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SUMMONS TO ATTEND COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 29 February 2024 at 6.00 pm
Conference Hall - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Please note that this meeting will be held as a physical meeting with all members of the Council required to attend in person.

To the Mayor and Councillors of the London Borough of Brent and to each and every one of them.

I hereby summon you to attend the MEETING OF THE COUNCIL of this Borough.



KIM WRIGHT
Chief Executive

Dated: 21 February (Agenda republished on 26 February 2024, 28 & 29 February 2024)

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

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Council meetings and decision making | Brent Council

Limited space will be available at the meeting for the press and public to attend or alternatively it will be possible to follow the meeting via the live webcast. The link to follow proceedings via the live webcast is available here

recycle for Brent

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 a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), 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 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 a 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, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, 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 employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above

Agenda

Apologies for absence.

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting 1 - 44

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on Monday 20 November 2023.

3 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.

4 Mayor's Announcements (including any petitions received)

To receive any announcements from the Mayor.

5 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies and Appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs (if any) 45 - 46

To agree any appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies (if any) in accordance with Standing Order 30(g).

(Agenda republished to include updated list of appointments for consideration on 29 February 2024)

6 Budget and Council Tax 2024 - 2025

6.1 Budget & Council Tax 2024-25 47 - 422

This report sets out the Council's budget proposals for 2024 - 25. It also details the results of the consultation, scrutiny and equalities considerations in relation to the budget proposals. The report also sets out the overall financial position facing the Council for the medium term and highlights the significant risks, issues and uncertainties.

Members are asked to note that the recommendations in the report were approved by Cabinet on 5 February 2024 for reference on to Council.

6.2 Conservative Group amendments to the Budget & Council Tax proposals 2024 - 25 423 - 434

To consider the proposed amendments submitted by the Conservative

Group in relation to the Council's budget proposals for 2024 - 25.

(Agenda republished to include the Conservative amendments to the budget proposals on 28 February 2024)

6.3 Liberal Democrats Group amendments to the Budget & Council Tax proposals 2024 - 25 435 - 448

To consider the proposed amendments submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group in relation to the Council's budget proposals for 2024 – 25.

(Agenda republished to include an updated version of Liberal Democrats amendments to the budget proposals on 29 February 2024)

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Contact Officer**: Ravinder Jassar, Deputy Director of Finance Tel: 020 8937 1487 ravinder.jassar@brent.gov.uk

7 Auditor's Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent 449 - 492

This report presents the Council's External Auditor's Annual Report on value for money as part of the 2022 - 23 audit of the year end accounts. It also sets out the key recommendations made within the Annual Report.

Members are asked to note that a representative of the Council's External Auditor's (Grant Thornton) will be present at the meeting to respond to any issues raised.

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Contact Officer**: Minesh Patel, Corporate Director of Finance & Resources Tel: 020 8937 6528 Minesh.Patel@brent.gov.uk

8 Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023-2024 493 - 510

This report provides an update on treasury management activities for the first half of the financial year 2023-24.

Members are asked to note that the report was noted by Cabinet on 15 January 2024 and has been referred on to Council for consideration in compliance with CIPFAs Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Contact Officer**: Amanda Healy, Head of Finance Tel: 020 8937 5912 Amanda.Healy@brent.gov.uk

9 Members' Allowance Scheme Annual Review 2024 -25 511 - 524

This report outlines the annual review of the Members Allowance Scheme undertaken for 2024 - 2025.

Ward Affected: All Wards	**Contact Officer**: Amira Nassr, Head of Chief Executive & Member Services Tel: 020 8937 5436 amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

10 Urgent Business

At the discretion of the Mayor to consider any urgent business, in accordance with Standing Order 37(s).



Please remember to switch 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 ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 20 November 2023 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Orleen Hylton

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Tariq Dar MBE

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Agha
Ahmadi-Moghaddam	Ahmed
Akram	Bajwa
Begum	Benea
M.Butt	S.Butt
Chan	Chappell
Chohan	Choudry
Collymore	Conneely
Crabb	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Farah	Fraser
Gbajumo	Georgiou
Grahl	Hack
Hirani	Johnson
Kabir	Kansagra
Kelcher	Kennelly
Knight	Long
Lorber	Matin
Maurice	Miller
Mistry	Mitchell
Moeen	Molloy
Nerva	J.Patel
M.Patel	Rajan-Seelan
Rubin	Shah
Ketan Sheth	Krupa Sheth
Smith	Southwood
Tatler	

1. **Mayors Introductory Statement**

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Afzal and Mahmood.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the of the Council meeting held on Monday 18 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

(a) Agenda Item 12.1 Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – Chair's Update: Councillor Lorber declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Barham Park and Director and Trustee of Barham Community Library given reference within the update report to the outcome of the call-in considered by the Scrutiny Committee on the Barham Park Trust Accounts 2022-23.

There were no other declarations of interest made at the meeting.

5. **Mayor's Announcements (including any petitions received)**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) Remembrance Sunday

The Mayor began her announcements by seeking to reflect on Remembrance Sunday and pay tribute to all those who had lost their lives in conflicts around the world. As part of the tributes, The Mayor advised she had been honoured to attend the borough remembrance service at Barham Park, which she was pleased to see had included representatives from a number of students at schools across Brent. As part of the programme of events, the Mayor advised she had also been pleased to attend the AJEC Jewish Military Association annual remembrance parade and ceremony at the Cenotaph.

(ii) Conflict in the Middle East

Turning her attention to other events the Mayor advised that her thoughts were also with all those affected by the current conflict in Israel and Gaza. In recognising that every life lost was a tragedy on all those impacted she asked members to join her in praying for the innocent people who had been affected and for a swift end to the conflict in hope that peace could be achieved.

Highlighting the personal impact of the conflict on communities across the borough the Mayor advised that she was also aware of the trauma this had created and, whilst recognising that people would have different ways of expressing solidarity with the people of Gaza and Israel, outlined her continued commitment as Mayor to fostering a strong level of community cohesion and reaching out to all of the communities affected across the borough.

(iii) Black History Month and other Mayoral events

The Mayor took the opportunity to thank everyone involved in developing and delivering the programme of activities to celebrate Black History month during October, which she had been pleased to be able to participate in and had included a number of visits to schools across the borough.

Other events attended since the previous Council meeting had included:

- The launch of ManVan – Brent's Prostate Cancer Screening Bus.
- Brent Care Leavers Awards Ceremony.
- Brent Start Student Awards Ceremony.
- Act of Hope and Remembrance for those affected by hate crime.
- A number of visits to celebrate the Navratri Festival and to local temples in Brent with the Deputy Lieutenant in order to celebrate Diwali, with all those celebrating wished a Happy Diwali

(iv) Islamophobia Awareness Month

The Mayor advised that she was also pleased to be supporting Islamophobia Awareness month, which included a range of activities designed to raise awareness and bring people together in standing against discrimination and hate crime. Members were reminded that as part of the programme of activities, Brent Council would be hosting an event on 21 November from 6 – 8pm at the Civic Centre that would include stories, discussion and presentations and she hoped all members would be able to attend.

(v) Kings Award for Voluntary Service

On behalf of both herself and the Council, the Mayor advised she would like to congratulate the Central Mosque of Brent Charity following receipt of the Kings Voluntary award. The award had been received in recognition of the work being undertaken to serve the entire community through the support of various programmes including health, social, sports and community initiatives.

(vi) Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Councillor Awards

The Mayor advised she was also delighted to be able to congratulate Councillor Choudry on his recent award as the LGIU Young Councillor of the Year reflecting the positive impact being made by members on the constituents and local communities they served. In receiving the award, members were advised that the LGIU had specifically commended Councillor Choudry for the work undertaken to support residents, lead on initiatives to tackle food poverty and empower young people and also to champion diverse communities in lobbying for change.

In addition, the opportunity was also taken to congratulate Councillor Nerva for being shortlisted in the category of lifetime legend, recognising his work in seeking to secure funding and engage local communities in the Kensal corridor project.

All members joined the Mayor in offering their congratulations to both councillors with a round of applause.

(vii) 100th Birthday Celebrations

The Mayor advised she had been pleased to join Mr Edward Macgrath in order to celebrate his 100th birthday. Born into an Anglo-Indian family in India, the Mayor advised that Edward and his family had subsequently moved to Brent in 1949 where he had worked for a cable company and been fortunate to travel extensively around the world.

All members joined the Mayor in wishing Mr Edward Macgrath a happy 100th birthday.

(viii) Mayors Christmas Fundraising Ball

Members were reminded that the Mayor would be hosting her Christmas Fundraising Ball on Thursday 7 December 2023 at the Civic Centre, with tickets available to purchase from the Mayor's Office.

(ix) Petitions

As a final announcement, the Mayor referred members to the list of current petitions tabled at the meeting, in accordance with Standing Orders which also detailed the action being taken to deal with them.

6. **Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies and Appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs (if any)**

The Mayor advised that there were no appointments to Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies which had been received for consideration so moved to the next item.

7. **Deputations (if any)**

The Mayor advised that she had accepted two requests for deputations to be presented at the meeting. The first of these was from Elaine Sheppard and Sylvia Gauthereau (representing Action for the Climate Emergency in Brent) outlining concerns about the action being taken by the Council to address the climate emergency and achieve the target of becoming net carbon zero by 2030. The second was from Sheila Darr (as a local resident) seeking to highlight a number of practical implementation and operational concerns relating to the recently introduced blue bag recycling scheme across the borough.

Unless otherwise indicated by members, the Mayor advised that she intended to allow up to five minutes for presentation of each deputation before then allowing the relevant Lead Cabinet Member up to two minutes to respond.

As no objections were raised on the approach outlined, the Mayor moved on to welcome the first deputation.

7.1 Action to address the Climate Emergency

In thanking the Mayor for the opportunity to address the meeting, Elaine Sheppard and Sylvia Gauthereau advised they were presenting the deputation on behalf of the newly established Action for the Climate Emergency in Brent (ACE Brent) which represented a coalition of groups including Brent Friends of the Earth, Brent Cycling Campaign, Brent Parks Forum, Brent Pure Energy, Brent XR and Divest Brent. In seeking to outline their concerns regarding the urgency of the action being taken by the Council to address the climate emergency and achieve the target of becoming a net carbon zero borough by 2030, Elaine Sheppard began by reminding members of the correspondence circulated in advance of the meeting, which had outlined the coalition's detailed proposals along with what they felt was a need to increase the pace of action over the coming five-year period. Whilst recognising that the government was not on track regarding the climate emergency, ACE Brent felt that Brent as a borough could be.

Although recognising the Council's commitment towards achieving net zero (as outlined within its Climate Emergency Strategy, Green Vision Planning guidelines, Green Neighbourhood pilots and other initiatives) it was not felt these were sufficiently urgent in nature as a response or reflected (given the diversity within Brent) the global and local social justice obligations which underpinned tackling the climate emergency. Whilst aware of the financial pressures on the Council and impact of cost-of-living crisis, it was felt that working together to focus on more ambitious and urgent action did not mean having to spending more money. ACE Brent were therefore seeking a revamped Climate Plan to galvanise and replace the existing strategy aimed at bringing together all current plans and initiatives to more clearly prioritise SMART and costed actions that would deliver net zero and protect those residents most at risk. Prior to handing over to Sylvia Gauthereau, Elaine Sheppard ended by expressing concern at the limited scope of the current Climate Strategy Delivery Plan in terms of the activities covered and also at the recent decision to revise reporting on climate action from an annual to biannual basis, reiterating that this decision negatively impacted the ability to effectively monitor delivery of the Climate Strategy in advance of 2030.

Sylvia Gauthereau then continued by advising that ACE Brent had welcomed the agreement at a recent Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to seek a more accessible accountability framework to monitor performance, especially with regard to clearer measurement of emissions which it was hoped was now in progress. It was also felt that the development of any new Plan should be initiated and informed by a new Climate Assembly which would engage in regular dialogue with residents and stakeholders. In support of this proposal, reference was made to the establishment of dedicated Climate and Emergency Scrutiny Committee's and Citizen Panels by other local authorities. As a result, ACE Brent felt that in order to effectively support the move towards net zero and ensure necessary co-ordination and oversight was provided, Brent should also consider establishing a dedicated Climate and Ecological Emergency Scrutiny Committee. To conclude, Sylvia Gauthereau outlined the main areas ACE Brent were seeking to address as part of any new Climate Plan which included enabling further choice for active travel;

implementing a major programme of insulation and retrofitting within the housing stock; fully divesting Brent's Pension Fund from the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel emitters; ensuring the sustainability of new developments; encouraging the installation of solar panels on all public buildings in the borough and increasing the canopy cover and green spaces in Brent.

In responding to the deputation, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action, welcomed ACE Brent's continued interest and contribution in supporting the Council to effectively tackle the climate emergency and meet the Council's ambitious target of net zero by 2030. In recognising this was not something the Council could deliver in isolation, the importance in ensuring all residents and stakeholders were engaged was recognised, with Councillor Krupa Sheth expressing her thanks for the work ACE Brent were undertaking as both a coalition and individual organisations in encouraging climate action. In expressing pride at the range of individuals and organisations across the borough taking on the challenge through practical action to reduce emissions and make the borough greener, Councillor Krupa Sheth also felt it was important to recognise the local leadership role being played by the Council in coordinating, convening and empowering local groups to contribute through the Brent Environmental Network, the Climate Action Plan and the Together Towards Zero small grant scheme.

In reminding members that Brent's Climate Strategy had been developed on a consensus basis, with the themes mirroring those areas the Brent Climate Assembly had viewed as being environmental priorities for the borough, the importance in ensuring that the Strategy and Delivery Plan remained adaptable had been recognised with work already underway to embed the actions more prominently in future climate delivery plans. With communication identified as key, in order to maintain progress, the work being undertaken to develop a data dashboard on a host of key climate measures to demonstrate impact was also outlined, which it was hoped to provide for the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee early in 2024. This was being designed to supplement and provide greater transparency on existing monitoring updates being provided to Cabinet and via existing communication channels. In ending her response, Councillor Krupa Sheth once again thanked Elaine Sheppard and Sylvia Gauthereau for the deputation and reiterated that the Council was keen to continue working constructively and collaborative with all sections of the community and stakeholders on the climate agenda to make Brent a low carbon, greener borough.

Having thanked Elaine Sheppard and Sylvia Gauthereau for their deputation and Councillor Krupa Sheth for the response the Mayor then moved on to welcome the second deputation.

7.2 Implementation and Operation of the Blue Bag Recycling Scheme for paper and cardboard

In thanking the Mayor for the opportunity to address the meeting, Sheila Darr (as a local resident) advised she was seeking to highlight a number of practical operational concerns relating to the recently introduced blue bag recycling scheme across the borough. In referring to comments which had been highlighted on the Nextdoor app and various petitions in opposition to the blue bag recycling scheme, she began by outlining health and safety concerns involving the bags being blown

around on streets and not sufficiently holding or protecting their contents, which it was reported had resulted in additional litter. As a result, queries were raised in relation to any risk assessment completed regarding the danger that lost bags and loose waste posed to the community. Furthermore, in reiterating the impact of the current housing crisis, she pointed out concerns had also been raised in relation to storage of the bags in homes, given the limited space often available when they were full, and queried why excess paper and card could not be placed in recycling bins as residential blocks had continued to use. In addition, the difficulty in keeping blue bags dry during wet weather and cold conditions was highlighted, especially where collection timetables had been altered, causing bags to be left for a longer period of time leading to increased contamination. In highlighting other difficulties with the blue bag recycling scheme, Sheila Darr also raised concerns about the impact on those elderly residents who may struggle with the weight of the bag and questioned whether any risk assessment had included the practical impact of the scheme in this respect. Although recognising that support could be requested on the Council's website, Sheila Darr reiterated that many elderly people struggled with internet usage and therefore may not be receiving the support they required. In concluding, it was felt further guidance was required with concerns highlighted in relation to the impact of the scheme on the elderly, those whose main language was not English and the extent of consultation undertaken prior to the implementation of the scheme. In highlighting the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the health and well-being of local residents Sheila Darr ended by calling on the Council to reconsider the implementation of the blue bag scheme in order to avoid compounding the challenges already being faced by many residents across the borough.

In response to the deputation, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action, felt it important to start by highlighting that the changes made to the recycling arrangements had been designed to reduce contamination and improve the amount and quality of material being recycled in order to reduce the borough's impact on the environment and contribute towards the goal of the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This scheme had been predicted to save the Council £1.2m per annum by 2024-25, the first full year of operation for the new service, which she felt was also an important consideration to recognise given the wider financial challenges being faced by the Council as a result of funding restrictions being imposed by Central Government.

In terms of the consultation process undertaken on the future waste collection and street cleansing services, confirmation was provided that this had taken place in Summer 2022 with the outcome supported by a successful trial involving 5000 households in Autumn 2022. The scheme in Brent had also reflected similar schemes being successfully operated by other local authorities. In confirming that the changes introduced had only been to street level properties and not to flats in communal blocks, which continued to receive the same comingled recycling collections as before, Councillor Krupa Sheth felt it important to recognise the need to allow sufficient time for any major service change to fully embed, with the Council continuing to closely monitor the roll out of the new service. Work was also being undertaken with the contractor (Veolia) to address any operational issues and feedback identified so that, where required, improvements could be introduced to make the service better for both residents and the environment. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the positive impact of the scheme with a continued rise in the amount of separated paper and card being collected, mirroring the successful

trial from last year. As an example, members were advised that in the last two weeks of October, the Council had seen a 50% increase in paper and cardboard collected in comparison to the first fortnight and further increases at the start of November with no reported issues in terms of either contamination or the impact of the weather.

In addressing the specific concerns raised within the deputation, Councillor Krupa Sheth confirmed that residents could choose whether to store their sack indoors or outdoors, so long as they were presented at the kerbside on the scheduled collection day. They could also order additional or replacement sacks for free with additional assistance available (for those residents who required it) with their recycling arrangements, as before. In summing up confirmation was provided of the Council's ongoing commitment, despite the challenging nature of the budget pressures identified, towards the provision of key services across the borough whilst also seeking to protect the most vulnerable with Councillor Krupa Sheth advising she would welcome further feedback on the blue bag recycling scheme as experience continued to be gained following its implementation across the borough.

The Mayor thanked Sheila Darr for attending the meeting in order to present her deputation and Councillor Krupa Sheth for her response and advised that as this concluded consideration of the deputations she would move on to the next item.

8. Questions from Members of the Public & Brent Youth Parliament

8.1 Questions from the Public

The Mayor advised that one question had been received from a member of the public, which was as follows:

Question 1 from Peggy Wylie regarding operation of the 206 bus route on Wembley Stadium event days.

Members noted the written response provided on the question, which had been circulated with the agenda. Having been invited to attend in order to ask any supplementary question, the Mayor advised she was pleased to welcome Peggy Wylie to the meeting who addressed the following supplementary question to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action.

Question 1 Supplementary Question from Peggy Wylie to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action.

Thanking Councillor Krupa Sheth for the written response provided Peggy Wylie, in highlighting the impact of the reduced bus service on local residents and large number of school pupils who also relied on the service, sought further details on the timescale to complete the necessary infrastructure works along Bridge Road and North End Road that would enable the proposed changes to the route to be introduced on event days, prior to the programme of stadium events commencing during 2024.

In thanking Peggy Wylie for her question Councillor Krupa Sheth, in responding, reiterated the Council's commitment to continue working with Transport for London

in order to secure the necessary service improvements and infrastructure works with further discussion welcomed with residents, as required.

Having noted the response provided, the Mayor thanked Peggy Wylie for her supplementary question and Councillor Krupa Sheth for her response and then moved on to deal with the question submitted by Brent Youth Parliament.

8.2 Questions from Brent Youth Parliament

The Mayor advised that the following question had been received from Brent Youth Parliament:

Question 1 from Brent Youth Parliament to Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, relating to the improvement of support for young people with Special Educational Needs both in and outside of school.

The Mayor thanked Brent Youth Parliament for their question, with members noting the written response provided and advised that representatives from the Youth Parliament had also been invited to attend the meeting in order to ask a supplementary question. As a result, the Mayor welcomed Armaan Rattu and Manel Bensada to the meeting who addressed the following supplementary question to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools.

Question 1 Supplementary Question from Armaan Rattu and Manel Bensada to Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools.

Having thanked Councillor Grahl for her written response and advising that they were pleased to hear about the support being provided for young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities Armaan Rattu and Manel Bensada, as a supplementary question, sought further clarification on the definition of 'inclusive environments and facilities' and how these were determined e.g. would school students be actively involved in the design of these facilities.

In response, Councillor Grahl began by thanking Brent Youth Parliament for the question and work they were undertaking to represent young people across the borough. In clarifying the reference made in her original; response, Councillor Grahl outlined the different types of special educational need provision available, referring firstly to that provided outside of a mainstream school setting with the example of the new 400 place SEND school provision being funded by the Council in London Road and secondly to inclusive educational provision, which involved the provision of additional support in a mainstream school environment. Whilst this would include an element of consultation on design with young people using the service Councillor Grahl, in ending her response, advised that she would be pleased to speak further with Brent Youth Parliament regarding the Council's proposals and to seek further feedback on the issues raised.

With no further questions to be considered, the Mayor advised that this now concluded the public question session.

9. Petitions (if any)

The Mayor advised that no requests for debates on any petitions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

10. Reports from the Leader and Cabinet

The Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, to introduce the report updating members on the work being undertaken across each Cabinet portfolio in order to manage the Council's finances and provide ongoing support and services to meet the needs of residents across the borough.

In referring to the draft 2024-25 budget proposals which had been approved for consultation by Cabinet on 16 November 23, the opportunity was taken to remind members of the significant financial pressures and challenges currently faced by the Council as a result of ongoing economic uncertainty, increased demand in relation to homelessness and impact of the wider funding reductions which had been imposed by the Government since 2010 through their programme of austerity. Despite these challenges, members were advised of the efforts being made to ensure the Council was able to deliver a balanced budget operating in a financially sustainable and resilient way, whilst seeking to support and safeguard local residents as far as possible during such challenging times, in line with the Council's core strategic priorities. As part of the update, members were also asked to note that no Executive decisions had been taken under the Council's urgency procedures, since the previous update provided for the Council meeting in July.

The Mayor thanked the Leader for the report and it was **RESOLVED** to formally note the update provided.

11. Questions from the Opposition and other Non-Cabinet Members

Before moving on to consider the questions submitted by non-Cabinet members, the Mayor reminded Members that a total of 30 minutes had been set aside for this item, which would begin with consideration of the written questions submitted in advance of the meeting along with any supplementary questions. Once these had been dealt with, the remaining time available would then be opened up for any other non-Cabinet members to question Cabinet Members (without the need for advance notice) on matters relating to their portfolio.

The Mayor advised that five written questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting for response by the relevant Cabinet Member and the written responses circulated within the agenda were noted. The Mayor then invited supplementary questions on the responses provided:

11.1 Councillor Rajan-Seelan thanked Councillor Donnelly-Jackson, as Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture, for the written response to his question regarding the activities being planned to ensure the contribution of British Tamils was fully recognised by the Council as part of Tamil Heritage month. Whilst no supplementary question was received members were reminded that Tamil Heritage Month would be taking place during January 2024 with councillors, residents and community groups all being encouraged to participate.

11.2 Councillor Ahmed thanked Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action, for the written response to his question regarding the changes to recycling arrangements across the borough and impact these were having at reducing the level of recyclable waste going to landfill in support of the Council's environmental aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. No supplementary question was received.

11.3 Having thanked Councillor Knight, as Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security, for the response provided on his question seeking details on the actions being taken by the Council to address the unprecedented increase in homelessness applications and use of Temporary Accommodation, Councillor Aden, as a supplementary question, sought further clarification on the contextual factors impacting on the housing crisis in the borough.

In response, Councillor Knight began by taking the opportunity to highlight the unprecedented nature of the current level of housing demand, with pressure in relation to the number of homeless households and applications continuing to grow driven by the cost-of-living crisis. This had led to a 322% increase in the use of temporary accommodation compared to previous years with it forecast (if demand continued to grow at the same rate) that the Housing Needs Service would receive a total of 7,500 applications over the year representing an average of 144 applications each week, the highest recorded. These pressures were exacerbated by a contraction in the number of properties available within the Private Rented Sector at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level (used to prevent and relieve homelessness) with many landlords having also exited the sector. In emphasising that that the Council did not believe homelessness to be a lifestyle choice, Councillor Knight outlined the establishment of a Temporary Accommodation supply and spend project aimed at addressing current pressures on the Temporary Accommodation budget and increasing the supply of temporary accommodation in order to address demand through new and alternative provision. In addition, she advised that the Council, in partnership with other local authorities, was calling on the government (as part of the Autum Statement) to consider a long-term funding solution to address the pressures and issues highlighted and reassured members of the action being taken by the Council to do everything possible to continue supporting residents in housing need through the provision of an affordable housing supply.

11.4 In reiterating the concerns highlighted within her written question and as part of the deputation at the start of the meeting, Councillor Hirani felt it important to recognise the operational issues which had been highlighted as well as the financial and value for money considerations relating to implementation of the blue bag recycling scheme. As a supplementary question, and in view of the concerns raised, Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action) was therefore asked whether she would consider suspending the blue bag recycling scheme in order for an independent inquiry to be conducted relating to its environmental and financial effectiveness.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that she had yet to be provided with detailed evidence of the operational concerns identified in relation to

displacement of the recycling bags and reminded members that the introduction of the scheme had already been subject to review at the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, which included cross-party representation. Highlighting the positive impact of the scheme in terms of recycling rates for paper and card and need to allow time for the scheme to fully settle, Councillor Krupa Sheth ended her response by highlighting that the Council would continue to monitor roll out of the new service in order to address any issues highlighted and ensure, where and if required, that improvements were made to enhance the service for both residents and the environment.

11.5 Councillor Georgiou, in noting the written response to the question submitted regarding the current position on the Altamira Morland Gardens housing scheme expressed concern at the associated impact in terms of costs, grant funding and on current use of the site now that the original planning permission had expired. In outlining the basis of the original selection of the architects and design of the scheme further details were sought, as a supplementary question, on whether the £1.6m costs he understood had been incurred as a result of seeking to decant Brent Start could have been avoided and whether, given the failure to deliver the original housing proposed within the scheme, the current project would now be aborted.

In response, Councillor Knight referred to the details provided within the written response on the original question which she felt had also addressed the subsequent issues highlighted. Whilst the current Morland Gardens scheme had been paused for further review, Councillor Knight thought it important to recognise how the Council was continuing to prioritise the development of new homes (despite current economic conditions), which included recent approval of three Infill development council housing schemes designed to increase the level of affordable housing available across the borough for Brent residents. In recognising the unprecedented homelessness emergency facing the borough, Councillor Knight emphasised that despite the challenges identified the Council would continue to utilise its powers to deliver the homes that residents needed and deserved.

In response to a Point of Order raised by Councillor Georgiou in relation to the extent of the response provided on his supplementary question the Mayor advised that the response was felt to be sufficient with the member able to seek a more detailed response direct from the Cabinet Member following the meeting, should that be required.

Having thanked members for their written questions and Cabinet Members for the responses provided to the supplementary questions, the Mayor then advised that the remainder of time available would be used for an open question time session to the Cabinet. Questions relating to the following issues were raised and responses provided, as set out below:

(i) Councillor Jayanti Patel highlighting concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and nuisance being experienced by residents in Milky Way, Queensbury linked to adjacent Housing Association blocks and action that could be taken by the Council working with the relevant Housing Association and Safer Neighbourhood Team to address the problems being experienced.

In response, Councillor Farah, as Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Public Protection, advised he was concerned to hear about the issues being experienced and as a result would be willing to facilitate discussions between the housing provider, police and relevant officers within the Council in order to address and seek a resolution to the issues being experienced.

(ii) Councillor Chan regarding the powers and support available through the Council, working with the police and local residents, in seeking to prevent the use of local shop premises along Park Parade, Harlesden for illegal and unregulated activities.

In response, Councillor Farah, as Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Public Protection, advised that he was aware of the concerns highlighted having recently visited the area and whilst not seeking to prevent legitimate businesses from operating, advised that it had been possible to secure four three-month closure orders to properties whose operation was causing concern in the area. As further reassurance, Councillor Farah advised that the Council would continue to work closely with the police in order to monitor the area and ensure the necessary enforcement action could be taken as required, on which ward councillors would continue to be kept updated.

(iii) Councillor Kelcher regarding the powers available to the Council to support the ongoing campaign to save the Royal Oak Public House in High Street, Harlesden from closure and in seeking to protect and offer business support to other similar venues, recognising their importance as local community hubs.

In response, Councillor Tatler, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Resources and Reform and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth, felt it important to recognise the important role played by various types of hospitality venues such as public houses as local community hubs. In outlining the actions available to the Council in seeking to protect and support these type of venues, Councillor Tatler advised of the work being undertaken to support and enhance the vitality of the boroughs high streets and town centres, including the use of planning policy to encourage new residential developments that would also drive business and footfall in the surrounding areas. In recognising the struggles faced by the hospitality sector due to the pandemic and cost of living crisis, Councillor Tatler ended by assuring members of the Council's commitment to increasing growth across the borough and working with ward councillors to support town centres and protect valued community assets.

(iv) Councillor Rubin commended the Council for their ongoing efforts to support and work with the Brent Renters Union in seeking to ensure the necessary protections were provided for tenants in the private rented sector across the borough as a means of tackling serious health and safety concerns, providing protection from evictions and ensuring access to key services with further details sought on how these measures and support could continue to be developed.

Councillor Knight, as Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security, thanked Councillor Rubin for his question and for raising

such an important issue. In highlighting a commitment to continuing working with Brent Renters Union in order to secure the necessary protections for tenants within the private rented sector, recognising the wider associated impact on current pressures relating to homelessness, members were also reminded of the priority given to the introduction of the borough-wide selective landlord licensing scheme that had also been introduced as a means of continuing to support tenants and increase the Council's ability to take action against rogue landlords operating within the sector.

(v) Councillor Lorber highlighting concern at what he felt had been the limited scope of the discussion permitted in response to a call-in on the decision to approve the Barham Park Trust Accounts at the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee meeting held to consider the matter. Details were also sought as to when it was anticipated the high-level consultancy based review, which had been commissioned by the Chief Executive in relation to the Trust Accounts would be available to support reconsideration of the decision referred back as an outcome of the call-in process.

In response, Councillor Tatler, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Resources and Reform and Vice Chair of the Barham Park Trust Committee, felt it was important to recognise that the high-level consultancy based review had been commissioned independently by the Chief Executive outside of the call-in process and as such its publication and consideration would not be a matter for either the Cabinet Member or Trust Committee to decide upon.

(vi) Councillor Maurice seeking clarification on the eligibility for a family with four children to bid for a 3 rather than 4-bedroom property under the Council's Housing Allocation Policy in order to maximise the opportunities available to secure a suitable property.

In responding, Councillor Knight, as Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security, thanked Councillor Maurice for raising the issue and highlighting the extent to which overcrowding and homelessness remained an issue across the borough. In terms of the specific case raised, Councillor Knight advised she would be willing to investigate further if Councillor Maurice could provide the relevant details outside of the meeting.

(vii) Councillor Mistry highlighting concerns relating to the dumping of rubbish and impact of other environmental and health and safety hazards identified by local residents along an unadopted alleyway adjacent to shops located on Kingsbury Road close to Kingsbury roundabout and Gore Court and seeking details on what measures the Council could take to address the concerns outlined.

In response Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action, advised that she would be willing to facilitate a site visit with Councillor Mistry in order to review the issues highlighted and explore how they could specifically be addressed moving forward.

At this stage in the proceedings, the Mayor advised that the time available for the open question session had expired. The Mayor therefore thanked all members for their contributions and advised that the meeting would now move on to the next item.

12. Report from Chairs of Scrutiny Committees

Before being presented with the updates from each Scrutiny Committee, the Mayor reminded members the time set aside for this item was 12 minutes, with each Chair having up to three minutes in which to highlight any significant issues arising from the work of their Committees. Once these updates had been provided, the remaining time available would then be opened up for any other non-Cabinet members to question (without the need for advance notice) the Scrutiny Committee Chairs on matters relating to the work of their Committee.

Councillor Conneely was then invited to introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, with the following issues highlighted:

- Referring to the Committee's ongoing focus and work in relation to development and delivery of the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy, members were advised that this would be subject to further review early in 2024 with the contribution made by Action for the Climate Emergency in Brent as part of their earlier deputation also welcomed.
- The Committee had met twice since the previous update with one of those meetings having been to consider a call-in relating to the decision made by the Barham Park Trust Committee to approve their accounts for 2022-23. Having consider the concerns raised under the call-in in relation to accuracy of the accounts and noted that the Chief Executive had also (independently of the call-in) commissioned a separate high-level consultancy based review on the concerns raised the Committee had agreed, as an outcome of the call-in, to refer the original decision made on the Accounts back to the Trust Committee for reconsideration.
- The Committee had also continued to actively monitor the Council's financial forecast position and medium-term financial outlook along with the risks and uncertainties regarding the budget setting position for 2024 – 25. Having noted the current £13m overspend forecast and unprecedented nature of demand driving these pressures in relation to the rise in homelessness and reduction in the supply of suitable accommodation, the Committee had welcomed the actions being taken in response to mitigate against and seek to address the pressures identified. Whilst recognising the efforts being made to maintain a financially resilient, balanced and sustainable budget position the Committee had recognised how difficult this had become given the ongoing reductions in core funding received by central government and overall level of savings which had needed to be made as a result since austerity had been introduced in 2010. The position would continue to be kept under review by the Committee with the issues highlighted also due to be considered by the Scrutiny Budget Task Group which members were advised had recently commenced its review as part of the budget consultation process for 2024-25.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Conneely for her update and then invited Councillor Ketan Sheth as chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to

introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by that Committee. The following issues were highlight as part of the update:

- The broad and dynamic nature of the Committee's work programme being delivered during 2023-24 with the Chair taking the opportunity to thank Helen Coombes (as Interim Corporate Director Care, Health & Wellbeing) and Zahur Khan (as Corporate Director Communities & Regeneration) for the support they had provided during their time at Brent and also to welcome Rachel Crossley as newly appointed Corporate Director Care, Health and Wellbeing and Alice Lester as newly appointed Interim Corporate Director Communities & Regeneration.
- Key issues considered since the previous report had included an update on the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of Local Authority Children Services with the Committee having welcomed the overall rating of "good" which had been received across all areas. As was usual practice, the inspection had identified a number of areas for improvement on which the Committee would continue to monitor progress as part of the action plan being developed in response. The Committee had also reviewed progress on implementation of the SEND Strategy as well as the work being undertaken between the Council and a cluster of schools in Harlesden on the Delivering Better Value programme, aligned to work being delivered through Brent Health Matters, Family Wellbeing Centres and the Intervention First Teaching Programme focussed on the way localities worked together to support children.
- Upcoming areas for focus at the Committee's next meeting included Brent Housing Management, including an update on tenant satisfaction measures and responsive repairs performance, the outcomes being achieved through the New Single Homeless Prevention Service and a focus on the impact of the new pilot introduced as part of the Landlord Selective Licensing scheme.
- The ongoing and active engagement of the Committee in the work of the North West London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee Brent, which Councillor Ketan Sheth continued to Chair.
- As a final issue the Chair also took the opportunity to congratulate Brent Health Matters and the volunteer team at the Central Mosque of Brent for the awards received at the recent North West London Health Equalities summit. This had been the first held in the area with the aim of reflecting on progress being made in addressing health inequalities and encouraging the development of wider community led engagement and inclusion across the region.

The Mayor thanked Councillors Ketan Sheth and Conneely for presenting their updates and it was **RESOLVED** that the contents of both reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that the remainder of time available would be open for questions from non-cabinet members to the Scrutiny Chairs The Mayor reminded members of the need to ensure that questions raised were focused on the updates provided or the work being undertaken by the relevant Committee.

As a result, Councillor Lorber took the opportunity to once again highlight the concerns raised at what he felt had been the limited scope of the discussion permitted in response to the call-in on the decision to approve the Barham Park

Trust Accounts at the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee call-in meeting held to deal with the matter.

The Mayor advised that as no specific question had been raised for the Chair of either Scrutiny Committee to respond on, she would move to the next item and thanked all members for their contribution.

13. **Report from the Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee**

The Mayor invited Councillor Chan, as the Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee, to introduce the report updating members on the work of the Committee.

