



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

**Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 7 April 2025 at
10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor M Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Benea, Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Nerva and Rubin.

Also present: Councillors Conneely for items 5, 8 and 9.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools) and Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) along with Alice Lester (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration) with Gerry Ansell (Director Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Action) attending as her representative.

No other apologies for absence were received at the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made during the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 10 March 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising (if any)

None identified.

5. Petitions (if any)

5.1 Management of fire safety risks and future provision of Lynton Close Travellers site

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Elisabeth Corcoran (as a local resident and representative of Lynton Close Travellers Site), who was supported by Nancy Hawker (London Gypsies and Travellers Association), to the meeting who he advised were attending to present a letter and petition relating to management of fire safety risks and the future provision of Lynton Close Travellers site.

In thanking the Leader of the Council for the opportunity to present the petition, Elisabeth Corcoran called on the Council to pause any eviction proceedings at the

site, install fire risk mitigations in collaboration with the residents of Lynton Close and find alternative land that could be used as a temporary site in the case of a humanitarian emergency which could be used, if required, until more permanent, adequate and suitable accommodation could be arranged. Whilst acknowledging the issues highlighted within the accompanying Cabinet Report (*Agenda Item 8: Housing Management – Building Safety Update, New Building Safety Policy and Update on Fire Safety at Lynton Close*) in relation to overcrowding and fire safety risks associated with the site, it was pointed out that residents on the site had previously raised concerns with the Council on the same issues. Despite assurances that every effort was being made to secure another more suitable alternative site it was pointed out this had not yet been achieved.

In representing the views of residents on the site, reference was also made to Brent's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy which it was pointed out included the ambition for Brent to become a borough of all cultures where all backgrounds were represented, celebrated and felt that they belonged. This was not, Elisabeth Corcoran advised, an approach that currently resonated with Brent's Traveller Community given the way in which other communities were felt to be treated when compared to the approach adopted in seeking to address the safety issues at Lynton Close (as the only traveller site in the borough) which had made the traveller community on the site feel like they did not belong or that their culture was respected.

As a further example, reference was made to the comments in the accompanying Cabinet report, which it was highlighted had described the residents of Lynton Close as 'unwilling', 'disruptive' and 'demanding' when detailing their interactions with Council officers. It was felt this continued to feed a narrative of negativity in relation to the traveller community located on the site, with the resident engagement process outlined also not felt to have been presented accurately.

Concerns were also expressed regarding the negative impact any potential displacement of families from the site would have on education provision for their children, including those with additional needs or SEND who had long awaited assessments and support plans in place. It was felt the momentum and trust built in terms of engagement with the education system would therefore be placed at significant risk by any displacement.

As further concerns, reference was made to the health and wellbeing of the traveller community with specific issues highlighted in relation to mental health and suicide having also directly affected the community at Lynton Close. Concern was expressed these were likely to be exacerbated should the community be forced in to brick-and-mortar accommodation resulting in increased anxiety as a result of the lifestyle change, concerns around isolation and the impact in being able to preserve their way of life and heritage. Whilst willing to consider alternative locations, it was felt further consideration needed to be given to the true impact moving residents into brick-and-mortar accommodation would have on the community's mental wellbeing, cultural identity and values.

In seeking a way forward, Elisabeth Corcoran advised that residents at Lynton Close had recognised the need to work with the Council to improve communication and had also advised they would be willing to consider the introduction of a Waking Watch following what was felt to have been limited initial engagement in seeking to

address safety concerns relating to operation of the scheme. These had included safeguarding concerns around the use of cameras in the vicinity of children on the site as well as use of the children's play area to facilitate the schemes implementation, which was also highlighted as a potential issue under the Decent Homes Standard. It was also pointed out that an apology had been issued by resident representatives for a previous incident related to the attempts made to establish a previous version of the scheme on site.

In summing up, Elisabeth Corcoran hoped the Council would seek to engage with the traveller Community at Lynton Close in order to find a solution that would respect their culture and heritage whilst also seeking to address the safety issues and risks highlighted, which it was hoped could be achieved through a process of collaboration and understanding. Recognising the various needs that would need to be addressed should displacement take place, including those of the elderly, vulnerable and children with special educational needs, as well as the impact the disruption would cause to residents physical and mental wellbeing, a request was once again made to pause any eviction proceedings and work in collaboration with residents in seeking to install the necessary fire mitigation measures. At the same time, the importance was highlighted in the Council seeking to continue its effort to find alternative land that could be used as a temporary site in the case of a humanitarian emergency and which could be used, if required, until more permanent, adequate and suitable accommodation was secured.

In response, Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing & Residents Services) thanked Elisabeth Corcoran and the other site representatives present for attending Cabinet in order to ensure the views of residents at Lynton Close were represented, whom it was assured remained valued members of the community in Brent. In outlining the Council's commitment to a more sustainable future for travellers in the borough, the opportunity was taken to highlight the efforts being made to identify alternative sites that would meet their needs whilst also seeking to address the safety concerns highlighted and improve the Lynton Close site. In acknowledging the specific issues highlighted during presentation of the petition it was pointed out that many of these had already been raised with officers in terms of the approach identified moving forward.

