



SUMMONS TO ATTEND ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 14 May 2025 at 6.00 pm

Grand 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 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL of this Borough.

KIM WRIGHT
Chief Executive

Dated: 6 May 2025 (republished on 13 May 2025)

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](#)

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

1 Apologies for Absence

2 To elect the Mayor of the Borough for the Municipal Year 2025 - 2026

For the Council to elect a Mayor for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year, in accordance with Standing Order 27(a).

3 To appoint a Councillor of the Borough to be Deputy Mayor

To receive notice from the Mayor regarding the appointment of a Councillor of the Borough to be Deputy Mayor, in accordance with Standing Order 27(b).

4 Vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor

To invite a vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor, in accordance with Standing Order 27(c).

5 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.

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting 1 - 42

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on Thursday 27 February 2025.

(Agenda republished on 13 May 2025 to include the attached minutes)

7 Annual Review of Constitution 43 - 48

To receive, in accordance with Standing Order 27(g), a report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources outlining proposed changes to the Constitution following its annual review.

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Marsha Henry, Director, Law
020 8937 4078
Marsha.Henry@brent.gov.uk

8 Representation of Political Groups on Committees

49 - 56

To receive a report from the Corporate Director of Law & Governance asking Members to review and determine, under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the allocation of seats on Council Committees and other relevant bodies, in accordance with Standing Order 27(h).

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Amira Nassr, Deputy Director
Democratic & Corporate Governance
Tel: 0208 937 5436
amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

9 Appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies including the appointment of Chairs & Vice-Chairs

57 - 78

To receive a report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources seeking approval to the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs along with the membership and substitute membership on Council Committees and other relevant bodies, in accordance with Standing Order 27(i).

Members are asked to note that the full list of appointments have been attached.

Appointments that are not constitutionally made by Full Council (including notification of appointment(s) of the Deputy Leader and to Cabinet and any Cabinet Committee) will also be circulated prior to the meeting, for Members to note.

(Agenda republished on 13 May 2025 to include appendices 1-4 of the main report detailing the full list of appointments)

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Amira Nassr, Deputy Director
Democratic & Corporate Governance
Tel: 0208 937 5436
amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

10 Calendar of Council Meetings for the 2025 -2026 Municipal Year

79 - 96

To receive a report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources seeking approval to the final calendar of Council meetings to take place following the Annual Council meeting for the 2025 - 2026 Municipal Year, in accordance with Standing Order 27 (j) & (k).

Ward Affected:
All Wards

Contact Officer: Amira Nassr, Deputy Director
Democratic & Corporate Governance
Tel: 0208 937 5436
amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

11 International Partnering Arrangements

97 - 190

To receive a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources proposing the adoption of an International Partnering Protocol (IPP) and reviewing a proposed arrangement with Nablus, in accordance with the protocol.

Ward Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Amira Nassr, Deputy Director

Democratic & Corporate Governance

Tel: 0208 937 5436

amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

12 Urgent Business

At the discretion of the Mayor to consider any urgent business, in accordance with Standing Order 27(m).



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 (BUDGET SETTING) MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held in the Conference Hall on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Tariq Dar MBE

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Ryan Hack

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. Mayors Introductory Statement

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

2. **Mayors Statement - Order of Business**

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor informed members of a change to the order of business. Given the attendance of Paul Dossett (Grant Thornton) as the Council's External Audit Partner for the External Audit Annual Report, he advised of the intention to move that report (listed as Item 7 on the agenda) for consideration in advance of the main Budget and Council Tax debate. The Mayor advised members this would also be followed by consideration of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme (listed as Item 8 on the agenda), which he intended to move at the same time given the need for those proposals to be considered in advance of the main budget report.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The business to be considered at the meeting be re-arranged in the following order:
 - Agenda Item 6 – Auditors Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent
 - Agenda Item 7 – Review of the Working Age Council Tax Support Scheme 2025-26
- (2) The remaining items of business to then follow in the same order as listed on the agenda.

3. **Procedural Motion - Conduct of Business**

The Mayor advised that as this meeting had been designated as the Council's formal budget and Council Tax setting meeting, he would be inviting Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam (as the Majority Group Chief Whip) to move a procedural motion, in accordance with Standing Orders, relating to the conduct of the debate on the budget report. Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam then proceeded to the move the procedural motion.

Prior to being put to the vote, Councillor Lorber spoke (as Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group) to highlight his objection to the proposed change in timing for Group Leaders speeches during the budget debate, which he felt required further explanation and should have been subject to prior consultation with the respective Group Leaders. The concerns highlighted were also shared and supported by Councillor Kansagra, as Leader of the Conservative Group.

In addressing the comments raised, Debra Norman (Corporate Director Law & Governance) clarified that there was no provision for debate on procedural motions. Should members not wish to support the proposals, as moved, they were advised this would require them to vote against the procedural motion. Should that not be passed, they would then have the opportunity to move any alternative proposals.

Having noted the advice provided, it was **RESOLVED** (on being put to the vote with all Liberal Democrats & Conservative members voting against) that the following procedural motion be agreed:

- (1) That the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 20 minutes in presenting the report to the meeting and setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the budget, after which, the following arrangements be agreed for the purpose of debating and voting upon the Budget and Council Tax:
 - (a) The Leader of the Conservative Group (or their nominated representative) be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes in response to the Leader and in order to move their alternative budget proposals;
 - (b) The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group (or their nominated representative) be permitted to speak in response to the Leader and in order to move their alternative budget proposals for up to 5 minutes;
 - (c) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes;
 - (d) The Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes;
 - (e) A general debate follow during which the usual rules for debate will apply as set out in Standing Orders (save as set out in this procedural motion);
- (2) At the end of the general debate, the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes to submit his closing remarks.
- (3) Following the close of the debate, recorded votes on any amendments to the budget proposals and then the final substantive budget proposals be taken in turn with the recommendations each taken as one block for voting purposes.

Following a request from Councillor Lorber, under Standing Order 43 (f), the names of the Liberal Democrats Group members who voted against the above procedural motion were recorded as follows – Councillors. Clinton, Lorber & Matin.

4. Apologies for Absence

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Collymore, Knight (who it was reported was currently on Maternity Leave) Jayanti Patel and Shah.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on Monday 18 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

7. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) Alpertown By-Election result

The Mayor began his announcements by formally congratulating and welcoming Charlie Clinton as the newly elected ward councillor for Alpertown, following the outcome of the by-election held in that ward on Tuesday 18 February 2025.

Highlighting the rewarding nature of being elected to serve as a councillor and in being able to represent local residents, he took the opportunity to wish Councillor Clinton well during his remaining term of office.

The opportunity was also taken to formally thank the Chief Executive and all other staff involved for the successful delivery of the by-election, which it was recognised had required a significant effort to organise.

(ii) Kings New Years Honours List

The Mayor then moved on to continue his announcements by congratulating all those associated with Brent who had received an honour in the Kings New Year Honours list for 2025.

(iii) Holocaust & Genocide Memorial Day

The Mayor advised members that January had included this year's Holocaust & Genocide Memorial Day event, which had included commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau & the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia.

In reflecting on the nature of the human tragedy involved, the Mayor welcomed King Charles III becoming the first British Head of State to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, with the events held serving to highlight the lessons for members from all faiths and communities about what could happen in allowing hate and discrimination to be tolerated.

(iv) HM Queen Camilla & Princess Royal visits to Brent

The Mayor advised he was delighted to have recently been invited to join Her Majesty Queen Camilla on a visit to the Asian Women's Resource Centre in Harlesden to celebrate its 45th anniversary, which had highlighted the charity's vital support for women facing domestic abuse. During her visit, the Mayor reported that the Queen had met survivors of domestic abuse along with staff, and officially opened the centre's new Healing Garden.

In addition, members were advised the borough had also received another royal visit in February when her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited the Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust's Brent Occupational Therapy and Community Service at Church End and Roundwood Unity Centre. The Mayor advised that during her visit the Princess Royal had met with Occupational Therapists and members of the local Somali community to view the efforts being made to tackle health inequalities through Brent Health Matters, recognising the important nature of the work being undertaken in Brent.

(v) 107th birthday celebrations – Mrs Mary Thomas

Following the announcement made last year, the Mayor advised he was pleased to be able to share and celebrate the wonderful achievement of a local Brent resident Mrs Mary “Mama” Thomas reaching her 107th birthday. In celebrating this achievement, all members joined the Mayor in wishing Mrs Thomas a happy 107th birthday.

(vi) Mayor’s Charity Appeal event and thanks to Deputy Mayor

The Mayor then took the opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor Councillor Hack for the work undertaken to cover his engagements during a recent short break away and also to remind members of his Charity Appeal event being held on Friday 7 March 2025 in support of his chosen charity, the Pakistan Community Centre. He hoped as many members as possible would be able to join him for what would be a special charity Iftar in support of the charity.

(vii) Passing of ex-Councillor K D Patel (husband of ex-Mayor 1996-97 Councillor Lata Patel)

The Mayor advised that it was with regret he had to announce the sad passing of former Councillor Mr. K. D. Patel. Members were advised that former Councillor Patel had served as a member of the Council during the 1990’s, with his dedication and commitment to making a positive impact on the local community he served fondly remembered by those who knew him.

On behalf of Brent Council, the Mayor offered his sincerest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of former Councillor Patel.

(viii) Changes to Senior Management Team

As a final announcement the Mayor took the opportunity to advise members of some key changes to the Council’s Corporate Management team that would shortly be taking effect.

Following the decision taken by Peter Gadsdon, Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing & Resident Services, to retire from the Council, confirmation was provided that he would be leaving Brent in early April 2025. The Mayor advised that Peter had worked at Brent for over ten years including roles as the Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships, Assistant Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Customer and Digital Services and then Corporate Director for Resident Services as well as holding directorships in the council’s subsidiary housing companies.

These various roles had involved Peter leading the delivery of services which the Mayor pointed out continued to meet the needs of the borough’s residents, including the effective use of technology to improve services and outcomes whilst increasing productivity and delivering cost efficiencies.

At the same time, members were advised that Debra Norman, Corporate Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, had also taken the decision to retire at the end of March. The Mayor advised that Debra had started with Brent in January 1996 and having joined Islington Council for a period in 2007, then returned to

Brent in October 2016 to take up the post of Director of Legal Services prior to being appointed to her current position. During her time at Brent her role had included leading the Council's Audit & Investigations, Procurement and HR services in addition to the legal team and more recently Democratic Services, which had involved her working closely with many councillors.

In recognising their legacy, the Mayor felt it would be no understatement to highlight how much both Peter and Debra would be missed by everyone who had worked with them over the years. On behalf of the Council, he therefore took the opportunity to wish them both all the best in their future endeavours and to thank them for their service to the Council and residents of Brent.

All present at the meeting then joined the Mayor in a brief round of applause to thank Peter & Debra for their service to Brent and wish them well for the future.

(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.

8. **Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies**

The Mayor referred members to the list of changes circulated in relation to appointments to Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies.

It was **RESOLVED**

- (1) To note that effective from 30 January 2025 the Leader of the Council had appointed Councillor Teo Benea to fill the position of Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property
- (2) To approve the following changes in the membership of Committee and Outside Bodies:

Committee Appointments:

(a) Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:

- Councillor Teo Benea to be replaced by Councillor Bhagwanji Chohan as a full member and as a substitute on the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillor Charlie Clinton to replace Councillor Paul Lorber as a full member with Councillor Paul Lorber to fill the vacancy as one of the Liberal Democrats two substitute members.

(b) Council Tax Setting Committee – Councillor Shama Tatler to be replaced by Councillor Teo Benea as a substitute member.

(c) General Purposes Committee:

- Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as a full member. Councillor Shama Tatler to fill the vacancy as a substitute member.
- Councillor Paul Lorber to replace the Liberal Democrat vacancy as full member with Councillor Charlie Clinton to replace Councillor Paul Lorber as one of the Liberal Democrats two substitute members.

(d) Licensing Committee:

- Councillor Ajmal Akram to replace Councillor Tony Ethapemi and Councillor Lesley Smith to replace Councillor Ryan Hack as full members.
- Councillor Charlie Clinton to replace Councillor Paul Lorber as the Liberal Democrats full member.

(e) Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Paul Lorber to replace the Liberal Democrat vacancy as full member with Councillor Charlie Clinton to replace Councillor Paul Lorber as one of the Liberal Democrats two substitute members.

(f) Brent Connects – Councillor Ajmal Akram to replace Councillor Teo Benea as Chair of Wembley Brent Connects

(g) Service User Consultative Forum – Disability – Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson to be replaced by Councillor Rajan Seelan

(h) To note that the Leader of the Council has appointed Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as a substitute member on the Barham Park Trust Sub Committee.

(i) To note that the Leader of the Council had replaced Councillor Shama Tatler as Brent's appointed representative on the West London Economic Prosperity Board and had appointed Councillor Teo Benea to fill the second deputy position.

(j) Subject to confirmation by the General Purposes Sub Committee on 10 March 2025:

- Senior Staff Appointment Sub Committee - Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as a substitute member.
- Senior Staff Appeals Sub Committee - Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Shama Tatler as a substitute member.

Outside Bodies:

(k) Capital Letters – Councillor Muhammed Butt to be replaced by Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson as Brent's representative.

- (l) London Road Safety Council – Councillor Shama Tatler to be replaced by Councillor Neil Nerva as Brent’s alternative member
 - (m) Newable Ltd (Greater London Enterprise Board) - Councillor Harbi Farah to replace Councillor Tatler as Brent’s appointed representative.
 - (n) Old Oak Common & Park Royal Development Corporation (ODPC) – Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Tatler as Brent’s Deputy representative.
 - (o) Queens Park Joint Consultative Group – Councillor Lesley Smith to fill the vacancy.
 - (p) Local Government Association General Assembly – Councillor Teo Benea to replace Councillor Tatler as one of Brent’s Deputy representatives.
 - (q) London Council’s Greater Employment Forum – Councillor Mili Patel to replace Councillor Muhammed Butt as the full member with Councillor Muhammed Butt replacing Councillor Mili Patel as Deputy.
- (3) To agree (on the basis of the recruitment process detailed within the paper) the appointment of Sebastian Evans as an Independent co-opted member of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee with a focus on audit matters for a four-year term of office, ending at the Council’s Annual Meeting in May 2029 (subject to confirmation of the ongoing appointment at the Annual Council meeting each year).

9. **Auditor’s Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent**

In accordance with the change in the order of business agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor then invited Paul Dossett (Grant Thornton) as the Council’s External Auditor Partner to introduce the External Audit 2023-24 Annual Report on Value for Money (VFM).

In introducing the report, Paul Dossett summarised the approach towards the VFM audit and drew Members attention to the focus of the Annual Report on the Council’s arrangements in relation to three areas, Governance, Financial Sustainability and Improving economy, efficiency along with the key findings detailed within the Annual Report. Members were advised that work to finalise sign-off of the Council’s 2023-24 Financial Statement of Accounts was now in the process of being completed, with the Executive Summary providing an overview in relation to the Value for Money assessment of the Council’s arrangements.

As part of the auditor’s work, members were advised that whilst no significant weakness had been identified in the Council’s arrangements for Governance or Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness a significant weakness and key recommendation had been raised in respect of the Council’s Financial Sustainability, highlighting the use of reserves in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to fund in year overspends arising from the unprecedented pressures in homelessness and temporary accommodation. This had been identified as a key risk in the Council’s financial sustainability and resilience on the basis that the continued use of

reserves to manage these pressures would be unsustainable. In recognising the significant pressures and challenges on local government funding, Paul Dossett advised this was a position faced by a number of other local authorities, with the report including a detailed commentary on the review of arrangements in relation to maintaining the Council's financial sustainability. These included the plans in place to address the significant financial pressures in relation to short and medium term plans, action being taken to address the funding gaps identified and deliver achievable savings in response, plans to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities and other key programmes as well as identify and manage risks to financial resilience (including unplanned changes in demand). In order to stabilise its financial position, the report had recognised that the Council had been compelled to make difficult decisions in order to balance its budget and ensure it maintained its finances on a sustainable footing avoiding the continued use of reserves to meet unplanned expenditure resulting in £16m of new savings having been proposed for delivery in 2025-26 with the auditors having found that the Council's financial planning both short and longer term had been based on sound judgements.

In terms of the arrangements relating to Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness members were advised that whilst a number of improvement recommendations had been identified, these had been designed to enhance existing processes rather than in response to any weaknesses identified. In commending the report to Council thanks were expressed to all officers involved in supporting the audit process.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, to respond to the Annual report on behalf of the Council. In welcoming the report, she felt it important to recognise and value the independent nature of the audit opinion and findings identified with all recommendations acknowledged and accepted. Management response had been provided on all issues, as detailed within the report and in highlighting the value of continued collaboration given the ongoing financial and economic challenges faced, the opportunity was taken to thank Paul Dossett and his team along with the Council's finance officers and Audit & Standards Advisory Committee for the diligent work undertaken on the audit.

The Mayor then invited contributions from other members, with the following comments received.

In response to further assurance being sought by Councillor Kansagra on the basis of the assessment relating to the significant weakness which had been identified in relation to the Council's Financial Sustainability Paul Dossett advised that this had reflected, in line with many other local authorities, the significant challenges and cost pressures being driven by the unprecedented increase in demand for services. The challenging nature of the measures taken by Brent in seeking to balance its budget and ensure it maintained a sustainable budget position moving forward had been recognised, with no need identified at this stage to consider the issue of a Section 114 notice.

In response to the outline of the audit process provided, Councillor Lorber sought further detail as to whether this had included any review of the costs incurred as a result of delivery of the Altamira Morland Gardens housing scheme not being

progressed along with the arrangements for management of the Barham Park Trust accounts and way in which Gifts and Hospitality were currently required to be registered by members. In responding on the issues raised, Paul Dossett advised that the scope of the audit had been focussed on the Council's overall arrangements for delivering Value for Money as prescribed within the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice rather than on the delivery of specific schemes or projects. Whilst again not focussed on specific schemes, an assurance was provided that should concerns be raised External Audit would be able to consider whether any further audit activity was required with the issue regarding the level of disclosure provided by members when registering Gifts & Hospitality involving "exceptional items" having also been recognised and identified as an improvement recommendation in order to enhance transparency.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor once again thanked Paul Dossett for his attendance and then put the recommendations in the report to the vote which were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to note the External Auditor's Annual Report on Value for Money as part of the 2023-24 audit of the year end accounts.

10. **Review of working age Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025-26**

In accordance with the change in the order of business agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor then invited Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services) to introduce a report from the Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing & Resident Services setting out proposals to introduce a revised local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025-26, as recommended to Council by Cabinet on 10 February 2025.

In introducing the report, members were advised that the significant nature of the changes to the scheme being proposed had been recognised, with the approach taken in developing the revised scheme having sought to balance the competing need for fairness and transparency against the Council's overall financial sustainability given the challenging financial context within which the Council was having to operate. Unlike many other universal benefits, members were reminded that Council Tax Support schemes were determined at a local level meaning the levels of support available would vary from area to area. In recognising the important role of the Council Tax Support scheme in supporting many households across the borough and challenging nature of the proposed changes outlined, members were advised that the scheme had reached a point at which it was no longer affordable to deliver. Whilst supporting nearly 17,000 working age individuals and just over 8,000 pensioners this had involved costs of approx. £33m during the previous year, with nearly 20p from every £1 collected in Council Tax t being provided in the form of Council Tax Support.

In highlighting the financial challenges faced not only within Brent but across many other local authorities (resulting in many having to seek additional financial support) members were advised that the cost associated with provision of local Council Tax Support Schemes was an issue being revisited by many other local authorities across London. In view of the budget gap currently faced by the Council, the need had been identified to re-evaluate every aspect of spending in order to identify where the greatest efficiencies could be unlocked enabling the

Council to achieve more with less. In reviewing current operation of the scheme, confirmation was provided that the statutory pensioner element of the scheme would remain protected with the proposed changes therefore focussed on the working-age element and including a standard 35% minimum contribution and simplified non-dependant deductions designed to make the system clearer, and easier to navigate whilst also reducing the administrative burden and ensuring that all working-age households contributed fairly towards local services, whilst also continuing to protect the most vulnerable and with a built in annual review of income bands to ensure they continue to reflect economic realities.

Having outlined the proposals for which approval was being sought, Council was reminded these were not being put forward as a matter of choice but out of necessity and in recognising the impact which the proposed changes were likely to have on affected households, the opportunity was also taken also to highlight the measures which had been developed to provide targeted support for those most in need. These included the reinvestment (from the savings identified) of £1.5m into a hardship fund alongside a programme of proactive outreach and support through the Welfare Advice Service (working through Brent Hubs alongside partners such as Citizens Advice Brent) designed to provide financial guidance and debt management support. In addition, work would continue with voluntary organisations, community groups and other local service providers to ensure those affected were aware of their entitlements and were able to access the support needed.

In ending her introduction, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt the changes outlined reflected the delicate balance needing to be achieved in seeking to meet the Council's broader aims to secure the Council's financial sustainability whilst also targeting support where it was needed most across the Council in order to work towards a fairer and more financially sustainable future for Brent with all those involved in helping to shape the review and ensure the scheme remained as fair and functional as possible thanked for their support and efforts.

Having thanked Councillor Donnelly-Jackson for moving the report the Mayor then invited contributions from other members, with the following comments received.

Outlining his concern at the proposed extent of the changes, Councillor Lorber began by highlighting the significant impact he felt they would have on local residents already struggling as a result of the cost-of-living crisis with, what he felt, had been insufficient time to make them aware and allow them to make any necessary adjustments. Concern was also expressed about the extent and meaningfulness of the consultation process undertaken given the preferred option which had been identified as the basis of that process, following the initial modelling undertaken. In highlighting the responses provided as part of the consultation, including those by Brent Citizens Advice, Councillor Lorber ended by urging members when considering the proposals and impact locally to consider, as a minimum and as proposed within the Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals, increasing the level of the financial hardship Support Fund from £1.5m to £3m.

In recognising the challenging nature of the financial position faced by the Council as context within which the proposals had needed to be developed, Councillor Grahl felt it was important for members when considering the proposals to

acknowledge the efforts being made to ensure those households most in need would continue to be supported with all those involved in developing the wide range of support available thanked for their efforts. The opportunity was also taken to draw attention to the way in which the proposals served to highlight the regressive nature of the current Council Tax regime and need for fundamental reform of the funding system for local government, with the ongoing efforts being made to lobby for the necessary change and longer term funding settlements proposed by the new Government therefore welcomed.

As a final contribution, Councillor Mistry whilst also recognising the challenging nature of the financial position faced by the Council as context within which the proposals had needed to be developed as a result of the Council having to deliver a range of essential demand led services amidst rising costs, advised that the Conservative Group were in support of the proposals having recognised the scheme previously operated by Brent as one of the most generous across London and which was recognised as no longer affordable to deliver. In support of the review undertaken, the Conservative Group felt there was scope to seek further changes with their alternative budget proposals having recommended raising the 35% Single Persons Discount to 40%, in order to save an additional £1m which could then be used to provide additional support to pensioners who had narrowly missed out through loss of the Winter Fuel Allowance, and more robust enforcement to tackle fraudulent claims.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak and Councillor Donnelly-Jackson advised she did not intend to exercise her right of reply the Mayor then moved on to put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED**

- (1) To approve the revised Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2025-26 incorporating the following changes:
 - (a) Introduction of a standard 35% minimum payment for working age households and application a percentage reduction to each of the income bands. This means all CTS claimants would be expected to contribute a minimum of 35% towards their Council Tax liability. Their CTS would then be calculated based on their income and that would determine which income band they feed into. This would reduce the cost of the scheme by £7.6m with detailed explanations and calculations, number of residents impacted and the proposed weekly reduction in CTS outlined in Appendix A of the report.
 - (b) Simplification of the non-dependant charges incorporating two flat rate non-dependant deductions for most households with other adults living in the property, £8 per week for non-dependants “out of work” and £20 per week for non-dependants “in work”. This would remove the need to verify income for non-dependants for CTS claims and reduce the administrative burden. Adopting this proposal would reduce the cost of the scheme by £0.7m with detailed explanation and calculations of the proposed non-dependant deduction, number of households affected and

proposed weekly reduction in CTS support outlined within Appendix B of the report.

Technical and administrative changes

- (2) To approve the amendments to CTS scheme to include the Universal Credit notification received from DWP for Council tax, as the start date of the claim for Council tax reduction if there was entitlement to it.
- (3) To approve the alignment of the backdating rules for new CTS claim with the Housing Benefits and Universal Credit regulations i.e. for a maximum of one calendar month. The backdating request is made at the time of submission of a new claim. This change would reduce the administrative burden, and customers would not lose out as the start date would be accepted as per DWP notification date to start date of entitlement. In exceptional circumstances, the Council would consider revising the claim for more than a month e.g. bereavement of close relative.
- (4) To approve the income bands for households being reviewed every year in line with the Consumer Pricing Index (CPI) from September of the previous year to be considered for the new financial year.
- (5) To approve that a review and update of section 13A policy for hardship fund for Council tax, including an additional £1.5m fund to support residents, be considered at the 10 March 2025 Cabinet meeting

11. Budget and Council Tax 2025 - 2026

The Mayor then moved on to receive the report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2025-26. Included within the report were the results of the budget consultation, scrutiny and equalities processes along with a summary of the overall financial position, risks, issues and uncertainties facing the Council over the medium term.

In accordance with the procedural motion agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, to introduce and move the budget proposals within the report.

At this stage in the meeting Councillors Clinton, Lorber and Matin as members of the Liberal Democrats group withdrew from the meeting.

Councillor Muhammed Butt began by thanking members, officers, the public and other stakeholders for their contribution in preparation of the budget. Highlighting that the proposals were the first to be presented under the leadership of a new Labour Government seeking to invest in communities, strengthen public services and put people first, building what he felt would be a brighter future for all, he felt this needed to be contrasted with the impact of the previous Governments mismanagement of the economy and programme of austerity and with the new Government working at pace to reverse a decade of managed decline in public services.

As with the new Government, rather than focus on short term convenience and in recognising the difficult nature of choices reflecting current reality as opposed to political rhetoric and opportunism, he felt it important to recognise the way in which the current Administration had once again be able to present a balanced budget which had not only been designed to deliver a fair and responsible long term approach but would also continue to make a difference for residents across Brent.

Recognising the difficult nature of the decisions needing to be made given the financial challenges faced by local government, which it was noted had resulted in at least seven local authorities across London and more across the country (of all political persuasions) needing to approach the Government for exceptional financial support, he highlighted the need for urgent reform of the current system of funding local government services given the regressive nature and reliance on Council Tax increases which Council's, in exercising responsible leadership (and once again of all political persuasions) would once again be required to seek.

Reflecting on the range of issues needing to be addressed by the Government, Councillor Muhammed Butt felt it was important to keep advocating for the prioritisation of local government and outlined the extent of work undertaken to ensure that the proposals presented for consideration had been subject to detailed consideration and represented a reasoned and rational financial judgement reflecting the careful stewardship of the Council's resources and the difficult and often unpalatable nature of decisions which had needed to be made given increasing levels of demand. He felt this was best demonstrated in relation to the current housing crisis, which had resulted in increasing levels of homelessness and a reduction in supply of temporary accommodation; the increased reliance on foodbanks and widening of health and economic inequalities being experienced by many communities and made worse by the previous Conservative Government's approach towards austerity. As an alternative, the approach adopted by the new Labour Government was welcomed, including the prospect of genuine devolution and levelling up and the opportunity to collaborate even more closely with the Mayor of London recognising, despite the progress already made in terms of the delivery of affordable homes across the borough, the extent of demand still to be addressed.

In highlighting the ongoing impact of the previous Government's programme of austerity and funding restrictions imposed on public services, Councillor Muhammed Butt also felt it important to recognise the cumulative impact not only across London as a whole (with London Council's having calculated that funding per Londoner had decreased by 28% since 2010) but also for Brent given the £218m worth of cuts which had needed to be delivered since 2010 representing a 78% reduction in core funding. Despite this context, he felt it important to outline the Administration's commitment to continue protecting those services relied on by the most vulnerable in society and to matching realism with real delivery and change.

Moving on to focus in detail on the budget proposals set out within the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt was keen to highlight the way in which the following key commitments identified by the current Labour Administration had been supported through the budget:

(a) Establishing a Foundation for Growth – including:

- investment of £31.4m to deliver 1,700 safe and secure new homes by 2028;
 - a £10.4m commitment to improve standards for private renters through enhance licensing to address standards;
 - additional investment for housing services, including new area tenancy managers and efforts to address mould and damp issues;
 - setting aside, recognising the pressure on household budgets, £1.5m in a new hardship fund to assist to residents with rising costs and to address fuel and food poverty aimed at providing dignity to those struggling to make ends meet;
 - allocating £500k to Brent Works to support the provision of employment opportunities and £2.9 m to Brent Start for skills programs recognising the benefits of investing in skills and jobs in terms of the borough's future;
 - increasing digital skills training funding and partnering with major employers to help develop future talent.
- (b) A Cleaner and Greener Brent – including:
- investing £8.2m in maintaining the boroughs road and pavement, including an additional £700k provided by the Government, allocated for reactive repairs (including potholes) in order to ensure the borough remained connected, accessible and safe for all;
 - the increased level of enforcement to tackle fly-tipping and support the “Don’t Mess with Brent” initiative;
 - an investment of £2.3m in maintaining Brent's award-winning parks and open spaces, serving as a green lung within the borough;
 - continuation of the £21.6m spending plans, facilitating rubbish and recycling collection from homes while ensuring the borough’s streets remained clean and enhancing recycling rates;
 - seeking to encourage ongoing behaviour change with the continued programme of EV charging point installation;
 - use of the Fix my Street App, working in partnership with residents to detect and remove waste;
 - continued support to tackle climate change, including a comprehensive Climate Action Plan, supported by £11m in grant funding and utilising the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to establish Green Neighbourhoods;
 - ongoing work supported by TfL to lead on the delivery of Brent's first cycleway from Willesden to Wembley.
- (c) Fostering Thriving & Strong Communities - including
- Investing £3m in the Library, Arts, and Heritage service, and allocating £300,000 for cultural activities to build on the Brent 2020 “Borough of Cultures “ legacy recognising the valued nature of Brent’s libraries as a resource;
 - Allocation of £1.5m towards community projects – empowering local people to improve their neighbourhoods from the grassroots;
 - The prioritisation of capital projects based on robust invest-to-save principles and utilising CIL reserves, thereby avoiding borrowing from commercial markets and alleviating additional strain on the daily revenue budget, with the Capital Investment Strategy providing significant

investment in various projects and the supply chain within Brent including a range of significant schemes such as Hillside Corridor, Staples Corner, and new Neasden Civic Partnership.

- (d) Investing in Our Children's Future – including the aim for every child in Brent to have the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or circumstances. Recognising that 97% of Brent's schools had been rated good or outstanding the ongoing commitment to providing outstanding education services had included:
- the establishment of 427 new school places for children with special educational needs funded through a £44m investment;
 - the allocation of £900k to assist eligible children and young people during school holidays, acknowledging that the Council's responsibility extended beyond term time; and
 - the comprehensive support the Council continued to provide (in its role as corporate parent) for children in care and as they transitioned into adulthood.
- (e) A Healthier Brent – including:
- An ongoing commitment (recognising the significant challenges facing social care) towards providing essential social care services for over 4,600 elderly and vulnerable residents across the borough totalling £117.9m designed to ensure dignity and high quality care whilst also seeking to focus service delivery on future demand;
 - An investment of £24.3m in enhancing health and wellbeing and £4.2m in supporting residents through initiatives focussed around Brent's Leisure Centre facilities;

Whilst recognising there were no immediate solutions to the complexities of social care, it was felt the initiatives outlined demonstrated the Council's going commitment to aiding those in greatest need.

