in year 30 is projected at £145m (£54.6m less than baseline).

D) A four-year rent freeze from 2025/26 can have a significant impact on the health of the business plan, particularly in the immediate short-term, resulting in projected budget deficit of £17m over 4 years and £118m accumulated deficit over 30 years, making it unviable without significant cost reduction being identified.

E) Operational performance on void turnaround and income collection rates can have a significant impact on budgets. 0.5% increases to void rent loss (1% baseline) and bad debts (2% baseline) over the life of the business plan is projected to increase budget pressures over the next 6 years. It is estimated that reserves are likely to be reduced significantly below target levels to balance budgets over this period, leaving HRA at risk of deficit if mitigating cost reductions estimated at £4.1m over next 6 years are not identified.

F) If average annual CPI was to reduce by 0.5% to 1.5% from year 7 onwards, while inflation on expenditure remained the same as baseline at 3%. The average rental income inflation per annum will be 2.5% per annum. Reserve balance in year 30 is projected at £48.8m (£150.8m below baseline).

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. There has already been a change to the Council's power to increase rents annually up to a maximum of CPI plus 1%, with an introduced rent rise limitation of 7% in 2023/24. Implications of future Government regulated rent policy remain uncertain beyond April 2025.

6.3 Global conflicts, the long-term impact of pandemic, Brexit, high levels of inflation, labour shortages and rising interest rates present the Council with a volatile and uncertain economic environment. The cost of living crisis will impact residents of Brent and the Council is committed to doing what it can to support those in greatest need. Cost pressures and risk of income collection losses are continuously monitored.

6.4 Inflation over the past year has experienced such high levels that have not been seen since the 1980's. Besides rising energy costs, other goods are also experiencing increases in prices, due to factors such as labour shortages, pay rises, logistic issues and a general trend to increase prices and restore profit margins where previously slumps in demand had suppressed price levels.

6.5 In September 2023 CPI stood at 6.7% against a Bank of England target of 2%. The September inflation figures are important as they are used for the following years uplift on formula rent levels, 2023/24 being an exception with a 7% ceiling, as opposed to 11.1%. The gap between inflation on rent levels and inflation on costs is a significant risk to the long-term business plan. Inflation rates assumed in the current business plan is informed by projections from Bank of England, which is currently forecasting CPI inflation to return to the 2% target by the end of 2025.

6.6 The impacts of Universal Credit and cost of living crisis 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 on universal credit, along with Council Resident Support Fund to help with financial hardship.

6.7 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 decarbonisation, the cost of major works are rising. At the moment, there is insufficient government subsidy available to address these changes. The Asset Management Strategy and investment plans must be approached cautiously and allow for flexibility to scale back on schemes where required.

6.8 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.

6.9 Whilst the Council is confident in its ability to continue delivering affordable homes for Brent residents, there are social and economic factors, which are increasingly placing pressure on both current schemes that are on site and those in the Council's pipeline. Brexit, inflation, shortage of labour, materials and global events such as Covid-19 pandemic and wars have had an adverse effect on costs and therefore the financial viability of capital schemes. Developing affordable housing remains challenging within the current market which is resulting in the tenure of schemes being revisited and some pipeline schemes pausing. Though cost of materials have recently stabilised, they remain high. The average cost is now at £4,068 per sqm based on figures reported by London based affordable housing benchmarking collective. The Council also applies a 10% contingency to each schemes estimated build costs in order to mitigate against inflationary rises when assessing viability.

6.10 Significant grant funding is essential to pay for new build schemes. The Council has entered into grant agreements with the Greater London Authority governing the award of such funding to include the requirement to deliver specified numbers of new homes with start on site dates specified. Failure to observe grant conditions or achieve specified delivery numbers may lead to a requirement to repay grant funding and therefore efficient and timely delivery approaches are essential to mitigate the risk.

6.11 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. Brent Council operates a one-pool approach to its borrowing, where the HRA receives a proportion of the Council's overall borrowing but with a reduced rate. Having remained at 1% or less since February 2009, base rates began rising in June 2022. The forecast borrowing rate for the HRA is informed by the Bank of England Monetary Policy, with projections for base rates to remain at current rates of 5.25% until 2024 Q3 and decline gradually to 4.25% by the end of 2026. Interest rates for new borrowing during this period in the business plan have been assumed at an average rate of 5%.

6.12 Spend targets for 1-4-1 receipts set by Government mean that the Council may need to transfer receipts with compounded interest, if spend targets are not met within 5 years of receiving the receipt. There are currently sufficient schemes in pipeline to be able to utilise receipts towards adding affordable housing in Brent.

6.13 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, a proportion of the population who are elderly 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.

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Brent	**Cabinet** 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services
	Lead Member – Leader of the Council (Councillor Muhammed Butt)

Future of Resident Support Fund (RSF) and New Model of Support

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Four Appendix 1: Cost-of-Living Pilots Monitoring Frameworks Appendix 2: Update on the Cost-of-Living OBR Pilots Appendix 3: Cost of Living Statement Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. This report outlines proposals for introducing a new model of support for Brent residents from April 2024, which has been developed through the piloting of Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) projects and guided by a series of Design Principles agreed with Members in December 2023. The report proposes a single, joined-up model including development of a Community Wellbeing Programme aligned with a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), designed to support residents to be more resilient in the longer term and align more closely with strategic priorities and related projects.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

2.1 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.

2.2 Agree that:

2.2.1 the access criteria for the Community Wellbeing Service (detailed from section 4.24 of the report) are delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Director of Public Health; and

2.2.2 authority to amend the award criteria for RSF and CRF funds are delegated to the Corporate Director of Resident Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities and Culture.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 The proposed model of resident support detailed in this report supports the Brent Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 priorities of ‘Thriving Communities’, ‘A Healthier Brent’ and ‘Prosperity and Stability in Brent’, including a focus on achieving the desired outcome of ‘Easing the Cost-of-Living Crisis’ for our residents. This work also closely aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027 ‘Healthy Lives’ priority, and will support the new Brent Food Strategy, which is currently in development.

4.0 Background

4.1 In December 2023, Members were presented with a report providing an update on the pilot projects that were developed through the Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) and considerations for further developing them into a single, more-joined up support model.

4.2 To guide development of the model, the following design principles were presented and ratified by Members:

1. The model should support residents to become more resilient and independent.
2. The programmes and support available should be targeted and easily accessible to those who need them most.
3. The model should incentivise skills and employment and address physical and mental health challenges.
4. The model should align with and support connectivity between related support offers (including those detailed in the Cost of Living statement).
5. Development of the model should be intelligence-led
6. The model should be sustainable.

4.3 This report details how these design principles are being applied to guide the development of a new model that will succeed the current Resident Support Fund (RSF) and apply the learning from the Cost-of-Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) to better support residents in the longer term.

Cost-of-Living Outcomes Based Review Pilot Projects (OBR)

4.4 An Outcome Based Review (OBR) constitutes a system-wide review, bringing together diverse groups of stakeholders to collaborate in tackling crosscutting issues by using design-led methodologies, across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

4.5 Brent Council has successfully utilised the OBR approach for several years. Previous OBR themes include Welfare Reform, Housing Vulnerable People, Domestic Abuse, and Children on the Edge of Care. Outputs of previous OBR's directly led to the creation of the borough-wide Brent Hubs model and the design of Family Wellbeing Centres, as well as other initiatives.

4.6 In 2022, Brent Council launched a Cost-of-Living themed Outcomes Based Review (OBR) aimed at developing tailored solutions to best support residents impacted by the ongoing Cost-of-Living crisis. A cross-council working group was convened to monitor the cost-of-living strategic risk and resulting mitigating actions, including supporting the delivery of the OBR and ensuring the work aligns with key corporate strategies and initiatives such as the Brent Poverty Commission.

4.7 Insights from an extensive Discovery phase were shared at a Visioning Day collaboration event in September 2022, attended by over 80 of the partners and stakeholders that were engaged throughout the OBR process. Attendees were facilitated to generate and prioritise ideas for new solutions that respond to the challenges and opportunities identified.

4.8 Several pilot projects emerged and have been in testing and development throughout 2023/24, in partnership with local organisations and stakeholders. The pilot projects are:

- **Community Wellbeing Project (CWP):** aims to increase community resilience, tackle food insecurity and provide holistic interventions to better support residents in the long term, and to prevent vulnerable families from experiencing severe financial crisis. Partnership with Sufra NW London.

- **Crisis Response Fund:** a rapid cash payment of £200, or £400 for white goods, for residents facing an emergency. Several trusted Brent teams and partners are able to complete applications on behalf of residents.

- **Debt Advice:** In partnership with Advice 4 Renters, two dedicated debt advisors situated across Brent Hubs providing specialist debt advice, income maximisation reviews, application support for benefits and support funds and referrals onto other support organisations as required.

- **Immigration Advice**: In partnership with Northwest London Law Centre, specialist immigration advisors are situated across the Brent Hubs delivering an immigration advice programme.

- **Upskilling Frontline staff:** consisted of a programme of upskilling staff training sessions, the Practitioners network aiming to bring together frontline practitioners to share information and knowledge, and a debt advice apprenticeship offered to Brent Hubs staff to upskill in providing specialist debt advice.

4.9 An overarching outcomes framework was developed for all Cost-of-Living pilots to support evaluation of their impact and joint outcomes. Each pilot also has a tailored monitoring and outcomes framework against which the pilot is evaluated. All frameworks can be found in Appendix 1 of the report.

4.10 Detail on all Cost-of-Living pilots including monitoring and outcomes can be found in the Appendix 2 of the report.

4.11 Evaluation of the Cost-of-Living OBR pilots show that they are effective in supporting residents both through their individual, core purposes as well as by connecting them with aligned services and other local support. Over the lifespan of the pilots they have been continuously developed to increase join-up of the offers, for example, introducing access to the Debt Advice Service via the CWP in Bridge Park, and the extension of facilitating Crisis Response Fund (CRF) applications to additional services and partners including Family Wellbeing Centres and Sufra NW London (to facilitate CRF applications for CWP members).

4.12 The pilot phase of this programme is due to end in March 2024. Following feedback from Members, detailed work to further develop, align and formalise the pilot services to become a core part of a more cohesive and sustainable BAU model has been completed. This includes development work to ensure greater alignment and connectivity with wider Brent offers and initiatives (as summarised in the Cost of Living Statement – Appendix 3 of the report).

Resident Support Fund (RSF) and Household Support Fund (HSF)

4.13 The Resident Support Fund (RSF) was established in August 2020 in response to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. From 2020 to date the RSF scheme has been administered and further developed as a discretionary fund available to Brent residents experiencing financial difficulties.

4.14 In March 2021, following input from the Brent Poverty Commission and consultation with colleagues and partners across Brent, Cabinet agreed that the council's Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) scheme, would be discontinued and that all remaining funds from the LWA scheme would be transferred to the RSF scheme. Following this, Cabinet further agreed a commitment in the Borough Plan for RSF to continue in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

4.15 Historic analysis of RSF awards shows that the five most common reasons for awards granted are for the increased cost of living, rent arrears, council tax arrears, white goods and debt.

4.16 In the period August 2020 to March 2023, RSF made 8,058 awards to residents with a total spend of £13.06 million. From April 2023, new RSF criteria, including a maximum £1,000 award per application and limiting the number of awards per year to one, were implemented to contain the spend within the available budget. For the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, RSF has supported 2,773 households with a total spend of £2m.

4.17 From August 2020 to date the RSF has been funded by the Council and topped up by Household Support Fund (HSF) and other available funds.

4.18 Brent Council's current allocation for HSF is £5,562,445, which must be used from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and of which £2m has been allocated as a top up to the RSF. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2023 this provided support to 18,291 households with a total of £5.2m already spent. We anticipate to spend the full grant by March 2024. The Council cannot carry over any residue of the HSF grant fund to the next financial year (2024/25).

4.19 This matrix sets out the allocation of HSF 2023/2024 funds for different groups of residents and the fund available for RSF for reactive support to the most vulnerable households:

Table 1: Breakdown of HSF 2023/2024 allocation

Type of Support	Number of Households supported	Amount
Free school meals during holidays (13 weeks) £15 per week per child	7850	£1,530,750
Food vouchers for 0-4 year olds during holidays (13 weeks) where parents/guardian are in receipt of Housing Benefit	1740	£339,300
Emergency Super Market Vouchers	410	£87,395
Disabled residents £50 one off payment	6600	£330,000
Housing Benefits only (no other government grant) £900 one off payment	750	£675,000
Local food bank grants		£200,000
Partners, charities and voluntary organisations	500	£250,000
Carers in Brent (Housing costs)	150	£150,000
Resident Support Fund	2000	£2,000,000
Total	**20,000**	**£5,562,445**

4.20 It is currently unclear what level of HSF funding (if any) will be available to Local Authorities from 2024/2025 to help support residents, including via locally designed schemes like the RSF. In this context, despite the significant financial challenges facing the Council, £1m has been allocated to the RSF in the 2024/25 budget, which is being considered on the same agenda as this Cabinet meeting. However, as demonstrated at paragraph 4.15, this will not be sufficient funding to continue administering the RSF scheme in its current form. It is proposed, therefore, that the RSF in its current form ceases as of April 2024, and that the £1m budget allocation is used to fund the new, more sustainable model of support detailed in this paper.

Developing the model

4.21 Evaluation of the Cost-of-Living OBR pilots (Appendix 2) shows that they are effective in supporting residents both through their individual, core purposes as well as by connecting them with aligned services and other local support. In accordance with the design principles at 4.2, the new arrangements will incorporate key elements of these pilots and develop them into a consolidated and more sustainable borough-wide model of support.

4.22 The vision for this model is to move away from providing short-term financial assistance towards focussing on more sustainable outcomes through a behaviour-centred approach. The ambition is to provide a multifaceted programme including the space, tools, and knowledge to support residents to improve their situation and increase opportunities in the longer-term, reducing long-term dependency on services. This aligns with recommendations in a report commissioned by the GLA and London Councils to work towards a preventative approach, intervening upstream to build long-term resilience and ensuring that effective models and ways of working that emerged through the cost-of-living crisis are embedded in longer-term ways of working. This also builds organisational memory and can minimise effects of future crises.[1]

4.23 By further developing, consolidating, and aligning the OBR projects with the refreshed RSF and existing services - for example Brent Hubs, Brent Start and GP surgeries - the new model will promote independence for residents and enable more sustainable outcomes.

4.24 The proposed new model consists of a 'Community Wellbeing Service' – an expanded version of the Community Wellbeing Project which has been piloted at Bridge Park and supports up to 400 families per year. Capacity will be increased with the Community Wellbeing Service operating five days per week at a new location where it can be co-located with wider support provision. This will include capacity to support 1,000 families and residents per year through a three-month membership programme. Eligibility for the expanded offer will include health needs, with health professionals, including GP Social Prescribers, able to refer.

4.25 The model also includes a Resident Support Fund (RSF), Crisis Response Fund (CRF) and interest-free loan offer in partnership with Hillingdon Credit Union. The level and types of payments available in the new model are based on learning from historic RSF and CRF awards and the former Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) scheme, which Brent operated between 2013 and 2021. LWA payments were made for expenses incurred to help with disaster situations like fires and floods, or to help vulnerable residents to live an independent life in the community. These generally covered costs of furniture and white goods, connection and removal costs, minor repairs in certain accommodation, travel costs and essential clothing and footwear. The proposed model will support similar short-term financial pressures through a Crisis Response Fund with a maximum award amount of £200. There will also be a Resident Support Fund with a maximum annual amount of up to £500 which could be used to help with food, utility bills and arrears, as well as referrals to the Credit Union for interest free loans, for example, if the resident's need is greater than £500 or includes credit or store card debt. The CRF and RSF will also act as a gateway to connect the applicant with a wider package of support relevant to their longer-term sustainability.

[1] Winter Learning: Support for low-income households in winter 2022/23 Key Findings. Published August 2023. Research commissioned by the GLA and London Councils, conducted by Social Life.

4.26 To ensure the support package available through the new model meets local needs, it is proposed that specialist Immigration and Debt Advice offers (piloted in partnership with Northwest London Law Centre and Advice 4 Renters respectively) are incorporated into the wider programme, and debt advice capacity increased through further apprenticeship training for Brent officers. These building blocks will align with existing provision including Brent Hubs, FWCs, Brent Start, and the Turning Point, and will ensure core support such as ESOL classes, digital training and other life skills are embedded in the offer. Additional employment and skills provision is also currently being explored for inclusion in the programme, including a potential partnership with the London Community Kitchen to support residents with training courses on horticulture and employment within the hospitality industry via an Employment and Skills Project located in Alperton.

4.27 Beyond this, there are opportunities to develop additional offers in-line with the Design Principles set out at 4.2 to further strengthen the model and support longer-term outcomes. These include a new Employment and Skills-themed OBR, which launched in December 2023 and is focussing on enabling residents to better support themselves through employment, as well as opportunities for expanding on national Breathing Space legislation through local initiatives (i.e. 'Brent Breathing Space'), which could test the potential to 'write-off' a proportion of a resident's debt to the Council (e.g. Council Tax arrears) upon their completion of a tailored programme of support.

Support with urgent needs

4.28 Support with urgent needs is a key element of the model and includes the provision of cash awards via the RSF and CRF. The value of the cash awards would be up to £500, compared to current RSF arrangements of up to £1000. To support residents to become more independent, this part of the model also includes referrals to the Credit Union for interest free loans and directs residents with urgent needs to engage in parts of the programme suitable to their wider needs and has the potential to provide higher value, more sustainable outcomes.

4.29 As part of the application for Resident Support Fund cash payments, there will be an option to request additional support, for example with debt, finding employment, getting online. This will link applicants with elements of the model suitable to their needs. Crisis Response Fund applications can only be made by recognised services, these currently include Brent Hubs, Family Wellbeing Centres and some VCS partners (including members of the Practitioners Network). As part of this process, residents will also be linked to additional support within the programme.

4.30 Table 2 below show's example scenarios of those who may access the model through these routes, and the potential outcomes.

Table 2: Example scenarios of residents with urgent needs

Scenario	1. Urgent needs	2. Wider needs	3. Outcome / Next steps
1	Resident requires new white goods due to recent fire in their property.	Process confirms this is a **stand-alone emergency** and resident has no wider support need.	• Eligibility confirmed, resident receives cash payment. **No further action needed.**
2	Resident requests assistance due to several outstanding utility bills.	Process identifies resident is experiencing other debt-related issues.	• Resident is connected with Brent debt advice service for debt-related support. • Resident receives cash payment.
3	Resident requests assistance to support with purchasing food for their family.	Process identifies that resident's family is struggling with food insecurity.	• Resident is referred to Community Wellbeing Service and can access food support and other wraparound support. • Resident receives cash payment.
4	Resident is struggling to repay council debts	Process identifies resident is currently unemployed but would like to find a job.	• Resident is referred to employment element of model to support with obtaining a job. • Ethical Debt Recovery policy applied, giving resident breathing space and debt advice
5	Resident is facing financial pressures, including credit card debt	Process identifies resident has digital skills needs	• Resident is referred into skills element of the model for digital inclusion support • Resident is referred to Credit Union and receives interest free loan.

Longer term support and sustainability

4.31 A key enabler for longer-term sustainability is through improving access to and further designing improved skills, employment and health outcomes into the model. This would include connecting more residents with an enhanced offer modelled on the Community Wellbeing Project pilot at Bridge Park, where members currently enrol to take part in a three-month scheme and for a £4 weekly fee can access:

- A Community Kitchen – providing free evening meals
- A Community Café – providing free hot lunches and snacks

- A Community Shop – providing access to a weekly shop worth approx. £25 consisting of food staples, fresh fruit, vegetables and toiletries
- A 1-2-1 assessment with a Brent Hubs advisor, including creation of a personal development plan based on individual needs
- Welfare, health and wellbeing and employment advice, themed drop-ins and workshops from partners
- Free access to Bridge Park Leisure Centre gym facilities

4.32 It is proposed to extend delivery of this two-days-per-week offer at Bridge Park for six months from April – October 2024 before transitioning to a new location at New Millennium Day Centre, which will be open five-days-per-week and will be able to support up to 1,000 families and residents per year through the Community Wellbeing Service.

4.33 Locating the service at New Millennium Day Centre provides the space and facilities required to effectively deliver the expanded Kitchen, Café and Shop offer as well as make use of other on-site facilities including the arts space and garden. Additional spaces within the New Millennium Day Centre site also provide opportunities to co-locate the service with complementary offers such as Brent Hubs, as well as test new approaches, for example, those developed through the current Employment and Skills OBR. This approach also aligns with savings proposals relating to the site, including supporting development of a more dynamic day support offer for existing ASC client groups that would include continued use of spaces within the centre on a sessional basis for day opportunities.

4.34 In line with the model design principles at 4.2, this location is accessible for residents (including through 206 and 226 Bus Routes) and is located in a deprived area with low food accessibility (based on e-food desert index EFDI) and high levels of RSF applications and Council Tax Arrears. It is also within walking distance of the Willesden Centre for Health and Care (2 minutes) and both Harlesden and Willesden High Roads (15 minutes).

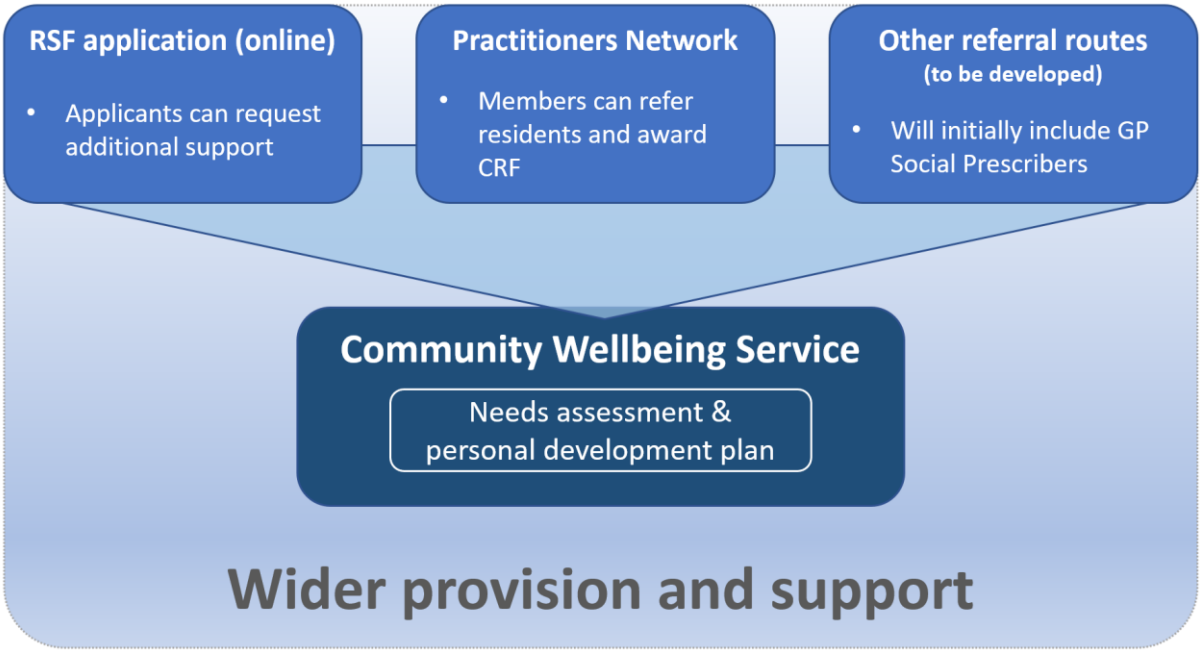
4.35 Referrals into the service will come from members of the Cost-of-Living Practitioners Network, which includes council services such as Brent Hubs, FWCs and other front-line staff, as well as VCS partners. New referral routes will be developed with GP Social Prescribers and Public Health Community Support Officers and BHM leads, and discussions are also taking place with DWP about improving referral routes.

4.36 Residents referred into the service will receive a full needs assessment and will co-produce a personal development plan with an advisor. This will include linking them with wider provision and support including help with debt, support with physical and mental health, and preparing for employment. Alongside the support agreed in this plan, the resident (and their family) will gain access to the offers listed at 4.30 (access arrangements to local gym facilities will be developed).

4.37 Benefits identified through piloting this approach included residents reporting greater financial resilience, improved mental and physical wellbeing, improved

knowledge of and access to local support services, and improved access to affordable food and other essentials. Wider benefits have also included increased confidence, reduced stigma in accessing support, multiple scheme members becoming volunteers within the service, and prevention of escalating needs. Through extending the service at the New Millennium Day Centre site and further enhancing the model with connectivity to and from related services more residents will be supported to become more resilient in the longer-term.

Image 1: Community Wellbeing Programme - pathways of support



Financial benefits of early intervention models

4.38 Whilst the model will provide short term financial assistance to those in emergency situations, it is focused on an early intervention approach, with the aim of intervening as soon as possible to reduce demand for more costly services in the future. Where there is an opportunity to address issues early and avoid escalation to other Brent Services, statutory services and local organisations, there is a potential financial cost avoidance benefit (outlined in the table below)

Table 3: Potential cost benefits

Need	Outcome and benefits	Who does benefit accrue to?	Potential cost benefit per 1 unit **Source: Greater Manchester New Economy Model: Cost Benefit Analysis Tool July 2023[2] unless stated otherwise**
Employment	Increased employment: 1. Fiscal benefit of moving people off benefits and into work 2. Improved health outcomes 3. Increased income	DWP - JSA	£19,153 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
		DH - ESA	£15,963 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
		Individuals – Income Support (IS)	£10,504 economic and fiscal value per claimant per year
Improved skill levels	Increase in earnings amongst residents achieving Level 2 NVQ and residents progressing to Level 3	Population without Level 2 qualifications	£443 economic and fiscal value
Mental Health	Reduced Health cost of interventions	NHS/Individuals	£4,671 – economic and fiscal value per person per year
Housing and Homelessness	Reduced Temporary Accommodation costs	Brent Council	£442.50 **weekly** **Source: Brent Council records, average weekly cost of a Temporary Accommodation placement between 1st April 2023 and 31st December 2023*
	Housing evictions - reduced costs of legal proceedings and repair of property	Housing Provider	£6,680 per incident
Wellbeing	Increased wellbeing of the population	Individuals / society	£13,000 social benefit (per one-point improvement in life satisfaction, per person per year)
	Alleviation of loneliness	Health and social care	Approx £3 per £1 long-term return on investment **Source: LGA: Combating Loneliness, a guide for local authorities* [3]

4.39 As part of the new model, a tracking system to monitor individuals' following their needs assessment will support with monitoring of impact and outcomes against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers.

[2] Greater Manchester New Economy Model: Cost Benefit Analysis Tool 2023 v5.1.2

[3] Case studies in Local Government Association's Combating Loneliness: a guide for Local Authorities, pg 14.

4.40 Table 4 below provides an overview of the timeline and key activities for developing and implementing the new model.

Table 4: Proposed timeline

Period	Activity
Jan – Mar 2024	Cost-of-Living Pilot Projects continue to operate.
Jan – Apr	Develop referral routes with GP's and Social Prescribers
Feb – Apr	Develop criteria for refreshed RSF and CRF and update forms, comms, materials etc.
Feb – May	Tender for partners to deliver Debt Advice and Immigration Advice services
Feb – Sep	Develop future offer and arrangements for ASC client groups at New Millenium Day Centre
Mar	Anticipated date of HSF 2024/2025 allocation announcement
Apr	Move to new RSF and CRF criteria
Apr – Oct	Continue with two-days-per-week Wellbeing support at Bridge Park
Apr – Oct	Tender for partner to deliver five-days-per-week service at New Millennium Day Centre
Apr – Oct	Identify other services to move to New Millennium Day Centre
Apr – Oct	Pilot referral routes with GP social prescribers with small group
Apr – Oct	Pilot new Employment and Skills offers developed through OBR

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 The Cost-of-Living Outcomes Based Review process included early stakeholder and community engagement, and co-development of prototype ideas with key stakeholders. Ward members are regularly updated on the actions the Council is taking to mitigate the impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis on Brent residents.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 Table 5 below shows costs and funding for the proposed model for 2024-2027.

Costs	Funding	YEAR 1 2024-5	YEAR 2 2025-6	YEAR 3 2026-7
Operational costs for continuing 2 day per week service at Bridge Park for 6 months		£249,706		
Annual operational costs for running expanded service at NMDC (six months only in Y1)		£287,571	£575,142	£575,142
Grant for Alperton Employment & Skills project		£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Grant for debt advice provision		£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Grant for immigration advice provision		£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Grant for additional food support initiatives		£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Top up for Credit Union loan fund		£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Funding for CRF and RSF payments		£899,723	£689,858	£689,858
TOTAL COSTS		**£1,662,000**	**£1,490,000**	**£1,490,000**
	Borough plan poverty commission funding	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000
	Public Health contribution	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
	UK SPF funding	£172,000		
	Funding for RSF	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
TOTAL FUNDING		**£1,662,000**	**£1,490,000**	**£1,490,000**

6.2 The additional £172k funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been confirmed for the Community Kitchen model with Sufra NW London for 2024/2025. Other grants, such as the GLA's Food Roots grant, may become available and officers will actively monitor for opportunities.

6.3 If further funding is made available through the HSF, this model will be delivered and the additional funding used to enhance the offer, with potential to upscale to other locations in areas of high need.

Use of the public health grant reserve for the development of the Community Wellbeing Service

6.4 The public health grant reserve is subject to the same grant conditions as the original grant. The development of the Community Wellbeing Service as described in this paper allows the public health grant to be pooled with RSF, UKSPF and any HSF to support the service. The new service will have a more explicit focus on health needs in the eligibility criteria and be open to individuals as well as families. Closer working between Brent Health Matters (BHM), public health and various debt, employment and immigration service offers will be progressed along with the creation of new referral routes with GP Social Prescribers and Public Health Community Support Officers and BHM leads.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides that Local Government may pay a grant to a local authority towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it. Subject to the conditions put in place, failure to spend Government grants in accordance with Government grant conditions could result in the requirement to return all Government Funding.

7.2 In relation to the Housing Support Fund and the way in which monies are spent, the Council is required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund, clearly setting out their priorities and approach for use of the Fund, and to demonstrate the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding. Accordingly, payment from the Housing Support Fund into the Resident Support Fund.

7.3 The Localism Act 2011 section 1. introduced “the general power of competence” which enables authorities “to do anything that individuals generally may do”. The proposals within this report relating to the payment of grants from its resources are consistent with the Council exercising this power. Instead of being able to act only where the law permits it, local authorities are free to do anything provided they do not contravene other limitations set out in legislation or policy.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the “Public Sector Equality Duty”), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
(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,

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

8.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposals in this report has been completed and is included at Appendix 4 of the report.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 There are none at this stage.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

10.1 The Community Wellbeing Project pilot is currently in operation from Bridge Park Leisure Centre, Stonebridge, NW10 0RG and will continue to operate from this premises in the short term. This is a Brent Council owned site and is currently under a land sale agreement with longer term redevelopment plans. An appropriate lease arrangement is being agreed between Brent Council and Sufra NW London to ensure the proposals in this paper do not undermine the land sale agreement.

10.2 Proposals to provide an expanded Community Wellbeing Service from the New Millennium Day Centre site at 1 Robson Ave, London NW10 3SG are subject to the outcome of a public consultation that ran from 6 December 2023 - 14 January 2024 and included proposals to end existing arrangements for day support at the centre in 2024. The proposals in this paper align with those in the consultation and support development of a more dynamic day support offer.

11.0 Communication Considerations

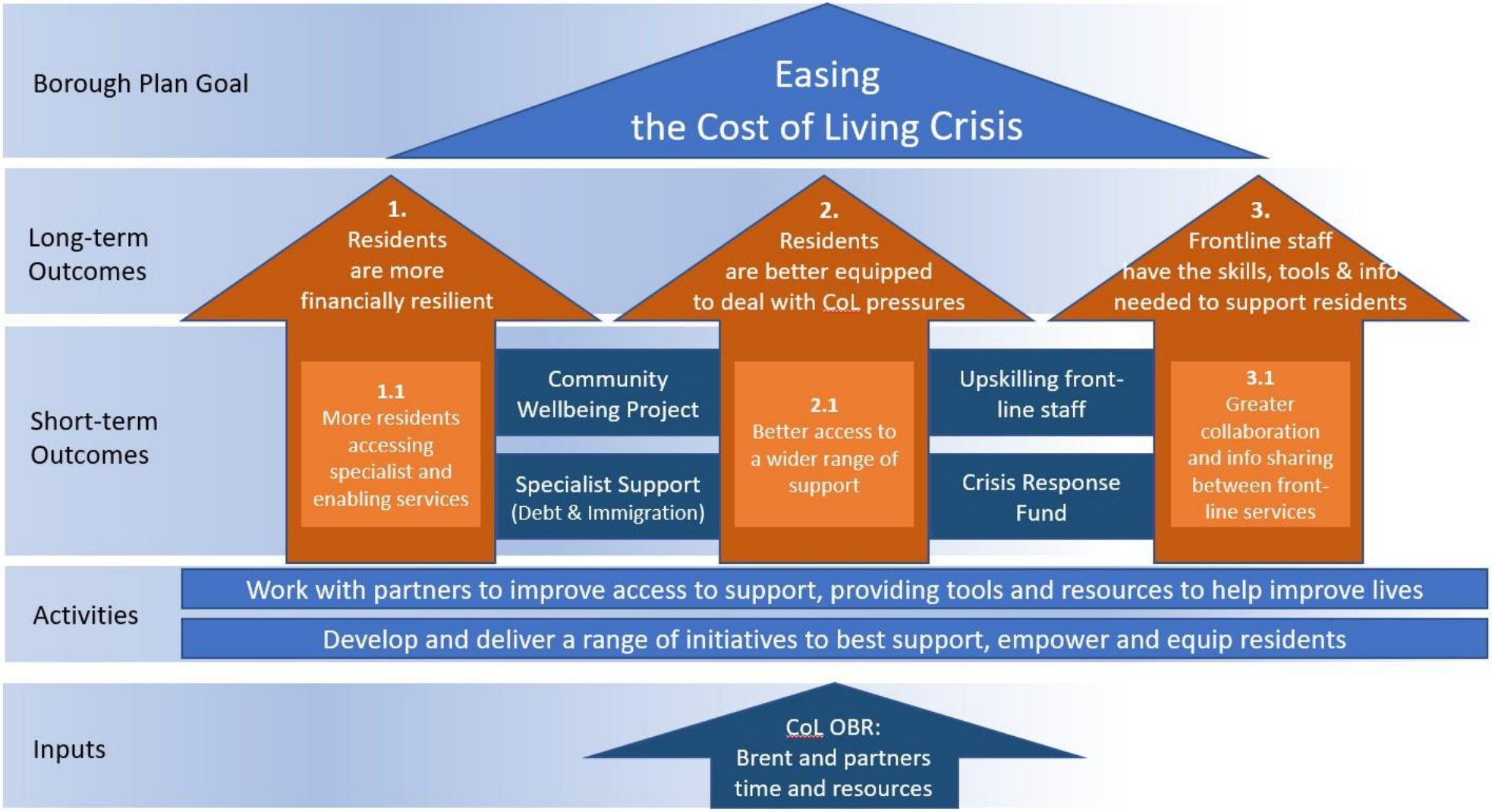
11.1 New materials and targeted stakeholder campaigns will be developed to effectively communicate the Community Wellbeing Programme and refreshed RSF and CRF criteria.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Corporate Director of Resident Services

Appendix 1:

A1: Cost-of-Living OBR Pilots: Monitoring Framework



A2: Monitoring Framework Community Wellbeing Project

Community Wellbeing Project

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

Levels of poverty in Brent are high, lending to our residents being one of the worst impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

To address this, easing the effects of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for Brent Council with an aim to provide more holistic support, tailored to complex needs and co-designed with local stakeholders.

The Cost of Living OBR identified that some feel there is stigma associated to accessing certain support services, such as food banks. The OBR also picked up on the importance of community resilience. With Brent recently becoming a Right to Food borough, this paves a unique opportunity for alternative models of support for residents with complex needs.

Drivers

Resources:

1. Staff
   a. Project staff
   b. Other staff ie. project support, support from other VCS orgs.
2. Funding (statutory and charitable)
3. Partnerships - with local community organisations and food aid charities.
4. Suitable premises (with commercial kitchen)

Relationships:

1. Buy-in from local community
2. Buy-in from local organisations
3. Partnerships with local community organisations

Political will:
Local government focus on tackling effects of the cost of living crisis and poverty.

Communication:
Sharing best practice and success stories

Idea / Concept

To mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis by aiming to reduce food poverty and build community resilience amongst local communities in Brent. To do so by working in collaboration with local organisations and charities, to put in place targeted interventions that benefit residents with complex needs and tackle the underlying causes of poverty.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Cost of Living Outcomes Based Review research, identifying need for wraparound support in tackling the crisis. • Engagement with residents and VCS sector representatives. • Partnership with delivery partner Sufra NW London, existing food aid charity in the borough. • Funding for staffing costs, food contribution and set-up and ongoing project costs. • Council-owned property with suitable facilities. • Partnership with specialist organisations in Brent. • Partnership with Brent Hubs. • Support from internal services eg Employment and Skills Service, Public Health.	• OBR Research • Community engagement: pop-ups, workshops, ethnographic interviews. • Engagement with VCS professionals • Visioning Day outcomes • Prototyping session with Transformation Team • Liaison with Sufra NW London around partnership working on the model. • Arrangements around Brent Council's funding of project. • Coordination and preparation of suitable premises, to fit-to-use condition. • Arrangements to prepare commercial kitchen. • Purchase of equipment for shop and hire of kitchen equipment and storage facilities. • Ongoing project support. • Promotion of programme internally and externally. • Extension of programme for Phase 2 between Aug-23 to Mar-24, all necessary arrangements inc. lease, grant arrangements, equipment hire extension and continued partnership and support from Brent services.	• Residents supported with access to affordable food and other essentials, through on-site hot meals and take away weekly food shops. • Residents supported with initial assessments and identification of personal needs. • Residents receive advice and support from Brent Hubs advisors. • Residents referred to relevant partner organisations based at Bridge Park. • Residents booked on to relevant themed workshops hosted at Bridge Park. • Creation of personal development plans. • Residents feel dignified when accessing support. • Residents able to access a social community space.	• Increased levels of financial resilience for members of the programme. • Improved mental and physical wellbeing. • Improved awareness and ability to access local support services. • Improved access to affordable food, increasing food security. **For Phase 2 (Aug-23 to Mar-24), as well as the above:** • Improved access to employment, skills and training support.	• Improved financial resilience. • Improved mental and physical wellbeing. • Improved awareness of support services and how they can be accessed • Increased access to affordable food for residents with complex needs. **For Phase 2 (Aug-23 to Mar-24), as well as the above:** • Improved access to employment, skills and training support.	**Short term / Quantitative usage indicators:** • No. of referrals into programme • No. of registered members. • No. of weekly food shops • No. of members accessing the cafe and kitchen. • No. of non-members accessing cafe and kitchen • Registration and attendance at workshop sessions. • Registration and attendance of members at leisure facilities included in membership. Medium/Longer term measures: • Baseline, mid-way and end of programme survey, **questions centred around medium-term outcomes.** • Case studies • Informal feedback during visits • Week 6, mid-way and end monitoring and evaluation report. • Focus groups.