At the same time in responding to the petition, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt it important to recognise that the Lynton Close Travellers Site was dangerously overcrowded which, when combined with other factors (including breaches in site licensing agreements) had presented an intolerable risk to life, given the severe fire and associated safety risks to those living on the site along with the pressure placed on the site's broader infrastructure. In detailing the Council's responsibilities as a landlord in response to these risks, she explained these had placed not only a legal but also moral duty on the Council to ensure the site was safe, highlighting that it would be a dereliction of duty to do nothing.

In outlining the previous unsuccessful attempts made to address safety issues on the site, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson highlighted that the approach now being taken to serve notice on the pitch holders had been designed to provide 28 days to resolve any breaches of licence identified with confirmation provided these were not eviction notices. Whilst recognising that the efforts required to address overcrowding, as a result of the notices served, may involve the displacement of some residents including extended family members, an assurance was provided

that dedicated support would be available to assist those residents in arranging temporary accommodation and in applying to join the waiting list for new pitches as they became available.

The concerns raised in relation to protecting the traveller communities heritage and traditional lifestyle were also recognised along with the need to ensure fair and equal treatment, with the efforts being made as a result to identify alternative sites reiterated. Whilst this work was ongoing it was, however, pointed out that the Council's immediate priority was to the safety of residents on the Lynton Close site with the next best option secured being safe, secure, settled and affordable accommodation, much of which would be grouped to allow larger families to remain in proximity.

In terms of next steps, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson confirmed that further details would be provided at a community information meeting for site residents which had been scheduled with an external specialist agency having also been appointed to assist with the search for alternative sites. The site representatives were also thanked for their cooperation and willingness to engage in further work around the implementation of a Waking Watch, which the Council had agreed in principle subject to working through the logistics and operational requirements relating to its implementation.

In bringing the item to close, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) also took the opportunity to assure the residents of Lynton Close of the Council's willingness to continue working with them to mitigate the issues and safety concerns which had been identified, with work also ongoing to find an appropriate alternative site that would work for the community and their requirements. He also thanked residents for their cooperation in seeking to progress implementation of a Waking Watch scheme to mitigate fire risks on the site. In response to the comments raised regarding equity, diversity and inclusion, Councillor Butt assured those present that the traveller community was not regarded any differently from others in the borough and would be afforded the same rights, recognising the legally protected characteristic that the Council had a duty to consider. He concluded his remarks by reminding residents of the community meeting which had been scheduled and would provide a further opportunity to hear from and respond to residents and outline the measures to mitigate the safety issues associated with the site whilst supporting the community and ended by once again thanking the representatives for taking the time to attend the meeting and ensure the views of the traveller community at Lynton Close were represented.

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

There were no items referred from either the Community Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees.

7. Change in Order of Business

Councillor Muhammed Butt advised that following on from presentation of the petition regarding the Lynton Close Travellers site he had agreed to a change in the order of business listed on the agenda, with Agenda Item 8 (Housing Management – Building Safety Update, new Building Safety Policy and Update on fire Safety at Lynton Close) to be considered as the next item of business.

As he had also accepted a number of requests to speak in relation to Agenda Item 13 (Outcome of Informal Consultation on Amalgamation of Malorees Infant School and Malorees Junior School) members were advised this would be considered as the next item of business following on from Agenda Item 8 .

The minutes therefore reflect the order in which these items were considered at the meeting.

8. Housing Management - Building safety update, new Building Safety Policy and update on fire safety at Lynton Close

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) was then invited to introduce a report from the Corporate Director Residents and Housing Services providing an update on all compliance and building safety streams in housing management and property services and also presenting a newly drafted Building Safety Policy for the Housing Management Service as well as an update on fire safety at the Council owned Lynton Close Travellers site.

In presenting the report, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson advised members of its intended purpose to cover three areas. Firstly, it provided an update on all compliance and building safety streams within housing services. Secondly it presented a newly drafted Building Safety Policy and thirdly it provided an update on fire safety at the council-owned traveller site, Lynton Close. As further context, members were advised that following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, the government had commissioned an independent review of building regulations and fire safety management, which had led to the development and implementation of the Building Safety Act 2022 along with various secondary legislation, including the Fire Safety Regulations 2022. As a result, the Council's Housing Management Service had been working to implement the additional legislative requirements, including the introduction of a new approach towards engaging residents living in the Council's high-risk blocks, around building safety and resulting in the Building Safety Engagement Strategy being approved by Cabinet alongside the wider Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy in June 2024.