In thanking the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for their input into the budget setting process and recommendations made as a result, he compared that to the approach taken by both Opposition Groups in terms of the presentation of their alternative budget proposals outlining his disappointment at what he felt to be the lack of responsible and reasonable alternative proposals submitted, which it was felt would place the future financial resilience of the Council at risk.

In highlighting the difference in approach between the Administration and both Opposition Groups in terms of the support provided for local residents in an effort to ensure those most in need were protected, the Leader advised that, whilst recognising the additional burden any increase in Council Tax would have on households across the borough the decision, although challenging, had been necessary in order to ensure essential public services were protected as far as possible taking account of increasing demand and the impact of austerity on increasingly stretched resources.

Although not seeking to undermine the challenges and difficulties identified and impact of the budget proposals, the Leader also felt it important to recognise the support available for those most in need and also the way in which the budget (acknowledging that things could not stay the same) had been designed to not only

address the significant challenges currently faced in relation to housing, climate change, social care and economic inequality but also provide a strong foundation for the future working as one unified borough to tackle and deliver the level of change required in way services were being delivered.

In summing up, Councillor Muhammed Butt advised that the Administration, in presenting their budget proposals, had recognised and sought to match the realism of the financial challenges and pressures faced by the Council with a desire to do more in responding to the needs and aspirations of local residents across Brent which would not only protect crucial frontline services but also sought to invest in the future reflecting the values of fairness, opportunity and community in order to face the future with confidence and unity. On this basis he urged members to oppose the Opposition Groups alternative budget proposals and commended the budget, as set out in the report, to all members for approval.

The Mayor thanked the Leader for opening the debate and then invited Councillor Kansagra, as Leader of the Conservative Group, to respond to the budget proposals.

Councillors Clinton, Lorber and Matin returned to the meeting at this stage in proceedings.

In presenting the alternative proposals, Councillor Kansagra began by challenging what he felt was the Leaders ongoing rhetoric in relation to austerity and lack of reference to the impact of recent changes introduced by the new Labour Government in relation to cuts in the Winter Fuel Allowance, Inheritance Tax and the increase in National Insurance contributions on not only the financial stability of households and local businesses across the borough but also in relation to the financial challenges faced by the Council, given the impact on costs for commissioned providers and across the care sector. In querying the Labour Government's approach and focus in its support of the Trade Unions, he advised that the Conservative Opposition in Brent remained committed to holding the Labour Administration to account in order to ensure residents received the best possible services at a fair cost and once again challenged the democratic basis on which the change in speaking rights for Opposition Groups in responding to the budget had been introduced without prior consultation.

Moving on to focus on the alternative budget proposals submitted by the Conservative Group he advised that whilst willing to support those proposals which it was felt would support residents in paying less for services and receiving better value for money, such as the changes in the Council Tax Support Scheme, enhanced enforcement and initiatives to tackle fraud, they were not supportive of the budget proposals moved by the Leader. In moving the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals, Councillor Kansagra highlighted not only the enhanced level of detail provided but also the way in which the proposed amendments had sought to ensure the Council took a more robust approach towards management of the budget recognising the need to maintain fiscal responsibility, efficiency, and the well-being of local communities. As a result, he pointed out the Conservatives alternative budget proposals had sought to identify a number of areas where it was felt savings or enhancements could be made without compromising the quality of services provided. These had included:

- The amalgamation of two Cabinet Member posts in order to reflect the upcoming implementation of a streamlined senior management structure within the Council, with the Group also keen to review the current vice-chair arrangements on the Council's scrutiny committees and level of Special Responsibility Allowance for various positions;
- The provision of up to 1-hour free parking (on and off street) within town centres across the borough designed to support revival of the high streets and support local businesses and employment opportunities;
- Removal of the landlord incentive scheme. In commenting on this proposal, Councillor Kansagra highlighted the Conservative Groups concern at the impact of the scheme on the housing rental market and at incentivising landlords to seek alternative funding for property improvements. Concern was also expressed at the impact of the Landlord Licensing scheme, which it was felt would lead landlords to pass on any increase in costs and further disincentivise them from renting their properties;
- Discontinuing the printed version of the Brent Magazine and offering a digital only format;
- Increasing the budget for potholes and pavement repairs, ensuring safer roads and footways funded through the reallocation of the New Homes Bonus grant from capital to revenue;
- Utilising unspent public health reserves to support vital health initiatives;
- Introducing additional measures to tackle fly-tipping, including the use of technology and bringing back the free bulky waste collection scheme recognising the level of Council Tax already being charged for services.

In formally moving the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals, Councillor Kansagra ended by highlighting that the proposals had been assessed as producing a legally balanced budget which he felt would also provide a responsible approach in seeking to not only deliver savings and efficiencies but also deliver a more sustainable and strategic approach towards management of the budget over the longer term whilst also helping to ease the financial burden currently being faced by the Council and experienced by many residents across the borough. In thanking the Corporate Director and Deputy Director of Finance for their assistance, he ended by commending the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals to Council.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kansagra for his comments and for moving the alternative budget proposals on behalf of the Conservative Group. He then invited Councillor Lorber, as Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group, to move the alternative budget proposals submitted on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group.

In presenting the Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals, Councillor Lorber began by thanking the Corporate Director and Deputy Director of Finance for their assistance in developing their alternative proposals designed to provide a balanced and realistic budget which had been designed to enhance the offer from the Council to local residents. Whilst recognising the challenging nature of the financial situation faced by the Council, it was felt this had been compounded by the lack of progress on reform of the local government finance system as well as spending decision taken by the current Council Administration, such as those related to Civic Centre improvements and the pursuit of what he regarded as unviable development schemes including the Altamira Project in Stonebridge.

Whilst recognising the need for difficult decisions in order to provide a balanced and sustainable budget, Councillor Lorber advised he was keen to ensure that residents priorities remained at the forefront of the budget proposals being considered, with the Liberal Democrats Group having therefore proposed a number of amendments seeking to address areas of concern including the current state of cleanliness across the borough. He then moved on to outline the key budget proposals recommended by the Liberal Democrats Group as follows:

- Reflecting on concerns relating to street cleanliness and cuts in the street cleaning and refuse collection service, an increase of £500k was proposed in the street cleansing budget to reinstate weekly visits and daily street cleaning that were within 50 metres of a junction with busy shopping areas/ high streets; an increase in enforcement 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 along with provision of more dual litter/ recycling bins and the introduction of 1000 lamp post bins and a reduction in the charge for bulky waste collection.
- Highlighting concerns regarding the state of repair of local roads and pavements across the borough, an increase of £10m was proposed in the capital budget provision for highways and footways upgrades (funded through the New Homes Bonus reserve) along with the introduction of additional flexibility to target pavements and roads surfaces not properly reinstated following works by utility companies based on the negotiation of financial contributions towards the upgrade works.
- Recognising the impact of the current overspend on the Council's finances as a result of the supply and cost pressures relating to temporary accommodation and having expressed concern regarding the nature of developments being approved by Planning Committee, to increase the provision of more genuinely affordable housing involving the reintroduction of more stringent planning strategies and a 50% target in relation to the provision of affordable housing within all new developments and through the targeting of underoccupied properties.
- Having expressed concern at what the Liberal Democrats Group felt to be a decline in the standard of green and open spaces across the borough, it was proposed to allocate £500k to support the protection, maintenance and cleaning of parks and open spaces across the borough, supported by the introduction of segregated cycle lanes in parks. In addition, it was proposed to allocate £1m to support the installation of CCTV in parks and open spaces, particularly in anti-social behaviour hotspot areas with the package of measure designed to ensure parks and open spaces continued to be well utilised by local people in a safe and comfortable environment given the priority placed by residents on access to green spaces and wider environmental and health impacts.
- In recognising the current challenges and financial pressures faced by many community and voluntary organisations across the borough, it was proposed to allocate £300k to establish a special grant fund to support local groups in being able to hold and celebrate community events. In addition, the opportunity was also taken to express concern at the impact of the newly introduced Property Strategy given the imposition of what were felt to be unrealistic rent increases on facilities used by many valued local community groups.

Given the proposed increase in Council Tax, Councillor Lorber felt there was a need for the Council to ensure that as residents were being asked to pay more for services funding was refocussed and prioritised on local areas of concern. In highlighting the additional detail provided within the proposals included as part of the agenda papers, Councillor Lorber ended by outlining the important role members had in representing residents and local communities, which he felt the budget amendments presented by the Liberal Democrats had been designed to reflect in a balanced and pragmatic way that would enhance the offer from the Council recognising priorities being identified locally. As such he hoped all members would be able to support the amendments outlined and commended the Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals to Council.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Lorber for his comments and moving the alternative budget proposals on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group and then moved on to invite Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources to speak as the next stage in the budget debate.

Councillor Mili Patel began by highlighting the duty of care and responsibility which it was recognised the Labour Administration had in seeking to properly manage the Council's budget and tax payer money. This often involved the need to take difficult decisions in seeking to protect the longer term interests of the Council and local residents, with the associated challenge in achieving a balanced budget whilst also seeking to preserve essential services made even more difficult as a result of the impact of the previous governments programme of austerity and increased level of demand and costs for services, including social care and homelessness.

In highlighting what she felt had been the previous coalition and Conservative Governments record of economic mismanagement an outline was provided of the contract in approach with the new Labour Government's more responsible long term view as opposed to the more reactive and short term politics of the previous Conservative Government, Prime Ministers and their Chancellors which it was felt had resulted in many of the challenges the Labour Government was now having to address in relation to the economy and public services. Reflecting on the lessons learnt, Councillor Mili Patel felt this had identified a need to firstly recognise that short term decision making did not work, secondly that there was a need to ensure decision made were taken in the interests of all rather than any particular political party and lastly that it appeared even in Opposition the Conservative Party appeared not to have changed based on their support for means testing the triple lock on pensions and support for tax breaks in relation to private schools.

Moving on to reflect on the Opposition Groups alternative budget proposals, Councillor Mili Patel felt these also displayed a similar approach given the nature of the financial risk relating to the proposed use of reserves by the Liberal Democrats to fund temporary projects and associated future revenue costs (without the ability to fund them on an ongoing basis) and way it was felt this would jeopardise the Council's financial resilience. Concerns were also expressed at the way in which the Conservative Group's alternative budget proposals were felt to impact on working people given their stance in relation to the London Living Wage and criticism of recent public sector pay awards which had benefited a range of key frontline workers as opposed to the Trade Unions. As a result, the Deputy Leader felt there was a need to recognise the cumulative impact of the programme of

austerity introduced by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government, on the Council, wider public sector and local residents rather than seeking to place the blame elsewhere and avoid the difficult longer term decisions that had been required to continue meeting the need and aspirations of residents across the borough.

Councillor Mili Patel felt it was clear the new Labour Government had recognised the impact that their policies would have across local communities, with a clear plan to deliver longer term growth and a more robust economy, including essential infrastructure projects and reform of the planning system. Moving on to reflect on the difficult nature of the decisions that had needed to be made locally in setting a balanced budget, the Deputy Leader felt it important to recognise the way the choices made had also been designed to support a longer term strategic approach focussed on local growth and investment. Despite the decrease in core government funding and resulting £218m worth of cuts which had needed to be made since the start of austerity she was proud that Brent had still provided a strong foundation in being able to continue delivering the right services for residents. Despite the significant challenges faced in being able to achieve a balanced budget whilst also seeking to preserve essential services, it was felt this highlighted the Administration's commitment towards prudent financial management and maintaining fiscal discipline whilst reflecting the reality that many other local authorities also faced in being pushed to their financial limits with little option but to seek Exceptional Financial Support.

Whilst aware of future challenges and pressures that would need to be addressed in maintaining the Council's financial sustainability, Councillor Mili Patel also felt it important to assure members of the Administration's ongoing commitment in relation to the building of new, safe and secure homes across the borough, including the highest number of social housing starts in London; raising of standards for private renters; supporting residents experiencing fuel and food poverty; equipping people of all ages with access to training and jobs; keeping Brent clean and on the move by looking after its infrastructure and environment; maintaining the borough's award-winning parks and open spaces; providing the best start in life for children as well as dignity in the last stages of life through the social care offer.

In concluding, Councillor Mili Patel took the opportunity to thank all residents who had contributed towards the budget consultation process along with the Finance Team and all other officers involved for their efforts and support in preparing the budget proposals. In commending the budget to Council, members were reminded of the detailed consultation and scrutiny which the budget proposals had been subject to, along with the prudent approach adopted by the Administration in order to protect and renew the provision of essential services, growth and investment for residents across the borough on a sustainable and long-term basis designed to ensure the interest of all communities was placed before the interests of the party they represented.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mili Patel for her comments and as the final contribution prior to opening up the debate then invited Councillor Conneely, as Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, to present the key themes within the Budget Scrutiny Task Group report, which had been included as an appendix to the Budget and Council Tax 2025-26 report.

Councillor Conneely in introducing the Budget Scrutiny Task Group report began by highlighting the ongoing financial crisis in local government which it was felt continued to threaten the stability of services and communities across Brent and required extensive reform of the current way in which local authorities were funded with the current system no longer felt to be fit for purpose. Whilst welcoming the new Labour Governments initial steps towards reforming local government finance it was recognised that more needed to be done. Although acknowledging the positive measures introduced such as increased investment and additional funding to address key pressures in relation to homelessness, simplification of grants to allocate funding based on need rather than false competition between authorities and confirmation of multi-year funding settlements as steps in the right direction, it was recognised these still fell short of the comprehensive reform needed for local government to be able to fully meet its responsibilities to local residents and avoid over reliance on the use of reserves.

In presenting the Task Group report, Councillor Conneely highlighted the extensive nature of the review and recommendations which had been identified in relation to the budget proposals, as detailed within section 2 of their report. In terms of the issues highlighted, particular reference was made to the recommendations in relation to the promotion of value for money, social value and community wealth building through the Council's commissioning and procurement arrangements in order to drive economic growth and deliver social value, with the Task Group keen to ensure the work already underway continued to be monitored.

Highlighting other key recommendations made as part of the review, Councillor Conneely also referred to the Task Groups support, as part of the wider approach towards addressing the budget challenges identified, for the strategic prioritisation and enhanced investment in the Council's debt recovery efforts, specifically targeting those who refused rather than were not able to pay. Whilst recognising the regressive nature of the Council Tax system and ongoing impact of funding Council Tax Support Schemes through local authorities, the Task Group had also acknowledged the significant impact of the changes approved in relation to support being provided through the scheme. Whilst necessary to ensure financial stability and sustainability of Council services, the Task Group had been keen to ensure that the effect of these changes were carefully monitored in order to avoid impacting on the most vulnerable local residents. Despite the challenges identified, the Task Group had also recognised the way in which the Council's budget setting process had continued to demonstrate a commitment to prioritising those most in need with support expressed for the shift to a more localised community-based approach for social care assessment as a means of enhancing collaboration with community partners and providing support to residents in their own communities and networks.

In thanking all members, officers and other stakeholders who had supported the review and wide variety of engagement undertaken, Councillor Conneely ended by commending the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for consideration as part of the budget setting process.

The Mayor advised that this now concluded the opening statements and thanked Councillor Conneely for her comments. He then moved on to open up the debate on the budget proposals for comment by other members.

In opening the debate Councillor Kabir, in supporting the budget proposals, began by thanking all those involved for their work in being able to produce a balanced budget. Taking the opportunity to focus on proposals relating to children and young people she felt it important to recognise the support required and being provided to assist young people seeking to improve their life chances and realise their aspirations. In referencing the Council's SEND priorities, Councillor Kabir welcomed the additional SEN school places and Additional Resourced Provision being delivered alongside additional Post 16 provision based at the Welsh Harp Skills Centre but, as chair of The Village School Governing Body, acknowledged the increased support needed by families in terms of both respite care and housing. Despite the significant financial challenges identified, Councillor Kabir was pleased to recognise the way in which the budget proposals had sought to protect services for the most vulnerable and on this basis advised she was proud to support the budget proposals, as moved by the Leader, for approval.

Other members who spoke on the budget proposals were as follows:

Councillor Donnelley-Jackson, Cabinet Member for Housing & Resident Services, was next to speak and began by highlighting the financial pressure faced by the Council as a result of the current housing crisis and need, in response, to deliver more affordable homes and high quality provision for those in the private rented sector. In highlighting what she felt had been the origins of the crisis in political decisions made by Governments over previous years, the need for the provision of safe, affordable and sustainable housing had been recognised as a fundamental right with the Council committed to making the necessary interventions in order to tackle the crisis. In terms of the budget proposals these had therefore sought to identify plans not just to build but also improve existing housing and address existing tenant satisfaction measures including the introduction of area tenancy Managers working within local communities. This had been accompanied by measures designed to support the enhancement of standards in the private rented sector and to tackle unscrupulous landlords through the landlord licensing regime. In terms of managing demand for Temporary Accommodation members were also advised of the support which continued to be provided through the budget for the Council's New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) and in working towards the objective of delivering 5,000 affordable homes by 2028. In highlighting progress, reference was made to specific developments across the borough including Alpertons Bus Garage, Fulton Road, Church End Regeneration and Clock Cottages although the rise in homelessness was still identified as one of the most significant challenges faced by the Council with the number of households in emergency accommodation expected to rise to 1,643 in 2025-26, increasing costs by approximately £10.2 million. Whilst work continued to address the pressures identified, including the provision of additional temporary accommodation, the significant nature of the challenges identified were once again highlighted with the budget proposals commended on the basis of enabling further investment in new developments, greater homelessness prevention and a new approach to housing repairs as part of the decisive measures needed to work toward a future where every resident of our borough had a place to call home.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement, was next to speak in support of the budget proposals recognising the important role of the public realm in terms of keeping Brent clean, green, safe and on the move. Despite the financial pressures identified, the opportunity was taken to reflect on the

programme of work and investment being provided in relation to the boroughs highway infrastructure and to make Brent cleaner and greener. This included a £9m programme of highway repairs and improvements as well as delivery of the School Streets programme for which further investment had been secured from the Mayor for London. In addition, reference was made to the investment of £2.3m focussed on maintaining the boroughs award winning parks and open spaces in order to ensure the borough remained cleaner, greener and more resilient moving forward with an additional £400k allocated towards improving sports facilities, playgrounds, park signage and pathways in Gladstone Park. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the work being undertaken through the “Don’t Mess with Brent” campaign to tackle fly-tipping and other environmental crime including the provision of additional enforcement officers and increased fines as well as funding to support the return of the Community Skip initiative. Members were also reminded of the work being funded to support the Council’s ongoing efforts in tackling the climate emergency, which included expansion of the Green Neighbourhood pilots, ongoing support for active travel schemes and (in seeking to ensure the necessary balance in keeping pavements free from clutter) the provision of mandatory parking bays for use by the Lime dockless e-bikes. In commending the budget proposals to Council, Councillor Krupa Sheth ended by thanking all members and officers involved for their support in delivering the commitments outlined, which had been designed to protect residents and maintain vital service provision both now and over the longer term.

Councillor Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Community Power, also speaking in support of the budget proposals, opened his comments by focussing on the way the budget had been designed to support ongoing delivery of the Council’s action in relation to the climate emergency in a way that reflected the values of social justice, collective action and the empowering of communities. At a time when the Council was facing severe financial pressure, Councillor Rubin advised he was proud of this approach with reference made to the launch of the Council’s Green Corridors scheme in Church End and Roundwood, based on an investment of £3m designed to transform those areas into models of sustainable urban living, including activity to deliver cleaner air, safer streets and support transition to a greener Brent. In terms of active travel, reference was also made to the investment of £500k towards improving cycling and walking infrastructure supported by a further £2m planned over the next four years. In recognising the wider impact of the climate emergency, the opportunity was also taken to highlight the investment of £1.5m in community-led projects designed (recognising their importance in terms of social justice) to empower local people to shape and improve their own neighbourhoods, with £3m also being invested to support libraries, arts, and heritage services and £300k to support cultural activities designed to build on the legacy of Brent 2020. Reference was also made to the Green and Healthy Streets fund which had secured £610k for Brent to support work in making the spaces outside the boroughs schools safer, greener, and more welcoming. In addition to the work focussed around building a greener borough, Councillor Rubin also highlighted the support being provided to ensure residents had the necessary employment skills for the future, including work with United Colleges to open a Green Skills Centre at the College of North West London, equipping students with the skills to support the move towards a carbon neutral economy. Other initiatives highlighted included the Council’s new Sustainability Procurement Policy as well as work being undertaken with community and faith leaders (recognising the diverse nature of the borough) in seeking to embed sustainability across all communities. On this basis, Councillor

Rubin concluded by commending the budget proposals to all members recognising the support provided towards making Brent a greener and fairer borough.

Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, then spoke to highlight what she felt represented the renewed optimism provided by the new Labour Government in relation to the transformation of services for children and young people following the stance taken by the previous Conservative Government in relation to funding and service provision. In support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader, she highlighted the importance of the new children's residential centre being opened by the Council along with the creation of over 400 additional places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (which it had been estimated would generate savings of up to £6m annually) alongside plans to develop a Post-16 Skills Centre at Welsh Harp. Reference was also made to the recent Ofsted and SEND inspections which had demonstrated that the services being provided by the Council were making a real difference with the Family Wellbeing Centres also offering essential support for many families which would also be supported by the recent launch (hosted in Brent) of the Government's new national child poverty strategy. Despite the financial challenges identified she pointed out how these initiatives were also being supported more widely by the Mayor of London's Free Schools Meals programme as a means of tackling food poverty, public transport subsidy by the Council for care leavers as well as £1.7m of grant funding to support local youth organisations helping to provide safe and enriching spaces for young people. Expressing concern at the increase in child poverty and health related issues being experienced by children and young people, support was also highlighted for the Government's Children's Wellbeing Bill, including the proposal to provide free breakfast clubs, action to address private profiteering in care home provision and the restoration of local authority oversight in relation to school admissions, which it was felt would create a fairer, more accountable education system. Councillor Grahl felt this was in direct contract to the stance taken by the previous coalition and Conservative Government who had presided over a decline in youth services and more locally with the Conservative Opposition Group having opposed proposals to deliver a Children's Residential care home. In thanking officers for their work to support children and young people across the borough she ended by urging all members to support the budget as moved by the Leader given the way it had been designed to support children, young people and their families in seeking to secure a better future at each stage in their life that would empower them to feel valued and prioritised.

As the next contribution Councillor Benea, speaking as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property in support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader, highlighted what she felt reflected the bold, community focussed regeneration commitments enabled within the budget designed to drive real opportunities for change, investment and the creation of new communities at scale. Referring to recent data she advised that Brent had been ranked as one of the top three boroughs for the approval of affordable housing schemes in terms of Planning Committee performance and Brent being one of only three boroughs across London to achieve their housing targets and with the work being undertaken by all officers and members involved in seeking to encourage businesses and developers to invest in Brent commended. Councillor Benea also felt it important to recognise the way these efforts were also being supported through the wider programme of regeneration being funded with a recent example including the delivery of 99 new

council homes as well as commercial spaces to support local businesses and job opportunities as part of a scheme in Church End. Whilst recognising the ongoing financial viability challenges in delivery of many schemes, Councillor Benea assured members the Administration remained committed to delivering its programme of regeneration across the borough including South Kilburn, with 1,400 homes already delivered another 500 under construction and a £60m investment secured to ensure a streamlined, community first approach to its completion. As further evidence of the approach outlined, members were also reminded of the £10.5m investment in the Neasden Civic Partnership alongside work across the borough from Staples Corner to the Grand Union Canal bridge seeking to deliver investment and encourage thriving communities across Brent. On the basis of what Councillor Benea felt to be the sustained, ambitious, and inclusive level of growth included with the budget she ended by once again commending the proposals to Council.

Speaking in support of the Conservative Group's alternative budget proposals, Councillor Mistry then moved on to express concern at the ongoing impact of the proposed increase in Council Tax included in the budget moved by the Leader, given the additional financial burden placed on local residents and with the alternative proposals moved by the Conservative Group highlighted as providing local residents with the opportunity to pay less for better value service provision. Rather than seeking to blame the previous government for the challenges faced, she felt the Administration needed to recognise the impact on local households of the proposals introduced by the Labour Government in relation to the increase in National Insurance, Capital Gains and Inheritance Tax, as well as Stamp Duty and the failure to reduce household energy bills. Concern was also highlighted in relation to the impact arising from introduction of the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme within the borough, with the need also identified to consider the way in which Housing Benefit, Single Person and Council Tax Discount claims were being managed alongside the process for collection of debts and overpayments. As a result, Councillor Mistry advised she would be voting against the budget proposals moved by the Leader and in support of the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals given the way they would reduce the financial burden on local residents.

Councillor Maurice spoke next, also in support of the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals, highlighting concern at the impact of the Labour Government's recent increase in Employer National Insurance contributions given their impact on local businesses and schools across the borough as well as on the cost of a range of services being commissioned through the Council, including the provision of adult and social care. Taken alongside the increase in borrowing and cuts in Winter Fuel Allowance it was felt the cumulative impact of the approach adopted by the Labour Government was placing an additional financial burden on working households whilst public sector workers and Trade Union allies received above inflation pay increases and with the new Chancellor having failed to take advantage of the strong economy inherited by the previous Conservative Government. In recognising the impact on households across the borough, Councillor Maurice outlined how the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals had sought to minimise the increase in Council Tax and on the basis of the comments outlined also commended the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals for approval.

In addressing Council for the first time since his election, Councillor Clinton spoke next in support of the alternative budget proposals moved by the Liberal Democrats Group. In highlighting what he felt was a need to focus within the debate on the residents of Brent he began by outlining the key issues raised by residents during the local by-election campaign relating to the state of roads, pavements and cleanliness of the borough alongside concerns relating to anti-social behaviour and safety. Whilst recognising the nature of financial challenges and pressures needing to be addressed by the Council, Councillor Clinton felt there was also a need to ensure residents were not left feeling neglected, which he pointed out had been the basis on which the alternative budget proposals had been presented by the Liberal Democrats. In seeking to address the concerns highlighted by local residents, he drew attention to the proposals for an additional £1m investment in street cleansing, refuse collection and bulky waste collection along with the £10m additional investment in highway and pavement maintenance and repair (funded as a one off through the New Homes Bonus). In terms of parks and open spaces the proposals had also included £1.5m for their maintenance, cleaning and safety improvements. In concluding, whilst recognising the nature of the challenges identified it was felt bold, decisive and creative thinking was required by the current Administration and on that basis he commended the Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals to Council for approval.

Speaking next, Councillor Agha, outlined his support for the budget proposals as moved by the Leader which he felt reflected not only the Council's values in terms of fairness and responsibility but also sought to protect residents as well as essential services. The protection and support included for young people was also commended in terms of the positive outcomes being delivered, with a particular focus highlighted on schools, the proposals to deliver additional SEND, safeguarding and provision and support for Brent Starts. In reminding members that young people across Brent provided a foundation for the future he advised he would be supporting the budget on the basis of the balanced, fair and responsible approach taken towards protecting so many of the services on which young people depended across the borough.

Councillor Kelcher then spoke, also in support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader, and began by highlighting the recent independent consultancy report which had identified the performance of Brent's Planning Committee in being only one of three boroughs across London to meet and exceed its housing targets in relation to the level of approval for new homes. Outlining the importance in the delivery of new homes, not just in terms of the opportunities to address housing demand but also in contributing to the economic growth of the borough and level of funding the Council was able to generate through the Council Tax base and New Homes bonus he compared this to the approach taken by the Opposition Groups in their alternative budget proposals. Referring to the proposals presented by the Liberal Democrats Group in seeking to change the policy around delivery of Affordable Housing he outlined what he regarded as the poor track record of delivery by other Liberal Democrat and Conservative controlled local authorities and lack of understanding regarding the associated impact on generation of New Home Bonus funding, which they had both proposed to utilise to support their alternative proposals. In contrast he welcomed the approach taken by the Labour Administration in recognising the need to deliver new homes not only in terms of the long term viability of the Council but also from a social justice perspective and, on this basis, advised he would be supporting the budget as moved by the Leader.

Moving on, Councillor Matin then spoke to highlight her support for the alternative budget proposals moved on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group. In congratulating Councillor Clinton on his first speech at Council she echoed the previous comments made in support of the alternative budget proposals, highlighting the concerns being raised by residents regarding the cleanliness and safety across the borough with reference to specific concerns relating to street cleansing, littering, licensing enforcement and street drinking particularly within Alperton as the ward she represented. Speaking from a personal perspective, she took the opportunity to outline the way in which these issues had impacted on her own perception as a visually impaired person living in the borough being able to safely navigate the boroughs footways, parks and open spaces unaided with a guide dog given the level of litter (including glass debris) experienced and risk posed for more vulnerable residents or those with mobility issues. In seeking to achieve a level of consensus on the collective need for the budget to deliver improved outcomes and living standards for all within the borough, including cleaner and safer streets, parks and open spaces, Councillor Matin commended the Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals to Council.

As a further contribution to the debate, Councillor Fraser felt there was a need to acknowledge the political rhetoric displayed so far during the debate along with the focus of the Labour Administration in seeking to address the challenges identified. Rather than just blame the Council, she felt there was also a responsibility on all councillors to support their local residents in working to address the type of issues identified including, as an example, encouraging use of the Fix My Street App to report local issues across individual wards. In expressing her support for the creative thinking which she felt had been demonstrated by the Labour Administration in developing a budget which not only sought to address the significant challenges faced by the Council but also delivered a balanced budget, Councillor Fraser was also keen to highlight how this had been demonstrated through her involvement as a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, with officers thanked for their support in the process. Recognising the challenging financial context within which the budget proposals had needed to be developed and way in which austerity (enabled by the previous coalition and Conservative Government), had impacted on funding for services across the public sector and left not only the Council but many residents struggling financially, she felt it important to contrast this with the approach of the current and previous Labour Government's in establishing and supporting (rather than seeking to dismantle) the welfare state and provision of free healthcare. Whilst recognising the difficult nature of choices faced, Councillor Fraser ended by advising she was also proud to commend what she regarded as the balanced, fair and resident focused budget that the Administration had proposed in seeking to protect the most vulnerable and build a better future for all.

Councillor Choudry, also speaking in support of the budget proposals, commended the balanced nature of the proposals and their approach in seeking to protect the most vulnerable, particularly given the significant reduction in the Council's core funding due to austerity and the diminishing local government financial settlements provided by the previous Conservative Government. In praising the Administrations continued commitment towards the Resident Support Fund and programme of regeneration across the borough he felt this demonstrated the type of empathy required in seeking to support those most in need through such challenging times.

Concern was also highlighted (given the issues identified by the External Auditor earlier in the meeting) regarding any overreliance on the use of reserves given the unsustainable nature of this as an approach, with support expressed for ongoing lobbying to reform the system of funding local government in order to provide an adequate and stable level of resource. In recognising austerity as a political choice and the difficult nature of options needing to be considered, he confirmed he would also be supporting the budget as moved by the Leader, highlighting the protection the proposals would continue to provide for the most vulnerable and their progressive, pragmatic and sustainable nature.