In terms of issues highlighted, Councillor Chan drew members' attention to the important role and work undertaken by the Committee in relation to monitoring and advising on various governance matters relating to audit activity, the Council's finance, accounting and regulatory framework and members standards of conduct. As one of their key responsibilities, members were advised that the Committee had now signed off the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts 2022–23 having reviewed and also sought assurance around the management responses on the External Audit findings and Enquiries of Management. Officers were thanked for their efforts relating to sign off of the Accounts, with Brent being only one of a small number of local authorities to have completed the process for 2022-23. The importance of this process was also recognised in terms of the wider financial challenges, risks and pressures being faced by local authorities as a result of the current economic climate and Government's programme of austerity.

In highlighting the importance of other work also being undertaken in relation to issues such as delivery of the Internal Audit Plan and Counter Fraud activity, Councillor Chan concluded his update by reminding members of the Committee's continued focus on the adequacy of the Council's governance, risk and control arrangements in order to provide assurance and confidence on compliance and control of the Council's key governance, financial management and accounting arrangements.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Chan for the update provided and it was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

14. **Non-Cabinet Member Debate**

In accordance with Standing Order 34, the Mayor advised that the next item on the agenda was the non-cabinet member debate, with the subject chosen for consideration being Making our Borough Clean & Safe.

Members were advised that the motion submitted as the basis for the debate had been circulated with the agenda and that the time available for the debate was 25 minutes.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to introduce the motion which had been submitted as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate. In moving the motion, Councillor Georgiou began by highlighting what he felt was the need for the current Administration and Lead Cabinet Members to recognise the concerns being

expressed by residents at the cleanliness of the borough's streets, anti-social behaviour and also in relation to the blue bag recycling scheme. The motion submitted for debate had sought to raise these matters given the frustration and concerns being expressed by local residents at the general condition and cleanliness of streets across the borough, and on which it was felt decisions made by the current Administration had also negatively contributed towards.

Whilst calling on the Council to take more proactive action in relation to fly tipping and enforcement of the street cleansing contract, the motion had also sought to highlight the significant concerns being expressed by local residents (as highlighted by the strength of feeling expressed within current petitions and the deputation considered earlier in the meeting) relating to the roll out and impact of the blue bag recycling scheme. The motion was therefore calling for an immediate review of the scheme in order to avoid any longer term loss of confidence in recycling initiatives with the Liberal Democrats Group having already proposed an alternative approach when the matter was reviewed by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

In outlining the key actions being sought through the motion, Councillor Georgiou ended by querying the position of the Administration and Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action on the issues identified with the need for urgent action highlighted in order to address the concerns raised in seeking to make the borough clean and safe and positively impact on how local residents felt about the borough as a place to live.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Georgiou for introducing the motion and then drew members' attention to an amendment submitted by Councillor Krupa Sheth on behalf of the Labour Group, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

In moving the amendment, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action, felt that the original motion moved as the basis for the debate had missed the opportunity for a genuine cross-party discussion about making the environment cleaner, acknowledging the extent of work that was being undertaken within the funding available along with the challenges and compromises required to achieve the Council's target for carbon neutrality by 2030. The amendment had therefore been designed to recognise, in a way it was felt the original motion had not, the constraints placed upon the Council in relation to the increasing level of demand on services whilst at the same time having to mitigate against the extensive funding reductions imposed by central government and prioritise protection of the most vulnerable residents. In highlighting the hard work, funding and difficult nature of decisions required to resolve the issues identified Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that, whilst sharing the frustrations expressed in relation to the problem of fly-tipping and illegal dumping of rubbish, the amendment moved had sought to recognise the work required to address and purse the minority of individuals causing problems as well as the range of actions being taken to create a cleaner and greener borough. On this basis, the amendment moved was as follows:

To add the wording underlined and delete the wording indicated:

<u>Making our Borough Clean and Safe</u>

This Council notes:

A major issue of upmost importance to Brent Council is ~~T~~the general condition of our area. ~~is poor and r~~Residents are increasingly frustrated that a small minority of individuals disregard their streets ~~are full of~~ and use them for rubbish and illegal fly tipping. As ward ~~C~~councillors we are receiving daily updates from local people about dumping in the Borough, and we work tirelessly with Council Officers to resolve these enquiries and prevent the problem from ~~that is~~ getting worse~~, not better~~.

This includes large fly tips in hotspot locations that have been identified by the Council for a considerable time, but with limited resources, it is an ongoing battle for our environmental enforcement teams to tackle, nonetheless we do ensure that proactive action is taken to prevent further ongoing dumping at these sites.

In some areas of the borough 'paan spitting' continues to be a major problem local people are forced to contend with. The Council's campaigns to reduce unsightly, unhygienic mess caused by this bad habit ~~have failed~~ will encourage behaviour change.

Rubbish on our streets contributes to how people view the area and can have a knock-on effect in terms of further Anti-Social Behaviour in the community.

~~Decisions made by this Labour Administration have negatively contributed to the problem, by making it harder for some people to dispose of waste in the proper manner and by not prioritising effective enforcement and education campaigns that would deter this illegal behaviour.~~

A key priority of this local authority must be to address to scourge of fly tipping and crack down forcefully on those who continue to disrespect our community.

The new Waste Service Contract with Veolia is in place, and it is crucial that the company are held to account in delivering the set-out terms of their contract, particularly around targets on street cleansing.

The roll out of the new blue bags recycling service has ~~created more problems and confusion.~~ already led to a 50% increase in the tonnage of paper and cardboard collected in the first month. ~~Operatives throw bags around which are then blown away and lost.~~ While the scheme requires ~~R~~residents ~~are then penalised,~~ to adjust to the new regime ~~and their~~ more blue bin~~s~~ bags ~~not~~ are already being collected ~~on the grounds of~~ without contamination, with a record low of 1% contamination. There is a risk of local people losing confidence in the Climate Emergency Strategy should we choose to do nothing to improve the revised recycling system and ~~turning their back on it~~ increase levels of recycling.

It is ~~un~~likely that the new system will result in the Council's stated aim of increasing the boroughs overall recycling rate.

Prioritising making our borough clean will have a positive effect on the way people feel about where they live and how others who visit Brent view our area.

Therefore, this Council believes:

1. Keeping local streets clean and free of rubbish must be a ~~renewed~~ continued focus, particularly in light of increased dumping locally.

2. The best way to discourage illegal behaviour is by a programme of mass fining and continuing a zero-tolerance approach to rubbish on our streets and in our open spaces and paan spitting.

3. The Brent Connects areas ~~need to be reformed in order to~~ ensure Enforcement Teams are not overly stretched ~~and~~ so that a targeted approach is deployed in hotspot fly tipping locations – such as deployment of additional resources in Wembley and Alperton.

4. It is possible to change behaviours and educate people about how to treat our streets and opens spaces, through well run, targeted and engaging education campaigns.

5. Volunteers who spend hours every week trying to keep our borough clean and tidy must be commended for the work that they do and assisted wherever possible by the Council.

6. The blue bag scheme ~~needs to~~ will be reviewed ~~as soon as possible~~ in 2024 with ~~and~~ improvements to be considered by Cabinet and the recommendations by Scrutiny looked at again.

This Council therefore resolves to call on the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action:

1. To make ~~the~~ a non commercially sensitive version of the new Waste Service Contract with Veolia publicly available to enable effective scrutiny of the company and so that we can be confident that they are meeting the set-out terms of their contract with Brent.

2. To continue to work with partners across the Council and with outside agencies to identify additional resource to assist the existing Waste Enforcement teams across the borough in delivering effective enforcement against those who continue to disrespect our area.

3. Where additional resource is needed ~~T~~to scope the possibility of employing apprentices to work alongside Neighbourhood Managers and Enforcement Teams in fly tipping hotspot locations in the borough.

4. Subject to further engagement work, ~~Working with~~ to work with the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture, to undertake an internal review of the Brent Connects areas, particularly the Wembley Connects area, to see whether splitting them into smaller geographical areas can help with more effective, targeted waste enforcement work.

5. To ~~develop~~ continue the ~~an~~ education campaign including door to door communications about the Council's renewed focus on dealing with rubbish dumping and fly tipping in the area, this will include details of fines individuals would face if caught not adhering to the law.

6. To ~~E~~ensure that until the New Year all blue bins are emptied ~~at every collection~~ according to criteria and scheduled times published in residents' calendars. The Council will ~~i~~instruct~~ing~~ the contractor to ensure that blue bags are not thrown about and that all bins are returned to the correct location. ~~And a~~Above all the Cabinet will ~~re~~consider the feedback from ~~option of providing~~ residents and the emerging data from the roll out to consider all options ~~with a smaller wheelie bin~~ that will support residents with ~~for their mixed~~ recycling more ~~and converting the larger bins for the bulkier~~ cardboard and paper ~~collection~~ utilising the Capital budget of £1.6 million which has been allocated for this.

7. To ~~explore~~ lobby the government regarding the possibility of introducing a long awaited deposit scheme for cans and bottles, which would discourage dumping in our area.

8. To work with other London local authorities to gain insight on best practice around dealing with ongoing rubbish and fly tipping issues that are sadly prevalent in some areas in the capital.

9. To ~~call on~~ continue our ongoing work with the Mayor of London to ensure areas in our borough under his jurisdiction are kept clean and safe, including TfL land.

10. To write to Government urging that they consider banning the sale of paan, or at the very least require businesses who sell it to have a License.

11. To write to Government about the ongoing fly tipping problems in Brent and request additional funding to support renewed efforts to get to grips with this issue.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Krupa Sheth for moving the amendment on behalf of the Labour Group and then opened the debate for contributions from other members in relation to both the original motion and amendment.

Councillor Mistry, in supporting the original motion, highlighted the continued problems being created by a minority of residents with specific reference to illegal dumping of rubbish and also paan spitting. Despite having previously raised these concerns, Councillor Mistry felt that current reporting methods and level of action being taken in response were not sufficient with reference made to ongoing issues along Kingsbury High Road and within Queensbury. Expressing support for a ban on the sale of pann and the work being undertaken locally by residents to monitor issues, Councillor Mistry ended by also highlighting the need for improved education and for the Mayor of London to enhance funding for the Police in order to support the work being undertaken across neighbourhoods.

In support of the concerns raised regarding the introduction and operation of the blue bag recycling scheme, Councillor Lorber felt it important to remind members these had also been raised at the time the changes had been considered by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. Recognising the issues raised as part of the deputation on the same matter earlier in the meeting, he pointed out that concerns highlighted during the Scrutiny Committee meeting had included the

quality of the bags, potential issues with contamination and collection with the suggestion made that residents should be offered an alternative option of a separate bin. In support of the original motion moved as the basis of the debate, Councillor Lorber felt that the decision to proceed with the blue bag recycling scheme had not only been poorly implemented but was also contributing to the problem of keeping local streets clean and free of rubbish by creating excess litter.

Councillor Fraser, in expressing support for the amendment moved, felt that the focus for any concerns raised would be better targeted at the need to ensure Councils were being properly funded by central government to tackle fly-tipping and waste collection as well as other key services and to support the reintroduction of communication campaigns and initiatives such as “Keep Britain Tidy” to support the work being undertaken to change the behaviour of the minority of people who caused problems. In addition, Councillor Fraser felt there was a need to recognise the extent of the financial pressures being faced by the Council and impact these were having not just in relation to recycling and litter but also across a range of other crucial services relied on by many residents across the borough.

In pointing out that Brent were third in London for prosecutions relating to fly tipping and eighth for fines issued for fly tipping, Councillor Miller supported the need to focus attention on those creating the problem. In recognising the extent of littering and fly tipping as an issue across London the need to address individual behaviours was highlighted as a specific focus, including the issue of rogue landlords within the private rented housing sector. In commending the introduction of selective licensing schemes to better regulate the sector he was keen to ensure the necessary protections continued to be sought for tenants with action taken against landlords found to be in breach of their licence or to have been illegally fly-tipping as a means of avoiding business expenses. To conclude, Councillor Miller expressed disappointment that central government had decided not to bring forward the proposed Renters Rights Bill and in expressing support for the amendment moved, also hoped for a cross-party consensus which would result in the implementation of the renters’ rights provisions in future.

Councillor Kansagra in contributing to the debate and supporting the concerns raised in relation to introduction of the blue bag recycling scheme felt it was important, in considering the motion, to recognise the strength of public feeling which had been expressed on the issue and limited level of public support for the scheme which appeared to have been received in response. For these reasons he advised he would not be supporting the amendment moved by the Labour Group.

In responding to previous comments Councillor Dixon, whilst acknowledging the concerns raised regarding the blue bag scheme felt it important to recognise that the introduction of any borough wide scheme would require a period of review and adjustment, which she advised the majority of residents appeared to have understood given what the Council was seeking to achieve in terms of improving recycling rates and reducing the borough’s impact on the climate. Whilst patience would be required in refining and addressing operational issues, the priority in dealing with these at the same time as needing to focus on a range of other significant issues impacting on residents across the borough was highlighted, which it was felt the amendment had sought to recognise in a balanced way. For these reasons Councillor Dixon advised she would also be supporting the amendment moved rather than original motion.

As there were no further contributions, the Mayor then invited Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action, to summarise and close the debate.

In drawing the debate to a close, Councillor Krupa Sheth reiterated that the Council would continue to pursue those who littered and illegally fly tipped, detailing the outcome of a recent successful prosecution as evidence of the approach being adopted. Furthermore, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised of the work being undertaken to explore all available options in addressing the issue, including the use of new technology and wider use of the community skip initiative. Rather than singling out the blue bag scheme, members were advised that the amendment had sought to highlight and support the wider environmental and climate impact being achieved as a result of a wide range of initiatives with members assured that the blue bag scheme would continue to be reviewed moving forward in order to ensure it remained as effective as possible. In summing up, Councillor Krupa Sheth provided examples on the wide range of activities being progressed by the Council in addition to the recycling scheme, which included lobbying for a bottle deposit scheme, reducing the impact of paan spitting and littering as well as the efforts being made to seek an increase in funding from central government to support the range of initiatives outlined. Taken together it was felt this approach would best serve the borough in terms of creating a cleaner and greener future which she hoped all members would support, as a final outcome of the debate.

Having thanked members for their contributions, the Mayor then moved to the vote on the motion moved as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate starting with the amendment moved by the Labour Group. The amendment, as set out above, was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

The Mayor then moved on to put the substantive motion, as amended, to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion as the outcome of the non-cabinet member debate:

“<u>Making our Borough Clean and Safe</u>

This Council notes:

A major issue of upmost importance to Brent Council is the general condition of our area. Residents are increasingly frustrated that a small minority of individuals disregard their streets and use them for rubbish and illegal fly tipping. As ward councillors we are receiving daily updates from local people about dumping in the Borough, and we work tirelessly with Council Officers to resolve these enquiries and prevent the problem from getting worse.

This includes large fly tips in hotspot locations that have been identified by the Council for a considerable time, but with limited resources it is an ongoing battle for our environmental enforcement teams to tackle. Nonetheless we do ensure that proactive action is taken to prevent further ongoing dumping at these sites.

In some areas of the borough ‘paan spitting’ continues to be a major problem local people are forced to contend with. The Councils campaigns to reduce unsightly, unhygienic mess caused by this bad habit will encourage behaviour change.

Rubbish on our streets contributes to how people view the area and can have a knock-on effect in terms of further Anti-Social Behaviour in the community.

A key priority of this local authority must be to address to scourge of fly tipping and crack down forcefully on those who continue to disrespect our community.

The new Waste Service Contract with Veolia is in place, and it is crucial that the company are held to account in delivering the set-out terms of their contract, particularly around targets on street cleansing.

The roll out of the new blue bags recycling service has already led to a 50% increase in the tonnage of paper and cardboard collected in the first month. While the scheme requires residents to adjust to the new regime more blue bin bags are already being collected without contamination, with a record low of 1% contamination. There is a risk of local people losing confidence in the Climate Emergency Strategy should we choose to do nothing to improve the revised recycling system and increase levels of recycling.

It is likely that the new system will result in the Council’s stated aim of increasing the boroughs overall recycling rate.

Prioritising making our borough clean will have a positive effect on the way people feel about where they live and how others who visit Brent view our area.

Therefore, this Council believes:

1. Keeping local streets clean and free of rubbish must be a continued focus, particularly in light of increased dumping locally.

2. The best way to discourage illegal behaviour is by a programme of mass fining and continuing a zero-tolerance approach to rubbish on our streets and in our open spaces and paan spitting.

3. The Brent Connects areas ensure Enforcement Teams are not overly stretched so that a targeted approach is deployed in hotspot fly tipping locations – such as deployment of additional resources in Wembley and Alperton.

4. It is possible to change behaviours and educate people about how to treat our streets and opens spaces, through well run, targeted and engaging education campaigns.

5. Volunteers who spend hours every week trying to keep our borough clean and tidy must be commended for the work that they do and assisted wherever possible by the Council.

The blue bag scheme will be reviewed in 2024 with improvements to be considered by Cabinet and the recommendations by Scrutiny looked at again.

This Council therefore resolves to call on the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action:

1. To make a non commercially sensitive version of the new Waste Service Contract with Veolia publicly available to enable effective scrutiny of the company and so that we can be confident that they are meeting the set-out terms of their contract with Brent.

2. To continue to work with partners across the Council and with outside agencies to identify additional resource to assist the existing Waste Enforcement teams across the borough in delivering effective enforcement against those who continue to disrespect our area.

3. Where additional resource is needed to scope the possibility of employing apprentices to work alongside Neighbourhood Managers and Enforcement Teams in fly tipping hotspot locations in the borough.

4. Subject to further engagement work, to work with the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture, to undertake an internal review of the Brent Connects areas, particularly the Wembley Connects area, to see whether splitting them into smaller geographical areas can help with more effective, targeted waste enforcement work.

5. To continue the education campaign including door to door communications about the Council's renewed focus on dealing with rubbish dumping and fly tipping in the area, this will include details of fines individuals would face if caught not adhering to the law.

6. To ensure that until the New Year all blue bins are emptied according to criteria and scheduled times published in residents' calendars. The Council will instruct the contractor to ensure that blue bags are not thrown about and that all bins are returned to the correct location. Above all the Cabinet will consider the feedback from residents and the emerging data from the roll out to consider all options that will support residents with recycling more cardboard and paper utilising the Capital budget of £1.6 million which has been allocated for this.

7. To lobby the government regarding the possibility of introducing a long awaited deposit scheme for cans and bottles, which would discourage dumping in our area.

8. To work with other London local authorities to gain insight on best practice around dealing with ongoing rubbish and fly tipping issues that are sadly prevalent in some areas in the capital.

9. To continue our ongoing work with the Mayor of London to ensure areas in our borough under his jurisdiction are kept clean and safe, including TfL land.

10. To write to Government urging that they consider banning the sale of paan, or at the very least require businesses who sell it to have a License.

11. To write to Government about the ongoing fly tipping problems in Brent and request additional funding to support renewed efforts to get to grips with this issue."

15. **Statement of Gambling Principles 2024-2027**

The Mayor invited Councillor Farah, as Cabinet Member for Safer Communities & Public Protection, to introduce a report from the Corporate Director Resident Services setting out the Statement of Gambling Principles, which it was noted there was requirement (under the Gambling Act 2005) for all local authorities designated as a Licensing Authority to keep under review, prepare and publish every three years.

In introducing the report members were advised that as part of the Statement each Licensing Authority was expected to outline local issues, priorities and risks that would be used to inform their approach and policy for dealing with applications and regulating gambling premises, with the draft updated Statement for Brent having been detailed within Appendix 1 of the report. In preparing the Statement of Principles members were advised each authority would also be required to reflect current regulations and have regard to the Gambling Commission's guidance, with concerns expressed at the limitations this placed on Licensing Authorities in terms of relevant matters that could be taken into consideration as part of this process and when considering licensing applications for gambling premises given they prevented decisions being considered on public health and moral grounds as well as on the basis of demand. In noting that the draft Statement of Principles had been subject to an extensive consultation process, as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report, disappointment was expressed at the current legislative position with local authorities felt to be best placed to make decisions on the impact in relation to the assessment of relevant policy considerations when considering applications for gambling premises in their area.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Farah for introducing the report and then opened the debate for contributions from other members.

In supporting the concerns highlighted regarding the limitations currently placed on the relevant matters that could be taken into account when considering applications in relation to gambling premises, Councillor Lorber also felt it important to recognise the role of the current and previous governments in supporting de-regulation of the gambling industry, with a need highlighted for the Council to take a strong stance in seeking to oppose these type of licenses.

Councillor Nerva, in supporting the frustrations expressed regarding the limitations placed on Licensing Authorities in being able to oppose applications relating to gambling premises within the borough, felt it important to highlight that these were also shared by a majority of local residents who recognised the serious harm and nuisance being caused as a result of gambling centres operating within their local areas. Highlighting that the lack of control was even more serious in relation to online gambling he hoped that a future government would be more willing to address the issues raised working with local authorities and the health services in order to provide a more joined up approach.

In supporting the wider concerns raised, Councillor Grahl felt it important to also recognise the work undertaken to prepare the revised draft Statement particularly the focus which had been included under Objective 3 in terms of the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Councillor Miller also spoke to highlight his support for the approach adopted within the Statement and Council's stance in seeking to oppose (as strongly as possible) applications from gambling premises within the borough. At the same time concern was expressed regarding the lack of support provided for Licensing Authorities by the government who had failed to seek reform of the current legislation which he felt required a more responsible approach in order to address.

In sharing the frustrations and concerns identified, particularly given the number of licenced gambling and Adult Gaming premises currently operating within his ward, Councillor Kelcher highlighted the impact these were having not only in terms of local town centres and high streets but also on local communities in relation to the harm and anti-social behaviour associated with gambling activity. Whilst fully supportive of the Statement and approach adopted by the Council (as Licensing Authority) in seeking to oppose these type of premises operating in the borough, Councillor Kelcher felt more support was required from the government in terms of the legislation enabling the issues to be addressed as a public health consideration supported by relevant planning and licensing policy.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Maurice, whilst recognising the concerns which had been expressed during the debate also felt it important to highlight the need to ensure that national policy provided a consistent approach towards the gambling industry supported with, for example, proper regulation of the profits being generated as a result.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor thanked members for their contribution and invited Councillor Farah to exercise his right of reply. In closing the debate, Councillor Farah thanked members for their support and highlighted the work being undertaken involving a wide range of community organisations to continue lobbying for a change in the way the current licensing policy operated in relation to gambling given the lack of focus on regulation by the current government since an initial review had been announced in 2020 and the ongoing impact of the gambling sector lobbying to prevent reform. In recognising the concerns highlighted, Councillor Farah ended by commending the draft Statement of Principles to members on the basis it had been designed to continue seeking to protect, as far as was possible within the limitations of current regulations, local communities and individuals from the harm and anti-social behaviour associated with gambling activity.

Having thanked Councillor Farah for closing the debate, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** following its referral by Cabinet on 16 November 2023, to approve formal sign off and adoption of the revised Statement of Gambling Principles (31 January 2022 – 31 January 2025) as set out within Appendix 1 of the report.

16. **Changes to the Constitution**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council, to introduce a report from the Corporate Director of Governance outlining a number of proposed changes to the Constitution. In introducing the report, it was noted that the changes related to speaking rights for public organisations, such as the Police, at Planning Committee and the Council's Procurement Rules.

The Mayor thanked the Leader for introducing the report and then opened the debate for contributions from other members.

Referring to the changes proposed in relation to speaking rights at Planning Committee meetings, Councillor Lorber also took the opportunity to highlight what he felt was an additional need to consider allowing members of the public who had spoken in objection to an application the ability to sum up at the end of the associated debate, prior to any final decision being made by the Committee. Based on experience, he felt this would further enhance public engagement and participation in the process.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor invited Councillor Muhammed Butt to exercise his right of reply. In closing the debate, Councillor Muhammed Butt took the opportunity to remind members of the role and function of the Constitutional Working Group which he advised would be the appropriate forum to undertake consideration (on a cross-party basis) of any further suggestions relating to public speaking rights at meetings, reminding members of what he felt were the extensive arrangements already in place in relation to Planning Committee. On this basis, he commended the report as submitted to the Council.

Having thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for closing the debate, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED**:

(1) To approve the amendments to the Constitution as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report relating to speaking rights at Planning Committee (Standing Order 57) and the Procurement Rules within Contract Standing Orders.

(2) Following on from (1) above, to authorise the Corporate Director of Governance to amend the Constitution accordingly, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.

(3) To note that, to the extent that the changes related to executive functions of the Council, they had been approved by the Leader.

17. **Motions**

Before moving on to consider the motions listed on the summons, the Mayor advised members that a total of 40 minutes had been set aside for the consideration of the four motions submitted for debate, based on an initial allocation of 10 minutes per motion. Should the time taken to consider the first motion be less than 10 minutes she advised that the remaining time available would be rolled forward for consideration of the remaining motions.

17.1 1st Motion (Conservative Group) – Expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ): Don't Punish Brent Drivers

The Mayor invited Councillor Jayanti Patel to move the first motion which had been submitted on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Jayanti Patel began by providing context to the motion which had been focussed on concerns regarding the expansion of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its previous boundary along the North and South Circular Road to cover the whole of London, including all of Brent. This expansion, he felt, had caused a significant impact on local residents and businesses especially for those with non-compliant vehicles not eligible or able to take advantage of the existing limited scrappage scheme and who continued to rely on their vehicles for employment, social use or to take advantage of local businesses and high streets who were being forced to pay the charge to drive within the ULEZ. In addition, Councillor Patel felt there was a need to recognise the regressive nature of the charge, not only in terms of the less well-off being disproportionately penalised but also in terms of residents unable to afford the charge having to rely on what he felt to be inadequate levels of public transport in many areas.

The motion, he pointed out, also sought to challenge the science behind the expansion as an anti-pollution and environmental protection measure with the scheme, in his view, designed purely as a means of generating additional income to address the significant gap in TfL funding during the current the Mayor of London's tenure. Highlighting the financial and social impact on local residents and lack of what he regarded as realistic alternatives, such as an acceptable scrappage scheme, Councillor Patel advised the motion was seeking support to abolish the ULEZ expansion with the funding released as a result used to fund other measures which it was felt would have a more positive impact on residents in Brent and across London including faster upgrade to a zero-emission bus fleet, increasing the roll out of rapid electric vehicle charging points, encouraging more freight consolidation schemes, reinstating the Boiler Cashback Scheme and providing a fairer and more generous scrappage scheme for non- compliant vehicles.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Jayanti Patel for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

In opening the debate, Councillor Grahl queried the challenge made to the science supporting expansion of the ULEZ given figures provided by the World Health Organisation in relation to the percentage of children now exposed to air pollution and associated damaging health impacts. Rather than seeking to deny the impact of climate change or criticise the Mayor of London for his efforts to protect the health of those living within the borough and across London, particularly children, Councillor Grahl in opposing the motion felt the more responsible approach would be to support the efforts being led through initiatives such as expansion of the ULEZ to improve air quality and protect health.

Councillor Krupa Sheth also speaking against the motion felt it important to recognise the difficult nature of the decisions which had needed to be made in relation to expansion of the ULEZ but which were already making a significant difference in addressing air quality highlighting, as an example, the increase in vehicle compliance across outer London and across London as a whole with ULEZ

emission standards since the scheme's introduction and expansion. Highlighting the cost to Council taxpayers of the unsuccessful legal challenge against the ULEZ expansion supported by a number of Conservative led outer London Boroughs, it was felt the stance taken by the Mayor of London had sought to place the health of residents over those who continued to pollute with the motion containing no new ideas in seeking to address the climate emergency. Recognising the impact achieved in reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide since introduction of the ULEZ as well as highlighting and expressing support for the continued expansion of eligibility for the scrappage scheme, Councillor Krupa Sheth urged all members to reject the motion in support of providing a cleaner and greener future for Brent's residents.

In highlighting the importance and ongoing attempts made by the current and the previous Mayor of London to address air quality and pollution, Councillor Lorber felt the most appropriate means of addressing the concerns highlighted would be for the current government to properly finance and support expansion and introduction of a more generous scrappage scheme and for these reasons advised he would also not be supporting the motion.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Kansagra felt that the expansion of ULEZ had not represented a serious attempt to address the environmental and health issues highlighted but instead supported the view that it had involved the introduction of a regressive income generation scheme where those who could afford to pay the charge were able to continue polluting. Given the significant impact on local residents, he encouraged members to support the motion.

As there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak the Mayor then invited Councillor Jayanti Patel to exercise his right of reply. In summing up Councillor Patel once again highlighted what he felt to be the significant and unfair impact arising from expansion of ULEZ by the Mayor of London on local residents and businesses, many of whom he pointed out were already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. In support of the motion, he outlined the choice available to residents in the upcoming Mayoral election in seeking to support abolition of the expanded ULEZ and on this basis commended the motion as moved to members.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor then moved on to put the motion, as set out below, to a vote which was declared **LOST** and not therefore approved**.**

"<u>Expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) – Don't Punish Brent Drivers</u>

This Council notes that:

1. On 4th March 2022 the Mayor of London announced his plan to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its current boundary of the North and South Circular Roads to cover almost all of Greater London. Despite the best efforts of Londoners, the Mayor of London (Sadiq Khan) pushed through and expanded the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) on 29th August 2023 to all cover the whole of London.

2. Whilst the ULEZ was originally introduced covering the same area and with the same boundaries as the Congestion Charge Zone it was expanded on 25th October 2021 by 18 times its original size to its previous boundaries before the further expansion on 29th August 2023. The ramifications of this significant change are being felt in outer London Boroughs with the full extent still to be assessed. It goes without saying that the Mayor of London is on an anti-car rampage and won't be satisfied until we are "all out of cars"!

3. The expansion of ULEZ means that those with non-compliant vehicles are paying £12.50 per day to drive within the ULEZ. Residents are being forced to pay more to get to work, attend hospital appointments, visit friends and family and are not being able to take advantage of local businesses and high streets. This is costing jobs with essential workers such as doctors, nurses, care workers, teachers who rely on their vehicles also affected, especially those working nights who rely on use of their cars. ULEZ is damaging the social fabric of our local area, and many businesses have been forced to locate elsewhere or plan to close.

4. The ULEZ is a regressive tax, as the less well-off are disproportionately penalised. The expansion has also meant many more areas with poor public transport have been included within the zone which is fundamentally unfair as those residents unable to afford to keep or replace their car are being forced to rely on inadequate levels of public transport.

5. It is disappointing, but not at all surprising, that the Mayor of London has left a black hole in TfL's finances and the Labour Mayor now expects millions of families to foot the bill with an exorbitant £12.50 daily charge.

6. Drivers have paid an estimated £52 million in levies and fines in the first month of the ULEZ expansion. £52 million paid out of the pockets of the poorest Londoners is a disgrace with the scheme nothing more than a tax and money-making scheme and nothing to do with protecting environment.

7. During his time in office as Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has accumulated enough air miles to fly around the world fourteen times. He even chose to fly to Argentina for a hybrid meeting. All this whilst charging Londoners more and more to use their cars! That can't be right.

8. The science behind the expansion and other anti-pollution measures more generally is a case of pay your money, pick your scientist. Sadiq Khan has pointed towards figures suggesting ULEZ reduced Nitrous Oxide levels by more than a quarter in its first six months but a team at Imperial College. London looked at the data and suggested they fell by just 3%. Lies, damn lies, and emissions statistics.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan's suggestion that a majority of voters back his crusade to tackle air pollution and that backing ULEZ places him on "the right side of history" and might work as a long-term strategy, is a fantasy.

As a result of the concerns highlighted this Council believes that:

1. Measures such as ULEZ which have been backed by the Labour leadership nationally, push up the cost of living in Brent by imposing taxes and charges on residents who rely on motor vehicles without providing them with realistic alternatives should continue to be opposed.

2. The £400 million set aside by the Mayor of London for the expansion of ULEZ and related projects would have been better spent on measures that would have a more positive impact on residents in Brent and across London such as

    - a faster upgrade to a zero-emission bus fleet.
    - increasing the roll out of rapid electric vehicle charging points.
    - encouraging more freight consolidation schemes.
    - bringing back the previous Boiler Cashback Scheme to encourage Londoners to upgrade their boilers to reduce household emissions.
    - financing a generous scrappage scheme to support Londoners in replacing their non-compliant vehicles.

Therefore, this Council resolves to call on the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan outlining the concerns set out within the motion and crippling impact of the ULEZ tax on residents in Brent."

17.2 2nd Motion (Liberal Democrats Group) - Making our Voting System Fairer and More Representative

The Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to move the second motion which had been submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group. In moving the motion Councillor Georgiou, began by outlining what he felt had been recognised as the unfair and outdated nature of the current First Past the Post electoral system and one that was no longer fit for purpose within a modern democracy. Highlighting the growing consensus that the UK's voting system needed to change, which had been supported by the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Green Party along with a host of Trade Unions and pro-democracy organisations, he advised that the motion had been designed to support this process and move towards Proportional Representation (PR) as a more consensual and pragmatic way of conducting politics that valued all votes cast equally. In recognising the extensive use of PR across other democracies the benefits provided in terms of those elected better reflecting the communities they represented were also outlined along with the opportunity to enhance decision making, encourage wider participation and provide renewed confidence in the current political system. In urging all members to support the motion and join with other local authorities supporting calls for a change to the UK's voting system, Councillor Georgiou ended by highlighting the opportunity such a change would present to move forward in the aftermath of the current Conservative government and deliver the type of government which it was felt the majority of British people now wanted to see.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Georgiou for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

Speaking against the proposed change being sought within the motion, Councillor Maurice opened the debate by highlighting concerns at the impact he felt the introduction of PR would have in enabling more extremist political parties to gain an

element of power with damaging consequences on community relations. Referring to the opportunity already provided to support a change in electoral system through the Alternative Vote referendum held during the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in May 2011, which had been lost, Councillor Maurice pointed out that whilst no electoral system was perfect the current arrangements, in his view, did at least provide a more stable form of government than any coalition.

Also speaking in opposition to the motion, Councillor Rubin outlined what he felt to be the advantage of the current First Past the Post electoral system in terms of clearer democratic accountability around delivery of political manifestos and commitments. This compared to the type of electoral outcome provided through PR often involving the formation of coalitions between parties and the associated compromise which, he felt, could be seen as less democratic. As an example, Councillor Rubin ended by referring to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government following the election in 2010 and the impact compromises made in the process of forming that government had delivered in terms of tuition fees and the start of austerity.

Supporting the concerns raised about the impact of the Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition, which he accepted had not provided a strong example of coalition government, Councillor Miller advised that he was minded to support the change being sought within the motion given the stance taken towards the proposal by the Labour Party at its recent Conference.

As a final contribution Councillor Kelcher also spoke in opposition to the motion, highlighting the fundamental importance in the electorate being able to hold their elected representatives to account. Whilst supporting the concept of all votes having equal value, concerns were raised that certain forms of PR (such as the Party List system) may adversely impact the link between the electorate and their representatives as well as enable more extremist political parties to gain power. In view of these concerns and on the basis that more clarity was needed in terms of the type of PR system being sought, Councillor Kelcher advised he would be opposing the motion.

As there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak and in view of thew remaining time available, the Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to exercise his right of reply. In summing up, Councillor Georgiou felt it was important to recognise the fragile state of democracy in the UK, with confidence in politics at a record low. As a result, he hoped members would join him in supporting the motion in seeking a change in the voting system to guarantee that every vote counted equally as a means of fairness, increasing participation and inspiring renewed confidence in the current political system.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor then moved to put the motion, as set out below, to a vote which was declared **LOST** and not therefore approved**.**

“<u>Making our Voting System Fairer and More Representative</u>

This Council believes:

The next General Election is an opportunity to take our country on a different course after years of chaotic Tory rule. This is especially true in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, which saw the UK crash out of the European Union, with a bad deal, that has left us diminished, poorer and less important on the world stage. The next General Election will be fought under the antiquated First Past the Post voting system.

First Past the Post (FPTP) originated when land-owning aristocrats dominated parliament and voting was restricted to property-owning men. It is not fit for a 'modern democracy'.

In Europe, only the UK and authoritarian Belarus still use archaic single-round FPTP for general elections. This produces governments that have typically not had strong support across the country.

Internationally, Proportional Representation (PR) is used to elect the Parliaments of more than 80 countries. It is a system that works and has fostered a more consensual, pragmatic way of conducting politics and policy making.

PR ensures that all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast. Under PR, MPs and Parliaments better reflect the age, gender and protected characteristics of both local communities and of the nation. Whilst the UK has taken leaps forwards in terms of electing a more diverse Parliament, we are still behind many other countries.

MPs better reflecting the communities they represent in turn leads to improved decision making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership of decisions taken. PR would also end minority rule. In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power. Fair, proportional votes also prevent 'wrong winner' elections such as occurred in 1951 and February 1974.

PR is now the national policy of the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, SNP, Plaid Cymru and Women's Equality Party along with a host of Trade Unions and pro-democracy organisations.

There is a growing consensus that the UK's voting system must change.

PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its use should now be extended to include Westminster and considered at a local level too.