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Residents in Brent were harshly affected by effects of the cost of living crisis. • Wraparound support is important towards financial resilience • Some residents in Brent have poor access to food and groceries. • There is a level of stigma attached to accessing some support services such as food banks. • Community resilience is important towards facilitating strong, connected communities.	• Property - suitable space is required to host the programme. Commercial kitchen required as well as sufficient space to host a shop, cafe, assessments, workshops, drop ins. • Financial resource - costs associated with preparing premises to usable standard and ongoing costs including facility and equipment hire. • Access to food.	Operational: • Momentum from Cost of Living OBR and Visioning Day. • Partnership working with local food aid charity Sufra, delivery partners for the project. • Partnership and support from Brent Hubs and other Brent services such as Strategic: • Easing effects of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for Brent Council • Brent Council recently became a Right To Food borough. • Local charity organisations who support new models of delivery.

A3: Monitoring Framework Crisis Response Fund

Crisis Response Fund

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

The Resident Support fund has faced increased demand due to the cost of living crisis, offering up to £1000 of support for residents facing unforeseen financial issues. The wait for RSF applications has been between 4-8 weeks meaning that residents needing urgent support have to seen financial support elsewhere, and potentially risk accruing more debt.

Drivers

The need for a quicker way to respond to the cost of living crisis was highlighted throughout the Outcome Based Review process, and the Visioning Day.
Drivers: Brent Hubs, RSF Team, Transformation Team, Advice 4 Renters, Brent Reach, The Sheriffs Centre

Resources:
- Officers from RSF team checking CRF applications from partners
- Briefing sessions with partners (Transformation team)
- Partner officers identifying residents who are eligible for the fund

Relationships:
- RSF team, partner officers, transformation team and Family Wellbeing Centres

Political will:
- Brent council sees cost of living crisis as a strategic priority

Communication:
- Briefing sessions
- internal networks (practitioners network, cost of living working group)

Idea / Concept

The Crisis Response Fund aims to address the long-wait times for the RSF by providing emergency financial support up to £200 (up to £400 for white goods). The CRF is a partnership project with several internal teams and trusted VCS partners, who are able to identify residents who require financial support in emergencies, such as broken white goods, flooding or needing money for essentials.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Cost of Living OBR research identified residents struggling financially and having to go into debt for unforeseen expenses, e.g. broken white goods. • Engagement with residents via ethnographic interviews • Engagement with VCS partners via interviews and attending relevant forums to understand COL impact • Crisis Response Fund idea brainstormed with partners during the Visioning Day, empowering partners to identify residents in need of urgent financial support	• OBR research, involving horizon scanning and data analysis • Community engagement; ethnographic interviews • Visioning Day involved engagement with VCS sector and internal partners to brainstorm solutions to COL crisis • Prototyping session with Transformation team to develop CRF approach • Internal meetings to agree eligibility and process with RSF team • Agreement of eligibility and criteria with RSF team, Brent Hubs and partners. • Briefing sessions for 3 partners to outline the process. • Expanding the programme to Family Wellbeing Centre triage officers.	• Residents supported when faced with an emergency situation. • Residents referred onto other relevant services. • Greater communication and links built between partners and council services.	• Stronger links built between partner organisations and Brent services. • Sharing of information about support across the Council. • Residents develop trusted relationships with partners and Council services.	• Residents supported in an emergency. • Reducing reliance on exploitative credit sources. • Better links and sharing of information between partners, local charities and Brent services. • Better understanding of the emergencies faced by residents across the borough, helping to inform long-term strategies/policies to prevent such situations where it is possible with Council intervention.	Quantitative indicators: • Number of residents supported across prototype • Value of support delivered • Types of support received (e.g. food, energy fuel, clothes etc) • Turnaround time Qualitative impact indicators • Referral onto other services (internal and external) captured in case studies • Case studies • Feedback from partners

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
Residents facing emergencies will seek to receive the Resident Support Fund, partners will be able to identify residents and complete the application on their behalf to receive crisis support within 48h.	From initial feedback from partners, the value of £200 is often not enough to cover the complex financial struggles faced by residents, e.g. long-term large debts. Partners are often seeing mental health issues exacerbated by financial struggles and the RSF cap of £1000 has had an impact in lowering expectations of the support that is available. Partners are also referring residents to other types of support e.g. NHS, Acts 435 grants so CRF might not be the first type of support received.	Operational: Expanding the programme to the Family Wellbeing Centres will help to identify families which have been affected by the cost of living crisis. Often struggling with more unforeseen expenses, e.g. school uniforms. Strategic enablers: • Helping to ease the pressures of the cost of living crisis on residents finding themselves in unforeseen emergencies • Reducing the reliance on unsustainable credit sources • Preventing residents getting into debt for items such as white goods

A4: Monitoring Framework Upskilling Front-line workers, including Debt Advice Service

Upskilling Front-line workers

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

To build resilience amongst residents at an individual level. The outcome based review found that information sharing about support / advice available would be key to ensuring residents could access the help they needed throughout the cost of living crisis. They would be better equipped to support themselves and their families at a time where the council is facing significant financial and resource pressures.

Drivers

Resources:
- Session leads time / resources
- Transformation team time / resource
- Resource google drive folder with presentations, recordings and written Q&A
- Front line colleagues (participants)

Relationships:
- Buy-in from internal colleagues in officers e.g. Housing, RSF & CYP
- Effective front line colleague engagement
- Effective Voluntary community sector organisations engagement

Political will:
- Nationwide, regional and local government focus on tackling the cost of living crisis

Communication:
- Sharing best practice and successes

Idea / Concept

To mitigate the negative impact of the cost of living crisis on Brent residents by working with teams in the council and voluntary community sector partners to share practical information on how best to access local support and advice with front line colleagues who are best placed to use this information to support residents.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	Evidence / KPI's
All prototype work streams • Transformation team resource / time • existing organisation and individual experience / expertise of council staff and partnership staff (VCS) **Information sessions** • information session resource google drive with presentations, recordings and written Q&A • development of **Debt Advice Brent Hubs** • apprenticeship levy funding for Brent hubs staff **Debt Advice A4R** • partnership staff time and resources to deliver debt advice (information, advice, guidance, and /or advocacy case work • £50K Brent council grant funding	**All prototype workstreams** • OBR research • Visioning Day **Information sessions** • Developed and agreed timetable of information sessions • secured session leads • secured front line colleague participants • delivered 8 information sessions between January - March 2023 • developed resource folder to include presentations, recordings and Q&As • developed feedback form and registration form **Debt Advice Hubs** • regular meetings with HoS, Apprenticeship manager • secured expressions of interest from hubs advisers • shared expression of interest document • ran information session • met with Coorporate Director Resident Services, Director of Transformation and Director of Customer Access **Debt Advice A4R** • regular meetings with A4R • Authority to Award report to lead member for Jobs, Economy and Citizens Experience • proposal document • monitoring meetings	• Improved knowledge amongst residents and council officers on how to navigate internal council processes to seek support • improved awareness of support and advice services • greater communication between council, VCS and partners • increased number of residents referred to relevant support in the community • improved understanding of how the cost of living crisis is affecting residents • improved capacity to support residents	• Improved referral pathways between internal teams e.g. housing and family wellbeing centres • Improved referral pathways between external organisations and internal teams • greater joined up working between the council, VCS and partners • increased level of professional skill and ability in the workforce **Debt Advice A4R & Hubs** • Reduction in the amount of debt in the cohort of cases seen by A4R and hubs colleagues • improved money maximisation amongst cohort of cases seen by A4R and hubs colleagues	**All prototype work streams** • residents have access to support and advice for residents • A joined up approach to between council and external organisations such VCS and NHS to supporting residents during the cost of living crisis • Front line colleagues upskilled with a wider breadth of knowledge beyond their specialisms and on how to support residents • the council and its partners have an understanding of how debt affects residents • the council has an understanding how the cost of living crisis is affecting residents and providers of support in the community **Debt Advice A4R & Hubs** • Residents have assistance with income maximisation review • Residents are supported with their personal debt • Residents are able to access other financial support organisations such as those provided by VCS and key partners	**Information sessions** • number of front line colleagues who have been able to use the information to support a resident • number of queries supported with information learnt during the programme • survey feedback • reflective session feedback with participants • informal feedback during sessions • number of access points to support and advice for residents **Debt advice A4R** • amount of debt across the cohort of cases seen at Brent Hubs • Evaluation report on the cohort of cases received via the RSF from Brent Council RSF team • number of referrals to grants / credit unions / other support providing organisations • Qualitative feedback from participants to be recorded after 6 months or once a case has been closed whichever happens sooner • Evaluation report to be provided at end of project **Debt Advice Brent Hubs** • number of residents to receive debt advice support • amount of debt across the cohort of cases seen by Brent Hubs debt advisers • quantitative feedback through feedback form • case studies and interviews with sample of cases

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Information on support and advice services is key to mitigating the impact of the cost of living crisis • residents with debt with fall into further and more complex debt • residents who are on the cliff edge will fall into debt for the first time • front line colleagues have the skills to use this information in the best way to support residents • internal and community based information and support sharing is the best way to deliver the programme to tackle the cost of living crisis	• Conflict of interest in Brent council providing debt advice as a creditor • front line colleagues are already at capacity with their core roles and may not have time for training • some negative impacts of the cost of living crisis are influenced by national and local government policy which cannot be changed by actions of project staff • due to lack of funding A4R are only able to provide debt advisors for the 6 month pilot which means beyond the pilot without funding there will be no capacity to A4R to provide debt advice which includes a post prototype review. This will limit the ability to evaluate success	**Strategic** • Easing the negative impact of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for the council • partnership development and stakeholder engagement work **Operational** • the diversity of experience and expertise session leads bring to the information sessions • momentum of the cost of living sessions which took place in October provided a solid foundation for this work to take place

A5: Monitoring Framework Immigration Advice Service

Immigration Advice Prototype NWLLC/Brent Hubs

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

This project addresses a gap seen advice provision for specialist legal advice at the Brent Hubs and will increase the capacity to support residents with immigration, housing and benefit advice. The Northwest London Law Centres has extensive experience of providing specialist immigration legal advice covering asylum and non-asylum immigration work. The funding will be used to test this approach and to develop options for future delivery.

Drivers

Resources:
- NWLLC staff carrying out advice provision in the Hubs
- Hubs Triage officers identifying staff for advice
- Transformation team to help with monitoring progress and outcomes of project

Relationships:
- Hubs, NWLLC and Transformation
- creating link between other services in the Council to identify residents requiring support with immigration

Political will:
- Immigration has been a priority for the Council given the large proportion of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees who have been placed in Brent
- Furthermore, Brent has a large population of migrants who need support with visa applications and EU settled status

Communication:
- Work to advertise the service to relevant communities

Idea / Concept

The Brent Hubs have seen increased demand for specialist advice needed to support residents with No Recourse to Public Funds, as well as continuing residents from the EU make application to the Settlement Scheme (EUSS). This will create more capacity in the Hubs to provide immigration advice.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Review of NWLLC proposal • Meeting with NWLLC and Brent Hubs manager to discuss needs of the project • Transformation team set up a framework for monitoring the programme • Approval process for Cabinet report, Grant Agreement • Comms and advertising the service, internal and external advertising	• Work to review the proposal and create a monitoring framework • Writing a Cabinet member report • Work to create and approve a Grant Agreement with support from Legal and Finance • Liaising between NWLLC and Hubs to finalise delivery and schedule of the programme • Monitor progress when project is set up, first month review with Hubs and NWLLC • Work on spreading awareness of the service to other internal service areas that are seeing residents with immigration issues	• Residents supported with immigration issues, housing or benefits advice • Support on the following matters:: • Providing asylum and immigration advice and support • Appeals and representation in the lower and higher courts including First Tier and Upper Tribunals • Working with high-risk victims of domestic abuse to help them access legal advice and other services to keep them and their children safe. • Supporting victims of trafficking to access advice and support • Spouse visas • EU settled status applications for complex or vulnerable people • Settlement applications on the basis of long residency • Indefinite leave applications • Support people to are subject to no recourse to public funds restrictions • Judicial review applications subject to public funding restriction	• Establish the service in the Hubs as a trusted source of advice • Understanding the issues faced by residents seeking to gain indefinite right to remain, what are the common challenges • impact on residents able to resolve their immigration status	**Immigration** Matters where indefinite leave to enter/remain (ILR) is granted (including where this is after a period of leave has already granted); • Matters involving a successful family reunion application; • Matters involving a successful application for settlement; • Matters involving a successful application for remain in the UK permanently on the basis of marriage. • Where a spouse is granted limited leave to enter or remain in the country; • Where refugee status is granted for 5 years (or a lesser period). • Matters involving successful application for citizenship. **Housing** • Resident able to access housing advice • Resident retains home and homelessness prevented • Resident able to plan and manage affairs better **Welfare Benefits** • Client receives lump some or regular payments • Client advised and better able to plan and manage their affairs	• Number of residents seen by immigration advice staff • Number of active cases/ number of cases progressed/resolved • Types of advice provided • Attendance and duration of appointments • Resident satisfaction of service • Case studies

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Increased demand for specialist immigration advice across Brent residents with NRPF as well as EU residents	• Making sure that NWLLC has the capacity to record a good level of data and detail from their casework, creating a straightforward process for feedback on the prototype project.	**Strategic** • Easing the negative impact of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for the council • Partnership development and stakeholder engagement work **Operational** • Momentum of the cost of living sessions which took place in October provided a solid foundation for this work to take place

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Update on Cost-of-Living OBR Pilot projects

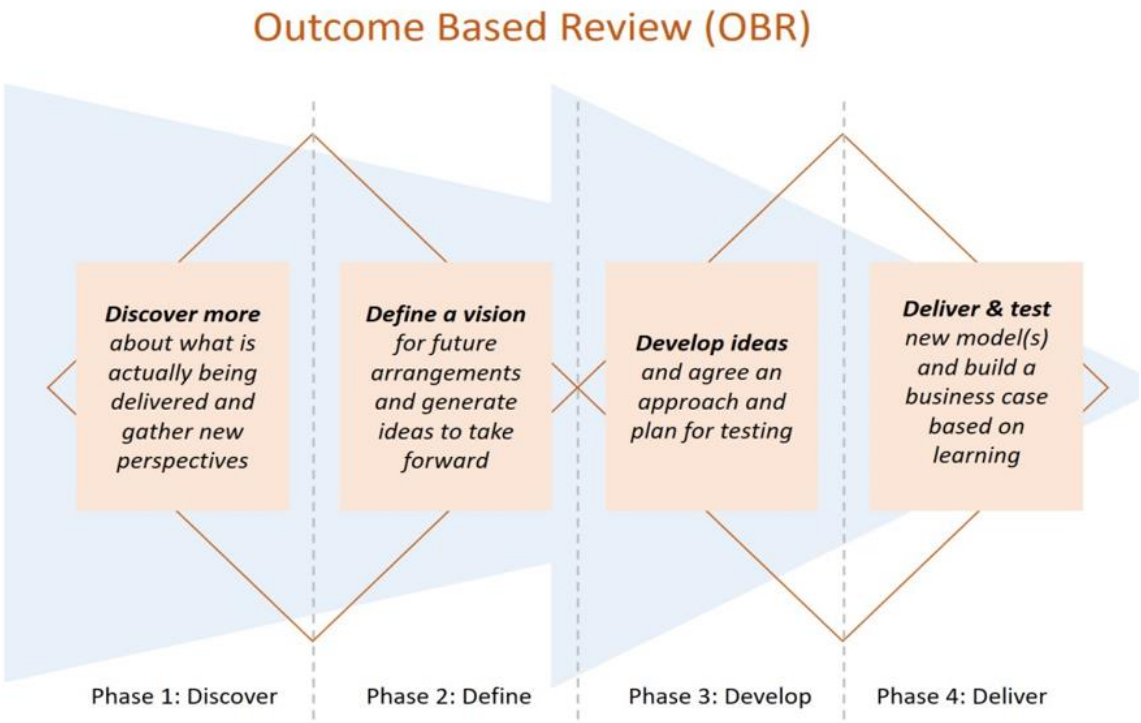
December 2023

Overview

In 2022, Brent Council carried out a Cost-of-Living themed Outcomes Based Review (OBR) aimed at developing tailored solutions to best support our residents through the ongoing Cost-of-Living crisis. OBR's constitute a cross-council and cross-organisational review, bringing together diverse groups of stakeholders, to collaborate using design-led methodologies across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. The review set out to gather rich insights and understands the issues residents were facing as a result of the ongoing crisis, as well as experiences of frontline staff and the Voluntary Community Sector supporting our residents, to collaborate towards creating new solutions, relationships, and ways of working to best support our residents.

The OBR enabled a joined-up approach across the council and partner organisations, shifting the focus from individual services to achieving the shared outcome of a model that minimises the impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis for Brent residents and businesses, ensuring that the voice of local people is at the centre of our response. Image 1 below shows the OBR process.

Image 1: Outcome Based Review Approach



Process

The Outcomes Based Review commenced in June 2022 and the discovery phase spanned three months. During this process, Brent Council worked with partners and communities to understand where there might be gaps in support and how we can ensure that those most in need can access the support they require – both in the short term and to ensure their situation improves in the long term. A range of discovery research methods were used, including extensive community research such as ethnographies (one-to-one interviews with individuals to understand their daily life and experiences), community pop-ups, workshops and interviews with frontline professionals and practitioners.

The insights from our community research were shared at a Visioning Day Event in September 2022, attended by over 80 partners and stakeholders engaged throughout the OBR process. Attendees were invited to listen to resident's stories, discuss their own experiences and review our discovery findings and data, to collaboratively generate ideas which address the challenges and opportunities highlighted though our discovery phase.






From the ideas which emerged, attendees were given the opportunity to define priority areas. Key priorities which emerged were:

- A community shop model, comprising of a range of interventions in one space, including elements of food support, various support services and a space for socialisation.
- A designated pot of money for frontline staff and trusted VCS organisations in the borough to distribute to those dealing with emergencies e.g., those needing white goods, fuel or food support.
- Increasing the capacity for specialist support for residents in the borough.
- A programme to train and upskill frontline staff and key workers, increasing understanding of the support and guidance available across Brent Council and the VCS sector, to increase early prevention and intervention efforts.

Several pilot projects emerged and were taken forward for testing and development in partnership with various stakeholders of the Outcomes Based Review and local organisations. Table 1 below shows the visioning day priorities and corresponding pilot projects.

Table 1: Visioning Day Priorities and Pilot project(s)

Visioning Day Priority	Pilot project(s)
Community Shop Model	• Community Wellbeing Project
Fast-tracked crisis payment	• Crisis Response Fund
Increasing specialist support capacity	• Debt Advice Service • Immigration Service
Upskilling frontline staff	• Upskilling Keyworkers Training Sessions • Debt Advice Apprenticeship • Practitioners Network

1. Community Wellbeing Project (CWP) pilot

The first idea emerging from the Visioning Day was a 'Community Shop' model, bringing together various wraparound interventions under one roof, enabling residents to access a host of support including support services and food support, with ease. The emerging project was the Community Wellbeing Project, a collaboration with delivery partners Sufra NW London, a local food aid organisation working to address the causes and consequences of poverty and social isolation in the borough. Sufra NW London was a key stakeholder in the Outcomes Based Review process and attendees at the Visioning Day Event.

What is it?

The Community Wellbeing Project (CWP) sets out to bring together various interventions in one community space, aiming to increase community resilience, tackle food insecurity and provide holistic interventions to better support residents in the long term and to prevent vulnerable families from experiencing severe financial crisis.

The pilot is based on a membership model. Members enrol to take part in the scheme for 3 months, and for a £4 per weekly fee members, and their families, get access to:

- A self-selected weekly food shop worth approx. £25, and an additional bag of perishable items from the Community Shop
- Free hot lunch and snacks from the daytime Café (between noon-18:00)
- Free three-course meal at the evening Kitchen (between 18:00-20:00)

- An initial 1-2-1 assessment with a Brent Hubs advisor, including creation of a personal development plan based on individual need
- Welfare, health and wellbeing and employment advice, themed drop ins and workshops from 15+ partners
- Free access to Bridge Park Leisure Centre gym facilities
- Other social activities

The Community Wellbeing Project pilot is based at Bridge Park Leisure Centre, Harrow Road, Stonebridge, NW10 0RG and is operational on Mondays and Tuesdays, between 12:00-18:00 for the Community Shop and Café, and 18:00-20:00 for the Community Kitchen evening meal. All elements of the project are based on the open space of the mezzanine floor of the leisure centre. Eligibility criteria for the pilot programme, whilst flexible, includes:

- Being local to Stonebridge or Harlesden
- Family, with any number of children
- In receipt of any means tested benefit

The Café and Kitchen provides free hot meals to members of the programme and is open to the wider community at discounted prices. During evening dining hours of 18:00-20:00 on Mondays and Tuesdays, the mezzanine floor of Bridge Park Leisure Centre is prepared to seat up to 80 residents at a time.

Personal Development Plans are always co-created with the member and an advisor, and are a personalised goal-orientated plan centred around finances, personal wellbeing and resilience. Areas of action are identified with an advisor, and an action plan is co-created.

What does it aim to achieve?

The pilot is evaluated against a monitoring framework, found in the Appendix (A2). The overarching, longer-term outcomes for the pilot are:

- Greater financial resilience for members
- Improved mental and physical wellbeing
- Improved knowledge of and ability to access local support services
- Improved access to affordable food and other essentials

Findings

The initial pilot phase of the project operated over a 6-month period between February 2023 and August 2023. During this period, the pilot reached full capacity with 200 residents, and their families, supported with a 3-month membership.

Uptake and interactions

Over the first 6-month period, the scheme enabled:

- 1359 weekly shops
- 1750 member visits to the daytime Café for free lunch
- 783 member visits to the evening Kitchen
- 185 non-member visits to the daytime Café
- 1975 non-member visits to the evening Kitchen
- 249 attendances at tailored advice workshops

Wider project engagement:

- 190 members using leisure centre facilities
- 56 volunteers engaged in the project, almost 60% of who live locally in HA9 or NW10, covering Stonebridge and Harlesden.
- 1843 hours of volunteering dedicated to the project
- 18 residents who began as members and began volunteering at the CWP, commenting on the sense of community it has given them.

It has been calculated that a member could save a potential maximum of £612 from engaging in the project across their 3-month membership. This figure is substantially higher if members are attending with others from their household too.

As well as collecting data on project uptake and interactions, members are asked to complete comparative baseline surveys at the beginning of their membership, and the same 27-question survey at the end of their membership to track responses across a range of indicators. Under each outcome are several relevant questions to demonstrate impact. Table 2 shows average baseline vs end-of-membership responses, from 33 like-for-like surveys:

Table 2: Findings from Community Wellbeing Project

Outcome	Proxy indicator	Baseline survey avg. response	End-of-membership avg. response	Impact
Greater financial resilience	On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 is low, 10 is high): how stressed are you about money?	**6.7**	**6.4**	0.3 point improvement
	On a scale of 1-10, when 1 is 'Not at all confident' and 10 is 'very confident' how confident do you feel about budgeting?	**4.6**	**6.1**	1.5 point improvement
	On a scale of 1-10 (1 is low, 10 is high) how would you rate your financial stress on your relationships with your friends and family?	**5.9**	**4.8**	1.1 point improvement
Improved mental and physical wellbeing	I've been able to relax (Scale 0-5, with 0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)	**2.2**	**3.2**	1 point improvement
	I've been feeling optimistic about the future (Scale 0-5, with 0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)	**2.4**	**3.6**	1.2 point improvement
Improved knowledge of and ability to access locals support services	On a scale of 1 (low) and 10 (high) how would you rate your knowledge of welfare benefits?	**3.9**	**6.0**	2.1 point improvement
	On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is "Not at all confident" and 10 is "Very confident", how confident are you in accessing debt related services?	**3.5**	**5.5**	2 point improvement
	On a scale of 1 (low) and 10 (high) how would you rate your knowledge of other services in the borough?	**4.3**	**6.3**	2 point improvement
Improved access to affordable food and other essentials	I can afford to buy the items that I want to eat	**3% agree**	**39% agree**	36% point increase
	I feel like I can budget well for my weekly food shop	**24% agree**	**45% agree**	21% point increase

More evaluation becomes available over the course of the pilot and is monitored and evaluated with Sufra, to ensure member needs are driving the project and our offer remains targeted.

Referral pathways

During Phase 1 of the pilot, there were multiple referral pathways between Brent Council and Voluntary Sector Organisations, which will be built upon for Phase 2 of the pilot. Brent Hubs

advisors are present in the space on every open day to carry out initial assessments, as well as making follow-up appointments and supporting with:

- Council tax
- Housing benefit queries
- Universal Credit Journal queries
- Calling utility companies
- Referrals to babybanks/other partners

Through presence of the Green Doctors, CWP members could access our Well and Warm scheme, with referrals made by Brent Hubs and Green Doctors directly in the space. Support from Public Health Brent included Brent Health Matters, who conducted adult health checks in the space, as well as NHS Trusts who carried out infant feeding information stands and Oral Health checks for children.

Referral pathways were also in place with the below partner organisations, who provided regular drop-ins and workshops on site:

- Department for Work and Pensions
- Brent Start
- Shaw Trust
- Green Doctors
- Advice4Renters, who were able to administer the Crisis Response Fund
- Public Health
- Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust
- Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Law Stop
- Christian's Against Poverty

Sarah's Story

Situation Before

Sarah sought assistance from the CWP due to significant financial hardship. The added challenge of being disabled exacerbated her circumstances, as the closure of disability specific services in the area had left her feeling isolated. In addition, Sarah also grappled with debt and mental health issues.

Support from CWP

The CWP brought a renewed sense of hope and positivity into Sarah's life. Increased access to groceries and high-quality food preserved her dignity and made her feel respected. The programme enabled Sarah to establish connections within the local community and meet others, addressing a crucial aspect she felt had been lacking in her life.



Situation Now

As part of her Personal Development Plan, a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) review began to ensure her income fairly reflects her situation. Regular check-ins with advisors on the application progress, as well as referrals into local mental health services have ensured Sarah isn't left to cope alone. With 14 interactions with the programme so far, Sarah enjoys scheduling an afternoon at Bridge Park.

2. Crisis Response Fund

The second idea emerging from the Visioning Day centred around a designated pot of money, a crisis fund, for frontline staff and trusted VCS organisations in the borough to distribute to those dealing with emergencies e.g., those needing white goods, fuel or food support. Officers who complete applications on behalf of residents also ensure that those who access this fund are also referred to other relevant services.

What is it?

The Crisis Response pilot is a subsidiary of the Resident Support Fund (RSF), aiming to link people in urgent need with immediate financial support such as emergency food and fuel support, as well as access to items such as clothes and white goods. Eligible residents can receive up to £200, and up to £400 where white goods are concerned within 48 hours to help with emergencies.

Several trusted officers are currently able to complete CRF applications, including officers from:

- Advice 4 Renters
- Sherriff's Centre
- Brent Reach
- Brent Council Family Wellbeing Centres
- Brent Council Single Homelessness Team

What does it aim to achieve?

The pilot is evaluated against a monitoring framework, found in the Appendix (A3). The overarching outcomes for the pilot are:

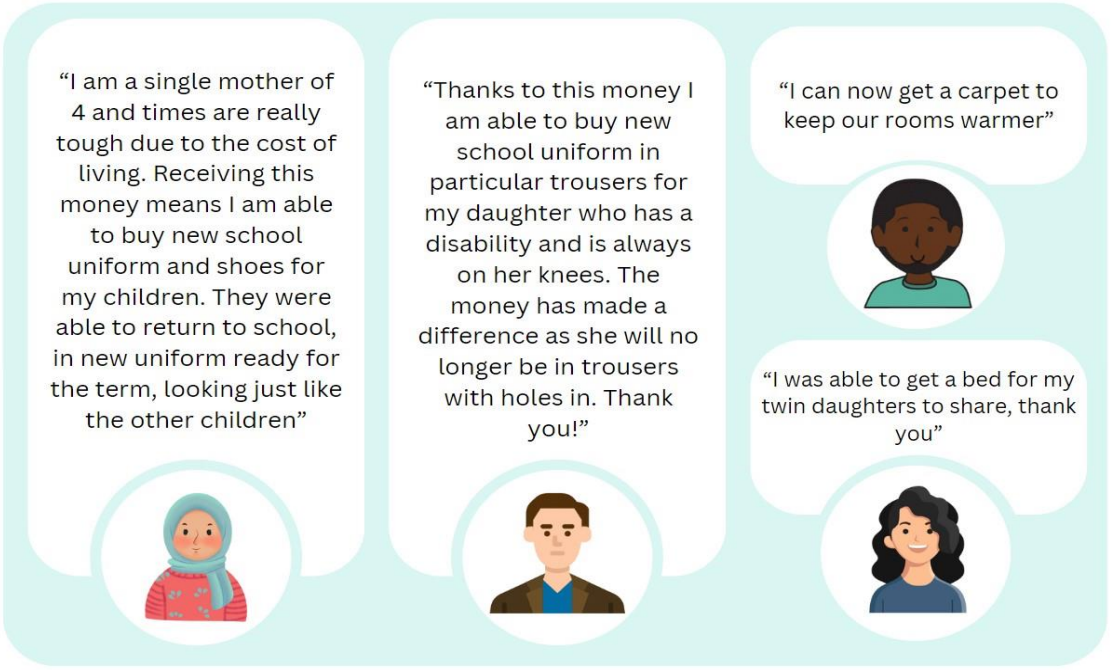
- Residents supported when faced with an emergency situation.
- Residents referred onto other support services.
- Stronger links built between partner organisations and Brent services.

Findings:

The pilot commenced in February 2023 and completed in July 2023. Following positive evaluation, the CRF recommenced on 21st August 2023 and will continue until March 2024.

Between February and December 2023, the CRF has received 152 applications, of which 130 have been awarded a crisis payment with an average award of £254 and a total of £33,000. Of these applicants, 54 had previously applied to either the RSF or CRF in the past 12 months. 22 applications have been rejected, with common reasons for rejection including the resident having more than £6000 in savings or not being a Brent resident.

Common reasons for application to the CRF have included food and fuel, clothing, school uniform, school equipment, white goods and furniture including beds and washing machines.





3. Specialist support

Another priority which emerged centred around increasing the capacity for specialist support for residents with complex needs in the borough.

The existing Brent Hubs service currently works with residents who find it difficult to access the support they need through mainstream services. There are currently seven Hubs located across Brent, offering a physical space for a range of local organisations and voluntary and community sector services to work together under one roof, working with residents to solve their problems and build knowledge, understanding and resilience. The Living Room Hub continues to offer specialist employment, training, and skills support.

Building on this existing provision, two pilot projects were rolled out to trial the delivery of a specialist Debt Advice service, and a specialist Immigration advice service to be hosted within our Brent Hubs.

3.1 Debt Advice Service

What is it?

The Debt Advice pilot is a partnership with Advice 4 Renters, a legal and financial advice service working to ensure those in rented accommodation have holistic, person-centred support. Advice for Renters were a key stakeholder in the Outcomes Based Review process and have been responsible for the delivery of the project to date.

The Debt Advice Service pilot entails two dedicated debt advisors situated across our Brent Hubs providing specialist debt advice, income maximisation reviews, application support for benefits and support funds and referrals onto other support organisations as required. The advisors are also able to issue debt relief orders to residents and have capacity to manage 22 cases, ongoing or new, per week.

What does it aim to achieve?

The pilot is evaluated against a monitoring framework, found in the Appendix (A4). The overarching outcomes for the pilot are:

- Residents receive assistance with income maximisation reviews
- Residents are supported with their personal debt
- Residents are able to access other financial support organisations such as those provided by VCS and key partners

Findings

The initial 6-month phase of the pilot began in February 2023. During the first six months between February 2023 and August 2023, the debt advisors saw 162 unique clients, with 266 customer interactions and £565,758 worth of accumulated debt across the 162 clients. These clients have seen a total of 326 interactions across the Brent Hubs locations and pop-ups at the Community Wellbeing Project.

To date, 10 clients have been referred to the Brent Crisis Response Fund and Advice 4 Renters officers have facilitated 34 applications to the Brent Resident Support Fund. Many clients pose with complex case requiring repeat visits, however to date clients have been supported with £98,936 in income maximisation as well as establishment of more affordable repayment plans, repayments due to previously inaccurate bills and referrals to other organisations such as Green Doctors

Following evaluation, the pilot has been extended to operate until February 2024 and will continue to be regularly monitored against the evaluation framework.

Abraham

Situation Before

Abraham is a 70 year old pensioner, suffering from chronic diabetes and helps to support his 10 grandchildren. At the time of approaching the debt advice service, Abraham was sleeping on a broken bed, had a broken fridge freezer, no wardrobe and approximately £500 of debt.

Support from debt advice service

Debt advisors supported Abraham with an application to the RSF, and Abraham was awarded £1000 to support with buying a fridge, bed and wardrobe. The advisors were able to further support with applications to other grants, to support with paying off bank charges and utility debt. Advisors neogtiated an affordable repayment plan with the utility company and the resident was able to clear most of their debt through the income maximisation provided.



Situation Now

Abraham cleared most of his £500 debt and the remainder is on an affordable repayment plan. He stated he feels happier, lighter and can think of other ways to improve his quality of life.

3.2 Immigration Advice Service

What is it?

The Immigration Advice pilot is a partnership with Northwest London Law Centre (NWLLC), a charity aiming to support vulnerable residents with free and independent legal advice and representation in employment, housing, welfare benefits, asylum and immigration law for people living, working and studying in Brent and Camden.

The Immigration Advice service is a 12-month pilot aiming to trial the delivery of a new immigration advice programme, designed to support Brent residents with immigration, housing and benefit advice. Specialist immigration advisors are available in the Kilburn and Wembley (Civic Centre) Hubs, across two days per week. The pilots aims to support between 100-150 residents with immigration advice.

What does it aim to achieve?

The pilot is evaluated against a monitoring framework, found in the Appendix (A5). The overarching outcomes for the pilot are:

- Residents receive trusted, free legal advice across a range of issues including immigration, asylum and welfare benefits
- To understand the issues residents in the borough face
- Positive impact on residents who are facing difficulty or challenges with immigration related issues

Findings:

The pilot began in June 2023. In the 3 months between June and September 2023, 46 unique clients have accessed the service for a range of support including guidance and support with the EU Settlement Scheme process and applications, spouse visa requirements, citizenship applications and asylum claims.

4. Upskilling Frontline Staff

Several trial initiatives were developed to train and upskill frontline staff and key workers, to increase understanding of the support and guidance available across Brent Council and the VCS sector and increase early prevention and intervention efforts. The initiatives include:

- **Upskilling Frontline Staff Training Sessions**: A programme of information sessions designed to upskill frontline staff on the various support and services available to residents.. Eight sessions were delivered between January and March 2023, with an average of 10 participants. On average participants gave rated the session 5/5 for usefulness and were very likely to attend future programmes.
- **Debt Advice Apprenticeship**: A debt advice apprenticeship was offered to Brent Hubs staff to upskill in offering specialist debt advice. The apprenticeship lasts 12 months and began in the Summer of 2023. The hope is in 2 years time, several advisors will have gone through the apprenticeship and be accredited in providing specialist debt advice in the Brent Hubs.
- **Practitioners Network**: A network bringing together key staff from across the council and providing a space to share learning and improve access to existing support. The network has been expanded to include external VCS sector and local community partners. To date, sessions have been themed around Cost-of-Living Support, Public Health, Digital Inclusion, Climate Change and the Cost of Living, as well as presentation from local community partners on the support available from their organisations.

All pilots mentioned are closely interlinked. Brent Hubs have closely supported our Community Wellbeing Project, with dedicated Hubs advisors based at the project on Mondays and Tuesdays to carry out initial assessments, create personal development plans and referring members to our specialist debt and immigration advice services. Advice 4 Renters are one of the partners at the Community Wellbeing Project offering workshops and drop-ins and can administer the Crisis Response Fund to members of the programme in need.

Responding to demand

Over the course of the pilots, we have continued to monitor, evaluate, and make changes as necessary. Access to the Crisis Response Fund was extended to Sufra NW London, to enable dedicated officers to able to administer the CRF to their foodbank users and Community Wellbeing Project members, improving alignment between the pilots. We have also expanded partnership of the CRF to Brent's Single Homelessness Team and officers at the Family Wellbeing Centre's who work closely with residents. We continue to monitor the demand and capacity of the fund.

Several changes were made over the course of the initial testing of the Community Wellbeing Project. Initial eligibility criteria included at least one adult in the household to be in employment,

part-time or full-time. As referrals began, we found that many residents in need of this support were not in employment. Whilst the criteria was flexible, 'in employment' was removed as a criteria.

Following further evaluation of the Community Wellbeing Project, from August 2023 we are also increasing access to the wraparound support to members of the programme from 3 months to 6 months, as well as working to improve and build on the current advice provision. Access to the food support will conclude after the initial 3-month membership period, however members will continue to have access to the wraparound support for an additional 3 months.

Employment support

Enabling residents to support themselves with improved employment and skills is key to ensuring residents see sustainable outcomes to improve their situations in the longer-term. Whilst an employment offer was in place for the first phase of the CWP, officers are working to align more closely with existing Brent services providing employment support for the second phase of the scheme. Brent Works will have a regular presence on-site and work closely with our CWP advisors to support members with skills, training and employment opportunities.

A stakeholder session will take place focused on improving the future employment offer, with relevant internal and external stakeholders.

Brent Council is also carrying out and Employment and Skills focussed OBR, the outcomes of which will be used to develop a bespoke employment offer.

Monitoring Frameworks

An overarching monitoring framework is in place to monitor all Cost-of-Living OBR related initiatives (Appendix, A1). With a central goal of aiming to ease effects of the cost-of-living crisis, across all initiatives the longer-term outcomes we are aiming to attain are:

1. Residents are more financially resilient.
2. Residents are better equipped to deal with Cost-of-living pressures
3. Frontline staff have the skills, tools and information needed to support residents.

The short-term outcomes for the initiatives are:

1. More residents accessing specialist and enabling services.
2. Better access to a wider range of support
3. Greater collaboration and information sharing between frontline services.