Following on, Councillor Mitchell also supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader, felt it was important to recognise the challenging financial context in which the budget had been developed, given the impact of austerity and increasing demand for vital services faced by the Council. In supporting the concerns raised regarding what she felt to be the overreliance within the Opposition Groups alternative budget proposals on the use of reserves, Councillor Mitchell highlighted (in contrast) what she felt had been the clear financial stewardship and fiscal responsibility demonstrated by the Labour Administration in their approach to managing the Council's finances and in presenting a fully costed and balanced budget aimed at providing stability over the longer term and not just quick fixes. At the same time, she praised the way in which it was felt the budget proposals had been designed to protect the most vulnerable in society, including supporting those in food and fuel poverty and on this basis advised she would also be fully supporting the budget, as moved by the Leader.

Councillor Ahmed, also highlighting his support for the budget, then spoke to outline what he felt was the importance of the proposals and investment focussed around delivering safer and cleaner streets alongside improved transport links and the maintenance and improvement of the boroughs parks and open spaces as key elements in creating a healthier borough. Amongst the proposals outlined, he advised he was particularly supportive of the investment in Gladstone Park (as part of his ward) alongside the investment to support the work in seeking to tackle the climate emergency through the Green Neighbourhood pilots and in encouraging more active modes of travel as well as seeking to invest in maintaining the boroughs highway infrastructure. Councillor Ahmed therefore advised he was also proud to be able to support the budget which was not only balanced but which he felt would also provide the investment required to continue building a cleaner, greener, safer and more stable borough.

Councillor Nerva, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care, also speaking in support of the budget proposals, opened his comments by responding to concerns raised by the Opposition Groups earlier in the debate regarding the boroughs parks and open spaces by highlighting their award winning status and investment being provided to ensure they remained well maintained and safe given their wider value in terms of residents health and wellbeing. Expressing concern at the way in which the previous Conservative Government had overseen a deterioration in adult social care and widening of health inequalities during their time in power, he felt the new Labour Government provided real hope and opportunity to address the challenges faced as a result in terms of health and social care. In commending the work being undertaken across Brent's Adult Social Care service to support this approach, he highlighted the ongoing increase in demand and number of residents being supported by the Council in relation to social care,

many with increasingly complex needs, which he felt also supported the need for a timely roadmap for social care reform. Whilst recognising the work being undertaken to deliver effective care to residents (including the retention of the New Millennium Centre and its reopening as the New Horizons Centre) the need to continue the delivery of a programme of service transformation was also acknowledged with reference, as an example, made to the pioneering introduction of same day community social care assessments. Reference was also made to the use of AI technology by social care teams aimed at enhancing efficiency and ensuring time could be focused on more face-to-face engagement with residents with enhanced framework contracts also being introduced for a range of externally provided day care opportunities to promote independence. In terms of Public Health, Councillor Nerva felt it was important to recognise the way in which the Brent Health Matters partnership had fundamentally changed the approach towards health provision in the borough. This had included the introduction of a network of Community Champions working alongside a range of community organisations providing a community-led approach towards the provision of health services within individual neighbourhoods supported by a range of health and wellbeing events, directly reaching over 4,200 residents, programmes of emotional wellbeing support to more than 2,500 people and the award of grants totalling £433k to local organisations so they could run their own health projects. In looking forward to continuing the collaborative work with health partners and in supporting the move from treatment to prevention, Councillor Nerva ended by taking the opportunity to thank all health & care staff, including carers, for their excellent work in such challenging circumstances and commending the budget proposals to all members.

In continuing the debate, Councillor Hirani then spoke in support of the alternative budget proposals moved by the Conservative Group. Highlighting concern at the Council's approach and ability to manage the programme of reactive highway and footway maintenance repairs she outlined the levels of neglect, damage, nuisance and compensation associated with potholes and poorly maintained roads across the borough along with her support for the Conservative Groups proposal to provide additional investment of £1.1m for reactive maintenance works to cover all highway assets including lines, signs, street furniture, footways and carriageways. Concerns were also expressed at the ongoing impact of the Blue Bag recycling scheme, which Councillor Hirani felt was not working, unviable and had continued to cause frustration to residents along with an increase in rubbish on the streets. As a result, she advised the Conservative Group was seeking to reverse the scheme and revert back to the blue recycling bins. Referring to concerns relating to the current state and maintenance of the boroughs parks and open spaces Councillor Hirani supported the issues being highlighted in relation to lack of toilets, littering broken benches and playground equipment as well as vandalism poor lighting and lack of CCTV coverage, which she felt supported the need for additional investment identified on top of the green infrastructure budget proposals. In commending the alternative proposals moved by the Conservative Group Councillor Hirani ended by highlighting what she felt had been the reasonable approach adopted given concerns expressed by residents relating to the level of services being provided locally.

Councillor Farah, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs & Skills, then spoke and began by highlighting concerns at the impact of government austerity on the provision of public services, focussing specifically (in relation to his remit) on the reduction in funding for the police and neighbourhood teams as well as the cuts in

services for domestic abuse victims and youth crime intervention. In recognising that community safety was about more than enforcement, involving a focus on building trust, prevention and ensuring residents felt safe, he outlined the work being undertaken by the Council to address the challenges identified and in seeking to reverse the impacts of austerity. This had included various community safety initiatives, which he was pleased to advise had yielded tangible results, most notably in relation to a 6.6% reduction in domestic abuse incidents which represented the largest decline among comparable boroughs. Action to address youth safety also remained a key priority, with the Council having secured three years of Public Health funding to combat youth violence, targeting the most vulnerable areas. Additionally, members were advised Brent had received £800k from the Mayor of London as further support with a robbery reduction initiative also launched, funded through the Violence Reduction Unit, aimed at protecting young people during after-school hours again as a prevention initiative. Acknowledging that the prevention of crime was not purely a police issue, Councillor Farah advised that the Council had also recognised the need to empower local communities involving a programme of investment in community-led safety programs, supporting local organisations to prevent crime at local level. Highlighting the link between employment and crime, Councillor Farah pointed out this had also been recognised within his recently revised Cabinet remit which had also provided the opportunity to focus on the provision of job opportunities and skill development in seeking to steer individuals away from crime. In support of the approach, members were advised of a £500k commitment within the budget to support connecting residents with new jobs through Brent Works and of the £2.9m to support residents in further developing their skills through Brent Start with the social value potential of the South Kilburn regeneration programme also highlighted as strengthening the jobs and workspace offer. In concluding, Councillor Farah extended his gratitude to all staff and partners, including the police, for the work being undertaken to keep residents across the borough safe and commended the budget (as moved by the Leader) to Council on the basis of the way it would support ongoing efforts to strive for a safer, stronger, and fairer Brent.

Following on, Councillor Lesley Smith (also speaking in support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader) challenged the basis of economic context provided in support of the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals highlighting the impact of previous Conservative Chancellors management of the economy, including increases in mortgage interest rates, inflation and the impact on individual households. In contrast, she outlined the way in which the budget proposals developed by the Labour Administration had been designed to support residents across the borough including significant levels of investment in housing and neighbourhoods alongside support for social care and efforts being made to tackle poverty. In supporting the prudent and compassionate approach adopted by the Labour Administration in seeking to safeguard and improve the quality of life for local communities across the borough, Councillor Lesley Smith ended by also commending the budget to members.

As a further contribution, Councillor Rajan-Seelan spoke and once again highlighted what he felt to be the damage being caused by the previous Conservative Government's programme of austerity and underfunding of local government and other public services, including the impact of the introduction of student loans on young people in higher education across the borough. In outlining the difficulties in seeking to produce a balanced budget in such circumstances,

Councillor Rajan Seelen felt that the Administration should be commended for delivering a financially responsible and workable budget (recognising the support also provided by the new Labour Government) and in closing commended the budget proposals moved by the Leader for their effective management of the limited resources available, which he felt was in contrast to the alternative proposals moved by both Opposition Groups.

As the next speaker, Councillor Begum, also expressed her support for the budget and praised the aspirations of the Labour Administration in seeking to support residents experiencing hardship as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and seeking to manage the increase in demand for services as a result of the housing crisis and an increasingly ageing population. Amongst the commitments highlighted the support provided in relation to the delivery of affordable housing, youth, social and health care provision alongside the efforts to address homelessness were commended as a means of addressing the gaps and level of need identified in relation to the most vulnerable members of society with concerns highlighted regarding levels of child poverty, rough sleeping and the barriers identified in being able to access, safe secure and affordable housing. In commending the budget proposals to members, Councillor Begum highlighted her pride at being part of an Administration seeking to protect the most vulnerable members of society and in seeking to provide a more inclusive and equitable future for all with support also expressed for the investment in the New Horizons Centre and Brent Hubs as a means of continuing to make a real difference for communities across Brent.

Councillor Kennelly, also expressing his support for the budget proposals, felt it important to begin by highlighting what he felt to be the unviable and unsustainable nature of the alternative budget proposals moved by the Opposition Groups especially when compared to the way in which the proposals presented by the Leader had been designed to stand up for local residents and maintain the provision of essential local services despite the funding restrictions imposed by the previous Conservative Government and impact of austerity. Whilst recognising the impact which any increase in Council Tax would have on households across the borough he felt these needed to be considered on the basis of the support being prioritised for local communities and the most vulnerable. Referring to what he felt to be the progressive and forward-thinking nature of the proposals identified in the budget, specific reference was made to support being provided for local high streets and economic plan for investment with efforts being made to lobby for the extension of the Bakerloo tube line also supported in this respect. The proposals being developed to expand Safer Neighbourhood Teams were also welcomed as a means of addressing concerns relating to crime locally, including shoplifting, with the support expressed for the role and value of the voluntary and community sector also recognised as crucial to ensure they were not adversely impacted by the burden in having to fill any gaps in service provision.

As a further contribution to the debate, Councillor Chohan also took the opportunity to express his support for the budget proposals moved by the Leader, highlighting the ongoing impact and difficulties being created for an increasing number of residents as a result of the previous Conservative Governments approach towards austerity and funding of public services. Despite the significant challenges and pressures on public services created as result, Councillor Chohan highlighted his pride at the way in which the current Administration had sought to protect key services such as parks and open spaces whilst also supporting the delivery of new

affordable homes, services for young people and local and those more vulnerable residents. Whilst acknowledging that the budget proposals would require difficult decisions to be made, Councillor Chohan was keen to commend the compassionate approach adopted in seeking to protect the most vulnerable and continuing to work for local communities.

Councillor Johnson also speaking in support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader felt it important to recognise the prudent approach adopted by the Administration to management of the Council's finances given the challenging context in which the budget had needed to be set driven by the previous Government's mismanagement of the economy and cuts imposed as a result of austerity. In terms of key challenges, Councillor Johnson highlighted the housing emergency as one of the most significant issues faced by the Council given the level of demand and number of households currently in temporary accommodation with the associated cost. As a result, support was expressed for the commitment within the budget and ongoing efforts towards increasing the supply of affordable housing across the borough. Whilst recognising the work that would be required to tackle the housing crisis the lead being taken by the Council in this respect was welcomed with the budget, as moved by the Leader, commended on this basis to members for support.

Councillor Mahmood, also expressing support for the budget, took the opportunity to thank council officers and elected members for the continued work to support Brent residents despite the challenging financial climate. Despite the impact of austerity, he felt it important to recognise the efforts being made by the Council to support residents in terms of the delivery of affordable housing, social care, libraries, parks and open spaces as well as the efforts being made to regenerate the borough and ensure it remained as accessible and open to investment as possible. As specific examples he referred to the work being undertaken with partners in relation to delivery of the Staples Corner regeneration scheme designed to boost infrastructure, environment and housing in that part of the borough along with the recently approved Neasden Civic Partnership. As a result, Councillor Mahmood ended by urging all members to support what he felt had been the proactive and resident focused budget which the current Administration had proposed.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Molloy, also took the opportunity to express his support for the budget proposals moved by the Leader and to challenge members about what more they could do individually to address the financial pressures under which the Council was continuing to operate. This included the use of local knowledge to identify potential opportunities for additional regeneration activity including, as an example, underutilised or empty properties, support for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates as well as enforcement activity related to illegal parking and fly-tipping. In concluding, he encouraged members to consider how best they could support the development of income generation and revenue sources designed to enhance the Council's overall financial position.

Having concluded the debate, the Mayor thanked all members for their contributions and then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt to summarise and respond to the points raised.

In response to the debate, Councillor Muhammed Butt began by thanking all members for their contributions at the meeting. In summing up, he felt that the debate had demonstrated the commitment amongst councillors to deliver for their residents. In responding to the Conservative and Liberal Democrats alternative budget proposals he expressed concern at the financial and budgetary literacy which he felt had been demonstrated in terms of their approach given the associated risks which had been identified in relation to both their impact and unviable way in which it had been proposed to fund them.

In contrast, he felt the Administration's budget proposals not only demonstrated an understanding of the challenges faced but were also designed to protect and support residents in the borough, with reference made to delivery of investment to support:

- the delivery of new secure, accessible and affordable housing options for residents alongside action to protect tenants and drive up standards in the private rented sector through the Landlord Licensing Scheme.
- the continued regeneration and growth of the borough including initiatives to connect residents with job opportunities and skill development programmes, fostering a thriving and empowered workforce.
- the protection of services for young people, including provision of additional SEND places.
- the ongoing provision of efficient waste management and street cleaning services alongside enhanced enforcement measures to address fly tipping through the Don't Mess with Brent campaign.
- community projects, empowering local residents and groups to actively contribute to improving their neighbourhoods alongside ongoing support for Brent's libraries.
- The ongoing provision of support to elderly and vulnerable residents including ongoing assistance to residents facing financial difficulties with bills and essential needs through the Resident Support Fund and advice and guidance available through Brent Hubs.
- the delivery of a programme of activity to address the climate emergency, including the Green Neighbourhood pilots and to encourage more active modes of travel alongside the maintenance and enhancement of the boroughs parks and open spaces.

In concluding, whilst recognising the difficult nature of decisions which had needed to be made, he outlined his pride that despite the challenges highlighted during the debate the Labour Administration had been able to present a balanced budget that reflected a more hopeful vision for Brent that would not only continue to prioritise essential services for the well-being of local residents but would also seek to foster a spirit of empowerment in order to meet the needs and aspirations of communities across the borough. On this basis he ended by once again commending the budget to Council.

Having thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for his closing comments, the Mayor advised that this now concluded the debate on the budget and he would therefore be moving to the vote on the alternative budget proposals and then (subject to any amendments agreed) the recommended budget moved by the Leader of the Council. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting

process he reminded Members that, in accordance with Standing Order 43, these would all need to be subject to a recorded vote.

The Mayor then moved on to put the budget and alternative proposals to the vote.

On a recorded vote being taken the budget proposals, as moved by the Leader of the Council were declared **CARRIED**.

Accordingly, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Agree an overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2025/26, with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 2.99% general increase.
- (2) Agree the General Fund revenue budget for 2025/26, as summarised in Appendices A and B of the report.
- (3) Agree the savings proposals for 2025/26, as set out in Appendices C (i) and C (ii) of the report.
- (4) Note, based on approval of the amendments to the Council Tax Support scheme, that there would no requirement to consider the use of reserves to cover any associated budget shortfall during 2025-26, as set out in section 6.19 of the report.
- (5) Note the Equalities Impact Assessments on the budget proposals, as set out in Appendices C (iii) and C (iv) of the report.
- (6) Note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in Appendix D of the report.
- (7) Note and agree inclusion of the HRA budget and business plan in the overall Council budget for 2025/26 as set out in section eight and appendix O of the report.
- (8) Agree the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of the report.
- (9) Agree the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new schemes and reprofiling, as set out in section ten of the report, and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix E of the report.
- (10) Agree the Capital Strategy, the Non-Treasury Investment Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendices F, G, H and I of the report.
- (11) Agree the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendices J (i) and J (ii) of the report.
- (12) Agree the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix K (ii) of the report.

- (13) Note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section seven and detailed in Appendices L (i) and L (ii) of the report.
- (14) Note the legal advice from the Corporate Director, Law and Governance, as set out in Appendix M of the report.
- (15) Agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix N of the report.
- (16) Agree to transfer the funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility (ERP) for packaging scheme to reserves in 2025/26.

Council Tax recommendations

- (17) In relation to the Council Tax for 2025/26 we resolve:

It was agreed that the following amounts be now calculated as the Council's element by the Council for the year 2025/26 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

- (a) £1,127,293,760 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) £948,861,011 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £178,432,749 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) £1,642.77 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 108,617, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 15 January 2025, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- (e) Table 1: Brent Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,095.18	1,277.71	1,460.24	1,642.77	2,007.83	2,372.89	2,737.95	3,285.54

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.

- (18) That it be noted that for the year 2025/26 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:

Table 2: GLA Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
326.92	381.41	435.89	490.38	599.35	708.33	817.30	980.76

- (19) That, having calculated the aggregate of the amounts at paragraph 17(e) and 18 above 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 2025/26 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Table 3: Overall Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,422.10	1,659.12	1,896.13	2,133.15	2,607.18	3,081.22	3,555.25	4,266.30

- (20) That it be noted that the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources has determined that the Council element of the basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

- (a) That the Corporate Director, 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, 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, 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.

Prior to the above recommendations being approved, the alternative budget proposals moved as amendments to the budget report by the Conservative & Liberal Democrats Groups were put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

The voting recorded on the amendment moved by the Conservative Group was as follows:

For the Amendment (4): Councillors Hirani, Kansagra, Maurice & Mistry.

Against the Amendment (46): Councillors Aden, Afzal, Agha, Ahmadi-Moghaddam, Ahmed, Akram, Bajwa, Begum, Benea, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, Choudry, Clinton, Conneely, Crabb, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Fraser, Gbajumo, Grahl, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Long, Lorber, Mahmood, Matin, Miller, Mitchell, Molloy, Nerva, M.Patel, Rajan Seelan, Rubin, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, L.Smith, T.Smith and Tatler.

Abstentions to the Amendment (2): Councillors Dar (Mayor) and Hack (Deputy Mayor).

The voting recorded on the amendment moved by the Liberal Democrats Group was as follows:

For the Amendment (3): Councillors Clinton, Lorber and Matin

Against the Amendment (47): Councillors Aden, Afzal, Agha, Ahmadi-Moghaddam, Ahmed, Akram, Bajwa, Begum, Benea, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, Choudry, Conneely, Crabb, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Fraser, Gbajumo, Grahl, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kansagra, Kelcher, Kennelly, Long, Mahmood, Maurice, Miller, Mistry, Mitchell, Molloy, Nerva, M.Patel, Rajan Seelan, Rubin, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, L.Smith, T.Smith and Tatler.

Abstentions to the Amendment (2): Councillors Dar (Mayor) and Hack (Deputy Mayor).

The voting recorded on the substantive recommendations, as detailed above, was as follows:

For (43): Councillors Aden, Afzal, Agha, Ahmadi-Moghaddam, Ahmed, Akram, Bajwa, Begum, Benea, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, Choudry, Conneely, Crabb, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Fraser, Gbajumo, Grahl, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Long, Mahmood, Miller, Mitchell, Molloy, Nerva, M.Patel, Rajan Seelan, Rubin, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, L.Smith, T.Smith and Tatler.

Against (7): Councillors Clinton, Hirani, Kansagra, Lorber, Matin. Maurice, & Mistry.

Abstentions (2): Councillors Dar (Mayor) and Hack (Deputy Mayor).

Prior to moving on to deal with the rest of the agenda, the Mayor advised that as the remaining time available was shortly due to expire he intended to move the suspension of Standing Order 44 (Council Guillotine Procedure) in order to extend

the time of the meeting, initially by a period of 15 minutes, to enable consideration of the remaining items on the agenda.

In advance of the procedural motion being put to the vote, Councillor Lorber sought to move an amendment requesting that the report on the Members Allowance Scheme Annual Review 2025-26 be deferred to enable more detailed consideration at the next Council meeting. Following advice from Debra Norman (as Corporate Director Law & Governance) that this would not be possible given the need for the scheme to be considered and adopted in advance of the new Financial Year the Mayor, in accordance with Standing Order 42 (d), then moved on to put the procedural motion to the vote without further discussion, which was declared **CARRIED**.

12. Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2024-2025

The Mayor then invited Councillor Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, to introduce the report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources updating members on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the 2024-25 financial year. Members noted that the report had also been considered and agreed by the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on 4 December 2024 and Cabinet on 10 February 2025 who had agreed to refer it on to Council for consideration in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

In introducing the report, Councillor Mili Patel advised that as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to financial transparency, the report included details on the Council's borrowing requirement, cash investment balances and compliance with the Prudential Indicators enabling Brent to meet its financial obligations. Members were reminded that as part of the approach outlined in terms of managing Treasury Management activity to support the Council's priorities, it was only possible to borrow for capital investment and not to fund operational day-to-day expenditure, for example, to offset the increasing financial pressures being experienced within the revenue budget with the Borrowing Requirement reflecting the Council's capital ambitions for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

As a result of the Council's careful financial stewardship and compliance with Prudential Indicators, Councillor Mili Patel advised that the Council's borrowing balance (as at September 2024) was £791.9m with the decrease in this balance, along with that held in cash investments, reflecting the ongoing approach towards the repayment of loans and investment in the Council's capital programme in place of additional borrowing. By prioritising existing cash investments, it was reported the Council had also been able to generate an interest income of £3.6m with the Council's borrowing strategy therefore recognised as continuing to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

In outlining the importance of the Council's Treasury Management function in underpinning all Borough Plan priorities and in ensuring the Council was able to continue meeting its financial obligations, including those associated with the affordability and delivery of the Capital Programme, the opportunity was taken to thank officers for their support in providing clear direction and delivery of the Council's Treasury Management activity. In commending the report to Council,

Councillor Mili Patel ended by highlighting how this was again felt to demonstrate the prudent approach adopted in terms of the financial management required to support delivery of the Council's wider ambitions and priorities.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mili Patel for introducing the report and as no other members had indicated they wished to speak, and Councillor Mili Patel advised she did not wish to exercise any right of reply, he then moved to put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously declared **CARRIED**

Council therefore **RESOLVED** to note the 2024-25 Mid-Year Treasury report detailing overall financial performance up to Quarter Two, which had been fully compliant with the Council's Treasury Prudential Indicators set as part of the annual strategy.

13. **Members' Allowance Scheme Annual Review 2025-26**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council, to introduce the report from the Corporate Director of Law and Governance which sought approval to the proposed Members Allowance Scheme for the 2025-26 financial year.

In introducing the report, the Leader outlined the background to the annual review and proposed uplift in the level of basic, special responsibility and civic allowances for 2025-26, which members were advised had been designed to take account of the latest review completed in 2023 by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on behalf of London Councils. In recognising the importance of the representational role undertaken by members alongside the increasing challenge in terms of managing demand and supporting the delivery of local services, the proposals had also sought to ensure any uplift could be managed within the existing Members Allowance budget, given the current financial pressures faced by the Council, and also reflected the National Joint Council Government Services pay agreement for staff during 2024-25. Members were advised this had therefore resulted in a recommended uplift of 2.5% to be applied across the basic allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) for 2025-26.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for introducing the report and then invited contributions from other members.

In response to the proposals outlined Councillor Kansagra (as Leader of the Conservative Group), whilst supportive of the attempts made to recognise the importance of the representational role undertaken by members, felt there was a need (given the time and effort involved) for a wider review of the level and allocation of SRA's for specific roles reflecting the different commitments required to deliver them effectively. To better inform the review process, it was felt this should be supported by additional benchmarking against comparative rates with the outcome reported back to the Constitutional Working Group for consideration.

As a further contribution, Councillor Lorber also spoke (as Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group) to highlight what he felt was a need for any increase in allowances to be self-funding and supported by savings achieved through a reduction and consolidation in Cabinet Member positions to reflect and align with the recent restructure of the Council's senior management team. In reviewing the

overall impact of the proposed change on the allowance budget, further clarification was also sought on the extent to which the saving identified during 2024-25 in relation to the Members Allowance scheme and had been delivered.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor invited Councillor Muhammed Butt to exercise his right of reply. In response to the concerns identified and in closing the debate, the Leader once again highlighted that the proposals in relation to SRAs had been designed to bring those specific allowances in line with the IRPs recommended percentage bands whilst also reflecting the increase in scope and workload experienced by all members in their various roles. In confirming that the previous saving identified in relation to the Allowance Scheme had been achieved and advising that he would have no objection to a further review of allowances across all positions being undertaken through the Constitutional Working Group, he ended by commending the report as submitted to Council.

Having thanked Councillor M.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 Members Allowance Scheme in the proposed terms set out within the report for the 2025-26 Financial Year.
- (2) To authorise the Corporate Director of Law & Governance to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

14. **Changes to the Constitution**

Prior to inviting the Leader of the Council to introduce the final item of, the Mayor advised that as the extended time available for the meeting was shortly due to expire he would be moving a further suspension of Standing Order 44 (Council Guillotine Procedure) in order to extend the time of the meeting by another 5 minutes in order to complete consideration of the agenda. In accordance with Standing Order 42 (d) the procedural motion was put to the vote without further discussion and declared **CARRIED**.

The Mayor the invited Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) to introduce the report from the Corporate Director of Law & Governance. In moving and presenting the report, members were advised the report detailed a number of proposed changes to the Constitution designed to reflect the recent restructure of the Council's senior management team and accompanying realignment of Directorates along with changes to the Contract Standing Orders as a result of implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 and to the Property Standing Orders in relation to the arrangements for acquiring, managing and disposing of land and buildings (Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions). Following advice provide by Debra Norman (Corporate Director Law & Governance) members noted that the change to Contract Standing Orders would need to become effective immediately upon approval, following introduction of the Procurement Act 2023.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for introducing the report and then invited contributions from other members.

Whilst supportive of the proposals outlined in the report Councillor Kansagra, reflecting comments made earlier during the meeting, reiterated what he felt was the need for the changes made to the speaking rights of members during the budget debate to be reviewed by the Constitutional Working Group.

As no other members had indicated they wished to speak and Councillor Muhammed Butt advised he did not wish to exercise any right of reply, the Mayor then moved straight on to put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously declared **CARRIED**

Council therefore **RESOLVED**:


- (1) To agree the changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 of the report. In relation to the changes approved to the Contract Standing Orders this would be with immediate effect with the remaining changes to be with effect from 1 April 2025.
- (2) To authorise the Corporate Director of Law & Governance to amend the Constitution accordingly, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.
- (3) To designate the post of Director of Law as the Council's Monitoring Officer post in accordance with s5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.
- (4) To note that, to the extent that the changes related to executive functions of the Council, they had been approved by the Leader.
- (5) To authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to bring forward the implementation of any of the proposed transfers of functions to a date earlier than 1 April 2025.

15. **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 he looked forward to seeing everyone again in person at the next Full Council which would be the Annual Council and Mayor Making meeting on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

COUNCILLOR TARIQ DAR MBE
Mayor

	Annual Council Meeting 14 May 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources
Annual Review of the Constitution	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix A: Proposed amendments to the Constitution
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Marsha Henry, Director, Law 020 8937 4078 Marsha.Henry@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes changes to the Constitution arising out of the annual review of its provisions and operation.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To agree the changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 To note that the list of cabinet members and portfolio holders in Part 1 of the Constitution will be updated to reflect the appointments of, and allocation of functions to, Cabinet Members by the Leader.
- 2.3 To authorise the Director of Law to amend the Constitution accordingly, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.
- 2.4 To note that, to the extent that the changes relate to executive functions of the Council, they have been approved by the Leader.

3 Detail

3.1 Contribution to the Borough Plan and Strategic Priorities

- 3.1.1 Ensuring the Constitution is kept up to date and supportive of good governance contributes to the delivery of all of the strategic priorities within the Borough Plan by supporting and enhancing the Council's activity.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 A review of the provisions of the Constitution and its operation over the year is undertaken each year in the period leading up to the Annual Meeting to ensure the Constitution remains up to date and fit for purpose. The changes proposed this year are set out in Appendix A and described below.

3.3 Changes to Part 4 - Terms of Reference

- 3.3.1 The North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee ("NWL JHOSC") was established to provide a joined up approach towards the scrutiny of plans for meeting the health needs of the population, arranging the provision of health services across North West London with a particular focus on the planning and, delivery of services being lead through the North West Integrated Care System and their Integrated Care Board, in order to enable a more coordinated approach than might normally be taken by individual local authorities.
- 3.3.2 Following a recent review of the JHOSC Terms of Reference it is necessary to clarify the remit of the NWL JHOSC in respect of its powers available to consider any substantial reconfiguration of health services. The reason being, the JHOSC terms of reference as currently drafted, specifically excludes JHOSC from acting for the purposes of being consulted on any major reconfiguration of health services across NWL, such as the Specialist Palliative Care Reconfiguration.
- 3.3.3 It is proposed to the JHOSC Terms of Reference to formally enable the JHOSC to respond to proposals relating to substantial reconfiguration.

3.4 Changes to Part 5 – Members Code of Conduct (the Code), Gifts & Hospitality

- 3.4.1 The acceptance of gifts and hospitality by Members is governed by the Brent Members Code of Conduct and the Bribery Act 2010.
- 3.4.2 Following discussion at the Constitutional Working Group (CWG) it is proposed to amend the gifts and hospitality provisions of the Code to require members accepting any gift or hospitality valued as £500 or more to provide reasons to the Monitoring Officer as to why they consider it appropriate to accept the gift or hospitality.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The proposed changes have been discussed at the Constitutional Working Group.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 None

6 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appointed under the provisions of regulation 30 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013/218 ('the 2013 Regulations'), which provides that two or more local authorities may appoint a joint overview and scrutiny committee of those authorities and arrange for relevant functions in relation to any (or all) of those authorities to be exercisable by the joint committee subject to such terms and conditions as the authorities may consider appropriate.
- 6.2 Regulation 23 of the 2013 Regulations provides that, where a responsible person has under consideration any proposal for a substantial development of the health service in the area of a local authority, or for a substantial variation in the provision of such service, they must consult the authority. The proposed revisions to the joint committee's terms of reference retains the requirement that individual member authorities be consulted in relation to substantial developments and variations in the provision of health services in their local authority area.
- 6.3 The proposed changes to the joint committee's terms of reference are designed to ensure these powers are clearly reflected with the Terms of Reference for the JHOSC.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1. 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, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.2 "Due regard" is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances. The weight to be attached to the effect is a matter for the council. As long as the council is properly aware of the effects and has taken them into account, the duty is discharged. Depending on the circumstances, regard should be had to the following:

- the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision;
- the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- the need to take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes taking account of disabled persons' disabilities. There can be a positive duty to take action to help a disabled person. What matters is how they are affected, whatever proportion of the relevant group of people they might be;
- the need to encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life (or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low); and
- the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

7.3 No equalities implications arise directly from this report.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 None

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director, Finance & Resources

Appendix A

Part 3, North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Terms of Reference

~~5 Participation in the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will not preclude any scrutiny or right of response by individual boroughs. In particular, and for the sake of clarity, this joint committee is not appointed for and nor does it have delegated to it any of the functions or powers of the local authorities, either individually or jointly, under Section 23 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.~~

Replaced with


5 To delegate the functions and powers available to local authorities under Section 23 and 30 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 to collectively respond to any formal consultations on proposals for substantial developments or variations in health services affecting the area of North West London on behalf of all boroughs participating in the JHOSC.