Members were advised that following this, a range of meetings had been held with residents living in high-risk blocks to inform them of the compliance and building safety work being undertaken and provide an opportunity to raise any concerns and issues with housing management staff with these meetings now continuing for a second year. This had also been accompanied by the implementation of a new Housing Management IT system (True Compliance) to improve the logging and monitoring of compliance streams and outstanding actions from compliance inspections. In terms of fire safety and fire risk assessment (FRA) compliance, members were advised (as detailed within section 5.2 of the report) that performance in relation to completion of FRAs across the 1134 residential blocks (including high-rise and converted street properties) was 98.69% with (in the interests of transparency) 819 individual actions currently identified as overdue in 205 blocks and property management currently undertaking an audit of closed down actions in order to ensure they were being closed with the appropriate evidence.

Moving on to then focus on the Gypsy and Traveller's site at Lynton Close, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson outlined the brief history of the site (which members were advised had been detailed within section 6 of the report) along with the specific and serious safety concerns that had been identified in relation to overcrowding and the associated fire safety risks identified, with the site having been deemed an 'Intolerable Risk' following an FRA carried out in August 2024. As a result, the Council had identified a number of safety measures and steps required to eliminate the immediate risk to life. Whilst these actions had been designed to ensure no harm came to the residents living on the site and assurance was also provided about the Council's commitment to creating a truly sustainable future for travellers living in Brent and in reiterating her initial response to the petition presented at the meeting by residents from the site, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson ended by advising of the Council's aim to ensure Lynton Close offered a place where the community had a safe, secure and decent home into the future.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the Council's legal and also moral duty as landlord to ensure the Lynton Close site was safe, with clarification provided that the notices served had not been eviction notices but were designed to provide those residents with licences who rented the pitches time to address the fire risks identified. Members also noted and endorsed the commitment identified by the Leader of the Council in response to the petition which had been presented by the site representatives, to continue working with them to mitigate the issues and safety concerns identified alongside the work continuing in an effort to find an appropriate alternative site and temporary accommodation (as needed) that would work for the community and their requirements.

In support of the approach outlined in relation to the Council's approach towards building safety compliance as a means of addressing residents safety and security Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the performance update against each key compliance stream, as detailed in the report.
- (2) To note, having also considered the issues raised following presentation of the petition on the same issue under Agenda Item 5, the update on fire safety at Lynton Close, as detailed in the report.
- (3) To endorse the Building Safety Policy set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

9. Outcome of Informal Consultation on Amalgamation of Malorees Infant School and Malorees Junior School

Prior to considering the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Patrick Martin (NEU representative), Michael Cleary (staff representative) and Aidan Reilly (local parent representative) to the meeting who he advised had requested to speak in relation to the proposed amalgamation of Malorees Infant & Junior School.

In opening the contributions, Patrick Martin, advised that whilst addressing Cabinet on behalf of members from the National Education Union from both schools (the majority of whom were opposed to the amalgamation proposal) he was also a specialist teacher working across both schools. In terms of concerns highlighted

these included what was felt to be the lack of perceived benefit to the school community arising from the amalgamation given the school was already operating as a Federation with a single Governing Body and senior leadership team along with uncertainty over the progress and viability of the DfE refurbishment/rebuild proposals, which were still to be confirmed and potential financial impact on the funding available to the school moving forward, with it estimated that the proposal may cost the school up to £186k annually representing a 5% cut in funding. Whilst supporting the need for refurbishment of the school it was felt the impact any additional cut in funding would have on the learning and care being provided for pupils at the school, particularly the most vulnerable, also needed to be recognised with the school already in deficit and a majority of NEU members therefore opposed to the proposals.

In support of the concerns expressed, Michael Cleary (representing staff from both schools) advised of the impact which the delay in the new build/refurbishment scheme still to be progressed under the DfE fast track scheme had created in terms of an NCIL funding bid for a multi-use games area submitted by the Junior school being lost. Whilst acknowledging that concerns relating to a potential land sale had been eased following discussions with the Council, it was pointed out that staff still remained uncertain given the process being undertaken to change the status of land owned by another local foundation school in Kilburn Park from educational to non-educational use and the increasingly uncertain and challenging context relating to the viability of any future rebuild or refurbishment scheme being delivered given the economic situation and resulting building delays and increased costs. In view of the financial impact on the school Mr Cleary ended his comments by once again highlighting the extent of opposition from staff and the wider school community towards the amalgamation proposal, which he hoped would be recognised in the final decision made.