Each pilot initiative is monitored and evaluated against their own, tailored and more detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Full monitoring and evaluation frameworks can be found in the Appendix (A2, A3, A4 and A5)

APPENDIX:

A1: Cost-of-Living OBR Pilots: Monitoring Framework

Individual Pilot Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

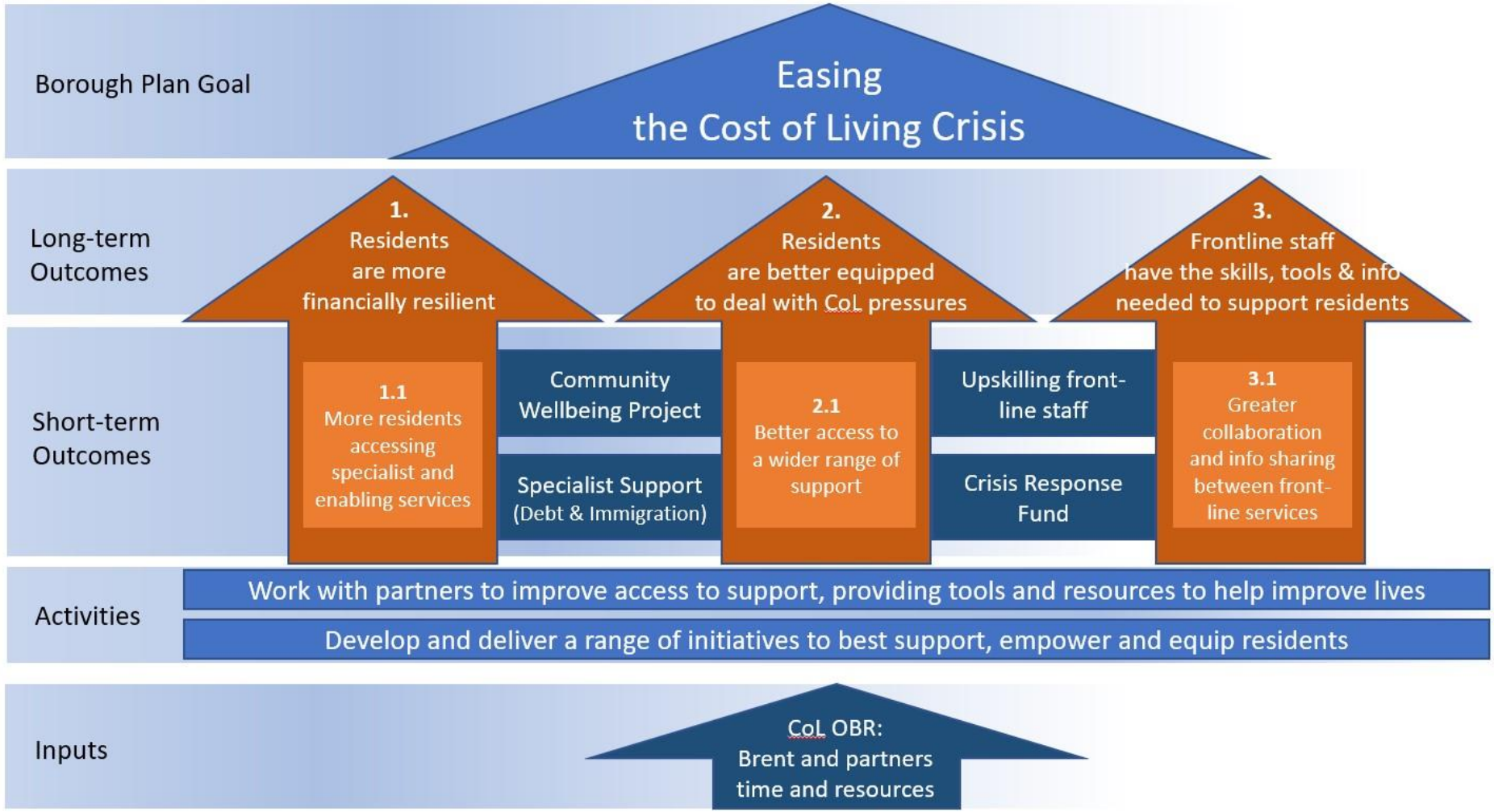
A2: Monitoring Framework Community Wellbeing Project

A3: Monitoring Framework Crisis Response Fund

A4: Monitoring Framework Upskilling Front-line workers, including Debt Advice Service

A5: Monitoring Framework Immigration Advice Service

A1: Cost-of-Living OBR Pilots: Monitoring Framework



A2: Monitoring Framework Community Wellbeing Project

Community Wellbeing Project

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

Levels of poverty in Brent are high, lending to our residents being one of the worst impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

To address this, easing the effects of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for Brent Council with an aim to provide more holistic support, tailored to complex needs and co-designed with local stakeholders.

The Cost of Living OBR identified that some feel there is stigma associated to accessing certain support services, such as food banks. The OBR also picked up on the importance of community resilience. With Brent recently becoming a Right to Food borough, this paves a unique opportunity for alternative models of support for residents with complex needs.

Drivers

Resources:

1. Staff
   a. Project staff
   b. Other staff ie. project support, support from other VCS orgs.
2. Funding (statutory and charitable)
3. Partnerships - with local community organisations and food aid charities.
4. Suitable premises (with commercial kitchen)

Relationships:

1. Buy-in from local community
2. Buy-in from local organisations
3. Partnerships with local community organisations

Political will:
Local government focus on tackling effects of the cost of living crisis and poverty.

Communication:
Sharing best practice and success stories

Idea / Concept

To mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis by aiming to reduce food poverty and build community resilience amongst local communities in Brent. To do so by working in collaboration with local organisations and charities, to put in place targeted interventions that benefit residents with complex needs and tackle the underlying causes of poverty.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Cost of Living Outcomes Based Review research, identifying need for wraparound support in tackling the crisis. • Engagement with residents and VCS sector representatives. • Partnership with delivery partner Sufra NW London, existing food aid charity in the borough. • Funding for staffing costs, food contribution and set-up and ongoing project costs. • Council-owned property with suitable facilities. • Partnership with specialist organisations in Brent. • Partnership with Brent Hubs. • Support from internal services eg Employment and Skills Service, Public Health.	• OBR Research • Community engagement; pop-ups, workshops, ethnographic interviews. • Engagement with VCS professionals • Visioning Day outcomes • Prototyping session with Transformation Team • Liaison with Sufra NW London around partnership working on the model. • Arrangements around Brent Council's funding of project. • Coordination and preparation of suitable premises, to fit-to-use condition. • Arrangements to prepare commercial kitchen. • Purchase of equipment for shop and hire of kitchen equipment and storage facilities. • Ongoing project support. • Promotion of programme internally and externally. • Extension of programme for Phase 2 between Aug-23 to Mar-24, all necessary arrangements inc. lease, grant arrangements, equipment hire extension and continued partnership and support from Brent services.	• Residents supported with access to affordable food and other essentials, through on-site hot meals and take away weekly food shops. • Residents supported with initial assessments and identification of personal needs. • Residents receive advice and support from Brent Hubs advisors. • Residents referred to relevant partner organisations based at Bridge Park. • Residents booked on to relevant themed workshops hosted at Bridge Park. • Creation of personal development plans. • Residents feel dignified when accessing support. • Residents able to access a social community space.	• Increased levels of financial resilience for members of the programme. • Improved mental and physical wellbeing. • Improved awareness and ability to access local support services. • Improved access to affordable food, increasing food security. **For Phase 2 (Aug-23 to Mar-24), as well as the above:** • Improved access to employment, skills and training support.	• Improved financial resilience. • Improved mental and physical wellbeing. • Improved awareness of support services and how they can be accessed • Increased access to affordable food for residents with complex needs. **For Phase 2 (Aug-23 to Mar-24), as well as the above:** • Improved access to employment, skills and training support.	**Short term / Quantitative usage indicators:** • No. of referrals into programme • No. of registered members. • No. of weekly food shops • No. of members accessing the cafe and kitchen. • No. of non-members accessing cafe and kitchen • Registration and attendance at workshop sessions. • Registration and attendance of members at leisure facilities included in membership. Medium/Longer term measures: • Baseline, mid-way and end of programme survey, **questions centred around medium-term outcomes.** • Case studies • Informal feedback during visits • Week 6, mid-way and end monitoring and evaluation report. • Focus groups.

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Residents in Brent were harshly affected by effects of the cost of living crisis. • Wraparound support is important towards financial resilience • Some residents in Brent have poor access to food and groceries. • There is a level of stigma attached to accessing some support services such as food banks. • Community resilience is important towards facilitating strong, connected communities.	• Property - suitable space is required to host the programme. Commercial kitchen required as well as sufficient space to host a shop, cafe, assessments, workshops, drop ins. • Financial resource - costs associated with preparing premises to usable standard and ongoing costs including facility and equipment hire. • Access to food.	Operational: • Momentum from Cost of Living OBR and Visioning Day. • Partnership working with local food aid charity Sufra, delivery partners for the project. • Partnership and support from Brent Hubs and other Brent services such as Strategic: • Easing effects of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for Brent Council • Brent Council recently became a Right To Food borough. • Local charity organisations who support new models of delivery.

A3: Monitoring Framework Crisis Response Fund

Crisis Response Fund

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

The Resident Support fund has faced increased demand due to the cost of living crisis, offering up to £1000 of support for residents facing unforeseen financial issues. The wait for RSF applications has been between 4-8 weeks meaning that residents needing urgent support have to seen financial support elsewhere, and potentially risk accruing more debt.

Drivers

The need for a quicker way to respond to the cost of living crisis was highlighted throughout the Outcome Based Review process, and the Visioning Day.
Drivers: Brent Hubs, RSF Team, Transformation Team, Advice 4 Renters, Brent Reach, The Sheriffs Centre

Resources:
- Officers from RSF team checking CRF applications from partners
- Briefing sessions with partners (Transformation team)
- Partner officers identifying residents who are eligible for the fund

Relationships:
- RSF team, partner officers, transformation team and Family Wellbeing Centres

Political will:
- Brent council sees cost of living crisis as a strategic priority

Communication:
- Briefing sessions
- internal networks (practitioners network, cost of living working group)

Idea / Concept

The Crisis Response Fund aims to address the long-wait times for the RSF by providing emergency financial support up to £200 (up to £400 for white goods). The CRF is a partnership project with several internal teams and trusted VCS partners, who are able to identify residents who require financial support in emergencies, such as broken white goods, flooding or needing money for essentials.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Cost of Living OBR research identified residents struggling financially and having to go into debt for unforeseen expenses, e.g. broken white goods. • Engagement with residents via ethnographic interviews • Engagement with VCS partners via interviews and attending relevant forums to understand COL impact • Crisis Response Fund idea brainstormed with partners during the Visioning Day, empowering partners to identify residents in need of urgent financial support	• OBR research, involving horizon scanning and data analysis • Community engagement; ethnographic interviews • Visioning Day involved engagement with VCS sector and internal partners to brainstorm solutions to COL crisis • Prototyping session with Transformation team to develop CRF approach • Internal meetings to agree eligibility and process with RSF team • Agreement of eligibility and criteria with RSF team, Brent Hubs and partners. • Briefing sessions for 3 partners to outline the process. • Expanding the programme to Family Wellbeing Centre triage officers.	• Residents supported when faced with an emergency situation. • Residents referred onto other relevant services. • Greater communication and links built between partners and council services.	• Stronger links built between partner organisations and Brent services. • Sharing of information about support across the Council. • Residents develop trusted relationships with partners and Council services.	• Residents supported in an emergency. • Reducing reliance on exploitative credit sources. • Better links and sharing of information between partners, local charities and Brent services. • Better understanding of the emergencies faced by residents across the borough, helping to inform long-term strategies/policies to prevent such situations where it is possible with Council intervention.	Quantitative indicators: • Number of residents supported across prototype • Value of support delivered • Types of support received (e.g. food, energy fuel, clothes etc) • Turnaround time Qualitative impact indicators • Referral onto other services (internal and external) captured in case studies • Case studies • Feedback from partners

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
Residents facing emergencies will seek to receive the Resident Support Fund, partners will be able to identify residents and complete the application on their behalf to receive crisis support within 48h.	From initial feedback from partners, the value of £200 is often not enough to cover the complex financial struggles faced by residents, e.g. long-term large debts. Partners are often seeing mental health issues exacerbated by financial struggles and the RSF cap of £1000 has had an impact in lowering expectations of the support that is available. Partners are also referring residents to other types of support e.g. NHS, Acts 435 grants so CRF might not be the first type of support received.	Operational: Expanding the programme to the Family Wellbeing Centres will help to identify families which have been affected by the cost of living crisis. Often struggling with more unforeseen expenses, e.g. school uniforms. Strategic enablers: • Helping to ease the pressures of the cost of living crisis on residents finding themselves in unforeseen emergencies • Reducing the reliance on unsustainable credit sources • Preventing residents getting into debt for items such as white goods

A4: Monitoring Framework Upskilling Front-line workers, including Debt Advice Service

Upskilling Front-line workers

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

To build resilience amongst residents at an individual level. The outcome based review found that information sharing about support / advice available would be key to ensuring residents could access the help they needed throughout the cost of living crisis. They would be better equipped to support themselves and their families at a time where the council is facing significant financial and resource pressures.

Drivers

Resources:
- Session leads time / resources
- Transformation team time / resource
- Resource google drive folder with presentations, recordings and written Q&A
- Front line colleagues (participants)

Relationships:
- Buy-in from internal colleagues in officers e.g. Housing, RSF & CYP
- Effective front line colleague engagement
- Effective Voluntary community sector organisations engagement

Political will:
- Nationwide, regional and local government focus on tackling the cost of living crisis

Communication:
- Sharing best practice and successes

Idea / Concept

To mitigate the negative impact of the cost of living crisis on Brent residents by working with teams in the council and voluntary community sector partners to share practical information on how best to access local support and advice with front line colleagues who are best placed to use this information to support residents.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	Evidence / KPI's
All prototype work streams • Transformation team resource / time • existing organisation and individual experience / expertise of council staff and partnership staff (VCS) **Information sessions** • information session resource google drive with presentations, recordings and written Q&A • development of **Debt Advice Brent Hubs** • apprenticeship levy funding for Brent hubs staff **Debt Advice A4R** • partnership staff time and resources to deliver debt advice (information, advice, guidance, and /or advocacy case work • £50K Brent council grant funding	**All prototype workstreams** • OBR research • Visioning Day **Information sessions** • Developed and agreed timetable of information sessions • secured session leads • secured front line colleague participants • delivered 8 information sessions between January - March 2023 • developed resource folder to include presentations, recordings and Q&As • developed feedback form and registration form **Debt Advice Hubs** • regular meetings with HoS, Apprenticeship manager • secured expressions of interest from hubs advisers • shared expression of interest document • ran information session • met with Coorporate Director Resident Services, Director of Transformation and Director of Customer Access **Debt Advice A4R** • regular meetings with A4R • Authority to Award report to lead member for Jobs, Economy and Citizens Experience • proposal document • monitoring meetings	• Improved knowledge amongst residents and council officers on how to navigate internal council processes to seek support • improved awareness of support and advice services • greater communication between council, VCS and partners • increased number of residents referred to relevant support in the community • improved understanding of how the cost of living crisis is affecting residents • improved capacity to support residents	• Improved referral pathways between internal teams e.g. housing and family wellbeing centres • Improved referral pathways between external organisations and internal teams • greater joined up working between the council, VCS and partners • increased level of professional skill and ability in the workforce **Debt Advice A4R & Hubs** • Reduction in the amount of debt in the cohort of cases seen by A4R and hubs colleagues • improved money maximisation amongst cohort of cases seen by A4R and hubs colleagues	**All prototype work streams** • residents have access to support and advice for residents • A joined up approach to between council and external organisations such VCS and NHS to supporting residents during the cost of living crisis • Front line colleagues upskilled with a wider breadth of knowledge beyond their specialisms and on how to support residents • the council and its partners have an understanding of how debt affects residents • the council has an understanding how the cost of living crisis is affecting residents and providers of support in the community **Debt Advice A4R & Hubs** • Residents have assistance with income maximisation review • Residents are supported with their personal debt • Residents are able to access other financial support organisations such as those provided by VCS and key partners	**Information sessions** • number of front line colleagues who have been able to use the information to support a resident • number of queries supported with information learnt during the programme • survey feedback • reflective session feedback with participants • informal feedback during sessions • number of access points to support and advice for residents **Debt advice A4R** • amount of debt across the cohort of cases seen at Brent Hubs • Evaluation report on the cohort of cases received via the RSF from Brent Council RSF team • number of referrals to grants / credit unions / other support providing organisations • Qualitative feedback from participants to be recorded after 6 months or once a case has been closed whichever happens sooner • Evaluation report to be provided at end of project **Debt Advice Brent Hubs** • number of residents to receive debt advice support • amount of debt across the cohort of cases seen by Brent Hubs debt advisers • quantitative feedback through feedback form • case studies and interviews with sample of cases

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Information on support and advice services is key to mitigating the impact of the cost of living crisis • residents with debt with fall into further and more complex debt • residents who are on the cliff edge will fall into debt for the first time • front line colleagues have the skills to use this information in the best way to support residents • internal and community based information and support sharing is the best way to deliver the programme to tackle the cost of living crisis	• Conflict of interest in Brent council providing debt advice as a creditor • front line colleagues are already at capacity with their core roles and may not have time for training • some negative impacts of the cost of living crisis are influenced by national and local government policy which cannot be changed by actions of project staff • due to lack of funding A4R are only able to provide debt advisors for the 6 month pilot which means beyond the pilot without funding there will be no capacity to A4R to provide debt advice which includes a post prototype review. This will limit the ability to evaluate success	**Strategic** • Easing the negative impact of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for the council • partnership development and stakeholder engagement work **Operational** • the diversity of experience and expertise session leads bring to the information sessions • momentum of the cost of living sessions which took place in October provided a solid foundation for this work to take place

A5: Monitoring Framework Immigration Advice Service

Immigration Advice Prototype NWLLC/Brent Hubs

Key Elements

The Issue / Challenge

This project addresses a gap seen advice provision for specialist legal advice at the Brent Hubs and will increase the capacity to support residents with immigration, housing and benefit advice. The Northwest London Law Centres has extensive experience of providing specialist immigration legal advice covering asylum and non-asylum immigration work. The funding will be used to test this approach and to develop options for future delivery.

Drivers

Resources:
- NWLLC staff carrying out advice provision in the Hubs
- Hubs Triage officers identifying staff for advice
- Transformation team to help with monitoring progress and outcomes of project

Relationships:
- Hubs, NWLLC and Transformation
- creating link between other services in the Council to identify residents requiring support with immigration

Political will:
- Immigration has been a priority for the Council given the large proportion of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees who have been placed in Brent
- Furthermore, Brent has a large population of migrants who need support with visa applications and EU settled status

Communication:
- Work to advertise the service to relevant communities

Idea / Concept

The Brent Hubs have seen increased demand for specialist advice needed to support residents with No Recourse to Public Funds, as well as continuing residents from the EU make application to the Settlement Scheme (EUSS). This will create more capacity in the Hubs to provide immigration advice.

Monitoring / Evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes (short-term)	Outcomes (Medium-term)	Impacts	KPI's
• Review of NWLLC proposal • Meeting with NWLLC and Brent Hubs manager to discuss needs of the project • Transformation team set up a framework for monitoring the programme • Approval process for Cabinet report, Grant Agreement • Comms and advertising the service, internal and external advertising	• Work to review the proposal and create a monitoring framework • Writing a Cabinet member report • Work to create and approve a Grant Agreement with support from Legal and Finance • Liaising between NWLLC and Hubs to finalise delivery and schedule of the programme • Monitor progress when project is set up, first month review with Hubs and NWLLC • Work on spreading awareness of the service to other internal service areas that are seeing residents with immigration issues	• Residents supported with immigration issues, housing or benefits advice • Support on the following matters:: • Providing asylum and immigration advice and support • Appeals and representation in the lower and higher courts including First Tier and Upper Tribunals • Working with high-risk victims of domestic abuse to help them access legal advice and other services to keep them and their children safe. • Supporting victims of trafficking to access advice and support • Spouse visas • EU settled status applications for complex or vulnerable people • Settlement applications on the basis of long residency • Indefinite leave applications • Support people to are subject to no recourse to public funds restrictions • Judicial review applications subject to public funding restriction	• Establish the service in the Hubs as a trusted source of advice • Understanding the issues faced by residents seeking to gain indefinite right to remain, what are the common challenges • impact on residents able to resolve their immigration status	**Immigration** Matters where indefinite leave to enter/remain (ILR) is granted (including where this is after a period of leave has already granted); • Matters involving a successful family reunion application; • Matters involving a successful application for settlement; • Matters involving a successful application for remain in the UK permanently on the basis of marriage. • Where a spouse is granted limited leave to enter or remain in the country; • Where refugee status is granted for 5 years (or a lesser period). • Matters involving successful application for citizenship. **Housing** • Resident able to access housing advice • Resident retains home and homelessness prevented • Resident able to plan and manage affairs better **Welfare Benefits** • Client receives lump some or regular payments • Client advised and better able to plan and manage their affairs	• Number of residents seen by immigration advice staff • Number of active cases/ number of cases progressed/resolved • Types of advice provided • Attendance and duration of appointments • Resident satisfaction of service • Case studies

Key Considerations (around the idea / concept)

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
• Increased demand for specialist immigration advice across Brent residents with NRPF as well as EU residents	• Making sure that NWLLC has the capacity to record a good level of data and detail from their casework, creating a straightforward process for feedback on the prototype project.	**Strategic** • Easing the negative impact of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for the council • Partnership development and stakeholder engagement work **Operational** • Momentum of the cost of living sessions which took place in October provided a solid foundation for this work to take place

Cost-of-Living Support Statement

October 2023

Since late 2021, the UK has experienced a sharp rise in the cost-of-living for individuals and businesses, as the cost of everyday things, including food and energy, increased. For many Brent residents, this meant having to make difficult decisions on how they spend their income, which can have a negative impact on their standard of living.

Context

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting everyone in Brent, with residents and communities with the most complex needs being hit the hardest. In our residents' attitude survey, one in five people stated their finances will get worse over the next year. We expect greater demand for our support as energy costs and use of foodbanks continues to increase. The crisis is affecting everyone - a recent attitudes survey[1] found that of those Londoners surveyed, a fifth were struggling due to the rising cost of living, with over half of those surveyed having to spend less on non-essentials and buying cheaper products.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, we learnt a lot, and we want to put that learning into practice. We listened to what our residents and people who work, study or do business in Brent said was important, and took your feedback.

Priorities

Our Moving Brent Forward Together Borough Plan for 2023-2027[2] sets out how we will work with residents, partner organisations and voluntary organisations over the next four years, and what the council will focus on.

There are five priority areas:

- **Prosperity and Stability in Brent**
- **A Cleaner, Greener Future**
- **Thriving Communities**
- **The Best Start in Life**
- **A Healthier Brent**

We will continue supporting our residents and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis and to recover from the pandemic, by continuing to work with partners and building on our existing joint plans to reduce poverty. We want to ensure everyone has access to direct support when they need it – whether it be financial, digital, welfare centred advice or for employment. This is also about making sure our residents and communities with more complex needs receive the best possible support. To enable this, we will continue our progress to be a Digital Place and Digital Council that make it easier for residents to access support and for us all to interact.

If you are struggling with rising costs or just about getting by, **our Cost-of-Living Advice Hub** lists all support Brent Council has available, to help with:

- Energy and water bills
- Money and debt
- Food and household essentials
- Childcare and school costs
- Help if you are facing homelessness.
- Jobs and training

Visit:

www.brent.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help-and-advice

[1] Source: YouGov (for GLA). Sample size: 1097 adults. Fieldwork undertaken between 15th and 20th September 2023. Figures have been weighted and are representative of all London adults (aged 18+).

[2] Moving Brent Forward Together for 2023-2027 Borough Plan. Available to read here. You can also download an accessible version of the borough plan here.

Support with money and debt

Our key activities in this area include:

- A focal point of the Council's approach to supporting residents who are experiencing financial hardship is our network of Brent Hubs and the Resident Support team within Customer Access. The Hubs team is well embedded within our communities and situated across seven locations in the borough. The Resident Support team considers RSF applications and makes awards.
- The Brent **Resident Support Fund (RSF)** is a discretionary support fund available to Brent residents who are in financial difficulties, for example struggling with food, utility bills and other household essentials.
- If you are unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits, you may be eligible for **Housing Benefit** to help you pay your rent.
    - If you are facing financial difficulties and need help paying your rent and household costs, we may be able to help you with a short term, one-off **Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).**
- **Council Tax support** is available for Brent residents needing help with paying their Council Tax**.**
    - Single persons, students, apprentices, carers, people with disabilities, people in detention, hospital or care home residents, and care leavers may also be eligible for a **Council Tax discount or reduction**.
- We have also improved access to free, regulated debt advice across our network of Brent Hubs.

Support with energy and water bills

Our key activities in this area include:

- Our dedicated **Resident Support Fund** can help eligible residents with emergency financial support towards things like their energy bills.
- Our **Brent Hubs** are based across seven locations in the borough and provide emergency support for residents in urgent need including food and fuel vouchers. Visit www.brenthubs.com
- The Brent **Well and Warm** Scheme is available to support vulnerable residents with free consultations and specialist energy advice to keep their homes warm over the winter period and beyond.
- If you are in arrears on your utility bills, you may be eligible for a 60-day 'Breathing Space', during which your creditors can't add interest or fees to your debts, or take enforcement action.

Support with food and household essentials

Our key activities in this area include:

- Our **Brent Hubs,** located across the borough, provide emergency support for residents in urgent need, including food and fuel vouchers. Visit www.brenthubs.com.
- Free vitamins are available to all pregnant women and children under the age of 4, available to collect from our Family Wellbeing Centres.
- If you are in extreme financial hardship and do not currently have access to the internet or a digital device, you may be eligible for a free **digital package** through our Resident Support Fund.

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Support with employment and training

Our key activities in this area include:

- The **Brent Start** programme provides adult education services across the borough including digital skills and ESOL, from a number of locations including libraries, community centres, primary schools and children centres. If you are on a low income and want to explore employment and training options, the Brent Start Adult Education Service Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) may be available to you.
- Our borough-wide **Brent Works** service provides job and apprenticeship opportunities, advice and support. For more information, visit https://brentworks.brent.gov.uk/
- Wrap-around support to help residents to access employment, skills and other linked support (e.g. financial inclusion and health) is available through **Brent Hubs**.
- Brent Council is currently undertaking and **Employment and Skills Outcomes Based Review** (OBR), to explore further opportunities around employment and skills.

Help if you are facing homelessness

If you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, the following support is available:

- If your landlord is harassing you, trying to unlawfully evict you or refusing to carry out essential repairs, The **London Borough of Brent Tenancy Relation Service** (BTRS), can provide support and advice Contact brenttrs@hja.net
- If you face the threat of homelessness in the next few weeks or are currently homeless and require emergency accommodation, complete our online **housing needs assessment** to receive further information on the options available to you.
- Other options are available for older and vulnerable people, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse or violence and those leaving the armed forces, prison, a hospital or a gang. Visit www.brent.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help-and-advice
- If you are single and at risk of homelessness, you can visit **The Turning Point** located in the Design Works, Park Parade, NW10 4HT for support with your housing needs.

Support with childcare and school costs

Our key activities in this area include:

- Our **Family Wellbeing Centres** offer a wide range of free health, education and welfare sessions and services to families and aim to give everyone in Brent the best possible start in life.
- Support is available through the **Resident Support Fund** if you are a Brent resident and in financial difficulty. The fund may be able to help with the costs of bills and essentials, including school uniforms.
- There are a range of schemes available to support with childcare and early education. Visit: https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/childcare-and-early-

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The Brent Offer

The Brent Offer is very much a partnership approach, particularly with our valued voluntary and community sector. This multi-agency approach ensures there is something for everyone who is experiencing financial hardship and seeks to guarantee that specialist services are available for those who need more help and support. Our range of services includes:

Resident Support Fund

Financial Assistance is available for Brent residents who have experienced a crisis, emergency and are in extreme financial hardship through the Resident Support Fund (RSF). A grant from this fund can help with reduced household income, increased household costs or arrears with rent, mortgage or council tax and/or debt. Grant packages in the form of digital packages are available to residents who are unable to access the internet.

Visit: **https://www.brent.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/resident-support-fund#howtoapplyrsf**

Brent Hubs

The Brent Hubs are a borough-wide service operating from seven locations across the borough: Harlesden, Kilburn, Willesden, Wembley, Kingsbury, the Civic Centre and The Living Room. The service offer was developed in partnership with local groups and organisations. Brent Hubs bring together local partners in one place to provide holistic support alongside key council services. The core service offer includes:

Benefits – housing benefits and council tax support, overpayment of benefits, change in circumstances, enquiries about JSA, ESA, Universal Credit processes, financial inclusion advice relating to benefits

- Housing and homelessness – rent arrears, facing eviction, repairs (relating to housing management), problems with landlords, moving home, sheltered accommodation enquires
- Money – debt, rent arrears, budget management, financial inclusion support
- Employment – support with setting up an email account, job search, CV writing, job applications, apprenticeships, course referrals, volunteering
- General support / form filling – support with reading letters and completing forms (e.g. medical appointments, MyAccount and digital support, universal credit, oyster card, freedom pass, driving license, blue badge forms, registering to vote and passport forms)
- Food and fuel aid– support in accessing food and fuel vouchers, referrals to food banks

Visit: **www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/brent-hubs**

Family Wellbeing Centres

In December 2020, Brent opened eight new Family Wellbeing Centres, developed from existing Children's Centre venues around Brent. Family Wellbeing Centres provide a wide range of easily accessible support for families. Their core offer of support includes health, education, family support, support for parents/carers and SEND support.

Both Brent Hubs and the council's Family Wellbeing Centres are aligned with a localities approach. Both aim to build on and connect with local community assets (including organisations and groups), helping their clients to access the right services and support for them. The approach enables us to address complex issues that exist at a local level by tailoring approaches to meet local needs, and to work with communities to make them more engaged, connected and resilient. The key shift in this approach is a move from focusing on single services to address specific issues (which often results in complex systems, which are challenging to navigate) to a more joined-up, issues approach relevant to needs and locations.

Visit: **www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/childcare/familywellbeing-centres**

Foodbanks

The Council recognises the vital role that foodbanks play in the borough, particularly in challenging times. Whilst recognising this role the council is also keen to reduce foodbank dependency. During the pandemic, foodbanks

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in the borough saw an increase in demand and the Council has worked closely with the Food Aid Network to share information, provide access to funding and ensure links are made with other services such as Brent Hubs.

Alongside food aid, foodbanks have been providing welfare advice to those in crisis. To reduce the dependency on foodbanks as well as support the types of food on offer, initiatives which support growing local produce are in place and work well in the borough. These include community gardens - Harlesden community gardens and Sufra/St. Raphael's community garden. Brent Hubs make referrals to foodbanks and provide an outreach service in food bank locations. Mutual Aid groups also make referrals. Foodbanks play a pivotal role in improving the health and wellbeing of residents. Their role is wider than food distribution and there are particular opportunities to support those with long-term conditions and ensure that the wider population are signposted to health services when they use foodbanks.

Visit: **https://www.brentfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/**

Ethical Debt Recovery policy and Breathing Space Legislation

The Ethical Debt Recovery policy and the debt write off policy procedure ensure that no resident is left with multiple debts that they find difficult to manage and that as a Council we take every step to support the residents with payments and proper recovery procedures. In addition, the new Breathing Space legislation that came into effect on 4 May 2021 will impact the way in which service areas across the council can collect income and debt. Residents with existing debt from 4 May 2021 will be able to apply for 'Breathing Space'. If granted, the individual will then be given a 60-day 'Breathing Space' period, during which all recovery and enforcement action is halted while they receive professional debt advice to find solutions to their financial difficulties.

Cost of Living Outcomes Based Review

In 2022, Brent Council carried out a Cost-of-Living focussed Outcomes Based Review (OBR). The OBR aimed to develop tailored solutions to best support our residents through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. OBR's constitute working with various stakeholders and residents, using design-led methodologies, across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. From this process, several pilot projects emerged which have been in development and testing, including our Community Wellbeing Project in Stonebridge.

The Community Wellbeing Project pilot is a partnership with local charity Sufra NW London, aiming to tackle food insecurity, increase community resilience and provide wraparound services to support our residents in the longer-term.

Visit: **www.bit.ly/sufracwp**

A Healthier Brent

The pandemic highlighted health inequalities that exist in our communities. We know there are a range of underlying factors such as housing, employment and income that contribute to these inequalities. We want Brent to be a healthier and stronger borough where everyone can live independent, safe and happy lives. We can do this by supporting the most vulnerable and removing barriers all residents face to becoming physically active and we will do so by focusing on tackling health inequalities, and providing localised services for local needs.

We provide opportunities for residents to be more active and working with local community groups and leaders. Public Health have over 80 sessions each week that residents can access free of charge.

Public Health/Brent Health Matters also work with local communities to provide Health and Wellbeing events where a wide range of information on health and wellbeing is offered, with access to local services such as health checks and healthy eating advice.

Public Health have also worked with health and community partners to offer local services to the community such as health checks, oral health checks, vaccinations (flu, Covid), prostate cancer checks, diabetes risk assessment, healthy eating and more.

Useful links:

- For Parks, Leisure and Healthier Living, Open Spaces, Sports Clubs and Activities, FREE to use Outdoor Gyms, and B.Active discount leisure

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card, visit: **https://www.brent.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-healthy-living**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: **https://www.brent.gov.uk/adult-social-care/health-and-wellbeing/promoting-mental-wellbeing**
- Healthy Start – get help with buying healthy food, milk and vitamins: **https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/support-for-parents-and-families/start-for-life/healthy-start**

Men's health programmes:

- Men's **wellbeing gardening programme**, on Sundays from 2-4pm at Longstone Avenue allotments (opposite Roundwood Park).
    - For men of all ages
    - No gardening experience necessary
    - No booking necessary, just turn up!
- Men United - Wellbeing Group, on Wednesdays between 1-3pm at the Methodist Church, 25 High Street, Harlesden, NW10 4NE
    - Free tea, coffee, light lunch, advice and support as well as barber services once a month.

Digital Inclusion

Since 2020 we have supported over 2000 residents with digital devices and connectivity as part of the Digital Resident Support Fund which continues to be available to all residents in Brent who do not have access to digital technology and internet at home. Alongside this, we have nearly 200 digital champions across Brent's frontline services to support residents with answering their digital questions and helping them to get online. We also understand that affordability is a significant barrier to the internet and actively promote the social tariffs available via our digital champions to ensure the digital world is both accessible and affordable. To ensure that we continue to meet the changing digital needs of residents we actively engage with the community and voluntary sector via our digital inclusion network and will be launching a resident survey later this year.

Improving intelligence

Measuring impact will improve the Council's understanding of the effects of the crisis on the borough and will shape how effective collective efforts are in helping to mitigate any negative impacts. The main mechanism for measuring impact is a Financial Inclusion Dashboard developed by Brent. The Council continues to develop and build on the dashboard, to support with making targeted decisions in mitigating the effects of the cost-of-living crisis.

Brent Start

Brent Start is Brent's adult education college, providing adult education services across the borough. Brent start can support you with learning new skills, getting into employment, finding a better job or improving your prospects, and offer a range of courses including digital skills and ESOL. The programme operates from a number of locations including libraries, community centres, primary schools and children centres.

Visit: **www.brent.gov.uk/jobs-training-and-skills/courses-training-and-skills**

Brent Works

Our borough-wide **Brent Works** service provides job and apprenticeship opportunities as well as employment related advice and support. For all opportunities and information, visit: **https://brentworks.brent.gov.uk/**

Employment and Skills OBR

Brent Council is undertaking and Employment and Skills themed Outcomes Based Review, aimed at exploring how we can best upskill and enable residents to best support themselves through employment. Findings from the OBR and other ongoing Cost-of-Living related work will inform our future support offer, to ensure we are supporting residents towards sustainable, longer-term outcomes.

DRAFT

Translation

If you need help translating the support available into another language, visit:

https://www.brent.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help-and-advice

and use the orange 'SPEAK' button at the top of the page, to change the language of the website.



DRAFT

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EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	RSF and New Model of Support
DEPARTMENT:	Resident Services
TEAM:	Transformation
LEAD OFFICER:	Marta Portalska
DATE:	24.01.2024

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.

Overview

Brent Council is proposing a new model of support for residents from April 2024, consisting of a Community Wellbeing Programme which includes a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), Crisis Response Fund (CRF) and Community Wellbeing Service.

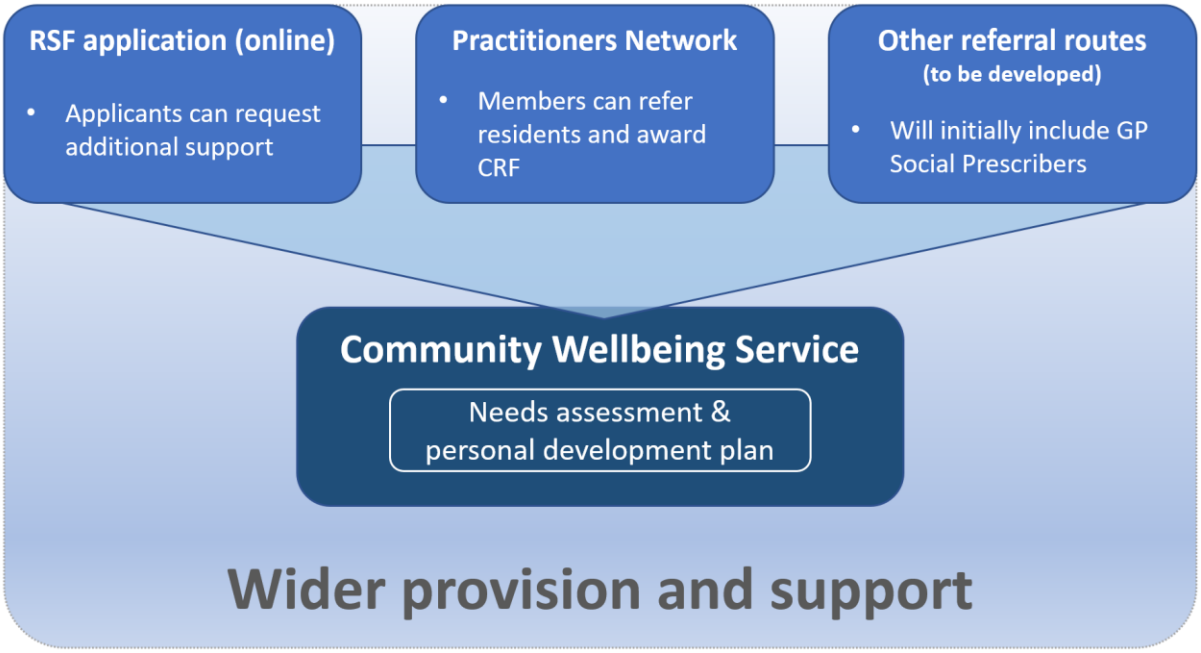
The funding available for the new model, including the RSF element, is less than in previous years. In this context, a key proposed change is a refreshed RSF criteria that includes a smaller maximum award of up to £500 per resident, compared to the current maximum award of £1,000 per resident. The impact of this change will be mitigated by aligning and connecting the refreshed RSF scheme with a wider range of support available in the new Community Wellbeing Programme, which is being developed around six design principles:

1. The model should support residents to become more resilient and independent.
2. The programmes and support available should be targeted and easily accessible to those who need them most.
3. The model should incentivise skills and employment and address physical and mental health challenges.
4. The model should align with and support connectivity between related support offers (including those detailed in the Cost of Living statement).
5. Development of the model should be intelligence-led
6. The model should be sustainable.

Proposal

The Community Wellbeing Programme is designed to support residents in the longer-term through a single, joined-up model including a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), and Community Wellbeing Service.