Part 4, Members Code of Conduct, Registerable personal interests

31 (c) a gift or hospitality you have received worth an estimated value of at least £50 in your capacity as a member. This includes a series of gifts and hospitality from the same person that add up to an estimated value of at least £50 in a municipal year. You must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of the following details:

- (i) the name of the person from whom you have received the gift or hospitality;
- (ii) when it was received; and
- (iii) what you reasonably believe to be the value or approximate value of the gift or hospitality. In deciding the value of the gift or hospitality it is what, for example, a member of the public would have had to pay to attend an event that matters (i.e. the open market value or official price) and not the fact that a courtesy/corporate ticket has a nil face value.
- (iv) In the case of an exceptional item (i.e. an item valued as £500 or more), the reason why you consider it appropriate to accept the gift or hospitality.

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	Annual Council Meeting 14 May 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources
Representation of Political Groups on Committees	

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 1: Political Balance Rules
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Amira Nassr, Deputy Director Democratic & Corporate Governance Tel: 0208 937 5436 amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk James Kinsella, Governance & Scrutiny Manager, Democratic Services Tel: 020 8937 2063 james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report fulfils the Council's duty to review and determine the representation of different political groups on certain committees at its Annual Meeting or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 1.2 The current membership of the Council consists of 57 councillors, which has been used as the basis for the annual review. Following this review, the Council will then have a duty to make appointments (where necessary) to those committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats.

2.0 Recommendations

Full Council is asked:

- (1) To agree the size of each committee.
- (2) To agree (where the rules of political balance apply) the allocation of seats on committees to each of the Council's political groups as set out in the report.
- (3) To make appointments to those committees (as set out at Item 9 of this agenda) giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats; and
- (4) To note that the political balance on sub-committees will be reviewed at the first meeting of the General Purposes Committee and the Licensing Committee held following the Annual Council Meeting.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The allocation of seats on each of the Council's committees to which the political balance rules apply supports delivery of the borough plan by enabling the Council's decision making bodies to operate transparently and effectively whilst also supporting and promoting confidence in the good governance of the council.

3.2 Background

Representation of Political Groups

- 3.2.1 The Council is required to review and determine the representation of different political groups on certain committees at, or as soon as practicable, after its Annual Meeting.
- 3.2.2 As soon as practicable after the review, the Council then has a duty to determine the allocation to the different political groups of all seats on the relevant committees. The allocation is determined by applying the "political balance rules" prescribed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and supplemented by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. These rules are set out in Appendix 1 to this report and are designed to ensure that the political composition of the Council's decision-making and deliberative committees, as far as possible, replicates the political composition of Full Council. Subsequently, the Council has a duty to make appointments to those committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seat(s).
- 3.2.3 The Committees that the political balance rules apply to have similar duties in relation to any sub-committees they may have.
- 3.2.4 On the basis that the overall membership of the Council stands at 57, the composition of political groups as a percentage of overall membership is as follows:

- 49 Labour Group councillors – representing 85.97% of the total council membership;
- 5 Conservative Group councillors – representing 8.77% of the total council membership;
- 3 Liberal Democrat councillors – representing 5.26% of the total council membership.

3.2.5 According to the political balance rules, a political group for this purpose is a group of two or more members.

3.2.6 Table 1 below sets out the 5 ordinary committees of the Council to which the political balance rules apply; the size of each committee (excluding any non-voting co-opted committee members in accordance with the political balance rules); the total number of seats required to be allocated; the number of seats each political group is entitled to based on the number of group members.

3.2.7 There are a total of **38** ordinary committee seats to which the political balance requirements will formally apply. Based on the overall council membership, the breakdown regarding the proportion of seats each political group is therefore entitled to on these committees is as follows:

- Labour Group – 33 seats
- Conservative Group – 3 seats
- Liberal Democrat Group – 2 seats

3.2.8 This has resulted in one seat on each of the 5 ordinary committees to which the political balance rules apply, being allocated between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups. The allocation of seats between Committees has been agreed between the respective Groups, with the proposed division as follows.

Table 1

Ordinary Committees	Size	Labour Group 49 85.97%	Conservative Group 5 8.77%	Liberal Democrats Group 3 5.26%
General Purposes Committee	8	7	0	1
Planning Committee	8	7	1	0
Audit & Standards Committee	7	6	1	0
Corporate Parenting Committee	5	4	1	0

Licensing Committee	10	9	0	1
Total seats	38	33	3	2
Entitlement (based on a proportion of total members)		33	3	2

3.2.9 There are other committees which the political balance rules apply to but only principles (a), (b) and (d) (see Appendix 1, paragraph 3). Namely, the existing Scrutiny Committees and the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee.

3.2.10 Table 2 below confirms the size and make-up of these Committees, with the Conservative and Liberal Democrats groups both entitled (given the size of each committee) to be allocated a seat on both Scrutiny Committees.

Other Committees	Size	Labour Group 49 85.97%	Conservative Group 5 8.77%	Liberal Democrats Group 3 5.26%
Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	11 (plus 4 voting co-opted members and 2 non-voting co-opted members)	9	1	1
Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee	11	9	1	1
Audit & Standards Advisory Committee	7 (plus up to 4 voting co-opted members)	6	1	0

3.2.11 Subsequent to allocating seats, the Council has a duty to make appointments to the specified committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats. This review has not led to any change in the overall allocation of seats on Committees following the previous review undertaken at the Annual Council meeting in May 2024. The appointments to each

committee being made by the respective political groups will be set out within the report to be considered as Agenda Item 9.

- 3.2.12 The political balance rules do not apply to the Health and Wellbeing Board but it has been previously agreed that this Board comprise four Cabinet Members and one opposition Member and this will continue following this review, with the Conservative Group as the Principal Opposition Group allocated the available seat.

4. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The proposed allocation of seats between Committees has been subject to consultation with each political group.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 These are addressed in the main body of the report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 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.

- 7.3 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.

- 7.4 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report at this stage.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 None directly arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel


Corporate Director Finance &
Resources

Appendix 1

The political balance rules prescribed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the Act') and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 ('the 1990 Regulations')

1. The rules are that seats on relevant committees must be allocated to different political groups so far as reasonably practicable in accordance with the following four principles:
 - (a) that not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the Council's membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that each political group is allocated the same proportion of the total seats across all the ordinary committees of the Council as the proportion of the members of the Council that belong to that group; and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that each political group is allocated the same proportion of the seats on each relevant body as the proportion of the members of the Council that belong to that group.
2. Principle (c) refers to "ordinary committees" which under the Act means those appointed under section 102(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, namely General Purposes Committee, Audit & Standards Committee, Corporate Parenting Committee, Planning Committee and Licensing Committee.
3. Principles (a), (b) and (d) apply to a "body" to which the Council makes appointments. The Act provides that the bodies to which this principle applies include ordinary committees (as defined above) and ordinary sub committees, advisory committees and sub-committees, and joint committees where at least 3 seats are filled by appointments made by the Council.
4. Principles (a), (b) and (d) therefore apply to the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee. Strictly speaking, according to principle (b), the Labour Group is entitled to a majority of the seats on the Committee. However, to maintain the current size of the Committee, Full Council can depart from the rules provided no member votes against the proposal.
5. By virtue of the Local Government Act 2000, principles (a), (b) and (d) also apply to the Scrutiny Committees.
6. According to principle (c) above, the General Purposes Committee, Audit & Standards Committee, Corporate Parenting Committee, Planning Committee and Licensing Committee first have to be taken together to determine the *number* of seats that should be allocated to each group. Then, in accordance with paragraph (d) above, the number of seats each political group is entitled to has to be allocated proportionately to individual committees so far as possible.
7. The political balance principles do not apply to the London Councils' Joint Committees or the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee because only one appointment on each Committee is made by the Council.

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 Brent	<p align="center">Annual Council Meeting 14 May 2025</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources</p>
<p align="center">Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies and Appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs</p>	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	<p>Four</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Appointments to Committees & Outside bodies</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Cabinet Appointments</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Appointments to be confirmed by General Purposes Committee</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Appointments to be confirmed by Licensing Committee</p> <p>NB: Members are asked to note that the full list of above appointments will be circulated in advance of the meeting.</p>
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officers:	<p>Amira Nassr, Deputy Director Democratic & Corporate Governance Tel: 0208 937 5436 amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>James Kinsella, Governance & Scrutiny Manager, Democratic Services Tel: 020 8937 2063 james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk</p>

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed appointment of members and co-opted members to allocated positions on the Council's Committees, and Outside Bodies for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year. The positions have been allocated according to the political balance of the Council and in accordance with the rules on proportionality, which are the subject of a separate report listed as Item 8 on the agenda for this meeting.

- 1.2 The recommendations below set out where, in line with the Council's Constitution, Full Council approval for an appointment is needed and which appointments are subject to confirmation by a separate body, with these presented for information purposes.
- 1.3 It also sets out the proposed appointments of Chairs/Vice Chairs for these bodies for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 For Full Council to agree or confirm (as appropriate) the proposed appointments of Members, Co-Opted Members and substitutes to Council Committees and Outside Bodies as set out in Appendix 1 ***(to be circulated in advance of the meeting)*** and section 3.2.4 of the report.
- 2.2 For Full Council to agree the proposed appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs to Council Committees as set out in Appendix 1 for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year ***(to be circulated in advance of the meeting)***.
- 2.3 For Full Council to note the appointments:
- (a) notified by the Leader of the Council in relation to Cabinet and Cabinet Committees and their respective Chairs/Vice Chairs, as set out in Appendix 2 for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year ***(to be circulated in advance of the meeting)***.
 - (b) to be confirmed by General Purposes Committee, as set out in Appendix 3 for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year ***(to be circulated in advance of the meeting)***.
 - (c) to be confirmed by Licensing Committee, as set out in Appendix 4 for the 2025-2026 Municipal Year ***(to be circulated in advance of the meeting)***.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The appointments being made will support the delivery of the borough plan by enabling the Council's decision making bodies to function effectively whilst also supporting and promoting confidence in the operation and good governance of the council.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 In accordance with Standing Order 27(i) of the Council's Constitution, the membership of Council Committees and other relevant bodies plus the appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs and substitute Members for these are matters requiring agreement at the Annual Council Meeting for the upcoming municipal year.

- 3.2.2 The appointments to Council Committees are to be made in line with the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the Act') and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 ('the 1990 Regulations') which set out how Committees must be constituted when a Council is divided into one or more political groups. Further detail on the political balance of the Council to meet these provisions has been detailed in the report 'Representation of Political Groups on Committees' which has been listed as Item 8 on the agenda for this meeting.
- 3.2.3 The appendices setting out the proposed appointment of councillors to relevant Committees and Outside Bodies will be circulated in advance of the meeting, following consultation with each political group.
- 3.2.4 Council is also asked to confirm the continuing appointment of:
- a. the Council's three existing Independent Persons - Julie Byrom, Mr William Goh and Mr Keir Hopley. The Independent Persons fulfil a statutory role and are appointed for the purpose of being consulted by the Monitoring Officer, the Audit & Standards Committee and members in relation to any Code of Conduct complaints. They would also form the Panel, should one need to be convened, in respect of the dismissal of one of the council's three statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer).
 - b. the existing independent co-opted members on the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee (Rhys Williams & Stephen Ross) who have a particular focus on Standards matters and Sebastian Evans who has a focus on Audit matters.
 - c. the existing co-opted members on the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee - Venerable Archdeacon Catherine Pickford (as a voting co-opted member representing the Church of England Diocese), Alloysius Frederick (as a voting co-opted member representing the Roman Catholic Diocese), Rachelle Goldberg (as a non-voting co-opted member representing Jewish Faith Schools) & Sayed Jaffar (as a non-voting co-opted member representing Muslim Faith Schools) with there also being current vacancies for two parent governor representatives (as voting co-opted members). Members are reminded that the Terms of Reference for Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee includes the consideration of matters "relating wholly or partly to any education functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet" with provision made (under Standing Order 50e) for its membership to include the above co-opted members positions with the voting rights applying only to matters relating to education functions.
- 3.2.5 As per Standing Order 51 (a) the Council may also appoint a pool of substitute members from which a member may be selected to speak and vote in the absence of a member of the Committee, provided that the substitute member is not already a member of the Committee. This Standing Order states that

each pool shall be up to the number of members comprising membership of the Committee and be divided according to the political balance on the Committee, save that where a group has only one member on the Committee up to two members may be appointed by that group to the pool. The list of appointments also include details of the substitute pool of members nominated.

3.2.6 For information purposes only:

- the appointments made by the Leader to the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees have been set out in Appendix 2.
- the appointments to be confirmed by General Purposes and Licensing Committee have been detailed in Appendices 3 & 4 respectively.

4. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The nominations for appointments detailed within the appendices to the report have been submitted directly by each political group.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 Certain positions to which Members are appointed will attract a Special Responsibility Allowance, the costs of which are met from within the existing Members Allowance budget.

- 5.2 There are no other financial considerations arising directly from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 As already highlighted, the appointments are due to be made in line with the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 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.

- 7.3 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.

- 7.4 As the appointments process is the same for all Members, irrespective of their background, there are no equity, diversity or inclusion implications relating to the proposals within this paper. Implications from the individual recommendations being considered by each body will continue to be considered and assessed during the decision-making process.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 None directly arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director Finance & Resources

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APPENDIX 1: Full Council Appointments - For approval by Annual Council

Council Committees

AUDIT & STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (7 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Independent Chair	David Ewart (31.07.25)
Labour	Chan (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Choudry
Labour	Kabir
Labour	Long
Labour	Molloy
Labour	L.Smith
Conservative	J. Patel
Independent Co-opted Members (Voting)	Rhys Jarvis (May 2027)
	Stephen Ross (May 2027)
	Sebastian Evans (May 2029)
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Agha
Labour	S.Butt
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Conneely
Labour	Ketan Sheth
Labour	T.Smith
Conservative	Kansagra
Conservative	Maurice

AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE (7 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Chan (Chair)
Labour	Choudry
Labour	Kabir
Labour	Long
Labour	Molloy
Labour	L.Smith
Conservative	J. Patel
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Agha
Labour	S.Butt
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Conneely
Labour	Ketan Sheth
Labour	T.Smith
Conservative	Kansagra
Conservative	Maurice

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (11 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ketan Sheth (Chair)
Labour	Fraser (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Aden
Labour	Afzal
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Ethapemi
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Rajan-Seelan
Labour	T.Smith
Conservative	Mistry
Liberal Democrat	Clinton
Education Statutory Co-optees (Voting-Education matters only)	Vacancy (x 2 Parent Governors) Alloysius Frederick (Roman Catholic Diocese)(May 2026) Venerable Archdeacon Catherine Pickford (CoE Diocese) (February 27)
Non-Voting Co-optees	Sayed Jaffar Milani (Muslim Faith Schools)(May 2026) Rachelle Goldberg (Jewish Faith Schools)(May 2026)
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam
Labour	S.Butt
Labour	Conneely
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Kennelly
Labour	Long
Labour	Mitchell
Labour	Molloy
Labour	Shah
Conservative	Kansagra
Conservative	Maurice
Liberal Democrat	Lorber
Liberal Democrat	Matin

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE (5 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Grahl (Chair)
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Gbajumo
Labour	L.Smith
Conservative	Hirani
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Chappell
Labour	Conneely
Labour	Kennelly
Labour	Rubin
Conservative	Kansagra
Conservative	Mistry

COUNCIL TAX SETTING COMMITTEE (5 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	M.Butt (Chair)
Labour	M.Patel (Vice Chair)
Labour	Knight
Labour	Rubin
Conservative	Kansagra
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Benea
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Farah
Labour	Grahl
Conservative	Maurice
Conservative	J. Patel

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE COMMITTEE (8 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	M.Butt
Labour	M.Patel (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Benea
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Nerva
Labour	Rubin
Labour	Krupa Sheth
Liberal Democrat	Lorber
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Afzal
Labour	Akram
Labour	Crabb
Labour	Farah
Labour	Grahl
Labour	Knight
Labour	Tatler
Liberal Democrat	Clinton
Liberal Democrat	Matin

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (5 Cllrs to be nominated)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Nerva (Chair)
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Grahl
Labour	Knight
Conservative	Kansagra
Full Voting Members (Voting)	Rammya Mathew (NWL ICB) (Vice-Chair)
	Robyn Doran (Brent ICB Partnership Executive)
	Simon Crawford (Brent ICB Partnership Executive)
	Jackie Allain (Brent ICB Partnership Executive)
	Gina Aston (Brent Healthwatch)
	Sarah Law (Residential & Nursing Care Sector)
Full Members (Non-Voting)	Kim Wright (Chief Executive - Brent Council)
	Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Service Reform & Strategy)
	Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children, Young People & Community Development - Brent Council)
	Dr Melanie Smith (Director of Public Health - Brent Council)
	Claudia Brown (Director Adult Social Care - Brent Council)
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	M.Butt
Labour	Farah
Labour	Mili Patel
Labour	Krupa Sheth
Conservative	Hirani
Conservative	Mistry

LICENSING COMMITTEE (10 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ahmed (Chair)
Labour	Long (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Akram
Labour	Bajwa
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Hylton
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Rajan-Seelan
Labour	L.Smith
Liberal Democrat	Clinton

PLANNING COMMITTEE (8 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Kelcher (Chair)
Labour	S. Butt (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Akram
Labour	Begum
Labour	Chappell
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Johnson
Conservative	J. Patel
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Agha
Labour	Bajwa
Labour	Crabb
Labour	Gbajumo
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Mitchell
Labour	Rajan-Seelan
Conservative	Hirani
Conservative	Kansagra

RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM COMMITTEE (11 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Conneely (Chair)
Labour	Kennelly (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam
Labour	S.Butt
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Long
Labour	Mitchell
Labour	Molloy
Labour	Shah
Conservative	Maurice
Liberal Democrat	Lorber
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Aden
Labour	Afzal
Labour	Ethapemi
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Fraser
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Rajan-Seelan
Labour	Ketan Sheth
Labour	T.Smith
Conservative	Kansagra
Conservative	J. Patel
Liberal Democrat	Clinton
Liberal Democrat	Matin

Council Joint Committees

NORTH WEST LONDON JOINT HEALTH AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ketan Sheth
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Fraser

LONDON COUNCILS LEADERS' COMMITTEE (s101 Joint Committee)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	M.Butt
Labour	M.Patel (Deputy)

LONDON COUNCILS TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (Associated Joint Committee)	
Full Members Nominated	
Labour	Krupa Sheth
Labour	M.Butt (Deputy)
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson (Deputy)
Labour	M.Patel (Deputy)
Labour	Rubin (Deputy)

OTHER BODIES AND PANELS

FOSTERING PANEL	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Moeen

EMPLOYEES JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE	
FULL Members Nominated (Employers Side)	
Labour	M.Patel (Chair)
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam
Labour	Chan
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Grahl
Labour	Nerva
Labour	Rubin
Labour	Tatler
Employees Side Members	
GMB X 4 representatives	
UNISON x 4 representatives	
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Aden
Labour	Afzal
Labour	Agha
Labour	Bajwa
Labour	Conneely
Labour	Gbajumo
Labour	Rajan Seelan
Labour	Ketan Sheth

TRADING STANDARDS JOINT ADVISORY BOARD	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Krupa Sheth (Chair)
Labour	Crabb
Labour	Kennelly
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Chohan
Labour	Farah
Labour	Miller

WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ahmed
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Mitchell
Labour	Krupa Sheth (Lead)
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Agha
Labour	S.Butt
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Farah

BRENT CONNECTS - HARLESDEN	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ethapemi (Chair)
Labour	Chappell (Vice-Chair)

BRENT CONNECTS - KILBURN	
FULL Members Nominated	

Labour	Cllr Begum (Chair)
Labour	Gbajumo (Vice-Chair)

BRENT CONNECTS - KINGSBURY AND KENTON	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Mitchell (Chair)
Labour	Kabir (Vice-Chair)

BRENT CONNECTS - WEMBLEY	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Akram(Chair)
Labour	Hylton (Vice-Chair)

BRENT CONNECTS - WILLESDEN	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Choudry (Chair)
Labour	Long (Vice-Chair)

BRENT YOUTH PARLIAMENT	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Choudry (Co-Chair)
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam (Co-Chair)

SERVICE USER CONSULTATIVE FORUM - EQUALITY	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	M.Patel

SERVICE USER CONSULTATIVE FORUM - DISABILITY	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	Rajan-Seelan

SERVICE USER CONSULTATIVE FORUM - PENSIONERS	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	Nerva

SERVICE USER CONSULTATIVE FORUM - PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam

SERVICE USER CONSULTATIVE FORUM - VOLUNTARY SECTOR	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	Rubin

BRENT ACTIVE TRAVEL FORUM	
FULL Member Nominated	
Labour	Mitchell

OUTSIDE BODIES

Open to Non-Cabinet

All Majority Party Only

Agreed Syllabus Conference (usually same membership as SACRE)	Johnson Mahmood Nerva
Capital Letters	Donnelly-Jackson
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	Ketan Sheth Nerva (Deputy)
Chalkhill Community Centre	Johnson
Chalkhill Community Trust Fund	Fraser Johnson
Edward Harvist Trust	Akram
First Wave Housing Board	S Butt
Newable Ltd (Greater London Enterprise Board)	Farah
Hillside Housing Trust	Knight
I4B Board	S Butt
Lee Valley Regional Park	Krupa Sheth (30.06.2025)
Local Government Information Unit Members' Assembly	Nerva M.Patel (Deputy)
London Housing Consortium (in process of being disbanded)	Donnelly-Jackson Knight(Deputy)
London Road Safety Council	Krupa Sheth Nerva (alternate)
Positive Ageing in London (formerly appointed to Age UK London)	Nerva Vacancy
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group	Crabb Nerva L.Smith
Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Greater London	Kennelly
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)	Johnson Mahmood Nerva
Willesden Consolidated Charities	Chappell Choudry Long Miller
Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) Planning Committee	Kelcher S.Butt (Deputy)
Brent District Scout Council	Choudry Long Miller
Young Brent Foundation	Grahl

OUTSIDE BODIES

Open to Cabinet Only

All Majority Party Only

	FULL Members Nominated
Local Government Association General Assembly	M.Butt
	M.Patel
	Benea
	Krupa Sheth
London Councils Greater London Employment Forum	M.Patel M.Butt (Deputy)
Partners for Brent (Local Strategic Partnership)	M.Butt

Kiln Theatre	M.Patel
	Donnelly-Jackson
West London Alliance	M.Butt
West London Waste Authority	Krupa Sheth
Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC)	M.Butt
	Benea (Deputy)
South Kilburn Trust	Rubin

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APPENDIX 2: For noting by Annual Council - Cabinet/Cabinet Committee/Executive Joint Committees Appointments

CABINET (Between 1-10 Full Members)	
Appointed by the Leader	
M.Butt	Leader
M.Patel	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources
Grahl	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools
Rubin	Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Community Power
Krupa Sheth	Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement
Nerva	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure
Knight	Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Resident Support & Culture (from 16 June 25 onwards)
Farah	Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs & Skills
Donnelly-Jackson	Cabinet Member for Housing (to include Resident Services remit until 16 June 25)
Benea	Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth
BARHAM PARK TRUST COMMITTEE (Currently 5 Full Members)	
Nominations by the Leader for approval by Cabinet.	
M.Butt (Chair)	
M.Patel (Vice-Chair)	
Donnelly-Jackson	
Farah	
Krupa Sheth	
Substitutue Members nominated by the Leader for approval by Cabinet	
Benea	
Grahl	
Knight	
Nerva	
Rubin	
JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE LONDON BOROUGHs OF BRENT, LEWISHAM AND SOUTHWARK (Currently 2 Full Members)	
Appointed by the Leader	
M.Patel (Lead)	
Rubin	
Substitute Members Appointed by the Leader	
M.Butt	
Donnelly-Jackson	
Grahl	
WEST LONDON ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD (Currently 1 Full Member)	
Appointed by the Leader	
M.Butt	
Substitute Members Appointed by the Leader	
M.Patel	
Benea	
LONDON COUNCILS GRANTS COMMITTEE	
Appointed by the Leader	
Rubin	
Donnelly-Jackson (Deputy)	
M.Patel (Deputy)	
LONDON LGPS CIV LTD	
Appointed by the Leader	
Johnson	
M.Patel	

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APPENDIX 3: For noting by Annual Council - Appointments to be made by General Purposes Committee

SENIOR STAFF APPOINTMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE (5 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	M. Butt (Chair)
Labour	M.Patel (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Grahl
Labour	Krupa Sheth
Conservative	Kansagra
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Benea
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Farah
Labour	Knight
Labour	Nerva
Labour	Rubin
Conservative	Maurice
Conservative	Mistry

SENIOR STAFF APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE (5 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	M. Butt (Chair)
Labour	M.Patel (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Grahl
Labour	Krupa Sheth
Conservative	Kansagra
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Benea
Labour	Donnelly-Jackson
Labour	Farah
Labour	Knight
Labour	Nerva
Labour	Rubin
Conservative	Maurice
Conservative	Mistry

BRENT PENSION FUND SUB-COMMITTEE (7 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Johnson (Chair)
Labour	Kennelly (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Ahmadi Moghaddam
Labour	Choudry
Labour	Crabb
Labour	Molloy
Conservative	Kansagra
Independent Co-Opted Members (Non-Voting)	Elizabeth Bankole (UNISON)
Substitute Members Nominated	
Labour	Ethapemi
Labour	Dixon
Labour	Mahmood
Labour	Shah
Conservative	Maurice
Conservative	J.Patel

BRENT PENSION BOARD (2 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated (not to be members of Pension Fund Sub Committee)	
Labour	Kabir
Labour	T.Smith
Independent Chair	David Ewart (31.07.2025)
Full Members	Chris Bala (Pension Scheme Member)
	Bola George (Trade Union Member UNISON)
	Robert Wheeler (Trade Union Member GMB)
	Vacancy (Employer Member - Non Brent Council)

No provision included within Boards Terms of Reference for appointment of substitute Members	
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APPENDIX 4: For noting by Annual Council - Appointments to be made by Licensing Committee

ALCOHOL & ENTERTAINMENT SUB COMMITTEE (3 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ahmed (Chair)
Labour	Long (Vice-Chair)
Labour	Bajwa
Substitute Members to be drawn from reminaing pool of Licensing Committee Members	

REGULATORY SUB-COMMITTEE (5 Full Members)	
FULL Members Nominated	
Labour	Ahmed (Chair)
Labour	Long (Vice-Chair)
Labour	L.Smith
Labour	Mahmood
Conservative	Kansagra (substitute nominated J.Patel)

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	Annual Council Meeting 14 May 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources
Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2025 - 2026	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	One: Appendix A: Annual Calendar of Meetings 2025 - 2026
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Amira Nassr, Deputy Director Democratic & Corporate Governance Tel: 0208 937 5436 amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk James Kinsella, Governance & Scrutiny Manager, Democratic Services Tel: 020 8937 2063 james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report presents the final calendar of council meetings for the 2025 - 2026 Municipal Year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members approve the dates for Full Council and other meetings to take place during the 2025 – 2026 Municipal Year, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Deputy Director Democratic & Corporate Governance be authorised to make any alterations deemed necessary to the Municipal Calendar during the course of the Municipal Year having consulted the Leader of the Council; the Leaders of the Opposition Groups; and the Chair of the affected meeting.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The advance scheduling of meetings supports delivery of the borough plan by enabling the Council's decision making bodies to operate transparently and effectively whilst also supporting and promoting confidence in the good governance of the council.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 Attached as Appendix 1 is the proposed calendar of meetings prepared for the 2025 - 2026 Municipal Year, which lists the dates for Full Council, and its committee/sub-committee meetings, meetings of the Cabinet and other bodies. These will continue to be kept under review as the Municipal Year progresses.

- 3.2.2 In the absence of any change in legislation relating to online meetings, the Council has returned to holding its main statutory meetings in person although it remains possible for members of the public and other stakeholders to still participate online, using the available hybrid meeting technology.

- 3.2.3 Attempts will be made, wherever possible, to avoid clashes of meetings for Members, based on a review of committee membership.

- 3.2.4 Religious festivals have been included on the calendar and meetings will be avoided (as far as possible) on dates where it has been deemed inappropriate to hold them due to the importance associated with any particular religious event.

- 3.2.5 For information purposes, the calendar also includes principal civic events as well as school holidays.

- 3.2.6 The dates of the Full Council meetings for the 2025 - 2026 Municipal year have been scheduled as follows:

- Monday 7 July 2025 – 6pm
- Monday 15 September 2025 – 6pm
- Monday 10 November 2025 – 6pm
- Monday 23 February 2026 (Council Tax & Budget Setting) – 6pm
- Wednesday 20 May 2026 (Annual Council Meeting & Mayor Making) – 6pm

- 3.2.7 Meetings of the following bodies have been agreed jointly with the other authorities listed:

- Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (London Borough of Barnet)
- Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board (London Borough of Harrow)
- Joint Committee of the London Boroughs of Brent Lewisham and Southwark (London Boroughs of Lewisham and Southwark)

- 3.2.8 In terms of attendance, each Member is responsible for submitting their apologies for absence in terms of the bodies they are members on. Such notifications shall be in writing and sent to the Deputy Director Democratic & Corporate Governance or their representative in good time and in any event, before the commencement of the

meeting in question. If such notification is not received, the Member(s) apologies will not be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

4. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The Annual Calendar of Meetings has been subject to consultation with officers and each political group.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires Members of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six-month consecutive period, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor. The calendar of meetings has been developed to ensure that membership clashes between meetings are avoided but members will still be responsible for managing their attendance, in order to comply with this requirement.

- 6.2 There are no other legal considerations relating to this report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 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.

- 7.3 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.