Our democracy is in a fragile state, with confidence in politics at a record low. Changing the voting system to guarantee that every vote counts equally can help to inspire renewed confidence in our political system, increase participation and ensure that the electorate are able to elect the type of government that the majority of the British people want to see.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1) Join 29 other local authorities across the country, of different political persuasions, in supporting calls for a change to the UK's voting system to Proportional Representation.

2) Request that the Leader of the Council write to H.M. Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws and to enable Proportional Representation to be used for UK general elections and local Council elections.

3) Request that the Leader of the Council write to H.M Leader of the Opposition to encourage that the Labour Party include changing the electoral system in their next election manifesto."

17.3 3rd Motion (Labour Group) – Save our Services

The Mayor then invited Councillor Benea to move the first motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion Councillor Benea, began by referring to a quote made by Rishi Sunak when seeking election as the Conservative Party leader prior to becoming Prime Minister relating to changes he felt needed to be made in the way funding was being allocated to different parts of the country under the levelling up agenda. Whilst acknowledging the need for levelling up, which had been understood by the previous Labour Government, Councillor Benea felt the approach adopted by the Conservative government had been the exact opposite in terms of the programme of austerity imposed on local authorities and public services. As a result, Councillor Benea advised that the motion was seeking to highlight the concerns being expressed by not only the Labour Administration in Brent but also the LGA, London Council's and a range of other local authorities of different political persuasion regarding the perilous state of local government finances and failure of the government to address the fundamental reforms identified as required in moving towards a more long term and sustainable funding solution and away from the current model of ad-hoc bidding for funding whilst also recognising the impact of the reduction in central government funding and £210m of cuts that had needed to be delivered in Brent since austerity had begun. In commending the motion to members, Councillor Benea ended by outlining the five specific actions being sought from the government on which support was being sought as a means of saving services and which it was hoped would start to be addressed in the Chancellors upcoming Autum statement.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Benea for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

In support of Councillor Benea's opening statement, Councillor Tatler also took the opportunity to highlight the serious and challenging nature of the Council's current financial position, which it was pointed out had arisen as a result of the unprecedented pressures created by continued economic and financial uncertainty along with the rapidly increasing demand for services and reduction in government funding as a result of austerity since 2010. Highlighting the decrease in core funding provided by the government for local government (totalling 78%) and cumulative impact of the cuts which had needed to be made as a result within Brent (totalling £210m) since 2010, Councillor Tatler urged all members to support the motion which she pointed out was seeking to secure a fully funded, long term funding solution from the government and had recognised the difficult nature of decisions needing to be taken to deliver a financially sustainable and resilient

balanced budget given the ongoing uncertainty over future government funding whilst also seeking to safeguarded key services for residents.

In support of the concerns outlined, Councillor Knight highlighted the specific budgetary pressures being created as a result of the unprecedented increase currently being experienced in levels of homelessness and demand in relation to housing supply as well as the increase in costs for the provision of suitable Temporary Accommodation. In referring to the £400m shortfall in funding identified by London Councils for local authorities across London, members were advised that nearly £90m of this related to pressures on Temporary Accommodation with 9 in 10 boroughs expected to overspend on their budgets during the current financial year. Whilst Brent continued to deliver one of the highest levels of affordable new housing the increase in supply was not able to match current demand with, she pointed out, the Council having experienced a 22% increase in the number of residents presenting as homelessness when compared to last year and current economic conditions within the construction sector making it even more challenging to deliver major housing projects in a viable way. In support of the motion, Councillor Knight felt there was a need for the government to recognise the seriousness of the financial position faced by local government and to take the necessary action to address the shortfall in funding in order to support the delivery of new homes and services relied on by some many residents.

Whilst supportive of the need to identify a permanent solution that would provide the long-term sustainable funding required by local government Councillor Kansagra, as a further contribution to the debate, also highlighted the extent of funding which had already been provided by the government in different forms to support the ongoing delivery of services for residents, which he felt also needed to be recognised as part of the approach towards the debate. The comments made by Councillor Kansagra were also supported by Councillor Hirani who felt there was a need to focus on the current Administration's control and management of the budget when considering the current financial pressures and challenges faced rather than the way funding was being allocated centrally and with concerns expressed to avoid the need for any Section 114 notice to be issued as a result.

In challenging the previous comments made by members of the Conservative Group, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as a final contribution to the debate) highlighted, despite their claims to the contrary, what he felt had been the government's failure to address the need for reform of local government finance and to increase the core spending power for local government. In contrast, he outlined what he regarded as the prudent and sustainable way in which the Council had sought to manage its budget despite the significant financial pressures and challenges highlighted with the government, he pointed out, having sought to shift the subsequent financial burden onto local resident through use of Council Tax, having consistently declined other equitable alternatives to raise funding. Pointing out that Brent was currently one of only a small number of Council's nationally to have received assurance regarding the completion of its Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 Councillor Butt ended by outlining the measures being taken to continue supporting and safeguarding local residents despite the approach taken by the Conservative Government towards the funding of local authorities, which he advised he was proud to support in seeking to ensure no one was left behind whilst also delivering a well-managed and balanced budget.

As there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak and in view of the remaining time available, the Mayor then invited Councillor Benea to exercise her right of reply. In responding and closing the debate, Councillor Benea thanked members in their support for the motion whilst also expressing concern at the approach taken by the Conservative Group in their response. Highlighting the serious nature of the financial position faced by local government as a result of the government's approach towards its funding, she ended by commending the Council on the measures being taken to manage Brent's budget whilst also seeking to prioritise the protection of frontline services and support those residents most in need and on this basis hoped all members would support the motion as moved.

Having thanked all members for their contributions, the Mayor then put the motion, to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion:

"<u>Save our Services</u>

This Council notes:

- The ongoing campaign by both Unison and the Local Government Association highlighting the devastating impact of cuts and the £3.5bn shortfall in funding for the local services we all rely on every day.

- During the pandemic, councils spent billions of publicly accountable funds, to protect the most vulnerable residents – and now after 13 years of cuts, local services that were already stretched are at breaking point.

- Over the last thirteen years core funding from government has decreased by 78%. On top of the £210m of cuts made since 2010 we now must find a further £8m in cuts between 2024/25 and 2025/26.

- While funding has decreased, demand for our services has exponentially increased. There are now 800,000 more Londoner's and overall funding across the capital remains a fifth lower than 13 years ago.

- Rather than fully fund local government from the centre, successive Conservative Chancellors have moved the responsibility onto residents – using Council Tax, a tax aimed not at the wealth of the occupants but based on your property value as rated in 1991. The Government has consistently declined other equitable alternatives to raise funding.

- Successive Conservative Chancellors have insisted that Core Spending Power has increased in local government – but this metric is a smokescreen and reliant on all local authorities increasing Council Tax by the maximum amount.

- In a recently published study, London Councils, a cross-party organisation representing all 32 boroughs, has found that councils across the capital face a £400m shortfall in 2023. Of this figure, nearly £90m is due to unprecedented

pressures on Temporary Accommodation. They also found that 9 in 10 boroughs were expected to overspend on their budgets this year.

- The cross-party Local Government Association has published analysis ahead of the Chancellors Autumn Statement, showing that inflation has added £15 billion nationally to the cost of delivering council services in just 2 years.

- A survey of 47 local authorities in the SIGOMA group revealed that five are in the process of deciding whether to issue a Section 114 notice and a further nine councils may have to declare bankruptcy next year, with at least 12 other councils across the country also considering issuing a section 114 notice in 23/24.

This Council also notes:

- Over the last 13 years of austerity, difficult decisions have been taken to allow this council to pass a legally balanced budget each year. In doing so, funding has been directed to protect frontline statutory services and ensure no resident is left behind – with to date, £14.5m invested in the Residents Support Fund and £32m dedicated to our Council Tax Support Scheme each year.

- Sadly, Brent like authorities up and down the UK, is experiencing an unprecedented demand for housing, driven by spiralling rents, catalysed by high interest rates.

- If demand continues at the same rate, the housing needs service will receive a total of 7,700 applications this financial year, an average of 148 applications every week, the highest it has ever been.

- In the last year, we saw more new homes built in Brent than anywhere else in the country. In contrast Liberal Democrat controlled Richmond, Kingston and Sutton built less than 200 between them.

- Yet our increased supply cannot keep pace with unparalleled demand, with a 22% increase in the number of residents presenting as homelessness, when compared to last year.

- The Chair of the G15 group of major housing associations has said that the capital is now facing the “worst situation” in regards to housing, ever seen. With inflation in the construction sector running at between 25% and 43% many major projects will need to be paused to await more favourable economic conditions.

- The seriousness of the Council’s financial position cannot be understated. Fulfilling our statutory duty to support those at risk of homelessness has driven a potential overspend estimated by officers at £13m.

- As a result, we are bringing in additional spending controls across the council to help balance our budget this year. These sensible, proactive and prudent

measures will ensure vital services are safeguarded at the same time as protecting our financial position.

This Council believes:

- Austerity was always a political choice not an economic necessity.

- The government should be held accountable for its role in every Section 114 notice issued by councils of all political colours across the country.

- It is the essential role of all Councillors to set a balanced budget, which ensures the long-term sustainability of this council.

This Council welcomes:

- The recommendations of Labour's Commission on the UK's future, chaired by Gordon Brown, setting out a plan for what Labour would do for local government – bringing decisions closer to the people affected by them; and with longer-term financial settlements, moving away from a model of ad-hoc bidding for funding pots.

- The Leader of the Labour Party's recent comments outlining how a Labour government would fix how councils are funded and move away from short-term funding settlements. In contrast, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said "it was up to councils to manage their own finances".

This Council resolves:

1) To request that the Leaders of all Group's should write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and call on the government to take responsibility for providing the long-term sustainable funding that councils so desperately need.

2) To ensure that budget proposals taken by Brent Council prioritise the protection of frontline services and the support available to residents most in need.

3) To support London Councils five-point plan to address the housing crisis in the capital:

    - Raising Local Housing Allowance (LHA)
    - Supporting councils to buy accommodation sold by private landlords
    - Boost Homelessness Prevention Grant funding
    - Increase Discretionary Housing Payments
    - Bring forward a cross-departmental strategy to reduce homelessness."

17.4 4th Motion (Labour Group) – Lift the Ban

The Mayor then invited Councillor Moeen to move the second and final motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion Councillor Moeen, began by highlighting the collective effort being coordinated through the "Lift the Ban" coalition in advocating for the right to work for people seeking asylum in the UK who

were currently prohibited from doing so whilst awaiting a decision on their asylum applications. Highlighting the impact of the ban in restricting the ability of those affected to support not only themselves and their families but also in undermining their dignity and self-worth the approach was also seen as detrimental towards society and the economy as a whole, given it denied those same individuals the ability to contribute and share their skills, knowledge, and potential which would not only enhance integration and provide a sense of purpose but also help alleviate the associated burden on public funds.

In addition, Councillor Moeen advised that the motion sought to recognise how lifting the ban would align with the UK's commitment to human rights and international obligations in terms satisfying the right to work and free choice of employment which she felt were principles to be recognised, in addition to the concept of equality, fairness, and the empowerment of all individuals regardless of their background or immigration status, in supporting a fair and inclusive society. As such, she ended by commending the motion to all members in support of the solution being sought by the Lift the Ban" coalition in seeking to stand up to inequality and grant people seeking asylum the right to work after a maximum waiting period of six months.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Moeen for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson opened the debate by expressing concern at the Government's current stance towards Asylum Seekers and prolonged delay in tackling the backlog of asylum applications directly impacting on the dignity and right to work of those affected and the contribution they were able to make not only in terms of supporting themselves and their families but also in terms of their health, wellbeing and broader contribution and integration towards society. Highlighting Brent's proud history of embracing individuals seeking safety and recognising and valuing the diverse nature of communities who had settled within the borough, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson advised that she welcomed the motion which she hoped all members would support.

Echoing the comments previously made, Councillor Nerva also spoke in support of the motion highlighting the valuable contribution he felt those seeking asylum could make in areas such as the health and social care sector if they were able to contribute and share their knowledge, skills, resilience and potential rather than being denied the opportunity to work by the government.

As further contributions in support of the motion, Councillor Ahmadi-Moghaddam in outlining concern at what he felt to be the unacceptable way in which Asylum Seekers were being treated by the government commended the efforts being made by charities and other organisations such as the "Lift the Ban" coalition to champion the rights of those seeking refuge within the UK in order to promote integration and avoid those individuals failing into impoverishment, isolation and exploitation with the need to address the recent damaging rhetoric of individuals within the government also highlighted. These concerns were also supported by Councillor Ethapemi, who queried the stance being taken by the government in seeking to challenge international law and longstanding commitments and obligations contained within the Human Rights Convention as a result of its Rwandan policy

and lack of what he felt was any credible and compassionate alternative immigration policy.

As a final contribution, Councillor Kansagra advised that whilst commending the sentiment behind the motion and keen to welcome and support those genuinely seeking refuge he also felt there was a need to recognise the need for the asylum process to be properly managed and shared across the international community.

As there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak and in view of the remaining time available within the block allocated for the motions, the Mayor then invited Councillor Moeen to exercise her right of reply who, in closing the debate, once again urged all members to support the motion and campaign by the "Lift the Ban" coalition. Recognising the comments made during the debate she ended by calling on members to be guided by their compassion, empathy, and fairness in seeking to champion the rights of people seeking asylum, promote integration, and foster a more inclusive society as a way of securing a brighter future for all.

Having once again thanked all members for their contributions, the Mayor then put the motion, to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion:

"<u>Lift the Ban</u>

This Council notes that:

- Brent has a proud history of embracing individuals seeking safety within our borough. Our diverse community of communities has contributed to the values which make Brent the open and welcoming borough it is today.

- The Conservative Government's attitude towards asylum seekers is unacceptable. It seeks to demonise families who have come to the UK for safety and a better life. This is reflected in both the UK-Rwanda partnership, which will criminalise refugees and threaten them with removal to Rwanda. It is also seen in the recent rhetoric of the Home Secretary who has said that multiculturalism has "failed".

- The government's approach can be seen in the significant problems with the UK asylum system, with over 700 individuals residing indefinitely in hotels in Brent while awaiting the outcome of their application to remain. There is a record backlog of cases awaiting a decision alongside a de facto ban on working, all of which leads to a circle of impoverishment.

- Since 2002, people seeking asylum have only been able to apply for the right to work after they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over a year, and only if they can be employed into one of the narrow, highly-skilled professions included on the government's Shortage Occupation List.

- That people seeking asylum are left to live on £5.39 per day, struggling to support themselves and their families, and left vulnerable to destitution, isolation, and exploitation.

- The potential for economic gain of millions of pounds to the UK via increased taxable income and reduced payments of accommodation and subsistence support is foregone.

This Council believes that:

- The Home Secretary's view that multiculturalism has failed is an insult to the residents that have built their lives in Brent and contributed to this borough.

- People seeking asylum want to be able to work so that they can use their skills and make the most of their potential, integrate into their communities, and provide for themselves and their families.

- Restrictions on the right to work can lead to extremely poor mental health outcomes, a waste of potentially invaluable talents and skills for the economy, and greater poverty and homelessness in Brent.

- Allowing people seeking asylum the right to work would therefore lead to positive outcomes for the local and national economy.

- The UK needs an asylum system that empowers people seeking safety to rebuild their lives and enables communities to welcome them, not to isolate them.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1) Join the Lift the Ban Coalition (led by refugee action), which is campaigning to restore the right to work for everyone waiting for more than 6 months for a decision on their asylum claim.

2) Request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Home Secretary to request that:

    - People seeking asylum and the right to work should be unconstrained by the shortage occupation list, after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim or further submission.

    - The Home Office work with local authorities and communities to build a refugee protection system that treats all people with dignity and compassion.

    - Financial support be made available for councils like Brent, that will have more refugees that require wraparound support with housing, upon being awarded the right to remain.

    - The Home Secretary apologise for describing rough sleeping as a "lifestyle choice." There are at least 1.5 million people residing in the UK

that have no recourse to public funds, many facing homelessness and many whose visa status has not been determined."

18. **Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business raised at the meeting so the Mayor, in closing the meeting, thanked all members for their co-operation and support and advised that she looked forward to seeing everyone again in person at the next Full Council which would be the budget setting meeting on Thursday 29 February 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.36 pm

COUNCILLOR ORLEEN HYLTON
Mayor

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Full Council – 29 February 2024

Agenda Item 5 – Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

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Standing Order 30(g) states that, if necessary, Full Council is required to agree appointments to committees and outside bodies. In addition to the changes listed Council is being asked to confirm the appointment of an Independent Person

Such appointments are set out below:

Cabinet Membership

Council is asked to note that **following her return from maternity leave on Monday 11 March 2024** the Leader of the Council has reappointed Councillor Mili Patel to resume her role as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform.

Committee Appointments

1. Council is asked to confirm the appointment of The Venerable Archdeacon Catherine Pickford to fill the vacancy as the Church of England Statutory co-opted member on the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee for a period of 2 years (subject to confirmation of the ongoing appointment at the Annual Council meeting each year)

2. Following Councillor Mili Patel's return from maternity leave Council is asked, **from Monday 11 March 2024**:

a. To confirm the appointment of Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Harbi Farah as a full member on the General Purposes Committee with Councillor Harbi Farah to replace the existing vacancy as a substitute member & Councillor Mili Patel to be reappointed as Vice-Chair on the Committee.

2. To confirm the appointment of Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as a full member on the Health & Wellbeing Board.

3. To note that the Leader of the Council has reappointed Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as full member and Brent's Chair of the Joint Borough IT Committee Brent, Lewisham & Southwark.

4. To note that the Leader of the Council has appointed Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Knight as a full member on the Barham Park Trust Committee with Councillor Knight to replace the existing vacancy as substitute member.

Outside Bodies:

1. To confirm Councillor Mili Patel replacing Councillor Shama Tatler as deputy on the London Council's Leaders Committee.

2. To note that the Leader of the Council has appointed Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as deputy on the London Council's Greater London Employment Forum.

3. To note that the Leader of the Council has appointed Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson as Brent's full representative on the London Council's Grants Committee with Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson appointed as deputy.

	Full Council 29 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
	Lead Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)

Budget and Council Tax 2024/25

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
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:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Minesh Patel Corporate Director of Finance and Resources Email: Minesh.Patel@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 6528 Rav Jassar Deputy Director of Finance Email: Ravinder.Jassar@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1487

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. Since the Cabinet meeting on 5 February 2024, Appendices A and B and Tables 1 and 2 have been updated to reflect the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and Public Health Grant allocations. Other minor updates have been made to Appendix C(ii) - Cumulative Equalities Impact Assessment, Appendix N - Consultation responses and Section 8 (Housing Revenue Account).

1.3. 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.

1.4. 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.

1.5. 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.

1.6. 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.

1.7. 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.

1.8. 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.

1.9. 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.

1.10. 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.

1.11. 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

1.12. 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.

1.13. 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).

1.14. 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)

2.1. 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.

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

2.3. Agree 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. 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.

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

2.8. 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.

2.9. 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.

2.10. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Council Tax recommendations

2.17. 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) £1,099,616,055 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.

(b) £937,554,302 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.

2.18. 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

2.19. 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

2.20. 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 (January 2024) 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 (January 2024) stands at 4.9%. 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 in 2023/24 is around £32m per annum and will rise to £34m in 2024/25.
- **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. 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 will also receive a number of one-off grants totalling £1.9m. These include a Guaranteed Funding Payment of £1.28m, which ensures authorities receive a minimum 4% increase in funding (before council tax decisions) and Service Grant of £0.62m, down 83% on the 2024/25 allocation. 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 material change to the budget assumptions as a result of this announcement.

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. 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 will also receive a number of one-off grants totalling £1.9m. These include a Guaranteed Funding Payment of £1.28m, which ensures authorities receive a minimum 4% increase in funding (before council tax decisions) and Service Grant of £0.62m, down 83% on the 2024/25 allocation. 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 material change to the budget assumptions as a result of this announcement.

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	**2025/26**
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	14,568	3,717
Grand Total	**33,014**	**17,931**

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	142.2
Children and Young People	73.4	74.6
Communities and Regeneration	5.5	5.5
Finance and Resources	12.1	13.9
Resident Services	84.3	84.3
Governance	14.3	14.2
Total Service Area Budgets	**331.0**	**334.8**
Central Budgets	55.9	60.2
Total Budget Requirement	**387.0**	**395.0**
Funding		
Business Rates	(114.2)	(117.5)
Revenue Support Grant	(30.9)	(31.8)
Specific Grants	(79.9)	(75.7)
Council Tax	(162.1)	(169.9)
Total Funding	**(387.0)**	**(395.0)**

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. Communal heating for 36 properties in Pharamond comprise of liquid fuel usage. The average service charge is proposed at £24.61 per week to recover estimated cost in 2024/25, a reduction on previous year service charge by 55%, reflecting updated cost estimates based on actual cost incurred.

8.16. 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

8.17. 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

8.18. 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.

8.19. 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

8.20. 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.

8.21. 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

8.22. 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**

8.23. 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.

8.24. 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.

8.25. 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.

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

8.27. 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

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**	
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
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

8.28. 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.

8.29. 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.

8.30. 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

8.31. 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

8.32. 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.

8.33. 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.

8.34. 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

8.35. 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.

8.36. 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%

8.37. 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)

8.38. 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.

8.39. 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

8.40. 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.

Schools and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

8.41. 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)

8.42. 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.

8.43. 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.

8.44. 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.

8.45. 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.

8.46. 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.

8.47. 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.

8.48. 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.

8.49. 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.

8.50. 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)

8.51. 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%.

8.52. 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.

8.53. 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.

8.54. 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.

8.55. 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.

8.56. 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

8.57. 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.

8.58. 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).

8.59. 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.

8.60. 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.

8.61. 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.

9.0 Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

9.1. 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.

10.0 Capital Programme Budget 2023/24 – 2028/29

10.1. 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.

10.2. 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.

10.3. 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.

10.4. 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.

10.5. 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.

10.6. 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.

10.7. 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.

10.8. 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**

10.9. 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.

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

Corporate Landlord

Civic Centre

10.11. 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

10.12. 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

10.13. £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

10.14. 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

10.15. 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

10.16. 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.

10.17. 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.

10.18. 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

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

10.20. 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.

10.21. 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.

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

Public Realm

10.23. 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.

10.24. 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

10.25. 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)

10.26. 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

10.27. 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.

10.28. 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

10.29. 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.

10.30. 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

10.31. 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.

10.32. 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

10.33. 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

10.34. 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

10.35. 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

10.36. 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

10.37. 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

10.38. 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

10.39. 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

10.40. 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.

10.41. 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)

10.42. 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)

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

New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) - 2021-2026

10.44. 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

10.45. 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.

10.46. 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

10.47. 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

10.48. 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

10.49. 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

10.50. 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.

10.51. 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.

10.52. 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.

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

11.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

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

12.0 Financial Considerations

12.1. 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.

12.2. 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.

12.3. 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.

12.4. 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.

12.5. 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.

12.6. 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.

13.0 Legal Considerations

13.1. These are set out in Appendix O.

14.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

14.1. 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.

15.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

15.1. 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.

16.0 Human Resources Considerations

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

16.2. 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.

17.0 Communication Considerations

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

Related document(s) for reference

Cabinet Report 16 November 24 - Draft Budget 2024 - 25

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Overall Revenue Budget 2024/25
Appendix B	Medium Term Financial Strategy Model
Appendix C (i)	Summary of Existing Savings 2023/24 - 2024/25
Appendix C (ii)	New Savings 2024/25 – 2025/26
Appendix C (iii)	Full Equalities Impact Assessments
Appendix C (iv)	Cumulative Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix D	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings Report
Appendix E	Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28
Appendix F	Capital Programme Pipeline
Appendix G	Capital Strategy 2024/25
Appendix H	Investment Strategy 2024/25
Appendix I	Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
Appendix J	Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement 2024/25
Appendix K (i)	Reserves Strategy 2024/25
Appendix K (ii)	Schedule of reserves
Appendix L	CIPFA Financial Management Code – Financial Resilience Assessment
Appendix M (i)	Fees & Charges Policy
Appendix M (ii)	Fees & Charges Schedule
Appendix N (i)	Summary of Budget Consultation
Appendix N (ii)	Consultation Direct representations (2 submissions)
Appendix O	Legal Advice
Appendix P	Pay Policy Statement 2024/25
Appendix Q	HRA Business Plan

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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	(1.1)		12.1
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**	**(6.5)**	**0.0**	**331.0**
Central Budgets	34.8	19.0	(1.6)	3.8	55.9
Total Budget Requirement	**358.4**	**33.0**	**(8.1)**	**3.8**	**387.0**
Funding					
Business Rates	(107.2)			(7.0)	(114.2)
Revenue Support Grant	(29.0)			(1.9)	(30.9)
Specific Grants	(71.4)			(8.5)	(79.9)
Council Tax	(150.8)			(11.3)	(162.1)
Total Funding	**(358.4)**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**(28.6)**	**(387.0)**

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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				387.0	
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		14.5			14.5	3.8			3.8	
		33.0				**17.9**				
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			(1.4)		(1.4)		0.0		0.0	
Income generation			(1.3)		(1.3)		(0.6)		(0.6)	
Digital			(0.8)		(0.8)		(0.4)		(0.4)	
Corporate items			0.0	3.8	3.8		(0.5)	(5.1)	(5.6)	
			(8.1)				**(4.9)**			
	358.4				**387.0**				**395.0**	
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)			(8.5)	(79.9)			1.4	(75.7)	
Council Tax	(150.8)			(11.3)	(162.1)			(7.8)	(169.9)	
	(358.4)				**(387.0)**				**(395.0)**	

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	7.6	1.9
Residents Support Fund	(2.0)	
ASC Grant - Hospital Discharge	1.2	- 3.1
Future Funding Risks	1.2	
Capital Programme Financing	1.2	1.2
Public Health	1.0	0.7
Concessionary Fares (Freedom Passes)	3.5	2.5
Temporary Accommodation	0.5	0.5
IT Licencing	0.1	
Audit Fees	0.3	
	14.5	**3.7**

Savings - Full Details in Appendix C	New savings proposals for agreement total £8m (split £3.6m in 2024/25 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 £1.28m 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	27.8	0.5
Total Specific Grants	**71.4**	**79.9**	**8.5**

APPENDIX C (i)

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

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	
Subtotal					**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	

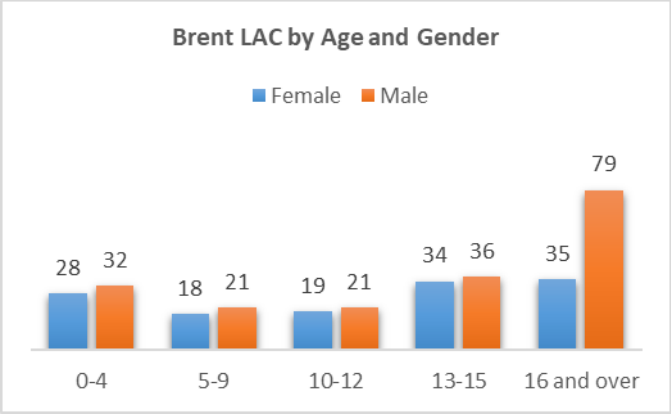
If you have answered YES to ANY of the above, then proceed to section B.
If you have answered NO to ALL of the above, then proceed straight to section D.

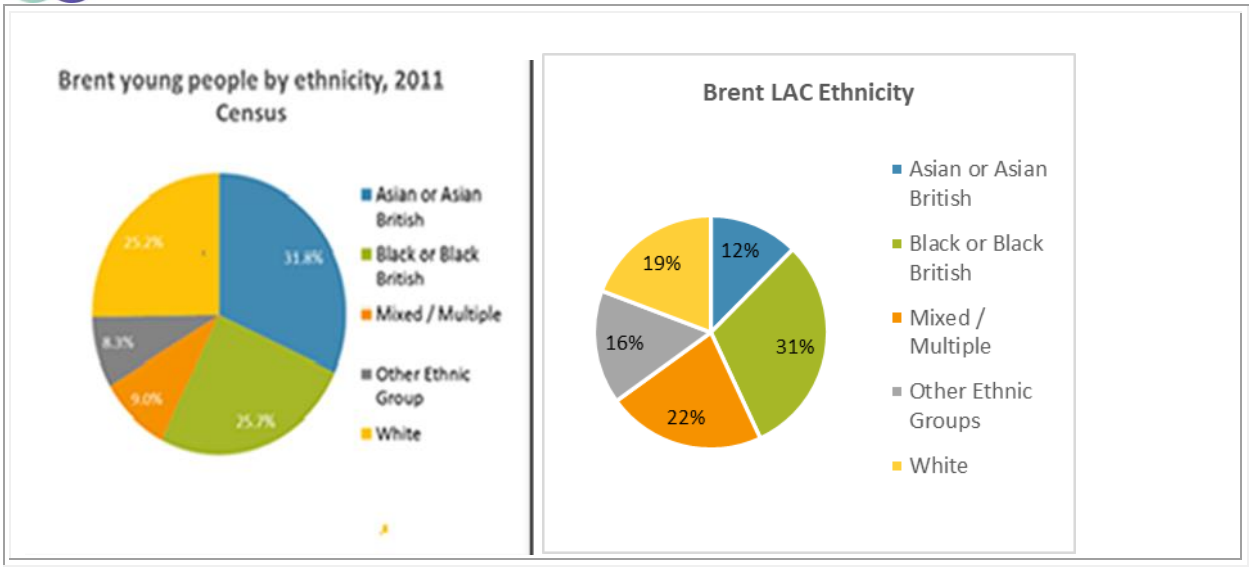
SECTION B – IMPACTS ANALYSIS

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

Brent

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.**		

Brent

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 and 2025/26

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to assess the cumulative equalities impacts of the Councils budget proposals by providing an analysis of the likely impact of the council's budget savings proposals on residents, community groups and employees with 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, 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. Brent Council also recognises that an individual's health and income status has a significant influence on their needs and life outcomes. Although health and income status are not protected from discrimination by law, we are committed to tackling health and socio-economic inequalities in the local area. This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes.

Approach to considering equalities

We are legally obliged to demonstrate compliance of our duty to have 'due regard' in the decision-making process and consequently, we need to understand the effect our policies, practices and decisions have on equality. Whilst the Council is not legally obliged to reject savings or growth proposals that could have negative impacts on any groups sharing a protected characteristic, it must carefully and with rigour consider the impact of its proposals on the PSED, take a reasonable and proportionate view about the overall impact on particular groups, and seek to mitigate negative impacts where possible.

Consequently, to support this process and in assessing the impact of each budget saving proposal, we operate a two stage process. Firstly, each of the budget savings proposals are subject to an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) screening, which helps to establish any negative or

positive impacts arising, their relevance to the council's equalities duties and determine whether a full EIA is required. Where proposals identified negative or positive impacts, the second stage of undertaking a Full EIA in order to mitigate any risks or maximise potential benefits is undertaken.

Guidance was provided, and training offered to all officers on how to undertake an EIA by our equalities team. Clarification was provided that a full EIA was not required where it was clearly demonstrated that there were no negative equality impacts; and officers reminded that EIAs are living documents and as projects/proposals develop, and further evidence of impacts becomes available, or any unforeseen impacts emerge, the EIA should be reviewed.

This document highlights the equality impacts for the 10 budget proposals that have been deemed to require a full EIA. The full Equality Impact Analyses are attached as Appendix C (iii).

Overall Assessment

The majority of savings arise from rises or changes to funding streams, making better use of technology (or not replacing under-used technology), not recruiting to vacant places, service restructures, re-procuring of contracts on competitive terms, utilising underspends and expanding commercial opportunities for the council. Essentially, these will result in 'back office' changes with little or no impact on residents, community groups.

Ten proposals have been identified as requiring a full EIA.

No direct or indirect 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, however measures have been identified to mitigate this.

A substantial proportion of the proposals have the long term impact of fostering good relations.

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 **C**ensus Data 2021**.** 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 to the Census question with '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 respondents did not answer the question on gender re-assignment, and less than half provided write-in details about their gender identity, these statistics provide 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 (43.1%) or in a registered civil partnership (0.2%), 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%. 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, this group being very diverse, including Eastern and Western European (e.g. Romanian) residents alongside a range of other groups (e.g. Brazilian, Australian).It also incorporates Brent's Irish population, which is the 2nd highest percentage nationally (2.7%) Brent's Roma population (0.7%) and Gypsy& Irish Traveller population (<0.1%) .
    - 65% are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups (the 2nd highest rate in England & Wales).

  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 have 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

- In Brent, 85.1% of adults identified as straight or heterosexual and 3.2% identified as LGB+. 11.7% of respondents 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 of 2024/25 – 2025/26 budget proposals

Initial equality screenings have been undertaken to ascertain the impact in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), a proportion of the proposals identified no impacts, - they are in their formative stages and are still to be developed or are subject to consultations, or despite not identifying an impact at present the service area have been advised by the equalities teams to keep the impact of the proposal under continuous review. Consequently, as the proposals are developed further equality analysis will be undertaken to assess the PSED. The proposals that fall into this category are summarised below:

<u>To be kept under review</u>

- 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 CYP03 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 RS11 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. However, it is dependent upon approval by the Secretary of State.

To be kept under review (in light of the potential cumulative staffing impact)

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): 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.

Communities & Regeneration

- 2024-25 CR02 Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies: Review of Directorate staffing structures to identify efficiencies.

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.

- 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.

- 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 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.

<u>Resident Services</u>

- 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 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 RS10 Customer Access Improvement and Performance: Restructure and pooling of administrative functions across Resident Services. Approx. 2 FTE Reductions.

- 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.

Proposals requiring a full equality assessment.

Ten 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.

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 included closure of the New Millennium Day Centre, offering people attending that centre alternative service provision.

Following consultation on the future of New Millennium Day Centre 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; 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. Information of those accessing sessional day opportunities are below:
- Learning Disability - 209
- Physical Support and Disability – 99
- Memory and Cognition - 8
- Mental Health – 2
- Sensory Support - 2

For this 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.

- **Age**: Overall, majority of people using day services are younger disabled people (236 of the 320 service users are between the ages of 18-65). Therefore, it will be affecting a predominantly working age cohort. 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.

- **Race**: Over two thirds of the 320 people currently using day services are from Asian/Asian British (119 people) and Black/Black British (94) backgrounds. People from Asian and Black 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.

Service users of the New Millennium Day Centre: The impact of the outlined proposal changes are potentially negative for attendees of the New Millennium Day Centre, if the proposal to close the centre is approved. For some users they will experience disappointment, confusion, loss or concern about a change to their service. Some users may also be required to travel further to an alternative. These impacts will be considered as part of the consultation process and feed into the final decision making.

Potential impacts on protected groups include:

- **Disability:** 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.

- **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 the centre close as people will need and be supported to find an alternative service. This 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, employed staff 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.

- **Race:** Of the 68 people currently accessing New Millennium Day Centre, 57% are from Black and Asian backgrounds. The impacts on these service users will be similar to those with a disability. It is likely they will experience disruption should the centre close and some people may 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 and the means to access those 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:

- **Gender**: 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: Longer waiting times and a more limited access to the services may impact on service users as highlighted above. This will be particularly pertinent with contracts, such as the DV service where a delay in waiting times could have significant implications. To mitigate impact, the contracts will be reviewed to highlight areas of potential duplication with other services, responsibilities of other agencies including support that should be provided as part of wider housing support. Full consideration of consequences of reducing spend on these services will be conducted and the outcomes from each service will be evaluated and quality assured before proposals for reductions are brought forward for approval. Following on from this, the impact of the proposal will be monitored over time, by recording the capacity of each service including any waiting lists. Any key issues from an increased waiting list would be identified and work with the providers and other stakeholders will continue to ensure a clear pathway from these services to other support available.

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 during the transitional periods. 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. Regular monitoring will take place on a case-by-case basis.

- **Race:** 77% of this client group identify as coming from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. 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. Regular monitoring will take place on a case-by-case basis.

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): Reduce the value of the 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 (2024/25 and 2025/26): 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 a Black, Asian and Minority 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.
Engagement with stakeholders is yet to take place, but will consider all groups, particularly those likely to be most affected. Furthermore, monitoring will be done by continually reviewing the provision in consultation with staff and users of the Nursery.

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 Department of Education (DfE) School Improvement and Brokering grant. The reduction will not impact on staffing or classroom provisions. This proposal will reduce the money available to affect strategic decisions which may improve the infrastructure and leadership of the schools that are in need of rapid improvement.

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 using the Freeman Family Centre 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 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 Minority Ethnic 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 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 have a socio –economic 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, subject to eligibility criteria, and are highlighted in under the socio-economic implications section below.