Image 1: Community Wellbeing Programme - pathways of support



The Programme includes support with short-term financial pressures through a Crisis Response Fund (CRF) with a maximum award amount of £200. There will also be a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF) with a maximum annual amount of up to £500. Where a resident's need is greater than £500 or includes credit or store card debt, referrals to a Credit Union for interest free loans will be available. The CRF and RSF will also act as a gateway to connect the applicant to the Community Wellbeing Service and a wider package of support, relevant to their longer-term sustainability.

The Community Wellbeing Service will be an expanded version of the Community Wellbeing Project which has been piloted at Bridge Park Leisure Centre two days per week and supports up to 400 families per year. Capacity for the Community Wellbeing Service will be increased to operating five days per week to support up to 1,000 families and residents per year, at a location where it can be co-located with wider support provision. Eligibility for the expanded offer will include health needs, with health professionals, including GP social prescribers, able to refer.

Locating the Community Wellbeing Service at the New Millennium Day Centre provides the space and facilities required to effectively deliver the expanded Kitchen, Café and Shop offer as well as making use of other on-site facilities, and enabling the continuation of sessional day support services. Additional spaces within the New Millennium Day Centre site provide opportunities to co-locate the service with complementary offers such as Brent Hubs, and to trial hosting other services in the space.

To ensure the support package available through the new model meets local needs, it is proposed that specialist Immigration and Debt Advice offers (piloted in partnership with Northwest London Law Centre and Advice 4 Renters respectively) are incorporated into the wider programme, and also located at the New Millenium Day Centre. These building blocks will align with existing provision including Brent Hubs, FWCs, Brent Start, and the Turning Point, and will ensure core support such as ESOL classes, digital training and other life skills are embedded in the offer.

The ambition is to provide a multifaceted programme including the space, tools, and knowledge to support residents to improve their situation and increase opportunities in the longer-term, reducing long-term dependency on services.

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

Proposals may affect any Brent resident who is impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, needs related support or has wider support needs, including physical or mental health challenges.

Currently, residents are able to apply for the Resident Support Fund for financial support, and in the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, the RSF has supported 2,773 residnets with a total of £2m awarded.

As part of the Community Wellbeing Programme, the Resident Support Fund will continue to be available, with an amended maximum award amount of £500. Residents who applied for the RSF in 23/24, would likely receive a smaller average award for the same application reason in 24/25. Therefore, these residents will be affected as less short-term financial assistance will be available than previously.

Cohorts of residents who will be able to access the enhanced Community Wellbeing Programme will also be affected by this proposal, which includes new pathways and access routes to support designed to improve their situations in the longer-term. Evaluation of pilot projects which are feeding into the design of the programme has shown they are effective in supporting residents, including positive outcomes aligned to the following indicators:

- Improved financial resilience
- Residents are better equipped to deal with Cost-of-Living pressures
- Frontline staff have the skills, tools and information needed to support residents.

Also, residents who currently access sessional day support services at the New Millenium Day Centre will be affected, as locating the Community Wellbeing Service at this site will enable the continuation of sessional services and access to other support within the programme.

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. Proposals for the support model will have an impact on Brent residents who require support, are affected by the cost-of-living crisis or have wider needs, including physical or mental wellbeing challenges.

In considering the proposals, the impact on these groups has been fully considered. It is acknowledged that the proposals may have a negative impact on residents that need short-term financial assistance via the RSF due to expected lower average award amounts.

The aim of the proposed new model, which includes access to a wider support package designed to support residents with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and connecting to other existing provision, is to facilitate positive, more sustainable outcomes for residents in the longer-term.

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	Neutral/None	Negative
Age	x		x
Sex		X	
Race	x		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 *is* 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.

Residents that currently access the RSF or are likely to seek support from the RSF in the future will be affected. In the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, the RSF supported 2,773 applicants.

Historic analysis of RSF awards shows that the five most common reasons for awards granted are for the increased cost of living, rent arrears, council tax arrears, white goods and debt.

Brent Council holds the following information on residents who have been awarded the Resident Support Fund. Some fields in the RSF application form are not mandatory, meaning data shown is representative of those who *have* provided information:

Table 1: Age Profile of RSF awards, 1 April 2023 – 16 Jan 2024

Age Bracket	Count	Percentage
18 – 24	161	5.9
25 – 34	595	21.9
35 – 44	725	26.7
45 – 54	589	21.7
55 – 64	394	14.5
65+	247	9.1

Table 2: Ethnicity profile: RSF awards 1 April 2023 – 16 Jan 2024

Ethnicity Category	Total	Percentage
Arab	329	12.9
Bangladeshi	10	0.4
Black African	663	26.1
Black Caribbean	376	14.8
Chinese	9	0.4
Indian	94	3.7
Not Answered	116	4.6
Other Asian	170	6.7
Other Black	75	2.9
Other Ethnic Group	85	3.3
Other Mixed	54	2.1
Other White	236	9.3
Pakistani	59	2.3
White & Asian	16	0.6
White & Black African	32	1.3
White & Black Caribbean	32	1.3
White British	156	6.1
White Irish	32	1.3

Residents who access the Community Wellbeing Service, which is modelled on the Community Wellbeing Project pilot, will be affected. The Community Wellbeing Project has supported approximately 340 members and their households between February and December 2023.

Data below shows demographic information of members enrolled on the scheme between August 2023 and December 2023. As this is a pilot scheme, eligibility criteria for membership, whilst flexible, was targeted at Stonebridge residents and included: being local to Stonebridge/Harlesden, in receipt of any means tested benefit/s and families. The enhanced Community Wellbeing Service within the new model will be accessed by a greater number of residents from all areas of Brent.

Table 3: Age Profile: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Age bracket	Total	Percentage
Under 18	9	7.5
18 – 24	0	0
25 – 34	12	10
35 – 44	53	44.2
45 – 54	39	32.5
55 – 64	6	5
65+	1	0.8

Table 4: Ethnicity Profile: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Ethnicity category	Total	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	12	10.2
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	64	54.2
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	17	14.4
White and any other white background	2	1.7
Prefer not to say	2	1.7
Any other ethnic category	21	17.8

*Due to a small sample size, responses have been categorised into fewer categories for the purpose of this report.

Table 5: Long term health conditions: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Do you have a long term health condition?	Total	Percentage
Yes	37	30.8
No	83	69.2

There are 68 people who currently attend the New Millennium Day Centre as part of or all of their support. Locating the Community Wellbeing Service and elements of the wider Programme at the New Millennium Day Centre will enable the continuation of some of the sessional day support services for those currently accessing the day service.

Brent Council holds the following information on those 68 people:

Age profile

18-64 - 49
65-74 - 9
75-84 - 6
85+ - 4

Service user group

Learning Disability - 53
Physical Support and Disability – 7
Older people/disability - 8

Ethnicity

Asian or Asian British - 19
Black or Black British - 20
White - 27

Gender

Male - 37
Female – 31

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	People accessing the Resident Support Fund are mostly of working age. The most common age bracket of those accessing the fund is residents aged between 35 and 44 (26.7%), followed by those aged between 25 and 34 (21.9%) and those aged between 45 and 54 (21.7%). Therefore the negative impact of lower value short-term financial assistance received via the refreshed RSF will be predominantly felt by these age groups. It is also anticipated that these groups will experience positive impacts from the new model, as they will be connected with a wider

	support package designed to support them with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and other existing provision (e.g. employment and skills support), which will result in more sustainable outcomes in the longer-term. This anticipated positive impact is supported by age data for residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Project, with 44.2% of project members aged between 35 and 44, 32.5% aged between 45 and 54 and 10% aged between 25 and 34.
DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	30.8% of people that access the Community Wellbeing Project have a long term health condition, which indicates that this group and other residents with long term health conditions will receive positive impacts through engaging with the enhanced Community Wellbeing Service in the new model. 60 of the 68 people who currently use the New Millennium Day Centre have a disability. This group will receive positive impacts through the new model through the continuation of sessional activities at this location and opportunity to connect with elements of the wider programme.
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	Residents awarded the RSF are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds, with Black African (26.1%), Black Caribbean (14.8%) and Arab (12.9) the largest groups. Therefore the negative impact of lower value short-term financial assistance received via the refreshed RSF will be disproportionately felt by these age groups. It is also anticipated that these groups will experience positive impacts from the new model, as through their RSF application they will be able to be connected with a wider support package designed to support them with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and other existing provision (e.g. employment and skills support), which will result in more sustainable outcomes in the longer-term. This anticipated positive impact for BAME groups is partially supported by age data for residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Project. Of the members enrolled on the scheme between August and December 2023, 54.2% were Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, 14.4% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups and 10.2% Asian or Asian British. However, it should be noted, this is a pilot scheme targeted towards the local area of Stonebridge and members reflect the diversity of the local community.
SEX	

Details of impacts identified	N/A
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	**N/A**
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	N/A

3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No. The Council is aiming to ensure that any effects on residents are minimised and impacts are mitigated. The proposals in this report aim to provide a range of mitigations to support residents in the longer-term.

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 design of the proposed new model is directly informed by pilot projects developed through a Cost of Living themed Outcome Based Review (OBR).
OBR engagement included a wide range of community research activity with stakeholders and residents through interviews, workshops, pop-ups and focus groups. Findings from this discovery work were synthesised and used at a large-scale collaboration event (Visioning Day) where stakeholders jointly developed ideas and priorities to inform the pilots.

Monitoring indicators and feedback from those accessing support provided by the Cost-of-Living pilot projects including the Community Wellbeing Project, debt and immigration advice and CRF are also regularly collected and evaluated, and have been positive.

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

As part of the new model, a tracking system will support with monitoring of impacts and outcomes, against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers, and will build on the monitoring and evaluation framework which has underpinned all related Cost-of-Living work to date.

Impacts and responses from the New Millennium Day Centre consultation process will also be analysed to inform service design.

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

Negative impacts on residents that need short-term financial assistance via the RSF due to expected lower average award amounts will remain. The funding available for the new model, including the RSF element, is less than in previous years and the new model is designed to ensure available funding is fairly distributed to residents in short-term financial need. The new model is further supplemented with a wider support package designed to support residents with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and connecting to other existing provision, is to facilitate positive, more sustainable outcomes for residents in the longer-term.

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

As part of the new model, a tracking system will support with monitoring of impacts and outcomes, against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers.

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.

The potential negative impacts relate to a reduction in the value of short-term financial assistance available to residents accessing the refreshed RSF scheme. Despite the potential negative impacts, it is recommended to continue with the proposal to introduce the Community Wellbeing Programme. This is because:

- The Council is required to maintain sustainable services. The proposals enable the Council to continue providing an element of immediate financial assistance, whilst focusing on improving outcomes for residents in the longer-term, within available budgets.
- Proposals aim to have positive impacts for those accessing the RSF by giving the opportunity to access the wider support package
- Negative impacts can be mitigated as follows:

- Residents with a wider support need will be connected with the appropriate element of the package. E.g:
    - A resident who applies for RSF to support with outstanding utility bills and is identified to have other debt-related issues will be connected with the Brent debt advice service, as well as receiving a cash award.
    - A resident who applies for RSF for support with purchasing food and is identified to be struggling with food insecurity will be referred to the Community Wellbeing Service, as well as receiving a cash award.
    - A resident who applies for RSF to support with financial pressures including credit card debt and is identified to have digital skills needs, will be referred to a Credit Union to receive an interest free loan, and referred to the skills element of the model for support with digital inclusion, as well as receiving a cash award.
- Residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Service will be supported with creation of a personal development plan to establish their current support needs and an action plan to improve this.

The intention is to ensure that all changes are clearly communicated to residents, and once in place, availability of the wider support package is clear to residents applying for the RSF.

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

Update RSF and CRF communications, materials and forms	Ensure changes are appropriately communicated to all residents	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April 2024
Develop future offer and arrangements for ASC client groups at New Millenium Day Centre	Appropriate arrangements agreed to enable the continuation of some of the sessional day support services for those currently accessing the day service.	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright/ Leon Gooding	April - September 2024
Identify other services to move to New Millennium Day Centre	Enable join-up of services and better access to services for residents	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April – October 2024
Create a tracking system to monitor outcomes following needs assessment	Ability to track journey from the needs assessment through the Community Wellbeing Programme, and their outcomes	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April – October 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Marta Portalska
REVIEWING OFFICER:	
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Jon Cartwright

Brent	**Cabinet** 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services
	Lead Member - Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action (Councillor Krupa Sheth)

Highways Footway Maintenance Programme 2023-26

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix A: Highways Footway Programme for 2023/26 (Please note this appendix has been marked as "To Follow" and will be circulated in advance of the meeting)
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Jonathan Westell, Highways Contracts & Delivery Manager 020 8937 3660 jonathan.Westell@brent.gov.uk Tony Kennedy, Head of Service, Highways Management 020 8937 5151 tony.kennedy@brent.gov.uk Chris Whyte Director, Environment & Leisure 020 8937 5342 chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. This report sets out recommendations for Brent's 2023/26 footway Maintenance programme through prioritised programmes of footway reconstruction, and following further ward councillor discussions on ward priorities

1.2. This follows on from the 16th October 2023 Cabinet report which set out recommendations for Brent's 2023/24 Carriageway Maintenance programme through prioritised programmes of major road resurfacing and preventative maintenance, which includes injection patching. It also set out budgets for asset condition surveys and analysis, improvements to highway structures & drainage, improvements to the public realm and renewal of road markings.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Cabinet approves the 2023/26 Planned Footway Maintenance Programme as set out in Appendix A of this report (Please note this appendix has been marked as "To Follow" and will be circulated in advance of the meeting).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 Highway infrastructure is the most visible, well used and valuable physical asset owned by the Council. The latest value of Brent's asset is estimated at around £4.5bn and includes 505 km of roads; 847 km of pavements; 20700 road gullies and 90 bridges and structures.

3.1.2 Our Asset Management approach uses condition survey and other data to produce annual road and footway maintenance programmes, to give optimum condition for our budget, taking into account deterioration of the asset.

3.1.3 This work chimes well with our Borough Plan, particularly "Prosperity & Stability in Brent" and "A Cleaner Greener Future". Our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our highways works help our "Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy". The highways drainage work is embedded in our "Flood Risk Management Strategy" and the highways term contracts (through which this work is carried out) have been procured in accordance with the "Procurement Strategy". Overall, highway maintenance allows our highway assets their continued availability to contribute towards the "Transportation Strategy".

3.2 Background

Last Year's Highways Maintenance Investment 2022/23

3.2.1 In 2022/23 Brent's annual highways maintenance investment programme consisted of £3.5m base Brent capital funding, plus £2m extra Brent Capital funding. This was used to maintain Brent's carriageways, footways and highway structures. The works delivered, which resulted in (amongst other things) around 4.3 miles of roads being resurfaced and 5.7 miles of footways being reconstructed.

Brent's Highway Assets

3.2.2 Highway infrastructure is the most visible, well used and valuable physical asset owned by the Council. The latest value of Brent's asset is estimated at around £4.5bn and includes:

- 505 km (315 miles) of roads;
- 847 km (529 miles) of pavements;
- 90 bridges and structures;
- 20700 road gullies;
- 10,000 street trees; and
- 22,848 streetlights and other illuminated street furniture.

Asset Condition Surveys

3.2.3 Detailed Visual Inspections are used to ascertain the structural condition of the borough's footways. We survey 50% of the footway network per year as we believe this is a good balance between cost and data quality; the overall condition of a footway does not tend to deteriorate rapidly in the same way a road can do, when it's subject to a bad winter and heavy traffic. This year we have continued to collect grass verge inventory and condition data, so (although it is a snapshot) we can see just how many of our grass verges are damaged through vehicle overrun, inconsiderate builders and illegal crossovers.

Structural Asset Condition

3.2.4 The overall footway condition has again slipped to 48% having improved from 47% in 2018/19 to 33 % in 2022/23. To investigate this slippage in condition, officers have checked the condition of all the footways reconstructed since the policy change to asphalt in 16/17, and they are all still in "Excellent" or "Good" condition. This would indicate that the slip in overall condition is due to the ongoing deterioration in the remaining slabbed footways. This highlights the wisdom of the second tranche of substantial £11m footway investment to keep up with ongoing deterioration of slabbed footways.

3.2.5 As time goes on roads, and pavements that are currently in good condition will deteriorate, just like any physical asset such as a house or a vehicle. To keep on top of the deterioration of our asset the council must invest continually in maintenance.

Footway Scheme Prioritisation

3.2.6 The 2023/26 footway maintenance programme is made up of two elements;(a) one road per ward chosen directly by Ward Councillors and (b) based on the asset management principles.

Direct Choice by Ward Councillors

3.2.7 In discussion with Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment and Councillor Butt, Leader Brent Council, it was agreed that given the additional investment, ward councillors should have more input into the selection process for their wards.

3.2.8 Therefore, ward councillors were given the opportunity to directly select footway(s) for their ward for direct inclusion in the programme, up to a nominal value of £150k. (This is in addition to taking account of a first round of councillor nominations for footway maintenance factored into the priorities for that part of the programme based on asset management principles)

3.2.9 The nominal £150k allocation was for the ward as a whole and nominations were to have the agreement of all ward councillors for the respective ward. Given the varying lengths of roads, for some wards the total cost of the footway(s) included via direct nomination exceeded £150k whilst for others it came in below. Where nominated roads are long, sections of roads from one junction to another have been selected, where a suitable end point (usually a crossroads) is available.

Based on Asset Management Principles

3.2.10 During 2022/23, the footway network has been assessed to determine the current condition of footways. A range of factors were then taken into account to define priorities for maintenance.

3.2.11 Ten locations for major footway reconstruction, identified using Asset Management Principles, have already been approved by Key Officer Decision for an early start in August. This was to facilitate implementation of the 2023/24 programmes, by giving approval for implementation before the customary annual Highways Capital Maintenance report to Cabinet.

3.2.12 After the costs of the roads chosen by Direct Choice by ward councillors were deducted, the programme for the remainder of the £11m budget was chosen according to asset management principles.

3.2.13 The factors taken into account come under two broad headings, "*Treatment Benefit*" from network condition and "*Prioritisation benefit*" for all the other factors. Scores are given according to each of the factors and the total score gives the relative priority for maintenance of one road against another.

- ***Treatment Benefit -*** For footways, "Treatment Benefit" scores have been based solely on structural condition as determined by independent surveys.

- ***Prioritisation Benefit*** - Scores for each of the following Prioritisation factors are calculated, weighted according to both the relative importance of each factor, and the total length of required maintenance ("treatment length") identified within a road, to get the Prioritisation Benefit score:

a) ***Claims Priority -*** Roads with a recent history of public accident claims for loss or damage on the highway (on the footway or carriageway as appropriate) are allocated a score in this category. The number of accident claims in a road is divided by its length, so that roads of different lengths can be compared on an equal basis.

b) ***Defects Priority -*** Roads with a recent history of reactive maintenance defects identified (on the footway or carriageway as appropriate) are allocated a score in this category. Reactive maintenance defects could be potholes or pavement trips, and are identified through either reactive safety inspections in response to customer reports or scheduled safety inspections. The number of defects in a road is divided by its length, so that roads of different lengths can be compared on an equal basis.

c) ***Nominations Priority -*** Roads, which have been named in that year's initial round of Councillor Nominations, are allocated a score in this category.

d) ***Hierarchy Priority -*** Brent footway and carriageway hierarchies have been determined according to the principles in the industry Code of Practice "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure" by Metis Consultants Ltd. A network hierarchy based on asset function is the foundation of a risk-based maintenance strategy. The hierarchy takes into account current and expected use, resilience, and local economic and social factors such as industry, schools, hospitals and similar, as well as the desirability of continuity and of a consistent approach for walking and cycling.

3.2.14 Apart from Classified roads, which by their nature can be quite long, the programmes are often drawn up on a whole road basis. This means a section of road in relatively good condition may be resurfaced if it is on a street where the rest of the road needs maintenance and it would be illogical, or impractical, not to resurface the whole street.

Highways Investment during 2023/26 - Footway Repairs

3.2.15 Officers will carry on with the practice established during the £20m footway improvement programme, for roads where the existing footway (including vehicle crossings) is all bituminous surfacing, that for the improvement works concrete blocks will be used on vehicle crossings and at street corners. This will provide consistency across all highway footway schemes in the borough.

3.2.16 Short lengths of footway that are in poor condition can cost a significant amount in reactive maintenance repairs, as well as being a cause of accident claims. It is intended to invest £150k of this year's overall budget to resurface short sections of footway. The programme is determined "in–year" according to priorities at the time.

3.2.17 The council has decided to invest a further £15m over the next four years *(from 2022/23) into planned highway maintenance. It is intended to deliver £5.33m of that in this year 2023/24 (approximately £3.33m to footway improvements and £2m to A road resurfacing).

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Officers continue to take account of councillor nominations for road maintenance and this is factored into the priorities for the annual maintenance plans based on asset management principles. Additionally one road in every ward was chosen from direct nominations by ward councillors

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 The table below summarises the allocation of Brent capital funding for highways maintenance during the year 2023/24, approved at the October 2023 Cabinet:

Schemes	2023/24
	£0
BRENT BASE CAPITAL ALLOCATION	
Major resurfacing of B, C & unclassified roads; Preventative maintenance unclassified roads	2,175
Carriageway Short Sections	150
Footway Short Sections	150
Injection patching	250
Renewal of Road Markings	100
Improvements to the public realm	125
Condition Surveys & Analysis	100
Highway Structures (*& Drainage)	450
Sub-total Base Brent Capital	**3,500**
£15 m - Major Footway Resurfacing	3330
£15 m - Major resurfacing of Principal (“A”) roads	2000
Sub-total Major Footway Investment	**5,330**
TfL Funding for Principal Roads	200
TOTAL HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME	**9,030**

5.2 The table above does not include the slippage from prior year budgets. For FY23/24 the capital monitoring reports takes into account this slippage and is the ‘revised budget’. Carriageways on the monitoring reports is £3.5m and in line with the table above (Sub-total Base Brent Capital). Pulling works forward will increase the reported Revised Budget figure and needed formal approval via the October Cabinet . Budget FY24/25 would be reviewed and revised down in line with this paper proposal during the budget build for FY24/25.

Highways Capital Expenditure Budget FY23/24 Budget includes over/under budget spends from FY22/23	
	2023/24 BUDGET
Footways	4,084
Carriageways	3,757
Other Highway Mtce costs	1,147
Total Highways Mtce Programme	**8,987**

5.3 The annual £3.5m is funded through a revenue contribution to capital and the investment of £15m will be funded through council reserves.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The Council's overall Capital Programme for 2023-2024 was agreed by Full Council on 23 February 2023. The programme consists of individual projects and sum allocated for work of a particular type. Under the Council's Policy Framework and Financial Regulations (Part 2 of the Constitution), any draft capital programme for a service area utilising those capital resources allocated by the Council must be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

6.2 Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 places a duty on the council as highways authority to maintain the public highway. The Highways Maintenance Scheme Programme must make sufficient provision for the Council to comply with this duty. Breach of this duty can render the council liable to pay compensation if anyone is injured as a result of failure to maintain the highway. There is also a general power under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980 to improve highways.

6.3 Any contracts referred to within this report that are let for the provision of works must be let in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders (Part 2 of the Constitution).

6.4 Subject to certain restrictions in sections 2-4 of the Localism Act 2011, and subject to any specific prohibitions within other legislation, or the existence of more specific legal powers in other Acts, the Council may rely on the general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to work collaboratively with other local authorities where necessary.

6.5 The current Climate Change Act 2008 does not impose any direct statutory obligations on local authorities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or to reduce their carbon footprint. However, local authority policy making including that at Brent Council, and case law is rapidly developing in this area. The Court of Appeal held in a recent judicial review case R (on the application of Plan B Earth Ltd) v The Secretary of State For Transport and others [2020] EWCA Civ. 214, that international climate change and environmental obligations are relevant considerations for determining whether public authority decisions (including those as to budgets and the allocation of resources) are sustainable as reasonable, if challenged judicially. The Commercial Organisations and Public Authorities Duty (Human Rights and Environment) Bill currently before Parliament will impose firmer targets and obligations in this area.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the "Public Sector Equality Duty"), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
(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,

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.5 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening there are considered to be no equalities implications that require full assessment. The works proposed under the highways main programme do not have different outcomes for people in terms of race, gender, age, sexuality or belief.

7.6 In addition, the design criteria used in all highway work does take note of the special requirements of various disabilities. These will take the form of levels and grades associated with wheelchair users, for example road crossing points, and for partially sighted / blind persons at crossing facilities. The highway standards employed are nationally recognised by such bodies as the Department for Transport. This programme of works continues the upgrade of disabled crossing facilities at junctions, which were not constructed to modern day standards. All new junctions are designed to be compliant at the time of construction.

7.7 Strengthened areas of footway are far less susceptible to damage and will therefore aid the movement of pedestrians that may find it difficult to walk on uneven pavements.

7.8 Officers will make sure accessibility ramps are provided to aid wheelchair users and those with prams. Officer will make sure high visibility barriers and tapping

rails are provided to allow those with visual impairments to negotiate the works as they are in progress.

7.9 Officers will make sure of the visibility of the required signage, also where temporary work is being carried out.

7.10 Officers will monitor of the quality of the work to ensure that the finished surface is to specification and does not form a mobility hindrance; and that signage and road markings are correctly provided as aid to movement.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 The Challenge is Now

8.1.1 The Highways Management service are keen to play an ever-increasing role in reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions from within our remit. The industry code of Practice "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure" recommends:

"*The effects of extreme weather events on highway infrastructure assets should be risk assessed and ways to mitigate the impacts of the highest risks identified."*
[Recommendation 21]

"The impact of highway infrastructure maintenance activities in terms of whole life carbon costs should be taken into account when determining appropriate interventions, material and treatments." [Recommendation 32]

8.1.2 It is important that decision making in highways asset management be taken with these recommendations in mind. At the same time, London Boroughs should work to ensure that the Mayoral policy of London, being carbon neutral by 2030, is achieved.

8.1.3 Thereby reduction of CO_2 in highway interventions needs to be assessed, understood and mitigated through:

a) Reduction of carbon in the production of materials
b) Reduction of carbon in transportation of materials to site
c) Reduction of carbon in installation
d) Reduction of waste generated from site
e) Extension of life of the assets ensuring resilient materials are used that withstand climate change and deliver a service to society in the longer term.

8.2 Common Aims with Asset Management

8.2.1 The challenge of reducing carbon footprint for the maintenance of the highways asset dovetails well with the aim of highways asset management; which is to have a structured approach to managing assets effectively and minimise the whole life cost of the asset whilst delivering the required levels of service.

8.2.2 Given that our aim is to minimise ongoing maintenance; all maintenance has its carbon footprint and so by minimising maintenance - especially by increasing planned maintenance (which is by its nature more cost effective) and thereby decreasing the need for reactive maintenance – we also decrease carbon emissions.

8.3 ***What we are doing already***

8.3.1 On a regular basis councils are reporting carbon efficiencies in schemes and contracts and works on various industry magazines. Currently our approach can be encapsulated by the watchwords ***Reduce, Reuse and Recycle:***

a) ***Reduce –*** the most desirable of the three: the Council reduces the ongoing maintenance through asset management, and use resilient materials in its footways and carriageways to be fit for the challenges of today. This approach needs to cover all schemes in the public realm, such as town centre refurbishments, to make sure they do not become maintenance liabilities. Warm-mix asphalt has many benefits over standard bitumen including reduced emissions (up to 30% & 50% at the point of mixing & laying respectively), reduced overall costs, improved Health & Safety and enhanced technical performance. Our preventative maintenance programmes reduce the need for more intrusive and costly maintenance

b) ***Reuse –*** the next desirable is reusing materials where possible. For example, during footway improvement works wherever possible we reuse the existing granite kerbs, instead of shipping in completely new kerbs from places like Portugal or China.

c) ***Recycle –*** lastly, if reducing or reusing is not possible, at least recycle***.*** It is standard practice now amongst contractors to recycle as many material arisings from highway works as possible, and turn it into granular fill, which can be used in the foundations of footway and carriageway construction. Often recycle rates are well over 90%.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)
N/A

10.0 Communication Considerations
N/A

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Corporate Director, Resident Services

APPENDIX A - Highways Maintenance Programme for 2023/26

Major Footway Reconstruction 2023/26

Major Footway Reconstruction 2022/23	Length (m)	Estimated Cost (£k)	Treatment	Ward	North South	
Swinderby Road	938	198	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	FMC	Completed
St Marys Road	554	155	Asphalt/Brick	Harlesden & Kensal Green	FMC	Completed
Pasture Road	1020	212	Asphalt/Brick	Northwick Park	FMC	Completed
Lushington Road	415	90	Asphalt/Brick	Harlesden & Kensal Green	FMC	Completed
Maybury Gardens	391	108	Asphalt/Brick	Willesden Green	FMC	Completed
2022/23 Schemes carried forward into 2023/24						
Fernbank Avenue	877	279	Asphalt/Brick	Sudbury	South	Completed
Sandringham Road	813	214	Asphalt/Brick	Willesden Green	South	Completed
Beverley Drive (Stag Lane to Roundabout)	691	275	Asphalt/Brick	Queensbury	North	Completed
Greenhill Road	341	114	Asphalt/Brick	Harlesden & Kensal Green	South	Completed
Winchester Avenue (Princes Avenue to Girton Avenue)	642	203	Asphalt/Brick	Queensbury	North	Completed
Sherborne Gardens	512	142	Asphalt/Brick	Queensbury	North	Completed
Major Footway Reconstruction 2023/26	**Length (m)**	**Estimated Cost (£k)**	**Treatment**	**Ward**	**North South**	
Brought forward						
Ledway Drive	442	123	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	Completed
Totternhoe Close	378	93	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	Completed
Southwell Road	188	70	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	Completed
Ashridge Close	232	67	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	Completed
Gabrielle Close	254	102	Asphalt/Brick	Preston	North	Completed
Hollycroft Avenue	366	107	Asphalt/Brick	Preston	North	Completed
Acacia Avenue	120	32	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Hill	South	Not Started
Park Place	150	47	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Hill	South	Completed
Stanley Road (removed)	0	0	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Hill	South	Removed
Oakington Avenue	1035	436	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Hill	South	Completed
2nd Cllrs Nominations						
Tiverton Road	124	43	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South	
Seaton Road	188	43	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South	
Carlyon Close	177	38	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South	
Chalkhill Road (110 to Bridge Road)	300	130	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill	North	
The Avenue (Tiverton Road to Aylestone Avenue)	312	174	Asphalt/Brick	Brondesbury Park	South	
Anson Road (number 1 to 66)	640	296	Asphalt/Brick	Cricklewood & Mapesbury	North	
Balancraig Avenue	310	144	Asphalt/Brick	Dollis Hill	North	
Buchanan Gardens	934	460	Asphalt/Brick	Harlesden & Kensal Green	South	
The Leys	115	36	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	
Brookside Close	262	65	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North	
Princess Road (22 to Cambridge Avenue)	525	241	Asphalt/Brick	Kilburn	South	
The Grove	444	137	Asphalt/Brick	Kingsbury	North	
Sudbury Court Drive (North East Side)	180	286	Asphalt/Brick	Northwick Park	North	
Derwent Gardens	380	129	Asphalt/Brick	Preston	North	
Chamberlayne Road (Kensal Corridor Scheme)	255	150	ASP	Queens Park	South	
Byron Avenue	460	135	Asphalt/Brick	Queensbury	North	
Roundwood Road (Church Road to Yewfield Road)	382	144	Asphalt/Brick	Roundwood	South	
Crouch Road	292	125	Asphalt/Brick	Stonebridge	South	
Sylvester Road	667	239	Asphalt/Brick	Sudbury	South	
Vivian Avenue (Neeld Crescent to St Michael's Avenue)	640	484	Asphalt/Brick	Tokyngton	South	

Wood Lane (Kingsmead Avenue to Townsend Road)	360	156	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Lancelot Avenue	257	93	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	South
London Road (Rupert Avenue to botton)	944	357	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Hill	South
Linacre Road	422	143	Asphalt/Brick	Willesden Green	North
Priority on Asset Condition					
Ashburnham Road	574	173	Asphalt/Brick	Queens Park	South
Greenhill Way	273	116	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill	North
Pine Road	570	167	Asphalt/Brick	Cricklewood & Mapesbury	North
Creighton Road	308	84	Asphalt/Brick	Queens Park	South
Cromwell Road	200	41	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South
Dundonald Road	470	230	Asphalt/Brick	Queens Park	South
Tadworth Road	616	219	Asphalt/Brick	Dollis Hill	North
Salmon Street (The Paddocks to Tudor Gardens)	1220	603	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill/Welsh Harp	North
The Rise	425	183	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Stewart Close	163	35	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Sycamore Grove	285	67	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Woodside Place	132	31	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South
Midstrath Road	156	55	Asphalt/Brick	Dollis Hill	North
St Georges Close	131	53	Asphalt/Brick	Northwick Park	North
Waylett Place	135	70	Asphalt/Brick	Sudbury	South
Sudbury Hill Close	333	72	Asphalt/Brick	Northwick Park	North
Barham Close	248	98	Asphalt/Brick	Sudbury	South
Turton Road	227	69	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	South
Beverley Gardens	1199	333	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill	North
Craigmuir Park	146	68	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South
Sunny View	105	17	Asphalt/Brick	Kingsbury	North
Havenwood	147	36	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill	North
Wrights Place	50	18	Asphalt/Brick	Stonebridge	South
St Annes Road	190	64	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	South
Holly Grove	202	49	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Church Walk	114	67	Asphalt/Brick	Welsh Harp	North
Hawarden Hill	168	57	Asphalt/Brick	Dollis Hill	North
Rosecroft Walk	105	59	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	South
Rustic Place	81	36	Asphalt/Brick	Sudbury	South
Magnolia Court	95	28	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North
The Leadings	196	54	Asphalt/Brick	Barnhill	North
Sunnydene Gardens	114	44	Asphalt/Brick	Alperton	South
Shakespeare Close	30	8	Asphalt/Brick	Kenton	North
Kathleen Avenue	525	190	Asphalt/Brick	Wembley Central	South
Total km	**29.9**	**10809**			
Miles	**18.7**				
Total Area m^2	**72501**				
Reserve Footways 2023/26					
Winchester Avenue (Girton Avenue to Queensbury Station Parade)	*636*	*233*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Queensbury*	*North*
Kendal Road	*863*	*345*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Willesden Green*	*North*
Carlisle Road	*387*	*131*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Queens Park*	*South*
Carlton Avenue West	*1824*	*926*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Northwick Park*	*North*
Haycroft Gardens	*455*	*209*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Harlesden & Kensal Green*	*South*
Cranhrust Road	*573*	*174*	*Asphalt/Brick*	*Willesden Green*	*North*
Total km	***4.7***	***2018***			
Miles	***3.0***				
Total Area m^2	***32205***				

All schemes subject to co-ordination with internal and external agencies.

	Cabinet 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director Resident Services
	Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture (Councillor Donnelly-Jackson)

Council Tax - Second and Empty Homes Premium and National Non Domestic Rates 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1 The Council's NNDR Discretionary Scheme; 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme. Appendix 2 The Council's 2023/24 Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme to 2025/26.
Background Papers	NNDR changes from a April 2024: 4/2023: The Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) NNDR reliefs for 2024/25 in autumn statement: 5/2023: Autumn Statement business rates measures - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) NNDR relief guidance: Business Rates Relief: 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Council Tax changes in: Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)

Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Peter Cosgrove, Head of Revenue and Debt 020 8937 3453 peter.cosgrove@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report covers changes affecting both council tax and business rates from 1 April 2024.

1.2 For business rates the powers to grant local discounts in respect of non-domestic rates are contained within section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended by section 69 of the Localism Act 2011. To award discounts under this provision any discount scheme requires Cabinet approval. Government has amended the guidance for the discretionary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme extending it for 2024/25. As it is discretionary the Council is required to have in place its own scheme, so the relief is provided to businesses in Brent. The cost of the relief is reimbursed by central government. The existing Supporting Small Business Relief scheme for small and medium properties continues for 2024/25 and 2025/26 having been approved by Cabinet on 13 March 2023 (see Appendix 2). No local scheme is required for the Transitional Relief that the government will it apply from 1 April 2024.

1.3 The changes required for council tax refer again to another area of discretion. At present, the Council uses its discretion to make additional charges of council tax for long term empty charges. At its meeting of 11 February 2019 Cabinet agreed to apply:

- 100% premium from 1 April 2019 in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 2 years.
- 200% from 1 April 2020 in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years.
- 300% from 1 April 2021 in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 10 years.

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LRA2023) provides further powers to the Council to apply the long-term empty premium after one year and to apply a 100% premium for Second Homes. The application of the latter requires twelve months' notice.

1.4 The powers are discretionary, so they require a decision by Cabinet in order to implement.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Cabinet approves 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 this report and pursuant to the Council's powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as

amended.

2.2 That Cabinet delegates 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.

2.3 That from 1 April 2024 in accordance with the provisions of The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023:

i. the Council introduces the council tax premium of an additional 100% for those domestic properties empty for longer than 1 year.
ii. the council maintains the council tax premium of 200% in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years.
iii. the council maintains the council tax premium of 300% in respect of domestic properties that have been empty for longer than 10 years.
iv. the Council, from 1 April 2025, introduces a premium of 100% to domestic properties determined to be applicable Second Homes.
v. To note the communication campaign (see paragraph 3.3.16) to highlight to owners of empty property how the council may be able to help them make better use of their property.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 The report sets out the Council's NNDR Discretionary Scheme 2024/25 - Retail, Hospitality and Leisure for which a local scheme is required to ensure qualifying businesses in Brent receive this government relief. In addition, the report sets out an opportunity for the Council arising from the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. The Act provides discretion to billing authorities to increase council tax and consequently reduce empty properties in the borough by allowing the existing long term empty premium to commence once a property has been empty for one year, rather than two years at present. This will start on 1 April 2024. It also allows councils to introduce a premium on second homes in the borough from April 2025. The introduction of these changes is in-line with the Council's strategic priority - Prosperity and Stability in Brent, allowing the Council to decide at a local level to charge Council Tax in line with its own strategic priorities.

3.2 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.2.1 The Council's first Strategic Priority targets securing Prosperity and Stability in Brent. The recommendation in this report supports this by making sure government business rates relief are delivered and secondly by encouraging owners and landlords to make best use of any property more quickly rather than leaving them empty, and where this does not happen to increase the council tax revenue available.

3.3 Background

Business Rates Relief - 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme

3.3.1 The Government announced the rate relief for 2024/25 in its autumn statement of 22 November 2023 and published the guidance on 15 December 2023 for the 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme. The guidance for the Business Rate Supporting Small Business Relief 2023/24 to 2025/26 was agreed by the Council on 13 March 2023, (see Appendix 2).

3.3.2 In order to award the 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme, the Council needs to approve a discount scheme as described in paragraph 1.2 above. This new scheme will be funded by Government. Relief under this scheme will be utilised after other pre-existing relief schemes have been applied. In view of the numbers of ratepayers who will be entitled to relief, this report also seeks approval to delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resident Services in consultation with the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources to implement the scheme so that officers, and the designated service provider, can award these discretionary reliefs where the set criteria are met within the bills for 2024/25.

3.3.3 The relief will provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 75% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business. This maintains the level of relief provided in 2023/24.