- 7.4 As outlined above, school holidays and religious festivals have been included within the calendar. As far as practicable meetings have been avoided on evenings where it has been deemed inappropriate to hold them due to the importance associated with a particular religious festival with the arrangement of meetings also limited during school holidays.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 None directly arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director Finance & Resources

Day	Committee Meetings	Time
MAY 2025		
Thursday 1 May		
Friday 2 May		
Saturday 3 May		
Sunday 4 May		
Monday 5 May	Early May bank holiday	
Tuesday 6 May		
Wednesday 7 May	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 8 May		
Friday 9 May		
Saturday 10 May		
Sunday 11 May		
Monday 12 May		
Tuesday 13 May		
Wednesday 14 May	Annual Council Meeting	6.00pm
Thursday 15 May		
Friday 16 May		
Saturday 17 May		
Sunday 18 May		
Monday 19 May	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
	Member Learning & Development - Scrutiny Committees	6.00pm
Tuesday 20 May		
Wednesday 21 May	Licensing Committee followed by Member Learning & Development - Compulsory for all Committee members	6.00pm
Thursday 22 May		
Friday 23 May		
Saturday 24 May		
Sunday 25 May		
Monday 26 May	Spring bank holiday/half term starts	
Tuesday 27 May		
Wednesday 28 May		

Thursday 29 May		
Friday 30 May	End of half term	
Saturday 31 May		
JUNE 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Sunday 1 June	Shavout starts	
Monday 2 June	Member Learning & Development - Planning Committee - Compulsory for Committee members	6.00pm
Tuesday 3 June	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
	Shavout finishes	
Wednesday 4 June	Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board - Brent	6.00pm
Thursday 5 June	Member Learning & Development	6.00pm
Friday 6 June	Eid-al-Adha starts	
Saturday 7 June		
Sunday 8 June		
Monday 9 June		
Tuesday 10 June	Eid-al-Adha finishes	
Wednesday 11 June	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 12 June	Member Learning & Development	6.00pm
Friday 13 June		
Saturday 14 June		
Sunday 15 June		
Monday 16 June	Cabinet	10.00am
	Member Learning & Development - Audit & Standards Advisory Full Committee - Compulsory for Committee members	5.00pm
	Audit & Standards Advisory Committee followed by Audit and Standards Committee	6.00pm
Tuesday 17 June	Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committee	10.00am
Wednesday 18 June	Schools Forum	6.00pm
Thursday 19 June		
Friday 20 June		
Saturday 21 June		
Sunday 22 June		
Monday 23 June	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Tuesday 24 June	Member Learning & Development - Brent Pensions Fund – Compulsory for Committee members	5.00pm

Tuesday 24 June	Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee	6.00pm
Wednesday 25 June		
Thursday 26 June		
Friday 27 June		
Saturday 28 June		
Sunday 29 June		
JULY 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Monday 30 June		
Tuesday 1 July	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 2 July	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 3 July		
Friday 4 July		
Saturday 5 July		
Sunday 6 July		
Monday 7 July	Full Council	6.00pm
Tuesday 8 July	Joint Boroughs IT Committee Brent, Lewisham and Southwark - Brent to host (online)	6.00pm
Wednesday 9 July	Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committee	10.00am
	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 10 July	SACRE	5.00pm
	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Friday 11 July		
Saturday 12 July		
Sunday 13 July		
Monday 14 July	Corporate Parenting	5.00pm
Tuesday 15 July		
Wednesday 16 July	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 17 July		
Friday 18 July		
Saturday 19 July		
Sunday 20 July		
Monday 21 July	Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee	6.00pm
Tuesday 22 July	Pension Board	6.00pm
Wednesday 23 July	Audit & Standards Advisory Committee	6.00pm

Thursday 24 July	Health & Wellbeing Board	6.00pm
Friday 25 July	Last day of Summer term	
Saturday 26 July		
Sunday 27 July		
Monday 28 July	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
Tuesday 29 July		
Wednesday 30 July		
AUGUST 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Thursday 31 July		
Friday 1 August		
Saturday 2 August		
Sunday 3 August		
Monday 4 August		
Tuesday 5 August		
Wednesday 6 August	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 7 August		
Friday 8 August		
Saturday 9 August		
Sunday 10 August		
Monday 11 August		
Tuesday 12 August		
Wednesday 13 August		
Thursday 14 August		
Friday 15 August	Janmasthtami	
Saturday 16 August		
Sunday 17 August		
Monday 18 August		
Tuesday 19 August		
Wednesday 20 August		
Thursday 21 August		
Friday 22 August		

Saturday 23 August		
Sunday 24 August		
Monday 25 August	Summer Bank Holiday	
Tuesday 26 August		
Wednesday 27 August		
Thursday 28 August		
Friday 29 August		
Saturday 30 August		
SEPTEMBER 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Sunday 31 August		
Monday 1 September	Start of Autumn term	
Tuesday 2 September	Barham Park Trust Committee	10.00am
	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Wednesday 3 September		
Thursday 4 September		
Friday 5 September		
Saturday 6 September		
Sunday 7 September		
Monday 8 September	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
Tuesday 9 September	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 10 September	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 11 September		
Friday 12 September		
Saturday 13 September		
Sunday 14 September		
Monday 15 September	Full Council	6.00pm
Tuesday 16 September		
Wednesday 17 September	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 18 September		
Friday 19 September		
Saturday 20 September	Liberal Democrat Party Conference starts	

Sunday 21 September		
Monday 22 September	Navratri starts	
	Rosh Hashanah starts	
Tuesday 23 September	Liberal Democrat Party Conference finishes	
Wednesday 24 September	Rosh Hashanah finishes	
Thursday 25 September	Audit and Standards Advisory Committee & Audit & Standards Committee	6.00pm
Friday 26 September		
Saturday 27 September		
Sunday 28 September		
Monday 29 September	Labour Party Conference starts	
OCTOBER 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Tuesday 30 September	Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committee	10.00am
Wednesday 1 October	Yom Kippur starts	
	Labour Party Conference finishes	
Thursday 2 October	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
	Navratri finishes/Yom Kippur finishes	
Friday 3 October		
Saturday 4 October		
Sunday 5 October	Conservative Party Conference starts	
Monday 6 October		
Tuesday 7 October	Member Learning & Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 8 October	Conservative Party Conference finishes	
	Pension Fund Sub Committee (including Training Session)	6.00pm
Thursday 9 October	SACRE	5.00pm
Friday 10 October		
Saturday 11 October		
Sunday 12 October		
Monday 13 October	Cabinet	10.00am
	Corporate Parenting	6.00pm
Tuesday 14 October		
Wednesday 15 October	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 16 October		
Friday 17 October		
Saturday 18 October		

Sunday 19 October		
Monday 20 October	Diwali	
Tuesday 21 October	Diwali	
Wednesday 22 October	Hindu New Year	
Thursday 23 October		
Friday 24 October		
Saturday 25 October		
Sunday 26 October		
Monday 27 October	Autum half term starts	
Tuesday 28 October		
Wednesday 29 October		
Thursday 30 October		
NOVEMBER 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Friday 31 October		
Saturday 1 November		
Sunday 2 November		
Monday 3 November	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Tuesday 4 November	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Wednesday 5 November	Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board - Harrow	6.00pm
Thursday 6 November	Pension Board	6.00pm
Friday 7 November		
Saturday 8 November		
Sunday 9 November		
Monday 10 November	Full Council	10.00am
Tuesday 11 November	Remembrance Day Schools Forum	6.00pm
Wednesday 12 November	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 13 November	Health & Wellbeing Board	6.00pm
Friday 14 November		
Saturday 15 November		
Sunday 16 November		
Monday 17 November	Cabinet	6.00pm
Tuesday 18 November	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review	6.00pm

Wednesday 19 November	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 20 November		
Friday 21 November		
Saturday 22 November		
Sunday 23 November		
Monday 24 November	Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee	6.00pm
Tuesday 25 November	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review	6.00pm
	Joint Boroughs IT Committee Brent, Lewisham and Southwark - Southwark to host (online)	6.00pm
Wednesday 26 November		
Thursday 27 November		
Friday 28 November		
Saturday 29 November		
December 2025		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Sunday 30 November		
Monday 1 December	Schools Forum (additional date if needed)	6.00pm
Tuesday 2 December	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 3 December	Audit and Standards Advisory Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 4 December	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review	6.00pm
Friday 5 December		
Saturday 6 December		
Sunday 7 December		
Monday 8 December	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
Tuesday 9 December	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 10 December	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 11 December	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review	6.00pm
Friday 12 December		
Saturday 13 December		
Sunday 14 December	Hanukkah starts	
Monday 15 December	Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review	6.00pm
Tuesday 16 December	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 17 December		

Thursday 18 December		
Friday 19 December	End of school Term	
Saturday 20 December		
Sunday 21 December		
Monday 22 December	School Christmas holiday starts	
	Hanukkah finishes	
Tuesday 23 December		
Wednesday 24 December		
Thursday 25 December	Christmas Day/Hanukkah starts	
Friday 26 December	Boxing day	
Saturday 27 December		
Sunday 28 December		
Monday 29 December		
Tuesday 30 December		
JANUARY 2026		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Wednesday 31 December		
Thursday 1 January	New Year's Day	
Friday 2 January		
Saturday 3 January		
Sunday 4 January		
Monday 5 January	Start of Spring term	
Tuesday 6 January		
Wednesday 7 January		
Thursday 8 January		
Friday 9 January		
Saturday 10 January		
Sunday 11 January		
Monday 12 January	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Tuesday 13 January		
Wednesday 14 January	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 15 January		
Friday 16 January		

Saturday 17 January		
Sunday 18 January		
Monday 19 January	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Tuesday 20 January		
Wednesday 21 January	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 22 January		
Friday 23 January		
Saturday 24 January		
Sunday 25 January		
Monday 26 January	Schools Forum	6.00pm
	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Tuesday 27 January	Holocaust Remembrance Day	
Wednesday 28 January		6.00pm
Thursday 29 January	Health & Wellbeing Board	6.00pm
Friday 30 January		
FEBRUARY 2026		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Saturday 31 January		
Sunday 1 February		
Monday 2 February	Corporate Parenting	5.00pm
Tuesday 3 February	Audit and Standards Advisory Committee	6.00pm
Wednesday 4 February	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Thursday 5 February	SACRE	5.00pm
Friday 6 February		
Saturday 7 February		
Sunday 8 February		
Monday 9 February	Cabinet	10.00am
Tuesday 10 February		
Wednesday 11 February	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 12 February		
Friday 13 February		

Saturday 14 February		
Sunday 15 February		
Monday 16 February	Half terms starts	
Tuesday 17 February	Ramadan starts	
Wednesday 18 February	Pension Fund Sub-Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 19 February		
Friday 20 February	Half term ends	
Saturday 21 February		
Sunday 22 February		
Monday 23 February	Full Council - Budget & Council Tax Setting meeting (if required)	6.00pm
Tuesday 24 February	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Wednesday 25 February		
Thursday 26 February	Council Tax Setting Committee (if required)	10.00am
	Schools Forum	6.00pm
Friday 27 February		
MARCH 2026		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Saturday 28 February		
Sunday 1 March		
Monday 2 March		
Tuesday 3 March	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 4 March	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Thursday 5 March	Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board - Brent	6.00pm
Friday 6 March		
Saturday 7 March		
Sunday 8 March		
Monday 9 March	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
Tuesday 10 March	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Wednesday 11 March	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 12 March		
Friday 13 March		
Saturday 14 March		

Sunday 15 March	Liberal Democrat Spring Conference starts	
Monday 16 March	Member Learning and Development	6.00pm
Tuesday 17 March	Joint Boroughs IT Committee Brent, Lewisham and Southwark - Lewisham to host (on line)	6.00pm
Wednesday 18 March	Ramadan finishes	
Thursday 19 March	Eid al Fitr	
Friday 20 March	Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee	6.00pm
Saturday 21 March	Eid al Fitr	
Sunday 22 March		
Monday 23 March	Pension Board	6.00pm
Tuesday 24 March	Audit and Standards Advisory Committee	6.00pm
Wednesday 25 March	Purdah starts	
Thursday 26 March		
Friday 27 March	Last day of term	
Saturday 28 March		
Sunday 29 March		
Monday 30 March	Easter holidays start	
APRIL 2026		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Tuesday 31 March		6.00pm
Wednesday 1 April	Health & Wellbeing Board	6.00pm
Thursday 2 April	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny	6.00pm
Friday 3 April	Easter Friday	
Saturday 4 April		
Sunday 5 April		
Monday 6 April	Easter Monday	
Tuesday 7 April	Cabinet	10.00am
	Corporate Parenting	5.00pm
Wednesday 8 April	Planning Committee	6.00pm
Thursday 9 April	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny	6.00pm
Friday 10 April		
Saturday 11 April		
Sunday 12 April		
Monday 13 April	Summer term starts	

Tuesday 14 April		
Wednesday 15 April		
Thursday 16 April		
Friday 17 April		
Saturday 18 April		
Sunday 19 April		
Monday 20 April		
Tuesday 21 April		
Wednesday 22 April		
Thursday 23 April		
Friday 24 April		
Saturday 25 April		
Sunday 26 April		
Monday 27 April		
Tuesday 28 April		
Wednesday 29 April		
MAY 2026		
Day	Committee Meeting	Time
Thursday 30 April		
Friday 1 May		
Saturday 2 May		
Sunday 3 May		
Monday 4 May	Early May Bank Holiday	
Tuesday 5 May		
Wednesday 6 May		
Thursday 7 May	Local Elections	
Friday 8 May		
Saturday 9 May		
Sunday 10 May		
Monday 11 May		
Tuesday 12 May		
Wednesday 13 May		
Thursday 14 May		

Friday 15 May		
Saturday 16 May		
Sunday 17 May		
Monday 18 May		
Tuesday 19 May		
Wednesday 20 May	Annual Council Meeting	6.00pm
Thursday 21 May		
Friday 22 May		
Saturday 23 May		
Sunday 24 May		
Monday 25 May	Spring Bank Holiday/Half Term starts	
Tuesday 26 May	General Purposes Committee	9.30am
	Cabinet	10.00am
Wednesday 27 May		
Thursday 28 May		
Friday 29 May		
Saturday 30 May		
Sunday 31 May		

	School Holidays
	Weekends
	Bank Holidays

	Annual Council Meeting 14 May 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources
International Partnering Arrangements	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Three Appendix 1: International Partnering Protocol Appendix 2: International Partnering Assessment – Nablus 2025 Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Minesh Patel Corporate Director of Finance & Resources 020 8937 4043 Minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes that the Council adopt an International Partnering Protocol (IPP) and reviews a proposed arrangement with Nablus in accordance with the protocol.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To adopt the International Partnering Protocol in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 To consider the community Assessment contained in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 To consider the Equalities Assessment contained in Appendix 3.
- 2.4 To agree that a Twinning Agreement be established with the city of Nablus.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to the Borough Plan and Strategic Priorities

- 3.1.1 The proposals contribute to the Borough Plan priority of Thriving Communities by allowing residents to come together, discuss what matters most to them, and work with the Council to develop and test new ideas. The approach outlined in the International Partnering Protocol will also help to utilise Brent's diverse cultures to celebrate and acknowledge key events and encourage residents to come together in celebration and commemoration of different cultures.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 International partnership arrangement programmes have been developed primarily as a result of the devastation caused by the world wars. They aimed to build trust and understanding across cities, countries and cultures in Europe, in the hope that they could help prevent similar catastrophes in the future. These arrangements are not now confined to European towns and cities however, and many authorities are partnered with towns and cities outside Europe with which they have particular connections.
- 3.2.2 International links promote tourism, cohesion and economic development. They create opportunities for groups, schools, individuals, families and businesses in different countries to get together in person and digitally to exchange and learn from each other. They help to expand horizons, build new friendships and establish useful commercial links as well as to practise languages and other skills and sample each other's countries' cultures.
- 3.2.3 Many international partnership arrangement projects involve clubs, schools and other agencies as well as individuals on work experience and or learning a foreign language, in addition to any activities initiated by the Council itself. The experience of other authorities is that involvement from local people is key to the success of any partnership arrangement and this is often underpinned by local people arranging exchange visits or digital activities between the residents of the partnered towns, often through a locally based town partnering associations and community groups and other organisations and agencies linking with their counterparts.

Governance of International Partnering Arrangements

- 3.2.4 In 2006, the Council adopted updated Twinning guidance. Following the passing of a motion by Full Council in November 2024, this guidance has been reviewed and a more comprehensive International Partnering Protocol has been developed as a basis for reviewing current and potential future partnering arrangements. The Protocol has been attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2.5 The Protocol provides criteria against which proposed International Partnering Arrangements can be assessed and reviewed. The categories of information to be included in assessment or review are, in summary:

- **Location Overview** - Information about the potential Partner town, city or region.
- **Strategic Fit** - How partnering would fit with the council's strategic objectives.
- **Profile** - Will the proposal be positive for the profile and shared objectives of Brent and the proposed?
- **Purpose** - What is the rationale or the aims and objectives behind collaboration?
- **Due Diligence Considerations** - Reputational and other risks.
- **Connections** - Existing local connections and interest.
- **Resources** - Are there sufficient resources, financial and staffing whether the council's or other stakeholders?
- **Inclusions and exclusions** - What is covered by the arrangement?
- **Mayoral Budget** - Confirming resources with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.

Brent Council International Partnering Arrangements

- 3.2.6 Brent entered into its first International Partnering Arrangement when it twinned with South Dublin in September 1997, on the basis of their common geographical, historical, cultural and trading links and their wish to continue to develop those links for the mutual benefit of the councils and their communities. At this time, Brent also had the largest Irish-born population in mainland Britain. This relationship is currently dormant, with the last Brent Mayoral visit to South Dublin taking place in April 2008. The only current recognition of this twinning seems to be the annual flag raising on St Patrick's Day by the Mayor's Office on 17 March.
- 3.2.7 If the Protocol is adopted, the current arrangement with South Dublin will be reviewed using the new assessment criteria.
- 3.2.8 The Council passed a Motion in November 2024 to consider twinning with the city of Nablus in Palestine. Since then, officers have been liaising with the Brent & Harrow branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other groups to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive.
- 3.2.9 Nablus is twinned with many cities across the world, including towns and cities in Ireland, France, Russia and Morocco. In addition to a petition evidencing community support, there is also support from faith organisations, businesses and local groups in Brent as well as a cross-sector interest in Brent, from schools, youth groups, charities, faith organisations, and community centres that already have links or interest in the region.
- 3.2.10 The 2021 Census results shows that Brent currently has the second highest Arab diaspora in England and Wales, second only to Birmingham. Arabs make up 5.3% of the Brent population (17,924 people), although it is hard to know what percentage of this are Palestinian.

- 3.2.11 As outlined in Appendix 1, in cases where it has been evidenced that there is substantial community support and backing for a proposal, the Council will be asked to approve a formal twinning arrangement.
- 3.2.12 Like Brent, Nablus has a long and rich history of culture, diversity and dynamism, ranging from historical architecture, a lively economy and a youthful population. A growing number of community and charitable organisations, including Brent Trades Union Council, Brent NEU and Brent Friends of Palestine have developed productive relations with Palestinian organisations and diaspora, further strengthening bonds to the city of Nablus.
- 3.2.13 Through the joint work of the Brent Trades Union Council, Brent NEU and of Brent and Harrow PSC, CADFA and the Palestinian Forum in Britain, opportunities have been provided to young Palestinians to meet Brent young people, Councillors and MPs, and share and develop a bond over their experiences in education, sports and culture. Opportunities for visits to Palestine by young Brent residents are also being planned.
- 3.2.14 The establishment of the “Brent-Nablus Twinning Project” organisation provides an opportunity for Brent to explore the potential of a formal international partnering arrangement with Nablus through community engagement, with the support of community organisations and official representatives in Nablus.
- 3.2.15 As set out in Appendix 1, there are various examples of what a Twinning arrangement is designed to deliver and also what it may aspire to achieve in the future.
- 3.2.16 Since the motion at Full Council, officers have been liaising with other Councils working on similar International Partnership Arrangements in Sheffield, Barnet, Hounslow and Oxford councils to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive. Conversations covered parameters of such agreements, the types of events, competitions, activities and knowledge sharing sessions planned by councils and local groups, inadvertent consequences (such as increased Fol requests), and managing expectations.
- 3.2.17 Appendices 2 and 3 contain an assessment of a proposed International Partnering Arrangement with the City of Nablus by reference to the proposed Protocol.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 A key part of the application process includes showing there is resident interest and engagement to initiate an International Partnership Agreement and keep it going. A petition has been submitted on behalf of the Brent-Nablus Twinning Association in support of the partnering arrangement and has received 1849 signatures.

4.2 Showing continued resident and community interest in such International Partnering Arrangements remains the responsibility of the proposers and will remain a fundamental part of any arrangement.

4.3 The report was shared and discussed with members of the Constitutional Working Group at its meeting on 22 April 2025, where the recommendations were agreed to proceed to Full Council for consideration and formal approval.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 International Partnering Arrangements would fall under the remit of the Mayor of Brent, but costs related to International Partnering Arrangements must be met by the organisation leading on this. This includes costs for entertaining, gift swaps or costs for printing certificates. There should be no additional financial cost for the Mayor's Office, or other parts of the council.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 In entering into its International Partnering Arrangements and undertaking associated activities, the council relies on the general power of competence set out in S1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 whereby a local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do and power to do it for, the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area.

6.2 If any new partnership were to be pursued, an agreement would need to be drawn up setting out the outcomes the partnership aspires to, and how it is hoped the desired outcomes and benefits will be achieved. The arrangement will not create any legal binding obligations.

6.3 Under section 176 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has power to defray any travelling or other expenses reasonably incurred by official or courtesy visits on behalf of the authority.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1. 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, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.2 "Due regard" is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances. The weight to be attached to the effect is a matter for the council. As long as the council is properly aware of the effects and has taken them into account, the duty is discharged. Depending on the circumstances, regard should be had to the following:

- the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision;
- the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- the need to take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes taking account of disabled persons' disabilities. There can be a positive duty to take action to help a disabled person. What matters is how they are affected, whatever proportion of the relevant group of people they might be;
- the need to encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life (or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low); and
- the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

7.3 A complete Equality Impact Assessment is appended at Appendix 3. Twinning with Nablus poses both positive and negative implications around race and religion/fait. The IPP assessment outlines the range of synergies, benefits and opportunities related to Twinning with Nablus. The potential challenges mainly relate to community cohesion and tension and these will be monitored through our existing mechanisms (e.g. complaints and community safety channels). It is difficult to fully determine any implications or the scale of them as they become clearer as initiatives and opportunities are realised as part of the Twinning arrangement. Additionally, existing data does not tell us the size of some of the relevant groups that may be more directly impacted in Brent.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 A formal International Partnering Arrangement would need to be signed by all parties involved and formally translated into one of the official languages of the partnering country. The cost of this would be met by the Mayor's budget.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director of Finance & Resources

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Brent Council – International Partnering Protocol

Introduction

International Partnering Arrangements aim to build trust and understanding across cities, countries and cultures to promote tourism, cohesion and economic development.

This Protocol sets out key principles to guide the Council's international Partnering work, ensuring that relationships are nurtured and managed with a focus on mutual benefits between Brent and the partner town, city or region.

Developing links or partnerships can contribute to other policy objectives such as culture, sports, heritage, links with diaspora, economic development and tourism. Potential mutual benefits include:

- Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Increasing cultural awareness, including knowledge and understanding of the town, city or region;
- Increased tolerance and understanding;
- Enhanced opportunities for youth activities, and
- The development of close friendships and ties built up over many years.

Different types of relationship

This Protocol uses a hierarchy of relationships, informed by good practice elsewhere:

1. Friendship Agreements have become more popular in recent years where partners identify areas of interest in which the partner town, city or region are committing themselves to explore and a timeframe for any proposed collaboration, or to trial an arrangement between the partners. These Agreements can also be renewed multiple times. These are time-limited arrangements, where each party receives short-term benefits but does not make a long-term commitment, at least until the relationship has had time to mature. These Friendship Agreements may be renewed or converted into Twinning Agreements at a later date if appropriate.
2. Twinning Agreements are formal longer-term arrangements (albeit with the inclusion of agreed review points). They represent a long-term commitment between the partners, not a short-term project partnership. They should always be able to survive changes in political leadership.

Relationship	Focus	Proposed by	Managed by	Budget	Duration	Review
Friendship Agreement	More civic and communal in nature, with language focusing on a commitment to fostering understanding; co-operation and mutual benefit (as opposed to specific projects)	Organisation or charity led	Community-led, with minimal officer input from the Mayoral team and no budget.	Budget raised and managed externally	Short-term	Every 24-36 months
Twinning	Agreement to exchange information, knowledge & expertise, and develop joint projects in defined areas e.g. Education; Culture; Sport;	Organisation or charity led	Community-led, with formal elements of officer and departmental input on specific projects	Budget raised and managed externally, but some monies set aside from the Mayoral budget.	Longer term	Every 5 years

Both types of arrangement have their respective benefits.

When considering new requests, the Council will form a view at the outset as to what form of arrangement it wishes to enter into. The approach outlined above is for a two-tiered system, whereby initial requests usually lead to a Friendship Agreement, with the potential, that if the Agreement is continually renewed over a certain period of time and there is clear community-driven support for maintaining such links, this could be developed into a Twinning Agreement. This process will require the Assessment criteria template to be completed to evidence this and reviewed at CWG followed by agreement at Full Council.

In exceptional circumstances, a request may be considered for the international partnership arrangement to be formalised into a Twinning arrangement without being a Friendship Agreement first. This will be based on substantial community support (such as over 1500 signatories on a petition) being evidenced.

Community Links

The experience of other authorities shows that involvement and ownership starts with the community and the key to the success of any partnering arrangement is often underpinned by local people arranging exchange visits between the residents of the twinned town, city or region, often through locally based town twinning associations and community groups and other organisations and agencies linking with their counterparts

In considering existing and potential International partnering arrangements we will be looking for a demonstration of community support. This support could form a willingness to donate time, money or their expertise to making its ambitions a reality.

Assessment Criteria for Decision Making

With limited time and resources, deciding on what Twinning or Friendship Agreement opportunities to pursue requires decision-making criteria and robust assessment. Whilst we may choose to maintain existing relationships, new opportunities for partnership working will undoubtedly arise. All relationships should be established for a fixed period of time and reviewed at the end that period and at other agreed intervals.

Opportunities for International Partnering must be sponsored by a councillor, with the backing of the local community. We will require measured assessment to determine value for the Council and other stakeholders. Using objective criteria, each new opportunity and each current relationship will be evaluated against a range of tourism, cultural, historical connections, educational, and operational factors before providing recommendations to Council on the merit of any new opportunity. Shared values of Brent Council such as the ability to demonstrate the promotion of human rights, gender equality and advocacy for social justice, respect and diversity of cultures, will also be taken into account.

International partnerships can offer benefits especially when there is a clear objective, with a strong, shared interest, community involvement and commitment of the partners involved. Such partnerships can offer an important opportunity to learn, share ideas and support community engagement. In a borough as diverse as Brent, this presents many opportunities to be explored.

Over the last 14 years, Brent Council's workforce has decreased by 52% alongside budget cuts of £210m over the last 13 years. This means that the council must also be realistic about the amount of resource (financial and in officer time) it can commit to International Partnering activities. We will only consider one new international partnering arrangement per administration with a maximum of three at any one given time (one fixed, one being implemented, and one being assessed).

The criteria detailed over the following pages will be used to assess new opportunities and approaches and to review existing relationships.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Before entering into any new international relationship, there will be an assessment of the proposal against the criteria set out below. The assessment will determine whether an International Partnership Arrangement would be appropriate and valuable and whether a formal Twinning Agreement or a Friendship Agreement is to be pursued, and the recommended terms and nature of the arrangement. As noted, the intention is for all arrangements (unless in exceptional circumstances) to start as a Friendship Agreement which will be reviewed after a set period.

Parties or Members proposing a Twinning or Friendship Agreement must answer each of questions in the first **eight** categories in this Assessment Criteria to put together their proposals. Please note that while residents can request Twinning or Friendship Agreements, this will only be considered by the Council if a current Member takes up the request on their behalf.

Please note that all answers require more than a Y/N response

1. Location Overview

- Is the proposed location a “good fit” for Brent in terms of:
 - a) Population size;
 - b) Population profiles (e.g. age, gender, race);
 - c) Business profile - Key sectors / main industries etc;
 - d) Type of governmental structures – e.g. sufficient similarity in powers and span of competence of each local authority;
 - e) Its ability to bring potential benefits to Brent
- Is the town, city or region making progress against similar challenges to Brent and are they doing so in a progressive manner?
- Does Brent have any existing partnerships in the same country?
- What other existing international town/city links does the partner, city or network already have in place?
- Key dates to be aware of – e.g. Independence Days; City Days; Keys Dates in the Civic Calendar.

2. Strategic Fit

- Does the proposal fit in with the Council’s stated aims as set out in its Borough Plan?
- Will there be tangible benefits for Brent’s residents, businesses or partners?
- Does Brent have any membership or affiliations to organisations in common with the proposed partner city or network?

3. Profile

- Will Brent Council's involvement help boost the profile of the proposed partner town, city or region and Council, helping them to achieve mutually shared objectives?

4. Purpose

- What is the rationale or the aims and objectives behind the approach – what are the perceived benefits of the arrangement either TO Brent or FROM Brent e.g., cultural opportunities, education, civic elements etc?
- What is the Council seeking to gain through establishing a formal relationship with this partner city or network?
 - a) Social and cultural exchanges;
 - b) Technical/knowledge sharing regarding common problems;
 - c) Tackling environmental issues, regeneration, community safety, health promotion and community cohesion;
 - d) Increasing educational opportunities for students (language learning, global awareness);
- What is the partner town, city or region seeking to achieve from collaboration?

5. Due Diligence Considerations

- Are there any potential risks including reputational issues through association with the location and/or key individuals such as Human Rights issues or any conflicts of interest?
- Are there any political circumstances or special relationships or causes being championed that the Council needs to be aware of?

6. Connections

- Are there pre-existing links with the partner city or network in respect of projects, networks or people to people dialogue?
- Is there local interest in this?
- Is there an existing diaspora community in Brent?
- Are there significant numbers of international students from the proposed partner studying in Brent?
- Are there any established businesses located in Brent from the proposed partner?
- Is there is a sufficient commonality of interest to sustain and grow the link within the specific and broader communities in the area?

7. Resources

- Does the Council or other Brent stakeholders have sufficient resources (both staffing and financial) to enter into the project or partnership? Consider which officers and departments are likely to be involved.
- How would the stakeholder group be run? Would they be set up as a charity or a CIC, or more informally run?

- At least 2 named Brent Council Members should take responsibility in supporting the stakeholder group with the Twinning or Friendship Agreement. Who might they be?
- Does the project have the potential to generate additional revenue or capital resources for Brent?
- How will the arrangement be sufficiently sustainable over its proposed lifespan? ‘
- How will the success of this programme be measured, monitored or reviewed?

8. Inclusions and exclusions

- What does this arrangement include and exclude? All agreements must be apolitical in nature. Are any particular activities intended as part of the arrangement? If so, the arrangement should also spell out who is responsible for what activity This agreement should loosely confirm how a trip for example would be funded, for how many people, how often trips can be made, how long a typical trip should last, purchase and exchange of gifts, and reciprocal arrangements.

9 Mayoral Budget

- The Mayoral Office is likely to spend some of its annual budget on hosting the occasional visit (if in a Twinning arrangement). A maximum budget per twinning or friendship agreement per financial year should be identified and confirmed with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources by the officer(s) assessing the proposal to ensure funds can be allocated to this budget before any new Internal Partnership Arrangement is agreed.

Review Criteria

All arrangements will be reviewed at the end of their agreed time period. If there is no longer any benefit to the Council or to Brent at large, the review will consider whether to seek to revive or terminate the arrangement. Reviews will be on a case-by-case basis using the same criteria as for an original assessment, including assessing historical benefits derived from the association and considering potential opportunities if the relationship were to be continued or reinvigorated.

If a decision is made to terminate an existing agreement, formal communication will be issued to inform the other party and to thank them for their association with Brent.

APPENDIX

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND GOVERNANCE

Decision-making

1. To initiate the international agreement process, the Council must hear a motion in support for this. If the Motion is passed, the group will be asked to complete the assessment template.
2. If the Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance considers the request reasonable on the basis of the assessment template completed, the Assessment will then go to the Constitutional Working Group (CWG) for initial consideration, and exploration. If the CWG have further questions or require further clarification, then this should be answered and ready for the next CWG meeting.
3. The outcome of the assessment will be confirmed by the Chief Executive following the consideration by CWG.
4. If applicable, the request will be reported to Full Council for decision. The report will include a recommendation of whether the Council should enter into an Agreement (and if so the nature and proposed terms of the agreement), and its review date. It should also include a completed Equalities Assessment form.
5. If a decision to proceed is made, formal communications will commence with the relevant city/town/region and an agreement between the two cities/towns/region will be developed.