As a further and final contribution, Aidan Reilly (local parent representative) was then invited to address the meeting who advised he was also speaking in opposition to the amalgamation proposal with the following concerns raised. Firstly, it was felt that any decision made to progress to formal consultation would contradict the outcome of the initial consultation on the basis that 81.7% of those who had responded had indicated they did not support the proposed amalgamation. Although not referred to in the report, advised this had also been supported by a petition containing 260 verified signatures. Reference was also made to the initial consultation proposal being clear that should any of the consultation processes indicate there was not agreement to the amalgamation proposal, or Cabinet decided not to accept any recommendation to amalgamate, the schools would continue as separate infant and junior entities with the Council therefore requested to stand by these terms, as outlined. In addition, he advised significant concerns remained in relation to the financial considerations outlined as part of the initial consultation proposals based on the subsequent amendments identified in relation to the reduced level of pupil funding and other figures such as level of maintenance savings. These concerns were also supported by what Mr Reilly felt to be a lack of evidence, relating to the impact new school buildings had in supporting increased enrolment with, he felt, the key driver in this respect remaining school leadership, staff, and culture as opposed to buildings. Given the further projected decline in demand for school places and pupil numbers across London, including Brent, he therefore felt the enrolment optimism and associated funding outlined in support of the proposal was misplaced. With concerns also raised and being pursued

separately in relation to school governance arrangements Aiden Reilly felt that the proposals, as presented to Cabinet, had failed to meet the standards of fairness, transparency, and integrity expected and should therefore be rejected recognising the strength of opinion also expressed by the wider school community.

In thanking Patrick Martin, Michael Cleary and Aidan Reilly for their comments and acknowledging the issues raised, Councillor Muhammed Butt then moved on to formally introduce the report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People & Community Development on behalf of Councillor Grahl, who had needed to submit apologies for absence at the meeting. In introducing the report, members were advised that it provided a summary of the informal consultation process undertaken on the proposal to amalgamate Malorees Infant and Junior Schools as one Primary School and sought approval to move to formal consultation on the closure of Malorees Junior School, expansion of the age range at Malorees Infant School and a change in name to Malorees Primary School in order to achieve the amalgamation. Although unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Butt advised that Councillor Grahl had provided a statement (in her role as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) on the proposals presented for consideration which he had been asked to present on her behalf.

Referring to the statement, he advised that Councillor Grahl had apologised to all present for not being able to attend the meeting and also thanked Patrick Martin, Michael Cleary and Aidan Reilly for the representations made and their engagement and continued scrutiny of the proposals, with Councillor Grahl advising that she would be more than willing to meet with NEU representatives should they have any further discussion points related to the proposals.

In terms of the proposals themselves, the Leader advised that Councillor Grahl had been keen to outline what were felt to be the considerable advantages to the school community, including the prospect of accessing DfE funding to carry out long overdue infrastructure investment, that would essentially lead to the rebuilding of both schools recognising how valuable an opportunity this represented in the current economic climate given the struggles faced by many schools in maintaining their buildings and limited progress made by the previous Conservative Government in delivery of their School Rebuilding Programme. She also felt it important to recognise that the merging of smaller schools had become a common strategy to provide financial resilience through the sharing of resources and staffing and in seeking to make them less vulnerable to declining pupil roll numbers, which had already been recognised as a risk in Brent and across London more widely.

The Leader advised that Councillor Grahl had also highlighted the complexities in terms of the role of local authorities in decision-making with regards to schools and had wanted to emphasise that the proposal itself had come directly from the school governing board, who had considerable autonomy in the day to day running of the school, as well as decisions surrounding funding and staff recruitment. The role of Cabinet would therefore be to consider the request on its merits and ratify the decision should it be considered in the school's interests. Whilst recognising that the proposals had met with opposition and anxiety by some NEU members and parents at Malorees School he advised that Councillor Grahl had wanted him to provide the following reassurances:

- That the amalgamation would not involve any proposed redundancies or changes in the terms and conditions of Malorees staff.
- There would be no risk of academisation as a result of the merger with support expressed for retaining Malorees as a community school.
- Whilst a small funding cut had been identified in the report, this had resulted from changes to the National Funding Formula set by the DfE with the governing board together with Brent Council having already outlined how that would be offset by savings elsewhere.

As a result, the Leader advised that Councillor Grahl had confirmed her support for the proposal amalgamation and move towards a formal consultation, highlighting what she felt would be the transformative nature of access to the funding for the rebuilding of the school that would be provided as a result, not only for pupils but also in supporting the school being able to attract a new cohort of children, which the Council continued to recognise as an important community asset in Brondesbury Park. In ending her statement, Councillor Grahl also took the opportunity to thank the school for overseeing the consultation as well as officers for their role in liaising with the school and the NEU.