3.3.4 The Government anticipates that local authorities will include details of the relief to be provided to eligible ratepayers for 2024/25 in their bills for the beginning of the billing cycle.

3.3.5 The Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme 2024/25, as this is a temporary measure for 2024/25, the government is not changing the legislation relating to the reliefs available to properties. Instead, the government has stated that it will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the government guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) ("LGFA 1988") to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to the government's guidance, to grant relief under section 47 of the LGFA 1988. The government has stated that it will fully reimburse billing authorities and major precepting authorities for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme as a result of awarding the relief that falls within the relevant definitions in the government's guidance, using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

3.3.6 Under the cash cap pursuant to the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme, no ratepayer can exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in England.

Council Tax long term empty properties

3.3.7 Since April 2019 the Council has charged a council tax premium of 100% after a property has been empty for two years, 200% after being empty for five years and also 300% extra once a property is empty for more than ten years.

3.3.8 These premiums are charged under powers provided in The Local Government Finance Act 2012, as amended. These discretionary powers are now further extended through amendments provided for in the sections 79 and 80 of LRA2023.

3.3.9 At the end of October 2023 Brent had 1,859 empty domestic properties. This included 1,557 empty for up to two years, 227 empty between 2 and 5 years charged a premium of 100%, 44 empty over two years charged an extra 200% and 31 empty for over 10 years and charged a premium of 300%.

3.3.10 The aim of the premium is to encourage owners of long-term empty properties to bring their properties back into use. Of the 1,557 empty for less than two years, 385 have been empty for more than a year. While bringing in the extra revenue the advent of the premium after 12 months it is also hoped that owners and landlords will seek to bring properties back into use more quickly to avoid paying the premium.

3.3.11 As at 1 December 2023 there are 385 properties that are empty for over a year, but for less than two. Charging the 100% premium, assuming the proposed average band D Council Tax for 2024/25 applies, would add £0.8m in council tax.

Second homes

3.3.12 The LRA 2023 allows local authorities the discretion to charge a premium on second homes. Such properties are underutilised so it would be appropriate for the Council to apply a premium that may encourage a second homeowner to put their property into more regular use to avoid paying the premium.

3.3.13 There is a requirement to provide 12 months' notice of the change, in accordance with LRA 2023 80 (3), so the premium will apply from 1 April 2025.

3.3.14 Since 2013 when second homes stopped receiving a 10% discount making the numbers less certain, as there no incentive to tell the council it is a second home. Currently, there are 163 recorded second homes. Where, after April 2025, it is claimed that a Second Home has become the main residence of the same person, the Council will of course, carry out checks to verify they have no other property.

3.3.15 As at 1 December 2023 there are 163 properties in the area classed as second homes. Assuming the proposed average Band D Council Tax for

2024/25 applies would add at least T£0.3m in council tax from 2025. Any further council tax increase in 2025/26 will lead to a proportionate increase in this amount.

Communications

3.3.16 There are several aspects to communicating these changes. Firstly, the standard communication to include the updated information on the website and the annual advert in the local press. Secondly, to encourage usage of empty property a review of empty and exempt properties is being carried out. This includes writing to all landlords/owners highlighting to them the option of letting via or selling to the Council, with clear information also on the web. This is clearly important currently with an acute housing shortage and rising numbers of residents in temporary accommodation while there are empty homes in the borough. The council will also utilise corporate communications channels, including the YourBrent Magazine and targeted social media channels, to communicate the changes.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 None, although the proposal is in line with the Council's strategic priority to create prosperity and stability. Ward members have previously supported the charging of the premium to encourage the use of long-term empty properties.

5.0 Financial Considerations

Business Rates

5.1 For 2024/25 to 2025/26, the government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) ("LGFA 1988"), to grant Supporting Small Business Relief and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme.

5.2 It is for individual local authorities, which administer the Supporting Small Business Relief, to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47 of the LGFA 1988. The Council approved this on 13 March 2023. The local scheme for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme is contained in this report, appendix 1. The government has stated that it will reimburse billing authorities and major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief that falls within the relevant definitions in the government guidance.

5.3 The 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief scheme is likely to amount to a subsidy. Therefore, any relief provided by local authorities under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations. To the extent that a local authority is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the

Subsidy Control Act 2022 allows an economic actor (e.g. a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a three-year period (consisting of the 2023/24 year and the two previous financial years). MFA subsidies cumulate with each other and with other subsidies that fall within the category of 'Minimal or Service of Public Economic Interest [SPEI] financial assistance'. BEIS COVID-19 business grants and any other subsidies claimed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement should be counted under the £315,000 allowance.

Council Tax - Long term empty properties

5.4 The change to charge the 100% premium after 12 months on an empty property is likely to affect around 400 properties. On 1 December 2023 there are 385 properties that are empty for over a year, but for less than two. Charging the 100% premium, assuming the proposed band D charge for 2024/25 applies, would add approximately £0.8m in council tax.

Council Tax - Second homes

5.5 As at 1 December 2023 there are 163 properties in the area classed as second homes. Assuming the proposed band D charge for 2024/25 applies would add approximately £0.3m in Council Tax from 2025 and any increase to the Council Tax proposed for the 2025/26 budget would result in a further proportionate increase to this amount.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 Local authorities have powers to grant local discounts in respect of non-domestic rates pursuant to section 47 of the Local Government Finance 1988 as amended by section 69 of the Localism Act 2011.

6.2 A billing local authority in England, when making a decision under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), must have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State, which includes the government guidance of December 2022 in relation to the two schemes that are set out in appendices 3 and 4 to this report.

6.3 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every local authority makes arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure the appointment of a s151 Officer also known as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) who shall have responsibility for the administration of those affairs.

6.4 Section 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating their budget requirement.

6.5 The Chief finance Officer, appointed under section 151 mentioned above, has a duty to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves under section 25 of the Local government Act 2003.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in 2012 when it was originally agreed to charge the premium as well as amend the discounts applicable to other empty properties. The changes affected non-resident owners and there was no evidence to suggest any particular group would be disadvantaged by the changes, indeed the most significant impact was that it will encourage owners to make their empty properties available for occupation. A further assessment was carried out in 2019 and now with the same outcome.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 The changes will be communicated via the Council's website and the bills for 2024/25.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Corporate Director, Resident Services

APPENDIX 1

NNDR Discretionary Scheme

i. In respect of the 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme, the Government confirmed the rate relief for 2023/24 in guidance published on 15 December 2023 for the 2024/254 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme. The Council's discretionary scheme is aligned to the government guidance, including the eligibility criteria, as set out in the government's guidance entitled "Business Rates Relief: 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme" paragraphs 11 to 13.

ii. The relief will provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 75% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

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APPENDIX 2

NNDR Discretionary Scheme
2023/24-2025/26 Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme

i. The Government published guidance on 21 December 2022 in relation to the 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme. The Council's discretionary scheme is aligned to the government guidance, including the eligibility criteria as set out in Section 2 of the government's guidance entitled "Business Rates Relief: 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief, local authority guidance".

ii. The 2023 Supporting Small Business Rate Relief will cap increases helping those ratepayers who would otherwise face a steeper increase.

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Brent	**Cabinet** 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Lead Member- Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
Determination of Brent Council's Community School Admission Arrangements for 2025/26	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1: Admission Arrangements for Brent Community Schools in 2025-2026 Appendix 2: Admissions Consultation Letter – November 2023
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Shirley Parks Director, Education, Partnerships and Strategy 020 8937 4529 Shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk Michelle Gwyther Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships 020 8937 2499 Michelle.gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the outcome of the consultation on proposed amendments to the Admission Arrangements for Brent Community Schools for 2025/26. It seeks Cabinet's approval to determine the arrangements as proposed (Appendix 1) in February 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Cabinet

2.1 notes the outcome of the consultation

2.2 agrees the proposed reductions of the Published Admission Numbers at Fryent Primary School and Mitchell Brook Primary School;

2.3 determines the admission arrangements (as set out in Appendix 2).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 Brent's school admission arrangements support the Borough Plan Strategic Priority 4: The Best Start in Life. By ensuring there are suitable admissions arrangements for children and young people in Brent, the local authority is meeting its statutory obligations and supporting every child and young person to access high quality education locally to them in the borough.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Brent Council is the Admission Authority for 30 community primary schools in the borough (listed within Appendix 1). Voluntary aided (VA) and foundation schools, academies and free schools are their own admission authority and determine their own admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria. Therefore, this report relates to the admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria of Brent community primary schools only.

3.2.2 The School Admissions Code issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act is the legal framework for school admissions matters. The Admissions Code requires that Admission Authorities have a mechanism to rank applications in order of priority. All schools and Admission Authorities must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements for Brent community schools are determined by the council as the Admission Authority.

3.2.3 At its meeting on 16 November 2023, Cabinet granted approval for the Council to carry out public consultation to amend its admission arrangements for the academic year 2025/26. The reasons for the proposed amendments are set out in the relevant cabinet report.

3.2.4 Consultation was carried out with all relevant parties as identified in the School Admissions Code 2021, for a period of seven weeks between 17 November 2023 and 4 January 2024.

3.2.5 The consultation document (Appendix 2) was available to view on Brent Council's Have Your Say portal, and a prominent notice was included at the top

of the Council's Education, schools and learning webpage. Letters were sent to the families of children attending the two schools that would be directly affected by the proposed changes.

3.2.6 Respondents were invited to complete a survey to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the two proposals and to provide reasons for their responses.

3.2.7 Three options are available to Cabinet members (these proposals are not inter-dependent and can be agreed individually):

a) To agree the proposals to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Fryent Primary School and Mitchell Brook Primary School and determine the arrangements as set out in Appendix 1. This is the recommended option.

b) To agree the proposal to reduce the PAN at either Fryent Primary School or Mitchell Brook Primary School and determine the arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 subject to the required amendment.

c) To dismiss the proposals to reduce the PAN at Fryent Primary School and Mitchell Brook Primary School and determine the arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 using the existing PANs for both schools.

3.2.8 The local authority, as the admission authority for community schools in Brent, is required to determine (formally agree) its admission arrangements by 28 February 2024.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Consultation was undertaken on the following amendments to the existing admission arrangements:

a) The reduction of the Published Admission Number at Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90;

b) The reduction of the Published Admission Number at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60.

4.2 Ten formal responses to the consultation were received during the consultation period, which were generally in favour of the proposals.

4.3 In response to the question '*do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number at Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90 places?'* Five respondents agreed (55.6% of respondents), two respondents disagreed (22.2%) and two respondents neither agreed or disagreed (22.2%).

4.4 In response to the question '*do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60 places?'* eight respondents agreed (80%) and two respondents disagreed (22.2%).

4.5 Two respondents provided additional comments stating: “Reducing number of children make their safety easy” and “School can be quite busy, and with less children – staff can be more attentive and meet each child’s individual needs. There are ample schools surrounding the area which can be utilised”.

4.6. Only two respondents provided any further demographical information about themselves.

4.7. Following consultation, officers remain of the view that the reduction in the PANs at Fryent Primary School and Mitchell Brook Primary should be implemented. Mitchell Brook Primary School is a three-form entry school located in Primary Planning Area 4. The planning area has an excessive surplus of capacity in the primary phase, and the proposal will support increased intakes at other schools. Demand for places at Fryent Primary School is lower than the full capacity of the school and has not exceeded 90 places since before 2015. Spare capacity at the school is being used for an Additionally Resource Provision for children with SEND.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no specific financial implications in relation to the admissions criteria.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The School Admissions Code has been issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act. The proposed admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria (Appendix 2) adhere to the requirements of the School Admissions Code, revised September 2021.

6.2 Admission Authorities are responsible for admissions and must act in accordance with the School Admissions Code, the School Admissions Appeals Code, other laws relating to admissions and relevant human rights and equalities legislation.

6.3 Consultation ran within the timescales set within the School Admissions Code, which require that it must have taken place for a minimum of six weeks between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2024.

6.4 The local authority must formally agree (“determine”) admission arrangements for 2025/2026 by 28 February 2024.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Local Authority when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those

who do not share that protected characteristic. The Admissions Criteria ensure fair access to school places.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 The local authority plans school places on the basis of children attending local schools, encouraging children to walk to school and reducing travel by car or public transport to reduce the carbon footprint.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 Schools are directly responsible for managing staff recruitment based on the number of teachers required in any year group, in any academic year.

9.2. There are no property implications.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 Once the Admission Arrangements are determined, the local authority is required to:

- publish these on the Brent website by 15 March 2024, where they must remain until the end of the 2025/26 academic year;
- notify the governing board at each Community school;
- notify all other admission authorities in Brent.

Related document(s) for reference

Cabinet report 16 November 2023 – Consultation on Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for 2025/26

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman
Corporate Director of Children and Young People

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Brent	**ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRENT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FOR 2025/2026**
	To be determined by Cabinet

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Brent Community Primary School Published Admission Numbers and Grid Reference Measuring Points for Admission in 2025/2026

Name of School	Published Admission Number	Grid Reference Measuring Point	
		Easting	Northing
Anson Primary School	52	523552	185345
Barham Primary School	120	517506	184655
Brentfield Primary School	90	520541	184537
Byron Court Primary School	150	517133	186955
Carlton Vale Infant School	60	524938	182956
Chalkhill Primary School	60	520005	186210
Donnington Primary School	30	522577	184004
Elsley Primary School	120	518869	184738
Fryent Primary School	90	520385	187897
Harlesden Primary School	60	521141	183461
Kingsbury Green Primary School	90	520010	188549
Leopold Primary School*	120	521640	184310
- Gwenneth Rickus Site		520810	184490
Lyon Park Primary School	120	518820	184115
Malorees Infant School	60	523952	184011
Mitchell Brook Primary School	60	521010	184768
Mora Primary School	60	523141	185939
Mount Stewart Infant School	90	517785	187999
Mount Stewart Junior School	90	517785	187999
Newfield Primary School	60	521890	184050
Northview Primary School	30	521580	185500
Oliver Goldsmith Primary School	60	520809	188559
Park Lane Primary School	60	518380	185490
Preston Park Primary School	120	517930	187200
Roe Green Infant School	120	519772	189316
Roe Green Junior School	120	519772	189316
Salusbury Primary School	90	524528	183518
The Stonebridge School	90	520512	183844
Uxendon Manor Primary School	90	518023	188541
Wembley Primary School	120	518365	186130
Wykeham Primary School	60	521087	186286

* Leopold Primary School is split into two sites – the main site on Hawkshead Road and a satellite site the Gwenneth Rickus site. Both sites are two-form entry and can accommodate 60 children in each year group. An informal public consultation was held from 1 November to 13 December 2023 on a proposal to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of the school. If this is implemented this would require a variation to the admissions arrangements of the school.

Oversubscription Criteria for Brent Community Schools in 2025/2026

The criteria set out below apply to the 30 Brent community schools listed on page 2.

Voluntary aided or religious faith schools, foundation schools, free schools and academies have their own admission policies. Parents/carers should visit the website of these schools for a copy of their admission arrangements or visit www.brent.gov.uk/admissions

Applications for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are made by Local Authority Special Educational Need (SEN) teams. The placement of such children is made after a process of consultation between parents/carers, the school and the Local Authority. Children with an EHCP receive priority over others for admission to the school named on their EHCP. An EHCP is a plan made by the Local Authority under Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014 specifying the special education provision required for that child.

Schools should not admit more than 30 pupils in each class for Reception, Year One and Year Two. This is to enable the Local Authority to meet its statutory duty of having no more than 30 pupils in each class at Key Stage One. Three-year-old children should not be admitted to Reception classes.

Whenever and wherever possible, children are offered a school of their parents'/carers' preference and in practice the majority of children go to the school which their parents/carers select for them. Admissions criteria are clear, fair and objective. It is illegal for schools to discriminate against a pupil on the basis of his/her/their ethnicity.

Sometimes, however, there are more applications for a particular school than there are places available. This is described as oversubscription. Whenever this happens, pupils are offered places in the following order of priority:

1. Looked After Children or Previously Looked After Children (including Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children)

A looked after child or a previously looked after child, including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

- A 'looked after child' (LAC) is a child who is in the care of a local authority, or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions at the time of making an application to a school.
- A 'previously looked after child' (PLAC) is a child who was looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order.
- An 'internationally adopted previously looked after child' (IAPLAC) is a child who appears to Brent Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society.

2. Linked infant school

Children attending an infant school on the same site as a junior school.

- This criterion only applies to Year 3 applications to Mount Stewart Junior School (for children attending Mount Stewart Infant School) and Roe Green Junior School (for children attending Roe Green Infant School).

3. Medical or Social needs

Exceptional circumstances to do with significant medical needs and or social needs which necessitate a child's placement at one particular school.

This criterion relates to the medical and/or social needs of the child or family members with caring or parental responsibility. The application must be supported by written evidence (see below) that sets out the particular reasons why the school in question is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another school. The recommendation for this specific school should demonstrate knowledge of the school in terms of location, resources and organisation which deems it essential that the named pupil be admitted to the specific school. The Council will not give higher priority to children under this criterion if the required documents have not been submitted. Decisions on whether to allow the criterion will be made by an admission panel, based on all the evidence available, and will be consistent.

- *Medical Needs*
  Applications made on medical grounds must be accompanied by compelling medical evidence from a GP/hospital consultant at the time of application. The letter from the GP/hospital consultant must provide information about the medical condition, the effects of this condition and why, in view of this, the child needs to attend the preferred school.
  If the school is not the closest to home, the consultant must set out in detail the wholly exceptional circumstances for attending this school and the difficulties that may exist if the child had to attend another school. Medical claims will only be considered for one school, and this should be named by the GP/hospital consultant. In assessing these applications, advice will be sought from relevant professionals as required.

- *Social Needs*
  Applications made on social grounds must be accompanied by compelling evidence at the time of application. Social needs claims will be considered where there is involvement from a social worker, or other professional and where it can be demonstrated that the child has exceptional social needs that cannot be met at any other school than the named school. Parents'/carers' circumstances can have an impact on a child's social needs and evidence of this will be considered. In assessing these applications, advice will be sought from relevant professionals as required.

4. Children of staff

Children whose parent/carer is a member of staff:
- who has been employed by the school and has worked predominantly on the school site for two or more years at the time of application; or
- who has been recruited to fill a vacancy at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

5. Siblings

Brothers or sisters of a child who attends the school, or an infant or junior school on the same or adjoining site, and who will continue to do so on the date of admission.

- This includes half and step brothers and sisters and foster children so long as they live at the same address - but not cousins.

6. All other applicants.

'Tie-break' Distance Measurement

Where pupils meet the same criteria, places will be offered in order of the distance from home to school which will be measured by straight-line, from the address point in the property to the address point in the school, as determined by Local Land Property Gazetteer (LLPG) data. Those living nearer the school will have the higher priority. The measuring system is an integral part of the admission software produced by The Access Group Ltd, uses Ordnance Survey maps and LLPG data and is accurate to 1 centimetre.

Where two or more children share the same priority, live equidistant from a community school and only one place remains, the local authority will use a computerised random allocation to determine which child should be given priority.

Home Address

The address used must be the child's permanent home address on the closing date for on-time applications or at the time of application for late or in-year applications.

This cannot be a business address, childminder or relative's address, or any address other than child's permanent home address. Only in circumstances where the relative or carer has legal guardianship, and is the main carer, will a different address be considered as the main residence. Evidence will be requested to support this arrangement.

Proof of address is not required to be sent with an application. The council tax reference number should be supplied on the application if the applicant is responsible for paying it. Brent Council will check internal council databases in order to verify the address. Where it is not possible to verify the address or the applicant has recently moved, the Council will write to the applicant to ask for two proofs of address.

Any offer of a place on the basis of address is conditional upon the child living at the appropriate address on the relevant date. Applicants have a responsibility to notify the local authority of any change of address.

Any applications received containing fraudulent or misleading information, or any offers made based on fraudulent or misleading information may be withdrawn, especially where other applicants have been disadvantaged as a result.

Twins, Triplets and other children of multiple births

In the event that the school has one place to offer and the next child on the waiting list is one of twins, triplets or other children of multiple births, the Local Authority will offer both twins, all triplets or children of multiple birth a place even if this means temporarily going over the published admission number.

In the event that one child from a multiple birth has an Education, Health and Care Plan which names a particular community school, all other children from the same multiple birth will be considered under the third criteria for the same school – medical or social needs – unless a higher criteria should be applied.

Split residence

Where a child lives with parents/carers with shared responsibility, each for part of a week, the address where the child lives is determined using a joint declaration from the parents/carers stating the pattern of residence. If a child's residence is split equally between both parents/carers, then they will be asked to determine which residential address should be used for the purpose of admission to school. If the residence is not split equally between both parents/carers, then the address used will be the address where the child spends the majority of the school week.

If it is not possible to determine which residential address should be used through a joint declaration, then the address of the parent/carer who is in receipt of child benefit will be used for the purpose of the application. In cases where parents/carers are not eligible for child benefit the address will be that of the parent/carer where the child is registered with the doctor. In cases that still cannot be determined, or are open to dispute by parents/carers, an admission panel will determine how to proceed with the application in accordance with these arrangements, the Admissions Code and any other relevant legislation or guidance. This will not impact on parents'/carers' right to appeal against any decision not to offer a preference school.

Multiple applications

Only one application can be processed for each child. In the event that the local authority receives more than one application for the same child, whether from the same parent/carer or not, the most recently received application will be processed. This includes applications that have been submitted online and by post.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring only one application is received. If multiple applications are received and it is not possible to obtain a joint declaration from both parents/ carers (or those with parental responsibility) regarding which schools should be included as preferences, an admission panel will determine how to proceed with the application in accordance with these arrangements, the Admissions Code and any other relevant legislation or guidance. This will not impact on parents'/carers' right to appeal against any decision not to offer a preference school.

Applications from overseas

Applications with an overseas address will not be accepted for processing by the local authority unless there is evidence of a link to an address in the area and evidence that a child will be living in the area on or before the date of admission.

Where an application is accepted, the address used on the application will be the overseas address until such time as there is evidence of the child's return to the linked address prior to the closing date (or the date for accepting applications as late for good reason). Such evidence received after the closing dates will be considered on the application after National Offer Day.

The local authority is only responsible for making offers for children currently living in the area. If it is not possible to make a preference offer prior to a child's arrival on the relevant offer days, an alternative offer will not be made.

Applications will not be accepted from overseas addresses for in-year applications with the exception of applications for Children of UK Service Personnel (UK Armed Forces) and Crown Servants.

Children of UK Service Personnel (UK Armed Forces) and Crown Servants

Families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to the area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in the area, can apply to the local authority in advance of their arrival provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address.

The address used on the application will be the postal address or quartering area address provided.

Offers will be made in advance of a child's arrival for in-year applications and on the relevant offer date for normal round applications.

How places will be allocated at Brent community schools for September 2025 in Reception (Primary and Infant schools) and Year 3 (Junior Schools)

There is no automatic transfer from nursery to Reception class, or from Year 2 to Year 3 in a Junior School. Parents/carers wanting to apply for a place at Reception (or to a Junior School) must complete an application which is available online or a paper Common Application Form.

If more applications are received than there are places available, places are offered up to a school's planned admission number to applicants whose application is received by the closing date in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed on page 3 using an equal preference system (see below).

Equal preferences

Each preference is treated as a separate application. Then using the oversubscription criteria each application is considered and ordered in a list based on how well it meets the oversubscription criteria (page 3).

If applicants qualify for a place at more than one school, a place is offered at the school given the highest ranking by the applicant.

Application forms will be available from September 2024 and the closing date for applications will be 15 January 2025. Offer letters and e-mails will be sent out on 16 April 2025.

Deferred Entry

Parents/carers can request that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until later in the year for which they apply or until the term in which the child reaches statutory school age. Statutory school age begins the first day of the term after a child's fifth birthday.

Parents/carers wishing to defer entry must contact the school to advise them of this after a place has been offered.

Parents/carers can also request that their child attends part-time until their child reaches statutory school age.

Applications for children outside the normal age group

The Council's policy is for children to be educated within their correct chronological year group, with the curriculum differentiated as necessary to meet the needs of individual children. In general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate; they should only be educated out of their normal age group in very limited circumstances.

If parents/carers believe their child should be educated in a different year group they should submit an application for the 'normal' Reception round for their child. With the application they should provide supporting evidence from relevant professionals working with the child and family stating why it is in the child's best interest to be placed outside their normal age appropriate cohort.

For community schools, the Council as the admission authority will decide whether the application will be accepted on the basis of the information submitted. Decisions will be based on the individual circumstances of each case including the view of parents/carers, the relevant head teacher(s), the child's social, academic and emotional development and whether the child has been previously educated out of year group.

There is no guarantee that an application will be accepted on this basis. If the application is not accepted this does not constitute a refusal of a place and there is no right to an independent statutory appeal. Similarly, there is no right of appeal for a place in a specific year group at a school. The internal management and organisation of a school, including the placement of pupils in classes, is a matter for the head teacher and senior leadership of individual schools.

Late Applications and changes after the closing date

Application forms must be received by Brent Council by the closing date of 15 January 2025.

Applications received after the closing date will be considered as late applications and will be processed after places have been allocated to applicants who applied on-time. However, in very exceptional circumstances applications received after the closing date may be considered as on time.

Applicants who consider they have exceptional circumstances that prevented them from applying between applications opening in September 2024 and the closing date of 15 January 2025 should provide independent written evidence explaining why the application was late no later than 5pm on Wednesday 12 February 2025.

Additionally, any changes to the application (e.g. order of school preference or change of preferences) received after the closing date will be treated in the same way as late applications.

Changes of Address after the closing date

Changes of address will only be considered after applicants are resident at the new address and evidence to demonstrate this has been supplied. Applications will not be processed from an intended future address except in the case of Crown servants and UK service personnel.

Evidence must be received by 5pm on Wednesday 12 February 2025 for the new address to be used when processing the application and calculating home to school distances. Any change of address evidenced after 5pm on Wednesday 12 February 2025 will not be included until after National Offer Day 16 April 2025.

Waiting Lists

If the school place allocated is not the first preference, the child's name will automatically be placed on the waiting list for schools which have been ranked higher than the offer made. Community school waiting lists will then be maintained by the Council whilst voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools' waiting lists will be maintained by the relevant schools.

Waiting lists are not maintained on a 'first come - first served' basis. Waiting lists are kept in the priority order as explained in the oversubscription criteria.

Places are offered from the waiting list throughout the year. When a place becomes available, it is offered to the first child on the list and, if it is accepted, all other children will move up the list. Children may also move down the waiting list if another family, with a higher priority under the oversubscription criteria, ask for their child's name to be added to the list.

Applicants, who ask for their child's name to be placed on the waiting list for another school after a school place has been allocated, are indicating they prefer this school to the other school already allocated. If at a later date a place is offered from the waiting list, this new offer will supersede any previous offer, which will then be withdrawn.

Looked after children and previously looked after children, and those allocated a place at the school in accordance with Brent's Fair Access Protocol, will take precedence over those on a waiting list.

Lists will be maintained throughout the school year. A child's position on the waiting list does not depend upon the time they have been on the list but will be determined by how they meet the oversubscription criteria.

This means that a child's position on the list can go down as well as up, depending upon the child's circumstances and those of other applicants.

The waiting list will be closed each year and will not roll over. A new application will have to be made for a new academic year.

Appeals

Parents/carers can appeal against any decision made by Brent Council about the school where they would like their child to be educated.

When an appeal form is requested, the child's name is automatically placed on the waiting list for that school, if it is not already included.

A child admitted to a school as a result of a successful appeal will be admitted in precedence to those on the waiting list.

There is no right of appeal against any decision not to offer a place in a nursery.

Admission to community school nurseries

The timeline and oversubscription criteria for a place in a nursery class in a community school are the same as for a Reception place. The council does not co-ordinate applications for nursery places. Applications for a nursery place in a community school must be made directly to the school by 15th January 2025. Offers will be made on 16th April 2025 by the school. If the nursery is oversubscribed the Community Schools' Oversubscription Criteria will be applied.

In-Year Applications

Applications received outside the normal admission round will be considered in line with the oversubscription criteria.

A place will be offered at the school requested provided there is a vacancy in the appropriate year group. Where the year group is full and it is not possible to meet the parental preference, a place will be offered at the nearest primary school with a vacancy in the year group, if the child does not already attend a suitable school.

The address used to process the application will be the address where the parent/carer and child normally live and they must be living there at the time of application.

Admission of one child to a primary school does not give a right of admission for brothers or sisters, if places are not available for all at the same time.

Appendix 2

Brent

CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRENT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FOR 2025/2026 ENTRY

November 2023

Introduction

1. In accordance with the School Admission (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 the admission authorities for schools located in the London Borough of Brent are required to consult where changes are proposed to admission arrangements. A consultation period must run for a minimum of 6 weeks and take place between 1 October and 31 January of the year before those arrangements are to apply.

2. This consultation starts on **Friday 17th November 2023**, will end on **Thursday 4th January 2024**, and applies to admission to the academic year from September 2025 until August 2026.

3. Brent Council is the admission authority for 30 community primary schools in the borough. These are indicated below with their proposed Published Admission Number (PAN) for 2025/26 Admissions.

Community Primary Schools	**PAN for 2025/26 academic year**
Anson Primary School	52
Barham Primary School	120
Brentfield Primary School	90
Byron Court Primary School	150
Carlton Vale Infant School	60
Chalkhill Primary School	60
Donnington Primary School	30
Elsley Primary School	120
Fryent Primary School	**90**
Harlesden Primary School	60
Kingsbury Green Primary School	90
Leopold Primary School	120
Lyon Park Primary School	120
Malorees Infant School	60
Mitchell Brook Primary School	**60**
Mora Primary School	60
Mount Stewart Infant School	90
Mount Stewart Junior School	90
Newfield Primary School	60
Northview Primary School	30
Oliver Goldsmith Primary School	60
Park Lane Primary School	60

Preston Park Primary School	120
Roe Green Infant School	120
Roe Green Junior School	120
Salusbury Primary School	90
Stonebridge Primary School	90
Uxendon Manor Primary School	90
Wembley Primary School	120
Wykeham Primary School	60

Proposed changes

4. There are two proposed changes to the current admission arrangements:

    1) The reduction of the Published Admission Number at Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90; and

    2) The reduction of the Published Admission Number at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60.

5. Other minor drafting changes have been made to the full admission arrangements text which do not require consultation, such as updates to the dates throughout the document.

The reduction of the Published Admission Number for Fryent Primary School

6. Fryent Primary School is a four-form entry primary school located in Primary Planning Area 1.

7. The school was established as a three-form entry school but was reduced to a two-form entry school in 2003 due to falling demand. In 2012, the school was expanded to four forms of entry at a time of rising demand.

8. Demand for places at Fryent Primary School is lower than the full capacity of the school. Although 120 places are made available each year for a place in the Reception cohort, demand for the school has not exceeded 90 places since before 2015.

9. In order to maximise use of the spare capacity, an Additionally Resourced Provision was established in the school in 2017. The ARP now utilises the spare accommodation of the school.

10. Reducing the PAN will normalise the typical operating approach of the school and will ensure that only a maximum of 90 places will be offered for Reception from 2025. If the PAN remains at 120 and more places than 90 are offered, this could create operational difficulties for the school as it would have to reclaim some capacity from the ARP to establish an additional mainstream classroom.

11. Primary Planning Area 1 operates with a small surplus of places in most year groups, with a small deficit in some year groups. Projections indicate this is likely to remain the case until 2026/27, after which there will be a small surplus in all year groups in the following year. There is additional capacity in neighbouring planning areas which

could meet any demand beyond the number of places available. If the local authority is unable to make an in-year offer of a place to a child who needs a school within a reasonable distance, it can utilise the Fair Access protocol to make an offer at a school that is already oversubscribed.

The reduction of the Published Admission Number for Mitchell Brook Primary School

12. Mitchell Brook Primary School is a three-form entry school located in Primary Planning Area 4. The planning area has an excessive surplus of capacity in the primary phase, and the council is implementing a number of measures to reduce this capacity.

13. The latest pupil place planning projections indicate that removing this capacity in the planning area will still leave enough places to meet demand, with at least a 5% surplus available at any time.

14. The Senior Leadership Team at the school have expressed an interest in supporting the Local Authority in managing the supply of places by suggesting a reduction of their PAN. This would support the school to continue to deliver suitable and effective education by:

    - Reducing the number of pupils attending the school which will ease pressure on constrained areas, such as hallways, dining area and the hall.
    - Maximising budget opportunities for the school by allowing it to operate at maximum effectiveness. The school is popular, but not full at three-forms of entry. Reduction of the school to two forms of entry would lead to the school to be full in each new year of entry, based on historical demand patterns.

15. In the context of the measures available to reduce school place capacity in the area, the local authority considers this proposal to have the lowest negative impact, as it is does not affect any pupils currently attending the school.

16. Reduction of the PAN at the school may limit the likelihood of some parents receiving one of their higher preference schools, where they have chosen Mitchell Brook Primary School but are not ranked highly enough to receive an offer if it is oversubscribed.

17. If the PAN is reduced and Mitchell Brook becomes an oversubscribed school, there may be an increase in appeals for the school. To put this in context, Uxendon Manor Primary School reduced its PAN in 2020. It has become oversubscribed in the Reception cohort since 2021, and to-date, 4 appeals have been lodged.

18. In mitigation to this, there is a wide selection of schools available in the planning area and in the surrounding planning areas that are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. The local authority would still be meeting its obligation to ensure that sufficient schools for providing education are available in its area (Education Act 1996).

19. The building capacity of the school would remain in place and would be available if there was a future increase in demand in the area that required an increase in the number of places.

Feedback

20. The council invites feedback in writing on the proposals outlined below. Feedback should be submitted online via Brent Council's consultation portal haveyoursay.brent.gov.uk

21. Responses can also be submitted by post using a response form which is available on request by calling Brent School Admissions team on 020 8937 3110.

22. Proposed admission arrangements will apply only to those community primary schools listed above to which the Local Authority is the Admission Authority. The full proposed admission arrangements for 2025/26 accompany this consultation paper.

Appendix 2

CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRENT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FOR 2025/2026 ENTRY

Consultation Response Form

Having read the community school admission arrangements consultation document for 2025/26, do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number at Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90 places?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

Having read the community school admission arrangements consultation document for 2025/26, do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60 places?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

Use the box below, if you wish, to provide your reasons for the responses you gave, or any other comments. Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

Name……..……. **Date**……..

Telephone…….. **E-mail**…….

Contact details are optional. We will respond to any queries only where possible and it is suitable to do so.

If you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation, please provide details

……

Your response should be submitted by **Thursday 4th January 2024** to:
Michael Rollin, Admissions Consultation, School Admissions Team, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ or e-mailed to school.admissions@brent.gov.uk

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Brent	**Cabinet** 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Lead Member **Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)**

Outcome of informal consultation on school organisation proposals for Leopold Primary School in Primary Planning Area 4

Wards Affected:	Stonebridge & Roundwood
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Three Appendix 1: Informal consultation document Appendix 2: Concerns and alternative proposals raised during informal consultation Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Shirley Parks Director, Education, Partnerships and Strategy 020 8937 4259 Shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk Michelle Gwyther, Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships 020 8937 2499 Michelle.Gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with a summary of the informal consultation undertaken between 1 November 2023 and 13 December 2023 on the proposal

to implement a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School.

1.2 The report recommends a move to formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on a phased closure of the provision on the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site and a variation to the Published Admission Number of Leopold Primary School from 120 to 60 to take effect from the 2025/26 academic year. A phased closure of the provision would mean no admissions to the Reception cohort at the Gwenneth Rickus site from September 2025 with children in older year groups remaining on the site until the end of July 2027.

2.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

2.1 Approves a period of formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on proposals to:

- Seek a variation to reduce Leopold Primary School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 120 to 60 from September 2025;

- Implement a phased closure of provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School between September 2025 and the end of July 2027.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword:

3.1.1 Borough-wide projections indicate that demand for Reception school places will continue to fall over the next 5 years. Planning Area 4 has the greatest number and percentage of spare places of all the six Primary Planning Areas in Brent. Schools in the area have been managing the impact of falling rolls for several years with the support of the Local Authority. The proposal to reduce capacity at Leopold Primary School is aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of all schools in the area.

3.1.2 School place planning supports the Borough Plan Strategic Priority 4: The Best Start in Life, by ensuring there are sufficient school places for children and young people in Brent and supporting every child and young person to access high quality education in the borough.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Between 2012-2021 there was a 17% decrease of the birth rate in London, which is a reduction of 23,225 live births across the capital. As a result the GLA has predicted a 7.6% decrease in reception pupil numbers across London from 2022-23 to 2026-27 (from 96,424 pupils to 89,121 pupils over this period). This roughly equates to a decrease of 243 classes of children. The falling birth rate is compounded by Brexit and migration patterns following the pandemic. In

response, a number of local authorities across London have consulted on closing local primary school provision or are planning to do so. The impact on falling demand in Brent is reflected in the updated School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028 approved by Cabinet in October 2023.

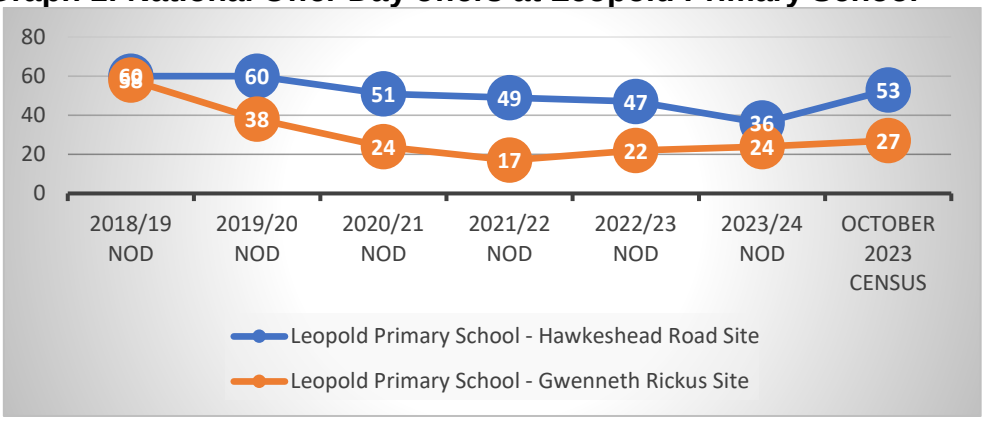
3.2.2 The number of children applying for primary school places in the borough has been reducing since a peak in 2017. The most recent population forecasts (underpinned by 2021 census data) at ward level indicate this trend will continue for the next few years. As detailed in the Brent School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28, (Primary Planning Area 4 which covers the wards of Roundwood, Stonebridge and Harlesden and Kensal Green has very high levels of surplus places. The latest projections indicate a further reduction in demand in this planning area.

3.2.3 The local authority has been working with schools to manage the detrimental impacts of falling demand. A series of reorganisation strategies are currently being deployed including PAN reductions, federations arrangements and a potential amalgamation.