4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

It is possible that some individuals will be impacted by more than one of the proposals being put forward and therefore will be hit harder by these changes. It is advisable that, where proposals are accepted, the intersectional impacts are monitored and evaluated over time and across services. However, overall, these impacts are considered to be short-term and part of a process that will eventually bring about improvements to the same.

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, as there is a statutory duty towards the children, a level of service provision will be necessary and 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.

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	1	0	0	-1	0	ASC
Continuing sustainable long-term care and support promoting independence CHW03 -24/25	1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	ASC
Procurement of contract promoting education, employment, and training for young people CYP02-24/25	1	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	1	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

5 SOCIO–ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Certain groups within the population are more likely than others to live in a low income household. In Brent, our Annual Residents Survey (2021) 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 middle and 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, subject to eligibility criteria, through the following funds:

- Resident Support Fund: this is available to Brent residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances. Brent residents can apply for financial support, for up to £1000, to help with energy bills and other household expenditure.

- 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.

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.

Council's Equalities Profile

The Council has around 2600 employees. The current equalities profile is set out below. The Council as a whole has a diverse workforce both in terms of age, race and religion. We continue to encourage officers from across the Council to update their personal information through our 'Let us Know' campaign, so our equality data is as comprehensive as possible.

From an equalities perspective, there remains a proportion of staff who have not identified their disability status (28.93%), ethnic origin (24.89%) or religion and belief (35.15%) and this is like most London Boroughs where equalities data can be improved. Nonetheless, the current staffing equalities profile is broadly reflective of the borough's equalities profile.

Equalities Data

By Age Band	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Under 21	12	0.46%
21-30	354	13.60%
31-40	536	20.59%
41-50	652	25.05%
51-60	739	28.39%
61-70	297	11.41%

By Gender	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Female	1673	64.27%
Male	930	35.73%
Total	**2603**	

By ethnic origin	Headcount	Percentage of Total

71-79	13	0.50%
Total	**2603**	

By Disability	**Headcount**	**Percentage of Total**
Disabled	149	5.72%
Not Disabled	1701	65.35%
PNTS / Unknown	753	28.93%
Total	**2603**	

By Religion	**Headcount**	**Percentage of Total**
No religion	247	9.49%
Christian	842	32.35%
Hindu	259	9.95%
Muslim	198	7.61%

Asian	529	20.32%
Black	692	26.58%
Mixed Heritage	107	4.11%
White	584	22.44%
Other	43	1.65%
PNTS / Unknown	648	24.89%
Total	**2603**	

By Sexual Orientation	**Headcount**	**Percentage of Total**
Lesbian, gay or bisexual	59	2.27%
Heterosexual/Straight	1691	64.96%
PNTS / Unknown	853	32.77%
Total	**2603**	

Other	142	5.46%
PNTS / Unknown	915	35.15%
Total	**2603**	

Married or in a civil partnership	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Yes	639	24.55%
No	527	20.25%
PNTS / Unknown	1437	55.21%
Total	**2603**	

Care responsibilities	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Yes	231	8.87%
No	1574	60.47%
PNTS / Unknown	798	30.66%

Currently on Maternity	Headcount	Percentage of Total
No	2565	98.54%
Yes	38	1.46%
Total	**2603**	

Gender identity same as assigned at birth	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Yes	1885	72.42%
No	11	0.42%
PNTS / Unknown	707	27.16%
Total	**2603**	

Parenting responsibilities	Headcount	Percentage of Total
Yes	703	27.01%
No	1040	39.95%

Total	**2603**	

PNTS / Unknown	860	33.04%
Total	**2603**	

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

Key Contacts:

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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**

Appendix E

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**

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.

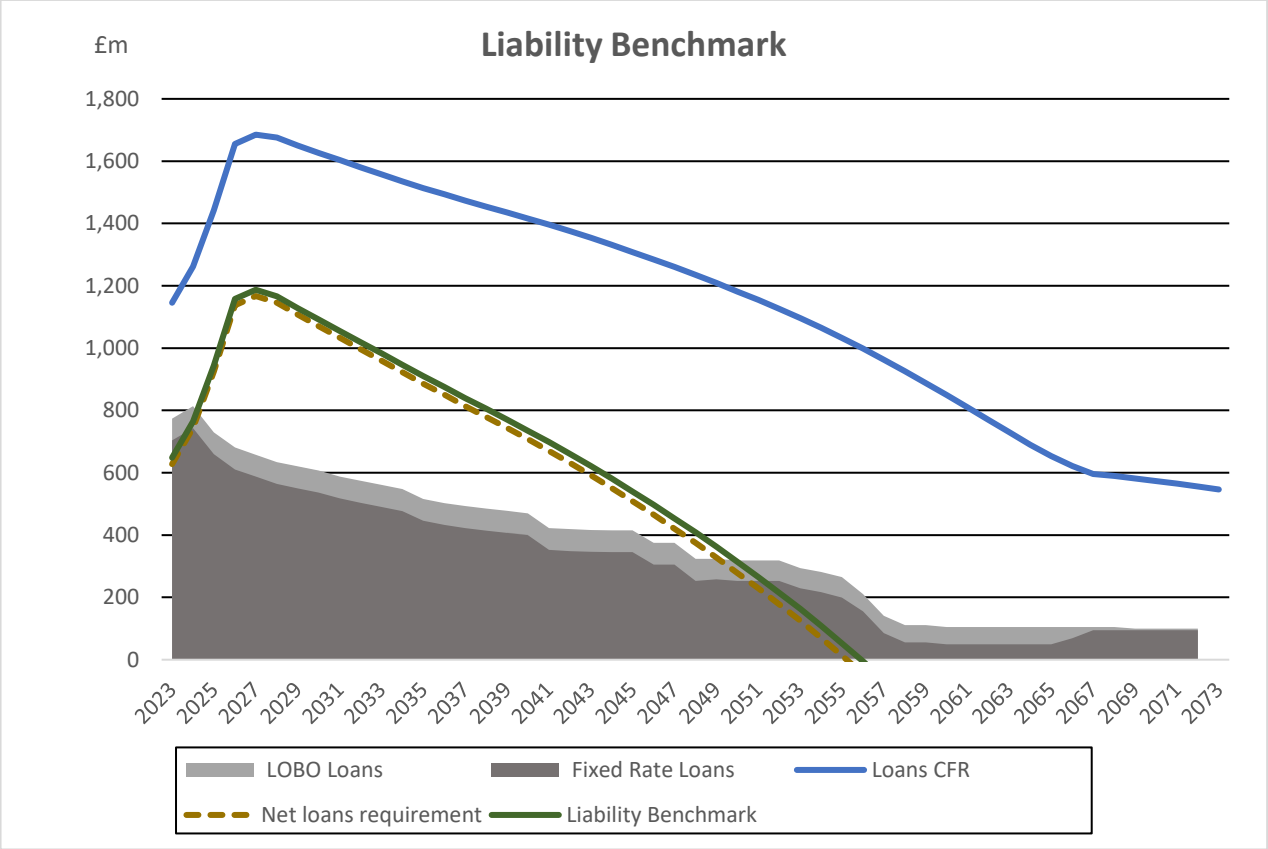
28.0 The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external 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.

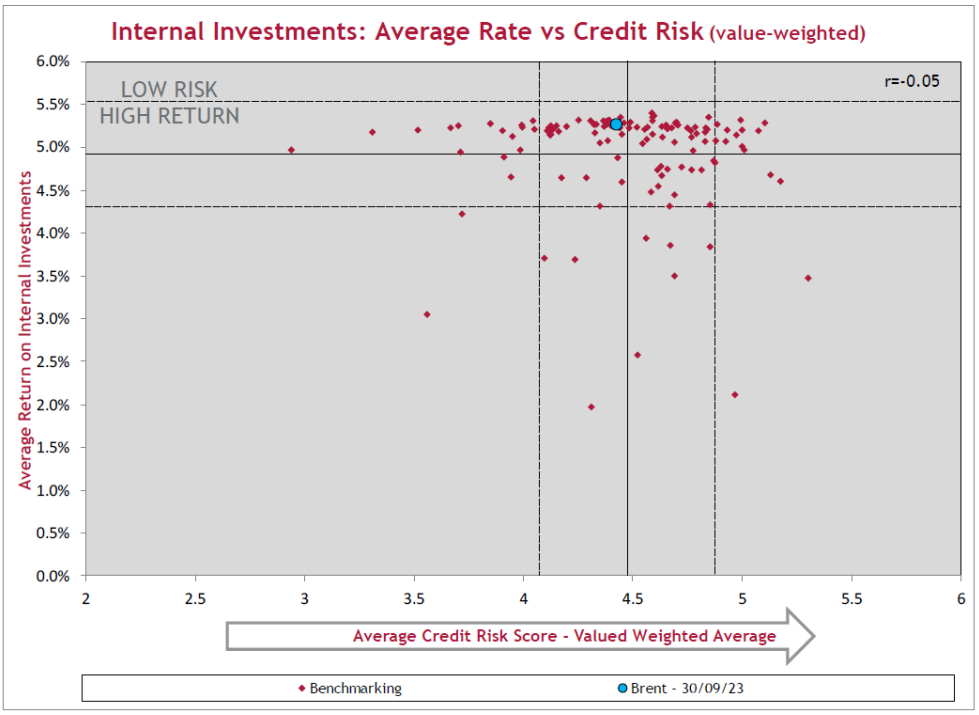
	Current	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-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							
	This reserve is comprised of:						
Care, Health & Wellbeing	Brent NHS S256 Agreement - Joint Investment Funding. Agreement with the Council for joint programmes across health and social care.	(6.4)	(9.5)	0.0	(9.5)	0.0	(9.5)
	Other reserves including MHCLG Community Champions	(2.8)					
	This includes balance of grants for CNWL Mental Health Supplement and Reablement and LD DHSC Community Discharge Grant	(0.2)					
		(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	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

Fees and Charges for 2024-2025

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

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:

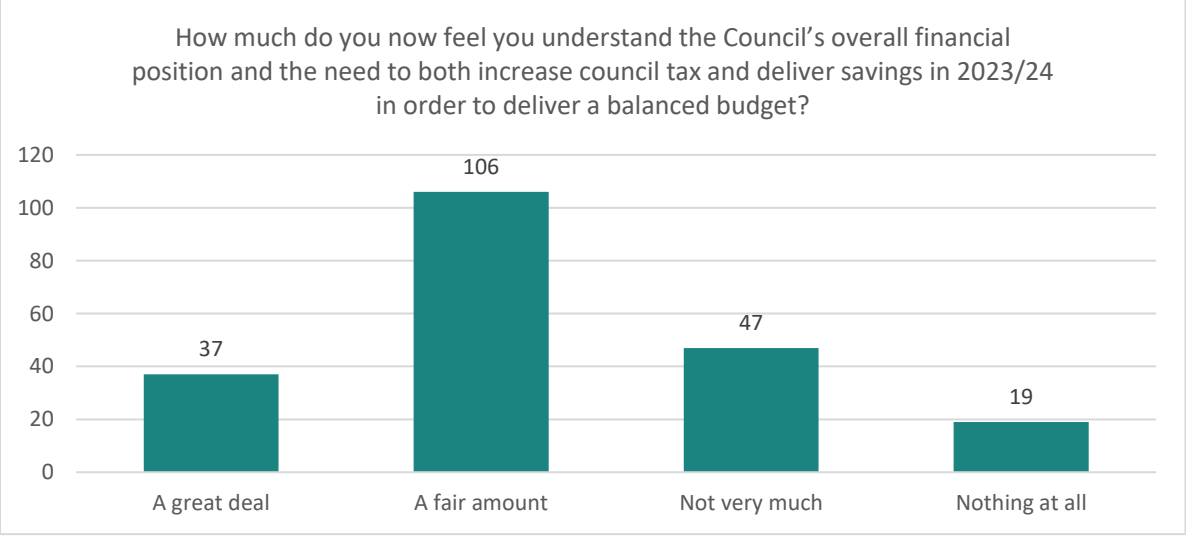
- **Do you have any comments about our draft budget plan?**
- **Having read the draft budget proposals, how much do you now feel you understand the Council's overall financial position and the need to both increase council tax and deliver savings in 2023/24 in order to deliver a balanced budget?**
- **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 2024/25 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 31 January 2024, there were **209** responses to the budget consultation survey.

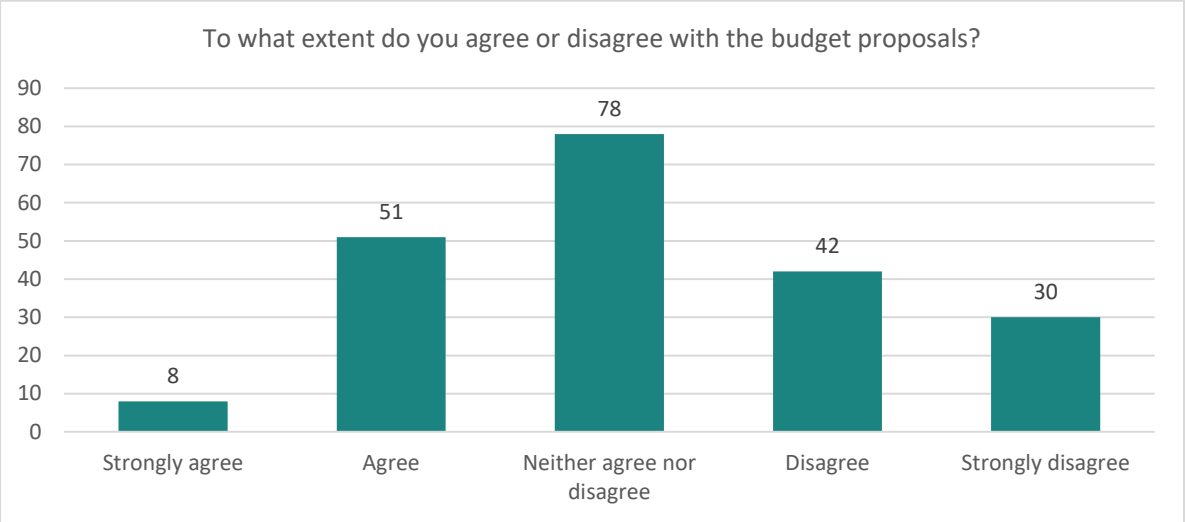
Questions:

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 2024/25 in order to deliver a balanced budget?



Nearly twice as many residents felt they understood the council's budget proposals (143, 68%) compared to those that didn't (66, 32%).

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 78 (55%) selecting this option. Of those residents who did give a clear preference, they were more likely to pick 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' (72, 34%) compared to those who selected 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' (59 residents, 28%).

Cross Reference

		Level of agreement				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Level of understanding	A great deal	7	12	4	6	8
	A fair amount	1	39	41	16	9
	Not very much			24	17	6
	Nothing at all			9	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 84 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 2024/25 Budget.

This question received 156 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 72 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:

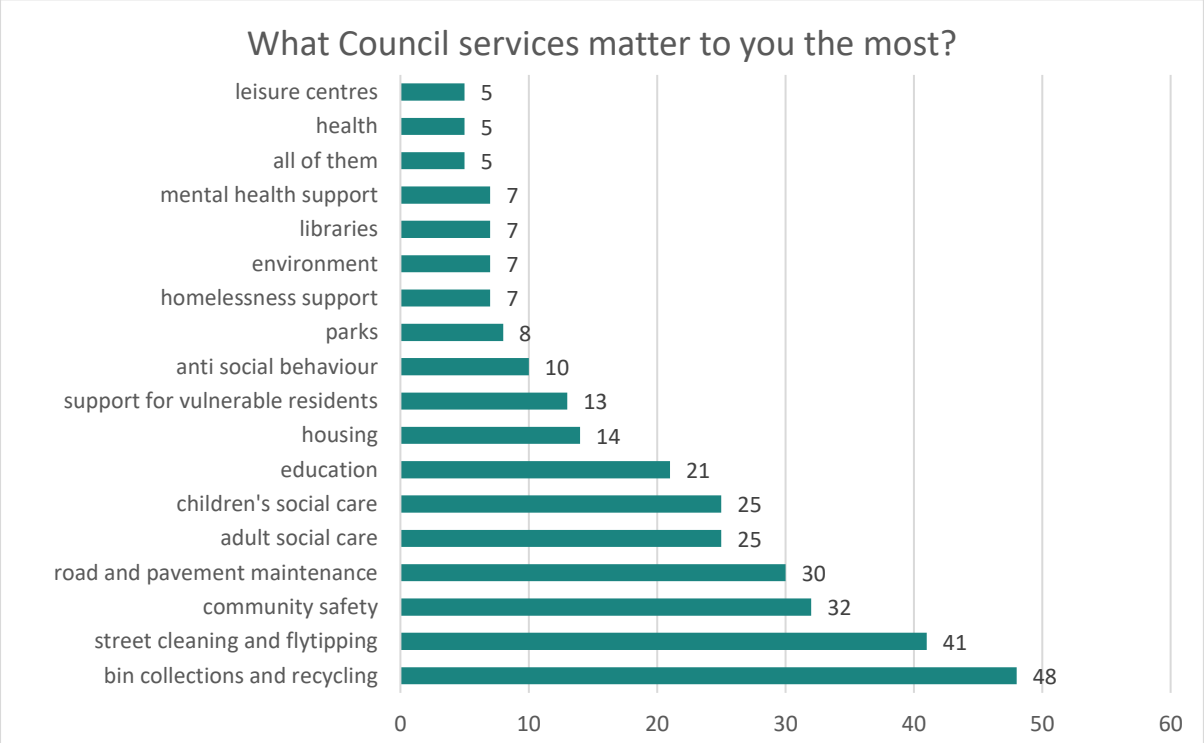


What Council services matter to you the most?

This question received 171 comments. A word cloud of the most common responses was generated:



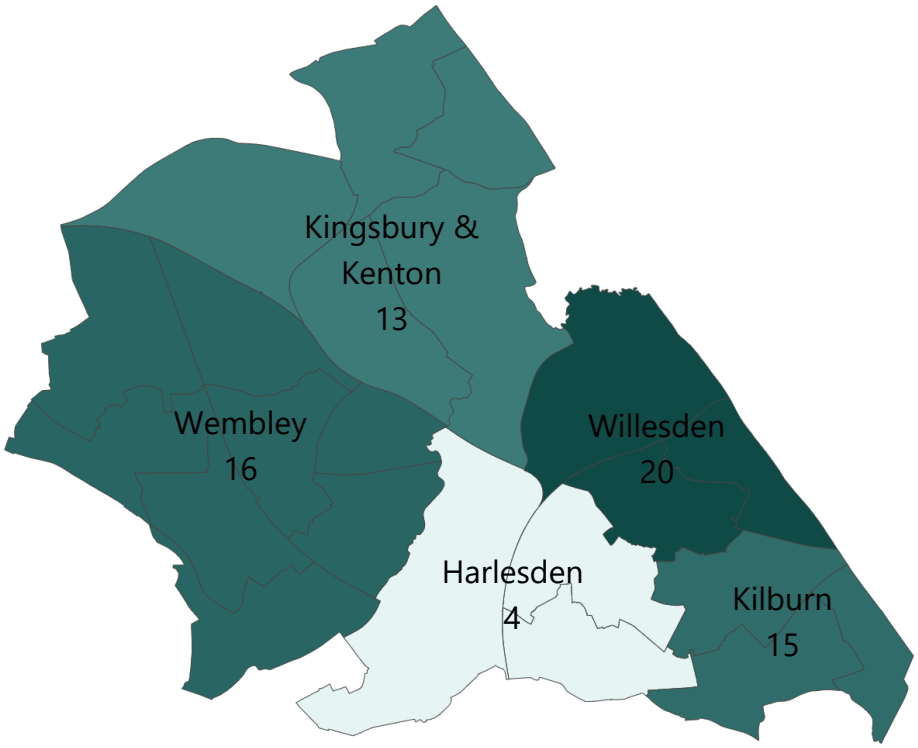
Individual responses were categorised by subject and the results tallied; responses which appear five or more times are shown in the graph below. The most popular services were bin collections and recycling (48 responses), street cleaning and flytipping (41), and community safety (32).



Equality Monitoring Questions

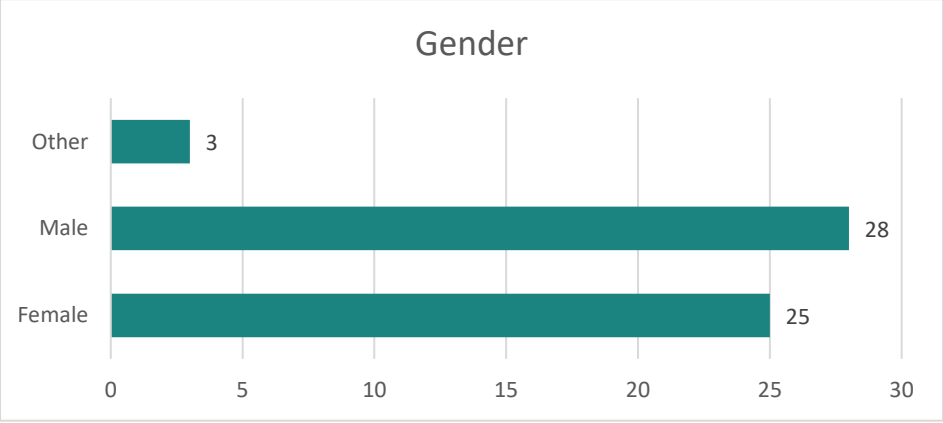
Only 32 of the 209 respondents chose to provide responses to the equality monitoring questions. However, 70 of the 209 residents had equality monitoring questions associated with their CitizenLab (the resident consultation platform) account; this is the data that has been analysed. Because of this low response rate, none of the data is presented as percentages.

Area



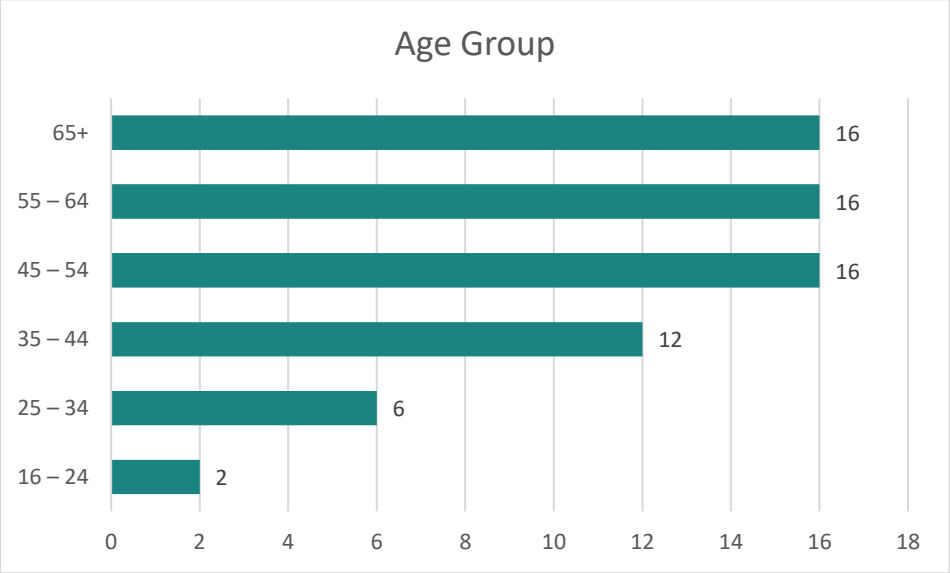
The greatest response was in the Willesden Brent Connects area with 14 responses, slightly over a quarter of the total. The area with the lowest number of responses was Harlesden, with just four surveys completed.

Gender



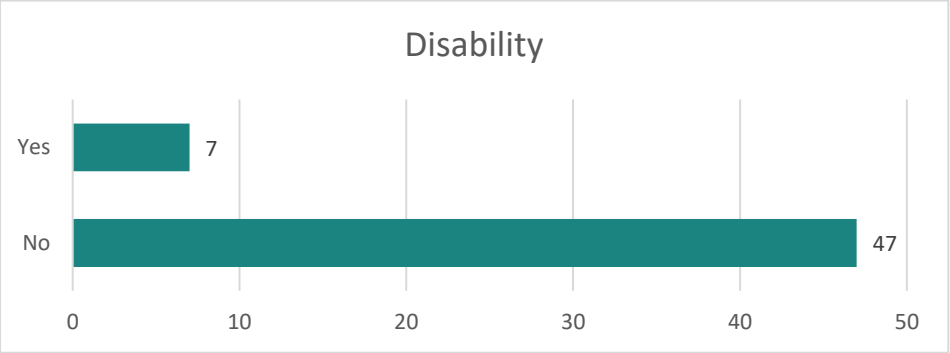
25 respondents identified as female and 28 as male. Three selected other, and 153 declined to complete the question.

Age Group



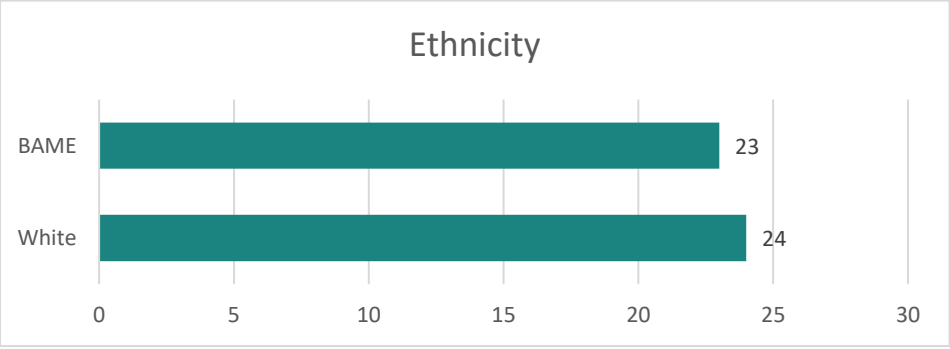
The age of respondents skews slightly older, with the greatest number of respondents (16) being aged between 65+, 55 – 64 and 45 – 54. Two respondents chose 'Prefer not to say' and 139 declined to complete the question.

Disability



58 respondents completed this question, only seven of whom chose to identify as having a disability. Four respondents chose 'Prefer not to say' and 151 declined to answer the question. When asked for additional details, the disabilities were specified as a mental health condition (including anxiety, bipolar disorder and depression); long term illness (including cancer, diabetes, HIV and multiple sclerosis); physical impairment (including arthritis, cerebral palsy and using a wheelchair); sensory impairment (including hearing, sight and speech impairments); or Other.

Ethnicity



47 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 160 declined to complete the question.

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 2024
Brent Connects – Winter round	So far residents count is **101**	9 January 2024 11 January 2024 16 January 2024 23 January 2024 29 January 2024

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

In response to your query received on 22/01/2024 about the New Millennium Day Centre, you will probably be aware of the report that will be considered by the Brent Council Cabinet on Monday 5th February that is recommending that the centre remains open. The report explains that there will be changes to the centre, and if approved it is planned that it will become the

new location of Brent's community wellbeing hub that is currently located at Bridge Park Sports Centre.

Day services for adults with disabilities will continue to be delivered from New Millennium even when the wellbeing hub is located there. But the use of the building will change, as more services are delivered from the site. 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 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.

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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?

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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.

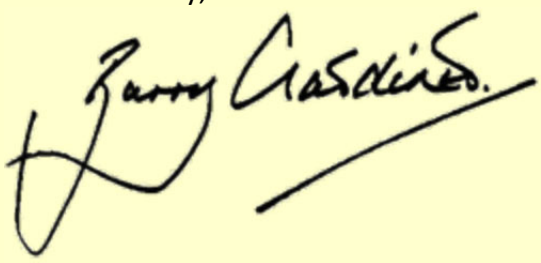
Finally, one incontrovertible benefit of a day centre over community-based services is reliability. The day centre and its opening times are widely known to constituents, ensuring that people will always be clear on when and where they can access the service. It also allows people with physical disabilities 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

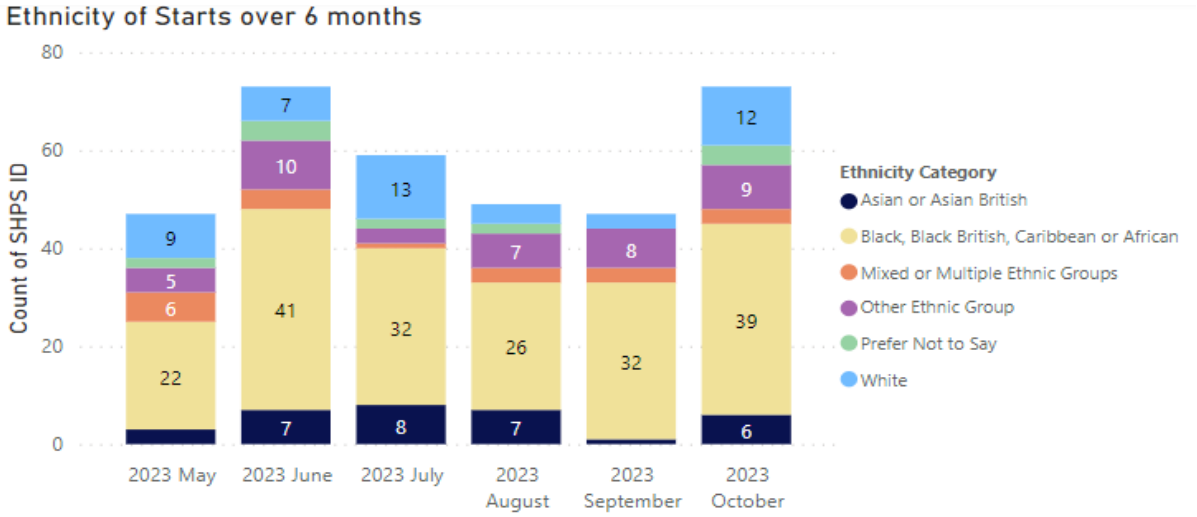
Page 7 - Continuing sustainable long-term care and support needs costs that promote independence.

- There is a clear lack of consultation of vol. and community professionals working to support this work

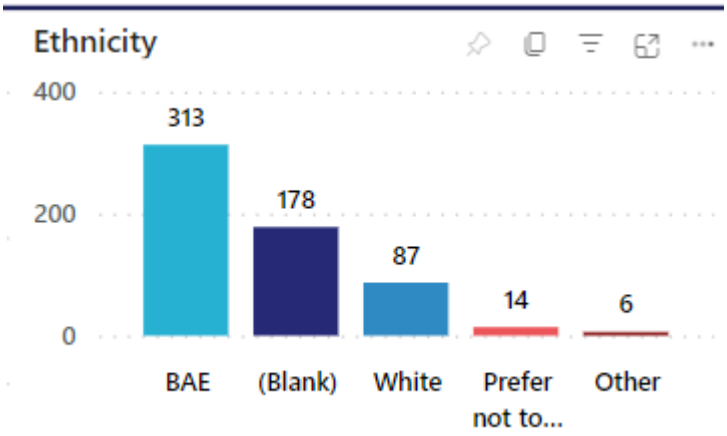
Page 16 - Review of housing related support contracts and focus on Care Act duties

- 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 Conservative Group Amendments to the Council's Proposed Budget 2024/25

Investing in our Towns and Communities for a cleaner, greener, safer, fairer, and healthier Brent

Conservatives

Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council Budget 2024/2025

INTRODUCTION

Brent Conservative Councillors are the main opposition in Brent Council. In our role of opposition, we hold the Labour administration to account, and we aspire to do better as a borough. We too want Brent to transform as a Council and be a wonderful place to live and work.

We are not endorsing Labour's financial blueprint for Brent or accepting assumptions and decisions built into their budget. However, we present these amendments and some suggestions to the proposed Budget so that residents pay less taxes and get better services and value for money.

The majority of Councils in England are facing challenges, as we do in Brent. The Conservative Government announced a £64 billion funding package to local governments that is £4 billion more compared to 2023-2024 to local councils in England. This is a 6.5% increase in the Local Government financial settlement, Brent received £126.7 million, an increase of 6 million over the previous year.

Our government's recent record provided more good news for households, November marked the first time in two years that food and non-alcoholic drink prices were lower than the previous month. A surprise fall in inflation in November has raised hopes that the Bank of England will begin cutting interest rates sooner than expected. Inflation - the rate prices rise at - fell from 4.6% to 3.9% in November and to 4.0% in January 2024 the lowest for more than two years. People will keep more of what they earn to provide for their families, do the things they love or invest in their future.

Exciting News from the Autumn Statement!

More good news which Labour Administration will shrug off, but the 2023 Autumn Statement marked a major milestone as we gear up for a decade of growth and this Conservative Government unveiled the BIGGEST PACKAGE OF TAX CUTS since the 1980s. Brent residents are already benefiting as can been seen below.

Here's a snapshot of the key highlights:

✂ **Tax Cuts for Working People:** 27 million working individuals have seen a boost in January 2024. A cut in the main rate of National Insurance Contributions of 2%, meaning a £450 tax cut for the average worker earning £35,000.

✂ **Supporting the Self-Employed:** 2 million self-employed individuals will enjoy simplified taxes, abolishing a NICs class and reducing the top rate from 9% to 8%, with an average saving of £350 for those earning £28,000.

✂ **Business Tax Cuts:** A whopping £11 billion cut in business taxes—the largest in modern British history—allowing businesses to invest more and offset their tax bills.

📉 **Debt Reduction:** On track to meet fiscal rules with debt forecasted to decrease as a share of the economy a year ahead of schedule.

✂ **Boosting the National Living Wage:** Elevating it to a record £11.44 per hour, a 9.8% increase benefiting 2.7 million workers. The Conservative Group have fresh ideas which benefit all residents across the borough.

Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council Budget 2024/2025

🚀 **Support for Vulnerable Families:** An average income boost of £800 increased Local Housing Allowance for 1.6 million struggling families.

🚀 **Support for Childcare Helping Families Thrive:** A new childcare package providing access to 30 hours of free childcare a week for working busy parents with children between 9 months and 4 years.

🏦 **Pension Boost:** Pensions up by 8.5% in line with the Triple Lock, ensuring dignity in older age, a boost to millions of pensioners.

🍺 **Freezing Alcohol Duty:** Duty on a pint in a Pub is cheaper than in our Supermarkets as a result following a radical overhaul of how alcohol is taxed. Alleviating pressure on the hospitality sector.

🚀 **Benefits Increase:** A 6.7% increase in all working-age benefits, supporting around 5.5 million households receiving Universal Credit.

The above measures are steps taken by the Conservative Government in tackling long-term economic challenges and Cost of Living, building a dynamic economy, and bringing prosperity to the entire United Kingdom!

This Conservative group budget amendment puts forward an alternative which invests in our towns, protects our beautiful greenbelt for future generations and delivers on the priorities of residents, ending a culture of waste at the Civic Centre.

Nationally, Labour is still a party of protest, not of government. Brent Labour administration cries "Tory cuts of £210million" without fail over 13 years, careful study of the annual published budgets shows in fact, we get a small increase. And let's remind ourselves that the National budget deficit skyrocketed to £103bn by 2010 when Labour left office. Since Conservatives took office in 2010 the deficit has steadily declined to £87.40 million even after the pandemic and the Ukraine war spending. As expected of this Labour administration they quote the 'Shortfall' of £210million but fail to tell us how much they receive in grants, benefits, and other income like business rates that they now keep, funny that. The country must live within it means, so should Brent Council.

Let's not forget we have had the world's worse pandemic in living memory, measures costing this Government between £310 billion to £410 billion. This Conservative Government gave Brent £40m to cope with the challenge, £20m was used for the actual pandemic and the balance was used after the pandemic as 'legacy' projects. Brent Council did not use any of its reserves for such a horrendous pandemic.

Local authorities have three main sources of revenue:

Government grants – £87.2 million core grants from central government for local services.

Council tax – a property tax levied on residential properties.

Business rates – a property tax levied on business premises, of which Brent retains 30%.

Council Tax

The Labour party takes all the credit for the good things happening in Brent, taking funds from

Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council Budget 2024/2025

Central Government to run Council services for residents but, if there's anything they cannot do, they scream "Tory cuts". Potholes and fly-tipping in Brent are blamed on the Government. For over a decade, during which the Labour Party has controlled Brent, they blamed the Conservatives for every reverse and decline but not themselves.

The Conservative Group is proposing a council tax of 3.99% made up of Council tax 1.99% and Adult Social Care precept of 2% which will be ringfenced for Adult Social Care which is the right thing to do. This will mean a Council tax rate increase on Band D properties for 2024/25 of £1,549.80. This is the Brent element only and excludes the GLA precept. The Labour Administration over the years has taxed and taxed residents. The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has no regard for hard-working Londoners and is going to raise his council tax by 8.6% - twice the rate of inflation. This means he has raised his council tax precept by a whopping 71% since 2016. This year it equates to over £470 pounds at Band D.