Relationship Management

Members and Officers involved in the conduct of any international relationship must note the need to:

- Facilitate two-way communication and commit to regular engagement with representatives from the location, whether that be meetings (in-person or online), engaging in visits or hosting representatives from the location in Brent, while taking care to ensure that no information will be shared that may contravene the principles of data protection contained within the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations or other duties of confidentiality;
- If the relationship includes proposals for any commercial agreements, ensure that this is the subject of a separate decision made in accordance with the Council's Constitution

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INTERNATIONAL PARTNERING ASSESSMENT OR REVIEW

Brent Twinning with Nablus

1. Location Overview	
Is the proposed location a “good fit” for Brent in terms of:	
a) Population size;	The city of Nablus has an estimated population of approximately 200,000, while the broader Nablus municipality encompasses around 447,000 residents.
<div>Page 113</div> b) Population profiles (e.g. age, gender, race);	<p>Nablus has a notably youthful demographic profile, with a significant proportion of the population—64.3%—under the age of 30. Specifically, 41.4% of residents are between the ages of 0–17, and 22.9% fall within the 18–29 age group. Adults aged 30–59 comprise 39.5% of the population, while 6.2% are aged 60 and above.</p> <p>The city's population is predominantly Muslim, complemented by historically rooted Christian (approximately 580 individuals) and Samaritan (approximately 400 individuals) communities that continue to play a vital cultural and religious role.</p> <p>The gender distribution in Nablus is relatively balanced, with approximately 51% male and 49% female residents.</p>
c) Business profile - Key sectors / main industries etc;	<p>Nablus has a diverse economy rooted in tradition and industry. It is especially known for its olive oil production and traditional soap-making.</p> <p>Other key sectors include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism: Driven by rich cultural heritage, historical architecture, and religious landmarks. • Education: University-linked language and exchange programmes. • Manufacturing: Includes vegetable oils, soap, stone and marble, pharmaceuticals, detergents, diapers, sweets, plastics, aluminium, textiles, paints, and furniture. • Media & Packaging: Includes cartoon production and related materials. <p>These industries, along with strong agricultural and academic ties, position Nablus as a vital cultural and economic hub in the region.</p>
<div>Page 114</div> <p>d) Type of governmental structures – e.g. sufficient similarity in powers and span of competence of each local authority;</p>	<p>There is strong potential for collaboration between our two councils due to parallel structures across key sectors</p> <p>Palestinian Authority run council, has departments including housing, agriculture, social care, childcare, health.</p> <p>Brent departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration, Planning and Property • Finance and Resources • Climate Action and Community Power • Children, Young People and Skills • Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure • Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills • Public Realm and Enforcement • Housing and Residents Services <p>The Nablus Municipality is led by elected representatives with the council is composed of professionals and technocrats, working under the framework of the Palestinian Ministry of Local.</p>
<p>e) Its ability to bring potential benefits to Brent</p>	<p>Nablus presents a range of potential benefits for Brent through its status as a high-profile historic, cultural, commercial, and tourism hub. The city is home to An-Najah National University, a renowned medical school, and has a rich legacy in education, industry, and innovation.</p>

Is the partner, city or network making progress against similar challenges to Brent and are they doing so in a progressive manner?

Additional unique strengths include a growing focus on renewable energy, particularly solar energy, alongside vibrant sports initiatives and a dynamic trading sector.

There is significant potential for collaborative projects between Brent and Nablus, especially in areas such as urban planning, sustainable development, and the preservation of historical sites. Such partnerships can foster mutual learning and innovation while enhancing cultural exchange and diversity, ultimately enriching the social and cultural fabric of Brent.

The city is actively addressing a number of issues which parallel those faced by Brent such as the climate emergency, poverty, housing, infrastructure pressures, and unemployment.

Nablus, like Brent, is contending with a range of significant urban challenges, including:

- Water scarcity, exacerbated this year by low rainfall, leading the municipality to explore solutions such as drilling new wells.
- Unemployment and economic strain, largely influenced by political and financial constraints.
- Traffic congestion and urban expansion, which are putting additional pressure on infrastructure and urban services.

Nablus is implementing a number of forward-thinking and innovative initiatives to tackle these challenges:

- Nablus Boulevard Project: A major redevelopment of a 4.5-hectare brownfield site into an urban park and cultural hub. Funded in collaboration with the city of Lille (France), the project includes renovated heritage buildings, public engagement spaces, and cultural venues. It is the first project of its kind in Palestine to include structured public consultation and a comprehensive urban planning approach.
- Updated Master Plan: Originally developed in 1995 and revised in 2011, the city's master plan outlines the strategic distribution of land use, anticipating future population growth and

expansion into southern and western areas.

- A Water Facilities Master Plan (2012–2027) addresses systemic issues such as intermittent supply and high water loss (previously as high as 38%), with strategies to increase supply, detect leaks, and improve network efficiency.
- Munib Rashid Masri Street, opened in 2022, improves connectivity to marginalised areas, funded through a £1 million donation from the Masri Foundation.
- A Pavement Management System, developed by An-Najah National University, prioritises road maintenance based on pavement condition, usage, and safety, helping to make the most of limited budgets.
- The municipality is leading a comprehensive preservation programme in the Old City of Nablus, which includes restoring historic houses and façades, upgrading infrastructure, reviving the traditional bazaar, and promoting sustainable tourism while retaining cultural authenticity.
- Through participation in the Tomorrow's Cities Initiative, Nablus is working to develop risk-sensitive urban planning strategies, encourage community participation, and manage complex geographical and hazard-related challenges.

Does Brent have any existing partnerships in the same country?

No

What other existing international town/city links does the town, city or region already have in place?

Nablus is twinned with many cities across the world. These relationships focus on promoting mutual understanding and collaboration, peace and building educational and civic partnership

Dublin, Ireland

- The twinning between Dublin and Nablus aims to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through various initiatives, including cultural programs, educational exchanges, and community development projects. Such relationships are designed to strengthen people-to-people connections and share best practices in municipal governance and community engagement.
- Over the years, there have been:
 - Delegations from Dublin to Nablus and vice versa
 - Student exchange programs
 - Community and NGO partnerships fostering mutual understanding and support

Lille, France

- One of the key outcomes of the partnership is the “Nablus Boulevard” project, launched in 2015. This initiative involved cooperation between municipal authorities and universities in both cities. It focused on sustainable urban development and preserving cultural heritage. Experts from Lille and Nablus worked together on urban planning strategies to improve public spaces. This included creating pedestrian walkways, cultural centers, and green areas. Community participation was an important part of the project.
- Educational and Professional Exchanges: In July 2023, a delegation from Lille visited An-Najah National University in Nablus to explore collaborative opportunities. Discussions focused on joint research, student exchanges, and professional training programs. These efforts aim to strengthen ties between institutions and build mutual understanding between people in both cities.
- Overall, the relationship between Nablus and Lille highlights how international city partnerships can create real local benefits through shared expertise and cultural connection.

Naples, Italy

- **University partnerships:** The University of Naples Federico II works closely with An-Najah National University on academic/faculty exchanges and collaborative research projects.

- **Cultural centers:** Places like the Handala Ali Cultural Center promote Palestinian culture and encourage intercultural dialogue.
- **Public engagement:** Naples has become a hub for solidarity activities that connect its citizens with global causes.

Dundee, United Kingdom

- **Cultural exchange:** Dundee has hosted exhibitions and events highlighting Palestinian culture, enriching its own cultural landscape.
- **Education:** Palestinian students have studied in Dundee, creating opportunities for cross-cultural learning.
- **Community involvement:** Projects like tree planting in Nablus have engaged Dundee residents and built awareness of global issues.

Boulder, Colorado, United States

- Foster cultural, education and professional exchanges between the 2 communities
- **Educational and Cultural Exchanges:** The Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project has organized various programs such as student pen-pal exchanges, yoga teacher training, and delegations traveling between the two cities. These initiatives help foster greater understanding and friendship across cultures.
- **Community Engagement:** The project encourages participation from a wide range of people in both cities - students, entrepreneurs, artists, and professionals - to create lasting personal and professional relationships.

Como, Italy

- Emphasises cultural and municipal cooperation
- The agreement aimed to promote:
 - **Cultural exchange** (arts, heritage, food, traditions)
 - **Educational collaboration** (schools, universities, language programs)
 - **Technical and municipal cooperation** (urban planning, public services)

- **Solidarity and awareness** around Palestinian issues
- Over the years, the partnership has included:
 - Visits by delegations from Nablus to Como and vice versa
 - Art and photography exhibitions about life in Nablus
 - Student and NGO-led initiatives to build awareness and mutual understanding

Metropolitan City of Florence, Italy

- Focuses on cultural exchanges and mutual support. Activities have included.
 - **Exhibitions and conferences** on Palestinian culture and the situation in Nablus
 - **Delegation visits** between municipal leaders
 - **Educational exchanges** and NGO collaboration

Stavanger, Norway

- Built on principles of **solidarity, peace, and mutual cooperation**.
- The twinning has led to **practical cooperation and development projects**, such as:
 - **Capacity building** for municipal services in Nablus (e.g., water, sanitation, waste management)
 - **Youth and cultural exchange programs**
 - **Technical training** for local authorities
- The partnership encourages **people-to-people connections**, enabling residents of both cities to engage in:
 - Educational exchanges
 - Awareness campaigns
 - Events focused on peace and justice

Poznań, Poland

- This relationship, like many twinning arrangements, was formed to promote:
 - **Cultural exchange**
 - **Educational collaboration**

- **Economic and municipal cooperation**

Rabat, Morocco

- This twinning often involves:
 - Municipal cooperation
 - Cultural events and exchanges
 - Political statements of unity and support

Khasavyurt, Russia

- **Cultural and educational exchanges:** Facilitating mutual understanding through shared cultural events and educational programs.
- **Municipal cooperation:** Sharing best practices in local governance and community development.
- **Solidarity and support:** Expressing mutual support, particularly in times of need or crisis.

Nazareth, Israel

The twinning relationship between Nablus and Nazareth is a symbolic and practical partnership aimed at promoting cooperation, cultural exchange, and mutual support between the two cities.

Established in 1998, this twinning was one of the first official links between a Palestinian city and a city inside Israel with a majority Arab population.

The relationship is symbolic of Palestinian unity and solidarity, transcending the political divisions between Palestinians living under Israeli rule in different contexts.

Key Goals and Activities:

- **Cultural Exchange:** Promoting shared Palestinian heritage, art, music, and traditions between the two cities.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Supporting local businesses, artisans, and tourism initiatives.
- **Educational Collaboration:** Encouraging partnerships between schools and universities.

- Political Solidarity: A show of unity among Palestinians inside Israel and those in the occupied territories, emphasizing shared national identity and goals.

Key dates to be aware of – e.g. Independence Days; City Days; Keys Dates in the Civic Calendar.

National

Palestine specific dates:

- 15th November - Day to commemorate Palestinian Independence Day
- 29th Nov – United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Religious (examples)

Key Muslim dates:

- Ramadan, Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Adha (dates change yearly)

Key Christian dates:

- Dec 25th and Jan. 7th - Christmas
- Easter (dates change yearly)

Key Samaritan Days:

- Passover (dates change yearly)
- Sokot (dates change yearly)
- Hebrew New Year (dates change yearly)

General International dates:

- 8th March - Women's International Day
- 1st May - Labour Day

Does the proposal fit in with the Council's stated aims as set out in any Corporate Plan?

A twinning between Brent and Nablus aligns well with the strategic plans and ambitions of the Council's key partners, particularly around inclusion, internationalisation, education, community wellbeing, and economic growth

Businesses and Local Economy: Drive for inclusive economic growth, new markets, and diverse customer engagement.

- Opens up potential trade, skills, or networking links with Nablus (particularly in tech, education, health, crafts, and food).
- Demonstrates corporate responsibility and global outlook.
- Encourages business mentorship schemes for diaspora youth or start-ups inspired by international entrepreneurship

NHS and Health Partners: Strong focus on community health, cultural competence, and health equity.

- Opportunity for cross-learning around mental health, trauma-informed care, and community-based healthcare models (especially relevant to diverse, migrant communities in Brent).
- Supports NHS workforce strategies to improve diversity, inclusion, and local trust in services.
- Public health collaboration can focus on issues like youth wellbeing, diabetes, and preventative care.

Schools and Colleges (incl. FE and HE): Education partners aim to raise aspirations, global awareness, and social mobility.

- International collaboration enriches the curriculum (geography, history, citizenship, RE, languages).
- Civic engagement and global citizenship education opportunities for students.
- Exchange projects, joint learning platforms, or creative collaborations (e.g., art, debate, music).
- Raises attainment and engagement for students with Palestinian or Arab heritage.

Faith and Community Groups: Promote interfaith understanding, social justice, and global solidarity.

- Offers a platform for intercultural dialogue, shared community events, and peacebuilding.

- Faith groups often have existing connections to Palestinian causes and can be active partners in education, fundraising, or advocacy work tied to the twinning

Wembley Stadium / The Football Association: Focus on community inclusion, cultural events, and international partnerships.

- Potential to host cultural showcases, international football/youth tournaments, or solidarity events.
- Amplifies Brent's reputation as the Borough of Culture, celebrating global identity and diversity.

Universities / Student Accommodation Providers: Growth of international student recruitment and diverse campus communities.

- Strengthens Brent's appeal as an internationally connected borough, particularly to students from the Middle East and wider Global South.
- Supports welcoming environment initiatives and intercultural experience for students.
- Could lead to research partnerships, placements, or study abroad opportunities related to development, health, and urban studies.

Developers / Housing Partners: Commitment to social value, placemaking, and building cohesive communities. Developers are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate community benefit beyond bricks and mortar. Supporting the twinning could:

- Add value to social impact reporting
- Offer community-building projects or youth employment linked to twinning initiatives
- Strengthen local pride and cohesion, supporting long-term neighbourhood sustainability

Voluntary/Charity Organisations: Increasing resident engagement, grassroots leadership, and local-global connection.

- Encourages volunteerism, storytelling, and community organising around shared values (e.g., justice, resilience, dignity).
- Builds solidarity networks, reduces isolation, and deepens Brent's community cohesion.

<p>Does the proposal fit with strategic plans of the Council's key partners (e.g. target market for international students)?</p>	<p>(As above)</p> <p>A twinning between Brent and Nablus aligns well with the strategic plans and ambitions of the Council's key partners, particularly around inclusion, internationalisation, education, community wellbeing, and economic growth</p> <p>Businesses and Local Economy: Drive for inclusive economic growth, new markets, and diverse customer engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up potential trade, skills, or networking links with Nablus (particularly in tech, education, health, crafts, and food). • Demonstrates corporate responsibility and global outlook. • Encourages business mentorship schemes for diaspora youth or start-ups inspired by international entrepreneurship <p>NHS and Health Partners: Strong focus on community health, cultural competence, and health equity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for cross-learning around mental health, trauma-informed care, and community-based healthcare models (especially relevant to diverse, migrant communities in Brent). • Supports NHS workforce strategies to improve diversity, inclusion, and local trust in services. • Public health collaboration can focus on issues like youth wellbeing, diabetes, and preventative care. <p>Schools and Colleges (incl. FE and HE): Education partners aim to raise aspirations, global awareness, and social mobility.</p>

- International collaboration enriches the curriculum (geography, history, citizenship, RE, languages).
- Civic engagement and global citizenship education opportunities for students.
- Exchange projects, joint learning platforms, or creative collaborations (e.g., art, debate, music).
- Raises attainment and engagement for students with Palestinian or Arab heritage.

Faith and Community Groups: Promote interfaith understanding, social justice, and global solidarity.

- Offers a platform for intercultural dialogue, shared community events, and peacebuilding.
- Faith groups often have existing connections to Palestinian causes and can be active partners in education, fundraising, or advocacy work tied to the twinning

Wembley Stadium / The Football Association: Focus on community inclusion, cultural events, and international partnerships.

- Potential to host cultural showcases, international football/youth tournaments, or solidarity events.
- Amplifies Brent's reputation as the Borough of Culture, celebrating global identity and diversity.

Universities / Student Accommodation Providers: Growth of international student recruitment and diverse campus communities.

- Strengthens Brent's appeal as an internationally connected borough, particularly to students from the Middle East and wider Global South.
- Supports welcoming environment initiatives and intercultural experience for students.
- Could lead to research partnerships, placements, or study abroad opportunities related to development, health, and urban studies.

Developers / Housing Partners: Commitment to social value, placemaking, and building cohesive communities. Developers are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate community benefit beyond bricks and mortar. Supporting the twinning could:

- Add value to social impact reporting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer community-building projects or youth employment linked to twinning initiatives • Strengthen local pride and cohesion, supporting long-term neighbourhood sustainability <p>Voluntary/Charity Organisations: Increasing resident engagement, grassroots leadership, and local-global connection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages volunteerism, storytelling, and community organising around shared values (e.g., justice, resilience, dignity). • Builds solidarity networks, reduces isolation, and deepens Brent’s community cohesion.
Will there be tangible benefits for Brent’s residents, businesses or partners?	<p>From opening trading opportunities, through to cultural enrichment and educational and social exchanges and improvements, this twinning will bring substantial benefits to all in Brent.</p> <p>Residents: twinning programs create opportunities for cultural exchange, economic growth, and community development, leading to a more enriched and connected local population. Twinning brings the world closer to Brent, making the borough a more vibrant, diverse, and connected place for everyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Exchange and Global Understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exposure to New Cultures: Twinning fosters an environment of cultural exchange, allowing residents of Brent to engage with the customs, traditions, and lifestyles of Nablus. This can increase understanding, reduce prejudice, and promote mutual respect among different cultures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Example: Through festivals, cultural events, and school exchanges, Brent residents can experience the cuisine, music, art, and languages of Nablus, enriching cultural perspectives. ○ Language Learning Opportunities: Residents, particularly students, can take advantage of language exchange programs, either in person or virtually, to improve their proficiency in Arabic, enhancing their communication skills and global awareness.

- Example: A course offered by a language provider in Nablus, known for its language training skills and courses, could provide an affordable way for locals to learn Arabic while gaining further insight into Arab culture.
- Strengthened International Relationships and Community Ties
 - Building International Friendships: Residents can form personal connections and friendships through visits, exchanges, or online interactions with people from Nablus. These relationships can create a sense of global community and cross-cultural bonds.
 - Example: A local club or social group in Brent could set up a twin-city exchange program, where members visit or host peers from Nablus, sharing experiences and ideas.
 - Volunteer and Community Exchange Programs: Twinning can lead to community exchange programs where Brent residents can volunteer in Nablus, contributing to local causes and helping communities abroad, while also bringing back new ideas to their own neighborhoods.
 - Example: A Brent-based charity might collaborate with Nablus to organize community service trips, such as helping build homes or offering educational programs.
- Economic Opportunities and Business Development
 - New Business Opportunities: Twinning can help Brent residents tap into international markets and business networks. Residents with entrepreneurial ambitions can find partners, clients, or investors abroad, expanding their business opportunities.
 - Example: A local entrepreneur in Brent could collaborate with businesses in Nablus to import/export goods, offer consulting services, or create partnerships for joint ventures.
 - Tourism and Travel: Twinning can help attract international tourists to Brent and increase travel opportunities for locals, boosting the local economy and making Brent a more internationally connected area.

- Example: A tourism partnership between Brent and Nablus could promote travel deals and cultural tourism that allow Brent residents to explore Nablus at discounted rates or vice versa.
- Educational Benefits and International Learning
 - Study Abroad and Educational Exchanges: Twinning can create opportunities for students and educators in Brent to engage in study abroad programs, participate in exchange visits, or access international scholarships, which provide global learning experiences.
 - Example: A student from Brent could participate in an exchange program with a school in Nablus, gaining firsthand knowledge of the Palestinian education system while learning a new language and culture.
 - Cultural and Educational Events: Local schools, colleges, and universities in Brent can organize joint activities, workshops, and events with their counterparts in the twinned region, offering residents opportunities to attend or participate in cultural and educational exchanges.
 - Example: An exhibition of art or history related to Nablus could be hosted at a local gallery, giving residents the chance to learn about the region's heritage.
- Promoting Social and Environmental Initiatives
 - Joint Environmental Projects: Residents of Brent can collaborate on sustainable development initiatives with Nablus, such as community gardening, waste management programs, or renewable energy projects, which can have local and global impact.
 - Example: A community group in Brent could work with a partner in Nablus to promote recycling, sustainable transport, or energy-efficient housing projects that benefit both communities.
 - Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Support: In times of crisis, twinning can provide avenues for humanitarian support and solidarity between residents, fostering a collective sense of responsibility and shared action in tackling issues such as natural disasters or humanitarian needs.

- Example: Brent residents could mobilize donations or organize relief efforts when Nablus faces a natural disaster, strengthening the bond between the two communities.
- Improved Public Services and Shared Best Practices
 - Learning from Global Best Practices: Twinning allows Brent residents and local authorities to learn from other areas' experiences in managing public services, healthcare, transport, and urban planning. This exchange can result in the adoption of innovative ideas and better services for local residents.
 - Example: With the experience Nablus has in preserving historic buildings, Brent could implement similar strategies to preserve our heritage and listed buildings, as well as historic sites, benefiting residents. For examples we have the Old Oxgate (oldest surviving domestic structure in the Borough), as well as Grade II listed buildings including Church of All Saints (Harlesden), Church of St. Andrew (Willesden), Church of St Mary (Church End), Black Lion Public House (Kilburn) and Hundred Elms Farm Outbuilding (Sudbury)
 - Healthcare Collaboration: Twinned cities can work together to improve healthcare practices, share medical expertise, and help residents benefit from innovative health initiatives.
 - Example: Brent hospitals/healthcare clinics could collaborate with the Hospitals in Nablus (Rafidia Surgical Hospital, An-Najah National University hospital, St. Lukes Hospital, Al-Watani Medical Hospital, Al-Ittihad Hospital, Nablus Speciality Hospital, Specialised Arab Hospital) to establish public health awareness programs or share best practices for combating local health issues.
- Raising Global Awareness and Civic Engagement
 - Global Citizenship and Advocacy: Twinning helps instill a sense of global citizenship among Brent residents, encouraging them to engage in international advocacy, whether it's for human rights, climate change, or social justice. This fosters a culture of global awareness and solidarity.

- Example: A Brent community group could collaborate with an international advocacy organization in Nablus to work on global issues like poverty reduction or the refugee crisis, empowering residents to make a difference.
 - Social Integration and Community Empowerment: Twinning can encourage the social integration of newcomers, such as refugees or immigrants, by fostering connections with other communities and helping residents feel connected to a larger, global community.
 - Example: Brent's twinning partnership with Nablus could organize community events that showcase the diverse cultures of both areas, helping integrate local immigrant populations and celebrating diversity.
- Personal Growth and Enrichment
 - Personal Travel and Enrichment: Brent residents may benefit from travel opportunities to Nablus, allowing them to broaden their horizons, learn about a new culture, and bring back unique perspectives to their local community.
 - Example: Residents could organize group trips to Nablus, where they can explore new environments, make lasting memories, and experience the world beyond their neighbourhood.
 - Cultural Events and Festivals: Twinning arrangements often involve the creation of cultural festivals, where residents can participate in events that celebrate art, music, literature, and dance from the twinned city, expanding their cultural exposure.
 - Example: Brent might host an international film festival or a food fair showcasing cuisines from Nablus, enriching local culture and providing entertainment for residents.
- Strengthening Brent's International Reputation
 - Boosting Local Prestige: By engaging in international twinning partnerships, Brent can enhance its global profile, attracting visitors, businesses, and investors, which can ultimately benefit the local economy and residents' quality of life.

- Example: A successful twinning program could encourage international conferences or events to be held in Brent, leading to more tourism, local engagement, and economic development.
- Promoting Brent as a Diverse, Inclusive Community: As a borough known for its cultural diversity, twinning can reinforce Brent's reputation as a progressive, inclusive community committed to fostering global connections and welcoming diverse cultures.
 - Example: Leveraging its twinning partnerships in promotional materials, attracting international recognition for its commitment to inclusivity and community engagement.

Businesses and Local Economy: businesses can tap into multiple **benefits** that help drive economic development, increase brand visibility, and encourage innovation. as new potential suppliers, as well as purchases of the goods/services offered.

- Access to New Markets and Customers
 - Export/Import Opportunities: Twinning can open the door for businesses to enter new international markets, facilitating trade between the twinned areas.
 - Example: A manufacturing business in Nablus could partner with distributors or retailers in Brent to sell their products and vice-versa.
 - Global Customer Base: Businesses can reach out to global customers through marketing campaigns or by participating in joint expos and trade events.
- Partnerships and Networking
 - Collaborative Ventures: Companies can explore opportunities for joint ventures or business partnerships with counterparts in the twin region, leveraging local knowledge, networks, and resources.
 - Example: A tech company in Nablus might collaborate with a university or startup in Brent to co-develop new technologies and vice-versa.
 - Increased Networking: Twinned cities often host business delegations, networking events, and trade missions, where companies from both regions can meet, exchange ideas, and collaborate on new projects, resulting in mutual benefit for both areas.

- Innovation and Knowledge Sharing. Best Practices Exchange: Businesses can learn from best practices in areas like:
 - Manufacturing: How the twin city's companies are innovating on production processes.
 - Technology: Knowledge exchange on digital transformation, new software tools, or fintech innovations.
 - Sustainability: Sharing eco-friendly solutions or green tech advancements.
 - Research & Development: Twinned areas can jointly fund R&D projects to solve common challenges, whether related to sustainability, health, or tech innovation.

Talent Acquisition and Workforce Development

- Talent Pool Expansion: Through international connections, businesses in Brent/Nablus can access a broader talent pool, including engineers, designers, or other specialized skills.
 - Example: A local tech company can recruit from An-Najah university or other training institutions in Nablus to find employees with the right qualifications.
- Skill Building & Training: Both regions can exchange knowledge about training programs, internship opportunities, and vocational programs, improving local workforce skills and employability.

Marketing and Brand Recognition

- Co-Branding Opportunities: Businesses can co-brand products with their twinned city's counterparts, benefiting from the increased visibility of an international partnership.
 - Example: A local food manufacturer might team up with a city's food producer in Nablus to market a new joint product to both regions and vice versa.
- International Branding: Being part of a twinning initiative enhances a business's global presence, making them appear more innovative and internationally-minded.
- Sustainability and Green Innovation. Businesses can collaborate on environmental projects with counterparts in the twin city, sharing strategies to tackle issues like:

- Climate change and carbon footprint reduction
 - Urban sustainability
 - Green tech adoption (e.g. renewable energy solutions)
- This can lead to new partnerships focused on developing green technologies and sustainable business practices.
- Supply Chain Strengthening: Brent businesses can diversify their supply chains by establishing relationships with suppliers, distributors, or manufacturers in Nablus. This could be crucial for reducing risks or costs.
 - Example: A local manufacturer could source raw materials from Nablus, ensuring more resilient and cost-effective supply chains.
- Tourism and Hospitality
 - Tourism Boost: A twinned region may see increased tourism, especially if businesses are involved in tourism promotion or hospitality, creating opportunities for businesses in the local tourism, hospitality, and retail sectors.
 - Example: Hotels and restaurants might attract visitors from Nablus, or businesses can promote joint tourism packages between Nablus and Brent.
- Cultural and Educational Tourism
 - Cultural Events: Twinned cities often host cultural events that attract international visitors, and businesses can leverage these opportunities to showcase Brent local culture, host events, or sell local products to visitors from Nablus.
 - Academic Collaboration: Educational institutions can set up collaborations with An-Najah University in Nablus, which might lead to research projects, student exchanges, or even education tourism.
- Real-World Example:
 - Florence and Nablus: The twinning between Florence and Nablus has spurred interest in cultural and handicraft exports, as businesses in Nablus market their traditional arts to the European market.

- Liverpool and Shanghai: The twin cities have led to collaborations between local businesses and their counterparts in Shanghai, especially in sectors like tech innovation, logistics, and cultural exchange.

NHS and Health Partners:

- Health Knowledge Exchange: through virtual staff exchanges, joint training programs and potential study visits between hospitals, to share best practice in areas like primary care delivery, chronic disease management, health technology and innovation, as well as tackling the growing issue community mental health support
- Collaborative Public Health Projects: joint efforts on global health challenges like smoking cessation, diabetes prevention and air pollution and respiratory illness.
- Education and training: opportunities for NHS clinicians or public health professionals to engage in teaching or learning abroad, involvement in international conferences or online learning with peers in Nablus
- Innovation and Digital health: co-develop or share low-cost innovations useful in underserved areas or resource-strained NHS contexts, as well as exploring partnerships around digital health tools, tele-medicine and eHealth platforms.
- Community and Social Health programs: Tackle health inequalities by learning how Nablus works with marginalised and vulnerable populations, as well as involving local community groups, schools and social services in international community health campaigns.
- Global citizenship: foster sense of purpose, pride and global solidarity among NHS staff, building an outward-looking culturally sensitive workforce, especially given our diverse population.
- Examples of benefits from twinning from a Health perspective include Liverpool, which has a long-standing partnership with Odessa, and various health education projects have stemmed from that as well as Bristol's link with Beira, Mozambique, which includes public health collaboration and climate-resilient healthcare planning.