Moving on to consider the report, members sought further clarification from officers regarding the concerns relating the reduction in funding identified, which Shirley Parks (Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy) confirmed related to changes in the DfE National Schools Funding Formula and had been based (in terms of maintenance) on the delivery of a new school building. In terms of the impact of wider changes in the local area it was felt the situation regarding Islamia Primary School and the attraction of a new building would have the potential to attract more pupils with members advised that the schools were now in the active DfE rebuilding programme for consideration between April and December 2025. In terms of the concerns raised regarding the lack of perceived benefit to the school community arising from the amalgamation, given the school was already operating as a Federation with a single Governing Body and senior leadership team, members were advised of the additional benefits arising in relation to the admissions criteria (removing the need for pupils currently at the Infant School to have to apply for a place at the Junior School) and Ofsted inspection framework. In relation to concerns regarding governance arrangements at the school, confirmation was provided these were subject to review with the Council's School Effectiveness Service continuing to work with the governing board to offer support in seeking to strengthening any arrangements, where needed. Confirmation was also provided that the Governing Body remained confident it could manage the funding reduction over a period without impact on staff with the amalgamation also helping the new school to build one community. Assurance was also provided regarding future use of the Junior School site (should it end up being transferred by the Foundation) with clarification provided that the situation at Kilburn Park, also a Foundation School, had been different as the redesignation of that land for non-education purposes was linked to wider delivery of the South Kilburn regeneration scheme.

Having considered the clarification provided, Councillor Muhammed Butt in summing up and seeking to provide a final response on the concerns raised took the opportunity to once again assure the school staff and parent community that the approach being recommended did not include any proposed redundancies or

changes in the terms and conditions of school staff; would retain Malorees as a community school and not lead to the risk of academisation and had been designed to secure access to DfE funding that would provide long overdue and transformative infrastructure investment for the rebuilding of both school buildings recognising the school as an important community asset. In clarifying the funding reduction outlined in the report, it was pointed out this reflected the move towards the National Funding Formula, set by the DfE, with the Governing Body together with Council commitment to securing the schools financial resilience and confident of the plans in place to manage the funding reduction without an impact on staff, Confirmation was also provided that the issues raised within the supporting petition referred to at the meeting had been reviewed and addressed within the report.

On the basis of the clarification provided at the meeting and in recognising the offer extended by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools to meet with NEU representatives in order to continue discussions around the proposals moving forward Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve a period of formal consultation, through publication of a statutory notice, on proposals to:

- (1) Close Malorees Junior School;
- (2) Expand the age range of Malorees Infant School to admit children aged between 3 – 11; and
- (3) Change the name of Malorees Infant School to Malorees Primary School.

10. **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Feedback Report and Action Plan**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced a report from the Chief Executive detailing the outcome of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in Brent during January 2025 along with the key recommendations and Action Plan produced in response.

In presenting the report, Cabinet were advised of the comprehensive nature of the evaluation, which had been conducted independently by the LGA and as well as identifying key areas of success and strength had also identified a number of crucial areas for continued improvement. In terms of key highlights, members were advised that Brent had been identified as a well-performing authority with a positive organisational culture and commendable track record in delivering essential services with notable achievements including significant progress in housing development, particularly in Wembley Park and Grand Union. Political stability was also recognised to have fostered effective collaboration between senior management and council members with the moved towards a Radical Place Leadership approach also identified as supporting the aim to enhance public service delivery through strengthened partnerships and integrated service models.

In also seeking to confront the challenges identified, members were advised that the key areas for improvement had included the need to address internal silo working to encourage strategic collaboration across departments. Reference had also been made to the urgent focus required to tackle the temporary accommodation crisis, given the significant financial strain this was creating as well as a focus on addressing the ongoing challenges in relation to financial management and resilience relating to the depletion of reserves, which had

necessitated a robust financial recovery and sustainability plan. As a further issue performance in social housing management had also been identified as below expectations, prompting new initiatives like the Housing Management Service Improvement Plan.

In acknowledging the significance of the challenges identified it was recognised that many of the issues highlighted were also shared by councils across London with a detailed Action Plan having been developed, which members were advised had been produced to provide a clear strategic approach and roadmap towards addressing the areas for improvement outlined.

Kim Wright (as Chief Executive) was also invited to comment on the report who highlighted the Corporate Peer Review (CPC) challenge as a robust and effective improvement and assurance process which demonstrated an open and transparent approach towards external review by the Council as an organisation. The Action Plan developed in response to the review recommendations (included as Appendix B to the report) had been developed by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and senior management alongside the Change Champion cohort and detailed the range of activity being developed and implemented in response to the CPC feedback. Whilst owned by CMT and senior managers members were advised that all staff would be involved in delivery of the Action Plan.

In considering the report, members welcomed the challenge process undertaken which was felt to have provided a fair and comprehensive evaluation of the Council's strengths as well as areas for improvement. Noting the focus on the challenges faced in relation to housing, reference was made to the work already underway and key milestones identified within the Action Plan in relation to addressing the pressures around temporary accommodation, including development of a Temporary Accommodation Improvement Plan, alongside a refresh of the Council's approach towards Tenant engagement supported through the new Housing Management Advisory Board and work also being undertaken to review and update the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. As a further addition in relation to the Action Plan, members were advised of an additional milestone included in relation to the work being undertaken to establish a strategic culture approach supporting development of a shared vision for Brent, involving the Culture Service having engaged a specialist consultant to map the existing assets of Brent's cultural and creative landscape in order to better understand Brent's existing creative and visitor economy and inform future strategic planning. Members also noted the work being undertaken to address the recommendations made in relation to the refresh of the Council's EDI priorities as well as the Council's financial sustainability focussed around the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process for 2026/27 – 2028/29.