The Conservative Group believe the Council needs to do more to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour across the borough to keep our streets safe by installing mobile CCTV cameras in crime hotpots across the borough.

We note that Sadiq Khan has once again increased his Precept and yet knife crime and violent attacks, especially on women, have increased. Under Sadiq Khan's London we see Robbery up 49%, Sexual Offences up 53% and Thefts up 21%.

Keeping us safe is London Mayor Sadiq Khan's responsibility. Our message to him is to 'wake up' and show political leadership over soaring crime in London once known as one of the world's safest cities. Mayor Sadiq Khan needs to stop blaming everyone else. Help make Brent a safer borough.

The Conservative Group would like it noted and brought to the residents' attention that while other Councils in the country give around £6 million in council tax discounts to eligible households, in Brent Council we know that discounts and exemptions amounts **to £32 million to more than 26,000 households which equals 5.5 times the national average.** We clearly need to look at this difference to see why this is the case in Brent. Any savings derived from this area could be used to fund other needy services or even cut our Council Tax further rather than any increase. We propose that Brent Council scrutinise the exemptions to reduce the burden on Council finances.

Council Tax discounts and exemptions

Single Person Council Tax Discount

The Conservative Group notes that Brent Council seriously needs to look at the single person's discount as through scrutiny we note that the system is abused. The culprits make fraudulent claims and recent internal audits found that fraudsters are misrepresenting their household composition to Brent Council or failing to inform the council when their circumstances change. If found to be true, this would be a substantial saving to Brent Council's revenue. We recognise that most residents claiming the Single Person Discount are doing so legitimately but council investigators need to do more to root out those who wrongly reckon they can cheat the system and get away with it.

The fact is a person aged 18 or over living in a property may be entitled to a single Person discount, which qualifies the person to **25%** off their council tax bill. Brent has a NEC Software solution in place, but it is not utilised fully. Other councils like Aberdeenshire and Staffordshire Councils generated £2 million from the review. Additionally, Internal Audit has made management aware that there was an absence of a joint approach between the **Benefits team overpayments and the**

Finance team for undertaking more reconciliations and robust checks. These variances result in housing benefits overpayment discrepancies, which results in huge to resident Council Tax. **We can ill afford to have a lack of control within the Housing Benefit Team and Finance Team where discrepancies have been found.** The Council cannot go to Brent residents year on year to ask them to pay more in local taxes.

The Conservative Group want the Brent Labour Administration to get a grip on the mismanagement in Council Tax, Benefits and Housing Benefit. This has to stop. There is a cost-of-living crisis which is being exacerbated by these enormous Council Tax hikes. The Labour Administration is asking residents to give, give, give. Enough is enough!

Housing

The council is currently spending approximately £50m a year on around 2000 residents in homelessness need and accommodation. A large amount for a small percentage of residents.

The 2021 Census provides an estimate of the number of unoccupied homes in Brent as of March 2021 (7.4% of dwellings - 9,425 in number). **The census figure is more than three times higher than the administrative count of empty homes sourced from the Council Tax Base**. In Brent as of 31st December 2023 recorded shows 3135 empty properties, this is three times less than on the 2021 census. There have been **1604** properties empty for under 2 years, **219** properties between 2-5 years at 100% premium, **47** properties have been emptied between 5-10 years at 200% premium and no properties empty of more than 10 years.

If Brent Council is working to full potential, our Council Tax should not have to be increased. Long term empty property criteria give rise to additional Council Tax. For example, a property that has been empty for 2 to 4 years is liable to pay 200% (twice) the Council Tax, properties that are empty for 5 years the council tax is 300%, properties that are empty for 10 years or more should pay 400%.

The Conservatives are concerned that of the 1604 empty properties of less than 2 years, Brent Council should have collected approximately £3.2 million (average council tax per property of £2000). However, our concern is that the total collected for 2023/24 is £1.5 million. There is a big discrepancy in empty properties as per the National Census 9000+ in Brent and Brent Council's records show only 3000+ as vacant.

Free bulk waste collection and Licensing

The Conservative Group propose bringing back the free bulk waste collection scheme which has been suggested by many residents to discourage unscrupulous people from fly-tipping and dumping sofas, fridges and other bulky items on our streets. It is not right that Brent residents pay one of the highest Council Tax in London only to be charged again to have their waste collected. This perhaps is a contentious issue for the Brent Labour Administration.

NCIL (Neighbourhood Infrastructure Levy)

The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL), which is a community funding programme using money collected from developers, has £16.6million currently available.

We are proposing part of the NCIL money is used for Community Safety such as CCTV, Enforcement officers, and youth-based activities to prevent knife crime, serious youth violence and

school exclusions by engaging, educating, and empowering disadvantaged young people and supporting them to enjoy their lives and improve their prospects.

This should also be used to ameliorate infrastructure, including pavements and roads around the new developments and that will relieve the pressure on the revenue budget. This is a political decision to made.

What Conservatives are proposing:

Investing in Shared Services and Cutting Waste at the Civic Centre

We recognise the importance of Shared Services and how they can generate savings to both Brent Council and the authorities we share services with.

One of the most successful Shared Services arrangements in the country is that of Westminster City Council with Kensington & Chelsea. This arrangement has reduced the cost of the Council by £50m. The London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Richmond have a sharing arrangement, and combining services, for an annual saving of £10 million.

Brent Conservatives propose a shared services arrangement with both our Legal Services and a back-office arrangement with Harrow Council and/or Barnet Council. Savings derived from Shared Services arrangements will enable the Council to focus on and implement the borough plan for Brent for 2023-2027. Additionally, in making more savings we want Shared Services in waste disposal so that Brent residents can use Harrow waste sites to reduce carbon footprints of car journeys and reduce pollution. We would also like Brent Council to note that this is an area where we are sure savings can be made and the additional facilities welcomed by residents.

Care, Health & Wellbeing (CHW) – Adult Social Care

We note that CHW budget is huge, £122+ million, we are not proposing any savings to be made in this area, but The Conservative Group's view is that there is scope to identify efficiencies and serve the residents better, and particularly regards to agency staff and Care agencies, investing in full time staff.

To achieve these efficiencies, the council must work closely with all partners, including NHS England and NHS Improvement (London), London Integrated Care Systems, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, London Mayor, Home Office and Department of Health & Social Care. Assessments and Reviews must be quicker and more efficient. The Conservative Group recognises that there is a need to provide long-term care and support for vulnerable Brent Residents.

We recognise that this service should continue to provide the best possible care for our residents, however, to avoid dipping into our reserves, further savings in 2024/25 should be explored and made.

A range of modern equipment can either directly assist a person to carry out tasks of care (and reduce the need for personal care) or can monitor a person so that they are more secure and safe. These cannot replace personal care but for some people in particular circumstances they can reduce the need for formal care. They work best when linked to other actions that are in place to support a person to live more independently. **Minister for Care recently announced that several councils received the first £3 million of our Adult Social Care Technology Fund**. More care at home and

more personalised care is what people want to support independence in the home, undertake a personalised falls prevention programme etc., and most importantly reduce pressure on the NHS.

Helping Local Businesses

To revive our high streets and help local businesses to get back on their feet as we are proposing a 1-hour free parking (on street and off-street parking) throughout the borough. This will allow residents to park and shop, go to the bank, or Post Office for longer, helping support small businesses.

Neighbouring run Conservative Harrow Council recently introduced 1 Hour free parking in all car parks across Harrow. This has been warmly welcomed by residents and businesses, who have seen an uptake in usage. It is estimated that this would cost Brent £1m in terms of a reduction to current budgeted income and will be funded by re-allocating the New Homes Bonus Grant from Capital to Revenue, which is allowed under the current grant conditions.

General Fund Reserves 2024

Brent Labour administration draft budget proposes to increase the General Fund reserve from £18 million to £19 million for 2024/25. Brent Conservative Group proposes NOT do this and instead transfer this one-off increase to support the 2024/25 revenue budget.

Children & Young People

The Conservative Group fails to see the logic of making a saving of £50,000 when we are already overspending, in fact we should be putting money in into our children's services to support our young people. However, we feel that this department needs to robustly assess the ability to provide better service and support parents' capacity and resources to improve their children's outcomes at early stages within the budget.

Finance & Resources

Landlords Incentives

The Conservative Group proposes to remove the Landlords Incentive Scheme. In the Labour draft budget, Brent Labour is giving generous grants of £1+ million as an incentive to Landlords to bring their properties back into use to rent out in 2024/25. We feel that it is wrong to subsidise private landlords in this way as it acts as an incentive to keep rents artificially high. They should be sourcing finance from other sources to renovate their properties to rent out. If the property remains empty the landlord will be liable for high Council Tax which benefits the council either way. It is therefore our proposal to scrap the scheme. If the landlord cannot carry out improvements and put the property to rent, he can sell it and creating an opportunity for new house hunters to climb the ladder. It is estimated that this would result in a saving of £1m.

Second selective licensing scheme from 1st April 2024

The council is implementing a policy whereby all landlords will require a costly license from £700 per house. This is increasing the bureaucracy and not helping the tenants because the landlords

are increasing the rent immediately passing it onto the tenants, another example of where Labour is disincentivising landlords from renting their properties. On one hand Brent Labour is incentivising landlords, and on the other hand they are penalising them.

New Home Bonus Scheme

The New Homes Bonus is not a ring-fenced grant, which means local authorities are free to decide how to spend it, as they are in the best position to make decisions about local priorities. As a non-ringfenced grant, funds can be spent on either revenue or capital, strategic projects, or placed in a local authority's reserves. There is no time limit on when the funds can be spent. However, the Government expects local authorities to engage with the communities most affected by housing growth to decide how the money is spent, so residents can share in the benefits of growth.

The council will receive £2.9 million New Homes Bonus for 2024/25. The Labour Group has allocated in their draft budget as capital, we propose to move this into the revenue budget for 2024-25.

Governance

Bringing an end to excessive Labour Council payments

In 2022, the number of councillors reduced from 63 to 57 members. However, the savings have been re-distributed to the Labour councillors only instead of making a saving in the council budget. In the Labour draft budget, it is proposed that the Chairs of the 4 Connect Forums will get an increase from £1,304 to £2,068. This is £500 per meeting via Zoom just for chairing a Zoom meeting. There is no recognition for opposition councillors who work equally hard for their residents. Whilst considering SRA's (Special Responsibility Allowances) it should be noted that Brent Opposition members were removed as Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees, taken away last year even though there was no allowance. This is a murder of democracy!

There is a vast difference with the responsibility of Cabinet members, currently there are nine cabinet members, and we propose to delete 2 Cabinet posts and merge the portfolios. Nearly all Labour members are in receipt of at least one Special Responsibility Allowance. The Opposition do not believe in job creation or roles with extra payments at the cost of front-line services.

The Conservative Group proposes that Opposition members should be given back the Vice Chair roles with appropriate SRAs. This will be better for scrutiny and democracy.

Making Brent Cleaner and Greener

Blue Sack Cardboard recycling

In October 2023 Brent introduced the Blue Bag Recycling scheme. This is not working!

Many blue bags have blown away, tearing or stolen, residents have taken to dumping large cardboards box on the pavements as Veolia won't collect the cardboard placed in the blue recycling bins.

All councillors are facing backlashes over this disastrous recycling plan. Opposition to Brent Council's new blue sack recycling scheme is growing as frustrated residents' call this reduce

fortnightly collection “waste of money” and claim it makes it more difficult to recycle.

The Conservative group is proposing to reverse the blue sack cardboard recycling as it has been an ill thought scheme that has and will not work and revert back to recycling in the blue bins. The idea that the cardboard does not get wet with the lid closed is a myth and in practice does not work. It is estimated that this would lead to a loss of income from recycling by £1.2m. Our proposal is to fund this shortfall by using the New Homes Bonus grant.

Making Brent a Safer Borough

Reversing the proposal to dim streetlights.

The Conservative Group is proposing to put more money into street lighting by reversing the current policy of dimming the streetlights. Residents are dismayed and dimming lights has sparked fears of a rise in crime and road accidents. The elderly effectively are placed under a curfew as they fear going out. Diming the lights in Brent has made our streets unsafe to walk for commuters. It is estimated that this proposal would cost £0.5m, again we will fund from the New Homes Bonus grant.

Street Works

The Conservative Group wants utility companies to be **handed heavy fines for carrying out sub-standard road repairs.** Residents and motorists should have a reasonable expectation that the roads they are travelling on are well maintained and free of defects and holes.

We want the worst performing utility companies whose road works fail to meet strict standards to face financial penalties and be inspected to ensure their work meets rigorous criteria and they leave the roads in a good condition.

Potholes and Broken pavements

In the Labour draft budget, the allocation for Reactive Maintenance covers all highways assets including lines, signs, street furniture, footways and carriageways and is £0.8m. The Conservative Group proposes to increase this to £1.2 million. This additional amount will be funded by use of the New Homes Bonus grant.

Increase in Knife Crime Incidents

Unfortunately, knife-related incidents have escalated across Brent in comparison to previous reporting periods. As a Council, we need to do much more to understand what is driving the increase, address this issue and reduce offences in the borough. Local Police in conjunction with Brent Council’s Communities and Safer Neighbourhoods should conduct more targeted knife crime awareness sessions with schools and parents in the new financial year.

When times are hard, we must tighten our belts and seek better value and explore further savings without negative impact to the service.

Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council Budget 2024/2025

The Conservative Group's Funding Proposal 2024/25

Conservative Group - Alternative budget proposals	Impact on 2024/25 budget £m
1 Hour free parking on high streets (loss of income)	1.0
Removal of landlord incentives (saving)	(1.0)
Delete two Cabinet members (saving)	(0.1)
Reintroduce blue bins	1.2
Reverse dimming of streetlights	0.5
Increase budget for potholes and pavement repairs	0.4
Top slice of New Homes Bonus to fund additional borrowing for the capital programme	0.3
All of the above funded by re-allocating NHB grant from capital to revenue	(2.81)
Increase Council Tax by 3.99% (loss of income)	1.5
Maintain the current reserve level at £18m	(1.0)
Total	**0.0**

We commend these Conservative Group amendments to the Labour draft budget. We thank the officers for supporting the group in preparing this budget amendment.

Cllr Suresh Kansagra, Leader, Brent Conservative Group

Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council Budget 2024/2025

Advice from the Corporate & Director of Finance

Senior finance support has been provided to assist the Conservative Group to formulate an alternative budget that reflects their policy priorities.

The Alternative Budget proposed by the Conservative Group would be a legal, balanced budget for 2024/25, although it is recognised that this carries financial risk. The potential implications for 2025/26 and beyond have not been considered as part of these proposals.

Overall, these proposals introduce £3.41m of new spending commitments and £1.5m of revenue foregone from increasing council tax by 3.99% (1% below the maximum amount allowable), balanced by £1.1m of new savings, £1m of one-off reserves and re-allocating the New Homes Bonus grant from the capital programme to the revenue budget.

Firstly, these proposals are heavily dependent on the NHB grant. The Council received £3.1m of NHB in 2022/23, £7.9m in 2023/24 and is due to receive £2.9m in 2024/25. This is a non-ring-fenced grant that is currently recorded as a reserve and used to finance the capital programme. Allocating a proportion of the grant into the Council's revenue budget is allowed under the current grant conditions, however this would have an impact on the financing of the capital programme. In addition, as can be seen from the figures, this grant is highly unpredictable and is one of the reasons why this grant has historically not been budgeted for in the revenue budget. There is therefore a risk of building this volatile grant (which has been subject to government top slicing and various rule changes over the years) into the base budget and calls into question the sustainability of the proposals set out in this report that are to be funded by this grant.

In addition, the consequences of removing New Homes Bonus grant from financing of the capital programme will have significant consequences that will need to be managed. In the short term this means further borrowing to finance the capital programme. While the financing of this additional borrowing has been factored into the budget proposals, it does add risk to the medium-term financial strategy as budgets generally become more constrained while capital repayments are fixed.

It is also worth noting that there are proposals that make reference to provision of free bulky waste and use of NCIL. As instructed by the Conservative Group, these have not been costed and do not form part of this alternative budget.

Finally, section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires that I, as Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, report to Council my view of the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the estimates underpinning the budget. This assessment is set out in more detail in section 6 of the budget report. In summary, the General Fund reserve is held to cover uncertain events that may transpire, such as an unexpected overspend or to cover bumps in cash flow. The level is subjective and requires professional judgement, however it is generally accepted that 5% of net expenditure should be held as a generally useable reserve. When setting the budget for 2024/25 it was deemed necessary to increase the General Fund reserve by £1m in order for this reserve to keep within 5% of the Council's net budget. In addition, our external auditors would be critical of deviating away from the current strategy and comment negatively in their annual value for money report.

The proposal to not increase the General Fund reserve by £1m would result in a balance of 4.6% of net expenditure. On balance, this is not a significant deviation from the current strategy, but it is not a medium to long term position that can be maintained. Despite the financial pressures facing the Council, the level of external scrutiny on Councils to demonstrate financial resilience and sustainability is expected to increase. Therefore, this proposal needs to be included a commitment

that the 5% level of General Fund reserves is maintained from 2025/26. Overall, this proposal adds risk to the 2024/25 budget but is not unlawful.

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance & Resources

Liberal Democrat Group Budget Amendments 2024-25

This is a very difficult time for local government finances. Brent, like all local authorities face very challenging decisions in the coming financial year and beyond. The perilous situation we face is down to a combination of factors. Chronic underfunding of local authorities by central government for decades, the fallout from shambolic Brexit which has adversely impacted every sector, Tory economic mismanagement.

The difficult financial situation has been made even worse because of poor decisions by this Labour Administration. Wasteful spending, that is hard to justify, including but not limited to, £2 million for the Civic Centre revamp, millions lost due to the pursuing undeliverable development projects, such as the £4 million on Altamira in Stonebridge, which was highlighted by the Liberal Democrats at a Scrutiny call-in meeting.

The Liberal Democrat Group recognise that difficult decisions need to be made. But we believe that as a service-based organisation, Brent Council must make every effort to ensure that the priorities and concerns of our residents are at the forefront of all that we do. Our **ten amendments** to the budget reflect the conversations that we continue to have with residents across the borough. They cover key issues residents feel that the Council is not dealing with. Whether it is the general state of our area, the increasing rubbish on our streets, to the limited youth provision in Brent, to the puny effort to address the Climate Emergency.

The Liberal Democrats are proposing ten reasonable, costed and practical measures to enhance the 2024/25 Council Budget.

Our hope is that members from all sides will recognise that at a time like this, it is important to work across political divides and agree on solutions.

We wish for our **ten amendments** to the 2024/25 Budget to be voted on one by one, as we feel that there are some that all Members can collectively get behind, in turn making the Budget a better package for Brent residents.

Just as last year, the Liberal Democrat Group have worked with Officers in the Finance Department to ensure our proposals are legal and deliver a balanced overall Budget. **We very much hope that all elected Members will consider our proposals in full and put partisan politics to one side, when the time comes to vote on our ten amendments.**



Cllr Anton Georgiou – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

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Liberal Democrat Amendments to the 2024/25 Budget

1. Keeping Brent Clean

Residents are increasingly angry about the dirty state of their areas with increasing rubbish on our streets. Succession of cuts in street cleaning and refuse collection over the past 10 years under this Labour Administration including:

1. Changing to fortnightly refuse collections
2. Charges for Garden Waste
3. Charges for Bulky Waste
4. Blue Bags for segregated recycling
5. Stopping weekly sweeping of streets
6. Cutting sweeping near shops and High Roads

Have cumulatively resulted in making Brent one of the dirtiest boroughs in the UK, as per recent BBC reporting. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68029786)

We are therefore demanding action to clean up Brent.

PROPOSAL:

1. Increase street cleaning budget by £500,000 so that each street is visited and swept once a week and reinstate the daily street cleaning of 50 meters from junctions with busy shopping areas/ high streets.

2. Utilise the £1.6 million set aside immediately in the Capital Budget to give residents ability request a further wheelie bin for segregated recycling. The blue topped bins will be converted to use for cardboard and paper recycling and the smaller wheelie bin will be offered for use for other recyclable materials.

3. Increase enforcement and fining activity by establishing an invest to save pilot with teams targeting dumping, drinking and paan spitting hotspots and issuing on the spot Fixed Penalty Notices. These teams will operate at times when these anti-social activities take place. We need to send a clear message through tougher enforcement that these types of anti-social activities will not be tolerated in our borough.

4. Provision of more dual litter/ recycling bins in areas requested by Councillors and residents and establish a monthly cleaning service for all street bins *(existing and new)* in our streets and parks to ensure that they are safe to use.

FUNDING (advice from officers):

Point 1, increasing the street cleaning by £0.5m will require £0.5m of savings to keep the budget in balance.

Point 4, this proposal is estimated to cost around £0.5m, which will require further savings of £0.5m to keep the budget in balance.

Both proposals can be funded by allocating the New Homes Bonus Grant (£2.9m) into the base revenue budget for 2024/25. This proposal is allowed under the NHB grant conditions but does mean less resources available for the capital programme and therefore higher levels of borrowing. At current interest rates the debt financing cost is £310k per annum, which can be funded by top slicing this amount from the grant. Further details are set out in the overall summary section at the end of this report.

2. Accessible and Safe Roads and Pavements

The Council's effort to keep local roads and pavements safe and accessible does not go far enough. The current Highways Programme hardly scratches the surface of repairs that are desperately needed in our areas.

Many of our pavements are in a dangerous condition. This has an impact on all of our residents, particularly the elderly and disabled.

PROPOSAL

1. To increase the Capital Budget for road and pavement upgrading in 2024/25 to £20 million. £2 million of the £20 million Budget to be allocated to regular preventative maintenance works to extend the life of existing road surfaces.

2. Introduce flexibility into our investment to target pavements and roads surfaces which are being dug up by utility companies for major gas, water pipe or electricity upgrades so that the areas are not simply patched up but properly upgraded. We would do this by negotiating for a financial contribution from the utility companies towards the upgrade works, thus reducing the overall cost to the Council, while getting the required upgrades our residents deserve.

FUNDING

Point 1, the existing budget is £13.5m for 24/25 and £6m for 25/26. Increasing this budget to £20m will require further borrowing of £0.5m, where the financing costs are £40k per annum. This will be funded by reallocating the NHB grant from capital to revenue. Further details are set out in the overall summary section at the end of this report.

3. Increasing Supply of Affordable Homes

The £13 million overspend is a blight on our borough's finances. The bulk of this overspend is as consequence of high costs associated with temporary accommodation. Brent is spending far too much money on hotels and BnB's for people who are presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In order to solve this issue, we desperately need to increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing in the borough.

PROPOSAL

1. Change our planning strategy to ensure that all new developments meet a new higher target of 50% genuinely affordable units, thus increasing the supply of affordable housing. This will help to reduce the continued anticipated overspend on temporary accommodation and provide people with the genuinely affordable homes they need.

2. Target underoccupied properties by providing suitable replacement property in the right location to meet the residents' specific needs.

FUNDING

Point 1, given the current economic climate of high interest rates and high inflation on construction costs it is unlikely that schemes with 50% affordable units will be viable. However, if the economic climate improves during 2024 then this proposal could be considered. In 2024/25 and 2025/26 this is unlikely to result in savings in temporary accommodation due to the time taken to deliver a new development but could be a possibility in 2026/27.

Point 2, it is possible that this proposal could generate savings. However, at this stage an estimate is not possible.

4. Investing in our Youth

It is a very difficult time to be a young person in Brent. Opportunities that were previously available to young people across our borough, have more or less disappeared. Youth provision is limited and the budget for it is scarce.

This has had a hugely negative impact on many young people in our borough, particularly those from economically deprived backgrounds.

The '**Brent Safer Partnership Annual Report 2022-23**' report highlighted a significant increase in knife crime, impacting people under 25. There is recognition that a link exists between increasing knife crime and cuts to youth services.

PROPOSAL:

1. Allocate and transfer £1 million from reserves for a new *'Youth Offer'* provision to be spent over the next 2 years, specifically seeking to assist organisations that offer early intervention with young people in Brent.

2. This is to be supplemented by the Brent Grant Unit applying (or assisting community groups to apply) for specific grants supporting young people activities with the aim of enhancing the fund beyond its initial 2 years.

FUNDING:

Point 1, reserves could be used this time limited proposal and one off proposal. The only reserve that is possible to be used is the Future Funding Risks reserve. Depleting this reserve however may put the financial resilience and sustainability of the Council at risk. Further commentary on this risk is provided in the summary section below.

Point 2, NCIL could be used to fund this proposal as part of its role in funding community led projects.

5. Delivering on Climate Emergency Commitments

Brent Council became one of the first local authorities to declare a Climate Emergency back in 2019. Five years on, we believe that not enough has been done to meet the commitments of the declaration and we are running out of time.

In order to achieve Carbon Neutrality in under six years, greater emphasis must be placed on reducing toxic carbon emissions that are polluting local air. The Council must also immediately divest its Pension Fund from fossil fuel investments.

One way to reduce toxic carbon emissions is to tackle the overreliance on polluting vehicles in the borough. The Council therefore needs to make active transport options desirable and accessible to a greater number of residents. The easiest way to do this is to make active travel safe.

We also need to see greater effort to ensure all public and community buildings are energy efficient. This will significantly help us achieve our Climate Emergency ambitions.

PROPOSAL:

1. To work with Brent Cyclists and other local groups to devise an active travel plan of action and allocate £10 million to develop safe cycle routes within and between growth areas across Brent over a 2-year period.

2. Assessing our property portfolio and ensuring that all public and community buildings are energy efficient by allocating £3 million over a 2-year period.

FUNDING:

Point 1, the cycle routes would need to be in growth areas or connecting growth areas for SCIL to be utilised.

Point 2, this proposal would need to be funded through the carbon offset fund reserve.

6. Work Opportunities for Local Young People

The Council should better promote job opportunities and training for local young people. One area the Council continues to struggle with is keeping our area clean and free of illegal dumping and littering.

We therefore want to tackle both limited job/ training opportunities and the issue of the dirty state of the area by creating 12 new apprenticeship posts for young people in Brent who can work alongside our team of experienced Neighbourhood Managers in the Environmental Services Department.

PROPOSAL:

1. Employ 12 apprentices, two assigned to each of the six Neighbourhood Managers, to assist with the required work in our communities and being proactive tackling issues in local streets. The apprentices would support Neighbourhood Managers and engage with members of the community, businesses and other stakeholders. This would require a total of £480,000 pa, on the basis that each apprentice would cost the Council £30,000 salary, including on costs.

FUNDING

This proposal is estimated to cost around £0.5m, which will require further savings of £0.5m to keep the budget in balance.

This can be funded by allocating the New Homes Bonus Grant into the base revenue budget for 2024/25. Further details are set out in the overall summary section at the end of this report.

7. Supporting Adult Social Care and Children and Young people

We know that demands on Adult Social Care and Children and Young people services have increased in recent years. People are living longer but the funding for services, both statutory and community based, has reduced.

Supporting people to remain in their own homes and to move from supported accommodation placements to homes in the community requires affordable, accessible housing.

Furthermore, unpaid Carers, caring for family members, friends and neighbours in their homes must continue to be supported. Without this care, more residents would need to leave their own homes and enter residential or nursing homes, which is very costly for the Council.

PROPOSAL:

1. For housing developments to be led jointly by the Housing, Adult Social Care and Children and Young people services. This would allow housing provision for homeless people; help reduce Social Care spend on high cost residential or

supported accommodation placements and allow more investment on services supporting care at home.

2. To continue the Council's support of unpaid Carers including access to community equipment and home adaptations allowing people requiring care to remain at home rather than enter residential or nursing care, by piloting an invest to save programme costing £1 million for 1-year from the Public Health Reserve.

FUNDING:

Point 2, approval would need to sought from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) as the Public Health grant cannot be used to avoid Care Act responsibilities.

8. Protecting Parks and Open Spaces

Brent is home to a many wonderful parks and open spaces that are enjoyed by residents and visitors to our area. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the standard of these spaces.

We believe that more effort must be made to protect and promote our parks and open spaces so that they continue to be well utilised by local people and so that more feel comfortable and safe in them. This is even more important as a growing number of residents in our borough now live in high rise buildings with very limited access to green space.

PROPOSAL:

1. One reason residents are put off using local parks and opens spaces is because too often they are left in a poor state, which fuels anti-social behaviour in them. Therefore, we want to ensure there is a greater effort to keep local parks clean by allocating an additional budget of £0.5m to the Parks Department, specifically for maintenance.

2. Introduce segregated cycle lanes in parks and linking routes to parks to ensure the safety of dog walkers and pedestrians.

3. Install CCTV in parks and open spaces, particularly in anti-social behaviour hotspot areas, identified by local Councillors and Council Officers. An allocation of £1 million.

FUNDING:

Point 1, To ensure parks never have any litter or flytips would require twice daily litter bin emptying by dedicated teams across 100 different sites. This is estimated to cost around £0.5m per annum.

Point 2, cycle lanes would need to be in growth areas or connecting growth areas for SCIL to be utilised.

Point 3, this would require further borrowing of £1m which would require annual savings of £0.08m per annum.

Overall, these proposals will again be funded by re-allocating the NHB grant from the capital programme to the revenue budget. Further commentary on this proposal is set out in the overall summary at the end of this report.

9. Supporting People to Access Services Online

The Council wants people to access most of the services they provide online. Banks and Post Offices are closing, residents are asked to report local issues via the Fix My Street App, most things have to be applied for online; whether a Passport, Blue Badge, Green Waste Bin renewal and of course complaints to the Council need to be submitted on a form - online. A large section of the population is therefore disadvantaged because of these demands.

Brent Council must seek to tackle digital exclusion, by becoming a champion for the needs of people who find it hard to or are unable to use online systems.

PROPOSAL:

1. Support the creation of a flexible, freelancer-based service to assist local people with hands on digital inclusion training through the voluntary sector, paid for by specific grants, with NCIL acting as the prime match-finding source. With an initial target of 20 trainers on a part-time basis of 15-20 hours a week.

FUNDING:

Funding this proposal will need to come from the core revenue budget which will create a budget gap of £250k per annum. It is again proposed to use the New Home Bonus grant to fund this proposal.

10. Celebrating our Communities

Community groups and the voluntary sector have never had it tougher. Funding is very limited in the current climate, but the work many do in engaging with communities cannot be understated or underappreciated.

Community cohesion and events where local people can get together and celebrate are important.

We therefore want to see the Council do more to support community groups across the borough.

PROPOSAL:

1. To support and assist Brent based groups in being able to hold and celebrate community events, by allocating £150,000 per year over 4 years to a special Grant Fund to ensure local groups can afford the cost of hall, room hire and facilities. The maximum grant in each financial year will be £5,000 per

organisation. The organisations will be encouraged to raise match funding and the Grants Unit will provide advice on this. There will be one round of funding in each year and the Council will give 2 months' notice for applications. Assessment of the applications will include consideration of the organisation's ability and willingness to raise additional funding and the effort they plan to put into involving people from other communities in their event/ celebration.

FUNDING:

These proposals can be funded by NCIL, provided they demonstrate a link to development in the local area of each project. Appropriate due diligence will need to be undertaken to ensure conditions of NCIL can be met.

11. Conclusion

The Labour Administration's 2024/25 Budget will once again propose the maximum **4.99% Council Tax hike**. This coupled with the Labour Mayor of London's **increase of roughly 8.6%** for his element of the bill, means that residents will be paying more than ever before.

The Liberal Democrats strongly believe that if residents are being asked to pay more than ever, the concerns they have about our borough and the improvements they want to see must be prioritised.

Our **10 amendments** have been crafted to enhance the offer Brent Council is making for residents in the Budget.

They cover issues that local people, borough-wide, care about. They also push this Council further in key areas where more work needs to take place, namely, to **tackle the Climate Emergency**, **keep our streets clean** and **provide needed genuinely affordable housing**.

Our reasonable and costed proposals represent a positive contribution to delivering a Council Budget that reflects the wishes of local residents and will deliver urgent improvements in Brent.

12. Money Owed to Brent Council

The current debt mountain owed to Brent Council is £169 million.

Brent Council is owed large amounts of money including:

SOURCE	MONEY OWED
Council Tax	£50 million
Business Rates	£15.8 million
Housing Benefits Overpayments	£60.6 million
Adult Social Care	£18.5 million
Sundry Debts	£26.4 million

The Council has had to set up a **£70.5 million impairment provision** against these debts but if even more turn out to be bad *(unrecoverable)* there will be a major cost which the Council **cannot afford**.

Every £1 million owed is costing Brent at least £40,000 in lost interest each year.

There is a major advantage in recovering this money as soon as possible.

The Liberal Democrats propose that the Scrutiny Committee sets up a task group to review all debts owed to the Council and develops an action plan to recover.

There is currently no incentive for the debtors to pay early as they can treat the amount owed as free borrowing. **Where possible Brent Council should now impose a commercial rate of interest on the money owed.**

13. Management of Commercial Property Portfolio

Brent Council owns a commercial portfolio of properties worth around **£45 million**.

The gross rent income from these properties is around **£3 million**.

However, rents have not been reviewed for some time *(possibly only recently)* and a large amount of rent is owed, totalling **£1.2 million**.

Many properties are currently empty.

The cost of managing these properties is disproportionate to the amount rent actually received.

Therefore, the Liberal Democrat Group propose that the Scrutiny Committee should set up a task force to specifically review the Council's commercial property portfolio with a view to:

1. Pursue collection of rent owed.
2. Ensure that all rents have been reviewed and any outstanding reviews implemented and backdated.
3. Ensure that interest is charged on the rents owed in line with the lease terms.
4. Dispose of the whole property portfolio or any parts of it which are difficult to manage or provide insufficient income.
5. Consider whether any of the properties can be repurposed for housing or suitable for specific service provision directly or in partnership with the voluntary sector.
6. Report on the capital receipts, income recovery and management savings this action can achieve.

14. Advice from the Director of Finance

Senior finance support has been provided to assist the Liberal Democrat Group to formulate an alternative budget that reflects their policy priorities.

The Alternative Budget proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group would be a legal, balanced budget for 2024/25, although it is recognised that this carries financial risk. The potential implications for 2025/26 and beyond have not been considered as part of these proposals.

The sections below set out a summary of the proposals, the sources of funding and an overall summary of the proposed amendments.

15. Summary of Proposals and Sources of Funding

Liberal Democrat Group - Alternative budget proposals	Impact on 2024/25 budget £m
*** Costs have been grossed up include £0.31m of additional cost of borrowing as a result of re allocating the NHB grant**	
*** Keeping Brent Clean** – Increase in street cleaning budget by £0.5m and provision of more dual litter / recycling bins costing £0.5m	1.13
*** Accessible and Safe Roads and Pavements** - To increase the Capital Budget for road and pavement upgrading to £20 million. This requires £0.5m of further borrowing which will cost £40k per annum	0.05
*** Work Opportunities for Local Young People -** This proposal is estimated to cost around £0.5m, which will require further savings of £0.5m to keep the budget in balance.	0.57
*** Protecting Parks and Open Spaces -** To ensure parks never have any litter or flytips would cost around £0.5m per annum. Also installing CCTV in parks and open spaces would cost £1m of further borrowing which would cost £80k per annum	0.66
*** Supporting People to Access Services Online** – This will cost £220k per annum	0.28
Above funded by New Homes Bonus Grant (grossed up to include £0.31m of additional cost of borrowing as a result of re-allocating the NHB grant	(2.68)
Investing in our Youth – £1m new Youth Offer	1.0
Above funded by use of earmarked reserves	(1.0)
Delivering on Climate Emergency Commitments – £10m on new cycle routes	10.0
Above funded by use of Strategic CIL	(10.0)
Delivering on Climate Emergency Commitments –£3m on energy efficient council buildings.	3.0
Above funded by use of earmarked reserves	(3.0)
Celebrating our Communities - To support and assist Brent based groups in being able to hold and celebrate community events, by allocating £150k per annum	0.15
This proposal can be funded by NCIL, subject to appropriate legal due diligence.	(0.15)
Total	**0.0**

Overall, these proposals introduce £16.83m of new spending commitments, balanced by use of Strategic CIL (£10m), Neighbourhood CIL (£0.15m), reserves (£4m) and re-

allocating the New Homes Bonus grant from the capital programme to the revenue budget (£2.68m).

Firstly, any use of SCIL or NCIL requires significant legal due diligence to ensure any expenditure is compliant with grant conditions, such as ensuring any new cycle routes are within and between growth areas in Brent.

Secondly, reserves have been used to fund certain proposals with potential ongoing revenue implications into future years. There is a risk that new services become embedded into Council services making it more difficult to cease. Recurring expenditure requires either sustainable funding sources or savings found elsewhere in the budget. This has not been offered as part of these proposals, which would impact the financial sustainability of these services.