Schools and Colleges (incl. FE and HE): offer a multitude of benefits that enrich the educational experience, enhance academic outcomes, and foster cross-cultural understanding

- Cultural Exchange and Global Understanding
 - Student Exchange Programs: Twinning can create opportunities for student exchanges, allowing students to immerse themselves in different cultures, enhancing their global awareness, and improving their adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills.
 - Example: A school in Brent could establish a student exchange program with a school in Nablus, where students can live with host families and attend school, fostering a deeper understanding of Palestinian culture and education.
 - Global Perspective in Curriculum: Twinned institutions can collaborate to enrich their curricula with global perspectives on history, politics, economics, and culture. This allows students to study topics from multiple viewpoints and engage with international peers.
 - Example: Universities in Brent and their twinned counterparts in Nablus could jointly design a curriculum focused on international relations, offering students insights into global diplomatic practices.
- Enhanced Academic Collaboration
 - Joint Research Projects: Universities and colleges in Brent can collaborate with those abroad on research initiatives, particularly in fields such as science, technology, social studies, or environmental studies. Twinning partnerships can help share resources, knowledge, and innovative approaches to complex problems.
 - Example: A university in Brent could collaborate with an engineering school in Nablus to jointly research renewable energy technologies or robotics.
 - Faculty Exchanges and Professional Development: Twinned schools, colleges, and universities can create faculty exchange programs that allow educators to share best practices, attend professional development workshops, and gain new perspectives on teaching and learning.
 - Example: A college in Brent could send teachers to a partner institution in Nablus to learn about their educational methods and apply them in Brent schools.
- Expanding Career Opportunities for Students

- International Internships and Job Placements: Students can benefit from international internship opportunities through partnerships with twinned institutions in Nablus. These internships offer real-world experience in global markets and enhance students' career prospects.
 - Example: A university in Brent could partner with a company in Nablus to provide internship opportunities for students in business, technology, or hospitality management.
- Global Networking: Twinning creates a platform for students and faculty to network with peers, professionals, and industry leaders abroad, opening doors to global career opportunities and collaborations.
 - Example: University students based in Brent might attend an international conference or career fair held at An-Najah university in Nablus, making connections that could lead to job offers abroad.
- Promoting Innovation and Knowledge Sharing
 - Collaboration on Innovation: Schools and universities in Brent can work with their twinned counterparts in Nablus to develop innovative educational tools, such as new digital platforms, online learning courses, or virtual labs, which can benefit students globally.
 - Example: A college in Brent could collaborate with An-Najah university in Nablus to co-develop an online learning module on advanced AI techniques, allowing students from both countries to participate in a shared course.
 - Knowledge Sharing on Pedagogy: Schools in Brent can learn about new teaching methods or educational technologies used by their twin institutions, which can then be implemented in local classrooms to improve learning outcomes.
 - Example: A primary school in Brent could partner with a school in Nablus to adopt their student-centered teaching approach, as well as other tried and tested methods, which can be applied where applicable.
- Promoting Language Learning and Bilingualism

- Language Exchange Programs: Twinning with a region where a different language is spoken can provide a natural setting for language learning. Students can participate in exchange programs where they immerse themselves in the language and culture.
 - Example: A school in Brent could establish an exchange partnership with a school in Nablus, offering students the opportunity to learn Arabic through direct interaction with native speakers.
 - Cultural and Language Events: Twinning can also facilitate events such as language competitions, theatre performances, or poetry readings that celebrate linguistic diversity and allow students to practice their Arabic skills in a real-world setting.
- Improving Access to Resources
 - Access to International Libraries and Research: University students based in Brent can benefit from twinning partnerships by gaining access to research libraries, databases, and academic journals from An-Najah University in Nablus
 - Technological Resources and Facilities: Twinned institutions can share access to state-of-the-art labs, technology, or online tools, allowing students and faculty to conduct research or participate in projects that would otherwise be out of reach.
 - Example: A science department at a Brent college could collaborate with a partner institution in Nablus that has advanced research facilities for climate change studies.
 - Strengthening Social Responsibility and Community Engagement
 - Collaborative Social Impact Projects: Educational institutions can work with their twin institutions to address global social issues, such as poverty, inequality, or climate change. This could involve joint research, community projects, or charity work.
 - Example: Educational institutions in Brent could team up with their counterparts in Nablus to research sustainable farming practices and develop a solution for food security in underdeveloped communities.
 - Volunteer and Outreach Programs: Students in Brent can participate in international volunteering opportunities, working on projects such as educational outreach, healthcare

initiatives, or environmental conservation, while learning firsthand about global social challenges.

- Example: A college in Brent could partner with An-Najah university to establish a community development program where students work together to improve infrastructure or education in rural areas.

- Raising the Global Profile of Brent's Institutions

- International Reputation: Twinning partnerships can increase the global visibility of Brent's educational institutions, attracting international students and partnerships. Schools, colleges, and can enhance their reputation by demonstrating global engagement and academic excellence.

- Example: that collaborates with An-Najah university institution in Nablus may attract students from Palestine as well as the wider Arab world, raising the institution's profile and increasing applications.

- Global Competitions and Events: Through twinning, schools in Brent can participate in global competitions, such as science fairs, debating contests, or sports tournaments, which showcase their students' talents and foster school pride.

- Example: A Brent secondary school could form a sports twinning program with a school in Nablus, enabling students to compete in international athletics events.

- Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity

- Cross-Cultural Interaction: Twinning creates opportunities for students to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and fostering a culture of respect and understanding.

- Example: Brent schools could create programs that bring students from different cultural backgrounds together to work on shared projects, such as environmental sustainability, or to celebrate important cultural or religious holidays.

- Encouraging Global Citizenship

- Building Global Citizens: Twinning partnerships help schools, colleges, and universities to foster a sense of global citizenship in their students. These partnerships encourage students to think beyond their local context and develop a broader understanding of the world.
 - Example: A Brent school twinned with a school in Nablus could organize a project about climate change, educating students on how environmental issues affect both local and global communities, and encouraging them to become active participants in solutions.

Faith and Community Groups. Twinning offers faith centers in Brent a chance to connect globally, learn from others, share their own unique practices, and grow both spiritually and socially. Through collaborative efforts, they can address global challenges, foster peace, and create stronger, more resilient communities

- Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Understanding
 - Building Stronger Relationships: Twinning with religious centers in another part of the world can open opportunities for interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding. This helps to reduce cultural barriers and promotes peaceful coexistence.
 - Example: Faith organisations in Brent could partner with a faith organisations in Nablus, which will have a different cultural approach, creating a space for dialogue on shared beliefs and practices.
 - Global Interfaith Events: Religious communities can organize joint events, such as conferences, peace-building workshops, or religious festivals, that foster collaboration and understanding.
 - Example: Faith organisations in Brent could come together to mark common major religious events in both regions, like Christmas, Eid, or Passover, with mutual participation, as well as learning about other faiths and celebrations
- Cultural and Religious Exchange

- Learning About Global Practices: Religious centers can learn from religious practices in different parts of the world. This exchange can include worship styles, rituals, and religious music.
 - Example: A church in Brent could learn more about the practices of a church in Nablus, deepening their understanding of Christian traditions abroad.
- Sharing Local Traditions: Faith groups in Brent can also showcase their own practices and traditions with twinned communities, promoting their culture globally.
 - Example: A local Hindu temple could showcase cultural events such as Navratri celebrations to Nablus, which doesn't have a Hindu community for example, building greater international visibility.
- Community Development and Social Outreach
 - Joint Charitable Projects: Religious groups can join forces with their twin partners to address issues such as poverty, discrimination, and refugee support. Through collaboration, they can expand their charitable activities and create global initiatives.
 - Example: A collection of faith centres in Brent could partner with faith centres in Nablus to send humanitarian aid to communities in need, such as disaster-stricken areas.
 - Social Justice Initiatives: Twinning creates a platform to share best practices on tackling social issues such as mental health, housing, and social isolation, improving the wellbeing of local communities.
 - Example: Mosques in Brent might twin with mosques in Nablus to jointly support programs like mental health awareness, youth outreach, or food banks.
- Shared Resources and Expertise
 - Support for Religious Education: Twinned religious groups can exchange religious education materials and teachings, benefiting young people in the community. They can also arrange student exchanges or pilgrimages, expanding the spiritual and educational horizons of their followers.

- Example: Schools, in coordination with faith organisations in Brent could collaborate with their counterparts in Nablus to create educational programs that teach about faith, history, culture and philosophy from a global perspective.
 - Best Practices for Religious Spaces: Religious centers can share best practices in terms of managing their spaces, organizing events, and engaging with local communities.
 - Example: A mosque in Brent could benefit from the experiences of a large mosque in Nablus in terms of community engagement and fundraising strategies.
- Networking Opportunities for Faith-Based Leaders
 - Global Leadership Forums: Religious leaders in Brent could attend global forums, conventions, or workshops with their twinned counterparts in Nablus. This can foster international solidarity among faith communities and create opportunities for leadership development.
 - Example: A local imam could attend a global Muslim leadership summit, expanding his network and bringing back new ideas for local mosque development.
 - Faith Leadership Exchange: Twinned communities can invite religious leaders to give lectures, sermons, or share insights about faith leadership in their respective regions.
 - Example: A rabbi from a Brent synagogue could host an interfaith seminar with faith leaders from Nablus to discuss religious leadership during times of crisis.
- Promoting Peace and Conflict Resolution
 - Global Peacebuilding: Twinning can provide a platform for faith centers to collaborate on global peacebuilding initiatives and promote religious tolerance and conflict resolution.
 - Example: Faith organisations in Brent could collaborate with their counterparts in Nablus to help mediate and provide support in peace talks.
 - Joint Advocacy for Religious Freedom: Religious centers in Brent can join forces with those in Nablus to advocate for religious freedom, human rights, and equality globally.
- Access to Funding and Resources

- Joint Grant Applications: Twinning can lead to joint applications for international grants or funding for religious or charitable projects, especially those focusing on community building, educational outreach, or global initiatives.
 - Example: A faith organisation within Brent could partner with an international organisation to apply for funding aimed at building a new faith centre or expanding educational resources.
 - Collaboration on International Projects: Twinned religious organizations can co-organize large-scale events such as interfaith festivals, youth camps, or pilgrimages that could attract international sponsors and donors.
- Enhancing Global Presence
 - Cultural Exchange Through Social Media: Through twinning, religious centers can build an online presence that connects Brent's faith communities with their international counterparts. This could involve sharing religious messages, updates on events, or showcasing cultural experiences.
 - Example: A local church could share a live-stream of a service on social media, linking with a church in Nablus for a joint prayer session or cultural exchange.
 - Branding and Global Recognition: Being part of a twinning initiative can help faith centers increase their global profile and attract international visitors who are interested in experiencing their religious and cultural traditions.
 - Tourism and Pilgrimage Opportunities
 - Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism: Faith groups in Brent can work with their twinned counterparts to organize pilgrimages or religious tourism programs that benefit both regions.
 - Example: Faith centres could offer organized pilgrimages to holy sites, potentially growing religious tourism and benefiting local economies.
 - Cultural Tours and Retreats: Twinned faith communities can create cultural exchange programs that allow members to visit places of worship and holy sites, while also learning about Nablus' culture and faith practices.

- Community Empowerment and Building Resilience
 - Supporting Vulnerable Groups: Twinning partnerships allow faith centers to share resources and ideas on how to better support vulnerable groups, such as refugees, the homeless, or minorities, through charity drives or emergency support initiatives.
 - Example: A local church in Brent could collaborate with a church in Nablus to support refugee resettlement efforts, providing services and housing solutions.

Wembley Stadium / The Football Association: as the home of football, the stadium has the ability to support the strengthening of sporting, especially football, collaborations. Nablus has a 5,00-6000 capacity stadium, hosting local league matches as well as being used for youth training, community sports events and school tournaments.

- Cultural Exchange Through Sport: Twinning opens doors for intercultural sports events, like:
 - Youth football tournaments
 - Mixed-nationality community leagues or charity games

Promotes inclusivity, respect, and international friendship through shared sporting values.

- Stadium Management & Infrastructure Knowledge Sharing: Share expertise in:
 - Crowd management & safety
 - Sustainable stadium design (e.g. zero-carbon goals)
 - Event operations, hospitality, and fan engagement
 - Exchange visits between stadium operations teams to shadow each other and learn new practices.
- Sports Education & Talent Development
 - Partner on youth football development academies
 - Enable coach exchanges, mentorship, or joint training programs
 - Set up talent scouting collaborations between twinned regions

- Example: Wembley stadium could support local in Nablus talent and offer pathways to higher levels of the sport.
- Community Impact and Legacy Projects. Co-create outreach programs on:
 - Mental health through sport
 - Girls' and women's access to football
 - Anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns
 - Stadiums can act as community hubs with twinned locations offering support, toolkits, or co-branded campaigns.
- Sustainability & Smart Stadium Initiatives. Joint research or pilots for:
 - Renewable energy use (e.g. solar-powered floodlights)
 - Smart ticketing and crowd flow systems
 - Recycling and low-impact construction
 - Share case studies on stadium greening and eco-certification.
- International Promotion & Tourism. Co-branding or cross-promotion of events.
 - Cultural festivals or sports diplomacy events that use both stadiums as global stages.
 - Example: As part of the Football Associations aims to internationalise football and aid development, it can highlight football initiatives in places, including Nablus
 - Peacebuilding and Symbolic Partnerships
 - Twinning between stadiums in regions with different or even tense political backgrounds can be a powerful symbol of unity and peace through sport.
 - Supports dialogue, respect, and shared hope.
- Could offer powerful opportunities around:
 - **Youth sports development**
 - **Coaching programs**

- **Facility improvement support**
- **Football diplomacy**

Universities / Student Accommodation Providers: Palestinian refugees have been recognized as some of the most educated refugee groups worldwide.

- Cultural exchange: can benefit from international exchanges, study abroad programs, as well as accommodation being a hub of cross-cultural interaction, as halls can host
 - Language exchange nights
 - international food and culture events.,
 - Art and photography exhibitions from Nablus
- Shared Knowledge on Student Living Modes. Student accommodation providers (especially universities or municipal partners) can compare notes with Nablus on:
 - Design of student housing (e.g., communal living vs. studio flats)
 - Sustainability practices (energy-efficient buildings, waste systems)
 - Wellbeing and mental health support for residents

Either twinned areas with innovative or student-friendly housing could inspire upgrades or redesigns in the other.

- Career & Leadership Opportunities for Residents. Residents can get involved in student ambassador roles tied to the twinning relationship:
 - Help welcome international students from Nablus
 - Organize peer mentorship or buddy programs
 - Join delegations or projects tied to the twinning

Great for building leadership skills and enhancing their CV.

- Exchange of Accommodation Staff & Practices. Staff from student housing (residence managers, pastoral care teams) can participate in training exchanges with staff in Nablus. Topics might include:
 - Handling student conflict and safety

- Inclusion and diversity
- Supporting international and refugee students

Brings fresh perspectives to residence life management.

- Sustainability Partnerships. Student accommodations can twin specifically with green campuses or eco-housing projects in Nablus.
 - Students could co-develop:
 - Sustainability campaigns
 - Community gardens or rooftop farms
 - Plastic-free initiatives or smart recycling systems

A practical, collaborative way to live the values of climate action across borders.

- Joint Celebrations and Events. Brent and Nablus could celebrate their twinning anniversary with synchronized events in their student residences:
 - Live-streamed concerts or student talent shows
 - Twin-themed pub quiz or movie nights
 - Collaborative art murals connecting both cities

Builds a fun, shared identity among students.

Developers / Housing Partners: share experiences and learn to improve the development in communities. can tap into new opportunities, knowledge, and resources, which can help improve their practices

- Knowledge Sharing and Best Practices
 - Sustainable Building Practices: Twinning can allow developers to share and adopt sustainable construction methods from regions that excel in eco-friendly or energy-efficient building solutions.

- Example: A partnership with a Nablus-based developer which may be known for sustainable architecture could inspire developers in Brent to adopt better green building materials or energy-saving designs.
 - Innovative Design Concepts: Developers can learn about cutting-edge architectural designs that reflect global trends or local cultural influences. Twinned regions might offer fresh perspectives on urban planning and design.
- Access to New Markets and Investment
 - International Partnerships: Twinning can open doors for joint ventures between developers in Brent and businesses in Nablus and further afield. This could help developers expand their networks and pursue international projects.
 - Example: Nablus could provide Brent developers with investment opportunities or access to new development projects in that region.
 - Attracting Foreign Investment: Twinning can attract foreign investors to Brent's real estate and construction sectors, increasing the flow of capital for local development projects.
- Collaboration on Sustainable Urban Development
 - Eco-City Design and Green Building Standards: Developers in Brent can collaborate with Nablus, with their focus on sustainability to introduce eco-city models or smart technologies in new developments.
 - Example: A partnership with Nablus with a reputation for eco-friendly urban planning can help Brent developers integrate green building standards, such as the BREEAM rating system or LEED certification.
- Skill Development and Knowledge Transfer
 - Training Programs and Exchange: Developers and builders can participate in international training programs, sharing knowledge on advanced building techniques, project management skills, and construction safety.

- Collaboration on Workforce Development: Twinning can enable the creation of workforce development programs where local builders can gain training or internships abroad, learning new techniques that can be applied to their projects in Brent.
- Cross-Cultural Design and Architecture
 - Cultural Influences on Architecture: Twinning can bring new cultural influences to construction projects, enriching the designs of homes and commercial spaces in Brent.
 - Example: Developers might work with architects from Nablus to blend local traditions or cultural elements into the designs of modern buildings, creating unique developments that appeal to a global market.
 - Increased Diversity in Development Projects: Twinning with Nablus, known for architectural diversity could inspire developers to integrate various cultural and design elements, enhancing Brent's urban landscape with a mix of styles.
- Business Opportunities and Networking
 - International Networking: Twinning opens the door for networking with international developers, suppliers, architects, and investors. This could lead to collaborations on multinational projects.
 - Trade and Supply Chain Networks: Developers in Brent could gain access to new suppliers or building materials from Nablus, potentially lowering costs or improving quality.
- Housing Projects and Affordable Development
 - Affordable Housing Initiatives: Developers could learn from Nablus on things like successful affordable housing models. These models can be adapted and applied to meet the needs of the local community in Brent.
 - Housing Innovation: Working with twinned cities can expose Brent developers to innovative housing solutions, such as modular housing, co-living spaces, or community-driven development projects.

- International Visibility and Recognition
 - Global Brand Presence: Developers in Brent can boost their international reputation by being associated with global projects and markets. Twinning can provide exposure to the international community and open doors for new business opportunities abroad.
 - Showcasing Work: Twinned cities might invite developers to participate in international expos, trade shows, or conferences, giving them a platform to showcase their work and share best practices.
- Access to Funding and Grants
 - International Funding: Developers in Brent may be able to access international funding, grants, or subsidies available for joint projects between Brent and Nablus.
- Addressing Urban Challenges
 - Solving Urbanization Challenges: Twinning can foster collaboration between developers and city planners to address common urban challenges such as:
 - Traffic congestion
 - Housing shortages
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Sharing Solutions: Brent and Nablus can share knowledge on how they've tackled these issues, giving developers in Brent the tools to design better solutions for local challenges.

Voluntary/Charity Organisations: twinning, in fostering opportunities for **knowledge exchange**, **resource sharing**, and **cross-border collaborations** can greatly benefit organisations in Brent.

- International Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building

- Sharing Best Practices: Twinning with charitable organizations in Nablus can allow Brent-based charities to learn new strategies, innovative solutions, and effective programs for tackling social issues.
 - Example: A Brent charity focused on mental health could partner with a mental health organization in Nablus, learning about their successful community-based mental health programs and applying them in Brent.
- Training and Skill Development: Charities can benefit from capacity-building programs and training provided by their twinned partners, which can improve their efficiency, staff capabilities, and service delivery.
 - Example: A refugee support charity in Brent could organize joint training sessions with an international organization to improve support mechanisms for refugees and migrants.
- Expanding Networks and Partnerships
 - Global Networking: Twinning partnerships provide opportunities for charities to connect with other organizations, donors, and funders globally, which can help them expand their network and raise awareness for their causes.
 - Example: A Brent-based homelessness charity could build relationships with international partners and participate in global networks focused on finding sustainable solutions to homelessness, gaining access to resources and expertise.
 - Collaborative Fundraising Initiatives: Partnering with organisations abroad can enable joint fundraising campaigns and events, which attract international donors, sponsors, and grants.
 - Example: A charity in Brent working on clean water access could partner with a counterpart in Nablus to raise funds for clean water initiatives in developing countries, increasing their visibility and credibility.
- Supporting International Development Goals

- Contributing to Global Challenges: Charities in Brent can align their work with global development goals (such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and collaborate on international projects aimed at addressing pressing issues like poverty, education, health, and environmental sustainability.
 - Example: A charity in Brent that focuses on education for girls could partner with an international NGO working in Nablus, helping to increase educational opportunities for girls, which is already a big focus for Nablus.
- Volunteering and Hands-on Support: Twinning can also provide opportunities for local volunteers to travel and contribute to humanitarian projects abroad, gaining practical experience in international development while building stronger ties with global causes.
 - Example: Volunteers from a Brent charity supporting disadvantaged youth could travel to Nablus to offer mentorship programs, sports activities, or arts workshops, gaining skills they can bring back to their own communities.
- Sharing Resources and Knowledge
 - Resource Sharing: Charities can exchange resources such as donated goods, fundraising tools, or educational materials, especially in cases where twinned organizations are working in similar sectors or with similar communities.
 - Example: A charity in Brent that provides clothing to the homeless could collaborate with a partner in Nablus to share excess clothing donations during winter months, ensuring those in need are supported in both regions.
 - Joint Projects and Research: Charities could collaborate on joint research initiatives that evaluate the effectiveness of different methods for solving social problems, and share their findings with international networks to improve practices and policies globally.
 - Example: A Brent charity focused on food insecurity might partner with an international food bank network to jointly research sustainable food distribution methods and share findings to improve operations in both Brent and Nablus.
- Strengthening Advocacy and Global Impact

- Joint Advocacy Campaigns: Twinning allows charities to work together on international advocacy efforts, amplifying their voice and working to influence global policy changes. By partnering with global counterparts, they can help raise awareness about issues and advocate for funding or legislation that benefits both local and international communities.
 - Example: A Brent-based climate change advocacy group could partner with organizations in Nablus to advocate for policies that address climate justice and environmental preservation, working with governments to enact change at both the national and international levels.
- Raising Global Awareness for Local Causes: By twinning with international organizations, charities in Brent can help raise awareness about local issues on a global scale, and learn how other communities are addressing similar challenges.
 - Example: A domestic abuse charity in Brent could collaborate with a similar organization in Nablus to launch a global campaign that educates people about the impact of gender-based violence and supports survivors in both regions.
- Promoting International Volunteering and Exchange Programs
 - Volunteer Exchanges: Twinned charities can establish volunteer exchange programs, where volunteers from one region can visit and assist the other region, providing practical support while learning from the local community and its challenges.
 - Example: A volunteer from a youth charity in Brent could visit an NGO in Nablus to work with local children on education and skills development, then bring back valuable insights into how Brent's own programs can be improved.
 - Building Cross-Border Volunteer Networks: Charities in Brent can partner with those in Nablus to create a network of volunteers who work collaboratively on large-scale projects that span multiple countries, such as disaster relief, human rights, or refugee assistance.
 - Example: During a humanitarian crisis, a Brent charity could connect with twinned partners in Nablus to coordinate a global volunteer network, providing immediate support and resources.
- Access to New Funding and Grant Opportunities

- Leveraging International Grants: Through twinning, charities in Brent can access international funding opportunities, particularly for cross-border projects or those addressing global issues.
 - Example: A Brent-based environmental charity could apply for UN funding for a project that focuses on sustainable agriculture in partnership with an environmental NGO in Nablus.
- Global Partnerships for Joint Funding: By collaborating with international charities, Brent's organizations can strengthen their funding applications by showing the global scope and impact of their projects, which can increase their chances of securing funding from global foundations or governments.
 - Example: A Brent charity focused on children's rights could join forces with a similar charity in Nablus to apply for joint funding to address child exploitation in both regions, increasing their chances of receiving large-scale international grants.
- Improving Local and Global Community Engagement
 - Building Global Networks: Twinned organizations can share ideas on how to engage their local communities, creating projects that bridge the gap between local and international communities and encourage mutual support.
 - Example: A local charity working on elderly care in Brent could partner with a similar organization in Nablus to exchange ideas on improving elderly care services, while organizing community visits to strengthen both local and global bonds.
 - Creating Awareness Campaigns: Charities can benefit from twinning by raising global awareness about local issues, such as homelessness, unemployment, or mental health. By highlighting shared challenges, they can work together to create effective campaigns for change
 - Example: A mental health charity in Brent could team up with a counterpart in Nablus to create an international campaign focused on mental health awareness and reducing stigma.

Does Brent have any membership or affiliations to organisations in common with the town, city or region?	No - given the geopolitical conditions, we are at the stage of creating those links that do not yet exist.
3. Profile	
Will Brent Council's involvement help boost the profile of its partners, helping them to achieve mutually shared objectives?	<p>Brent Council's involvement in a twinning with Nablus would significantly boost the profile of its partners, creating a high-impact platform that advances shared objectives around inclusion, global engagement, community wellbeing, education, and social value</p> <p>Businesses and Local Economy: Aligns businesses with purpose-driven local-global initiatives, appealing to socially conscious customers and investors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New links to international networks and diaspora markets • Supports diverse entrepreneurship and inclusive economic development <p>NHS and Health Partners: Highlights the NHS as an inclusive, community-driven health provider responsive to Brent's diverse population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement with underrepresented communities • Promotion of health equity and trauma-informed care • Opportunities for global health learning partnerships <p>Schools and Colleges (incl. FE and HE): Positions Brent as a leader in global citizenship education and intercultural learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher aspiration and attainment among diverse students

- Attraction of international students through global links
- Enhanced reputation for inclusive, outward-looking education

Faith and Community Groups: Recognised as bridge-builders and partners in peace, solidarity, and global understanding.

- Increased participation in intercultural dialogue and social cohesion
- Opportunities to host or co-lead community-based international events

Wembley Stadium / The Football Association: A twining partnership has the potential to showcase Wembley and Brent as globally engaged cultural hubs with a commitment to unity and diversity.

- Opportunity to host international youth and cultural events
- Boosts community goodwill and international visibility

Universities / Student Accommodation Providers: Reinforces their brand as welcoming, globally connected and socially responsible.

- Strengthens international student experience and retention
- Supports broader campus wellbeing and cultural exchange

Developers / Housing Partners: Demonstrates commitment to social value, inclusive growth, and community cohesion beyond physical development. Shared Goals Achieved:

- Delivers social impact aligned with Brent's regeneration agenda
- Supports stronger, more connected neighbourhoods

Voluntary/Charity Organisations: Brings visibility to local organisations involved in global justice, education, youth empowerment, and cultural outreach.

- Expands funding and collaboration opportunities
- Enables deeper engagement with diaspora communities and youth

4. Purpose

What is the rationale or the aims and objectives behind the approach – what are the perceived benefits of the arrangement either TO Brent or FROM Brent e.g cultural opportunities, education, civic elements etc?

From increasing cultural awareness and celebrating diversity, through to creating opportunities for growth and collaborative approaches to solve problems, twinning brings about many potential benefits to all areas involved.

- Promote International Friendship and Peace; Originating after WWII, twinning fosters understanding and goodwill between different cultures and countries.
- Celebrate Cultural and Diaspora Connections: Twinning reflects historical, cultural, or community links (e.g., diaspora populations or shared heritage).
- Strengthen Local Identity through Global Solidarity: It positions a community as inclusive, globally aware, and proud of its diversity.
- Facilitate Mutual Learning: Cities share experiences and approaches to challenges like urban planning, public health, climate action, or education.
- Engage Young People and Future Leaders: Youth exchanges and school projects promote global citizenship, empathy, and leadership skills.
- Build Civic Pride and Community Cohesion: Twinning projects can unite residents across different backgrounds around shared goals and cultural events.
- Support Peace, Justice, and Human Rights: Many towns twin in solidarity with communities experiencing conflict or occupation, using their platform to advocate for justice.

Key Benefits of Twinning

- Educational Opportunities
 - School partnerships
 - Language exchange and global learning
 - Raised aspirations and cultural awareness
- Cultural Exchange & Celebration
 - Arts, music, sport, food and heritage events
 - Joint festivals or exhibitions
 - Shared storytelling and creative collaboration
- Economic Development
 - Trade, tourism, and investment links

<p>Page 157</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Business networking and diaspora entrepreneurship ○ International student recruitment and partnerships ● Health and Social Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge exchange on healthcare delivery and wellbeing ○ Shared campaigns on issues like mental health, sustainability, or youth support ○ Trauma-informed practices in communities affected by conflict ● Community Empowerment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement of residents, faith groups, charities, and local leaders ○ Civic participation and volunteer opportunities ○ Focus on equity, representation, and grassroots leadership ● Resilience and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing solutions to local-global challenges (e.g., climate change, housing, youth unemployment) ○ Building networks of solidarity, especially during crises
<p>What is the Council seeking to gain through establishing a formal relationship with this town, city or region?</p>	
<p>a) Social and cultural exchanges;</p>	<p>Twining between Brent Council and Nablus can offer significant social and cultural gains for the Council, enhancing both community engagement and Brent's standing as a diverse, outward-looking borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deepening Community Cohesion through Shared Heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brent has a large, diverse population — including communities with roots in Palestine and the wider Middle East. ○ Twinning with Nablus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognises and validates diasporic identity. ■ Helps foster a sense of belonging, inclusion, and pride among residents.

- Builds bridges between different communities within Brent through shared values of solidarity, dignity, and cultural heritage.
- Enriching Brent's Cultural Landscape
 - Opens doors to cultural exchange programs — music, dance, film, art, food, and storytelling — that:
 - Celebrate multiculturalism
 - Promote intergenerational understanding
 - Bring diverse audiences into Brent's cultural spaces
 - Enables joint festivals or exhibitions, e.g. Palestinian cultural week, showcasing Nablus traditions in partnership with local venues and artists.
- Youth Engagement & Global Citizenship
 - Through school partnerships, youth forums, and digital exchanges, Brent can:
 - Empower young people to become global citizens
 - Provide platforms for youth to lead, learn and connect across borders
 - Raise awareness about issues such as justice, peace, and sustainability through a real-world lens
 - This supports the Council's priority on giving young people a voice and raising aspirations.
- Faith and Intercultural Dialogue
 - Nablus is a city with deep religious and historical significance. Linking with it:
 - Encourages interfaith and intercultural conversations
 - Provides space for reflection, understanding, and solidarity between Brent's many faith communities
 - Aligns with Brent's ethos as a place where diversity is respected and celebrated
- Strengthening Civic Engagement and Local Pride

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Twinning creates opportunities for residents, schools, charities, and local leaders to participate in something meaningful. ○ Builds grassroots civic participation, volunteering, and cross-community collaboration. ○ Boosts Brent's identity as a borough of global consciousness and local compassion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raising Brent's National and International Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Twinning shows leadership in cultural diplomacy and community-driven internationalism. ○ Positions Brent as a model of how local councils can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stand for justice and inclusion ■ Build global-local connections ■ Promote peace through people-to-people ties
<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 159</div> <div>b) Technical/knowledge sharing regarding common problems;</div>	<p>Establishing a twinning with Nablus offers Brent Council a unique opportunity for technical and knowledge sharing, especially on common urban, social, and governance challenges. Despite differing national contexts, both cities face similar core issues — such as urban development pressures, youth unemployment, environmental sustainability, and inclusive service delivery.</p> <p>Shared Solutions to Urban Challenges: Housing, urban density, and public infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both Brent and Nablus are urban centres experiencing population growth, housing pressure, and complex infrastructure demands. Twinning allows Brent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore community-led housing models used in Nablus under resource constraints ○ Share knowledge on sustainable urban planning, regeneration, and inclusive design ○ Jointly address challenges like land use, social housing, and informal settlements <p>Youth Employment, Skills & Entrepreneurship: High youth unemployment and lack of pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nablus has developed grassroots tech incubators and youth-led social enterprises — often in challenging circumstances. Brent can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learn from resilience-based youth employment strategies

- Build international youth skills exchanges, coding partnerships, or enterprise mentorship programs
- Share approaches to inclusive apprenticeships, NEET reduction, and local employer engagement

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience: Climate change, waste management, green space access

- Nablus has implemented low-resource, community-based environmental initiatives, including urban farming, recycling, and water conservation. Brent can benefit by:
 - Exchanging ideas around circular economy, nature-based solutions, and public engagement
 - Comparing climate adaptation strategies in dense, urban environments
 - Co-developing sustainability projects with schools or youth groups in both cities

Public Health and Community Wellbeing: Health inequalities and access to culturally appropriate services

- Nablus' experience with community health models (especially in trauma-informed care and mental health) is relevant to Brent's NHS partners. Brent can:
 - Share best practice on integrated care systems, public health campaigns, and resident engagement
 - Learn about community mobilisation and wellbeing under pressure, which is valuable for emergency planning and resilience

Civic Innovation and Digital Inclusion: Digital divide and participatory governance

- Nablus, despite political and economic limitations, has pursued digital engagement tools and youth-driven civic tech. Brent could:
 - Share tools for digital democracy, online consultation, and civic education
 - Co-develop low-cost digital inclusion strategies that reflect real community needs

<p>Page 161</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore joint platforms for resident-to-resident storytelling, service feedback, or co-design <p>Capacity Building & Mutual Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Council officers, teachers, health workers, and community leaders from Brent could engage in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peer learning exchanges ○ Joint workshops or training on urban governance, youth policy, or social inclusion ○ Study visits or virtual forums focused on bottom-up innovation under constraint <p>Strategic Gains for Brent Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enriches local policy-making with global insight and fresh perspectives ● Builds Brent's institutional capacity through peer collaboration, not just top-down consultancy ● Aligns with goals of inclusive innovation, decolonising development, and community empowerment <p>Understanding problems being faced in each authority, finding out common problems, and solutions either tried and which have worked, or potential solutions to be explored, to be applied/tested</p>
<p>c) Tackling environmental issues, regeneration, community safety, health promotion and community cohesion;</p>	<p>Twinning with Nablus offers Brent Council a valuable opportunity to strengthen its work across key local priorities like environmental sustainability, regeneration, community safety, health promotion, and community cohesion</p> <p>Tackling Environmental Issues: Shared Learning & Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nablus has pioneered low-cost, community-driven sustainability efforts like water conservation, urban agriculture, and grassroots waste management — often in the face of resource scarcity. Brent can gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insights into resilience-based environmental strategies suitable for diverse, high-density communities.