In thanking all officers involved for their support in the CPC process and opportunity provided to reaffirm the Council's resolve, resourcefulness, and responsiveness in addressing the significant challenges identified, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report from the LGA, attached as Appendix A to the report.
- (2) To approve the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, attached as Appendix B to the report which it was noted would include the following as an additional

milestone in relation to Recommendation 8. Shared Vision for the Future of Brent:

Milestone 3: establish a strategic culture approach

Brent Culture Service has engaged a specialist consultant to map the existing assets of Brent's cultural and creative landscape in order to better understand Brent's existing and potential audiences and identify baseline data sets. This would help to then understand Brent's creative and visitor economy and inform the future strategic planning.

11. Community Led Housing in Brent - Extension to Brentfield Road site agreement

Councillor Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Resident & Housing Services providing an update on the progress made by Brent Community Land Trust (BCLT) towards establishing a Community Led Housing (CLH) scheme utilising a site at Brentfield Road and outlining the next steps in the process.

In presenting the report, Cabinet were reminded of the background to the scheme and decision which had been taken in May 2023 to ring fence the site at Brentfield Road for provision of a Community Led Housing (CLH) for a 12-month period. Following that decision members were advised that Brent Community Land Trust (BCLT) had been working towards meeting the initial criteria set out in section 3.2.3 of the report which, to date, had included developing the scheme to concept design and pre application stage, selecting a Registered Provider, pending final agreement, to act as developer for the site and engagement with the surrounding community. Recognising the progress made, Cabinet were now being asked to consider extending the ring-fence on use of the site offered until March 2026 in order to provide BCLT more time to fully demonstrate their capacity to move forward with the project. Members were advised that the extension would also allow the Council to continue working with BCLT to ensure that the necessary steps were taken for the project to succeed enabling it, once they had been assessed as meeting the specified criteria, to move forward and enter into a formal lease agreement. In terms of benefits outlined, members noted that whilst maintaining the necessary level of oversight and accountability in seeking to ensure the scheme remained on track the approach would also provide support for continuation of a community-led initiative as well as contribute towards the much needed delivery of affordable housing within the borough with the proposals therefore commended on this basis.

In considering the report, members welcomed and supported the commitment towards encouraging and supporting community-led housing projects recognising the role they could play towards increasing the supply of affordable housing. Whilst recognising that progress on the scheme had faced challenges, support was expressed for the proposed extension of the existing arrangements in an attempt to move forward and also continue facilitating community-led initiatives recognising the benefits delivered for residents.

On the basis of the discussion at the meeting Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To confirm the position that the Brentfield Road site, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, continues to be ring-fenced for the purpose of Community Led Housing.
- (2) To agree that the site be ring fenced for a further period until March 2026.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration to certify whether Brent Community Land Trust (BCLT) had met the specific criteria detailed at paragraph 3.2.3 of the report and based on that certification, to approve the next steps outlined in (4) and (5) below.
- (4) To delegate authority to the Director of Property and Assets (in consultation with the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) to agree heads of terms and enter into a conditional agreement for lease with the BCLT.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Director of Property and Assets to enter into a 250-year lease (and/or any ancillary legal document) with the BCLT once the conditions detailed at paragraph 3.2.3 of the report were fulfilled.
- (6) To agree in principle to further consider the use of appropriation for planning purposes under section 19 (1) of the Housing Act 1985 and/or section 122 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to support the development of the Brentfield Road site and to ensure the scheme was not frustrated or delayed by legal injunction.
- (7) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration to formally cease the site ring-fencing upon non-compliance of the specific criteria detailed at paragraph 3.2.3 of the report.
- (8) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration to extend the site ring fencing by an additional 6 months should BCLT fail to meet the specific criteria detailed in paragraph 3.2.3 of the report but be able to demonstrate significant progress towards meeting the criteria.
- (9) To note that should BCLT fail to meet the specific criteria detailed in paragraph 3.2.3 of the report or demonstrate significant progress towards meeting the criteria, the site would be returned to Brent Council and the formal arrangement with BCLT would cease.

12. Brent Local Development Scheme

Councillor Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration presenting the updated Brent Local Development Scheme, which set out the proposed timetable for the replacement of parts of the Development Plan including the Brent Local Development Plan and other planning related documents.