3.2.4 Leopold Primary School operates as one school with one leadership team and governing body across two sites. Leopold Primary School is situated on Hawkshead Road within the Roundwood ward. The Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School is situated on Brentfield Road within the Stonebridge ward. The Leopold Gwenneth Rickus site was opened in September 2013 in response to increasing demand for primary school places in Brent. The site was previously used by the borough as a school improvement centre running courses for education professionals. Currently children attending each of Leopold Primary School's two sites receive all of their education exclusively at that site. Each of Leopold Primary School's site can accommodate two forms of entry, but the Gwenneth Rickus site currently operates an informal cap of one form entry in Reception, Year One, Year Two and Year Four. The school achieves good outcomes for pupils at or above national averages at all key stages and was rated by Ofsted as 'Good' in June 2022.

3.2.5 For the purposes of admissions when applying for a place at Leopold Primary School, parents can make a preference for either the Hawkshead Road site or the Gwenneth Rickus site on Brentfield Road. As shown in graph 1 below, the number of children applying for and receiving an offer of a place at the Gwenneth Rickus site through Reception co-ordination has been at a consistently lower rate since 2019 than the number choosing the Hawkshead Road site.

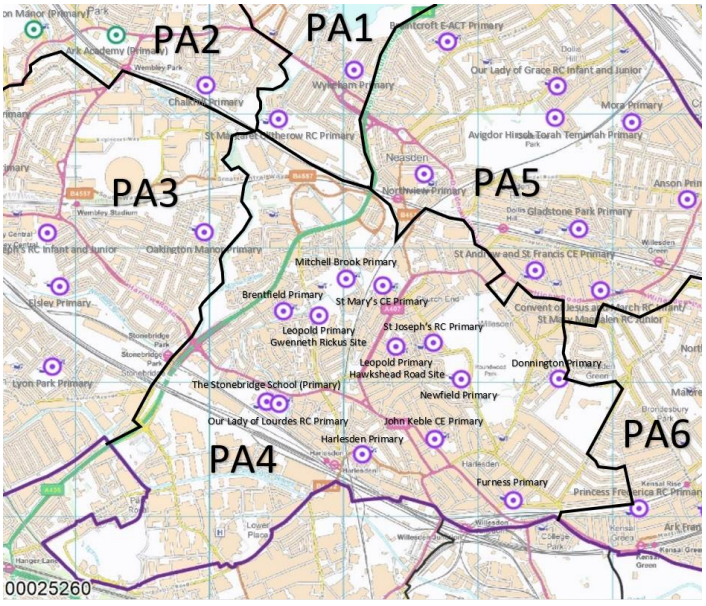
Graph 1: National Offer Day offers at Leopold Primary School



National Offer Day occurs from 16 April each year. October Census data also included for 2023/24

3.2.6 In the context of falling demand, there is no longer a need for Leopold Primary school to be split across two sites as there are sufficient spare places on both the Leopold Primary School Hawkshead Road site and in other local schools to accommodate future demand for primary provision in the area. The Gwenneth Rickus Leopold site is less than one mile to seven other Primary schools, including Brentfield, Mitchell Brook and Stonebridge Primary Schools as seen in the map below.

Map 1 – Map of Primary Planning Area Four schools



3.2.7 Within this context, on 16 October 2023, Cabinet was informed of the intention to undertake informal consultation on the future provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School in response to falling demand for places in the area.

3.3. The consultation process

3.3.1 A period of informal consultation was carried out between 1 November 2023 and 13 December 2023. An informal consultation document (Appendix 1) was made available in hard and electronic form that outlined proposals and relevant background information. Hard copies were made available in English, Arabic and Somali and were distributed to parents and carers with children at Leopold Primary School with an accompanying letter in the same three languages. The governing board and staff were also provided with the consultation document in electronic format.

3.3.2 The consultation and a survey about the proposals was included on the 'Have your say' consultation portal on the Brent Council website and a separate webpage was created on the Council's education webpages which could translate consultation information into multiple other languages.

3.3.3 Letters providing information about the consultation and how to attend public meetings were made available and distributed in English, Arabic, Gujarati, Pashto, Polish, Romanian, Somalian, Ukrainian and Urdu as key languages advised by the school. Leaflets with information about the consultation were sent to residents living nearby to both school sites. Both the letters and the leaflets gave details of how to access the website to translate the consultation document into other languages.

3.3.4 Eight consultation meetings were hosted by Local Authority Officers that provided parents/carers, staff, governors and the public the opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the proposals. Six meetings with the public were held over 14th and 15th November at both school sites, a staff meeting was held on 20th November at the Gwenneth Rickus site and a Governors meeting was held on 27th November on Zoom.

3.3.5 Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation using the reply form that was included with the consultation document. Submissions could be posted, submitted online or e-mailed to a dedicated e-mail address. Appendix 2 provides details of issues raised during the consultation process with officer comments.

3.4. Responses from the consultation process

3.4.1 A total of 173 written response forms were submitted to the local authority (one by e-mail and 172 via Brent Council's 'Have Your Say' online consultation portal). The local authority also received an electronic written response from the Chair of Governors of Leopold Primary School on behalf of the Governing Board.

3.4.2. Table 1 below details all of the consultation responses received.

Table 1: Summary of Response Forms

Views on proposal to cease provision on Gwenneth Rickus site	**Number of responses received**	**Percentage of response overall**
Agree with proposal	23	13.3%
Disagree with proposal	150	86.7%
Total responses	173	100.0%
Views on how a closure should happen	**Number of responses received**	**Percentage of response overall**
Phased closure	104	61.9%
At a fixed point in time	14	8.3%
A different approach	50	29.8%
Total responses	168	100%

3.4.3 The majority of responses received (86.7%) were opposed to the proposal to cease provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site. The majority of responses to a question about how the school should be closed if the closure was to proceed indicated support for a phased closure (61.9%). 29.8% of respondents suggested there should be a different approach, but they tended not to provide suggestions of alternative proposals choosing instead to provide information on why they disagreed with the closure proposal.

3.4.4 During the consultation period, a number of concerns were raised that can be grouped as follows:

- Why Leopold Primary School has been chosen as it is one of the better performing schools in the area and why not a school with fewer pupils / budget pressures and / or a lower Ofsted rating.
- Parents attending the Gwenneth Rickus site consider it to be a standalone school and have little connection to the Hawkshead Road site of the school.
- Travel to Hawkshead Road would be difficult and inconvenient for some parents, especially those with more than one child / large families.
- Families with siblings of children at the Gwenneth Rickus site are assuming their children will be able to attend the same school. There are several large families who will be impacted.
- Any decision to close the site will lead to instability of both pupil numbers and staffing. This will impact on the previous work of the leadership team to address budget issues.
- Concerns that the council is not supporting the local community in terms of regeneration and housing developments.

3.4.5 Appendix 2 details officers' responses to these concerns and if and how they can be mitigated with the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site.

3.4.6 During the consultation period, some alternative suggestions and proposals were made (see Appendix 2). These suggested that the local authority should:

- Continue to monitor pupil numbers.
- Reduce all schools in Brent to one form entry.
- Cap the Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) of all schools in Brent.
- Reduce the number of pupils of both Gwenneth Rickus and Hawkshead Road site and keep both open
- Keep Gwenneth Rickus site open and use the empty space to open a special school/ use for other educational purposes or sell parts of the building.
- Move all children from the Hawkshead Road site into the Gwenneth Rickus site.
- Close/amalgamate with another school on both of the Leopold Primary sites.

3.4.7 During the public consultation meetings, it was made clear by parents to officers that Leopold Primary School was a school which operated from two sites with common leadership and governance. However, it was also made clear that parents view each site as a separate school serving its own community.

3.5. Proposal

3.5.1. Having taken the informal consultation into account the intention is to proceed with the next stage of the statutory process to close the Gwenneth Rickus site. Officers do not consider there is sufficient evidence to indicate that one of the alternative proposals suggested during the consultation, as set out in paragraph 3.4.6 and in Appendix 2, should be pursued. The informal consultation has highlighted a number of concerns from parents, carers and governors as set out in paragraph 3.4.4 and in detail in Appendix 2. The Local Authority remains of the view that the proposal is required to address the level of spare places in the local area. While concerns raised by parents would need to be taken into consideration if the proposal was implemented, officers are of the view that the Council should move to consult formally on the proposal to cease provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School.

3.5.2. The Local Authority is seeking to implement a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School by

a) Proposing a variation to reduce Leopold Primary School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 120 to 60 from September 2025;

b) Closing the site for educational provision no later than the end of July 2027

3.5.3. In order to reduce the Published Admission Number for Leopold Primary School it is necessary to propose a variation of the Brent Community School Admission Arrangements 2025/26. Approval must be sought from the Schools Adjudicator and appropriate bodies notified.

3.5.4. Following the reduction of the PAN, no further co-ordinated Reception admissions will be made at the Gwenneth Rickus site. Any children offered a reception place at Leopold Primary School through co-ordination would only be admitted onto the Hawkshead Road site. There would be no barrier to parents

making in-year applications for their children to attend all other year groups at the Gwenneth Rickus site. However, it is anticipated the number of in-year applications would reduce as a result of the forthcoming closure.

3.5.5. Table 2 shows the number of children on roll in 2023/24 moving through each of the year groups until the children currently in reception finish Year 6 on the Gwenneth Rickus site. This table assumes there is a 10% reduction in on-roll numbers each year as some parents may choose to move their children due to the closure proposal. If this reduction does not materialise then by 2027/28 there could be 110 pupils on the Gwenneth Rickus site.

3.5.6 Two closure options were considered - a phased closure and closure at a fixed point in time. Officers are proposing a phased closure with provision ceasing at the end of the academic year 2026/2027, when there is estimated to be between 75 and 110 pupils across year groups 3-6 who would need to move to the Hawkshead Road site to complete their education or an alternative school, if this is what parents would prefer. This would allow all pupils attending Gwenneth Rickus site in 2024/25 to complete their current key stage on the site. An alternative would be to keep the site open until September 2028 when there is estimated to be between 44 and 65 pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 on the Gwenneth Rickus site at this point in time. The local authority is concerned that keeping the school site open beyond September 2027 would create financial pressure for the school and difficulties in staff management.

Table 2: Number of children on roll in 2023/24 if all completed their education on the Gwenneth Rickus site.

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2023/24	27	26	37	28	42	35	54	**249**
2024/25	20*	24	23	33	25	38	32	**196**
2025/26	-	18	22	21	30	23	34	**148**
2026/27	-	-	16	20	19	27	20	**102**
2027/28	-	-	-	15	18	17	24	**74**
2028/29	-	-	-	-	13	16	15	**44**
2029/30	-	-	-	-	-	12	14	**26**
2030/31	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	**11**

**estimate of reception admissions Assumes a 10% reduction in on-roll numbers each year*

3.5.7 The children directly affected by this proposal are those currently in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, as well as those children who will be admitted to the Gwenneth Rickus site in Reception in September 2024. The local authority would work with the leadership team of Leopold Primary School to develop plans for how these pupils could be accommodated on the Hawkshead Road site from September 2027. Currently there are vacancies in most year groups on the Hawkshead Road site (Table 3). The School Admissions Team would support any parents who want to make an application for an alternative school.

Table 3: Number of children currently on roll at the Hawkshead Road site.

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2023/24	53	48	42	55	50	42	40	**330**
2024/25	50	53	48	42	55	50	42	**340**
2025/26	47	50	53	48	42	55	50	**345**
2026/27	48	47	50	53	48	42	55	**343**
2027/28	48	48	47	50	53	48	42	**336**
2028/29	51	48	48	47	50	53	48	**345**
2029/30	53	51	48	48	47	50	53	**350**
2030/31	55	53	51	48	48	47	50	**352**
2031/32	58	55	53	51	48	48	47	**360**

3.5.8 Table 4 shows the combined projected numbers on roll at the Hawkshead Road site and the Gwenneth Rickus site from September 2027. Red text shows the year groups that would have a combined intake from both sites with 2027/28 and 2028/29 being the two academic years where there would be the most pressure on space.

Table 4: Projected numbers on roll - Hawkshead Road site from September 2027

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2027/28	48	48	47	65	71	65	66	410
2028/29	51	48	48	47	63	69	63	389
2029/30	53	51	48	48	47	62	67	376
2030/31	55	53	51	48	48	47	61	363
2031/32	58	55	53	51	48	48	47	360

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1. An informal consultation was held from 1 November to 13 December 2023 which enabled staff, governors, parents, carers and local residents the opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the proposal to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School.

4.2. In advance of the informal consultation process, local ward members were briefed about school place planning issues in all planning areas including Planning Area 4. Officers also met members to update them on the consultation process.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 School funding received via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is driven by pupil numbers, and vacant school places cause a financial pressure for schools as they will need to operate with reduced budgets. A small number of schools have applied for a licensed deficit and several schools in the primary phase remain at risk due to the knock-on effect of falling rolls in Brent and across

London. A licenced deficit enables a school to hold a deficit balance for a period of three years while implementing an agreed plan on how to return to a balanced position at the end of the three-year period. This approach becomes increasingly difficult as pupil numbers continue to fall leading schools to undertake staff restructures which have a financial cost arising from redundancies and will not be sustainable.

5.2 Leopold Primary school's main source of income is from the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG). The school reported a surplus reserves balance of £0.926m as at end of March 2023 and estimates to use half of its reserves by the end of the current financial year 2023/24, with almost all of the balance spent by March 2025/26 on goods and services including some planned capital works. The school undertook a restructure in 2022/23, to match staff numbers to pupil numbers due to continued falling rolls across the two sites and to ensure financial viability. The restructure cost absorbed by the school was £0.250m.

5.3 The school receives a per pupil funding rate of £6,205 and with approximately 634 pupils, this equates to £3.9m DSG funding, inclusive of £0.224m split site funding allocation. This compares to an average of £6k per primary pupil across the borough. The closure of the site will lead to a more efficient use of the DSG as spare places in other schools are utilised for new cohorts of children. There may be support required towards redundancy payments.

5.4 There would be general fund cost implications to maintain the Gwenneth Rickus site if it remained vacant, including utilities and any security provisions that officers felt were required. The costs and the budget required are yet to be confirmed but could be in the region of £20,000 per site per annum, depending on the level of resources involved to look after the site.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The authority has the power to consider and determine proposals published under Section 19 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006, pursuant to Section 21 (2) (f) of the Act and in accordance with Schedule 3 paragraph 3 of The School Organisation Regulations 2013.

6.2 Under sections 13 and 14 of The Education Act 1996, as amended by The Education and Inspections Act 2006, a local education authority has a general statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places available to meet the needs of the population in its area. The local authority must promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area and promote diversity and increase parental choice. To discharge this duty, the LA has to undertake a planning function to ensure that the supply of school places balances the demand for them.

6.3 If the proposals which form the basis of the proposed formal consultation were eventually to be implemented, then this would have the potential effect of the need to consider redundancies for staff.

6.4 Although not part of the considerations for the site proposed to be closed, any change of use from Education use and/or disposal requires the permission from the Secretary of State for Education under Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Schedule 1 of the Academies Act.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Local Authority when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics covered under the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination) pregnancy and maternity, race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality) religion or belief (this includes lack of belief) sex and sexual orientation. Due regard means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty, in that whenever significant decisions are being made consideration must be given to the impact/affect that implementing a particular decision will have in relation to equality before making that decision. Brent Council also has a policy of considering Human Rights and socio-economic impact.

7.2 An Equality Analysis has been carried out on the proposals set out in this report and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. It is not anticipated there will be any negative impact from these proposals on the basis of disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination) pregnancy and maternity, race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality) religion or belief (this includes lack of belief) sex and sexual orientation.

7.3 Pupil-level data suggest that the intake at the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site is similar to other local schools in terms of ethnic diversity, children on free school meals and the number of children with special needs and disabilities (SEND). This proposal could have a negative impact on individual children depending on their individual needs if they were required to move schools. However, based on current information other local schools would provide a suitable alternative and would support children to settle.

7.4 The top three ethnic groups attending Leopold Primary School match the top three ethnic groups across Primary Planning Area 4, although the proportion of each group is higher in Leopold Primary School. The proportion of children receiving benefits related Free School Meals at the school is 32.8% compared to 33.2% for the whole planning area. The proportion of children at Leopold Primary School with an EHCP is 1.5% compared to 3.7% across the whole planning area. The proportion of children at Leopold Primary School receiving SEN Support is 9.2% compared to 18.1% across the whole planning area.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 School place planning and admissions policies aim to ensure that primary children can attend a local school and therefore can walk to school or take public transport. This approach underpins these proposals. All schools in Brent can access support to develop a sustainable travel plan.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations

9.1 Implementation of the proposal to close the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site would be likely to impact on the required staffing for Leopold Primary School, as it would lead to a reduction in overall staffing levels. This could therefore result in the possibility for the need to consider redundancies and/or relocation of staff to the Hawkshead Road site. The number of staff affected would depend on the nature of a phased closure. The school, supported by the Local Authority and the school's HR provider, would need to follow the Managing Change in Schools policy and Procedure including consultation with affected staff and trade unions to effect the changes in due course. The Local Authority would work with the governing boards of local schools to see if affected staff could find local re-employment.

9.2 Should a decision be made to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School, then the building and site would become surplus to requirements for mainstream primary school use. At that time the Council will review its priorities and potential future uses for the site, but the expectation is that the site is retained for educational use given the need for other forms of local educational provision, for example for children and young people with SEND or for children accessing alternative provision.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 Formal consultation to change the provision is required under the statutory process for making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools (Statutory Guidance for Proposers and Decision-makers, Department for Education, January 2023). As the admission authority for the school, the local authority would lead this process. The statutory consultation process for significant changes to school provision has four stages - Stage 1 Publication of a Statutory Notice, Stage 2 Representation (formal consultation for a period of 4 weeks), Stage 3 Decision and Stage 4 Implementation.

10.2 Cabinet is asked to approve publication of a statutory notice to commence the formal consultation process to:

- vary Leopold Primary School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 120 to 60 from September 2025.

- implement a phased closure of provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School with no new Reception cohorts from September 2025 and a final closure no later than the end of July 2027.

10.3 Subject to Cabinet approval, the statutory notice would be published in the Brent and Kilburn Times, on the Brent website, and notices would also be displayed on the school gate at both sites (Hawkshead Road and Brentfield Road). Stakeholders would be invited to submit written representations that set out their views and comments on the proposals.

10.4 Following the formal representation period, Cabinet is required to make a decision on this proposal within two months. The anticipated milestone dates following a decision by the Cabinet to approve the formal consultation to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School are set out in the timetable below.

Table 5: Statutory Process and Implementation Milestones

Date	Action
19 February 2024	Publication of statutory proposal notice and formal consultation
18 March 2024	Formal consultation closes
28 May 2024	Final decision by Cabinet*
1 July 2024	Submission of variation proposal the Schools Adjudicator to reduce school's PAN to 60 from September 2025
1 September 2025	Phased closure commences with no intakes into Reception
31 July 2027	Gwenneth Rickus site closes. All pupils on roll at the time of closure would move to the Hawkshead Road site or other schools in September 2027.

**The table assumes the May 2024 Cabinet still goes ahead despite elections*

Related document(s) for reference

Review of Primary School Places in Primary Planning Area 4 – Cabinet Report 16 October 202

Report sign off

Nigel Chapman
Corporate Director Children and Young People

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A Public Consultation

Proposed Change of Character of Leopold Primary School from September 2025: Closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site

Consultation period:
1 November 2023 to 13 December 2023

Introduction

Brent Council is consulting on the proposed closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School. This would mean admissions to Leopold Primary School reducing from 120 to 60 and no children starting in Reception at the Gwenneth Rickus site (NW10 8HE) from September 2025. Leopold Primary School's Hawkshead Road site (NW10 9UR) would remain open and the school would revert back to the status it had prior to 2015 - a primary school located on one site with 60 pupils (2 forms of entry) in Reception to Year 6.

The closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School is being proposed due to falling pupil numbers in primary schools across Brent, as detailed in the Brent School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28. Demand for primary places in Brent peaked in 2017 and has been reducing since. The latest forecasts indicate that the primary school population in Brent will continue to fall. This reflects the picture across London. As school budgets are linked to pupil numbers, falling rolls means less government funding for local schools. Over time this can create financial pressures for schools, which, if not managed effectively, can impact on the quality of education pupils receive.

This informal consultation provides an opportunity to discuss this proposal with governors, staff, parents, carers and the public. This consultation document sets out the reasons for the proposal and seeks your views and comments. There are a number of ways you can respond to the consultation – by attending a consultation meeting, by sending the Council a written response or through Brent Council's consultation portal. Further information can be found at the end of this document.

The consultation period is 6 weeks long and the closing date for responses is Wednesday 13 December 2023. Following the consultation period, the Council will review the responses received and take a decision on whether to progress to formal consultation through the publication of a statutory notice that details the proposal and how it would be implemented.

Why does the Council want to reduce primary school places?

There has been a significant fall in the number of primary aged children in Brent over the past 6 years, linked to falling birth rates, the cost of living in London and the impact of Brexit and the Covid pandemic. Over this period, the local authority has been working closely with schools across the borough to manage the impacts of falling demand. A range of different strategies have been deployed including reducing Published Admission Numbers (PANs), schools coming together in federation arrangements and considering alternative use for spare capacity, for example establishing Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). However, these have not proved sufficient to manage the continued impact of falling rolls with many schools facing ongoing challenges linked to reduced funding. The Council is of the view therefore that a reduction in capacity is required to support the long-term sustainability of local primary schools.

Why is the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School being proposed?

Leopold Primary School is one of 12 schools in the area known as Primary Place Planning Area 4 which covers the wards of Stonebridge, Roundwood, and Harlesden and Kensal Green: Brentfield Primary School, Donnington Primary School, Furness Primary School, Harlesden Primary School, John Keble CE Primary School, Leopold Primary School, Mitchell Brook Primary School, Newfield Primary School, Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary School, St Mary's CE Primary School and The Stonebridge School.

This area benefited from substantial expansion of school capacity between 2005 and 2017 in response to increasing demand for school places. However, demand for places in the area has been reducing over the past six years and the area currently has the highest number and percentage of spare places of Brent's six primary place planning areas. There are a total of 5,985 places available in the 12 schools in the area, but the number of pupils on roll has reduced from 5,249 in 2017 to 4,120 in 2023. As a result, there are high levels of spare places in each year group (as set out in the table below) and the forecasts suggest this will not change over the next five years.

Forecast and capacity of Primary schools in Primary Planning Area 4

PA4	Dataset	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
2023/2024	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	519	515	577	573	621	580	629
	Spare places	**336**	**340**	**278**	**282**	**234**	**275**	**226**
	Percentage	***39%***	***40%***	***33%***	***33%***	***27%***	***32%***	***26%***
2024/2025	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	498	502	504	582	581	617	603
	Spare places	**357**	**353**	**351**	**273**	**274**	**238**	**252**
	Percentage	***42%***	***41%***	***41%***	***32%***	***32%***	***28%***	***29%***
2025/2026	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	477	482	492	507	590	575	638
	Spare places	**378**	**373**	**363**	**348**	**265**	**280**	**217**
	Percentage	***44%***	***44%***	***42%***	***41%***	***31%***	***33%***	***25%***
2026/2027	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	485	462	472	494	514	585	592
	Spare places	**370**	**393**	**383**	**361**	**341**	**270**	**263**
	Percentage	***43%***	***46%***	***45%***	***42%***	***40%***	***32%***	***31%***
2027/2028	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	479	473	455	479	504	513	607
	Spare places	**376**	**382**	**400**	**376**	**351**	**342**	**248**
	Percentage	***44%***	***45%***	***47%***	***44%***	***41%***	***40%***	***29%***

The Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School was opened in 2013 in response to increasing demand for primary places in the area. However, demand for Leopold Primary School has been falling since 2018 and the Gwenneth Rickus site currently operates as one form of entry in some year groups, including Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. There are also spare places at the Hawkshead Road site in all year groups. The tables below show the number of children reported on roll at each site following each October pupil census return.

Number on roll at Leopold Primary Gwenneth Rickus site at October each year

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	PAN	Spare places
2019/20	46	58	55	58	54	47	69	**387**	420	**33** (8%)
2020/21	33	45	44	53	58	47	47	**327**	420	**93** (22%)
2021/22	29	41	43	40	54	50	47	**304**	420	**116** (28%)
2022/23	31	29	41	44	35	48	51	**279**	420	**141** (34%)
2023/24	27	27	28	38	42	37	54	**253**	420	**167** (40%)

Number on roll at the Leopold Primary School Hawkshead Road at October each year

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	PAN	Spare places
2019/20	52	57	49	55	47	42	56	**358**	**420**	**62** (15%)
2020/21	50	57	56	51	52	42	45	**353**	**420**	**67** (16%)
2021/22	54	54	56	53	48	49	39	**353**	**420**	**67** (16%)
2022/23	47	58	51	55	45	43	58	**357**	**420**	**63** (15%)
2023/24	53	46	53	43	51	42	40	**328**	**420**	**92** (22%)

There are sufficient spare places in other schools in Primary Planning Area 4 to accommodate future pupil demand, which means that the additional places provided by Gwenneth Rickus are no longer required.

No changes are proposed for the Hawkshead Road site. The Hawkshead Road site will continue to have a 30 place nursery and Reception to Year 6 provision for up to 60 pupils each year.

When would the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site happen?

Closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site would commence from September 2025, when there would be no pupils admitted into Reception on the site. Parents of future Reception children would have a range of local schools to choose from.

A phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site is proposed. We would like to know your views on two different options:

- **Option 1:** A phased closure of the provision, which would mean no Reception classes on the site from 2025 onwards and children in other year groups who are taught at the Gwenneth Rickus site remaining either on the site or moving to the Hawkshead

Road site to complete their primary education at Leopold Primary School. This could mean the Gwenneth Rickus site remaining open until 2028.

- **Option 2:** A full closure of the provision at a fixed point in time in the future when all children being educated on the site would move to either the Hawkshead site and / or alternative local schools to complete their education. This would be more disruptive for families.

Other relevant information

In November 2023, the Council is also consulting on PAN reductions at other schools for the admissions arrangements for September 2025. This includes a reduction in the PAN of Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90 and a reduction in the PAN at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60.

If the proposal to cease provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site is implemented, then it could impact on Leopold Primary School's staffing requirements. There may be a need to consider potential redundancies for staff, which would be subject to a separate formal consultation process in line with the Managing Change Policy. Other schools in Brent would be encouraged to help any affected staff to find alternative employment.

Frequently asked questions

If the Gwenneth Rickus site closes, where will my child go to school in September 2025?
Your child will remain at the Gwenneth Rickus site until such time as the site fully closes. It may be that at some point in the future your child moves to the Hawkshead Road site.

Can I change my child's school now?
Yes – you can submit an in-year application for any school in Brent. An offer will only be made for preference schools if there have vacancies.

If I am offered a place at the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School for my child for Reception in September 2024, can I choose an alternative?
Any parents who receive an offer of a place at the school will be notified that this consultation is ongoing. If parents would prefer an alternative offer, they can let us know.

Can applications still be made for the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School?
While the site remains open, in-year applications can still be made and offers will be made if there are vacancies in a year group or class. If the decision is taken in to cease the provision, parents will not be able to apply for a Reception place at the school for September 2025.

What will happen to the Gwenneth Rickus site?
There are no formal plans for the future use of the site. The Gwenneth Rickus site would be considered for other educational use if this proposal was implemented.

Timeline

If, after this informal consultation, Brent Council is of the view the proposals should continue to be progressed, a statutory notice would be published in line with the Department for Education's guidance 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools'. This would trigger four weeks of formal consultation, after which Brent Council's Cabinet would make a final decision on the proposal, taking into consideration consultation and statutory proposal responses.

The anticipated timetable for the full process is as follows:

Date	Action
01 November 2023	Informal Consultation begins
13 November 2023	Consultation meeting for school staff at the Hawkshead Road site
14 November 2023	Consultation meetings for the public at the Gwenneth Rickus site
15 November 2023	Consultation meetings for the public at the Hawkshead Road site
27 November 2023	Consultation meeting for school governors
13 December 2023	Informal Consultation closes – deadline for responses
January/February 2024	Cabinet decision on agreeing formal consultation
March 2024	Publication of statutory proposal notice and formal consultation*
April / May 2024	Final Decision by Cabinet*
July 2024	Variation request to reduce published admission number* to the Schools Adjudicator
September 2025	Planned closure commences*

* Subject to Cabinet agreement

How to have your say

Brent Council would welcome your views on this proposal to reduce the size of Leopold Primary School by ending provision on the school's Gwenneth Rickus site. You can let us know your views by submitting a response to this consultation document (form attached to this document) and/or attending one of the consultation meetings. **The informal consultation closes on 13 December 2023** – please ensure you have your say before then.

Please complete the attached Response Form and return it by email or post
Email: LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk
Post to: Admissions and School Organisation Team, 3rd Floor, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0FJ

Attending a consultation meeting
The following consultation meetings are being held at the Hawkshead Road site of Leopold Primary School

Public consultation meeting	**15 November 2023**	**9.00 – 10.00am**
Public consultation meeting	**15 November 2023**	**3.30 – 4.30pm**
Public consultation meeting	**15 November 2023**	**6.00 – 7.00pm**

The following consultation meetings are being held at the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School

Consultation meeting for staff only	**20 November 2023**	**4.00 – 5.00pm**
Public consultation meeting	**14 November 2023**	**9.00 – 10.00am**
Public consultation meeting	**14 November 2023**	**3.30 – 4.30pm**
Public consultation meeting	**14 November 2023**	**6.00 – 7.00pm**
Consultation meeting for governors	**27 November 2023**	**6.00 – 7.00pm**

Copies of this document are available from Leopold Primary School and on request from the Admissions and School Organisation Team at LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk.

The Consultation and response form are available online at Brent Connects consultations - www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/brent-connects

If you would like to request this information in a different language or format, such as accessible PDF, large print, easy read, BSL, audio recording or braille, email LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk.or call 020 8937 3110.

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Leopold Primary School Consultation Response Slip

Please return by: 13 December 2023

I agree / disagree with the proposal to change the capacity of Leopold Primary School so that it includes the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus provision.

Agree	
Disagree	

Comments: Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

I believe that, if it goes ahead, the closure should be:

Phased with all children remaining Gwenneth Rickus site/Leopold Primary School until they complete year 6	
At a fixed point in time with all children moving to alternative sites/schools	
A different approach (please provide details below)	

Comments: Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Part 2 – Monitoring Questions. ***This section is optional***

Q1. Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this questionnaire. Please select the one option that most closely represents how you are responding to this consultation.

As a parent or carer with a child at Leopold Primary School	
As a member of staff at Leopold Primary School	
As a governor of Leopold Primary School	
As a Brent resident	
As a representative of a local community group or residents' association	
On behalf of a school or setting apart from Leopold Primary School	
As a Councillor	
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	
Other, please specify:	

Q2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (business, community group, residents' association, council or any other organisation), please tell us the name of your organisation here:

Q3. If you are a parent of a child attending Leopold Primary School, or of a child who is due to start at the school, please indicate their current year group.

Nursery		Year 3	
Reception		Year 4	
Year 1		Year 5	
Year 2		Year 6	

Q4. Please tell us the first part of your postcode (this will be three or four characters). *Please do not reveal your whole postcode. We use this to help us to analyse our data responses and it will not be used to identify who you are.*

Q5. How did you find out about this consultation? *Select one option*

Leopold Primary School		Facebook	
Leaflet		Twitter	
From a friend or relative		Instagram	
Brent.gov.uk website		LinkedIn	
Councillor		Nextdoor	
Newspaper		A Voluntary or Community sector organisation	
Other, please specify			

Please return this form by post or e-mail by 13 December 2023 to:

- Post: Admissions and School Organisation Team, 3rd Floor, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 0FJ

- Email: LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk

Appendix 2 - Concerns and alternative proposals raised during informal consultation

Concerns raised during informal consultation

1. Quality of provision at Leopold Primary School and why the local authority is not proposing to close a school with more spare places / budget pressures or a lower Ofsted rating

A number of responses and comments highlighted the high quality of the educational provision at Leopold Primary School and questioned why the Gwenneth Rickus site had been chosen for closure when there are schools in the area with fewer children on roll, budget pressures and/ or a lower Ofsted rating.

Response:

96.8% of mainstream primary schools in the borough are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted and this includes Leopold Primary School.

The local authority considered several factors pertaining to each school in Primary Planning Area 4 when making the proposal to consult on the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site. These included current Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) and current informal capping arrangements, spare capacity, demand patterns and how easily demand could be absorbed by other local schools, Ofsted ratings, the proximity to other schools, budget positions and performance. The local authority considered these factors in the round, with the geographic location of schools a key driver for selecting the Gwenneth Rickus site for closure. There are seven other schools located within less than one mile of the site providing parental choice.

The Governing Board's written consultation response focused on the 'lack of logic' for selecting the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School for closure and this was reflective of feedback received during the public consultation meetings.

The Governing Board's analysis of school level information used by the local authority to inform the Primary Planning Area Four school estate review ranked Leopold Primary School as being fourth in the list of schools to be closed. The three schools ranked above Leopold Primary School do not include The Stonebridge School that it was suggested in public consultation meetings should be closed instead of Gwenneth Rickus site.

The Local Authority does not agree with the governing board's analysis. The majority of schools in Planning Area Four have spare places and are operating in buildings that are larger than the pupil population they serve. In selecting the Gwenneth Rickus site for closure, the Local Authority is reducing the size of Leopold Primary School and not closing a local community school.

The Local Authority acknowledges the work of the leadership team of Leopold Primary School to deliver a good standard of educational provision as judged by Ofsted. All schools in Planning Area Four other than one school are currently rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

2. Identity of Gwenneth Rickus site as a standalone school

Parents highlighted that they considered the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School to be a separate school and not related to education on the Leopold Hawkshead Road site. Parents of children attending the Hawkshead Road site expressed the same view.

Response:

Up until September 2013 Leopold Primary School operated from the Hawkshead Road site only. The expansion of the school was originally in response to a shortfall of primary places across Brent and Leopold Primary School officially became a split site school operating from the two sites in 2015. The school has one leadership team under an Executive Headteacher.

During the consultation it became apparent that the two sites operate independently, other than the shared leadership team, and the local authority recognises that, for parents, the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site is the school that their child attends. Children attending the site do not travel to the Hawkshead Road site for any of their education. The Governing Board's written response was pleased to note officers acknowledged their school was "not just Leopold Primary School with the Gwenneth Rickus bulge site".

If the proposal to close the site is taken forward, the implementation plan will consider how best to support children and families during the period of transition working with the leadership of the school. The current plan to phase the closure of the site aims to ensure that all children attending the site can complete their current Key Stage on the site to minimise disruption to families.

3. More difficult travel arrangements/ Families wanting siblings to attend the same school

Parents suggested any proposals to move their children to the Hawkshead Road site of Leopold Primary School would make travelling to school much more difficult. Families with siblings of children at the Gwenneth Rickus site are assuming their children will be able to attend the same school, and there are several large families who will be impacted.

Response:

The local authority is proposing a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site. This would involve ceasing Reception intakes from September 2025 and moving any children who attend the site in September 2027 to the Hawkshead Road site to complete their education. This means that only children in Reception and Year 1 and Year 2 in academic year 2024/25 would need to move to the Hawkshead Road site if the site closed in summer 2027. The current Year 3 would complete their Year 6 in July 2027 and not be directly affected by the closure.

The Local Authority recognises this may mean a longer journey for some children depending on where they live. It is also recognised that the closure proposal could have an impact on families who have children currently educated at the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site and younger children who have not yet started school, as it would not be possible for them to attend the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site from September 2025. Having children attending more than one school could be particularly difficult for large families.

While it will not be encouraged by the local authority, parents would be able to choose to move their children to an alternative school. There are seven other Primary schools located within less than one mile than the Gwenneth Rickus site providing parental choice with the average travel distance of 0.52 miles. There are also seven schools located within one mile of the Hawkshead Road site with 0.57 miles being the average distance to other schools.

Distance from the Gwenneth Rickus site to other Primary Planning Area Four Primary Schools	Distance from the Hawkshead Road site to other Primary Planning Area Four Primary Schools
Mitchell Brook 0.3	Newfield 0.4
Brentfield 0.4	St Joseph's RC 0.4
St Joseph's RC 0.5	John Keble CE 0.5
St Mary's CE 0.5	St Mary's CE 0.5
The Stonebridge 0.6	Harlesden 0.7
Our Lady of Lourdes RC 0.6	Mitchell Brook 0.7
Harlesden 0.8	Donnington 0.8
Leopold Hawkshead 0.8	Leopold Gwenneth Rickus 0.8

Any parents wishing to change schools as a result of travel arrangements or wishing to have their children attend the same school would be supported with their application by the Local Authority's School Admissions team.

4. Instability of pupil numbers and staffing

Concerns were raised that any proposals to close the site would lead to instability of pupil numbers and staff leaving to secure jobs elsewhere.

Response:

While it was made clear during the informal consultation meetings that parents and carers do not need to move their children from the school, the Local Authority acknowledges that some parents and carers may choose to move their children from the Gwenneth Rickus site of the school before it is due to close either to the Hawkshead Road site or to other schools, leading to lower class numbers. It is also recognised that staff may choose to seek employment in other schools due to concerns about job security. If the closure proposal proceeds, the Local Authority and the school would work together to manage implementation of the proposal in the least disruptive way.

5. Concerns that the council is not supporting the local community in terms of regeneration and housing developments.

Some parents questioned the local authority's projection figures, highlighting examples where they were aware of a lot of large families moving to the area, and asking what would happen if demand in the area rose significantly in the future.

Response:

The local authority uses projections provided by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to inform school place planning. GLA projections are informed by national data inputs such as census data and birth rates together with locally held information on migration patterns and planned housing growth. Pupil projection figures are a good indicator of need, rather than a definitive position, and are updated annually to reflect changes in underlying data. The most recent projections have been underpinned by 2021 census data.

At the time the Gwenneth Rickus Site of Leopold Primary School was opened and when other schools were expanded, there was anticipated demand for the planned places. However, Reception intakes have since reduced and the most recent projections provided by the GLA indicate further reductions in demand over the next few years. This is the case across London as well as in Brent.

Even if demand was to exceed current projections in the future, there would need to be very large increases in the local birth rate for demand to take up all surplus school places in Primary Planning Area Four if the Gwenneth Rickus site was to close. This is unlikely given the current birth rates in Brent and trends across London.

6. Governors have been responsible in managing the impacts of falling rolls

In their written response, the Governing Board expressed that it had been forward thinking in terms of managing the impact of falling rolls on the school's budget, for example undertaking a staff restructure, and were exploring ways to increase the school's income using buildings and the annex at Gwenneth Rickus for the benefits of the local community and children in this area.

Response:

It is recognised that the Governing Board have taken actions to respond to falling rolls and to manage the budget implications. The Local Authority would expect all schools to do so and to develop future plans to ensure the quality of education provided can be protected.

Alternative proposals submitted during informal consultation.

1. Continue to monitor pupil numbers.

The local authority has been working closely with schools across the borough over the past five years to monitor and manage the impacts of falling demand. A School Place Planning Working Group, comprising officers and headteachers was established in the 2022/23 academic year focused on planning areas where there is falling demand. This group identified there was a need to act in Primary Planning Area Four given the high level of spare places (2012) in the area. The Local Authority is of the view that action to address this is required to ensure the sustainability of schools in the area. The issues of falling primary rolls in Brent mirror the position across London and other London local authorities are undertaking action to reduce the number of local school places.