Thirdly, the Council received £3.1m of NHB in 2022/23, £7.9m in 2023/24 and is due to receive £2.9m in 2024/25. This is an non ring-fenced grant that is currently recorded as a reserve and used to finance the capital programme. Allocating a proportion of the grant into the Council's revenue budget is allowed under the current grant conditions, however this would have an impact on the financing of the capital programme. In addition, as can be seen from the figures, this grant is highly unpredictable and is one of the reasons why this grant has historically not been budgeted for in the revenue budget. There is therefore a risk of building this volatile grant (which has been subject to government top slicing and various rule changes over the years) into the base budget and calls into question the sustainability of the proposals set out in this report that are to be funded by this grant.

In addition, the consequences of removing New Homes Bonus grant from financing of the capital programme will have significant consequences that will need to be managed. In the short term this means further borrowing to finance the capital programme. Equally, three of the proposals require further borrowing of £1.5m in total. While the financing of this additional borrowing has been factored into the budget proposals, it does add risk to the medium term financial strategy as budgets generally become more constrained.

While the proposals add an element of risk to the 2024/25 budget, particularly use of one-off reserves for potentially recurring commitments and higher levels of borrowing, the budget can be considered balanced. This is also subject to appropriate due diligence on the use of SCIL and NCIL.

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance & Resources

	Full Council 29 February 2024
	Report from the Chief Executive
	Lead Member – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)
Auditor's Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
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:	One Appendix A: Auditor's Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Minesh Patel Corporate Director of Finance & Resources 020 8937 6528 Email: Minesh.Patel@brent.gov.uk Rav Jassar Deputy Director of Finance 020 8937 1487 Email: Ravinder.Jassar@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report presents the Council's external auditor's annual report on value for money as part of the 2022 - 23 audit of the year end accounts. It also sets out their key recommendations.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To note the report and recommendations.

3.0 Background

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1.1 Securing value for money underpins all aspects of financial management within the Council which enables the delivery of the priorities and objectives within the Borough Plan.

3.2 Detail

3.2.1 The National Audit Office introduced a new Code of Audit Practice for 2020/21 which revised the approach to the audit of Value for Money (VFM).

There are three main changes:

- A new set of key criteria, covering financial sustainability, governance and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

- More extensive reporting, providing commentary on arrangements across all key criteria.

- Auditors to arrive at a more sophisticated judgement on performance, as well recommendations.

3.2.2 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). As is customary, their report is to be presented to Full Council to be considered at the same time as setting of the Council's budget.

3.2.3 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.

3.2.4 All of the recommendations have been accepted and management responses have been provided.

3.2.5 The full report is attached at Appendix A.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 The Annual Report has been subject to consideration by the Audit & Standard Advisory Committee prior to its submission to Council.

5.0 Financial Consideration

5.1 There are no financial implications arising as result of this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising as result of this report.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 Communication Considerations

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance & Resources

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Grant Thornton

Auditor's Annual Report on London Borough Brent

2022/23

October 2023



Contents

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our commentary relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



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The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Executive summary

Value for money arrangements and key recommendation(s)

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the Council's arrangements under specified criteria and 2022/23 is the third year that we have reported our findings in this way. As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Where we identify significant weaknesses in arrangements, we are required to make recommendations so that the Council may set out actions to make improvements. Our conclusions are summarised in the table below.

Criteria	2022/23 Risk assessment	2022/23 Auditor judgement on arrangements		2021/22 Auditor judgement on arrangements		Direction of travel
Financial sustainability	No risks of significant weakness identified	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but five improvement recommendations made	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but two improvement recommendations made	↓
Governance	No risks of significant weakness identified	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made	↔
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No risks of significant weakness identified	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made	↔

G	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
R	Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

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Executive summary (continued)

Financial sustainability

The significant challenges facing the Local Government sector In England mean that the Council is having to make tough decisions in order to balance the budget and ensure it maintains its finances on a sustainable footing. For the first time in recent years the Council is having to make cuts in some services while moving forward with its overall plans for improving the future of Brent. We found that its financial planning both short term and longer term were based on sound judgements and the Council has a good track record in setting and achieving balanced budgets. It has identified and is responding to key financial risks to which it is exposed. There are further challenging decisions ahead for the Council requiring continued careful monitoring of its financial position.

Our work has not identified evidence of significant weaknesses within the arrangements in place. However, we have identified areas where the Council could improve arrangements and as such, have raised five improvement recommendations which have been accepted by Management. See pages 9-16 for more detail.

Governance

The Council's arrangements for managing risk and taking decisions appear appropriate. There is no evidence of concerns regarding standards and behaviours by either officers or members. The Council has taken steps to further improve arrangements for identifying and monitoring risks.

Our work has not identified evidence of significant weaknesses within the arrangements in place. However, we have identified areas where the Council could improve arrangements and as such, have raised three improvement recommendations which have been accepted by Management. See pages 17-20 for more detail

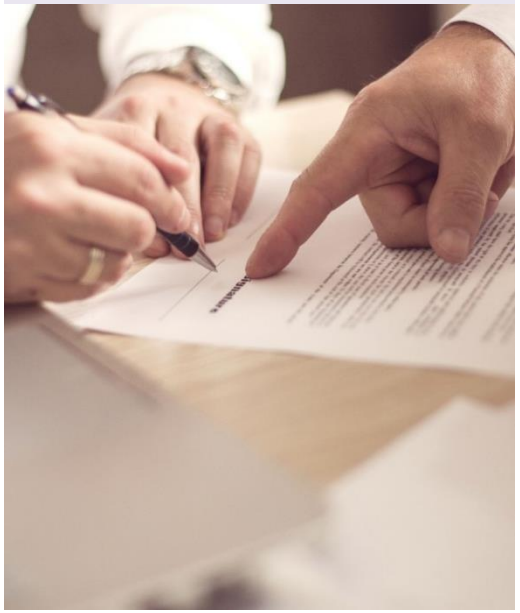
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

The Council makes good use of performance and financial information in order to review and improve its systems, processes and services. These arrangements have been further enhanced recently following the arrival of the Council's new Chief Executive. The Council works collaboratively with a number of key partners, including voluntary sector organisations, local community groups, multi faith groups and other public sector organisations such as the NHS and Metropolitan Police.

Our work has not identified evidence of significant weaknesses within the arrangements in place. However, we have identified areas where the Council could improve arrangements and as such, have raised three improvement recommendations which have been accepted by Management. See pages 21-25 for more detail

Financial Statements opinion

We have completed our audit of your financial statements and we plan to issue an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial statements on 12 October 2023 Our findings are set out in further detail on pages 29 to 34.



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Use of auditor's powers

We bring the following matters to your attention:

	2022/23
Statutory recommendations Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors can make written recommendations to the audited body which need to be considered by the body and responded to publicly.	We did not make any written recommendations under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
Public Interest Report Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors have the power to make a report if they consider a matter is sufficiently important to be brought to the attention of the audited body or the public as a matter of urgency, including matters which may already be known to the public, but where it is in the public interest for the auditor to publish their independent view.	We did not issue a public interest report.
Application to the Court Under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, if auditors think that an item of account is contrary to law, they may apply to the court for a declaration to that effect.	We did not make an application to the Court.
Advisory notice Under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may issue an advisory notice if the auditor thinks that the authority or an officer of the authority: • is about to make or has made a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring unlawful expenditure, • is about to take or has begun to take a course of action which, if followed to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or • is about to enter an item of account, the entry of which is unlawful.	We did not issue any advisory notices.
Judicial review Under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may make an application for judicial review of a decision of an authority, or of a failure by an authority to act, which it is reasonable to believe would have an effect on the accounts of that body.	We did not make an application for judicial review.

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Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's use of resources

All councils are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. The Council's responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.

Councils report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statement.

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, we are required to be satisfied whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note (AGN) 03, requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:

Financial sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the Council can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years).

Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the Council makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the Council makes decisions based on appropriate information.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the Council delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.

Our commentary on the Council's arrangements in each of these three areas, is set out on pages 9 to 26.

In addition to our financial statements audit work, we perform a range of procedures to inform our value for money commentary:

- Review of Council, Cabinet and committee reports
- Regular meetings with senior officers
- Interviews with other members and management
- Attendance at Audit Committee
- Considering the work of internal audit
- Reviewing reports from third parties including Ofsted
- Reviewing the Council's Annual Governance Statement and other publications

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The current local government landscape

National context

Local government in England continues to face significant challenges as a sector. These include a high level of uncertainty over future levels of government funding, alongside delays to the Government's plans for reform of the local government finance system, impacting on medium-term financial planning. This is also a time of generationally significant levels of inflation – the UK inflation rate was 7.8% in April 2022, rising to a 41-year high of 11.1% in October 2022, then reducing to 10.1% in March 2023. Inflation levels put pressure on councils' revenue and capital expenditure, as well as the associated cost of living crisis impacting on local communities and businesses, leading to an increase in demand for council services such as children with special education needs with associated transport costs, debt advice, housing needs, and mental health, as well as impacting on some areas of council income such as car parking and the collection rates of council tax, business rates and rents. This follows a significant period of funding reductions by Government (2012 to 2017) and the impacts of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic which, for example, have contributed to workforce shortages in a number of council service areas, as well creating supply chain fragility risks.

The local government finance settlement for 2023/24 was better than many in the sector anticipated demonstrating an understanding by Government of the financial challenges being faced by the sector. However, the Local Government Association, in July 2023, estimated that the costs to councils of delivering their services will exceed their core funding by £2bn in 2023/24 and by £900m in 2024/25. This includes underlying cost pressures that pre-date and have been increased by the pandemic, such as demographic pressures increasing the demand for services such as social care and homelessness.

Over the past decade many councils have sought to increase commercial activity as a way to generate new sources of income which has increased the nature of financial risk, as well as the need to ensure there is appropriate skills and capacity in place to manage such activities.

Local government is coming under an increased spotlight in terms of how the sector responds to these external challenges, including the Government establishing the Office for Local Government (Oflog) and there has been an increase in the number of councils who have laid a Section 114 Notice, or are commenting on the likelihood of such an action, as well as continued Government intervention at a number of councils.

There has also been an increase in the use of auditors using their statutory powers, such as public interest reporting and statutory recommendations. The use of such auditor powers typically derive from Value for Money audit work, where weaknesses in arrangements have been identified. These include:

- a failure to understand and manage the risks associated with commercial investments and council owned companies
- a failure to address and resolve relationship difficulties between senior officers and members
- significant challenges associated with financial capability and capacity
- a lack of compliance with procurement and contract management processes and procedures
- ineffective leadership and decision-making.

Value for Money audit has an important role in providing assurance and supporting improvement in the sector.

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The current local government landscape (continued)

Local context

The London Borough of Brent (the Council) is situated in north-west London. Brent's population is estimated to be 339,800. Major districts are Kilburn, Willesden, Wembley and Harlesden, with sub-districts Stonebridge, Kingsbury, Kensal Green, Neasden, and Kenton. Brent has a mixture of residential, industrial and commercial land. It includes many districts of inner-city character in the east and a more distinct suburban character in the west, part of which formed part of the early 20th century Metroland developments.

Brent continues to experience levels of unemployment and poverty higher than the rest of London. The unemployment rate in Brent was 4% in September 2019, lower than the London average of 4.6%. However, by June 2022 this had risen to 8.2% - significantly higher than the London average of 5.3%. 36% of people in Brent live in poverty, the second highest level in London; and 30% of residents are estimated to be earning below the Living Wage. Brent therefore has a large number of vulnerable people who are already financially challenged and who face further deprivations as a result of the cost of living crisis. According to the Council's own analysis the cost of living crisis is continuing to have a significant impact on the residents of Brent. The Council has committed to doing what it can to assist those in greatest need, in particular providing support via a Resident Support Fund (RFS) and a local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme. The Brent Resident Support Fund (RSF) has been in place since August 2020. In the period August 2020 to January 2023, RSF has supported 6,940 households with a total of £12.2 million. 27,495 households are supported through CTS of which 18,923 are working age and 8,572 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.

Service demand has continued to rise due to demographic changes which affect all age groups, with particular pressures on adults' and children's social care and the homelessness budget. The Council appointed a New Chief Executive in May 2023. Although this happened after the year under report we have where appropriate commented on any key changes in arrangements as a result of initiatives introduced by the new Chief Executive. Those new arrangements will of course be reported against in more detail in future reviews.

The Council was formed in 1965 and elections take place every four years, with currently 57 councillors being elected at each election. The Labour Party has been the largest single party on the council for about half its history and the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats have each been the largest party at other times, and there have been several periods when no party has had overall control. Labour have been the administration since 2010 and as of the most recent elections in 2022, the council is composed of 49 labour councillors, five conservative councillors and three liberal democrat councillor.

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Financial sustainability



We considered how the Council:

- identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds them into its plans
- plans to bridge its funding gaps and identify achievable savings
- plans its finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities
- ensures its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system
- identifies and manages risk to financial resilience, such as unplanned changes in demand and assumptions underlying its plans.

Short and medium term financial planning

Whilst the position remains one of extreme pressure on Council's finances the Council demonstrates financial prudence in its approach. This is evidenced by the fact that budget to outturn variances in 2021/22 and 2022/23 were minimal and the Council achieved 93% of its targeted savings over that period as shown in Table 1 on page 10 of this report. The Council has set a revenue budget of £358.4m for 2023/24 a 9% increase overall compared to 2022/23. Planned savings of £13.5m represents 3.7% of net revenue.

There is little headroom in the budget given that the Council has not achieved 100% of planned savings in each of the previous two years. The Council undertook a series of scenario analyses and sensitivity analyses on various budget assumptions to develop a best case, mid-case and worst-case assessment. Savings targets are currently based on the Council's mid-case scenario plan. It would be prudent for the Council to also set out how it would address a budget shortfall based on its worst case scenario. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.

In July 2022, The Council agreed a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), outlining the financial framework for the financial years 2023/24 to 2024/2025. The programme forecasted a two-year savings target of £28m (£18m 2023/24 and £10m for 2024/25). In line with its reserves strategy the Council did not intend to utilise reserves to fund recurrent revenue expenditure.

A bid has been made to the Department for Education for the Council to build its own Childrens' Home. If successful this should help the Council manage growth challenges in the Children and Young Persons area caused by increased demand and placement costs.

The Council has embarked on an extensive Capital Plan to invest c£1,080m over 5 years, over the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. However £530m remains as pipeline provision and those schemes have not yet been approved within the current Capital Programme.

The cost of borrowing means that additional funding is required to service the Capital Programme. Based on the Council's latest estimate of its capital financing requirement (CFR) on 31st March 2023 the Minimum Revenue Provision in the budget for 2023/24 has been set at £12.0m The Council has a General Fund Capital Reserve from which additional funds could be drawn. At March 2023 this reserve contained £58m.

At 31st December 2022, the Council held £781m of borrowing (£695.3m long term and £85.7m short term) and £116.2m of investments. The level of borrowing is within CIPFA Prudential Code limits.

Major capital projects include: South Kilburn Estate Regeneration (£63.1m over 5 years); Wembley Housing Zone redevelopment (£130m); Highways Capital Scheme Programme (£15m over 4 years); Integrated Street Cleansing and Waste Fleet (£21m); Special Educational Needs School Places (£44.2m); General Fund Housing development (£170m over 4 years); New Council Homes Programme (£265m over 4 years), and Fulton Road Housing (£85.6m).

This is an ambitious capital plan in the current economic climate however the Council is aware of this and is carefully monitoring and adapting its plans accordingly. The agreed capital programme reflects the broad aims of the Borough plan however the Council will need to ensure that the desire to achieve its Borough plan in the short term does not overly burden the financial position in the long term.

The Council's performance against key financial and performance metrics is set out in Table 1 on page 10 of this report.

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Financial sustainability (continued)

Short and medium term financial planning (Cont'd)

The quarter 2 budget monitoring report 2023/24 has identified a potential adverse variance of £13.5m (3%) as a result of increased demand and costs relating to the provision of temporary accommodation to homeless persons. Given that this was a known risk at the time of setting the 2023/24 budget in February 2023 the Council should review how demand forecasts and future costs are estimated to identify any lessons to be learned for setting future budgets. An improvement Recommendation has been made in this respect.

Financial planning and strategic priorities

The Council has developed a Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2022-2024 with a detailed delivery plan. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group raised concerns that the draft 2023/24 budget did not clearly align to the revised Borough Plan for 2023-27. In particular the strategic priority relating to climate change and its goal to be net zero by 2030.

We note that the Climate Strategy delivery plan contains the financial implications of each element of the plan, but only in general terms i.e. whether covered by existing budgets or external funding. There are no detailed costings for each element. Without detailed costings it is not clear how the Council is assessing the value for money achieved from each part of the plan. It is also good practice to consider what the costs or impacts would be if the Council didn't take the specified action. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.

We also note that the latest MTFS for the Council only runs to the 2024/25 financial year. We have made an improvement recommendation that the MTFS should cover the full period of the borough plan. This will bring transparency with regard to the financial implications of delivering against that plan.

Table 1. Performance against key financial metrics	2022/23	2021/22
Planned revenue expenditure	£312m	£305m
Actual revenue expenditure	£316m	£306.4m
Planned capital spend	£232m	£220m
Actual capital spend	£191m	£165.4m
Planned savings target (recurrent/non-recurrent)	£2.7m	£8.5m
Actual savings delivered (recurrent/non-recurrent)	£2.3m	£8.1m
Year-end cash position	£134.5m	£136.4m

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Financial sustainability (continued)

Identifying savings

As a result of a more favourable local government settlement in December 2022 planned savings of £13.5m for the 2023/24 budget set in February 2023 are slightly lower than envisaged in the July 2022 MTFS where the Council had previously identified a need for a total of £18m savings in 2023/24. The identified savings for 2023/24 mainly related to efficiency savings including digital transformation. A small level of cuts to services as well as restructuring were also planned. Planned reductions in services included library stock reduction and streetlight dimming.

The Council is anticipating that further significant savings will be required in order to continue to balance the budget beyond 2024/25. The Council has provisionally assessed the gap across 2024/25 and 2025/26 as £8m but has caveated that with a +-20% margin of error which would mean the requirement could be closer to £10m.

The Council has a good track record in achieving set savings targets (93% of targeted savings in 2021/22 and 2022/23) . Overall the Council has delivered savings of £196m since 2010. However the savings of £13.5m required in 2023/24 represents a significant increase in the total savings set for 2021/22 (£8.5m) and 2022/23 (£2.7m). We feel that in setting its plans the Council should distinguish between those savings which are non-recurrent (i.e. only apply to one year) and those which are recurrent i.e. those savings will continue in future years. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect. The Council is still not planning to utilise reserves to fund recurring budget gaps which means further cuts in services are likely to be needed as opportunities for further efficiency savings will have diminished.

The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has a savings target of £3.1m for 2023/24 in order to achieve a balanced budget. This compares to £0.5m efficiency savings achieved in 2022/23. Therefore the £3.1m looks highly ambitious at more than 6 times the savings achieved for 2022/23. Some of the identified savings opportunities such as reduced staffing (£0.9m) and a reduction in support services (£0.3m) may be easier for the Council to achieve, however the plans to reduce turnaround times on voids (£1.2m) and a reduction in contract costs (£0.7m) maybe more difficult to achieve. This will require close monitoring by the Council.

Each department monitors the delivery of planned savings, and mitigating actions where relevant, at its Department Management Team. A comprehensive Savings Tracker is reported to Council Management Team and to Cabinet.

	2023/24
Planned savings	£ 13.5m
Planned savings as a % of income	3.5%
Planned savings (recurrent/non-recurrent)	£100% recurrent
Planned saving schemes rated amber/green	£100%

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Financial sustainability (continued)

Financial planning and other operational plans

The Council has an ongoing commitment to deliver 5,000 new affordable home in the borough by 31 March 2024, this includes the provision of 1,000 to be delivered directly by the Council. As of November 2022, 684 new homes had been delivered. Due to the ongoing need for affordable housing in Brent, the Council has committed to directly deliver an additional target of 700 new affordable homes by 31 March 2028 and was awarded £111m of grant funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA). The forecast capital investment on acquisitions and building new council homes in 2023/24 is estimated close to £140.2m. However it is likely that a number of schemes will need to be paused or re-evaluated as cost increases arising from inflation may make some schemes unviable.

The number of Brent schools experiencing difficulties in 2022/23 has increased with 67% projecting an in-year deficit. 23% of these schools' plan to use over 50% of reserves to balance their budgets in 2022/23. A number of Brent schools are also experiencing falling rolls and as a result have had significant reductions in funding. Alongside measures to support schools, such as capping admission numbers, the Council has established a School Place Planning Working Group to review the sustainability of provision in primary planning areas.

The overall Dedicated Schools Grant(DSG) outturn for 2022/23 was £210.6m, a surplus of £1.3m, against total grant funds of £211.9m for the year This in-year surplus is mainly driven by a £1m underspend against the Early Years Block due to the Department of Education's (DfE) in-year adjustment and a £0.3m surplus against the High Needs Block (HNB), a positive outturn for the HNB. The cumulative DSG deficit carried forward from 2021/22 was £15.1m. Under government regulations the surplus must be held in a separate fund which can be used to help balance future years' budget and therefore the carried forward defecit remains £15.1m. This is an improvement on the position envisaged at the time of setting the 2022/23 budget in February 2022 where the Council had estimated that the overall deficit would continue to increase.

In 2022/23 The Council was invited to participate in the DfE programme called Delivering Better Value (DBV) in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for local authorities which provided dedicated support and funding to help local authorities with HNB deficits reform their high needs systems. The first phase of the programme included a comprehensive diagnostic to identify root cause cost drivers, mitigating solutions or reforms and support in developing a quality assured Management Plan. The findings confirmed that in Brent, the increased expenditure leading to the deficit was fuelled by increases in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It also confirmed that Brent had already taken steps via the existing Management Plan to identify mitigating solutions.

Following the discovery phase, Brent successfully bid for a £1 million grant to deliver the actions in the Management Plan. The funding is over 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

Managing risks to financial resilience

The Budget papers presented to Cabinet in February 2023 contain a detailed assessment of financial risks. Since that time an additional risk with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been identified nationally. The Council has undertaken a number of surveys of all buildings owned or maintained by the Council to determine the likely scale of the issue. Those surveys have found one school with confirmed RAAC presence and four schools with suspected RAAC issues. These schools are all academies and are not local authority schools so these are not a direct financial risk for The Council. Further surveys are being completed so the position on this is likely to change, and this is something we will be monitoring as part of our future VfM work.

There are other potential financial hurdles identified by the Council. These include:

- The current statutory override which prevents the need for the Council to fund the DSG deficit of £14m (as at March 2023) from General Fund reserves is due to be reviewed by the government in 2025/26. If the statutory override were to end then this would put strain on the Council's reserves, reducing the usable reserves' balance significantly.

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Financial governance

Managing risks to financial resilience (Cont'd)

- There are potential reductions in funding regarding the government Homelessness Prevention Grant from 2025/26. Such a reduction would have an even greater impact due to rising demand in this area.
- The Council's environment contracts in Resident Services are due to be indexed for inflation in 2025/26. Current inflation levels mean that this could have a significant financial impact.

The Council is aware of these risks and taking action accordingly. The Council's General Fund Reserve 31 March 2023 was £18m. At 5% of revenue budget this is in line with the Council's aim of maintaining 5% of net revenue. The Council plans to increase reserves further by 31 March 2024. The Council does hold further earmarked reserves to cover inflation risk (£10m) and Future Funding Risks (£6.1m).

Annual budget setting

Annual assumptions built into the budget include demographic growth, general inflation, contract inflation, pay inflation, as well as unavoidable service delivery changes. For 2023/24 the budget included £49m of such growth pressures from the 2022/23 base. As stated previously the Council undertook a series of scenario analyses and sensitivity analyses on various budget assumptions to develop a best case, mid-case and worst-case assessment. The budgeted growth was primarily based on taking the mid-case scenario. This growth was partially offset by planned increases in Council Tax and Business Rates as well as an overall increase in specific grants, predominantly the Social Care Grant where an increase of £8.6m was received.

In setting the budget for 2023/24 however the Council still envisaged a shortfall of £13.5m which it planned to address through identified savings.

A Budget Scrutiny Task Group (BSTG) assessed the impact of the draft budget proposals. That group was formed of six members from across the Council's two permanent scrutiny committees. The group operated under agreed terms of reference and received evidence from members, officers and other stakeholders including a focus group with key voluntary and community sector partners. The task group described itself as a 'critical friend' in the process.

The BSTG challenged the Council to consider how it could generate additional income from parks.

Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) were undertaken on each individual element of the budget proposals. The BSTG recommended that a cumulative EIA be undertaken to assess the cumulative impact of budget decisions since 2018. We have made an Improvement Recommendation that a cumulative EIA should also include the assessed impacts projected over the full period of the MTFS.

Budgetary control

As reported in our 2021/22 Annual Audit Report the Council has strong budget monitoring arrangements involving Cost Centre Managers, Heads of Service and Directors with support from Finance Business Partners. Those arrangements have been further strengthened with the establishment of a Budget Assurance Panel (BAP).

The BAP met for the first time in September 2023 where it undertook a deeper dive into temporary accommodation and homelessness pressures. As well as scrutinising budget monitoring reports, the BAP will undertake deep dives into particular parts of the budget at each of its monthly meetings as well as scrutinising achievement of savings plans. Membership of the panel includes the Chief Executive (Chair); Corporate Director of Finance & Resources (Vice-Chair); Head of Internal Audit; Heads of Services and representatives covering Governance and Transformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion we have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements to ensure the Council manages risk to its financial sustainability. Whilst arrangements are deemed appropriate, we recognise that the ability to balance the revenue budget into the medium term will become increasingly difficult. We found that its financial planning both short term and longer term were based on sound judgements and the Council has a good track record in setting and achieving balanced budgets. It has identified and is responding to key financial risks to which it is exposed. There are further challenging decisions ahead for the Council requiring continued careful monitoring of its financial position.

We have made four improvement recommendations set out on pages 14 to 16.

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 1	The Council should set out options for how it would plan to address any budget shortfall arising from its worst-case scenario planning. It would also benefit from specifying whether savings achieved are recurrent v non-recurrent savings in its plans and reporting
Improvement opportunity identified	To provide a headroom in its financial plan
Summary findings	The Council has historically achieved 93% of its savings target each year. Savings targets are currently based on the Council's mid-case scenario plan. The Council does not currently distinguish between recurrent and non-recurrent savings in its financial plans and reporting
Criteria impacted	 Financial sustainability
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted
Improvement Recommendation 2	The Council's MTFS should cover the full period of the Borough Plan i.e. until 2026/27
Improvement opportunity identified	To ensure plans are fully costed and achievable
Summary findings	
Criteria impacted	 Financial sustainability
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 3	The Council should undertake a cumulative Equality Impact Assessment (EIAs) covering the impacts assessed across the full life of the MTFS and establish review dates for all EIAs to monitor the actual impacts and adjust actions accordingly.
Improvement opportunity identified	To ensure the Equality Impacts are understood across the full life of the MTFS and are monitored and reviewed appropriately
Summary findings	EIAs are conducted on individual elements of the annual budget.
Criteria impacted	Financial sustainability
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted and will be considered alongside the existing framework for conducting Equality Impact Assessments
Improvement Recommendation 4	The Council should specify detailed costings for each planned action in its Climate Strategy and compare these to the costs of not taking those actions.
Improvement opportunity identified	Detailed costing and comparisons will help determine the value for money of each element of the strategy
Summary findings	The Climate Strategy delivery plan contains the financial implications of each element of the plan, but only in general terms i.e. whether covered by existing budgets or external funding. There are no detailed costings for each element.
Criteria impacted	Financial sustainability
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	Detailed costings and financial appraisals are undertaken on all actions where necessary, but not published in strategy reports. Any future reports will provide additional details where relevant.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 5	The Council should review how demand forecasts and future costs are estimated to identify any lessons to be learned for setting future budgets.
Improvement opportunity identified	To improve the accuracy of the Council's financial projections
Summary findings	A potential adverse variance of £13.4m (5%) has been identified at the end of Q2 2023/24 as a result of increased demand and costs relating to the provision of temporary accommodation to homeless persons. This was a known risk at the time of setting the 2023/24 budget in February 2023.
Criteria impacted	Financial sustainability
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted. The main cause of the forecast overspend is the provision of temporary accommodation. High levels of demand due to a rise in homelessness and a reduction in supply of suitable accommodation have combined to create significant pressures on the Council's budget. The rise in demand for housing services is a national issue, but is particularly acute in London. At the time of setting the budget for 2023/24, growth was built into the MTFS to account for a rise in demand that was being experienced in 2022/23. However, the pressures currently being experienced are unprecedented and the forecast in 2023/24 is beyond the worst case scenario modelling that was undertaken at the time of budget setting. If pressures are not reduced as a result of management interventions or further funding from government, consideration will need to be taken as part of the 2024/25 setting process.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Governance

We considered how the Council:

- monitors and assesses risk and gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud
- approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process
- ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information); supports its statutory financial reporting; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed, including in relation to significant partnerships
- ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency
- monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff and member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declaration of interests) and where it procures and commissions services.

Risk management and internal controls

As at February 2023 there were 8 strategic risks listed on the strategic risk register. Five of those risks showed the risk as increasing with only one (Increased Demand from Migration and People Movement) showing a decrease in residual risk score. Two of the risks (Increase in Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (HNB) Deficit and a Lack of supply of affordable accommodation scored the maximum 25 on the Council's risk matrix. The Council has determined that this overall worsening of the risk environment is mainly attributable to the cost of living crisis.

As stated previously the Council has developed a Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2022-2024 with a detailed delivery plan. There is no reference to the impacts on this strategy from any of the risks identified in the Strategic Risk register. If the Council does not consider that any of the existing strategic risks are relevant then it should assess whether a new specific risk should be added to the register. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.

In the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) the Council has identified "second line' gaps in controls, which includes the monitoring, reporting and challenge over 'first line' controls. The 'first line' is the provision of services and the application of an internal control framework to manage associated risks; and 'second line' responsibilities include the monitoring, reporting and challenge of the effectiveness of 'first line' functions. The same weakness was identified in 2021-22 and has still not been addressed. Effective second line controls are essential to effective risk management. The Council should address this risk without delay and we have made an improvement recommendation in this respect.

The Council's Internal Audit function was subject to an External Quality Assessment in January 2023. The conclusion of that assessment was that overall, the internal audit service is a well led, professional and respected service that adds value and provides evidence based, reliable assurance over the Council's governance, risk management and internal controls. It rated the service as generally conforms with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. This is the highest rating that can be given. A number of actions have been recommended and a detailed action plan developed. This plan includes a refresh of the Council's Risk Management Policy which has not been updated since June 2017.

Counter Fraud arrangements were strengthened in 2022/23 through agreement that the Council obtain full membership access to an Enhanced Internal Fraud Database (EIFD) that has been developed and maintained by CIFAS (a not-for-profit UK fraud prevention service). The EIFD is a repository of fraud risk information that can be used to reduce exposure to fraud and other irregular conduct and inform decisions according to risk appetite. This system is focussed on employee fraud and recruitment controls. The system will enable the Council to have additional assurance around recruitment and provide the Investigations team with additional resource when conducting internal investigations.

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Governance (continued)

Informed decision making

The number of audits completed in 2002/23 was in line with previous years and provides reasonable coverage based on assessed risks. A summary of the annual audit work for 2022/23 against plan is provided in the Table 3 opposite.

The Council scores favourably in the Council Climate Plan Scorecard assessed by Climate Emergency UK with a score of 73%. It scores less well in measuring and setting emissions targets. Although this latter element was a low scoring area for most Councils it is perhaps an area of development for the Council to consider. An Improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.

For the South Kilburn Regeneration Programme external consultants were appointed to help identify the most appropriate method of procurement. Those consultants have been retained to advise on taken forward procuring a single delivery partner.

An Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in 2022 highlighted that services for children in care and care leavers have declined from outstanding to good from 2018 -2022. A key issue identified was reduced oversight in some areas of social work practice and challenges in recruitment and retention of staff. The Council has reviewed its recruitment and retention payments for children and young persons social workers as a result. The Council also agreed a new Workforce Strategy 2022-25 with aim to recruit, retain and reward a diverse, highly skilled, flexible and motivated workforce. Council Management Team receive reports on progress in achieving the outcomes of the new Workforce Strategy twice a year. It is too soon to assess whether these initiatives are having the desired effect and we will further monitor this in future VfM work.

Table 3 Summary of Internal Audit Activity 2022/23 (as at 30 April 2023)	Number	%
Audits included in 2022-23 plan	35	
Audits carried forward from 2021-22	14	
(Audits cancelled/deferred)	(9)	
Additional Audits added to plan	3	
Total Planned Audits for 2022-23	**43**	
- Completed	33	77%
- Draft Report Stage	3	7%
- Fieldwork completed	1	2%
- In progress	6	14%

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Governance (continued)

Standards and behaviours

There were 53 complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman regarding Brent Council in 2022/23. Out of these 20 were upheld.

Out of those upheld, 8 related to the Council's housing department. In particular allocations and treatment of homeless persons. This has highlighted that homeless persons were not getting access to the housing register in an appropriate manner. As a result the Council is having to take urgent steps including changes to its policy in this respect.

There were 4 complaints made by members of the public regarding behaviour and standards of members of the Council. None of these complaints led to an investigation and all were dismissed as no breaches of the Member Code of Conduct.

Conclusion

The Council's performance against key governance metrics is set out in Table 4 below. In conclusion we have not identified any significant weaknesses in Governance arrangements. There is no evidence of concerns regarding standards and behaviours by either officers or members. The Council has taken steps to further improve arrangements for identifying and monitoring risks.
We have made four improvement recommendations set out on pages 20 to 21.

Table 4 Performance against key governance metrics	2022/23	2021/22
Annual Governance Statement (control deficiencies)	• second line' gaps in control, which includes the monitoring, reporting and challenge over 'first line' controls. • rate of implementation of 'medium risk' audit recommendations; and • absence and/or updating of policies and procedures.	• second line' gaps in control, which includes the monitoring, reporting and challenge over 'first line' controls
Head of Internal Audit opinion	Reasonable	Reasonable
Ofsted inspection rating	Good	

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 6	The Council should consider how it can improve its Council Climate Plan Score for Measuring and setting Emissions Targets
Improvement opportunity identified	Setting and measuring effective targets will help the Council deliver against its Climate Strategy
Summary findings	The Council scores favourably in the Council Climate Plan Scorecard but scores less well in measuring and setting emissions targets.
Criteria impacted	 Governance
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted
Improvement Recommendation 7	The Council should develop a plan for how it will address the second line' gaps in control, which includes the monitoring, reporting and challenge over 'first line' controls .
Improvement opportunity identified	Improvements in second line control monitoring is an essential element of an effective system of internal controls
Summary findings	The AGS identifies "second line' gaps in controls, which includes the monitoring, reporting and challenge over 'first line' controls.
Criteria impacted	 Governance
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This issue has previously been reported by Internal Audit in both 2021-22 and 2022-23. Internal Audit continue to monitor this and report progress to ASAC as part of its regular updates. This will also be monitored by the Brent Assurance Board, Chaired by the Chief Executive.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 8	The Council should review the strategic risk register to assess if risks to its Climate Strategy are adequately addressed.
Improvement opportunity identified	To ensure all strategic risks impacting on the Council's Climate Strategy are identified
Summary findings	There is no reference to the impacts on this strategy from any of the risks identified in the Strategic Risk register.
Criteria impacted	Governance
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This risk is currently managed at departmental level. Consideration will be given to escalating this to the Strategic Risk Register if/when the risk score exceeds set thresholds.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

We considered how the Council:

- uses financial and performance information to assess performance to identify areas for improvement
- evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement
- ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders it has identified, in order to assess whether it is meeting its objectives
- where it commissions or procures services assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits.