- Ideas for engaging underrepresented communities in green initiatives and behaviour change.
- A platform to pilot joint eco-projects (e.g. school-based recycling drives, tree planting, climate education, solar panels).
- Global Solidarity on Climate Justice
 - Enhances Brent's international standing as a borough that takes climate equity seriously — showing leadership in aligning local and global environmental action.

Regeneration: Inclusive, Community-Led Development

- Both cities face regeneration challenges: housing pressure, affordability, and the need to preserve local character. Brent can:
 - Learn from grassroots urban renewal models used in Nablus — where communities co-design public spaces, markets, or services.
 - Apply insights to high street revitalisation, community infrastructure, and inclusive public realm design in areas like Harlesden, Kilburn or Wembley.
- Enhancing Social Value in Development
 - A twinning relationship reinforces Brent's commitment to regeneration that includes cultural identity, youth opportunity, and sustainability — values Nablus shares and practices under constraint.

Community Safety: Social Cohesion as a Safety Strategy

- Nablus uses youth engagement, education, and community networks to address social tensions, marginalisation, and conflict resolution. Brent can:
 - Collaborate on community safety approaches that centre trust, youth empowerment, and dialogue.
 - Share strategies on reducing violence through arts, sport, education, and trauma-informed support - especially relevant in areas affected by youth crime or disengagement.

Health Promotion: Mental Health & Trauma-Informed Practice

- Nablus has experience in delivering mental health support under stress, using community and cultural strengths. Brent can:
 - Develop joint health promotion initiatives focused on mental wellbeing, stress, and youth resilience.
 - Share approaches to health equity, community health champions, and public health outreach.
- Healthy Lifestyles & Prevention
 - Create shared campaigns on topics like nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, and preventive care, tailored to culturally diverse populations.

Community Cohesion: Intercultural Dialogue & Inclusion

- Twinning with Nablus — a historic city with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish heritage — reinforces Brent's own identity as one of the UK's most diverse and inclusive boroughs. Brent gains:
 - New platforms for cross-cultural exchange, celebration, and solidarity.
 - Stronger ties with local faith groups, diaspora networks, and younger residents who want to see their identities reflected in civic life.
- Standing for Peace & Justice
 - A twinning with Nablus resonates deeply with Brent's communities and supports dialogue, empathy and international solidarity — key ingredients in building a cohesive, compassionate borough.

Strategic Impact for Brent Council

- Enhances delivery of Borough Plan priorities, especially around sustainability, safety, youth opportunity, health equity and cohesion.
- Builds local pride, global relevance, and real community involvement.
- Supports the council's ambition to be bold, inclusive and globally connected in how it governs and engages.

d) Increasing educational opportunities for students (language learning, global awareness);

Establishing a twinning between Brent and Nablus offers significant gains for the Council in terms of increasing educational opportunities for students — especially in areas such as language learning, global awareness, and aspiration-raising. These gains align directly with Brent's strategic focus on giving young people the best start in life, amplifying their voices, and preparing them for a globally connected future

- Enhanced Global Awareness and Citizenship
 - Twinning introduces Brent students to life in Nablus, encouraging:
 - Understanding of global issues such as inequality, resilience, conflict, and cooperation
 - A greater sense of empathy, international solidarity, and intercultural respect
 - Supports national and local educational goals for global learning, PSHE, and civic education.
- Brent becomes a leader in nurturing globally minded, socially conscious young people.
- Language Learning (Arabic & English)
 - Through exchange programmes, pen-pal schemes, or virtual classroom links:
 - Brent students gain exposure to Arabic language and Palestinian culture, especially pertinent given the large and growing Arab population within Brent.
 - Students in Nablus improve their English through real peer-to-peer engagement.
 - Boosts interest in language learning and broadens students' worldviews.
- This adds cultural depth to MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) teaching in Brent schools, making learning more meaningful and relevant.

- School Partnerships & Curriculum Enrichment
 - The twinning can facilitate school-to-school collaborations, including:
 - Joint learning projects (e.g. sustainability, heritage, or rights-based education)
 - Teacher exchanges and co-developed lesson plans
 - Online seminars, shared book readings, cultural showcases
 - Enables Brent schools to offer rich, real-life intercultural education experiences.
- Aligns with Ofsted goals around enriched curriculum, SMSC development (spiritual, moral, social, cultural), and inclusion.
- Raising Aspirations and Career Pathways
 - Students in Brent gain:
 - Inspiration from peers in Nablus facing adversity with creativity and ambition
 - Opportunities to explore careers in international relations, humanitarian work, languages, and development
 - Students from both cities may benefit from joint youth leadership or ambassador programmes supported by local colleges or universities.
- Supports Brent's aim to increase opportunity and aspiration for all students, particularly those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Digital Exchange and 21st-Century Skills
 - Online collaboration and shared projects help young people build:
 - Communication and collaboration skills
 - Cross-cultural literacy
 - Digital competence
 - Brent can explore platforms for virtual twinning projects through schools, youth clubs, or the library service.
- Builds real-world skills aligned with Brent's priorities for future readiness and tech inclusion.
- Strategic Value for Brent Council
 - Promotes equity and representation in international education opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reinforces Brent as a borough that invests in youth, education, and global connection ○ Builds strong relationships with schools, community leaders, diaspora networks, and local universities ○ Adds depth to Brent's work on anti-racism, decolonised education, and inclusive curriculum development
e) What is the partner city or network seeking to achieve from collaboration?	Cultural exchange, learning and improving services through collaboration and celebrating diversity and its achievements.
5. Due Diligence Considerations	
Are there any potential risks including reputational issues through association with the location and/or key individuals such as Human Rights issues or any conflicts of interest?	This is a Palestinian Authority led City.
Are there any political circumstances or special relationships or causes being championed that the Council needs to be aware of?	Nablus, is situated within the West Bank, which is occupied territory under international law. There are a number of humanitarian and charitable organisations that operate in the area, and there are historic and current judgements concerning violations of international law against the population
6. Connections	
Are there pre-existing links with the partner city or network in respect of projects, networks or people to people dialogue?	<p>Friends of Nablus and Surrounding Areas (FONSA)</p> <p>Camden-Abu Dis Friendship Association (CADFA) - students brought to Brent as part of a visit and cultural exchange</p> <p>Palestine Solidarity Campaign</p>

Brent Friends of Palestine

Is there local interest in this?

In addition to a petition evidencing community support, there is also support from faith organisations, businesses and local groups in Brent, including:

- Brent Trades Council
- Brent & Harrow Palestinian Solidarity Campaign
- Brent Friends of the Earth
- Brent National Education Union
- Brent Friends of Palestine
- St Andrews Church, Kingsbury
- All Saints RC Church
- Christ Gospel Church London Trust
- St. Erconwald's Catholic Church
- An-Nisa Society
- Afghanistan and Central Asian Association
- Comfyland Furniture
- Beirut Wonders, Wembley
- Original Biryani Wala, Wembley
- Royal Karahi restaurant, Wembley
- Taste of Lahore, Wembley
- Liberty Supplements
- Al-Saha restaurant, Kilburn
- Baghdad restaurant, Kilburn

Is there an existing diaspora community in Brent?

Yes, Brent has the 2nd largest Arab diaspora in the county from the latest census, totalling ~18,000 of our residents.

	It is the fastest growing ethnic group within the borough, with growth of 56.8% (Census 2021).
Are there significant numbers of international students from the country of origin studying in Brent?	
Are there any established businesses located in Brent from the country of origin?	<p> Basil Broasted Levant Book Cafe Al Banafsaj Restaurant & Cafe Oriental Place Al Quds Supermarket Al Mahdi Supermarket Number 1 Barber Momtaz Restaurant Beit el Zeytoun Maroush Al Mas Restaurant Khomali AlBasra Baity Restaurant Biblos </p>

Is there is a sufficient commonality of interest to sustain and grow the link within the specific and broader communities in the area?

Yes, given the diaspora and wider community support, as well as continued commonality in issues, the relationship has more than enough support to be sustained and grown.

Shared Community Values and Diversity

- Brent is one of the UK's most diverse boroughs, with a large diaspora population from across the Global South, including a significant Arab and Muslim community. This shared cultural heritage with Nablus fosters a strong basis for mutual understanding and solidarity, as well as support for a long-term relationship.

Parallel Urban and Social Challenges

- Both cities face similar urban challenges, including:
 - Youth unemployment and disengagement
 - Health inequalities
 - Affordable housing and regeneration
 - Climate resilience
- These provide common areas for technical knowledge-sharing, policy innovation, and co-learning between municipal departments and communities.

Interest Across Sectors

- There is cross-sector interest in Brent, from schools, youth groups, charities, faith organisations, and community centres that already have links or interest in the region.
- Stakeholders such as the NHS, education institutions, voluntary sector networks, and diaspora groups have expressed support for international collaborations focused on social justice, intercultural understanding, and education.

Strong Community and Diaspora Support

- Brent has a growing Palestinian and broader Arab community, many of whom maintain cultural and familial ties to Nablus and the surrounding region.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is also a broader solidarity movement that connects residents in Brent to global justice causes, including Palestinian rights and sustainable development
7. Resources	
<p>Does the Council or other Brent stakeholders have sufficient resources (both staffing and financial) to enter into the project or partnership? Consider which officers and departments are likely to be involved.</p> <p>Page 170</p>	<p>Minimal Financial Burden on the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal commits to delivering community events and activities without drawing on Council funding, relying instead on community networks, partner contributions, and voluntary sector support. As such, the Council's financial outlay is minimal, restricted primarily to officer time related to coordination, communications, and occasional strategic engagement. Mayor <p>Resource Requirements Are Proportionate</p> <p>The twinning arrangement is designed to be low-cost and high-impact, leveraging existing resources and external partnerships. Officer involvement will likely include light coordination.</p>
How would the stakeholder group be run? Would they be set up as a charity or a CIC, or more informally run?	Formally, to be constituted as a CIC

<p>At least 2 named Brent Council Members should take responsibility in supporting the stakeholder group with the Twinning or Friendship Agreement. Who might they be?</p>	<p>Cllr Ihtesham Afzal Cllr Erica Gjabumo</p>
<p>Does the project have the potential to generate additional revenue or capital resources for Brent?</p> <p>Page 171</p>	<p>There is real potential for indirect and longer-term revenue and capital benefits to Brent</p> <p>Positioning Brent as a Global, Inclusive Borough – Attracting External Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A successful twinning with Nablus could strengthen Brent’s reputation as a leader in international cooperation, diaspora engagement, and inclusive community development. • This reputation may enhance Brent’s eligibility and competitiveness for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National and international grant funding (e.g. from the UK government, FCDO, British Council, Arts Council, GLA, and international NGOs) ○ Philanthropic and corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions ○ EU or UN-linked cultural exchange and peacebuilding funds, where applicable <p>Educational and Research Partnerships with Economic Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, colleges and universities in Brent can benefit from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International student recruitment and cultural exchange grants ○ Collaborative research or innovation projects linked to global development, health, education, or sustainability ○ Enhanced student accommodation demand tied to international collaboration <p>These links may lead to economic activity, knowledge economy growth, and educational investment in Brent.</p> <p>Local Economic Uplift Through Events and Cultural Programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning often generates:

- Public events, cultural festivals, exhibitions, food markets, and performances and increased tourism
- Increased footfall to cultural venues, high streets, and local businesses
- These activities support local commerce, hospitality, and Brent's creative and visitor economy.

Potential to Attract Ethical Investment and Partnerships

- Twinning with a city like Nablus, known for its resilience, enterprise and rich heritage, may create:
 - Opportunities for ethical investment in community-led projects
 - Diaspora-led business collaborations and trade links
 - Engagement from international development organisations or social enterprises looking to support transnational community work

Long-Term Value Creation

- Though not a short-term revenue generator, the twinning has long-term potential to:
 - Improve social cohesion, reducing cost pressures in areas like youth services, public health and community safety
 - Strengthen international networks that may later contribute to economic resilience and civic innovation

Is the arrangement sufficiently sustainable over its proposed lifespan? 'yes'

Community-Led Model Ensures Long-Term Ownership

- The proposal is rooted in a community-driven approach, with strong involvement from local residents, voluntary organisations, cultural groups, faith institutions, and educational stakeholders.
- This bottom-up engagement means the project is not overly reliant on council-led funding or staffing, making it more resilient to political or budgetary changes.

- The community's ability to independently organise, fundraise and sponsor for twinning activities contributes significantly to its sustainability.

Are the proposed outcomes for the relationship measurable? How will the success of this programme be monitored or reviewed?

Yes, the proposed outcomes of the Brent–Nablus twinning can be measured through clear, realistic and community-focused indicators, with success monitored via a structured review framework. The programme will use both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights to track impact over time

Measurable outcomes could include

- Education & Youth Engagement
 - Number of schools, colleges and youth groups participating in exchanges or joint projects
 - Student feedback on global awareness, cultural understanding and aspiration
 - Uptake of language learning or global citizenship activities in the curriculum
- Community Cohesion & Cultural Exchange
 - Attendance and reach of cultural events, exhibitions or dialogue programmes
 - Increased participation from underrepresented groups in cross-cultural activities
 - Community feedback surveys assessing belonging, pride, and inclusivity
- Knowledge Sharing & Technical Collaboration
 - Number of joint initiatives (e.g. around sustainability, public health, regeneration)
 - Documentation of learning exchanges and outcomes shared with partners
 - Use of shared practices or insights in Brent policy or service design
- Public Engagement
 - Social media engagement, newsletter sign-ups, and local media coverage
 - Number of Brent residents actively involved in twinning activities

- The petition from the Brent Public, the interest from local business, links of business owners
- Ongoing Monitoring
 - Twinning Group will meet quarterly to review progress.
 - Activity and impact logs will be maintained for each project strand (e.g. education, culture, environment).
- Annual Review
 - A Yearly Impact Report will be published, by the Twinning Group on its website and shared with Brent Council. The report will outline:
 - Activities delivered and participation rates
 - Feedback from partners and the community
 - Success stories, learning points, and areas for development

8 Inclusions and exclusions

What does this agreement include and exclude? All agreements must be apolitical in nature. This agreement should also spell out who is responsible for what activity e.g. if the Brent Mayor or a delegation from Waste Management or a five-a-side football team decides to visit the host city, then this agreement should loosely confirm how the trip would be funded, for how many people, how often trips can be made, how long a typical trip should last, purchase and exchange of gifts, and reciprocal arrangements.

Key Elements of the Twinning Relationship

Flag-Raising Ceremony

- An important symbolic gesture of the partnership will be the raising of flags from both areas in prominent public spaces within each community. This act serves as a reminder of the twinning agreement, celebrating the bond between the two boroughs.
- Frequency: The ceremony to take place annually on the 29th Nov to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Official Signage in Boroughs

- We are committed to exploring all appropriate avenues for recognising this important relationship. As such, the possibility of including reference to the Brent–Nablu twinning on borough signage will be revisited at a later date, as and when circumstances allow. This will ensure that opportunities for greater public awareness and celebration of the partnership can be considered in due course.

Cultural Exchange Events

- Cultural exchange is at the heart of any twinning agreement. Organisations and community groups within both boroughs will organise various cultural events that allow residents to learn about and celebrate each other's traditions, art, and heritage. These events could include:
- Festivals: Host cultural festivals featuring music, dance, and food from both boroughs. These festivals could take place on an annual significant date.
- Performing Arts: Organise theatre, music, and dance performances that feature artists from both communities. This could also include the hosting of international film screenings.
- Traditional Celebrations: Each borough could send respective Mayors to participate in national or local celebrations, such as national holidays, traditional fairs, or festivals that showcase the cultural fabric of each community.

Workshops and Educational Exchanges

- The boroughs will organise various workshops and educational exchanges aimed at fostering mutual learning in areas such as history, language, urban planning, or sustainability. These exchanges will be conducted in both virtual and in-person formats.
- Student Exchange Programs: Schools and educational institutions in both boroughs could establish student exchange programs, providing young people with the opportunity to study in each other's boroughs for a designated period.
- Language Classes: Workshops teaching the native languages of each borough will encourage residents to better understand and communicate with their international counterparts.
- Food and Skills Workshops: Culinary and skill-building workshops focused on the traditional foods and crafts of each borough will allow residents to explore and appreciate the cultural practices of their counterparts, fostering greater understanding and connection.
- Professional Workshops: Host workshops focused on areas of common interest such as sustainability, architecture, arts, local governance, or technology, allowing professionals and experts from each borough to collaborate and share knowledge.

Exhibitions and Art Shows

- The sharing of art and cultural exhibits can foster deeper understanding and respect between the communities. Both boroughs will organise joint exhibitions featuring:
- Art and Craft Exhibits: Showcasing artwork, sculptures, crafts, and traditional garments from both communities.
- Photography Exhibitions: Photographic exhibitions that highlight the beauty, landscapes, and day-to-day life of both boroughs.
- Pop-Up Museums: Temporary exhibitions that rotate between the boroughs, offering educational displays and cultural artefacts that tell the history of the twinning relationship.

Joint Community Projects

- Through this partnership, both boroughs will collaborate on projects that benefit their communities. These projects will focus on areas such as sustainability, social development, and improving urban life.

- Environmental Initiatives: Both boroughs could work together on environmental initiatives such as tree planting, waste reduction programmes, renewable energy sources or public green space development.
- Community Health Initiatives: Collaborating on public health programmes, such as wellness campaigns or research in healthcare innovation, could be a priority.
- Charity and Fundraising: Organising joint fundraising events for causes that are important to both boroughs.

Business and Economic Collaboration

- The twinning relationship should also foster economic collaboration and business development. Opportunities include:
- Trade and Commerce: Both boroughs can work together to create trade missions, explore new markets for local businesses, engage in trade fairs, and encourage investment.
- Tourism Promotion: Collaborating on tourism initiatives, including promoting each other as travel destinations, can boost the local economy.
- Business Delegations: Establishing exchange programmes for entrepreneurs, business leaders, and government officials to meet, discuss, and create partnerships.
- Union Delegations: Establishing exchange programmes for union representatives, social justice advocates, and workers' rights organisations to meet, collaborate, and strengthen partnerships in advocating for fair labour practices and policies.

Sports Competitions and Friendly Matches

- A sporting element to the twinning relationship can foster camaraderie and bring communities together through friendly competition.
- Annual Sporting Events: Organising annual sports tournaments (such as football, basketball, or athletics) between the two boroughs can create lasting bonds and promote a sense of friendly rivalry.
- Youth Sports Camps: Youth from both boroughs could attend sports camps in each other's locations, fostering teamwork, respect, and understanding through sport.

Virtual Collaboration Platforms

- With the advent of technology, a virtual platform can be established for regular online meetings, workshops, and collaborations, which will allow for continued engagement even when physical travel is not possible.
- Online Events and Webinars: Host virtual conferences or panel discussions on topics of mutual interest, such as sustainable development or local government practices.
- Cultural Exchange Platforms: Virtual spaces for sharing cultural content, music, art, and performances, allowing residents from both boroughs to stay connected throughout the year.

Regular Communication and Updates

- An important component of the twinning relationship will be maintaining open lines of communication between the two boroughs. This can be achieved through:
- Newsletter: A joint newsletter sent to residents of both boroughs, updating them on upcoming events, projects, and achievements.
- Social Media Engagement: Establishing social media pages dedicated to the twinning relationship to keep both communities informed and engaged.

The Mayoral Office is likely to spend some of its annual budget on hosting the occasional visit. A maximum budget per twinning or friendship agreement per financial year should be identified and confirmed with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources by the officer(s) assessing the proposal to ensure additional funds can be allocated to this budget before any new Internal Partnership Arrangement is agreed.

Noted

NOTE: The establishing or termination of International Partnering Arrangements will require formal approval by Full Council in all cases

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EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	Twinning Agreement
DEPARTMENT:	Democratic Services, Law and Governance
TEAM:	Mayor's Office
LEAD OFFICER:	Fatema Limbada
LEAD MEMBER(S):	Cllr Ihtesham Afzal
DATE:	16 April, 2025

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 International Partnering Protocol, and a summary of its objectives and the intended results.

This International Partnering Protocol (IPP) aims to establish a 'Twinning' arrangement with Nablus, Palestine. Twinning is organisation-led, and focused on exchanging information, knowledge & expertise, and developing joint projects in defined areas by contributing to policy objectives such as culture, sports, heritage, links with diaspora, economic development and tourism.

Potential mutual benefits include:

- Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Increasing cultural awareness, including knowledge and understanding of the town, city or region;
- Increased tolerance and understanding;
- Enhanced opportunities for youth activities, and
- The development of close friendships and ties built up over many years.

Criteria around Twinning includes:

- All funds relating to twinning must be raised and managed externally, and all planning and organisation must also be managed externally.
- If the Mayor is invited to the twinned town/city/region, or to events outside of London, then all costs must be met externally.
- Agreement will last for five years, with the option for future renewal.
- Ongoing community support and organisation is at the crux of the arrangement

In November 2024, the Council passed a Motion to consider twinning with the city of Nablus in Palestine. Nablus is twinned with many cities across the world, including towns and cities in Ireland, France, Russia and Morocco. In addition to a petition evidencing community

support, there is also support from faith organisations, businesses and local groups in Brent as well as a cross-sector interest in Brent, from schools, youth groups, charities, faith organisations, and community centres that already have links or interest in the region.

Having liaised with the Brent & Harrow branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other groups, there are a series of synergies with, and opportunities for Brent through this arrangement, including:

- Demography: Nablus has a predominantly Muslim population; Brent has the 15th largest Muslim population and the 2nd largest Arab diaspora in England and Wales.
- Shared challenges: Nablus is addressing issues parallel to those faced by Brent such as the climate emergency, poverty, housing, infrastructure pressures, urban planning and unemployment.

Opportunities: aligned with the challenges, there are opportunities for collaborative projects around urban planning, sustainable development and beyond. Additionally, we can foster mutual learning and innovation while enhancing cultural exchange and diversity.

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

It's important to recognise that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is highly contentious and polarising. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, Islamophobic and Antisemitic, therefore the decision to twin with a Palestinian city has not been taken lightly and appreciates that it may cause anxiety to some of Brent's communities.

Members

Members are representatives of their locality and the borough. Given the contention surrounding the Israel/Palestine conflict and the strong feelings felt around this within our communities, Members will have an important role in demonstrating support, consideration and care to any and all concerns around the conflict and Twinning arrangement. Members may receive an increase in casework or complaints from residents on this issue.

Some Members will be more actively involved in the Twinning arrangement and the practical activities. They will need to ensure they demonstrate consideration and care around the implications and impacts of any practical actions and outcomes (e.g. visits and events)

Officers

Officers may have to respond to queries and complaints related to the Twinning both through formal structures or through our engagement forums and mechanisms.

Practical involvement from officers for Twinning arrangements is limited. The main practical support will be through business-as-usual support provided from the Mayor's Office i.e. should the Mayor be involved or lead an activity related to the Twinning the team will

support, and the funding will be from the Mayoral budget. Beyond this, activity will be driven by the relevant Member and the community/organisation.

Residents

The direct and practical impact for residents may be limited, however given how contentious and polarised the Israel/Palestine conflict is, different groups will be emotionally impacted by the Twinning, at the very least. Nationally, reports have found that the conflict has contributed to a rise in hate crime, particularly around antisemitism; therefore, there may be anxiety for some groups that the Twinning may demonstrate greater support for one group over another and may exacerbate existing tensions i.e. Twinning with Nablus may risk compounding antisemitism, equally rejecting the Twinning may be viewed as Islamophobic.

There are routes for residents to share any concerns, for examples through usual Councillor engagement and democratic and council engagement processes. Additionally, petitions can be submitted for and against this twinning and considered at Full Council before members are asked to vote for or against this plan. Petitioners may also decide to put in a request for an alternative IPP.

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, as this is a change of policy. The Israel/Palestine conflict has resulted in challenges around community cohesion around the globe and the Twinning may exacerbate these challenges. Equally, Twinning provides opportunities to share and enrich culture and history with other areas across the world.

As part of the International Partnering Protocol, the Twinning must be evidenced through community support and have a positive, beneficial impact for Brent. It must also help foster good relations across different groups.

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

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

Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage		X	

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

Screening Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal <i>is</i> relevant to the council’s public sector equality duty?	X	
Does the 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.**

In relation to similarities with the demography of Nablus, the Census 2021 captures that Brent currently has the second highest Arab diaspora in England and Wales, making up 5.3% of the population. Additionally, Brent has the 15th largest Muslim population in England and Wales, accounting for 21.4% of the population. There is no data available around the number of Palestinians in Brent; equally, in relation to potential challenges arising around community cohesion, there is no data available around Brent’s Israeli population.

The latest hate crime statistics in Brent suggest:

- 40 recorded offences around antisemitism (April 24 – February 25), 11% reduction in the same period last year.
- 73 recorded offences around Islamophobia (April 24 – February 25), 82% increase in the same period last year.

The council have engaged with a range of groups to help inform this decision, including:

- The Brent & Harrow branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other groups to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive.

- Brent Trades Union Council, Brent NEU, Brent Friends of Palestine, CADFA and the Palestinian Forum in Britain to understand existing relationships, activities and opportunities.
- Other local authorities working on similar International Partnership Arrangements in Sheffield, Barnet, Hounslow and Oxford councils to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive.

In relation to community support for the Twinning, a petition has been submitted on behalf of the Brent-Nablus Twinning Association in support of the partnering arrangement and has received 1849 signatures. No counter petitions or protest emails have been raised and received. The number of signatories in the petition has exceeded 1500 people, this allows the council to formalise into a Twinning arrangement without being a Friendship Agreement first.

Nablus is already twinned with many cities, including Dublin which Brent is also twinned with.

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	Not applicable
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DISABILITY

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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RACE

Details of impacts identified	<p>The Twinning may be interpreted as having positive implications due to the cultural and knowledge sharing opportunities with Nablus, particularly given similarities in demography and local challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>However, the Israel/Palestine conflict is highly contentious and polarising and may have negative implications. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, both Islamophobic and Antisemitic. While it is unlikely, there is a possibility that Twinning with Nablus may compound existing tensions as it may be viewed as supporting one group over another. The Twinning may, at the very least, cause emotional harm to some groups in Brent. Therefore, the council and Members will need to</p>
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	<p>demonstrate care and consideration with engaging with residents and activity associated with the Twinning.</p> <p>It's difficult to understand the scale of any impact associated with the Twinning based on quantitative insights. The 2021 Census results shows that Brent currently has the second highest Arab diaspora in England and Wales, second only to Birmingham. Arabs make up 5.3% of the Brent population (17,924 people), although it is hard to know what percentage of this are Palestinian. Equally, it is not possible to know the Israeli population in Brent.</p>
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SEX

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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PREGANCY AND MATERNITY

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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RELIGION OR BELIEF

Details of impacts identified	<p>The Twinning may be interpreted as having positive implications due to the cultural and knowledge sharing opportunities with Nablus, particularly given similarities in demography and local challenges and opportunities. The Twinning plan includes ambitions to involve the main faiths in Brent and Nablus (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism). Additionally, Brent's Muslim population is 21.4% (15th largest in England and UK) and Nablus is predominantly Muslim.</p> <p>However, the Israel/Palestine conflict is highly contentious and polarising and may have negative implications. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, both Islamophobic and Antisemitic. While it is unlikely, there is a possibility that Twinning with Nablus may compound existing tensions as it may be viewed as supporting one group over another. The Twinning may, at the very least, cause emotional harm to some groups in Brent. Therefore, the council and Members will need to demonstrate care and consideration with engaging with residents and activity associated with the Twinning.</p>
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GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Details of impacts identified	Not applicable
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3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No

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

This is uncertain as robust data does not exist around Palestinian and Israeli populations in Brent. Additionally, the supporting petition does not capture people's characteristics and backgrounds.

Formal engagement is not required, but there is still the opportunity for members or the public to discuss their opinions for or against this twinning at Full Council.

No further engagement is deemed as necessary but any counter-petitions, concerns or complaints will be taken into consideration.

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

N/A

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

If the Twinning results in any negative impacts around hate crime or community tension they will be addressed through existing work and support available through our Community Safety Team, working with the Police and other stakeholders.

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

Each Twinning arrangement will be reviewed every five years. The organisation will be asked to re-submit the assessment template to show evidence of impact etc. which will be used to determine whether the arrangement continues or not.

As part of the initial assessment, the proposer is asked to outline how they will show and monitor progress and impact of the activities undertaken. This will also be reviewed periodically.

In relation to any resident concerns or complaints, this will be monitored through our existing mechanisms e.g. corporate complaints monitoring, Member enquiries monitoring etc.

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.

Twinning with Nablus poses both positive and negative implications around race and religion/faith.

The IPP assessment outlines that range of synergies, benefits and opportunities related to Twinning with Nablus. The potential challenges mainly relate to community cohesion and tension will be monitoring through our existing mechanisms (e.g. complaints and community safety channels).

It's difficult to fully determine any implications or the scale of them as they become clearer as initiatives and opportunities are realised as part of the Twinning. Additionally, existing data does not tell us the size of some of the relevant groups that may be more directly impacted in Brent.

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
Consider any counter-petitions, should one be submitted.	Determine the scale of any challenge against the twinning and assess next steps.	Amira Nassr	As and when
Monitor volume of concerns or complaints raised around the twinning.	Determine any trends and then assess any need for any specific tailored support for impacted groups	Amira Nassr	31 October 25
Monitor hate crime trends in Brent.	Determine if the twinning has contributed to any increases in hate crime and then assess the twinning and community safety response accordingly.	Amira Nassr, liaising with the council's Community Safety Team	31 October 25

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Fatema Limbada	Fatema Limbada 16/04/25
REVIEWING OFFICER: <i>* the manager with oversight of the project</i>	Amira Nassr	Amira Nassr 17/04/25
HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:	Minesh Patel	Minesh Patel 17/04/25

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