2. Reduce all schools in Brent to one form entry.

Reducing all of Brent schools to one form entry is not a viable option. One form of entry schools can be more vulnerable to the impacts of falling rolls than larger schools. and this proposal would not protect the long-term sustainability of all schools in Brent.

This would not be viable as spare capacity is not evenly distributed across all of the Local Authority's six Primary Planning Areas. Some Planning Areas are currently operating near to capacity, while others have a high number of spare places, as is the case in Primary Planning Area 4 where Leopold Primary School is located. The local authority needs to maintain some spare capacity for in-year admissions and the School Place Planning Strategy 2024 - 2028 details the percentage of spare capacity available in each Primary Planning Area.

3. Cap the Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) of all schools in Brent.

Informal caps can support schools by limiting their intake in a particular year group where demand is below PAN. The advantage of informal capping arrangements is that they can be implemented quickly in response to a current situation and can easily be removed if there is an increase in demand in an area. However, implementing informal caps is not a long-term sustainable solution nor does it allow for good school organisation planning and staff and budget management.

4. Reducing the pupils of both Gwenneth Rickus and Hawkshead Road site, so that each site operates as a one form of entry school

The maintenance costs to run the two sites will remain the same as they are now and this is not an efficient use of the school's budget allocation from the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG), which would reduce if Leopold Primary School became a two form of entry school operating from two sites. Similarly, the leadership capacity to run two sites is more expensive than for a two form of entry school operating on one site.

As is the case with many schools across Brent, Leopold Primary School is predicting an in-year deficit using some of the school's surplus budget reserves to meet costs. The school's current financial plans suggest that school's reserves balance will be spent by March 2025/26 on goods and services including some planned capital works. Keeping both sites open with lower numbers on a long-term basis could create budget pressures for the school. The school could be at risk of a deficit budget if it continued to run on two separate sites with each operating only one form of entry.

5. Keep the Gwenneth Rickus site open and use the empty space for pupils with SEND/ other educational purposes or sell parts of the building

The removal of capacity through closing the Gwenneth Rickus site would direct future intakes to other schools in the area. Keeping the Gwenneth Rickus site open would not support increasing numbers on the Hawkshead Road site that also has some spare places or other schools in Planning Area Four whose Reception intakes would increase if the Gwenneth Rickus site was not a future option for parents.

Using the empty space on the Gwenneth Rickus site for educational purposes could form part of a phased closure process. This is not, however, a long-term solution as there is insufficient demand for the number of mainstream places across Primary Planning Area Four.

One of the principles from the School Place Planning Strategy 2024 - 2028 is to ensure any measures taken that remove capacity from Brent schools do not negatively impact on the need to ensure sufficient places in the future. If the proposal proceeds, the Local Authority will consider using the site for alternative educational use.

6. Move all children from the Hawkshead Road site on to the Gwenneth Rickus site.

This is a potential option which could be further pursued if the leadership team and governing body of Leopold Primary school felt the Gwenneth Rickus site was a better site to retain. However, Leopold Primary School has operated on the Hawkshead Road site for over 100 years and the school is surrounded by family housing. It is the Local Authority's view that it would be better to close the Gwenneth Rickus site that has only been opened for around 10 years.

7. Amalgamation with another school and retaining both of the Leopold Primary school sites.

The Legislation does not allow the Local Authority to amalgamate two schools and establish a new community primary school. Furthermore, the Legislation provides the Council with the authority to close community schools but it does not have the same authority over academies, Foundation or Voluntary Aided schools. This does not mean that the Local Authority would not want to work with both Dioceses, academies and the DfE's Regional Director in this regard.

An amalgamation proposal would effectively mean either closing another school and the children moving on to the roll of Leopold Primary School and continuing their education either on the Gwenneth Rickus or Hawkshead Road site or closing two schools and opening a new free school academy under the Presumption Process. This is not considered a better option than the proposal to close the Gwenneth Rickus site, as it would be more disruptive and impact on more schools and their communities.

Appendix XX

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	Closure of primary provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School
DEPARTMENT:	Children and Young People
TEAM:	Admissions and School Organisation Team, Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Service
LEAD OFFICER:	Michelle Gwyther
DATE:	5 January 2024

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

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.

Leopold Primary School is situated in the south of the borough. The Brent School Place Planning Strategy 2014-18 approved by Cabinet in October 2014, identified an increasing demand for primary school places and the need for additional places across the borough. To help meet this demand, new primary provision was established in 2014 under the management of Leopold Primary School on a separate site known as the Gwenneth Rickus Building. This was located on Brentfield Road 0.5 miles from the main site on Hawkshead Road. The provision was for 420 places in total with 60 in each year group from Reception to Year 6.

Many other schools in the area have also expanded on a permanent basis, thereby increasing the supply of places to meet anticipated demand at the time. Demand for places across London has, however, been decreasing since 2017. Borough-wide projections indicate that demand for Reception school places will continue to fall over the next 5 years. Planning Area 4 has the greatest number and percentage of spare places of all the six Primary Planning Areas in Brent. Schools in the area have been managing the impact of falling rolls for several years with the support of the Local Authority to manage the detrimental impacts of falling demand. A series of reorganisation strategies are currently being deployed including Pupil Admission Number (PAN) reductions, federations arrangements and a potential amalgamation.

The proposal to reduce capacity at Leopold Primary School is aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of all schools in the area.

The proposal is to close provision on the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site by:

- Proposing a variation to reduce Leopold Primary School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 120 to 60 from September 2025
- Closing the site for educational provision no later than the end of July 2027

Plans will be made for pupils currently educated on the site who will remain on the roll of Leopold Primary School beyond July 2027. Leopold Primary School will revert back to the status it had in 2013 as a single site primary school with a PAN of 60 and 420 places across Reception to Year 6.

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

Pupils Parents and carers of children who attend Leopold Primary School Residents in the Brentfield Road and Hawkshead Road areas i.e. Roundwood and Stonebridge wards Staff/contractors based at the Gwenneth Rickus site and Hawkshead Road sites of Leopold Primary School Leopold Primary School Governing Board

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

Yes

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	**Neutral/None**	**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 *is* 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 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.

The London Borough of Brent School Place Planning Strategy 2024 – 2028 (approved by Cabinet in October 2023) noted the sustained reduction in primary demand and the resulting level of spare places that are impacting on some schools. Planning Area 4 has the greatest number and percentage of spare places of all the six Primary Planning Areas in Brent. Primary Planning Area 4 covers the wards of Roundwood, Stonebridge and Harlesden and Kensal Green has very high levels of surplus places. The latest projections indicate a further reduction in demand in this planning area.

The closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School has been proposed as part of a wider, co-ordinated series of measures which have included informal capping arrangements, Published Admission Number reductions and federations.

Leopold Primary School operates as one school with one leadership team and governing body across two sites. Leopold Primary School is situated on Hawkshead Road within the Roundwood ward. The Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School is situated on Brentfield Road within the Stonebridge ward. The Leopold Gwenneth Rickus site was opened in September 2013 in response to increasing demand for primary school places in Brent. The site was previously used by the borough as a school improvement centre running courses for education professionals.

Currently children attending each of Leopold Primary School's two sites receive all of their education exclusively at that site. Each of Leopold Primary School's site can accommodate two forms of entry, but the Gwenneth Rickus site currently operates an informal cap of one form entry in Reception, Year One, Year Two and Year Four. The school achieves good outcomes for pupils across at or above national averages at all key stages and was rated by Ofsted as 'Good' in June 2022.

For the purposes of admissions when applying for a place at Leopold Primary School, parents can make a preference for either the Hawkshead Road site or the Gwenneth Rickus site on Brentfield Road.

The site has been selected for closure because it avoids the need to completely close a primary school. The location of the site is also such that there is sufficient capacity in the area to accommodate current and future demand for places. There are seven other Primary schools located within less than one mile than the Gwenneth Rickus site providing parental choice with the average travel distance of 0.52 miles. There are also seven schools located

within one mile of the Hawkshead Road site with 0.57 miles being the average distance to other schools.

Data on pupils at the school suggest that the intake is similar to other schools in terms of ethnic diversity, children on free school meals and children with special needs and disabilities. This indicates that attending other local schools would not have a negative impact on children that might otherwise attend provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site.

The proportion of children receiving benefits related Free School Meals at the school is 32.8% compared to 33.2% for the whole planning area. Ethnicity and SEND data is below

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	If the Gwenneth Rickus site is closed it will affect 4 – 11 year olds who attend that site and who live in the local area as the option to attend provision on the site will no longer be available. The local authority is proposing a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site. This would involve ceasing Reception intakes from September 2025 and moving any children who attend the site in September 2027 to the Hawkshead Road site to complete their education. This means that only children in Reception and Year 1 and Year 2 in academic year 2024/25 would need to move to the Hawkshead Road site when the site closes in summer 2027. The current Year 3 will complete their Year 6 in July 2027 and not be directly affected by the closure. The Local Authority recognises this may mean a longer journey for some children depending on where they live. It is also recognised that the closure proposal could have an impact on families who have children currently educated at the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site and younger children who have not yet started school, as it would not be possible for them to attend the Leopold Primary School Gwenneth Rickus site from September 2025. Having children attending more than one school could be particularly difficult for large families. While it will not be encouraged by the local authority, parents would be able to choose to move their children to an alternative school. There are seven other Primary schools located within less than one mile than the Gwenneth Rickus site providing parental choice with the average travel distance of 0.52 miles. There are also seven schools located within one mile of the Hawkshead Road site with 0.57 miles being the average distance to other schools.

DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	The Gwenneth Rickus site has restricted accessibility. The site has two floors. The ground floor is fully accessible with wheelchair accessible toilets, but there is no lift to the first floor. If children with disabilities or with SEND attending the site are required to move site or school, the receiving site or school would be required to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan attending the site, would have their plans reviewed to identify the most suitable ongoing placement. The proportion of children at Leopold Primary School with an EHCP is 1.5% compared to 3.7% across the whole planning area. The proportion of children at Leopold Primary School receiving SEN Support is 9.2% compared to 18.1% across the whole planning area. (Data taken from the October 2023 School Census)
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	Pupils at the Leopold Primary School represent the diversity of Brent. Other schools in the primary planning area also have diverse intakes and it is not considered that attending an alternative site or school would have a negative impact on the basis of race. The top three ethnic groups attending Leopold Primary School match the top three ethnic groups across Primary Planning Area 4, although the proportion of each group is higher in Leopold Primary School. (Data taken from the ethnicity section of the January 2023 School Census)
SEX	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	Leopold Primary School is non-denominational. There are seven other schools in the local planning area which are non-denominational.
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	N/A

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	N/A

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?

Informal consultation with stakeholders was carried out between 1 November 2023 and 13 December 2023. 174 responses were received, and approximately 100 members of the public attended consultation meetings, with separate meetings held for both staff and governors.

A formal statutory consultation will provide stakeholders an opportunity to comment on defined proposals.

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

N/A

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

If following consultation a decision is taken to close the site, the proposals would be implemented from September 2025. This will allow time to plan in order to minimise the impacts on children, their families and carers. Any children remaining on roll at the site at the point of closure will have the opportunity to transfer to the Hawkshead Road site of the school or be supported to change to a different school.

If the proposal to close the site is taken forward, the implementation plan will consider how best to support children and families during the period of transition working with the leadership of the school. The current plan to phase the closure of the site aims to ensure that all children attending the site can complete their current Key Stage on the site to minimise disruption to families.

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

The proposals have already gone through informal consultation and responses reviewed. The final decision whether to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School will be made by Brent Cabinet after reviewing the responses to both the informal and formal consultations.

If the closure proposal proceeds, the Local Authority and the school would work together to manage implementation of the proposal in the least disruptive way.

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.

Based on current data analysis and information, officers are of the view that it is appropriate to proceed with formal consultation on the proposal to close the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School

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
Review concerns and issues raised during formal consultation	Inform the final proposal and if agreed, the implementation plan to be taken forward	Michael Rollin Michelle Gwyther	May 2024
Establish a clear implementation plan, working with the school leadership team and governing board	To mitigate negative impacts	Michael Rollin with support from other services	July 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Michael Rollin
REVIEWING OFFICER:	Michelle Gwyther
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Michelle Gwyther

	Cabinet 5 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director for Care, Health and Wellbeing
	Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Neil Nerva)

Changes to the Adult Social Care Charging Policy

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Online consultation results
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Name: Andrew Davies Job Title: Head of Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management, ASC Email: Andrew.davies@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to members the outcome of the Adult Social Care Charging Policy consultation, which ran from 2nd November to 17th December 2023. In October 2023 Cabinet gave consent to undertake a public consultation on several proposed changes to the policy, the outcome of which was to be presented back to Cabinet before a final decision was taken on their implementation.

1.2 The Brent Adult Social Care Charging policy was last reviewed fully in 2016. Officers had begun to review the policy in 2021/22, ahead of the Government's proposed changes to adult social care charging (i.e. the introduction of the lifetime care cap, and changes to the capital thresholds for charging for care). These proposals have been postponed until October 2025 . However, in doing the work on the charging policy ahead of those proposed changes, a number of issues and inconsistencies were found in the policy, and it is felt that there should be changes to the policy as a result.

1.3 The adult social care charging policy needs to be updated to bring greater consistency to the policy and ensure that it is fit for purpose in the years to come. It is also important that the charging policy links to wider aims for adult social care in Brent, to ensure that there is a sustainable service going forward, but that also the service is focussed on supporting people to remain as independent as possible without formal care commissioned by the local authority. Reviewing the policy on a regular basis is also good practice. The proposed changes that were included in the public consultation were –

- Reducing the discretionary personal allowance from 25% to 10% for those receiving non-residential or nursing care. This change would have an impact on the financial contribution made by all service users who contribute towards the cost of their adult social care services, except those in residential or nursing care.
- Increasing the amount charged to service users if they do not participate or cooperate with their financial assessment and making people full cost after 28 days.
- Increasing the hourly rate charged for homecare 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 placements, although these figures will increase from April 2024. This would have an impact on the payments made by self-funders, and a small number of service users receiving very small packages of care.
- That an annual uplift is applied to the hourly rate charged for homecare in line with the increase given to providers, so that the charge continues to reflect the amount paid to providers on an hourly basis.
- Charging homecare service users for up to seven days after a hospital admission, to bring this into line with payments to care providers (who continue to be paid for up to seven days after a service user is admitted to hospital).
- Charging service users for 28 days after being admitted to hospital from a residential or nursing home. Providers are paid for up to 28 days, so it brings the charging policy into line with payments to providers.

1.4 The public consultation has now been completed and the responses to the consultation reviewed to finalise the proposed changes to the charging policy to be signed off by Cabinet. This report summarises how the consultation was carried out, the number of responses received, a summary of those responses and the recommendations for changes to the policy as a result.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to –

Approve the changes to the Adult Social Care charging policy following the completion of the public consultation, specifically to -

(i). Apply a 10% discretionary enhancement to the minimum income guarantee those receiving non-residential or nursing care.

(ii). 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.

(iii). Agree that an annual uplift is applied to the hourly rate charged for homecare in line with the increase given to providers, so that the charge continues to reflect the amount paid to providers on an hourly basis.

(iv). 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).

(v). 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.

(vi). Charge homecare service users their client contribution for up to seven days during a hospital admission.

(vii). Charge service users their client contribution for 28 days after being admitted to hospital from a residential or nursing home.

(viii). 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.

(ix) Agree that final arrangements for implementation of the policy to be delegated to the Corporate Director Care Health & Wellbeing.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the Adult Social Care Charging Policy and the changes that are recommended following the completion of that consultation. In the absence of a national health and social care service, adult social care remains a service for which councils can charge. Whilst this isn't always popular, it is essential that if the service is to remain sustainable and the council is to deliver care to all who need it, that those who can afford to pay for care do so. It is also important that the authority regularly reviews and updates its charging policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

3.1.2 The changes to be implemented will mean that some people will pay more for their care services. However, those who do not pay at the moment will not be required to do so as a result of the changes that will be made to the policy. There are also a number of things that the council can do to mitigate the impact from the charges that people pay for receiving care services. Firstly, everyone who receives a care service from Brent has a financial assessment to

determine what they should pay towards their care – there is a clear principle that nobody should pay more towards their care than they can afford to. Secondly, the council will take into account disability related expenditure, and disregard legitimate expenditure where a person has little or no choice other than to incur the expenditure in order to maintain independence or quality of life. The council does all that it can to help people maximise their income, and social workers and care assessors play important roles in this, when explaining to people the process for receiving care and paying for care. And it is important to note that the changes to the charging policy are being implemented at a time when the council is investing in reablement and other important preventative services to keep people as independent as possible for as long as possible without requiring adult social care services.

3.1.3 The adoption and implementation of the revised adult social care charging policy will bring greater consistency and fairness to the policy, which will help the council continue to commission and provide good quality care services to the people of Brent.

3.2 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.2.1 The proposals in this report support the borough plan priority "A Healthier Brent". Having an up to date charging policy enables the council to raise the income required from charges for care services that enable social care services to remain sustainable and available to those that need them. In particular the policy supports outcome 1, Tackling Health Inequalities to "ensure all adults with care and support needs are able to access support and services and they are integrated with health, culturally competent and responsive to individual need".

3.3 Background

3.3.1 The Care Act 2014 gives local authorities discretionary powers to charge adult recipients for social care services provided. The basis of those charges varies depending on whether someone is receiving care in a care home or in their own home or in another setting. However, they share some common elements.

3.3.2 Section 14 of the Care Act 2014 states that a local authority may charge for meeting care needs and must follow the Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) regulations if it chooses to charge. Section 17 of the Care Act 2014 states that having determined that it will charge, the local authority must carry out a financial assessment to determine how much an individual should pay towards their care.

3.3.3 Brent Council, along with 30 other councils in London, charges service users for their social care services. The council's charging policy sets out the basis on which the council does this and reflects local needs. Councils have some discretion on the way they charge for care and Brent has a policy that includes discretionary elements within it.

3.3.4 Brent's Adult Social Care charging policy has not been fully reviewed and updated since 2016. Officers began the process of review ahead of the Government's plans to change the adult social care charging regulations, especially the introduction of a life-time care cap on service user contributions to the cost of their care and changes to the capital thresholds that would determine whether someone paid for their care in full. Even though the implementation of these changes is on hold until 2025, the review by officers uncovered a number of inconsistencies within the Brent charging policy and consequently the council is proposing a number of changes to the policy.

3.3.5 It is unfortunate that the implementation of the Government's reform to social care charging has been delayed. Fully funded charging reform for care services would have alleviated the need for Brent (and other councils) to review their existing policies and would give greater assurance to service users and their families on the contributions to their care during their lifetimes. As it is, the reforms will not be implemented until October 2025 at the earliest.

3.3.6 There are currently 4,335 people receiving social care services in Brent. Of these people, 2,069 do not make any contribution to their care costs, 2,266 people make a contribution based on their financial status. 358 people are self-funders, and pay for their care in its entirety, 88 in residential or nursing care and 270 people receiving homecare.

3.3.7 The charges that the council implements for its adult social care service are essential to ensure that the service remains sustainable in the years to come. Without the income from service user charges, the service would not be sustainable. Brent raises around £12m per year from charges for adult social care services; around £9m from those in residential and nursing care services and £3m a year from those receiving community based services, such as homecare. It is essential that there is a policy to provide a framework for charging, and that this is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

3.3.8 It was on this basis that a report was presented to Cabinet in October 2023 with a number of proposed changes to the policy. The proposed changes were significant and some would have an impact on all service users who make a contribution towards their care and support services. Others would affect a smaller number of people but given the scale of the change Cabinet agreed a public consultation should take place to inform people who use care services and seek their views on the proposed changes before a final decision is taken on their implementation.

3.4 **Consultation Details**

3.4.1 As agreed by Cabinet in October 2023, the council has run a public consultation on the proposed changes to the Adult Social Care charging policy. The consultation ran from 2nd November to 17th December 2023 and was focussed on the main changes to the policy, specifically –

- Reducing the discretionary personal allowance from 25% to 10% for those receiving non-residential or nursing care.

- Increasing the amount charged to service users if they do not participate or cooperate with their financial assessment.
- Increasing the hourly rate charged for homecare 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 placements.
- That an annual uplift is applied to the hourly rate charged for homecare in line with the increase given to providers, so that the charge continues to reflect the amount paid to providers on an hourly basis.
- Charging homecare service users for up to seven days after a hospital admission, to bring this into line with payments to care providers (who continue to be paid for up to seven days after a service user is admitted to hospital).
- Charging service users for 28 days after being admitted to hospital from a residential or nursing home. Providers are paid for up to 28 days, so it brings the charging policy into line with payments to providers.

3.4.2 A letter was sent to every adult social care service user to inform them of the consultation, and how they could give their feedback on the proposals. Separate letters were sent to self-funders receiving homecare services given the impact that the changes to the policy could have on this client group. Over 4,000 people received a letter about the consultation.

3.4.3 Feedback on the changes could be sent in writing, through the completion of an online survey on the Have Your Say page of the Brent Council website. There were two written responses and 50 online responses received to the survey in total. Additionally, seven consultation meetings were held during the consultation period – four organised with the Consultation and Engagement Team in Wembley, Kensal Green, Willesden and Harlesden, the Brent Disability Forum, a briefing with Brent Councillors and a meeting organised with the Brent Carers Centre that took place at Willesden Green Library. Around 75 people attended these meetings in total.

3.4.4 Officers also made contact with the Brent Carers Centre, Age UK Brent, Brent Mencap, Ashford Place, CVS Brent and Health Watch Brent to inform them of the consultation, and to offer to meet with their members / service users to discuss the consultation proposals. Representatives from these organisations attended one of the consultation meetings and the Brent Disability Forum.

3.4.5 The consultation questions and engagement plan were signed off by the Consultation Institute, who approved the approach the council used and undertook a mid-consultation review.

3.6 **Consultation Results**

3.6.1 Unsurprisingly with a consultation of this nature where people may have to pay more for care services depending on their personal circumstances, responses on the proposals were mixed. All of the proposed changes have some support, with the proposal to retain an enhanced minimum income guarantee and the change to the self-funder rates for homecare charges having the highest level of support from those who responded to the online

survey questions. A majority of people support retaining an enhanced Minimum Income Guarantee, which Brent would do even if it is reduced to 10% from 25%. There is less support for reducing this from April 2024, with more people preferring the reduction is phased in over two years to April 2026.

3.6.2 With regards to the proposals to charge people an average rate where their financial assessment could not be completed using a light touch approach and charging full cost if the assessment could not be completed within 28 days, around a third of respondents were in favour. There were similar responses to charges for people admitted to hospital whilst receiving homecare or in a residential or nursing placement.

3.6.3 The feedback from the events was generally more positive, or understanding, than that from the survey feedback. Having the opportunity to explain and discuss the changes with those who attended the consultation meetings was beneficial in helping to increase the understanding of the proposals, as well as make it clear that the individual changes will depend on the outcome of a new financial assessment. Those who attended the consultation events were also encouraged to complete the online survey so that their views could be included in the consultation outcomes more easily.

3.6.4 A summary of the online survey results is included at Appendix 1 to this report.

3.7 **Policy Proposals**

3.7.1 Based on the outcomes of the consultation survey and feedback received from the consultation meetings, it is clear that there is support for retaining an enhanced minimum income guarantee (a majority of people were in favour). Although the consultation did not ask specifically about removing the enhancement altogether, there is no rationale for doing so given the desire of the council to support vulnerable people in Brent and maximise incomes where possible. Retaining an enhanced minimum income guarantee, whilst reducing it to 10% both supports residents receiving social care services, and supports with keeping services sustainable whilst budgets are challenged and there is an increased demand for social care support in Brent.

3.7.2 Brent can deliver on its commitment to retain an enhanced minimum income guarantee, but officers are recommending that the change from 25% to 10% is made from April 2024 onwards. As explained to Cabinet in the report in October 2023 and also in the consultation materials and engagement events, the council will carry out a new financial assessment on all service users before confirming the amount people will pay towards their care. The council will support people to maximise their incomes, and there is also work happening to ensure people remain as independent as possible and to avoid the use of ongoing care where possible. There is not a strong enough argument for phasing in this change over a number of years, and in the main those who responded to the consultation who commented on this proposal opposed the change, rather than offering compelling reasons for phasing it in.

3.7.3 Assuming Cabinet is in agreement, the change to the enhanced minimum income guarantee from 25% to 10% will be implemented from 1st April 2024 and be applied to all financial assessments and client contributions to their adult social care services from that date. The council will apply a transition period for at least two months from April 2024 to give service users time to adapt to the new charges or raise requests for a new financial assessment with the council or consider additional disability related expenditure in their assessment. Full implementation will be from June 2024 onwards.

3.7.4 As set out above, there are 4,335 people receiving social care services in Brent. Of this number there are 3,597 receiving a community service of some kind, such as homecare, day care or a direct payment. People who currently make no contribution to their care will not be impacted by changes to the minimum income guarantee. This is because the council is keeping an enhanced minimum income guarantee – if someone doesn't contribute to their care now, the change will not result in an increase in their income to bring them up to a level where they contribute to their care.

3.7.5 The impact of the change will be felt by those people who already make a contribution to their care, but where that contribution is capped. Until each person undergoes a new financial assessment, the impact on each individual is difficult to quantify. But the likelihood is that the majority of people whose contribution to their care is capped will pay more for their care through the implementation of the 10% enhancement to the minimum income guarantee.

3.7.6 Brent Council is not aware of any other local authority that gives adult social care service users an enhancement to the Minimum Income Guarantee. Minimum Income Guarantee levels are set by Government and determine the minimum level of income a person should be left with after care costs and essential living costs, such as housing, are taken into account. Brent will still offer an enhanced Minimum Income Guarantee once the changes to the charging policy are implemented to protect to vulnerable service users from other cost of living challenges. But reducing this from 25% is unavoidable due to the need to make up shortfalls in funding for care services and the need to deliver a sustainable adult social care offer in future years.

3.7.7 As with the changes to the minimum income guarantee, the consultation has not given officers any compelling reason not to implement the changes to self-funder homecare rates from 1st April 2024. There is currently an inequality in the way care is paid for, with self-funders receiving a subsidy to their homecare costs that other service users do not receive. Care costs considerably more than £12.97 (the current rate paid by self-funders) to commission, and it is the right thing to do to increase the charge to each self-funder to the cost of commissioning care on their behalf. From April 2024, the contracted homecare rate and framework rate will be £21 per hour, with the spot rate to be confirmed.

3.7.8 From 1st April, officers are recommending that self-funders are charged the correct cost of care for their homecare service. Additionally, there should also be an inflationary uplift applied from 1st April of each year in line with the uplift

paid to care providers so that charges keep pace with the cost of commissioning care.

3.7.9 Self-funders, of whom there are 270 receiving homecare services, will be impacted by the change to the hourly rate for homecare. The changes to the minimum income guarantee will not impact this group, but they will pay more for each hour of care they receive that is commissioned by Brent Council. Again, each self-funder will have a new financial assessment and they will be informed of their new charges for care ahead of the new financial year.

3.7.10 It is appreciated that these changes will have a significant impact on self-funders, but there is no justification for continuing to subsidise care services for those who can afford to contribute most towards their care. Self-funders have in effect been receiving a subsidised service whilst the hourly rate charged for care has been less than the hourly rate paid to commission care. If a self-funder chooses to they could seek their own support elsewhere in the market. If they did this it is unlikely they would secure support for less than £21 an hour, the rate Brent will charge from April 2024. Self-funders also benefit from Brent's brokerage, contract management, quality assurance and oversight functions, that work with providers to ensure people in Brent receive good quality care. Although the council could, we do not charge an admin fee for these services. However, as proposed, the council will charge self-funders the full cost of their care from April 2024.

3.7.11 As with changes to the discretionary enhancement on the minimum income guarantee, a two month transition will take place to give self-funders an opportunity to request another financial assessment, look for care from alternative providers or to adjust to having to pay a higher cost for care. Full implementation will not happen before June 2024.

3.7.12 The other two changes consulted on relating to the financial assessment process and charges for admission to hospital, will have a minimal impact if implemented. However, it was important to consult on both as they help to bring greater consistency to the charging policy. Officers are recommending that the changes relating to both elements are implemented from April 2024 onwards.

3.7.13 On the financial assessment process, the vast majority of assessments are completed using a light touch methodology, as explained in the Cabinet report from October 2023. Only where this isn't possible will an average charge be levied on the service user whilst the assessment is completed. The council does this now, but officers would like to increase the rate to the average charge as of now (£32.52) per week, and to increase this on an annual basis to stay in line with the average weekly contribution. Similarly, where service users do not cooperate with the financial assessment, the policy will change to allow the council to make them full cost after 28 days. Safeguards will remain in place to support those who are unable to complete the assessment due to a physical or cognitive impairment.

3.7.14 The consultation hasn't produced a compelling reason not to make the changes to the financial assessment process from April 2024. Consequently, officers are recommending that the changes are implemented from April 2024, and the amendment to the average rate charged reviewed on an annual basis from now on.

3.7.15 For those people receiving homecare, the charges for care during hospital admission will also have little impact but the change brings consistency to the charging policy. Currently the council will only apply a credit to care charges if we are informed of a hospital admission. For people whose contribution is capped, unless the charges for care not received whilst in hospital are more than the capped amount paid by the client, then no credit is applied during an admission. By making it clear in the policy that service users will continue to pay for care for up to seven days on admission to hospital, this position is made clear for all service users.

3.7.16 There are 738 people in residential or nursing services. The impact on this group will be limited to the changes to charging for admission to hospital. Other proposed changes will have no impact on this group.

3.7.17 The change to charging for up to 28 days for hospital admissions will have minimal impact. The current policy, where people should be credited for hospital admissions, doesn't work in practice for many people. Unless the council is told about hospital admissions, and frequently we are not particularly where the admission is for a night or two, then a credit cannot be given for the duration of the admission. By making the change to the policy where people are charged during admissions for up to 28 days, the policy will be brought into line with current social care practice and payments to providers to keep residential and nursing beds open for residents to return to. Officers are recommending that the changes to the policy in relation to charges during hospital admissions are implemented from April 2024 onwards.

3.7.18 Officers are preparing for the implementation of the new policy (subject to Cabinet approval) including testing of changes to understand implications of the changes to the Minimum Income Guarantee and self-funder rates ahead of April 2024. Additional support will be offered to people, where needed, that are particularly impacted by the changes and members will be updated as the new policy is implemented.

3.7.19 Letters explaining the changes will be sent to all Adult Social Care service users in February 2024, assuming Cabinet approves these changes. A follow up letter will happen in line with year end before the end of March 2024, confirming the new charges for each service user from April 2024. A transition period up until at least June 2024 will be applied to give people the opportunity to speak to the council about the new charges, request a new financial assessment or to consider the application of further disability related expenses in their financial assessment.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 A public consultation on the changes to the Adult Social Policy took place from 2nd November to 17th December 2023. A summary of the results is included in this report at Appendix 1.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 The proposed changes to the charging policy are to bring it up to date, and to ensure greater consistency across the policy.

5.2 The Adult Social Care department is under growing pressure due to rising costs and increasing client numbers. The current challenging financial environment has seen rising costs across all areas of the Council. The proposed changes to the Adult Social Care charging policy would ensure that the charging policy is fit for purpose and allow the department to continue to operate efficiently.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 Now that the consultation process has concluded and EIA completed, members should familiarise themselves with the outcome and responses to the same. The recommended changes following the consultation remain legally sound.

6.2 Members should be satisfied that the consultation was a meaningful exercise, that those affected were given every opportunity to respond to the consultation, especially those with mobility and/or cognitive difficulties and that the views of those who did respond were taken into consideration in the final recommendations and final decision. This is to ensure that the local authority is able to robustly defend any challenges that may be brought when the changes come into effect.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 A full equalities impact assessment has been completed and focussed on the impact on disabled people, who will be affected by the proposed changes when implemented. As set out in the body of this report, any changes to charges people will pay for ASC services will be based on the outcomes of a new financial assessment and their ability to pay.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 A public consultation has taken place, and all Adult Social Care service users written to, to inform them of the proposed changes. Further communication with service users will take place once the proposed changes are agreed by

Cabinet, including a letter to be sent to all service users informing them of the change and a second letter before the start of the new financial year confirming individual charges from April 2024 onwards, with the new arrangements to take affect after that date.

Report sign off:

Rachel Crossley
Corporate Director for Care, Health and Wellbeing

Appendix 1 – Online Consultation Results

Minimum Income Guarantee

Do you agree with the proposal that Brent Council retains an enhanced minimum income guarantee? The minimum income guarantee is the minimum level of income which a person must be left with after care charges are deducted. For more information, please see the documents that accompany this consultation.

Yes – 62% (31 responses)
No – 34% (17 responses)
Don't know – 4% (2 responses)

Minimum Income Guarantee

By when should Brent move the enhanced minimum income guarantee to 10% above the required level

From April 2024 – 32% (13 responses)
From April 2025 – 7% (3 responses)
From April 2026 – 61% (25 responses)

Completing your financial assessment

Do you agree that the council should charge service users the full cost of their care service, if after 28 days of receiving care they have not co-operated with their financial assessment?

Yes – 31% (15 responses)
No – 69% (34 responses)

Completing your financial assessment

Do you support the proposal to charge people an average contribution of £32.52 per week if a light-touch financial assessment can't be completed, but the service user is working with the council on their financial assessment?

Yes – 35% (17 responses)
No – 65% (32 choices)

Homecare charges for self-funders

Do you agree that self-funders (those who can afford to pay the full cost of their care) should be charged the actual cost of their care? This would mean hourly charges increase to £21 an hour from April 2024.

Yes – 41% (19 responses)
No – 59% - (27 choices)

Homecare charges for self-funders

Do you agree that an annual inflation uplift should be applied to the cost of care for self-funders, inline with the increase paid to care providers?

Yes – 56% (24 choices)
No – 44% (19 choices)

Charges during admissions to hospital

Do you agree that services users should contribute to the cost of their homecare package for up to seven days if admitted to hospital, in order to ensure that the care package remains available on their discharge home?

Yes – 33% (16 responses)
No – 67% (33 responses)

Charges during admission to hospital
Do you agree that service users should contribute to the cost of their residential or nursing placement for up to 28 days if admitted to hospital, to ensure the placement remains open for them to be discharged back to?

Yes – 38% (18 responses)
No – 62% (29 responses)

	Cabinet 5 February 2024
	Interim Corporate Director Communities and Regeneration
	Lead Member - Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Public Protection (Councillor Harbi Farah)

Proposed Safer Brent – Community Safety Strategy

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1: Safer Brent - Community Safety Strategy 2024-2026 Appendix 2: Overarching -Safer Brent Action Plan 2024-2026
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Kibibi Octave, Director of Communities 020 8937 4255 Kibibi.octave@brent/gov.uk Simon Egbor, Head of Community Safety and Prevention 020 8937 5853 simon.egbor@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. This report presents the proposed Safer Brent – Community Safety Strategy and accompanying action plan for 2024 – 2026. The priorities for the plan were set by the Safer Brent Partnership. However, the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Public Protection, provided a strong steer to revise how these priorities should be addressed, by incorporating a Public Health, early intervention, preventative approach to reducing crime within Brent. The strategy has been re-designed to reflect this and in consultation with our communities,

partners and stakeholders. The strategy has incorporated recommendations made by Scrutiny.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet approves the Safer Brent - Community Safety Strategy, and Action Plan.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 This strategy sits under the Borough Plan priority of “Thriving Communities”. The Borough Plan tells us, safety should be the most important priority for the council. And gives a commitment to work hard to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The Borough Plan states that prevention is essential in tackling the causes of crime. In it we have we have told our residents that we will help people leave criminal lifestyles, pursue justice for victims, work with our communities to build trust, prevent criminality and improve our response to crime. The proposed Safer Brent – Community Safety Strategy aims to deliver on all of the above.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 The Safer Brent Partnership (SBP), is a statutory board, more generically known as a Community Safety Partnership. These partnerships were established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with the aim of creating “an alliance of organisations which generates strategies and policies, implement actions and interventions concerning crime and disorder within their partnership area”.

3.2.2 The Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy and accompanying action plan is part of their work. This proposed strategy was approved for onward sign – off at the SBP’s July board meeting.

3.2.3 The strategy identifies 4 Priorities these are:

- Tackling Violent Crime
- Challenging Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls
- Focus on Incidents Impacting Our Community
- Protecting Those Most Vulnerable

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Following a strategic assessment exercise, community groups were consulted, including dedicated focus groups, presentations at various delivery groups and boards, as well as Brent Connects community meetings.

- Online consultation – 96 respondents

- Member consultation online event – x2
- Focus Groups – Pupil Referral Units (staff), New Beginnings – (Service Users) Group, College of North West London – (Students), Brent LBGTQ+ Network (chair and co-chair), Brent Multi – Faith Forum, Al Saddiiq Cultural Centre (Users)
- Brent Connects Meetings x4
- Safeguarding Children's Board
- Scrutiny Committee

4.2 The strategy was presented to senior managers on 27 September 2023 who recommended that Public Health leads again review the strategy which has been completed. Further revisions were also recommended to the graphics and text of the strategy and the implementation date to commence from 2024 to 2026 as opposed to 2023.

4.3 A final review of the strategy and action plan was held with the newly appointed Chair of SBP and related members on 18 December 2023.

4.4 The strategy was also presented to senior managers and lead members on 24 January 2024 with it recommended the strategic action plan activity around bleed kit training should sit with one delivery board. This will now fall under priority, tacking violent crime and will be omitted under the priority protecting the most vulnerable.

4.5 Under the strategic action plan priority on focusing on incidents impacting our community, (Prevention, Reduction and Public Confidence) a recommendation was also made that the wording under the measure is changed from harder to engage, to seldom engaged.

4.6 A further amendment will also be made on page 11 relating to the installation of knife bins.

4.7 Following consideration by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2024 a recommendation was also made that the priority around tacking violent crime should have a specific emphasis on knife crime due to the spike locally and nationally. It was agreed to reword the priority to, tackling violent crime with a specific focus on knife crime.

4.8 Due to time limitations, these changes could not be made before the submission deadline of this report to Cabinet but all of the above recommendations will be implemented before the strategy is published.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 No additional resource has been identified to deliver this strategy. The majority of activity earmarked to tackle crime and support victims and offenders is funded by external grants.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The strategy supports expectations under Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Prevent Duty 2015, Serious Violence Duty 2022, and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. Creates a duty imposed on an authority to do all it reasonably can to prevent serious violence in its area

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation

7.2 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation

7.3 Given that the strategy incorporates requirements of, in particular, the Prevent Duty and the Serious Violence Duty, whilst interventions aim to be supportive, rather than punitive, concerns may be raised that activity disproportionality impacts individuals from BAME backgrounds.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 The council has adopted an existing Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, due to be reviewed every two years, which focuses on the direct impacts of climate change within the borough boundary (flooding, extreme heat, drought and water shortages, extreme cold). No negative climate change or environmental considerations have been identified at this stage in terms of rolling out this strategy.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 The Community Safety and Prevention Team is made up of 30 staff, with 27 grant funded roles, across 4 teams with very distinct areas of work. These are:

- Rescue and Response, the Pan – London Team set up to respond to county lines exploitation.
- The Prevent Team, who delivery objectives to meet our Prevent duty and related counter – terrorism response measures,
- The Homes for Ukraine Team, helping those migrating from areas of conflict and,

- The Core Community Safety Team

9.2 The proposed Safer Brent – Community Safety Strategy, with the exception of the ASB and CCTV Team, in Regeneration, is largely reliant on delivery undertaken by the Core Community Safety Team, in the Communities Directorate. This is a relatively small team with only 3 core funded posts. The remainder of the roles are grant funded and this has an impact on staff retention and continuity of service.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no direct communications implications following this paper. However, going forwards, delivery of the accompanying action plan presents an opportunity to highlight success stories.