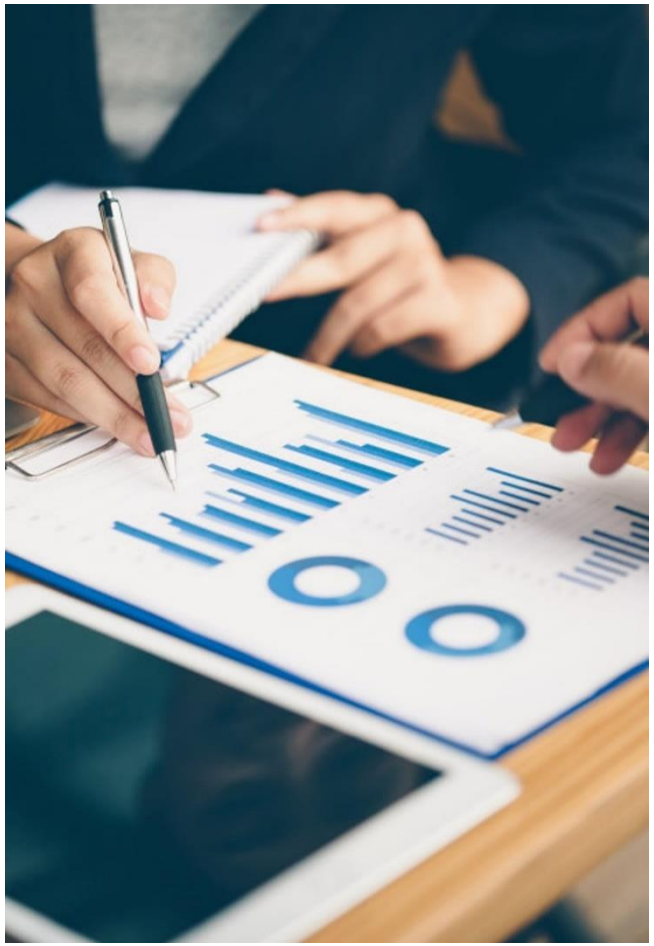
Use of financial and performance information

The Council makes effective use of financial and performance data. As already mentioned, a new Borough Plan 2023-2027 was approved in March 2023. As a result the Council is currently reviewing its performance monitoring reports to reflect the new plan. A new Performance Management Framework (PMF) has been approved by the Council Management Team (CMT) and this sets out the new arrangements for corporate performance reporting and monitoring. The framework has been developed in the context of the formation of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) part of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) tasked with providing authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and support its improvement.

The Council's new Performance Management Framework has been designed to align with Oflog reporting to ensure the data used by Oflog is effectively monitored locally. A balanced scorecard has also been developed which is also aligned to the Oflog reporting as well as the Council's strategic risk register. A Balanced Scorecard provides a holistic view of metrics that gauge performance over the four areas (or 'perspectives') most relevant to the organisation's vision and strategy. The four areas identified by the Council are: Finance; Customer; Internal and Learning Growth and Culture.

The new reporting arrangements will be implemented by the end of 2023 and their effectiveness will be considered as part of our 2023/24 value for money audit. We note the intention that the new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)will be aligned to the Strategic Risk Register however it is not clear how the risk register will be reviewed and refreshed to take account of actions arising from the monitoring of Council performance. We have made an improvement recommendation in this respect.

Corporate directors are responsible for ensuring that their departments have effective processes in place for recording data in accordance with the council's Data and Insight Strategy 2023/27 and central performance reporting system (SPINE). Data quality 'spot-checks' will be undertaken by the Corporate Performance Team. Any concerns identified will be fed-back to the appropriate data-owner.

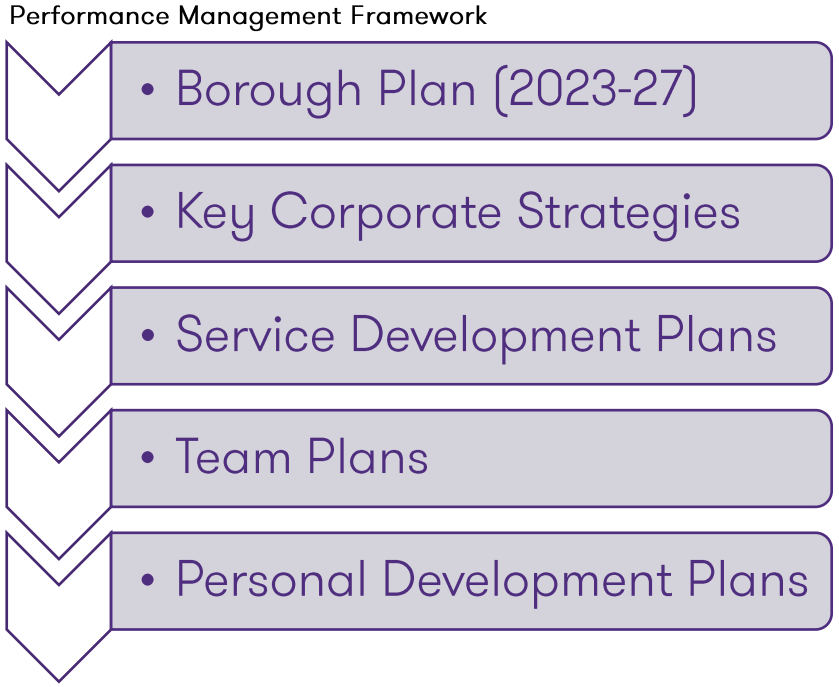


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Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

Assessing performance and identifying improvement (continued)

The new Performance Management Framework has a clear line of sight from the Borough Plan down to individual performance as shown in the diagram below:



Partnership working

The Council works collaboratively and effectively with a number of voluntary sector organisations; multi faith groups as well as other public bodies such as NHS bodies and the Metropolitan Police. It is not always clear however what specific monitoring measures are in place to determine the success of such partnerships. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.

Examples of such partnership working include:

- In response to the risk that a sustained increase in migration and movement of people could result in increased demand on the Council's critical front-line services and also impact on the wider cohesion of the community, a multi-agency migration coordination working group has been set-up. This includes officers from strategy, housing, public health, community protection, looked after children and legal services, as well as Brent NHS and the Metropolitan Police. Meetings have also been called with the multi-faith forum and the voluntary sector. No specific outcome measures have been established to monitor the impact of these arrangements.
- The Council entered into a partnership arrangement, under Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006, in respect of delivery of the approved Better Care Fund Plan with North West London Integrated Commissioning Board for 2023/24 and onwards. In considering the report, members noted the innovative approach to the use of the Better Care Fund within Brent as part of a process of well-established collaboration and joint working between the Council and local health services through the Integrated Care Partnership. No specific outcome measures have been established to monitor the impact of these new arrangements.
- The Council has agreed to lease out buildings to various voluntary and community groups at less than market rate in return for added social value. How social value will be assessed and whether this achieves value for money in terms of the lost rent received has not been defined. In this context it may be helpful for the Council to adopt the Social Value measurement methodology used in its Contract Management.

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Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

Partnership working (continued)

- The West London Alliance (WLA) is a public sector partnership between seven West London local authorities of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. Priority areas of focus include social care and housing as well as the local economy. It is governed by the Leaders of each member Council and a Chief Executives' Board. Day to Day programme management is through representative Directors from each Council. It is not clear how the impacts from this work and value for money achieved is assessed by the Council.

Commissioning and procurement

As referenced in the partnership working section of this report, the Council has developed a framework for assessing the Social Value provided by suppliers under its Contract Management arrangements. Evidence of this is also sought as part of Contract Management audits. This work will be of value to the partnerships team who are looking to develop similar assessments for partners.

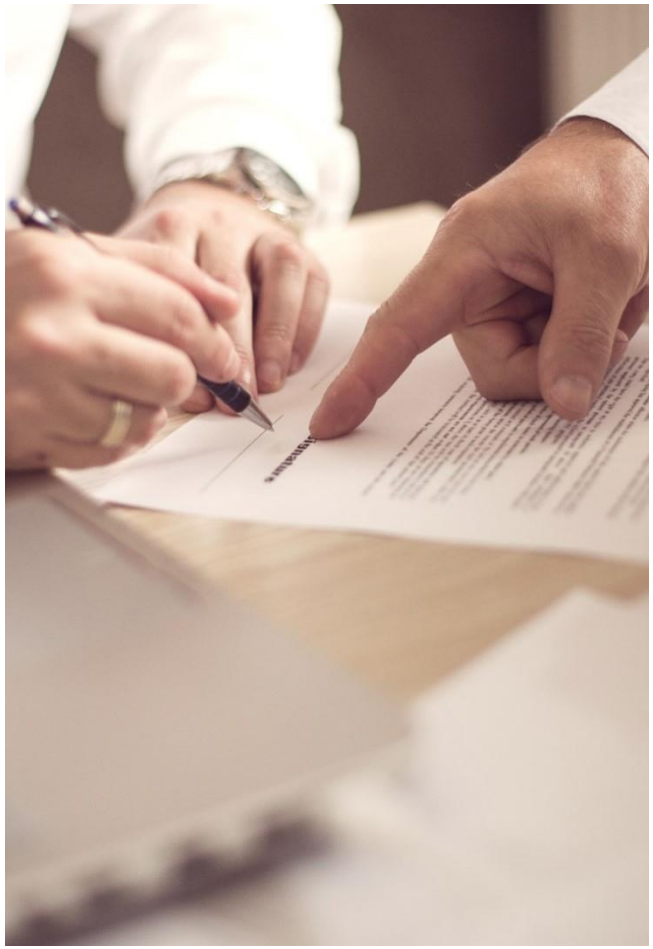
Commissioning and Procurement arrangements have been further strengthened throughout 2022/23. In particular:

- A new 'Gateway 4' process has been agreed to work with the Directorates to review commissioning intentions to determine if there are any opportunities through decommissioning, economies of scale or savings that can be delivered to support council objectives for contracts that require re-procuring for contracts up to Mar 24. All contracts that require a Gateway 4 are presented at the Commissioning and Procurement Board for comments and agreement. It is not clear how total savings or efficiencies achieved as part of this process will be tracked and reported. An improvement recommendation has been made in this respect.
- All Strategic Contracts have been identified in a Strategic Contract Register approved by CMT. This will enable better proactive management of the renewal of those contracts.
- All other contracts are now recorded in a central contract register that will be updated as new contracts are signed. Each Directorate is provided with their extract to review and provide feedback on the accuracy of the detail kept. Further reconciliation of the Contracts register and Online register has been undertaken by the Central procurement team to ensure all the contracts published online are on the Contracts register. Additional work on supplier spend above £500k is to be conducted to reconcile against the Contract register to identify if there is a current compliant contract and if not on the register, locate and add to the register. If there is no contract then a procurement process will be undertaken to ensure the Council is delivering services in a compliant manner.

Conclusion

In conclusion we have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements to ensure the Council improves economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Council makes good use of performance and financial information in order to review and improve its systems, processes and services. These arrangements have been further enhanced recently following the arrival of the Council's new Chief Executive. The Council works collaboratively with a number of key partners, including voluntary sector organisations, local community groups, multi faith groups and other public sector organisations such as the NHS and Metropolitan Police.

We have made three improvement recommendations set out on pages 25 to 26.



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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 9	The Council should review how it measures and monitors the success and value for money achieved from partnership working initiatives.
Improvement opportunity identified	To ensure the Council is achieving value for money from these arrangements
Summary findings	It is not always clear however what specific monitoring measures are in place to determine the success of such partnerships
Criteria impacted	 Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This recommendation is accepted
Improvement Recommendation 10	The Council should agree a process by which the strategic risk register is updated to reflect actions and issues arising from the monitoring of performance and financial data.
Improvement opportunity identified	To ensure there is effective feedback from performance into the management of risks
Summary findings	The newly developed KPIs will be aligned to the Strategic Risk Register however it is not clear how actions arising from the monitoring of Council performance will then feedback and inform review of the risk register.
Criteria impacted	 Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	This is something that has been newly introduced and is a best practice/notable practice process (not many other Council's directly link performance KPIs to the Strategic Risk Register). These will effectively serve as KPIs in the risk register

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 11	The Council should review how it measures and monitors the success of the new 'Gateway 4' procurement process
Improvement opportunity identified	It is important to monitor how the Gateway 4 process is helping the Council to achieve value for money
Summary findings	It is not clear how total savings or efficiencies achieved as part of this process will be reported.
Criteria impacted	 Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
Auditor judgement	Our work has enabled us to identify a weakness in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.
Management comments	Savings and efficiencies that can be delivered from the Gateway 4 process will be recorded and followed up by Procurement with evidence of delivery obtained from the Service and reported to the Commissioning and Procurement Board.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Council in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

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Follow-up of previous recommendations

	Recommendation	Type of recommendation	Date raised	Progress to date	Addressed?	Further action?
1	The Council should continue to review the reasons for procurement related delays to the Capital Programme to identify any lessons learned	Improvement	February 2023	Any delays in the delivery of the Capital Programme are reported to the internal Capital Programme Board and the Cabinet quarterly.	Yes	No
2	The Council should continue to ensure that assumptions made about future yield from commercial property remain cautious.	Improvement	February 2023	The property strategy sets out the overarching framework for how these assets are managed.	Yes	No
3	The Corporate Risk Register impact matrix should include legal and regulatory impact assessments	Improvement	February 2023	The legal and regulatory impacts form part of the 'Reputation' and 'Financial' assessments to any risks on the Risk Register	Yes	No
4	The Council's Audit and Standards Advisory Committee (ASAC) should ensure timely implementation of the CIPFA Financial Management code requirements.	Improvement	February 2023	Outputs from this work are regularly reported to Cabinet as part of updated to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Given the current financial challenges, a report to ASAC committee is planned for early 2024	Yes	No
5	The Council should regularly review the governance arrangements relating to its subsidiary companies to ensure they are operating effectively	Improvement	February 2023	Reports to the Shareholder/Guarantor, as well as the annual business planning process and reports to the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee provide information to enable the Council to gain assurance of the operation of the companies.	Yes	No
6	Improvements to performance management should be made to include: The 'direction of travel' should be included on performance reports at individual KPI level; Benchmarking data should be utilised to benchmark service performance, and the report narrative should include relevant financial performance information	Improvement	February 2023	A new Performance Management Framework and Balanced Scorecard approach, including corporate level KPIs, KPIs for the Borough Plan and benchmarking has been agreed and due to go live in Q4.	Yes	No

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Follow-up of previous recommendations

	Recommendation	Type of recommendation	Date raised	Progress to date	Addressed?	Further action?
7	The LGA Digital Ltd business plan should be reviewed to identify the key financial deliverables to the Council as well as a longer term strategy to determine how value for money will be achieved	Improvement	February 2023	A new business plan was agreed by the board in July 2023	Yes	No
8	Arrangements for the Procurement Function to provide oversight of Contract Management compliance should be improved	Improvement	February 2023	The Annual Procurement Strategy, which includes the Strategic Contract list, is planned to go to Cabinet in November and then annually thereafter.	Yes	No
9	Whilst interests declared by members are available on their individual biographies on the website, the Council should consider the creation of a central, online register of members' interests. This would enable a review of the interests of the Cabinet or of a specific Committee as a whole	Improvement	September 2021	The Council has raised this with Mod.Gov and this requirement is not within their product offering. The service is considering an alternative way of presenting this information.	No	Yes
10	The Council should consider including an analysis which benchmarks its performance against that of other authorities, both in its internal management information and in its corporate performance scorecard. implications for the Council	Improvement	September 2021	The benchmarking information was made available to members as part Budget Challenge meetings for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budget setting process.	Yes	No
11	Routine reporting of services provided by external contractors should be included in the information provided to and reviewed by those charged with governance.	Improvement	September 2021	The Annual Procurement Strategy, which includes the Strategic Contract list, is planned to go to Cabinet in November and then annually thereafter.	Yes	No

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Opinion on the financial statements

Grant Thornton provides an independent opinion on whether the Council's financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2023 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended, and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We conducted our audit in accordance with:

- International Standards on Auditing (UK)
- the Code of Audit Practice (2020) published by the National Audit Office, and
- applicable law

We are independent of the Council in accordance with applicable ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

Audit opinion on the financial statements

We plan to issue an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial statements on 12 October 2023.

The full opinion is included in the Council's Annual Report for 2022/23, which can be obtained from the Council's website.

Further information on our audit of the financial statements is set out overleaf.



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Opinion on the financial statements

Timescale for the audit of the financial statements

- The Audit Plan was issued to the Audit and Standards Committee on 18 July 2023.
- Our audit work was completed remotely during July-September.
- The Council provided draft financial statements in July line with the national timetable
- The Council team worked constructively with the audit team to ensure that audit evidence requested were provided on time and of sufficient quality. There was clear and open communication between the audit team and the Council officers which ensured that the audit process went smoothly.
- The opinion on the financial statements will be issued on 12 October in line with the national timetable

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

We have shown on slides 31-34 the finds on the significant risks on the financial statement audit

More detailed findings are set out in our Audit Findings Report, which was presented to the Council's Audit and Standards Committee on 26 September 2023. Requests for this Audit Findings Report should be directed to the Council.



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Opinion on the financial statements

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

Risks identified in our Audit Plan	Commentary
Management override of controls Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. The Council faces external scrutiny of its spending, and this could potentially place management under undue pressure in terms of how they report performance. We therefore identified management override of control, in particular journals, management estimates, and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk for both the group and Council, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.	We have: • evaluated the design effectiveness of management controls over journals • analysed the journals listing and determined the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals • identified and tested unusual journals made during the year and the accounts production stage for appropriateness and corroboration • gained an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied by management and considered their reasonableness • reviewed and tested transfers between the General Fund and HRA and inter group journals During our work on journals, we identified The Council posted approximately 25,000 journals with a total value of £22 billion during the year. A total of 37 employees can raise a journal, and 22 employees can approval a journal. We considered the number of people posting journals to be high and we raised a control point for management to reduce the total number of people who post journals. We observed the download of the GL for each month and the size of the November GL was considerably larger than the other months due to Council tax direct debit journals for April up to October were all created in November. We recommended to management that the Council creates these entries as close to the month they relate to as possible prevent this issue in following years.

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Opinion on the financial statements

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

Risks identified in our Audit Plan	Commentary
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions (rebutted)	We rebutted the presumed risk of fraud in revenue, and such there is no specific work planned for this risk. There are no changes to our assessment reported in the audit plan. In order to get assurance over revenue, we have ; • selected a sample from each material revenue stream and tested to supporting information and subsequent receipt of income to gain assurance over accuracy and occurrence, and completeness • inspected transactions which occurred in the year and ensured that they have been included in the correct year. • confirmed our understanding of the business process and determined if there were any relevant controls. We identified a misclassification of a grant of £6.1m as a ring-fenced grant instead of a non-ring-fenced grant. We recorded this error under the adjusted misclassification/ disclosure error in the Audit findings report.

Valuation of land and buildings
The council re-values its land and buildings on a five yearly rolling programme to ensure that the carrying value is not materially different from fair value. This represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size and numbers involved (£1,097.8m) as at 31st March 2023 and the sensitivity of the estimate to key changes in assumptions.
Additionally, management needs to ensure the carrying value of assets not revalued as at 31 March 2023 in the Council's financial statements is not materially different from the current value at the financial statements date, where a rolling programme is used.
We identified the valuation of land and buildings, particularly revaluations and impairments, as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement, and a key audit matter
	We have:
	• evaluated management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to the expert and the scope of their work.
	• evaluated the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert.
	• discussed with and written to Wilks, Head and Eve (the valuer) to confirm the basis on which their valuation was carried out
	• engaged our own expert, Gerald Eve, to provide commentary on;
	  • The instructions process in comparison to requirements from CIPFA/IFRS/RICS; and
	  • The valuation methodology and approach, resulting assumptions and any other relevant points.
	• challenged the information and assumptions used by the Valuer to assess the completeness and consistency with our understanding;
	• tested revaluations made during the year to see if they have been input correctly to the Council's asset register.
	• evaluated the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not currently different to current value at year end.
	Our audit work on Valuation of land and building is still in progress. Our work to date has not identified any matters which we want to bring to the attention of the Audit and Standards Committee. We will update the Committee following the completion of our work.

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Opinion on the financial statements

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

Risks identified in our Audit Plan	Commentary

Valuation of Council Dwellings
 	
The Council owns 8220 dwellings as 31 March 2023, and it is required to revalue these properties in accordance with DCLG's Stock Valuation for Resource Accounting guidance. The guidance requires the use of beacon methodology, in which a detailed valuation of representative property types is then applied to similar types.
 	
The Council performed a full revaluation of its properties in the prior year. For 2022/23, the Council engaged the Valuer (Wilks, Head and Eve) to perform a market review from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The Council used the indexes in the market review report to carry out indexation on the full council dwelling properties from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The valuation of the properties after indexation for 22/23 is £827.8m. This represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size and numbers involved, and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.
 	
We identified the valuation of Council dwellings, as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material.
	We have:
	• evaluated management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate;
	• evaluated the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert.
	• discussed with and written to Wilks, Head and Eve (the valuer) to confirm the basis on which their valuation was carried out
	• engaged our own expert, Gerald Eve, to provide commentary on;
	  • The instructions process in comparison to requirements from CIPFA/IFRS/RICS; and
	  • The valuation methodology and approach, resulting assumptions and any other relevant points.
	• challenged the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess the completeness and consistency with our understanding;
	• tested revaluations made during the year to see if they have been input correctly to the Council's asset register.
	• evaluated the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not currently different to current value at year end.
	
	Our audit work on Valuation of Council Dwellings is still in progress. Our work to date has not identified any matters yet which we want to bring to the attention of the Audit and Standards Committee. We will update the Committee following the completion of our work.

Fraud in expenditure recognition (Completeness of Non-Pay expenditure) In line with the Public Audit Forum Practice Note 10, in the public sector, auditors must also consider the risk that material misstatements due to fraudulent financial reporting may arise from the manipulation of expenditure recognition for instance by deferring expenditure to a later period. There is a risk the Council may manipulate expenditure to meet externally set targets and we had regard to this when planning and performing our audit procedures. Management could defer recognition of non-pay expenditure by under-accruing for expenses that have been incurred during the period, but which were not paid until after the year-end or not record expenses accurately in order to improve the financial results.	We have : • Inspected a sample of accruals made at year end for expenditure but not yet invoiced to assess whether the valuation of the accrual was consistent with the value billed after the year; compared size and nature of accruals at year to the prior year to help ensure completeness. • Investigated manual journals posted as part of the year end accounts preparation that reduces expenditure to assess whether there is appropriate supporting evidence for the reduction in expenditure. • Evaluated the accounting policy for recognition of non-pay expenditure for appropriateness, including the use of de minimis level set, • Gained an understanding of your system for accounting for non-pay expenditure and evaluated the design of the associated controls, • obtained and tested a listing of non-pay payments made in April and May 2023 to ensure that they have been charged to the appropriate year. Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of the completeness of non-pay expenditure.

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Opinion on the financial statements

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

Risks identified in our Audit Plan	Commentary
Valuation of pension fund net liability The Council's pension fund net liability as reflected in its balance sheet as the net defined benefit liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements. The pension fund net liability is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved (£262m in the Council's balance sheet) and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions. The methods applied in the calculation of the IAS 19 estimates are routine and commonly applied by all actuarial firms in line with the requirements set out in the Code of practice for local government accounting (the applicable financial reporting framework). We have therefore concluded that there is not a significant risk of material misstatement in the IAS 19 estimate due to the methods and models used in their calculation. The source data used by the actuaries to produce the IAS 19 estimates is provided by administering authorities and employers. We do not consider this to be a significant risk as this is easily verifiable. The actuarial assumptions used are the responsibility of the entity but should be set on the advice given by the actuary. A small change in the key assumptions (discount rate, inflation rate, salary increase and life expectancy) can have a significant impact on the estimated IAS 19 liability. In particular the discount and inflation rates, where our consulting actuary has indicated that a 0.1% change in these two assumptions would have approximately 2% effect on the liability. We have therefore concluded that there is a significant risk of material misstatement in the IAS 19 estimate due to the assumptions used in their calculation. With regard to these assumptions, we have therefore identified valuation of the Council's pension fund net liability as a significant risk.	We have: • updated our understanding of the process and controls put in place by management to ensure that the council's pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and evaluate the design of the associated controls • assessed the competence, capabilities, and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the council's pension fund valuation • assessed the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council to the actuary to estimate the liability. • tested the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosure in the note to the core financial statement with the actuarial report from the actuary. • undertaken procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (as auditor's expert) and performing any additional procedure suggested within the report. We noted an error where the "other experience of" amount £53.2m was not disclosed in the draft accounts, however, the total net pension fund liability was disclosed correctly. We have recorded this error under the adjusted misclassification/ disclosure error in the audit findings report. Our work is substantially complete subject to receiving the IAS 19 assurance letter from the pension fund auditor. We will update the Audit and Standards Committee following the completion of our work.

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Other reporting requirements

Other opinion/key findings

We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas:

- if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with disclosure requirements set out in CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit,
- if we have applied any of our statutory powers or duties.
- where we are not satisfied in respect of arrangements to secure value for money and have reported [a] significant weakness/es.

We have nothing to report on these matters.

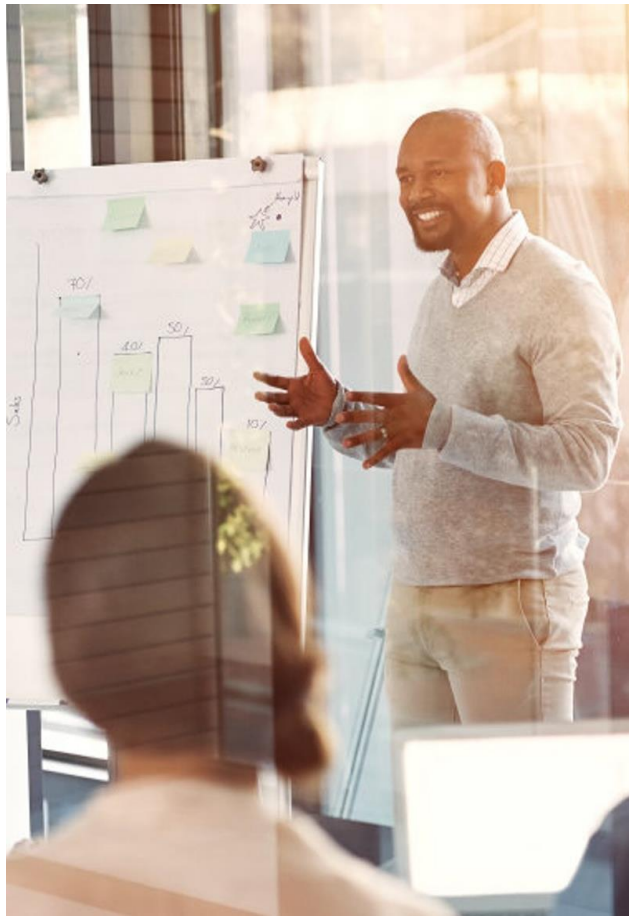
Audit Findings Report

More detailed findings can be found in our AFR, which was published and reported to the Council's Audit Committee on 26 September 2023.

Whole of Government Accounts

To support the audit of the Whole of Government Accounts, we are required to examine and report on the consistency of the Council's consolidation schedules with their audited financial statements. This work includes performing specified procedures under group audit instructions issued by the National Audit Office.

The London Borough of Brent does not exceed the threshold.



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Appendices

Appendix A:
Responsibilities of the Council

Public bodies spending taxpayers' money are accountable for their stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. They should account properly for their use of resources and manage themselves well so that the public can be confident.

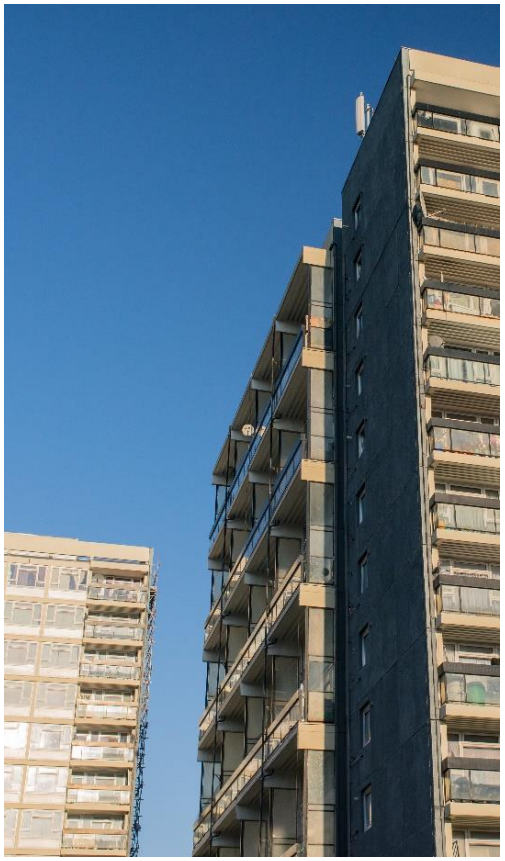
Financial statements are the main way in which local public bodies account for how they use their resources. Local public bodies are required to prepare and publish financial statements setting out their financial performance for the year. To do this, bodies need to maintain proper accounting records and ensure they have effective systems of internal control.

All local public bodies are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Local public bodies report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness with which the arrangements are operating, as part of their annual governance statement.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is required to prepare the financial statements in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern and use the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the Council will no longer be provided.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



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Appendix B:
An explanatory note on recommendations

A range of different recommendations can be raised by the Council's auditors as follows:

Type of recommendation	Background	Raised within this report	Page reference(s)
Statutory	Written recommendations to the Council under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.	No	
Key	The NAO Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses as part of the Council's arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the Council. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.	No	
Improvement	These recommendations, if implemented, should improve the arrangements in place at the Council, but are not a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements.	Yes	14-16 20-21 25-26

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	Full Council 29 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
	Lead Member – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)

Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023-24

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
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 Treasury Management Indicators
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Amanda Healy, Head of Finance Email: Amanda.Healy@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 5912 Sacha Bakhtiar, Senior Finance Analyst Email: Sacha.Bakhtiar@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 4039

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on Treasury activity for the first half of the financial year 2023-24.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Council is asked to note the 2023-24 Mid-Year Treasury report and that the Council has been fully compliant with the prudential indicators set as part of the annual strategy.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.2 The Council's Treasury Management function underpins all Borough Plan priorities through providing the organisation's cash management service which ensures the Council can meet its financial obligations. Through managing the Council's investment and borrowing activities, the service ensures affordability of the Capital Programme and manages the risks associated with those activities in line with the relevant professional codes and legislation.

3.3 With interest rates at much higher levels than seen in recent years, long-term borrowing was unattractive during the first half of the year however the Council was able to benefit from higher investment income due to the short-dated nature of the investment portfolio. With inflation forecast to have reached its peak, there are likely to be opportunities for new long-term borrowing and certainty on affordability for the Capital Programme before the end of 2023/24.

Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.4 Treasury Management underpins all aspects of financial management within the Council which enables the delivery of the priorities and objectives within the Borough Plan. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is underpinned by the adoption of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) on Treasury Management 2021. This requires the Council to approve Treasury Management mid-year and annual reports. The update report is presented here in-line with CIPFA's recommendations.

3.5 CIPFA published its revised Treasury Management Code of Practice (the TM Code) back in December 2021. The key changes in the two codes were around permitted reasons to borrow, knowledge and skills, and the management of non-treasury investments. The principles within the Code took immediate effect although local authorities were able to defer the revised reporting requirements until the 2023/24 financial year. In line with this, the Council has fully adopted the revised reporting requirements in the current financial year.

Background

3.6 Treasury Management is defined as: "The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

3.7 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 was approved by Full Council on 23rd February 2023.

3.8 In addition to reporting on risk management, the Code requires the Council to report on any financial instruments entered into to manage treasury risks.

Economic Background

3.9 UK inflation remained stubbornly high over much the period compared to the US and euro zone, keeping expectations elevated of how much further the Bank of England (BoE) would hike rates compared to the regions. However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period undershot expectations, causing financial markets to reassess the peak in BoE Bank Rate. This was followed very soon after by the BoE deciding to keep Bank Rate on hold at 5.25% in September, against expectation for another 0.25% rise. CPI inflation has subsequently fallen to 4.6% in October 2023, raising hopes that the impact of higher interest rates is reducing demand and inflationary pressures in the wider economy.

3.10 Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period. In calendar Q2 2023, the economy expanded by 0.4%, beating expectations of a 0.2% increase. However, monthly GDP data showed a 0.5% contraction in July, the largest fall to date in 2023 and worse than the 0.2% decline predicted which could be an indication the monetary tightening cycle is starting to cause recessionary or at the very least stagnating economic conditions.

3.11 July data showed the unemployment rate increased to 4.3% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 75.5%. Pay growth was 8.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 7.8% for regular pay, which for the latter was the highest recorded annual growth rate. Adjusting for inflation, pay growth in real terms were positive at 1.2% and 0.6% for total pay and regular pay respectively.

3.12 Inflation continued to fall from its peak as annual headline CPI declined to 6.7% in July 2023 from 6.8% in the previous month against expectations for a tick back up to 7.0%. The largest downward contribution came from food prices. The core rate also surprised on the downside, falling to 6.2% from 6.9% compared to predictions for it to only edge down to 6.8%.

3.13 The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee continued tightening monetary policy over most of the period, taking Bank Rate to 5.25% in August. Against expectations of a further hike in September, the Committee voted 5-4 to maintain Bank Rate at 5.25%. Each of the four dissenters were in favour of another 0.25% increase.

3.14 Financial market Bank Rate expectations moderated over the period as falling inflation and weakening data gave some indication that higher interest rates were working. Expectations fell from predicting a peak of over 6% in June to 5.5% just ahead of the September MPC meeting, and to then expecting 5.25% to be the peak by the end of the period.

3.15 The lagged effect of monetary policy together with the staggered fixed term mortgage maturities over the next 12-24 months means the full impact from Bank Rate rises are still yet to be felt by households. As such, while consumer confidence continued to improve over the period, the GfK measure hit -21 in September, it is likely this will reverse at some point. Higher rates will also impact business and according to S&P/CIPS survey data, the UK

manufacturing and services sector contracted during the quarter with all measures scoring under 50, indicating contraction in the sectors.

Financial Markets

3.16 Financial market sentiment and bond yields remained volatile, with the latter generally trending downwards as there were signs inflation, while still high, was moderating and interest rates were at a peak.

3.17 Gilt yields fell towards the end of the period. The 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield rose from 3.30% to peak at 4.91% in July before trending downwards to 4.29%, the 10-year gilt yield rose from 3.43% to 4.75% in August before declining to 4.45%, and the 20-year yield from 3.75% to 4.97% in August and then fell back to 4.84%. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.73% over the period.

Local Context

3.18 On 31st March 2023, the Council had external borrowing of £781.0m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.03.23 Actual £m	**31.03.24 Forecast £m**
General Fund CFR	851.4	1,021.0
HRA CFR	295.0	348.4
Total CFR	**1,146.4**	**1,369.4**
*Other debt liabilities	36.2	32.5
Borrowing CFR	**1,182.6**	**1,401.9**
Less: External borrowing	(781.0)	(707.6)
Internal borrowing	401.6	694.4
Less: Balance sheet resources		
Usable Reserves	(491.2)	(491.2)
Working Capital	(26.6)	(26.6)
(Investments) / New Borrowing	**(116.2)**	**176.6**

* Finance leases, PFI liabilities and transferred debt that form part of the Council's total debt

Table 2: Borrowing and Investment Portfolio

	31.03.23 Balance £m	**Movement £m**	**30.09.23 Balance £m**	**30.09.23 Rate %**
Long-term borrowing:				
PWLB	529.8	(4.7)	525.1	3.92%
LOBO's	70.5	-	70.5	4.64%
Other	95.0	-	95.0	2.37%
Short-term borrowing:				
PWLB	13.2	(3.8)	9.4	2.19%
Local Authorities	70.0	(20.0)	50.0	4.48%
Other	2.5	-	2.5	-
Total borrowing	**781.0**	**(28.5)**	**752.5**	**3.80%**
Short-term investments	116.2	2.3	118.5	5.27%
Total investments	**116.2**	**2.3**	**118.5**	**5.27%**
Net Borrowing	**664.8**	**(30.8)**	**634.0**	

Debt Management

3.19 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

3.20 The Council has not invested in assets primarily for financial return or that are not primarily related to the functions of the Authority. It has no plans to do so in future.

Borrowing strategy and activity

3.21 As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

3.22 There was a substantial rise in the cost of both short- and long-term borrowing over the last 18 months. The Bank Rate rose by 1% from 4.25% at the beginning

of April to 5.25% at the end of September. The Bank Rate was 2% higher than at the end of September 2022.

3.23 UK gilt yields were volatile, mainly facing upward pressure since early April following signs that UK growth had been more resilient, inflation stickier than expected, and that the Bank of England saw persistently higher rates through 2023/24 as key to dampening domestic demand. Gilt yields, and consequently PWLB borrowing rates, rose and broadly remained at elevated levels. On 30th September, the PWLB certainty rates for maturity loans were 5.26% for 10-year loans, 5.64% for 20-year loans and 5.43% for 50-year loans. Their equivalents on 31st March 2023 were 4.33%, 4.70% and 4.41% respectively.