In presenting the report, Cabinet were advised of the key role the Local Development Scheme played in seeking to guide future growth and development of the borough and in setting out the timetable for updating not only Brent's Local Plan but also other important planning-related documents such as Supplementary

Planning Documents and Conservation Area updates. Members were advised of the importance in maintaining an up-to-date Development Plan in allowing the Council to manage and plan for growth and development in a strategic and sustainable way whilst also embracing the challenge of the anticipated continued population growth in a manner that would enable the Council to meet the housing, social and cultural needs of residents whilst also providing space for businesses and the economy to thrive. Whilst accepting that there were certain policies that would benefit from immediate review, such as reinforcement of the Council's policy on gambling establishments and student housing, members noted that the Development Scheme had also been designed to support protection and enhancement of the borough's green infrastructure as well as areas of historical and cultural significance, ensuring that development took place in a way that respected and strengthened Brent's local identity. Reference was also made to the way in which the updated Local Development Scheme would support the Council in moving towards its climate goals, supporting the drive towards carbon neutrality and addressing the ongoing challenges posed by climate change with the updated Scheme reflecting the Council's commitment to providing the necessary planning framework to deliver on those objectives, while also providing a clear and realistic timetable for the process.

In recognising the importance of the Local Development Scheme in providing a positive framework to drive sustainable growth and manage development across the borough, members also welcomed reference to the going campaign seeking review of the policy and powers available to prevent the establishment of gambling premises given their overconcentration within the borough and wider associated impacts in terms of anti-social behaviour and public health as well as the framework for prioritising review of housing delivery targets within the Local Plan based on wider changes being introduced under the National Planning Policy Framework and tacking account of the emerging London Plan. Support was also expressed for the joined up approach outlined with development of the Gypsies and Travellers Strategy, given the need identified to consider the provision and development of sufficient sites for pitches within the borough as well as reconfiguration of the Lynton Close site taking account of the revised national definition.

In support of the ongoing work being undertaken with the Mayor for London and other key strategic partners to manage the framework for development across the borough, including the development of housing delivery targets, and timing of the review to coincide with wider planning reforms being introduced Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the Brent Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix A of the report.

13. **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

As a result of Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement) having submitted her apologies for absence Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration seeking approval to an updated Flood Risk Management Strategy, which detailed the actions the Council and other key stakeholders were taking to manage flood risk in Brent and had been produced in accordance with the duties placed on Local Lead Flood Authorities under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.

In presenting the report members were advised that whilst Brent had avoided the severe floods which had affected other parts of the country over recent years the borough was not immune to the challenges and risks presented by climate change and increasingly adverse weather events. In recognising the wider social and economic impact and increasing risk associated with flooding, members were advised the opportunity had been taken to review and refresh the Strategy outlining not only the existing efforts being undertaken and in place to manage flood risks but also the steps which it was felt were required to improve them focussing on local risks such as groundwater, surface water, and ordinary watercourses. Whilst recognising the complete prevention of flooding would not be possible to achieve members were advised the strategy had sought to prioritise actions based on evidence and resources to ensure the borough was as prepared as possible when it did occur.

In noting that the revision and update of the Strategy had followed consultation with key stakeholders, including local residents and businesses, neighbouring boroughs, Thames Water and the Environment Agency members commended the approach outlined within the strategy as a means of seeking to enhance not only the resilience of the borough in relation to flooding risk but also to address the ongoing impact of climate change. Whilst recognising the measures already in place to maintain existing local infrastructure such as gullies and drains, members also highlighted a need to ensure this was supported through enhanced cooperation and a more coordinated approach with other key partner agencies in Brent including Thames Water, Environment Agency and Canal & Rivers Trust to ensure they were also delivering their specific responsibilities locally.

Having thanked officers for the review and ongoing implementation of the necessary strategies to keep Brent safe in working to tackle the effects of climate change, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the Flood Risk Strategy for Brent as detailed in Section 3 and appended to the report.

14. Funding contribution towards next stage development costs for West London Orbital scheme

Councillor Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration seeking approval for a funding contribution plus contingency to support the next stage of development of the West London Orbital Rail Scheme (WLO).

In presenting the report, members were advised that the funding being sought represented a significant step in the progression of a project seeking to deliver crucial transport infrastructure for the area given the challenge for many residents created by the current lack of efficient orbital public transport connections across West London as well as addressing concerns relating to increased traffic, congestion and air pollution. As such WLO had been developed to provide an alternative which, members were advised, would support efforts being made to address these issues and improve accessibility across the region, making it easier for residents to access work, education, and leisure opportunities without the need for lengthy or expensive travel. In addition, members noted the significant economic, social, and environmental benefits that it was anticipated the scheme would deliver for Brent including the delivery of new homes and jobs, improved access to a range of employment and learning opportunities as well as the

promotion of enhanced social inclusion, particularly for some of the more deprived areas of the borough. Given the backing of all four WLO boroughs along with the Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporation and funding contribution by TfL towards 50% of the costs it was felt the case for investment in the scheme remained compelling with WLO also supported in Brent's Local Plan and Long-Term Transport Strategy as a key piece of infrastructure aligned with the Council's growth and sustainability goals.