Report sign off:

Alice Lester
Interim Corporate Director of Communities and Regeneration

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SAFER BRENT

Community Safety Strategy 2024-2026







Brent

Welcome

It is our pleasure to introduce the Safer Brent-Community Safety Strategy, 2024-2026. This Strategy gives an overview of our key priorities as a partnership. We aim to draw on our shared commitment to keeping residents safe, understand the underlying drivers of crime, address concerns and improve safety in the borough.

Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Public Protection, I am passionate that Brent should be a place where residents and visitors can feel safe. I am proud of our achievements so far but recognise there is always more we can do. I am absolutely resolute that Brent should be ambitious, tackling community safety issues with innovation and pushing hard to stay ahead of the curve.

Over the next 3 years I am committed to ensuring that our 'Public Health' preventative approach, is embedded across every strand of our work. We need to act earlier, smarter and more proactively to tackle crime and disorder, as well as protecting the most vulnerable. This means we will seek prevention at all costs, intervene earlier, interrupt negative cycles and disrupt escalating activity. We will continue to work collaboratively at all levels, with our partners in Police, Health, Probation, London Fire Brigade and the voluntary sector to achieve these aims.

We want to listen to the voices of survivors to help refine and shape our approach; and do more to protect our young people from a life of crime and exploitation. Our cohesive community is a reflection of our great strength. We possess a resilience against adversity that I am extremely proud of and collectively I am certain we can make Brent a safer place for all.



Lead Member
Councillor Harbi Farah,
Cabinet Member for
Safer Communities
and Public Protection

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Introduction

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities, to work together with Partners to develop and implement localised crime reduction strategies for their areas. In addition, we now have the Serious Violence Duty expectations, which is overseen by the Safer Brent Partnership (SBP). The SBP works together to prevent and reduce crime and disorder and improve cohesion and safety within neighbourhoods.

The SBP has undertaken a strategic threat assessment which informed the Partnership about the types of crime and antisocial behaviour we need to focus on in Brent. The findings of that assessment has informed this strategy by outlining local challenges and the areas of work we need to prioritise for the next three years.

We will continue to assess threat in Brent on an annual basis, improving and developing our response. We will also obtain insight from key stakeholders, such as the Mayor's Office for Crime and Policing (MOPAC) and align any shared priorities.

Mayor's Office of Police and Crime (MOPAC)
The Mayor of London has published his plan for policing and crime to keep Londoners safe and also ensure they feel safer. Visit the London's Police and Crime Plan 2022-25 | London City Hall for details.

The four key themes are;

- Reducing and preventing violence
- Increasing trust and confidence
- Better supporting for victims
- Protecting people from being exploited or harmed

Violence Reduction Unit
MOPAC also hosts London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). This is a team of specialists leading and advising on crime reduction for London. The team have specialisms in various areas, including local government, health, policing, education, communities and youth services. The VRU fund local authorities and key partners to support violence reduction activities in targeted areas. Brent is a beneficiary of this funding.

Working with communities
We recognise the most important voices are those of the Brent community. Central to our approach is listening to communities with lived experience, taking on board recommendations and being responsive to concerns. It is the diverse communities of Brent that will help shape our 'Public Health', early intervention approach. Identifying the underlying causes of crime, in particular, those that are impacting 'some' young people. We will also work with communities to protect the most vulnerable, especially those who are being physically or financially abused and those being coerced into a life of crime and exploitation. We will continue to use a variety of methods to involve our communities in the planning and delivery of our work.

Key data

The London Borough of Brent has a population of around 339,800 making it the 5th largest London Borough (ONS, 2021 Census). The population grew by 28,600 between 2011-21, a rise of 9%. Further growth is expected: the latest projections [2] suggest the population could grow between 14%-22% in the next twenty years (2021-2041). Around 56% of Brent residents were born outside the UK[3] and at least 149 languages are spoken locally. Around 65% of residents are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and Brent is home to over 74,000 EU citizens[4]. We are very much a borough rich in diversity and cultures.

The health, education and wellbeing of young people in the borough is aligned to our statutory duty and our aim to reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion. In Brent there are around 28,400 young people 13-19 (8% of the Brent population). Around 22% of children live in Poverty (rising to 43% where housing costs are also considered). On average Brent pupils attain grade C in each of their three A Level Subjects (equal to London and National averages). 38/10,000 children in Brent are in Care, for England the average is 67/10,000 children are in care.

The borough recognises the climate and ecological emergency we are facing and is actively working to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030. The steps we plan to take are outlined within the local strategy and annual delivery plan.

Brent is proud of its diverse and inclusive workforce and also our unique multicultural community. We will strive to ensure that our workforce is culturally competent, aware of any unconscious bias and fully equipped to serve all communities.

[1] 2021 Census first release - Brent summary - Final AV.pdf

[2] Greater London Authority projections (2021-based interim projections, housing-led model).

[3] ONS, 2021 Census (TS012)

[4] ONS, 2021 Census (TS013), Note: Statistic relates to number of residents with EU passports.

Safer Brent Priorities 2024-2026

When developing our priorities, we consulted with stakeholders, including members of the community, to provide solutions to reduce crime and make Brent a safe place to live, work and visit. Participants were also asked **how communities can work together** to tackle safety concerns, with some of the most popular suggestions below;

"You told Us"



Our Priorities

After listening to the community and analysing our most pressing needs, the Safer Brent Partnership (SBP) agreed that Safer Brent Strategy will focus on four priority areas;

1. **Tackling violent crime.**
2. **Challenging domestic abuse, sexual abuse and prevent violence against women and girls.**
3. **Focus on incidents impacting our community.**
4. **Protecting those most vulnerable.**



PRIORITY

Tackling violent crime



WE NEED TO

Keeping our streets safe, reducing risks and threats to our community.

FOCUS ON

- Focus on serious violence
- Preventing reoffending
- Challenging prolific offenders



PRIORITY

Challenging domestic abuse, sexual abuse and preventing violence against women and girls

WE NEED TO

Prioritize safety and protection for victims/ survivors of abuse, to be safe at home and in our streets.

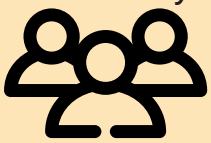
FOCUS ON

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Violence against women and girls



PRIORITY

Focus on incidents impacting our community



WE NEED TO

Empower communities, building strength and resilience.

FOCUS ON

- Antisocial behaviour
- Serious incidents, criminal exploitation (gang) exit and support
- Hate crime



PRIORITY

Protecting those most vulnerable



WE NEED TO

Support those at risk and vulnerable to exploitation. Protect victims of crime.

FOCUS ON

- Victims of crime (including exploitation and county lines)
- Prevent (radicalisation and extremism)
- Safeguarding (community multi agency risk assessment conference)

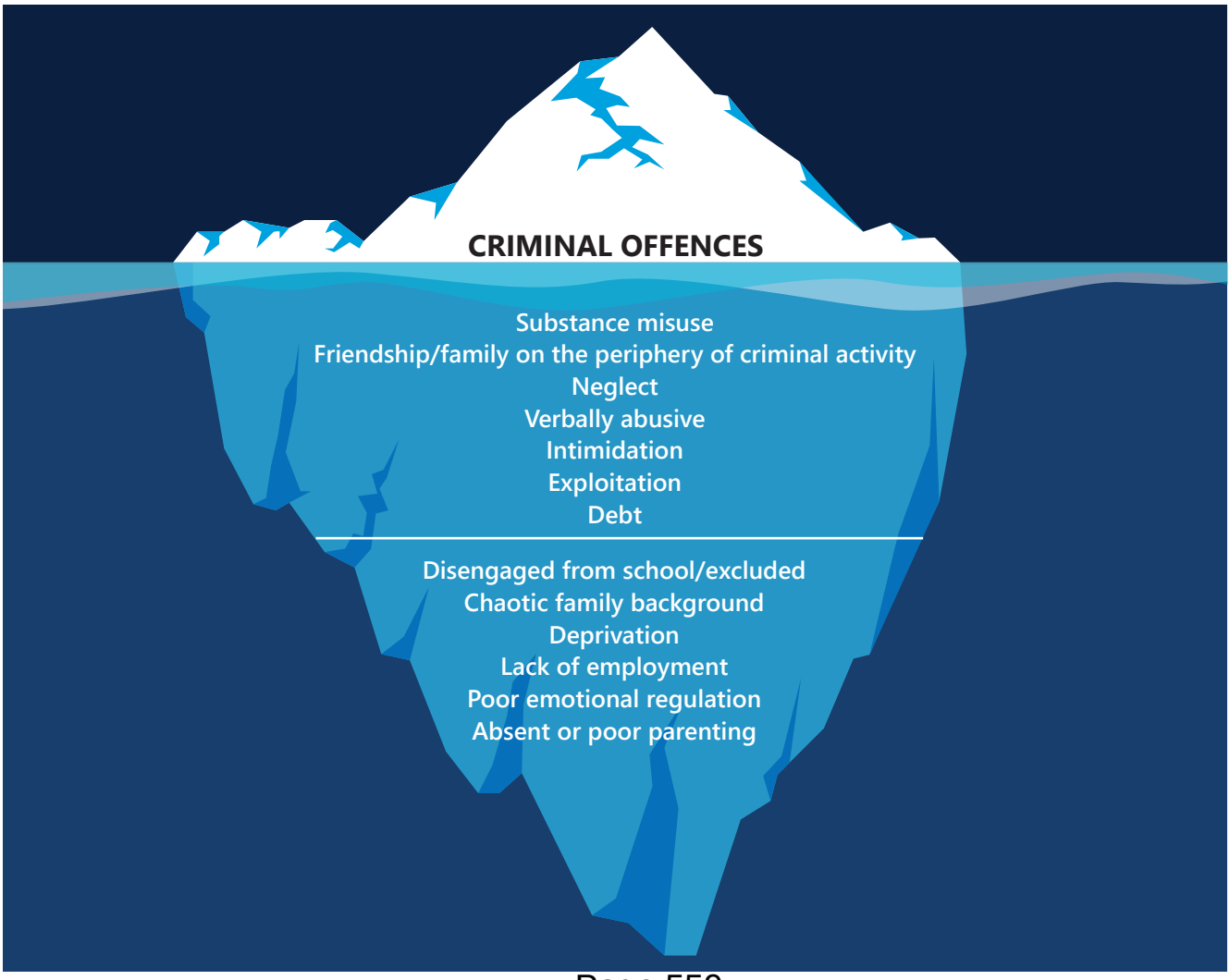
Our Priorities will be supported by action plans to track how issues will be addressed. Work will be co-ordinated and overseen by multi-agency sub-groups who will identify responses to address each priority.

Our Public Health Approach to Community Safety

Our 'public health approach' is all about intervening earlier, by identifying wider support needs as soon as possible to prevent escalation into violent crime. Research suggests that a person's exposure to **poverty, domestic violence, a lack of parental support, lack of education, or significantly disrupted education**, can indicate a greater likelihood of individuals becoming entrenched in criminal activity.

In Brent, we are concerned about all of these issues and aim to tackle concerns earlier and in a holistic, inter – agency way. We will work with partners to identify more opportunities to intervene and extend support; building protective factors such as, **mentoring, counselling, substance misuse outreach services and employment opportunities**.

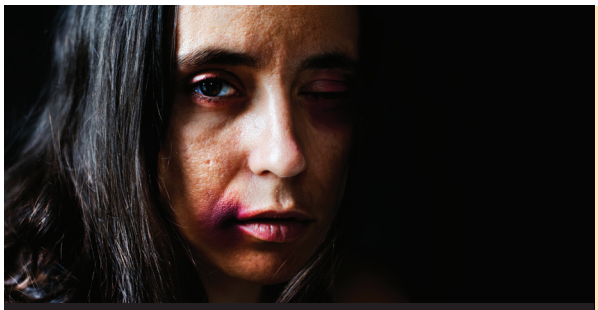
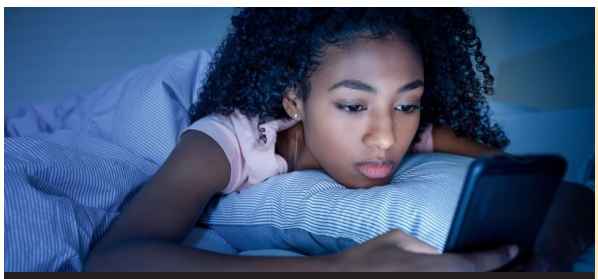
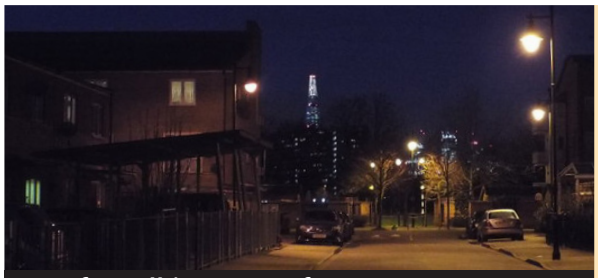
It's all about agencies working together to support a shared vision. Much of this work already exists in Brent through the multi-agency offer we provide through our 'Exploitation Violence and Vulnerability Panel' and 'Integrated Offender Management' scheme, but there is always more we can do to deliver on our 'Public Health' commitment and improve the lives of those who have had a difficult start.

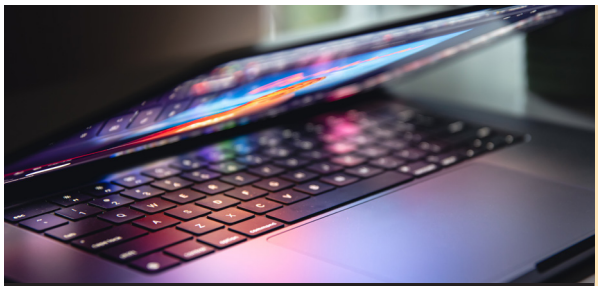


"You Said- Early Intervention and Prevention Is.."

Consultation findings

Following a period of engagement through focus groups with service users, surveys and reviews. The headline concerns and suggestions for early intervention and prevention helped to shape how we address our priorities; these were:

WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CONCERNS?	WHAT CAN BE DONE, TO HELP?
 Violence against women and girls.	Access to mentoring and awareness raising programmes for young people.
 Gang violence and exploitation.	Mentoring and educational programmes for young people explaining exploitation and the consequences of violence.
 Increase in use of social media negatively influencing young people.	Support packages and resources for parents on how to educate and safeguard children e.g., family/ parent champions. Information provided to parents and carers to identify new and emerging online trends that affect young people.
 Unsafe walking areas for young and older people.	Increased patrols and public facing community events. Create location based Contextual Safeguarding Action Plans.

WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CONCERNS?	WHAT CAN BE DONE, TO HELP?
 Knife crime.	Instillation of knife bins, amnesty weeks and regular weapon sweeps
 Anti-social behaviour including Street drinking and illicit drug taking in public areas.	More severe consequences for those convicted of anti-social behaviour and environmental issues.
 Street robberies.	Increased CCTV, proactive patrols and street lighting.
 Illegal businesses acting as “fronts” for organised gangs.	Better response times from enforcement agencies including the Police and Local Authority. Working more closely with Police Gangs Units to disrupt activity.
 Increase in mental health crisis amongst young people and related criminal exploitation.	Diversionary programmes where young people can better understand criminal exploitation, healthy relationships, substance misuse and their own well-being. Increase in support from our Health Partners and commissioned services, including support in the Transitional Safeguarding space.

Tackling our priorities

Much of the activity identified in our priorities will have overlaps. We will take every opportunity to understand these concerns and work to raise awareness of harms in schools and community settings, intervening earlier.

Priority 1 - Tackling violent crime

- Focus on serious violence
- Preventing reoffending
- Challenging prolific offenders

Serious Violence

In recent years, gang and serious offending has been primarily linked to **drug markets**, distribution through **county lines, violent incidents and exploitation of vulnerable people**. High harm gang offending is dynamic and activity quickly diversifies, so it's important that we continue to monitor crime trends, particularly for sudden spikes. We will monitor crimes committed by multiple offenders, also crimes committed by those who we would consider vulnerable to exploitation.

We are concerned by the supply of drugs being a major activity for criminal groups and gangs in Brent. Open drugs markets are high risk and often lead to an increase in violence, mainly due to transaction disputes and drug patch competition. We recognise that this activity not only impacts those directly involved, but also increases the fear of crime and associated anti-social behaviour within communities.

Although, we are pleased to have seen an overall reduction in gang related offending, when incidents occur, these offenses cause some of the highest harm to our communities. We aim to be **ahead of the curve** by, **engaging with communities** on this issue, being open about our concerns, encourage **early reporting**, promote **diversionary activities** and opportunities. And where activity is dangerous and persistent, use all of our powers to disrupt activity and bring prolific offenders to justice.

The peak age range for knife crime victims is between 18 and 24 years old. This age group is over-represented compared to the borough population as of the Census 2021 data.



Preventing reoffending
Integrated Offender Management
London Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme introduced a managing persistent and violent offender's framework that came into effect in February 2021. These prolific offenders cause harm to communities and individuals, and cost London taxpayers the equivalent of £2.2 billion a year in criminal justice costs alone. We know that it takes targeted and specific support for individuals to break the cycle of reoffending. Many prolific offenders are over 25 years of age and are stuck in a cycle, requiring intensive intervention to bring about a change in behaviour.

We will continue to use a **trauma informed approach** to the delivery of our support, this enables professionals to consider wider risks and historic personal trauma. In addition, we recognise there may be multiple barriers to engagement, including wider vulnerabilities such as substance misuse and homelessness which we will attempt to address in collaboration with our Partners in Health and Housing.

Priority 2 - Challenging domestic, sexual abuse and preventing violence against women and girls

- Domestic Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Violence Against Women and Girls

Domestic abuse
Domestic abuse continues to be a significant concern in Brent and a crime which we believe is under reported. This pattern of behaviour seeks to deliberately create fear and control and can have long lasting impacts, in particular for children who witness abuse in the home.

As a borough we have learnt lessons from the tragic deaths of victims of domestic abuse, by undertaking comprehensive Domestic Homicide Reviews and learning lessons from their findings.

We will continue to commission specialist support to victims/survivors of domestic abuse to access the services needed to rebuild their lives. We will also commission services to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to help deconstruct negative and violent patterns of behaviour.

Sexual abuse
Sexual assault, rape and abuse can happen suddenly and requires specialist support to be offered to the victim. In the first instance that may be physical or medical support, but we know that practical and emotional support is of equal importance. We will continue to work with Partners and commissioned services to be responsive to the needs of victims.

Violence against women and girls
Recent and tragic fatal attacks, gaining national attention, have rightly raised the profile of violence against women and girls and there is a clear need to raise awareness in this area. Unacceptable behaviours such as stalking, harassment, whether in person or online, cat-calling and unwanted attention have no place in our society. We will do more to campaign against such behaviours and raise awareness is schools, colleges, the business sector and community settings. We want to **empower allies** to intervene and disrupt these behaviours at an earlier stage, promoting a **zero tolerance** approach to all violence against women and girls.

Priority 3 – Focusing on incidents impacting our community

- Antisocial Behaviour
- Serious Incidents, criminal exploitation (gang) exit and support
- Hate crime

Anti-social behaviour (including low-level crime and nuisance)
Antisocial behaviour (ASB) is defined as 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person'. There are three main categories for antisocial behaviour, depending on what the

impact is or how many people are affected:

1. Environmental ASB - when a person's actions affect the wider environment, such as public spaces or buildings.
2. Nuisance ASB - when a person causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community.
3. Personal ASB - when a person targets a specific individual or group.

The council's approach to tackling ASB is to engage with perpetrators in the first instance, issue warnings where appropriate and explore informal interventions such as issuing fixed penalty notices (FPN's) to change behaviour. We also look at referral pathways to other support services where relevant for those with vulnerabilities and complex needs.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 a range of tools and powers are at the council's disposal to enforce against individuals who meet the threshold. These are as follows:

- Civil injunctions
- Criminal behaviour orders
- Dispersal powers
- Community protection notice / fixed penalty notice
- Public space protection orders (PSPO's)
- Closure powers
- Absolute grounds for possession
- Community trigger

Environmental ASB

We know that ASB and persistent 'hotspots' near or adjacent to town centres, experience issues such as street drinking, illicit drug activity, graffiti and fly tipping, having a detrimental impact on residents, businesses and visitors to the borough. Many of these difficult groups or individuals are impacted by mental health or substance misuse issues. Repeat offenders are often vulnerable and therefore we try not to utilise compliance and enforcement measures in isolation.

Our renewed strategy to tackling Environmental ASB includes the implementation of a joint programme of regular and more frequent on-street enforcement in hotspot areas to address poor behaviours. This programme of multiagency operations involves a collaborative effort by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Neighbourhood Management, Environmental Enforcement, Neighbourhood Police teams and Public Health Commissioned Providers such as the Westminster Drug Project and St Mungo's to ensure a greater emphasis on dealing with these issues in a more joined up and holistic manner. We have increased our menu of options under our new PSPO Strategy and will proactively use these to tackle ASB issues.

Public space protection orders (PSPO's)

To provide the council with the appropriate tools and measures needed to tackle ASB, the 'Boroughwide, Wembley Park and Parks and Open Spaces' PSPO was implemented on 1 February 2023 and remains in effect until 31 January 2026. This new PSPO includes increased prohibitions to tackle drug activity, littering, street drinking, street trading and other behaviours which, in turn will widen our scope of enforcement powers where it is needed and address issues affecting residents and businesses the most. A full list of all current PSPO's and prohibitions can be seen at Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) | Brent Council

PSPO's are enforced by the council's Neighbourhood Patrol Team and we also plan to increase our pool of enforcement utilising council enforcement officers across all Resident Services. We have also set up an enforcement protocol with Brent police who will police these orders on the council's behalf.

The council initially introduced PSPOs to deal with Nuisance Vehicles, increasing options to tackle dangerous and inconsiderate use of

vehicles and damage caused to our pavements, highways infrastructure.

We will continue to use Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) for repeat offenders who are linked to more serious ASB and crime, banning them from open spaces. And promote that a breach of a CBO could lead to a custodial sentence.repeat offenders linked to more serious ASB and crime, banning them from open spaces. A breach of a CBO could lead to a custodial sentence.

Nuisance and personal ASB

Neighbour disputes, drugs use / dealing, localised street drinking and harassment have been the highest category of nuisance reported to the council since 2020. Complaints of neighbour noise and nuisance premises have been especially prevalent in social housing estates, private rented accommodation and houses with multiple occupancy. The pandemic has also resulted in lifestyle changes that are considered to have contributed to this growing problem with more people working from or residing longer at home.

We recognise that engagement with communities at a local level in partnership with other council departments and the police, particularly in areas where there has been reduced contact from the community, should form a key part of what we do to understand local issues and local needs. We are therefore committed to delivering more proactive local engagement with partners to inform and target our efforts to tackle community nuisance.

The issue of 'Cuckooing' is also a persistent issue in Brent. Cuckooing is the practice of taking over the home of a vulnerable person to establish a base for illegal drug dealing or drug activity. These issues in Brent mainly occur in council owned homes or Housing Association properties due to a higher proportion of vulnerable clients living in Social Housing. As a response, the council is developing a joint Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and response which is expected to be approved in 2023 with Brent Housing Management who manage approximately 8000 Council Homes and 4000 leaseholds to ensure a uniform service is provided to our residents within the private and social housing sector.

Personal ASB is a high priority issue in Brent and the policy allows for a greater use of Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA's) Community Projection Warning (CPW's), Community Protection Notices (CPN's) and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN,s) on breaches, to target nuisance premisses and to be the catalyst for escalated housing enforcement action such as injunctions, notice to seek possession and absolute grounds for repossessing those properties, where the threshold is met.

We have also created a service level expectation protocol with Registered Providers with large housing stocks in the borough not owned or managed by the Council with a greater focus on tenancy management under the Housing Act to deal with anti-social tenants.

We are also committed to increasing our use of warnings, ABA's CPW's, CPN's over the next few years and expanding the service expectation with more social and private landlords in Brent. We will also be working with housing providers to design out anti-social behaviour and crime on estates and we are looking to develop future outreach, engagement and education initiatives that connect more with our communities to influence, prevent and deter nuisance behaviour.

We also plan to increase our use of partial closure orders, restricting 3rd parties from gaining access to properties which house vulnerable tenants and full closure orders restricting vulnerable tenants and 3rd parties being exploited, harassed and 'cuckooed' and this will often form the catalyst for review of those tenancies and possible relocation to supported housing in or out of the borough.

To deal with the cycle of reoffending involving individuals with mental health and substance misuse issues, we are committed to providing a vulnerability centred approach, signposting as a first option to support services such as mental health, adult social care or substance

misuse services. Where individuals do not meet the threshold to access those services, we will support these individuals through our Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference approach (Community MARAC.)

The Community Trigger under the Anti-Social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides victims of anti-social behavior with the ability to demand action and a case review where persistently reported problems have not been addressed. The trigger is open to all Brent residents of all ages and is not tenure specific. Complainants can be an individual, business or community group and another person such as a family member, Councillor or Member of Parliament can act on behalf of the victim. We will maintain our commitment to reviewing and taking appropriate actions for all applications of the Community Trigger that we receive.

CCTV

The council's CCTV Control Room monitors over 300 fixed or re-deployable cameras. The primary function of council CCTV is to support officers and police in maintaining public safety and security alongside its other functions . The service operates 24/7 other than for a short period of a few hours in the early mornings when it closes.

CCTV has proven a key tool in detecting or preventing crime and nuisance in addition to ensuring public safety and the council will continue to invest in advanced equipment as well as additional mobile CCTV cameras to support our fixed CCTV infrastructure, thereby enabling the rapid deployment of CCTV to where it is needed most to monitor emerging problems. We use an intelligence led approach to map hotspots, based on complaint and reports to the council and police. This informs our on-street multi agency operations and one of our key aims over the next few years will be to provide a greater coverage in ASB hotspots to improve public safety and support the police and officers in their activities

As surveillance technology is constantly evolving, we will look at further opportunities to modify our service alongside smart technology such as ANPR cameras to, capture vehicle registration numbers of nuisance vehicles. This includes the use of automation and artificial intelligence software to assist staff in delivering a more efficient and resilient service.

Community engagement

We recognise that many areas of the community either do not engage or are underrepresented when it comes to ASB, nuisance and low-level crime and we are committed to taking more steps to actively engage with communities to identify issues in areas where we receive very few reports. We aim to ensure that the 'silent victims' in our communities can confidently engage with us to ensure that our activities and areas of focus are appropriate. We aim to improve our engagement through increased proactive engagement as well as analysis of crime data and making access easier and more secure for those who traditionally will not engage because they are unaware of the support we offer or out of fear of reprisal.

To support this approach Brent has launched an Online Watch Link Scheme (OWL) with the police. This provides an online platform for residents who sign up, to be provided with localised information on our joint police and council outcomes in tackling anti-social behaviour. It also gives residents and businesses the platform to build watch schemes in their localities. We are committed to supporting the development of resident and business led watch schemes and increasing resident sign up to OWL over the next few years.

Summary

The council's historical position to tackle anti-social behaviour, nuisance and low-level crime was to utilise the standalone service of Community Protection to achieve this. We will now be adopting a more holistic partnership strategy, using a wider pool of officers across a wide range of partner services, commissioned providers or 3rd sector organisations to

ensure a more joined up partnership focused on delivering an excellent service for Brent residents. This includes more local engagement, proactive and targeted activities and better use of CCTV technology to improve the quality of life for all Brent residents as well as businesses and visitors.

Serious incidents, criminal exploitation (Gang) exit and support

Much of this work has overlaps with Priority 1 - "Tackling Serious Violence". However, we know that when we don't understand or address tensions within our community, serious incidents can occur.

When a serious incident takes place, much of the activity is led by our Policing Partners to apprehend perpetrators and bring them swiftly to justice. However, we are aware that the impact of a serious incident can leave a ripple effect within communities, causing fear for their ongoing safety.

After a serious incident has taken place, we will work swiftly with Partners to understand the impact on communities. Working with key stakeholders, such as Housing, Youth based organisations and Safer Neighbourhood Teams to draw up localised action plans to mitigate tensions and supress violence. Where appropriate, will extend interventions and diversionary support to individuals.

Hate crime

Brent is a diverse borough that welcomes people from all over the world and one value that unites us is that we do not tolerate any division in our communities, or disruptive activity that would seek to divide us. Brent is unique in terms of its community cohesion and this is something we will aim to prioritise and protect.

Hate incidents happen because of hostility or prejudice based on the Equality Act's - '9 protected characteristics. Age, Disability, Gender Re-assignment, Marriage of Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

We encourage all hate crime to be reported and will increase our awareness campaigns. And where people are identified as victims, we will extend a multi – agency response to support individuals.

Protecting those most vulnerable

- Victims of Crime (including exploitation and county lines)
- Prevent (Radicalisation and extremism)
- Safeguarding (Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

Victims of crime (including exploitation and county lines)

We are committed to supporting victims of crime, in particular, those who are being routinely targeted by criminals. We are concerned for the most vulnerable in our community, including the elderly who are being financial abused and threatened. And those whose homes are being taken over to host criminal activity. We are also concerned for our young people, coerced and exploited into criminal activity, hiding weapons or couriering drugs. We understand that when individuals are being exploited it is difficult to ask for help. We will work with multi-agency partners to offer training and host awareness raising activities, so that professionals and the community can identify different forms of exploitation. We will also strengthen our reporting and referrals pathways so that individuals can be supported earlier.

Prevent (radicalisation and extremism)

Prevent aims to stop people from engaging in terrorist activity or supporting terrorism. It's about early intervention to protect and divert people away from activity before serious illegality occurs.

Local Authorities have a duty to safeguard young people and adults at risk of radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism. Work undertaken is extended to individuals predominantly through the Channel Programme. This programme uses a multi-

agency approach to protect, divert and support those at risk. In Brent, delivery of Prevent is locally led and driven by analysis of the threat. We will continue to work closely with communities to understand their concerns about radicalisation and all forms of extremism. Extending support, advice and training according to need.

Safeguarding (Community multi agency risk assessment conference)

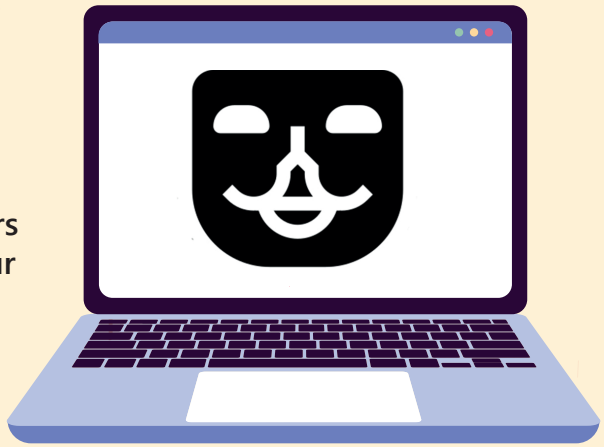
Community Safety works closely with Adult and Children's Safeguarding leads to address shared concerns, particularly for those more vulnerable individuals known to our services.

Our Brent Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) reviews cases of extremely vulnerable and high-risk individuals, whose personal safety has become a concern. An individualized risk management plan is put in place to reduce concerns, including repeat victimization. The process improves inter – agency accountability of professionals supporting individuals.

EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALS THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY THE MARAC ARE



Victims or perpetrators of antisocial behaviour



Victims of hate crime



At risk of fire related incidents



At risk of financial abuse or fraud



At risk of homelessness or difficulties maintaining their property

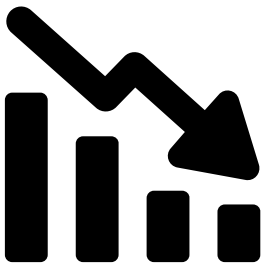
Measuring Impact



Identify



Disrupt



Prevent and Reduce



Protect and Support

The Safer Brent Partnership has drafted an overarching action plan with key benchmarks to support each of our agreed priorities (see Annex), incorporating our early intervention, Public Health approach. And we will undertake ongoing analysis of each priority by monitoring separate delivery plans from the following:

1. Violence & Vulnerabilities Delivery Group
2. Domestic Abuse and VAWG Delivery Group
3. Prevent Oversight Board
4. Brent Drug and Alcohol Partnership
5. ASB & CCTV Delivery Group
6. Youth Justice Service Management Board
7. Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group

We hope our plans offer a snapshot into the wider work we are doing to reduce crime and drive change.

We are always happy to hear your thoughts on how we could improve our approach. Communities remain a key partner and are important to all of the work we do.

Please contact us on
Community.safety@brent.gov.uk

Brent

Image of Unity Place on front cover
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OVERARCHING-
SAFER BRENT ACTION PLAN
2024-2026







Brent

1. Tackling violent crime	Keeping our streets safe, reducing risks and threats to our community.	• Focus on Serious Violence • Preventing reoffending • Challenging Prolific Offenders	Delivery Owners:
Method	**Measure**	**Output/Outcome**	
Reduction	Aim to be below the London borough average for violence with injury.	Police recorded offences for Violence With Injury. Swift action taken to bring perpetrators to justice.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: ASB and CCTV Delivery Group
Reduction	Aim to be below the London borough average for robbery of personal property.	Police recorded offences for robbery of personal property. Swift action taken to bring perpetrators to justice.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: ASB and CCTV Delivery Group
Prevention and public confidence	Bleed Kit training delivered to voluntary sector orgs and community champions.	Community togetherness fostered. Reduction in life threatening and life limiting injuries.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group
Early intervention, prevention, reduction	Set up a Violence Reduction Steering Group to advise and agree on prevention-based actions and activities.	Work with partners, including the voluntary sector, to co-design programmes and activities to address violent crime within our community and prevent exploitation and harm. Reduction in knife and lethal weapon carrying.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group
Early intervention and prevention	Set up a "Roundtable – Youth Justice Project" to provide a better understanding of crime and exploitation impacting young people.	Young people known to the Youth Justice Service have the opportunity to have their voices heard. Local councillors, Police and young people, have the opportunity to improve dialogue and utilise feedback to improve services. Participation will also count towards a young persons' reparation hours and complement a restorative justice approach.	Youth Justice Management Board

2. Challenging Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls	**Prioritize Safety and Protection for victims / survivors of abuse, to be safe at home and in our streets**	**• Domestic Abuse • Sexual Abuse • Violence Against Women and Girls**	**Delivery Owners:**
Method	**Measure**	**Output/Outcome**	
Reduction	Reduce the number of Violence with Injury Domestic abuse offences	Police recorded offences where the victim and suspects are intimate partners or are family members, are reported to the police and flagged as a domestic incident.	Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group
Early Intervention	Information sharing between Police and Schools where a child has experienced a domestic abuse incident is captured.	Operation Encompass – Swift support extended to children affected by domestic abuse. And better awareness and training extended to staff within school settings.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group
Prevention and Public Confidence	Increase communication and campaigns, committing to an 'all year' presence to highlight Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.	Professionals, the voluntary sector have an improved understanding of Domestic Abuse and VAWG and how to offer appropriate support.	Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group

3. Focus on incidents impacting our community	**Empower communities, building strength and resilience.**	**• Antisocial Behavior • Serious Incidents, Criminal exploitation (Gang) exit and support • Hate Crime**	**Delivery Owners:**
Method	**Measure**	**Output/Outcome**	
Reduction, Prevention and Public Confidence	Within 3 days of a serious violent incident, hold a Partners meeting to agree and coordinate a local response.	Immediately after a serious incident, agree a hyper – localised action plan. Accessing the VRU's critical incident fund to support internal and external intervention, prevention, and reassurance activities.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group
Early Intervention	In collaboration with the police, businesses, residents and key internal and external partners, identify and respond to hot spot locations and premises where there are concerns about anti-social behaviour, nuisance and criminal activities, including the social housing environment. To engage and where necessary, to take enforcement and supportive actions.	Identification of hot spots and problem premises using data and engagement with residents and businesses. Targeted use of fixed and mobile CCTV assets to monitor hot spot areas to mobilise enforcement and police teams to respond expediently. Increased used of low-level interventions and tools and powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing act 2014, to enforce breaches of Brent's Public Spaces Protection Orders and nuisance premises. Appropriate referrals to Support Services and the Community MARAC. Extending support to vulnerable individuals engaged in, or victims of, anti-social behaviour, nuisance and low-level crime.	ASB and CCTV Delivery Group

3. (Continued) Focus on incidents impacting our community	**Empower communities, building strength and resilience.**	**• Antisocial Behavior • Serious Incidents, Criminal exploitation (Gang) exit and support • Hate Crime**	**Delivery Owners:**
Method	**Measure**	**Output/Outcome**	
Public Confidence	To improve under reporting amongst businesses and members of the community in wards with high volume anti-social behaviour, nuisance, and low-level crime. To implement a refreshed strategy to make better use of Online Watch Link.	Increased engagement and contact through localised communications campaigns, attendance at Police Ward Panels, Brent Connects, residents and business forums. Increased use of Online Watch Link and social media platforms to communicate successful outcomes and more use of the platform across Resident Services.	ASB and CCTV Delivery Group
Prevention, Reduction and Public Confidence	Increase awareness of Hate Crimes and how to report concerns amongst harder to engage communities.	Promote 3rd Party reporting platforms	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: ASB and CCTV Delivery Group

4. Protecting those most vulnerable	**Support those at risk and vulnerable to exploitation. Protect victims of crime.**	**• Victims of Crime (including exploitation and county lines) • Prevent (Radicalisation and extremism) • Safeguarding (Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**	**Delivery Owners:**
Method	**Measure**	**Output/Outcome**	
Early Intervention and Prevention	Promote our early intervention panels amongst key stakeholders, as well as members our community to ensure vulnerable individuals are identified and supported earlier (EVVP,MARAC,CHANNEL).	Individuals, in particular younger people, are supported earlier reducing the burden on Child in Need and Child Protection plans and Youth Offending Orders are reduced.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: Community MARAC
Early Intervention and Prevention	Work with internal and external stakeholders to identify opportunities to divert individuals from exploitation, criminal activity and harm through mentoring and wider opportunities to enhance their skill sets.	Individuals are better supported, school exclusions are reduced, as are NEET numbers. Reduction in anti -social behaviour and nuisance related activities.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Support from: ASB and CCTV Delivery Group
Reduction, Prevention and Public Confidence	Bleed Kit training delivered to voluntary sector orgs and community champions.	Work with Public Health and the voluntary sector, to promote safe and well schemes, including buddying schemes.	Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group


Brent

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