3.24 A new PWLB HRA rate which is 0.4% below the certainty rate was made available from 15th June 2023. Initially available for a period of one year, this discounted rate is to support local authorities borrowing for the Housing Revenue Account and for refinancing existing HRA loans. The HRA concessionary rate has had a limited impact so far as the significantly higher market rates still make the overall cost of borrowing relatively high which makes viability challenging. The availability of the HRA concessionary rate was extended in the 2023 Autumn statement and will now continue until 15th June 2024.

3.25 The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) which is wholly owned and backed by HM Treasury has earmarked £4bn for lending to local authorities. Eligible projects must meet the Bank's investment principals: driving economic growth, developing infrastructure, delivering a positive financial return and crowding in private capital. The Treasury has provided £22bn in funding to the Bank over its first 5 years.

3.26 The Bank invested £1.1bn in 2022/23; although all of this was to the private sector (2021/22: £193m private, £117m public). Investments have included subsidy-free solar farms, gigabit broadband infrastructure and green buses. Loans are now available for qualifying projects at gilt yields plus 0.4%, which is 0.4% lower than the PWLB certainty rate. This was a recent reduction from the original offering of gilt yields plus 0.6%, in light of budgetary pressures arising from higher interest rates and gilt yields.

3.27 UKIB borrowing proposals must meet a strict set of criteria to be eligible. These include alignment with the government's net zero objectives and the project being an infrastructure asset or network. The UKIB does not support predominantly social infrastructure projects.

3.28 There may be an opportunity to borrow at lower rates from PWLB or UKIB in relation to the South Kilburn heat network. The GLA is providing low rate finance through the Mayor's Energy Efficiency Fund (MEEF) and the Mayor's Green Finance Fund, which was launched during London Climate Action Week 2023. The forecast development timetable of the heat network means the Council will apply to the latter scheme with the second round of expressions of interest closing in January 2024. Whilst the exact finance rates have not been confirmed, preliminary discussions have been held and funding is likely to be at lower rates those offered by the PWLB or the UKIB.

3.29 A summary of the Council's borrowing in the first half of 2023/24 is provided below:

Table 3 - Borrowing Position

	31.03.23 Balance £m	Movement £m	30.09.23 Balance £m	30.09.23 Weighted Average Rate %	30.09.23 Weighted Average Maturity (Years)
PWLB	543.0	(8.5)	534.5	3.89%	29.3
LOBO's	70.5	-	70.5	4.64%	41.0
Local Authority	70.0	(20.0)	50.0	4.48%	0.2
Other	97.5	-	97.5	2.31%	22.2
Total borrowing	**781.0**	**(28.5)**	**752.5**		

3.30 The Council's short-term borrowing cost has continued to increase with the rise in Bank Rate and short-dated market rates. The average rate on the Council's short-term loans at 30th September 2023 of £50.0m was 4.48%, this compares with 3.01% on £70m of loans 6 months ago.

3.31 The Council's main objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective.

3.32 In the first half of the year, new external long-term borrowing did not take place due to sufficient cash levels and high market rates making forward borrowing unattractive. Short-term borrowing continued to meet cash flow requirements. The Council continues to monitor borrowing rates with the objective to re-introduce the little and often approach for new long-term borrowing to support providing certainty on affordability for projects within the capital programme.

3.33 Borrowing costs on have increased significantly in recent months alongside increased market rates (see 3.7). The highest borrowing rate that has been agreed YTD was at 5.8% for a short-term 11 month borrowing period.

3.34 The Council has an increasing Capital Financing Requirement due to the elements of the capital programme funded by borrowing. An estimated borrowing requirement is determined by the liability benchmark, which takes into account the Council's usable reserves, planned capital expenditure and minimum revenue provision. Borrowing is also determined through detailed cashflow forecasting. This has shown that further borrowing in excess of £176.6m will be required in 2023/24.

3.35 The cost of PWLB and alternate borrowing options has continued to increase substantially in 2023/24, although rates have started to reduce very marginally in recent weeks. For our borrowing requirement, the PWLB remains the cheapest form of financing.

3.36 The Council has considered and will continue to monitor the possibility of agreeing forward funded deals if these are at advantageous rates. The Council will continue to monitor alternative sources of funding and pursue the lower cost solutions and opportunities as they arise. To date, no such opportunities have emerged, given the relatively high interest rate environment and expectation that rates will fall, making forward funding deals relatively unattractive.

3.37 Higher interest rates mean that it would be uneconomic to restructure existing PWLB debt. The majority of our existing long-term PWLB borrowing was secured at interest rates significantly lower than those which would be incurred on new borrowing arrangements. However this will be kept under review should interest rates be reduced in future.

3.38 The Council continues to hold £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 as set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. No lender exercised their option in the first half of the year. However, due to higher market rates, there is now a significant risk that existing LOBO's may require refinancing at higher rates or repayment. £16m of LOBO's have break points in the second half of 2023/24 and may require repayment and refinancing at higher rates. One LOBO, outlined below, had a break point in Q1. However, the break clause was not exercised.

LOBO's with break point in first half of 23/24

	Amount £m	Rate %	Final maturity	New rate proposed	Action taken by the Council
Loan 1	10.0	4.1	19/05/2055	None	None

LOBO's with break points in the remainder of 23/24

	Amount £m	Rate %	Final maturity
Loan 1	5.0	4.72%	18/11/2077
Loan 2	11.0	4.99%	12/02/2067

Treasury Investment Activity

3.39 The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the year, the Council's investment balances ranged between £56.1m and £122.0m due to timing differences between income and expenditure.

3.40 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum 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.

3.41 The Council's investment position is shown in the table below.

	Balance b/f 01/04/23 £m	Investments Repaid £m	New Investments £m	Balance c/f 30/09/23 £m
Debt Management Account Deposit Facility	-	(147.5)	164.8	17.3
Money Market Funds	116.2	(348.2)	333.2	101.2
Total Investments	**116.2**	**(495.7)**	**498.0**	**118.5**

Average rate of investments	**Return %**
Debt Management Account Deposit Facility	4.68%
Money Market Funds	4.53%

3.42 The Council holds most of its cash in Money Market Funds. The return on Money Market Funds has increased reflecting the higher interest rate environment. As at 30th September our Funds were paying rates between 5.20% - 5.35%. The Council also uses the Debt Management Agency's Deposit Facility (DMADF) for short-term cash deposits, which pays comparable rates.

3.43 The inter-local authority market has also seen higher interest rates. However, as at 30th September the Council did not hold any short-term deposits with other local authorities, as the liquidity offered by the money market funds was of greater benefit.

3.44 There was a modest increase of £2.3m in short term investments in the first half of the year. Investment balances are expected to reduce in the second half of the year in-line with the Council's cashflow requirements. The Council is reviewing its borrowing options which include short-term local authority borrowing, longer-term PWLB borrowing and forward borrowing (agreement to borrow at an agreed future date and rate in the future).

3.45 Security of capital has been maintained by following the Council's counterparty policy as set out in its Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. In accordance with the policy, new investments can be made with the following classes of institutions:

- A+ or above rated banks;
- AAA rated Money Market Funds;

- Other Local Authorities;
- Housing Associations;
- UK Debt Management Office;
- Corporate Bonds
- Collective Investment Schemes (Pooled Funds)
- Real Estate Investment Trusts

3.46 A short summary of the investment products available to the council along with an indication of the main driver behind their financial return and an indication of relative risk is provided below:

Asset Classes (approx. return)	**Cash (1.4%)**	**Bonds (-4.6%)**	**Equities (-0.9%)**	**Property (-19.7%)**
Income driven by	Short term interest rates	Medium term interest rates	Dividends/ share prices	Rental income/ vacancies
Key Risk(s)	Bank defaults	Company defaults	Company performance and perception of future performance	Property prices, least liquid asset class

3.47 Investments in Equities, Property and Bonds tend to be considered over a longer time frame, which are not currently suitable for the Council given its significant capital spending plans.

Risks

3.48 Regardless of the approach taken, the Council will be required to manage significant risks in relation to its treasury investment portfolio. Some key risks are:

- Credit risk - the risk that a bank or other institution will not be able to pay back the money invested with it. For longer term investments, the council is more exposed to credit risk. Should a counterparty's credit worthiness change, the council may not be able to get all their money back or may face heavy penalties if it can do so.

  Mitigation – see Prudential Indicator 1 (Security) – Appendix 1

- Liquidity risk - that is the council having funds tied up in long-term investments when it needs to use that money. Increasing the duration of fixed cash deposits increases liquidity risk, however this can be mitigated through good cash flow management.

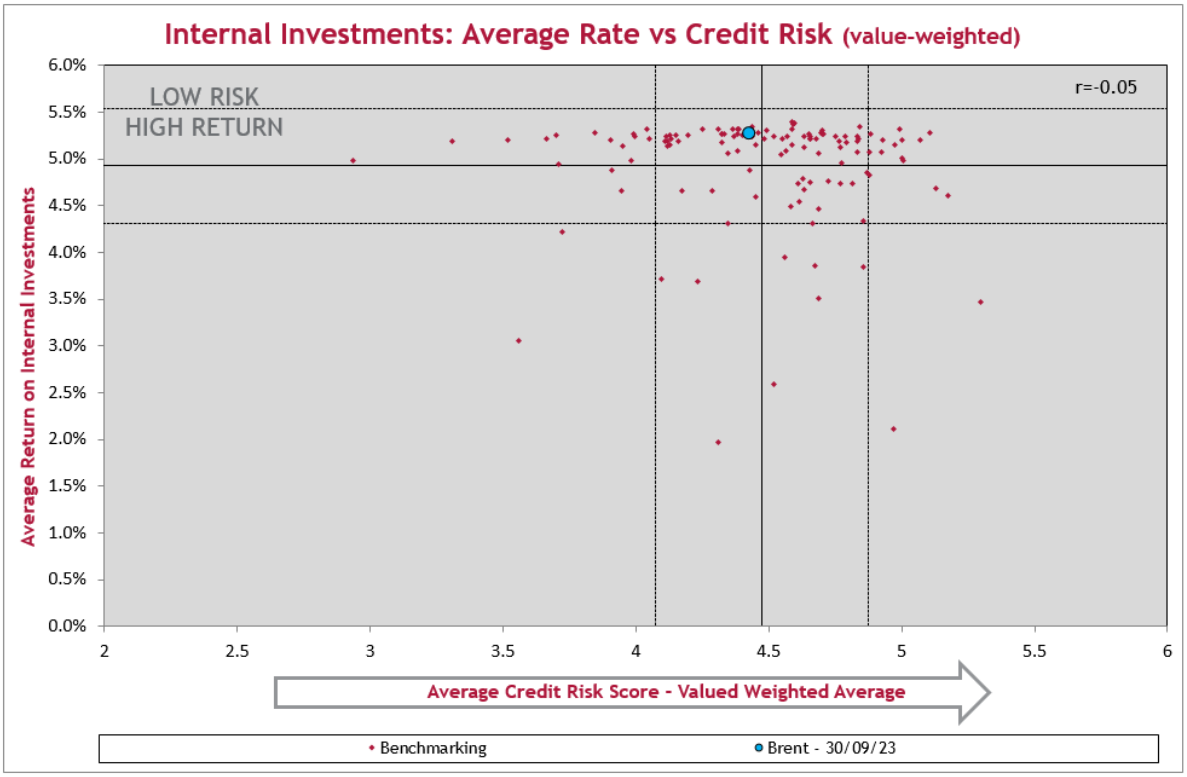
  Mitigation – see Prudential Indicator 2 (Liquidity) – Appendix 1

- Interest rate risk – the risk of the council's budget being affected by unforeseen changes in interest rates. Longer term cash deposits increase this risk and will negatively affect the council should interest rates rise. On the other hand, the council may benefit should interest rates fall.

  Mitigation – see Prudential Indicator 3 (Interest Rate Exposure) – Appendix 1

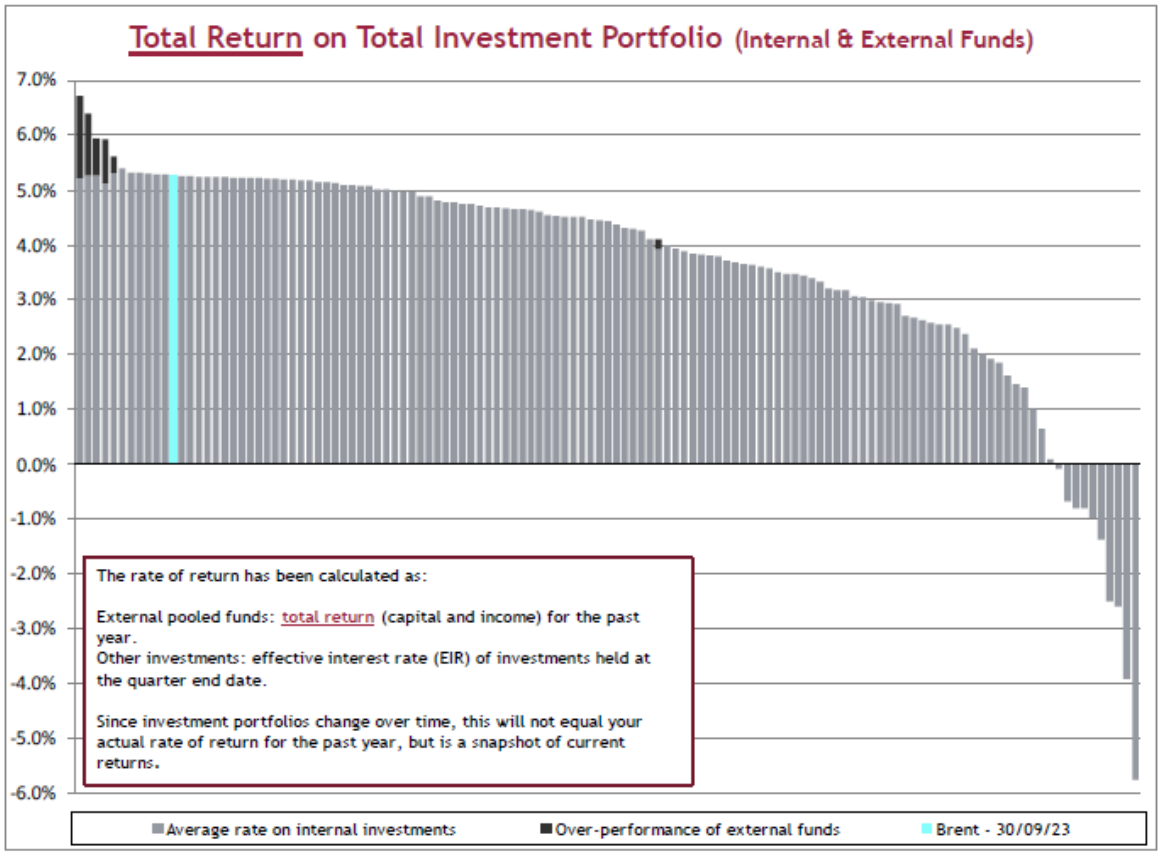
Benchmarking to other councils

3.49 The graph below shows a comparison in performance between Brent's investment portfolio and those of Arlingclose's (the Council's treasury advisor) other Local Authority clients. Brent's portfolio has an average risk profile compared with other authorities.



3.50 Our investment portfolio has a credit rating of AA- (equivalent to a Credit Risk Score of 4.42 in the table above). The credit rating achieved on our investments exceeds our target rating of A (which equates to a Credit Risk Score of 6 in the table above). The lower the Average Credit Risk score in the table above, the better the credit rating of the counterparties with which we hold investments.

3.51 A credit rating of 'A' per the Fitch agency indicates that an organisation has low default risk, but may be vulnerable to adverse economic conditions. A credit rating of 'AA' denotes that an organisation has very low default risk and is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events. The '+' and '-' are further delineations for each credit rating.



3.52 Our investment returns have been amongst the top 10 of our Treasury Adviser's clients. This is due to the short-term nature of our investment portfolio, enabling us to benefit promptly from the rising interest rate environment.

Budgeted Income And Outturn

3.53 The Council's external interest budget for the year is £21.8m, and for investment income is £11.3m. The average cash balances were £100.2m during the period to 30 September 2023. The Council expects to receive significantly higher income from its cash and short-dated money market investments than it did in 2022/23 and earlier years due to the higher interest rate environment and the immediate cash requirements, which only allow for short-term investments.

3.54 Reviewing the wider Capital Financing Budget, we are currently forecasting an overspend of £0.4m, with a forecast of £24.3m against a budget of £23.9m. This is driven by higher short-term interest payments which outweigh the benefit of increased interest income from our short-term investments.

Compliance

3.55 Officers confirm that they have complied with its Treasury Management Indicators for 2023/24, which were set in February 2023 as part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS). Details can be found in Appendix 1.

Summary

3.56 In compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice, this report provides Members with a summary report of the treasury management activity during the first half of 2023/24. As indicated in this report, none of the Prudential Indicators have been breached and a prudent approach has been taken in relation to investment activity with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 These are covered throughout the report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

6.1 There are no EDI considerations arising from this report.

7.0 Stakeholder and Ward Member Consultation and Engagement

7.1 There are no direct considerations arising from this report.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications

8.1 There are no HR or property considerations arising from this report.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no direct communication considerations arising from this report.

Related document(s) for reference

Treasury Management Strategy – Report to Full Council as part of the Budget Report (Appendix I) – February 2023.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

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Appendix 1 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

1. 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.

Credit Risk Indicator	2023/24 Target	30/09/23 Actual	Complied
Portfolio Average Credit Rating	A	AA-	Yes

2. 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.

Liquidity Risk Indicator	2023/24 Target £m	30/09/23 Actual £m	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	20.0	118.5	Yes

3. Interest Rate exposure

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investment will be replaced at current rates.

Interest Rate risk indicator	2023/24 Upper Limit £m	30/09/23 Actual £m	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	5.0	1.4	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	5.0	(1.4)	Yes

For context, a summary of the changes in interest rates in the first half of 2023/234 is below.

Interest Rate	31/03/2023	30/09/2023
Bank of England base rate	4.25%	5.25%
1-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.78%	5.69%
5-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.31%	5.22%

10-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.33%	5.26%
20-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.70%	5.64%
50-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.41%	5.43%

4. Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates. The Council uses the option date as the maturity date for LOBO loans.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing	**Upper Limit**	**Lower Limit**	**Actual Fixed Rate Borrowing at 30/09/23**	**% of Fixed Rate Borrowing at 30/09/23**	**Compliance with set limits?**
	%	**%**	**£m**	**%**	**Yes / No**
Under 12 months	40%	0%	52.5	7.0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	40%	0%	0.0	0.0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	40%	0%	0.0	0.0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	60%	0%	4.5	0.6%	Yes
10 years and within 20 years	75%	0%	209.4	27.8%	Yes
20 years and within 30 years	75%	0%	126.3	16.8%	Yes
30 years and within 40 years	75%	0%	199.3	26.5%	Yes
40 years and within 50 years	75%	0%	160.5	21.3%	Yes
50 years and above	75%	0%	0.0	0%	Yes
			752.5	**100%**	

5. Prudential Indicator: Capital Financing Requirement

	31/03/2023	**31/03/2024**	**31/03/2025**	**31/03/2026**
	Actual	**Forecast**	**Forecast**	**Forecast**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
Capital Financing Requirement	1,146.4	1,369.5	1,624.2	1,757.7
Other debt liabilities*	36.2	32.5	74.9	70.4
Loans CFR	**1,182.6**	**1,402.0**	**1,699.1**	**1,828.1**
(less) External borrowing	(781.0)	(707.6)	(697.2)	(686.9)
Internal Borrowing	**401.6**	**694.4**	**1,001.9**	**1,141.2**
(less) Balance Sheet Resources	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)
New borrowing (or Treasury Investments)	**(116.2)**	**176.6**	**484.1**	**623.4**

6. Prudential Indicator: Liability Benchmark

	31/03/23	31/03/24	31/03/25	31/03/26
	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Loans CFR	1,182.6	1,401.9	1,699.1	1,828.1
Less: Balance sheet resources	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)	(517.8)
Net loans requirement	**664.8**	**884.2**	**1,181.3**	**1,310.5**
Plus: Liquidity allowance	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Liability benchmark	**684.8**	**904.2**	**1,201.3**	**1,330.3**
Existing borrowing	**781.0**			

7. Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt

	2023/24 H1 Maximum £m	30.09.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Operational Boundary £m	2023/24 Authorised Limit £m	Complied?
Borrowing	781.0	752.5			
PFI and Finance Leases	34.5	34.5			
Total debt	**815.5**	**787.0**	**1,500.0**	**1,700.0**	**Yes**

The Authorised Limit sets the maximum level of external borrowing that the Council can incur. The Operational Boundary for External Debt is not a limit and actual borrowing can vary around the boundary. The Operational Boundary acts as an early indicator to ensure that the Authorised Limit is not breached.

8. Investment Limits

	2023/24 Maximum £m	30.09.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Time Limit	Complied?
Any single organisation, except a Government Entity	20	0	n/a	Yes
UK Government	Unlimited	0	50 Years	Yes
Local Authorities & other government entities	Unlimited	0	25 Years	Yes
Banks (unsecured)	20	0	13 months	Yes
Building Societies (unsecured)	20	0	13 months	Yes

Registered providers and registered social landlords	20	0	5 years	Yes
Secured investments	20	0	5 years	Yes
Money market funds	Lower of 5% of total net assets of the fund or £20m	20	n/a	Yes
Strategic pooled funds	20	0	n/a	Yes

9. Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums invested over 364 Days

Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums Invested Over 364 Days	**2023/24 Approved** **£m**	**Q2 2023/24 Actual** **£m**
Limit on principal invested beyond a year	50	0

10. Investment Rate of Return

This indicator demonstrates the rate of return obtained from the different investment categories.

Investments rate of return	**2023/24 Budget**	**2023/24 Actual**
Treasury management investments	3.10%	5.08%
Service investments: Loans	3.90%	3.11%

	Full Council 29 February 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director of Governance
	Lead Member – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)

Members Allowance Scheme Annual Review 2024-25

Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
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: Members Allowance Cost Analysis Appendix 2: Dependant Carers &Parental Leave Policy (amendments)
Background Papers:	
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Amira Nassr, Head of Chief Executive & Member Services 020 8937 5436 Email: amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 A Members' Allowance Scheme, which sets out the allowances Members are entitled to receive for carrying out their responsibilities has to be made for the 2024-25 Financial Year.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

2.1 Considers and approves the Members Allowance Scheme in the proposed terms set out within this report for the 2024-245 Financial Year.

2.2 Authorises the Corporate Director of Governance to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

3.0 Detail

3.1 **Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

3.1.1 The Members' Allowance scheme contributes to the delivery of the Borough Plan priorities by reducing financial barriers to public service, so as to enable a wide range of people to become a councillor and be recompensed for the time they devote to their role and to the responsibilities they carry.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Brent Council's Members' Allowance Scheme (which is included in the Council's Constitution at Part 6 and is published on the Council's website) was subject to full formal review at the Annual Council Meeting in 2018 and since then has been subject to ongoing annual review at each of the Council's budget setting meetings.

3.2.2 These reviews have been informed by the most recently available reports from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for London Councils. The latest review and report undertaken by the IRP (entitled "The Remuneration of Councillors in London 2023 – Report of the Independent Panel") was published in December 2023 and followed an initial review undertaken in 2022. As noted in the report, the review aimed to seek wider consultation than previously, using qualitative and quantitative research to underpin its findings and recommendations.

3.2.3 This year's annual review has been based on the contents of this report, which will continue to inform the Council's decision-making in respect of its scheme for a maximum period of four years. It should be noted that whilst the Panel makes recommendations, each council determines its own remuneration scheme for its own councillors, having regard to the Panel's recommendations.

3.2.4 The 2023 IRP report recognises the importance of the role played by elected members not only in terms of their representational role but also given the increasing challenges and demands in managing the delivery of local services and on the allocation of financial resources. The report highlights the increasingly difficult and complex nature of choices and work faced by local councillors in terms of managing these challenges and increasing level of demand on services. In addition, reference is made to the growth in other public sector activities, increasing expectations for closer working with partners such as the health services and the voluntary sector, as well the growing role of councillors acting as a point of information, advice and reassurance for local communities. The report also recognises the increasing expectations of the public in terms of access to their local councillors supported by the growth in digital connectivity, social media etc. as well as the effects of the pandemic and the resettlement of refugees.

3.2.5 The report highlights the importance of allowances being pitched at an appropriate level so that they make a major contribution in ensuring diverse and effective local representation.

3.2.6 Over the period of May 2023 to date, councillors have logged over 5,500 Members Enquiries on behalf of their constituents, organised in the region of 200 surgeries and cumulatively attended over 500 council meetings.

3.2.7 Whilst considering the above factors, the Council must remain conscious of the financial challenges faced by local authorities.

3.2.8 It is for Full Council to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to its members specifying the amount of entitlement by way of basic allowance (which is mandatory) and other allowances (which are discretionary). Such a scheme has to be in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and the Council is required to have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

3.2.9 The scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Annual Uplift

3.2.10 Brent's Members Allowance Scheme states that Basic, Special and Civic allowances "shall be increased with effect from each April, by a percentage equal to the inflation pay award agreed as part of the Local Government Pay Settlement in the previous financial year, unless otherwise determined by the Council". In 2023, the decision was made to increase the basic allowance by 4.04% increasing it to £12,988 in line with that agreed as part of the National Joint Council Government Services pay agreement.

3.2.11 As outlined in the review report, this allowance continues to be lower than that paid by all local authorities in Scotland which is presently £20,0992 and similarly in Wales where the government-appointed commission set the basic allowance at £17,600 for members of local authorities with populations which are generally substantially lower than those of London boroughs. The basic allowance in Northern Ireland is £16,394. The Panel have recommended that the basic allowance should be increased to £15,960. This represents an approximate 22% increase to the current basic allowance in Brent.

3.2.12 On review of the recommendations made by the Panel and conscious of the reasons set out above, members are asked to consider the proposal to apply an uplift of 5% across Basic Allowances within the Member Allowance scheme for 2024/25. If this were to be agreed, it would mean an increase in the Basic Allowance from £12,988 to £13,637 (a difference of £649 for each of the 57 councillors).

Special Responsibility Allowances

3.2.13 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) have also been reviewed in line with Panel recommendations. Noting that some of the positions do not currently fall within the recommended percentage bands (i.e. the % of the Leader's allowance considered appropriate for the role) and more importantly, recognising the increased workload and scope of these positions, members

are also asked to consider a targeted increase to the SRAs for the positions of Chairs of the Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums and members of the Licensing Committee.

3.2.14 It is evident that the number of meetings and scope of work considered by members of the Licensing Committee has increased and in recognition of this, it is proposed that the SRA for this role increase from £1,040 to £2,068. This will bring the SRA within the median of the recommended percentage band.

3.2.15 Over the last two and a half years, the number of Licensing Sub-committee meetings have averaged at 20 or more per year with each hearing lasting at least half a day. Serving on the Licensing Committee bears significant personal responsibility as the committee is quasi-judicial in nature. All members are expected to strictly adhere to the Licensing code of practise, with the failure to do so risking reputational damage to the council or the risk of legal proceedings. All members on the licensing committee are expected to regularly attend the Licensing Sub-committee as well as undertake regular training and development sessions provided by the council, in addition to site visits and other applicable work.

3.2.16 Similarly with the role of Chairs of the Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums and the increasing pressures on community resilience and power, these forums will be taking on a more developed role in the council, as part of our Borough Plan commitment to enabling communities and encouraging greater involvement at a neighbourhood level in council activities.

3.2.17 At Cabinet in April 2023, a new approach to Community grants (formerly known as NCIL) was adopted. This new approach is predicated on a much more significant and time demanding role for Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums chairs.

3.2.18 The model proposes an allocation to each ward in the borough to be spent on a Brent Connect area basis, totalling £1m in this financial year, from the funds available to each Brent Connects area. Each Brent Connects area will make its own recommendations on projects to be funded. Brent Connects area panels will be convened to review all the applications within their Connect area using the same assessment criteria. Each Panel will consist of all Ward Councillors in the locality and will be chaired by the Brent Connects chairs. This additional responsibility will require a greater time commitment of each Brent Connects Chair, as part of our approach to develop and test new approaches that empower residents on a neighbourhood basis.

3.2.19 It is proposed that the SRA for this role increase from £1,301 to £2,068. This will bring the SRA within the recommended median percentage band as set out in the IRP report.

3.2.20 These figures are reflected in the cost analysis within Appendix 1 of the report.

3.2.21 Benchmarking with other councils has been carried out to be able to draw comparisons to inform decision making. Hounslow council have Chairs of area forums who receive an SRA of £7,990 and Wandsworth Council have Council Champions who receive £2,805.

Parental leave policy

3.2.22 The LGA have recently conducted a survey to obtain an overview of the extent to which councils have introduced parental leave policies for councillors, how well these are working, and how councils deal with issues such as allowances, attendance requirements and cabinet positions. The research undertaken will be used to inform future LGA policy on parental leave policies and potential lobbying of central government.

3.2.23 In the survey, it asked if the council made Section 85 explicit in its maternity documents. We therefore propose amending the Dependants Carers Allowance policy within the Members Allowance Scheme, as shown in red (Appendix 2).

4.0 Publicity

4.1 As soon as reasonably practicable after the making or amendment of a Scheme, copies of the Scheme have to be made available for inspection at the Civic Centre and a notice has to be published in a local newspaper. It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Governance be authorised to comply with these requirements.

5. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 The outcome of the annual review has been subject to consultation with members of the Constitution Working Group.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 The actual overall cost of the payment of allowances depends on which Members are appointed to the roles where an SRA is received, as only one such allowance is payable irrespective of the number of roles held. At the end of each financial year, the payments made to each Member are published in accordance with statutory rules.

6.2 Any uplift to the allowance scheme will result in additional expenditure. A table illustrating this can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, the additional expenditure should the uplift and additional SRA be applied would be £57k.

6.3 The current budget for members' allowances is £1.16m. There is scope within the existing budget to absorb the additional expenditure, should this be agreed.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 The Council's Members' Allowance Scheme must comply with the relevant provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003; the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000. In adopting or amending the scheme the Council is required to have due regard to the report published by its Remuneration Panel, which is the IRP appointed by London Councils.

7.2 The increase in the basic allowance for all members and in the Special Responsibility Allowances identified to be increased are consistent with the recommendations of The Remuneration of Councillors in London 2023 – Report of the Independent Panel, to which the council must have regard.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:

a) To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
c) Foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.

8.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

8.3 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.

8.4 This report outlines the allowances for all Members for 2024-25. As the allowances are the same for all Members, irrespective of their background, there are no equality, diversity or inclusion implications for the proposals within this paper.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 None.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

10.1 None.

11.0 Communication Considerations

11.1 None.

Report sign off:

Debra Norman
Corporate Director of Governance

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Position	Number in position	Current Individual Allowance	Current Total Allowance	Current Total Cost to Council	Final Individual Allowance with Increase	Final Total Allowance with Increase	Total Cost to Council (new allowances)	Difference in Total Cost to Council
Basic Allowance	57	12,988	740,316	770,899	13,637	777,332	813,023	**42,124**
Leader	1	41,354	41,354	47,061	41,354	41,354	47,061	-
Deputy Leader	1	30,138	30,138	34,297	30,138	30,138	34,297	-
Cabinet Member	8	19,858	158,864	180,787	19,858	158,864	180,787	-
Chair (of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny; Planning; Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee)	3	14,858	44,574	50,725	14,858	44,574	50,725	-
Leader of the Principal Opposition Group	1	8,323	8,323	9,472	8,323	8,323	9,472	-
Group Whip for majority party	1	4,161	4,161	4,735	4,161	4,161	4,735	-
Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee	1	5,202	5,202	5,920	5,202	5,202	5,920	-
Leader of the Second Opposition Group	1	4,000	4,000	4,552	4,000	4,000	4,552	-
Chair of the Licensing Committee	1	3,365	3,365	3,829	3,365	3,365	3,829	-
Member of the Fostering Panel	1	3,354	3,354	3,817	3,354	3,354	3,817	-
Members of the Planning Committee	8	2,265	18,120	20,621	2,265	18,120	20,621	-
Chairs of the Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums *(Note - there was a 59% increase to the SRA)*	5	1,301	6,505	7,403	2,068	10,339	11,765	**4,363**
Members of the Licensing Committee *(Note - there was a 99% increase to the SRA)*	9	1,040	9,360	10,652	2,068	18,609	21,177	**10,526**
Mayor	1	7,429	7,429	8,454	7,429	7,429	8,454	-
Deputy Mayor	1	3,365	3,365	3,829	3,365	3,365	3,829	-
Total:			**1,088,430**	**1,167,053**		**1,138,529**	**1,224,065**	**57,012**

** Note - There was a 5% increase to total basic allowance*

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Appendix 2: Dependants' Carers' Allowance (Part 6, Members' Allowance Scheme) - amended

5 (1) A dependants' carers' allowance may be claimed by a councillor in respect of such expenses of arranging for the care of their children or dependants as are necessarily incurred in the attendance at meetings or the performance of functions of a type specified in Schedule 2.

(2) For the purposes of 5(1) above:

- A Councillor's dependants are defined as children aged 15 or under, elderly, disabled or unwell relatives who cannot be left alone (either temporarily or permanently).
- Payments will not normally be made to carers who are family members or person's resident at the Councillor's home.
- Carers must be aged 18 or over.

(3) The Carers' Allowance can also cover costs associated with Councillors who themselves need the help of a carer in order for them to fulfil their duties as a Councillor.

(4) The maximum rate for this allowance is based on the Living Wage Foundation's 'real living wage' (unless specialist care is required and approved) to meet, or contribute towards, the actual costs incurred in arranging care. The maximum period from which any one claim can be made is the duration of the meeting/duty, plus 'reasonable' travel time to and from meetings up to the maximum of an hour each way. What equates to reasonable travel time will be agreed with the Head of Executive and Member Services.

(5) Payments will only be made where:

a) receipts are produced for any claim; and
b) written/email approval of the claim has been obtained from the Head of Executive and Member Services prior to the meeting.

(6) Any queries on expenses or claims should be referred to the Head of Executive and Member Services.

(7) For the purposes of regulation 7(1)(h) of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (see Schedule 2), the following are approved duties in respect of which councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carers' allowance:

i) all approved internal and external learning and development sessions as part of the Council Member Learning and Development programme;
ii) meetings with government departments and other official bodies;
iii) meetings and/or briefings convened or authorised by Chief Officers provided that councillors of at least two political groups have been invited;
iv) Cabinet member/officer meetings;
v) formal inspections and site visits authorised by the Council;
(vi) conferences that a councillor is appointed to attend;
vii) formal joint meetings with members of other authorities; and
viii) meetings of all other bodies to which councillors are appointed as a representative of the Council or a Committee. These include:
a. joint committees with staff;
b. working panels;
c. steering groups; and
d. advisory groups and outside bodies (appointed to by the Council).

ix) the carrying out of any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees or subcommittees.

Summary: Care costs can be claimed for all formal Council work including attending Council meetings, committees and sub-committees, meetings for other bodies for which councillors have been appointed by the council, as well as attending internal and external learning and development sessions.

Care costs cannot be claimed for ward work, constituency meetings, meeting preparation or travel time as these are covered by the Basic Allowance.

(8) Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that if "a member of the executive of that local authority, fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the executive, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the local authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the local authority."

Summary: Members who take maternity leave must be careful to track their attendance to ensure they attend at least one meeting of the executive (such as Full Council, any Member Learning or Development session, or a Committee meeting) within six months of their last meeting to avoid being inadvertently removed as a member of Brent Council.

SCHEDULE 2

Extract from The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Dependants' carers' allowance

7.

(1) A scheme may provide for the payment to members of an authority of an allowance ("dependants' carers' allowance") in respect of such expenses of arranging for the care of their children or dependants as are necessarily incurred in—

(a)the attendance at a meeting of the authority or of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or of any other body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations, or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body;

(b)the attendance at any other meeting, the holding of which is authorised by the authority, or a committee or sub-committee of the authority, or a joint committee of the authority and at least one other local authority within the meaning of section 270(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee, provided that—

(i)where the authority is divided into two or more political groups it is a meeting to which members of at least two such groups have been invited; or

(ii)if the authority is not so divided, it is a meeting to which at least two members of the authority have been invited;

(c)the attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the authority is a member;
(d)the attendance at a meeting of the executive or a meeting of any of its committees, where the authority is operating executive arrangements;

(e)the performance of any duty in pursuance of any standing order made under section 135 of the Local Government Act 1972 requiring a member or members to be present while tender documents are opened;

(f)the performance of any duty in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises;

(g)the performance of any duty in connection with arrangements made by the authority for the attendance of pupils at any school approved for the purposes of section 342 of the Education Act 1996 (approval of non maintained special schools)(1); and

(h)the carrying out of any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees or subcommittees.

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