In welcoming the funding proposal, members took the opportunity to highlight the wider placemaking benefits of the scheme including the delivery of enhanced social inclusion through the provision of an enhanced step free station network as well as improved connectivity through enhanced access to a range of leisure, culture, recreation, healthcare, employment and learning opportunities. Recognising the significant opportunities also offered through WLO in relation to the promotion of growth and wider environmental impact, members were keen to add their support in seeking to progress the scheme as quickly as possible given the support from the Mayor for London and wide range of benefits that would be delivered across Brent and West London as whole.

As a result, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To agree that the Council contribute £465,516 and £150,000 contingency funded from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy, as its agreed share of the cost of taking forward the next stage of the development of the WLO.
- (2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property, to approve use of contingency for the final sum payable following confirmation from all WLO borough's governance processes.

15. **New approach to marking and celebrating community cohesion and inclusion events**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development which outlined the Council's new approach to community cohesion and inclusion events, detailing the overarching approach and specific components that would shape how the Council would continue to mark and celebrate events moving forward.

In presenting the report, Cabinet noted Brent's status as one of the most diverse boroughs in the country and a place where different cultures, faiths, and traditions were able to come together to create a vibrant and inclusive community. Recognising this diversity as a key strength, members were advised the new approach had been designed to strengthen the efforts being made to celebrate and foster cohesion and collaboration amongst all residents. With the previous policy last agreed in 2011 the new approach also reflected how the contextual landscape had changed in that time along with the need identified to deliver events as effectively and efficiently as possible. Recognising the need for clarity, consistency, and sustainability the new arrangements had sought to adopt an 'Enabler Approach' based on what was felt to be a fairer and more targeted methodology focussed on

empowering local communities, supporting grassroots initiatives, and ensuring that council resources were used effectively to deliver meaningful, high-quality events throughout the year. Members noted that the new approach had also sought to build on an extensive programme of engagement with residents, partners, and stakeholders, including faith and community groups and staff networks as well as review of the approach within other London boroughs. The efforts made to build on previous experience and develop a more strategic approach towards grant funding would also, it was felt, ensure community voices remained at the core of how Brent's cultural fabric was celebrated enabling local communities to take the lead with the Council taking a supportive and strategic role in delivery.

In highlighting their support for the approach outlined, members commended the focus in seeking to establish greater clarity and consistency for all stakeholders involved in the arrangement of community inclusion and cohesion events, which it was recognised would not only enable the council to better focus its resources but would also provide clear expectations around the support available for partners and residents in organising events.

In welcoming the new approach outlined as a means of strengthening relationships, fostering understanding, and reinforcing Brent's identity as a borough that embraced and championed diversity, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse the new community cohesion and inclusion events approach which will replace the existing approach agreed in 2011 comprising the components outlined in paragraph 3.2.5 – 3.2.15 of the report.

16. Authority to Participate in Collaborative Procurement in respect of a new London Sexual Health and Contraception E-service

Councillor Nerva (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Service Reform & Strategy providing details on the London Sexual Health Commissioning Collaborative Programme (LSHP) and seeking approval to the procurement of a new London Sexual Health and Contraception E-Service through the Programme.

In presenting the report, members noted the importance of sexual health services as part of the Council's public health responsibilities with the proposals presented for consideration seeking to enhance their provision across London through a collaborative procurement that Brent had been invited to participate in with 30 other London boroughs for a new London Sexual Health and Contraception E-Service. Members were advised that the creation of an e-service was regarded as a key step in modernising the delivery of sexual health services by enabling the provision of an online service for less complex issues designed to offer patients greater convenience and choice whilst also enabling more efficient use of clinical resources by reducing the pressure on face-to-face services and allowing health care professionals to focus on the more complex cases where in-person care was required. Having noted that the approach had been developed as part of the successful London Sexual Health Commissioning Collaborative Programme (LSHP), members were advised it had also been recognised as good practice both in terms of the positive feedback from service users and way in which working collaboratively at regional level had been able to deliver more cost-effective services, within the wider context of financial pressures faced by local authorities.

In welcoming and supporting the proactive approach being taken towards the procurement to ensure residents had access to important public health provision in a way that was preferred and also aligned with local priorities and national policy objectives Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the Council's participation in a collaborative procurement with the other 30 London boroughs for a contract for the provision of the London Sexual Health and Contraceptive E-Service.
- (2) To approve an exemption from the usual tendering requirements of Contract Standing Orders 84(a) to agree that the City of London Corporation act as the lead authority in the collaborative procurement detailed in (1) above for the reasons detailed in paragraph 3 of the report and accordingly that its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be used for the collaborative procurement.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure, to agree the award of a new contract with the successful bidder for a period of 5 years (with an option to extend for a further 4 years)
- (4) To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure, to agree for the Council to enter into the Inter-Authority agreement (IAA), and any other necessary legal agreement/s, with the City of London Corporation, to enable the provision of services to Brent Council following completion of the procurement process.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

18. Any other urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair