



## Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 4 September 2024 at 6.00 pm**

Conference Hall - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,  
Wembley, HA9 0FJ

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

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

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Conneely (Chair)  
Kennelly (Vice-Chair)  
Ahmadi Moghaddam  
S Butt  
Dixon  
Georgiou  
Long  
Maurice  
Mitchell  
Molloy  
Shah

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Aden, Afzal, Collymore, Ethapemi, Fraser, Mahmood,  
Rajan-Seelan, Ketan Sheth and Tazi Smith.

Councillors:

Kansagra & J.Patel  
Lorber & Matin

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### **Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:**

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest\*\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

### **\*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

### **\*\*Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or 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 the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

| Item   | Page    |
|--|---------|
| <b>1 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members</b>  |         |
| <b>2 Declarations of interests</b>   |         |
| 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. |         |
| <b>3 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>   |         |
| To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 17 July 2024 as a correct record.   | 1 - 14  |
| (Agenda republished to include this item on 3 September 2024)  |         |
| <b>4 Matters arising (if any)</b>  |         |
| To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.  |         |
| <b>5 Deputations (if any)</b>  |         |
| To hear any deputations requested by members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.   |         |
| <b>6 Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for the 2024-25 Municipal Year</b>   | 15 - 22 |
| To agree the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.  |         |
| (Agenda republished to include this item on 3 September 2024)  |         |
| <b>7 Establishment of Budget Scrutiny Task Group</b>   | 23 - 26 |
| To establish a Task Group to review the Council's budget proposals for 2025/2026.  |         |
| <b>8 Review of Year 1 Grounds Maintenance Contract</b>   | 27 - 84 |
| This report provides a review of the first year of the Grounds Maintenance   |         |

Contract with Continental Landscapes and covers information relating to the overall performance of the contract across Parks, BHM land and highway verges, and clarifies performance issues that have arisen and also those mitigations introduced to prevent re-occurrence. The report also details challenges faced in the first year of the contract and the lessons learnt from the first year of operation to allow improvements to be delivered moving forward.

**9 Delivery of Affordable Housing by i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd** 85 - 108

This report provides an update on i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B) and First Wave Housing Ltd.'s (FWH) operational, financial, and strategic performance, including delivery of the policy objectives relating to the provision of good quality affordable housing and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.

The report has been prepared to assist the Committee in seeking to understand and assess the effectiveness of investment decisions for the Council in seeking to achieve key strategic priorities.

**10 Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker** 109 - 130

This report presents the Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker for review by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

(Agenda republished to include this item on 3 September 2024)

**11 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Deputy Director Democratic Services or their representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

**Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 5 November 2024**



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

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



## **MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Held in the Conference Hall. Brent Civic Centre on Wednesday 17 July 2024 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Conneely (Chair), Councillor Kennelly (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Moghaddam, S Butt, Dixon, Georgiou, Long, Mitchell, Molloy and Shah

Also Present: Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Housing) and Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources)

### **1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) took the opportunity to welcome all newly appointed members of the Scrutiny Committee to their first meeting of the new Municipal Year, including Councillor Kennelly as Vice-Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maurice and also Councillor Kansagra (who it was reported had been appointed to attend as a substitute).

### **2. Declarations of interests**

No declarations of interests were made at the meeting.

### **3. Order of Business**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business on the agenda to enable the Scrutiny Progress Update – Recommendation Tracker (Agenda Item 7) to be considered as the first main item of business on the agenda. The minutes therefore reflect the order in which the items were dealt with at the meeting.

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meetings held on Tuesday 23 April 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### **5. Matters arising (if any)**

The Chair informed members that due to the General Election, the final scrutiny work programme planning session for the Committee had needed to be rescheduled and would now take place on Monday 22 July 2024. The Committee's 2024-25 work programme would therefore be presented to the September meeting for final endorsement.

No other matters arising were raised at the meeting.

### **6. Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations considered at the meeting.

## 7. **Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker**

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) introduced the report presenting an updated version of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee recommendations Tracker.

Members were invited to comment on the updates provided, with the following issues raised:

### **(a) Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings 24-25 & 25-26: Establish a strategic approach to income generation**

Having noted the initial response provided on 9 July 2024, as detailed within the report, a further update was requested on the remit of the Income & Debt Board and whether this would include the ability to review strategic commissioning and procurement arrangements across the Council as part of the approach towards income generation. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) supported by Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance & Resources) advised that strategic commissioning and procurement had been included within the scope of the Board supported through the newly appointed Director of Strategic Commissioning & Capacity Building. In terms of the collection of individual income and debt, whilst these would remain the responsibility of the relevant Directorates the Board would retain an overview on performance with the process supported by the Council's Ethical Debt Collection Policy.

### **(b) Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings 24-25 & 25-26: Climate Action commitments**

Whilst noting the response provided on 9 July 2024, further details were sought on the specific proposals relating to adoption of a "green budget" outlining the climate and environmental implications arising from specific budget proposals. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) reminded members of the inclusion, now required within all decision reports, of a section outlining relevant climate and environmental considerations relating to the proposed decision. Whilst the Council remained committed to addressing climate and environmental implications within schemes being brought forward for consideration members were advised of the need to recognise the impact which the ongoing financial pressures being experienced by the Council would have in terms of delivery and need to also assess plans against the approach of the new Government.

As no further issues were raised it was **AGREED** to note the updates provided within the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker.

## 8. **Budget update - Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) was invited to introduce a report providing an update on Brent's overall financial position including the Financial Outturn for 2023-24 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report), Q1 Financial Forecast 2024-25 (attached as Appendix 2 to the

report) and Medium Term Financial Strategy (attached as Appendix 3 to the report), which members noted also formed part of the Committee's role in undertaking budget scrutiny throughout the year.

In presenting the report, Councillor Mili Patel highlighted the detail provided within the Q1 Financial Forecast 2024-25 on the current Q1 position regarding the General Fund (GF) revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Capital Programme with the Council's revised GF revenue budget for 2024-25 totalling £387m. As at Q1, members were advised the forecast had identified an overspend of £10m against the revenue budget which, if not addressed, would potentially involve a carry forward into the following year. As a result, the Council had introduced a number of mitigating measures in an effort to contain the identified pressures, which included the implementation of a range of spending controls and were in addition to the £8m worth of savings already approved for delivery during 2024-25. In terms of both the immediate and the medium-term financial outlook, Councillor Mili Patel highlighted the challenging financial environment in which the Council continued to operate given the uncertain funding environment and the lack of clarity around long term funding for social care. In addition, significant spending pressures were continuing to be experienced in relation to demand-led services with a particular focus on homelessness and ongoing pressures as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. Whilst the Medium Term Financial Strategy had included growth to help alleviate some of the pressures identified, the Committee were advised that these continued to present a significant budget risk particularly in relation to demographic pressures, the increasing demand for housing and cost of provision for temporary accommodation and wider economic climate, with the Council therefore continuing to take a prudent approach in terms of managing a sustainable budget position given the nature of risks and pressures identified.

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) thanked Councillor Mili Patel for presenting the report and then opened up discussion on the information provided with the following comments and issues discussed.

- In recognising the nature of financial challenges and pressures identified the Committee began by querying the reference to the £0.2m underspend identified within Communities & Regeneration as referenced within the 2023-24 Financial Outturn Report which it was reported was partially linked to a pause in some spending on communications pending development of a new Communications Strategy. Focussing on wider communications activity, details were sought on plans being developed to support the promotion of key messages with different stakeholders around the Council's budget and overall financial position as part of the budget consultation process.

In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director of Finance & Resources) advised of the plans for the upcoming budget consultation process, which were due to be finalised once the final financial settlement from central government had been provided. This had included a review of different engagement and consultation models and channels (recognising the different approaches taken by other local authorities) with the aim of focussing on the key messages to be provided regarding the Council's overall financial position in support of the budget proposals and technical way in which the information was presented to ensure it was as clear and easy to understand as possible.

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) also took the opportunity to highlight the work undertaken with London Councils, who had been keen to review the approach taken towards budget consultation within Brent as well as recognise the important role of local ward councillors in the consultation and engagement process.

Following up, members felt there was also a need to recognise the value in developing more regular avenues of communication and engagement between local residents, key stakeholders and the Council's leadership as well as ward councillors in order to address issues such as the financial pressures being faced by the Council, which the Leader advised the Council had been keen to develop through not only the Brent Magazine and Your Brent e-bulletin but also initiatives such as the Brent Hubs day.

- As a further issue raised in relation to communication activity, members were also keen to seek details on the way in which outcomes were measured given the level of funding committed and wider financial pressures facing the Council. In response, Councillor Mili Patel, supported by the Leader, felt it important to recognise the reductions made in the Council's communication budget and work being undertaken (given the point raised about developing more regular avenues of communication) to assess and focus on the most cost-effective methods of engagement that were valued by local residents as a means of accessing information. Reference was also made to the recommendation made by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group regarding budget communication activity with the Committee, as a result of the issues highlighted, advising of the intention to review the metrics used to assess impact and cost effectiveness of budget communications activity to specifically support the budget consultation process as part of the Budget Task Group process. This would also include consideration of the budget communication plan being developed to support the 2024-25 consultation process, once finalised and promotion of key messages and information in as clear and easy to understand format as possible.
- The Chair then moved on and referring to the MTFs sought details on the current health and resilience of the Council's reserves given the identified budget gap of £16m in 2025-26 and level of budget cuts already delivered and identified as required moving forward, in terms of the Council's overall financial sustainability, risk of having to issue any s.114 notice and concern at the impact of the forecast overspend identified within the Q1 2024-25 budget monitoring report totalling £10m. In response, Minesh Patel confirmed that based on current funding allocation and assumptions the estimated budget gap for 2025-26 had been identified as £16m rising to a cumulative £30m by 2027-28. Whilst it was felt the Council had taken a prudent approach towards management of its budget this had required the draw down from the Future Funding Risks Reserve of £13.5m in 2023-24 to bring the General Fund to a breakeven position and a further £2.4m to top up the General Reserve to 5% (£18m) of net revenue budget in 2024-25 in order to provide the minimum level of reserves considered sufficient to maintain the Councils' financial stability. Given the current forecast overspend during 2024-25 and lack of certainty around future funding settlements and economic climate, the Council was therefore looking to identify and deliver savings of £16m (in addition to those already delivered) in order to set a balanced budget for 2025-26 and



also ensure that the reserve fund was built up and maintained at a sufficient level to manage any additional in year pressures. Whilst members were advised the Council was not at immediate risk of any s.114 notice, it was recognised that this process would involve a number of difficult decisions needing to be taken about which services to prioritise and protect and which to reduce in order to continue to deliver affordable and sustainable budgets and seeking to protect the most vulnerable. In terms of the choices available, members noted the increasing challenge in seeking to identify and deliver savings and in balancing the need to deliver the statutory duties placed on the Council against those which, whilst important to local residents, were non statutory in nature supported by the need for a clear and fairer funding regime for local government which recognised these pressures. Whilst noting the uncertainties and risks involved it was highlighted that the Council had sought to develop its financial plans based on an assessment (pending further clarification and refinement of the estimates involved) of a range of possible scenarios rather than await the outcome of the next Local Government Financial settlement in December 2024.

In response to further clarification being sought about use of reserves, details were provided on the current model with use to address the ongoing pressures identified in relation to the increase in homelessness and cost in provision of temporary accommodation but which, over the longer term, it was noted would, require a more sustainable funding solution to be identified by the Government, recognising the ongoing impact on local authority budgets. Lobbying to enable more flexible use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserves was also queried as a possible alternative option to support the general reserve. In response, both Minesh Patel and Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader) felt that the more sustainable option would be to lobby for a longer-term funding solution and reform of the local government finance system, given the reliance on the generation of CIL receipts around delivery of future development schemes. which had also been impacted by current economic uncertainty and the important use of CIL in support of wider community initiatives. In noting the new government's intention to reform the current planning system and encourage further development (particularly across the housing sector) the Committee were keen to support continued lobbying efforts for the urgent reform of local government finance and in seeking to extend and allow more flexible use of CIL funding supported by the provision of detail on overall level of CIL funding and balances available to support current infrastructure projects. Councillor Muhammed Butt advised he was due to meet with other Council Leaders across London shortly so could ensure the need for a coordinated and collaborative approach towards the lobbying of central government on these issues and approach to dealing with the wider financial challenges outlined was raised.

- As a separate issue, further assurance was then sought on the accuracy of the £16m budget gap currently forecast for 2025-26 given the reference within the Financial Outturn report to the potential for this to widen and the current estimate for savings of up to £30m being required for 2027-28. In response, Minesh Patel advised that the current forecast represented the best estimate

currently available recognising the current economic climate, uncertainty around future funding provision and ongoing pressures in relation to demographic changes and the impact on demand led service provision with the key risk and driver for these pressures remaining the increase in homelessness and reduction in supply of suitable accommodation. Whilst the use of Section 21 No Fault evictions remained an issue, the Committee were advised that the increase in households presenting as homeless involved a range of factors including the cost-of-living crisis and availability of suitable alternative affordable accommodation, including within the private rented sector, with work ongoing to ensure the projections were as accurate as possible in order to support the programme of works established to focus on containing the position.

- As an additional issue raised in relation to the savings identified for delivery, reference was made to the update on the savings delivery tracker included within the Q1 Financial Forecast 2024-25 with members keen to explore the trend in terms of savings on which delivery was flagged as “Amber” and feasibility of these being achieved, given the potential impact on the overall robustness of the budget position. Whilst highlighting the increasing challenge in being able to identify savings, given the cuts already delivered in relation to the budget, Rav Jassar (Deputy Director Finance) outlined the process undertaken to assess all savings proposals supported by the Budget Assurance Panel, with the amber RAG rating designed to flag when risks had been identified with the delivery of individual proposals. In noting members concerns relating to savings proposals currently identified as not achievable, the Committee was advised of the work being undertaken to explore alternative proposals within the related service area.
- As a more general issue, further detail was sought on the way in which risks relating to ongoing volatility in the energy market (referred to within the Q1 Financial Forecast 2024-25 update) were being reflected within the budget planning process alongside the options being explored to reduce the Council’s exposure to these risks. In response, members were advised of the measures in place to monitor the recognised volatility in the energy market against budget assumptions with the position also supported by the existing consortium arrangements the Council had entered into to forward purchase energy supplies over the medium term. In noting the newly elected governments plans for the introduction of a new publicly owned Great British Energy Company the Committee advised they were also keen to ensure the necessary action was undertaken to prepare the Council in seeking to take advantage of any potential impact in terms of the provision of energy supplies and work to develop more sustainable sources of energy including heat networks.
- The Committee then moved on to focus on the significant areas of overspend identified within the Financial Outturn Report 2023-24, which specific reference to the £11.2m overspend identified in relation to the increase in homelessness and cost of Temporary Accommodation within Resident Services that had been identified as a significant ongoing pressure and risk within the Q1 Forecast and MTFS. In recognising the mitigating measures established to focus on addressing and containing the pressures identified, members were also keen to explore what, if any, lessons it had been possible

to learn from other local authorities and how the strategies and measures in place were being developed and adapted to ensure they were as effective as possible. In terms of lessons learnt, Minesh Patel advised that whilst the position and approach adopted within other local authorities was continuing to be monitored the pressures identified were being experienced on a national scale with London having been particularly impacted. Whilst London Councils had undertaken analysis and benchmarking designed to support peers, the pressures being experienced in terms of the increase in households presenting as homeless, number of households in temporary accommodation and demand on supply were being experienced on a London wide basis making it difficult to learn any specific lessons. In recognising the complex nature of the issues driving the current housing crisis the Council had looked to develop a range of workstreams focussed not only on schemes designed to increase the supply of affordable housing but also on the affordability and supply of Temporary Accommodation and assessment of need. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the role of the Budget Assurance Panel in seeking to monitor the delivery and effectiveness of these workstreams alongside the work being undertaken in relation to the demand led pressures identified within Adult and Childrens and Young People Social Care.

- Following on from the previous question, details were sought on the extent to which the increase in Local Housing Allowance Rates (announced as part of the Chancellors 2023 Autumn Statement) had assisted in the reduction of housing costs. In response, the Committee was advised that whilst homeless households placed in temporary accommodation who were entitled, were able to claim housing benefit towards their housing costs, local authorities were required to pay the cost of that housing benefit upfront before being paid back by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through subsidy arrangements. Although households received full housing benefit the amount the Council was able to claim back remained limited to 90% of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) meaning that if the cost of the housing benefit claim was higher than that rate, the local authority would lose money with the council effectively bridging the gap between rent and the amount it was allowed to recover in housing benefit subsidy from the Department of Works and Pensions. Whilst the increase in LHA had therefore been welcomed, the cap on subsidy that could be claimed back remained an issue in terms of affordability with the total subsidy loss to the Council in 2023-24 being £10.4m.
- Details were also sought on the reasons the overspend within the Care, Health and Wellbeing Department totalling £1.9m had only been identified within Q4 2023-24 (Financial Outturn Update). In response Rav Jassar, referred to the detailed narrative provided within section 4 of the Financial Outturn report which had outlined the basis of the overspend and reason for it not having been identified prior to Q4 and, he felt, also highlighted the challenging nature of the forecast process particularly given the demand led nature of services being provided across Adult and Children's Social Care and in-year pressures experienced as a result. Attention was also drawn to the controls and mitigating measures put in place by the Department as a result of the specific issue raised designed to ensure that similar pressures were not experienced during the current financial year with assurance also provided in relation to the wider concerns raised regarding the unexpected overspends

identified within Care, Health & Wellbeing and Children & Young People regarding the robust nature of the forecasting process and work being undertaken to support departments in ensuring this remained as accurate as possible.

- As a further issue highlighted, clarification was provided on the background to the mid-year withdrawal of the supplier from the Community Equipment contract, given the associated budgetary impact and cost pressures identified within the section 4.1.3 of the Financial Outturn Report 2023-24. In outlining the reasons, Members were advised that a new provider had subsequently been found with controls in place to continue monitoring performance and trends in spending and the contract expected to stabilise during its second year of operation with the new arrangements also involving an increased range of local suppliers.

The Committee also took the opportunity, at this stage in the discussion, to seek further views on the potential available to generate income and avoid exposure to additional costs through the insourcing as opposed to contracting out of services. Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised that whilst the potential to insource services was an option considered as part of most large procurement processes there were a range of factors needing to be considered in terms of evaluating its cost effectiveness given the need to ensure the necessary infrastructure and staff were in place to deliver the service and also associated economies of scale. Whilst recognising the issues highlighted, the Committee advised they were keen to explore the opportunities available to support lobbying (through London Councils) for the development of a more co-ordinated pan London approach towards the commissioning of services across London local authorities in order to deliver enhanced economies of scale, generate further potential insourcing opportunities and ensure best practice in seeking a value driven and mission led approach towards future procurement activity that was also designed to minimise the ability for private sector companies to seek to exploit demand led pressures in areas such as Children and Adult Social Care.

- The Committee then moved on to focus on issues identified within section 4.2.4 of the Financial Outturn Report 2023-24 relating to the ongoing financial pressures being experienced as a result of the challenge in the recruitment and retention of social workers within Children & Young People and Adult Social Care and associated reliance on Agency Staff. In response, members were advised of the importance in recognising this as a national and regional rather than Brent specific issue. Whilst a range of measures had been introduced within Brent to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, including the provision of key worker accommodation, specific recruitment drives and training and incentive packages the measures being taken also involved a coordinated regional approach and, Councillor Muhammed Butt highlighted, would also need to be supported by the provision of adequate funding and reform of the social care sector.
- Following on from the previous issue, details were also sought regarding the interventions identified within section 4.2.12 of the Q1 Forecast Report 2024-25 around growing the in-house Fostering Service (designed to increase the number of in-house Brent Foster carers and reduce the reliance on

Independent Fostering Agencies) and promotion of care leavers independence. In responding, Minesh Patel supported by Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) highlighted the work being coordinated through the Corporate Director CYP and the Placements Commissioning Strategic Group in relation to both areas, which also involved a regional approach aimed at seeking to reduce the associated financial pressures whilst also meeting the requirements within the agreed offer to care leavers in relation to step down provision. Members advised they would be keen to receive further details (as a request for information arising from the review) on the work and interventions being coordinated through regional networks to address financial pressures in relation to the Fostering Service, including supply of Foster Carers and following on from the comments already made in relation to procurement also highlighted their support for lobbying of central government to end the privatisation of children's social care services.

- As a further matter raised for consideration, the Committee then turned their attention to the position regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant and management of the legacy deficit totalling £15.1m identified within the Q1 Forecast Report 2024-25 to ensure schools continued to be protected and risk mitigated. In response, Minesh Patel confirmed that this represented a cumulative deficit brought forward from 2023-24 with Members advised that the deficit carried forward since 2022-23 had been disclosed as an earmarked unusable reserve in line with DfE regulations (the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023) which required the deficit to be carried forward and held separately from in-year surpluses, funded from future years' funding and/or recovery plans agreed with the DfE. The significant proportion of the deficit was related to pressures being experienced in relation to the High Needs Block within the DSG for which a Deficit Recovery Management Plan had already been established led by a Task Group including the Corporate Directors CYP & Finance and Resources. Action to reduce costs had included managing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) through adopting a graduated approach framework, improving sufficiency of places through increasing the amount of special provision within the borough, particularly for secondary phase pupils and 16–25-year-old SEND students and financial management to identify efficiencies and ensure full cost recovery from other local authorities that placed pupils in Brent Special Schools with a combination of these longer-term recovery actions and anticipated funding increases expected to achieve continued reduction in the deficit. In addition, members were advised of Brent's participation in the DfE's Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme aimed at supporting the identification, funding and delivery of a range of initiatives designed to support management and a reduction in expenditure against the High Needs DSG Block. Whilst not specifically established to address the historic deficit it was anticipated that the current Management Plan and changes embedded as a result of the DBV programme may enable funds to be released to address historic deficits.

Although a balanced budget had been set for the High Needs Block, members were advised of the ongoing risk identified in relation to the growth of EHCPs (recognised as both a national and regional trend) and pressures created as a result of DfE funding not having been increased in line with this continued

growth or to reflect the risk of high inflationary costs, which would continue to impact deficit balances. Whilst the statutory override set out in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2021, which required local authorities to either carry forward any cumulative DSG deficit to set against the DSG in the next funding period or carry forward some or all the deficit to the funding period after that, was expected to end in 2022-23 this had now been extended for another three financial years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. Without this arrangement, members were advised the risk remained that the local authority would be required to absorb any accumulated deficit from the DSG using General Fund reserves. In response to an additional issue raised in relation to patterns identified in the management of deficits within individual schools, members were advised this would include a range of different factors including pupil numbers, inflationary costs and management of ECHPs with members (as an information request arising from the review) requesting the provision of details, further context and any identified patterns regarding schools that had managed to successfully move out of financial deficit and how any lessons learnt as a result had been utilised to support other schools facing financial challenges. In addition, members advised they would be keen to be provided with access to the report due to be considered by Audit & Standards Advisory Committee (24 July 24) as part of their review of key risks identified on the Strategic Risk Register, on the progress in delivery of the DSG Deficit Recovery Plan.

- The Committee then moved on to consider current performance in relation to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, as detailed within section 4.7 of the Q1 Forecast Report 2023-24 with details sought on the effectiveness of measures in place to enhance performance given collection rates had not yet returned to pre-covid levels. As background, members were advised that a decision had been taken in December 2023 to increase the long-term collection rate for budget setting back to the pre-pandemic target of 97.5% (having been reduced in December 2021 to account for the anticipated increase in uncollectable debts arising from the economic impact of the pandemic and the resulting recession) but had struggled to recover. Whilst recognised as a risk to the budget, members were advised that this had been identified as a longer-term trend which had been exacerbated by a number of other factors such as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. The Budget Assurance Panel was continuing to undertake detailed analysis to determine the wider causes for the decline and ensure the current assumptions within the MTFs were kept under review supported by a range of service led initiatives to enhance collection. These included not only enforcement action (focused around the Council's Ethical Debt Recover Policy) but also the promotion of direct debit payments; debt collection activity; access to open banking; enhanced engagement activity with residents and use of Hub Advisors and the provision of advice and support to residents in financial hardship. In considering the approach outlined, members were advised of the distinction that needed to be drawn between those struggling to pay as a result of financial hardship and those seeking to evade or refusing to pay, which the Budget Assurance Panel was also taking an active interest in reviewing alongside measures introduced by other local authorities to enhance collection rates. Members noted that the current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumption retained a 97.5% Council Tax collection rate for all years but should the effect of the review in relation to the long-term forecast for Council

Tax collection determine any adjustment needed to be made, this would impact on the funding available for the General Fund. Having highlighted the distinction and given concerns raised about the longer term impact any reduction in collection rates would have on the Council's overall budget position, the Committee (as a request for information arising from the review) asked for further details to be provided on the breakdown of cohorts identified as struggling to pay Council Tax or Business Rates (as a result of financial hardship) and the correlation to areas of deprivation across the borough alongside the % and approach being taken towards tackling those individuals who were seeking to evade or refuse to pay Council Tax or Business Rates. As an additional suggestion for improvement, the Committee advised they would also be keen to support a wider review of the plans in place to address and enhance Council Tax and Business Rate collection rates including relevant strategies for debt collection to ensure robust interventions were in place to target those evading Council Tax/Business Rates. In response to an additional suggestion made at the meeting, it was felt this should also include a review of the protocol in place to engage local councillors and to utilise their local knowledge in identifying those avoiding the payment of council tax or business rates. In recognising the concerns highlighted during the meeting the Leader also took the opportunity to advise the Committee of the renewed focus that would need to be given to the way in which support (including that available through the Council Tax and Resident Support Schemes) was being provided for residents moving forward, in order to ensure (given the financial challenges faced) that this continued to be targeted effectively on those in most in need.

Whilst focussing on the financial resilience of the Council, members were advised that some of the pressure experienced as a result of the reduction in collection rates had been mitigated by higher than average tax base growth, driven by the regeneration work ongoing within the borough. It was, however, recognised that the extent this growth could be expected to continue remained uncertain given the impact of the current economic climate on the building sector with a prudent approach therefore being taken towards the budget assumptions and work continuing to assess the growth in the Council Tax base, to feed into the budget setting for 2025-26.

In considering the collection of Business Rates, members also noted the advantages arising from Brent's participation in the London Local Authority Business Rates Pool given the ability to operate as single entity from a business rates perspective and the ability to retain more of the income generated locally. In noting that the London Borough of Camden and City of Westminster were not currently participating in the pooling arrangements, members felt it would be useful to explore in more detail the possibility of encouraging them to consider joining arrangements, which the Leader advised he would be willing to raise at a pan London level.

- Referring to the Q1 Financial Forecast 2023-24 the opportunity was also taken to highlight the potential budget pressures identified in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as a result of the savings required following the rent limitations imposed by the government over previous years and increased demand and costs associated with repairs. As part of the approach identified members queried what was felt to be a focus within the HRA on reactive

rather than planned maintenance (including cyclical works and upgrades to existing stock) given the costs involved, with members advising they would be keen to explore (as a further request for information arising from the review) whether it might be more cost effective for investment to be targeted towards planned repairs in order to reduce the more uncertain nature of demand and costs associated with the delivery of reactive repairs. Whilst noting that the HRA was currently forecasting a breakeven position, members also sought assurance regarding the adequacy of the HRA reserve and as a further request for information arising as an outcome of the review asked for details to be provided on the benchmark figure for HRA reserves along with a comparison between other London Boroughs on costs associated with the servicing of HRA debt and interest payments on tenants.

Whilst recognising that any review of HRA performance would fall under the remit of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Councillor Conneely (as Chair) advised of the intention to include consideration of the HRA Business Plan and strategic investment decisions as part of the review to be undertaken by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. This would include, given inclusion of reference to the Warm Homes Plan within the recent Kings Speech, plans to address the wider strategy in relation to the delivery of investment to support energy efficiency and retrofit works across the housing stock. Whilst confirmation was provided in relation to the planned programme of investment for maintenance work across the HRA, the Leader felt it important to highlight the scale of additional investment required to support delivery of the additional objectives outlined and associated financial support that would be required for which, the Committee advised, they had identified a need to work in partnership with the Mayor for London and to explore potential sources of alternative investment including Investment Funds (subject to the necessary financial modelling being undertaken in support). The need to ensure the right skills and experience were available within the workforce to support the programme of energy efficiency works was also highlighted as an issue of concern, which the Leader assured members was being addressed separately through initiatives supported through the Brent Skills Strategy.

Given the time remaining and in seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Council's current forecast budget position and Medium Term Financial Strategy and as a result of the outcome of the discussion the requests for additional information and suggestions for improvement identified as a result were **AGREED** as follows:

### **Recommendations to the Executive**

- (1) To continue lobbying efforts for the urgent reform of local government finance that provides local authorities with greater options for how they raise and spend their resources (e.g. fiscal devolution options leading to more freedoms over local revenues such as 100% business rates retention and flexible use/spend of community infrastructure levy (CIL) monies).
- (2) As part of work with London Councils, lobby for a greater co-ordinated approach between local authorities in the commissioning of services that curbs profiteering by private companies, creates new insourcing opportunities,



enables mission-led procurement outcomes, and that delivers greater cost efficiencies overall.

- (3) Lobby the government to end the privatisation of Children's social care services.

### **Suggestions for Improvement to Council Departments**

- (1) In order to address low Council Tax and Business Collection rates to review relevant strategies for debt collection to ensure robust interventions are in place designed to target those evading Council Tax/Business Rate payments. This to include a review of the protocol in place to engage local councillors and to utilise their local knowledge in identifying those avoiding the payment of Council Tax or Business rates.

### **Information Requests**

- (1) To provide detail on the metrics used to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Council's budget communications campaigns, along with the performance scorecard/evaluation from the last communications campaign for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 Budget.
- (2) To provide information on the number of agency staff (social workers) in Children & Young People's Services who have transitioned to permanent employment contracts over the past two years.
- (3) To provide information on the number of agency staff (social workers) in Adult Social Care who have transitioned to permanent employment contracts over the past two years.
- (4) To provide further detail on the effectiveness and impact of the "Growing the In-house Fostering Service and "Promoting Care Leavers Independence" workstreams in alleviating the financial pressures faced by the Council.
- (5) To provide details, context and any identified patterns regarding schools that have successfully moved out of financial deficit and explain how these insights have been utilised to inform strategies for supporting those schools remaining in deficit.
- (6) To provide a breakdown on the percentage of those struggling to pay Council Tax and Business Rates due to financial hardship and those evading or refusing to pay.
- (7) To provide insight as to whether additional investment in planned housing repairs could reduce the need and associated costs for responsive repairs and the potential cost effectiveness of this as an approach over the longer-term.
- (8) To provide benchmark figures for HRA reserves along with a comparison of costs related to servicing HRA debt and interest payments to tenants across other local authorities.

## **9. Any other urgent business**

No items of urgent business were identified, prior to the meeting ending.

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm

COUNCILLOR RITA CONNEELY

Chair

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <br><b>Brent</b> | <b>Resources and Public Realm<br/>Scrutiny Committee</b><br>4 September 2024 |
|   | <b>Report from the Deputy Director,<br/>Democratic Services</b>              |
| <b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work<br/>Programme 2024/25.</b>                  |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>  | All  |
| <b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>   | Not Applicable   |
| <b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br><small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open   |
| <b>List of Appendices:</b>  | One<br>Appendix A: Committee Work Programme 2024/25  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>   | None   |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br><small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>   | Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Law & Governance<br>020 8937 2036<br><a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a><br><br>Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic Services, Law & Governance<br>020 8937 5436<br><a href="mailto:Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk">Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk</a> |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 To present the Committee’s work programme for 2024/25.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the Committee’s work programme (set out in Appendix A) be agreed.

## 3.0 Detail

### 3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1.1 Borough Plan 2023-2027 – all strategic priorities.

## **3.2 Background**

3.2.1 The work programme outlines the items which the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee will consider during the municipal year.

3.2.2 The programme is in line with the remit of the Committee which is set out in the Council Constitution (under the Terms of Reference for scrutiny committees<sup>1</sup>):

*Corporate policy, partnerships and resources; Budget; Customer services; Commercial services; Planning policy; Environmental policy; Public realm; Employment and skills; IT; Recycling; Regeneration; Transport and highways; Community safety; Property; Emergency planning and business continuity.*

The Committee is also the Council's "crime and disorder committee" for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006 and as such may review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of the crime and disorder functions by the responsible authorities (as defined by section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) who make up the Safer Brent Partnership, in order to make reports or recommendations to Full Council.

3.2.3 Committee members prioritised items for inclusion in its work programme at its annual work planning meeting, ensuring items selected aligned with:

- The strategic priorities set out in the Borough Plan 2023-27
- Areas of local community concern
- Significant issues affecting a significant number of residents/wards
- Emerging policies, strategies, or key decisions where there is strong interest for scrutiny input

3.2.4 The work programme of a scrutiny committee is intended to be a flexible, living document that can adapt and change according to the needs of a committee. The 2024/25 work programme will therefore be regularly reviewed throughout the municipal year by the Committee and updated accordingly where necessary.

3.2.5 The Committee will also lead a task group in Autumn 2024 scrutinising the Council's draft Budget for 2025/26. The findings of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group will be reported to the Resources and Public Realm Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2025.

## **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 Non-executive members were involved in developing the work programme as part of their membership of the Committee.

4.2 In developing its work programme, the Committee engaged with stakeholders, including Cabinet Members, Corporate Directors, the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee, and ward councillors. These sessions were held to

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<sup>1</sup> Brent Council Constitution, Part 4.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s142996/Part%204%20May%202024%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20.pdf>

temperature check key priority areas, avoid work duplication, and most importantly, ensure that the programme reflects matters of local community concern.

## **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 There are no financial considerations arising from this report. However, budget and financial implications are addressed in the 'Financial Considerations' section of any reports to the Committee, requested as part of its work programme.

## **6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 There are no legal considerations arising from this report. However, legal implications are addressed in the 'Legal Considerations' section of any reports to the Committee, requested as part of its work programme.

## **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

7.1 There are no EDI considerations for the purposes of this report. However, EDI implications are addressed in the 'EDI Considerations' section of any reports to the Committee, requested as part of its work programme.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 There are no climate change and environmental considerations for the purposes of this report. However, climate change and environmental implications are addressed in the 'Climate Change and Environmental Considerations' section of any reports to the Committee, requested as part of its work programme.

## **9.0 Communication Considerations**

9.1 There are no communication considerations for the purposes of this report. However, communication implications are addressed in the 'Communication Considerations' section of any reports to the Committee, requested as part of its work programme.

**Report sign off:**

**Amira Nassr**  
Deputy Director, Democratic Services

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## Appendix A

### Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25

#### 17 July 2024

| Agenda Item   | Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member  | Chief Executive/Corporate Director                       | External Organisations |
|---|--|--|------------------------|
| Budget 2024/25 Update: Medium Term Financial Strategy | Cllr Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council<br>Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources | Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources |                        |

#### 4 September 2024

| Agenda Item   | Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member                                     | Chief Executive/Corporate Director                                 | External Organisations |
|---|---|--|------------------------|
| Committee Work Programme 2024/25                    | Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee       | Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance              |                        |
| Establishment of Budget Scrutiny Task Group         | Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee       | Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance              |                        |
| Grounds Maintenance Contract – Year One Performance | Cllr Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement        | Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration | Continental Landscapes |
| I4B & First Wave Housing                            | Cllr Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth | Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration | I4B/First Wave Housing |

**5 November 2024**

| <b>Agenda Item</b>                        | <b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>                                    | <b>Chief Executive/Corporate Director</b>                          | <b>External Organisations</b> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Budget 2024/25: In-Year Monitoring Update | Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources   | Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources           |                               |
| Employment & Skills                       | Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action | Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration |                               |
| Workforce Strategy                        | Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources   | Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance              |                               |

**28 January 2025**

| <b>Agenda Item</b>                            | <b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>                                  | <b>Chief Executive/Corporate Director</b>  | <b>External Organisations</b> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings           | Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee           | Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance                            |                               |
| Complaints Annual Report 2023/24              | Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources | Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance                            |                               |
| Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report 2023/24 | Cllr Harbi Farah, Cabinet Member for Public Safety and Partnerships         | Peter Gadsdon, Corporate Director – Partnerships, Housing, and Resident Services | Metropolitan Police           |




**25 February 2025**

| <b>Agenda Item</b>                         | <b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>                                    | <b>Chief Executive/Corporate Director</b>                            | <b>External Organisations</b> |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Budget 2024/25: In-Year Monitoring Update  | Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources   | Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources             |                               |
| Community Wealth Building and Social Value | Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action | Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director – Community Health and Wellbeing |                               |

**23 April 2025**

| <b>Agenda Item</b>                            | <b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>                              | <b>Chief Executive/Corporate Director</b>                          | <b>External Organisations</b> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Build Quality                                 | Cllr Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth | Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration |                               |
| Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 | Cllr Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth | Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration |                               |

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| <br><b>Brent</b> | <b>Resources and Public Realm<br/>Scrutiny Committee</b><br>4 September 2024 |
|   | <b>Report from the Deputy Director,<br/>Democratic Services</b>              |
| <b>Establishment of Budget Scrutiny Task Group</b>  |  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>  | All   |
| <b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>   | Not Applicable  |
| <b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br><small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open  |
| <b>List of Appendices:</b>  | None  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>   | None  |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br><small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>   | Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Strategy and Partnerships<br>Tel: 020 8937 2036<br><a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a><br><br>Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic Services<br>Tel: 020 8937 5436<br><a href="mailto:Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk">Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk</a> |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to establish a task group to consider the Cabinet’s budget proposals for 2025/26.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That a Budget Scrutiny Task Group be established with members to be confirmed at the Committee meeting on 4 September 2024.

2.2 The terms of reference for the group will be to:

1. Consider the Cabinet’s budget proposals for 2025/26.
2. Receive evidence from cabinet members, senior departmental officers, and any other relevant stakeholders.

3. Agree a draft report to comment on the budget proposals for submission to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee for ratification and submission to Cabinet.

### **3.0 Detail**

#### **3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

- 3.1.1 Borough Plan 2023-2027 – all strategic priorities.

#### **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 The process for developing proposals for the budget and capital programme each year is outlined in the Brent Council Constitution, Part 2, Paragraph 19. This requires the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to meet (on more than one occasion if necessary) to consider the report to Cabinet from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources setting out the financial position of the Council, financial forecasts for the following year, and the possible expenditure priorities of the Executive, as well as a report on the draft budget proposals.
- 3.2.2 The Committee may receive evidence from Cabinet Members, Council officers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- 3.2.3 The Committee should agree a report setting out its view of the budget priorities and any other issues it considers relevant. This report should then be submitted to each Cabinet Member and each Group Leader in order to inform budget proposal discussions. The Committee should submit a note/report on its deliberations and comments on the proposals to the Cabinet.
- 3.2.4 At its meeting on 17 July 2024, the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee received a report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources on the overall financial position of the Council. This was inclusive of the Medium Term Financial Outlook, highlighting the significant risks, issues, and uncertainties faced by the authority. The report also set out the proposed budget setting process for 2025/26, in order to maximise the period of consultation with residents, businesses and other key stakeholders. Additionally, the Committee reviewed the Council's budget outturn performance for 2023/24.
- 3.2.5 A report to Cabinet from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources on the Draft Budget (with additional savings proposals for 2025/26) is to be published in the autumn of 2024. This will be considered by the Task Group.
- 3.2.6 Comments and any draft recommendations from the Task Group are expected to be considered and agreed by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 28 January 2025. A report from the Committee will then be presented to Cabinet for consideration on Monday 10 February 2025, alongside the report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources on final budget proposals.

3.2.7 Cabinet will recommend a budget for approval at Full Council on Thursday 27 February 2025.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 The Budget Scrutiny Task Group may consider any consultation being undertaken as part of the Council's budget setting process.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 There are no financial considerations for the purposes of this report.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 There are no legal considerations for the purposes of this report.

#### **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

7.1 There are no Equity, Diversity & Inclusion considerations for the purposes of this report.

#### **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 There are no climate change and environmental considerations for the purposes of this report.


#### **9.0 Communication Considerations**

9.1 There are no communication considerations for the purposes of this report.

**Report sign off:**

**Amira Nassr**  
Deputy Director, Democratic Services

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|  <p><b>Brent</b></p>  | <p align="center"><b>Resources and Public Realm<br/>Scrutiny Committee</b><br/>4 September 2024</p>  |
|  | <p align="center"><b>Report from the Corporate Director<br/>of Neighbourhoods and<br/>Regeneration</b></p>   |
|  | <p align="center"><b>Lead Cabinet Member - Cabinet<br/>Member for Environment and<br/>Enforcement<br/>(Councillor Krupa Sheth)</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Review of Year 1 of the Grounds Maintenance Contract with<br/>Continental Landscapes</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Wards Affected:</b></p>  | <p>All</p>   |
| <p><b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b></p>   | <p>Not Applicable</p>  |
| <p><b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br/>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph<br/>of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local<br/>Government Act)</p> | <p>Open</p>  |
| <p><b>List of Appendices:</b></p>  | <p>Three<br/>Appendix 1: Sample Lead Member Briefing from<br/>Continental<br/>Appendix 2: Sample Contract Monitoring monthly<br/>report from Continental<br/>Appendix 3: KPI's and Penalties</p>   |
| <p><b>Background Papers:</b></p>   | <p>None</p>  |
| <p><b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br/>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</p>   | <p>Chris Whyte, Director of Public Realm<br/>Tel: 020 8937 5342<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk">chris.whyte@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Kelly Eaton, Head of Parks and Green Infrastructure<br/>Tel: 020 8937 5565<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:Kelly.eaton@brent.gov.uk">Kelly.eaton@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Rashmi Agarwal, Head of Service Improvement and<br/>Contract Performance<br/>Tel: 020 8937 3143<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:Rashmi.agarwal@brent.gov.uk">Rashmi.agarwal@brent.gov.uk</a></p> |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides a review of the first year of the Grounds Maintenance Contract with Continental Landscapes. It covers information relating to the overall performance of the contract across Parks, BHM land and highway verges, and clarifies performance issues that have arisen and also those mitigations introduced to prevent re-occurrence. It provides information on the challenges faced in the first year of the contract, including the adverse impact of weather conditions, IT issues and staffing issues and the lessons learnt from this first year to allow improvements to be delivered going forwards.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

To note the contents of the report.

## **3.0 Detail**

### **3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

The Grounds Maintenance contract supports the Council in delivering its Strategic Priority of being Cleaner and Greener. The new electric fleet and machinery is positively contributing towards the Council's target of carbon neutrality and ensuring that our green spaces are welcoming to encourage residents to utilise them. The contract also supports the [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy](#) by ensuring that our green spaces are able to help manage the absorption of rainwater due to the increased heavy rains and help manage the heat island effect that occurs in cities.

### **3.2 Background**

The Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract was re-tendered in 2023 and was awarded to Continental Landscapes, a specialist grounds maintenance company. The contract commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 and is an 8+8-year contract, with the first opportunity for renewal or extension in 2031.

### **3.3 The new contract consolidated operations around the areas of:**

- highways verge cutting,
- parks maintenance, including sports pitches,
- allotments
- hedges and main pathways,
- housing estate grass and shrub bed maintenance
- hardstanding cleansing and
- four closed churchyards.

The specification was written to ensure that it included areas that had not been covered in the previous contracts such as pathway edging and included bank holidays as normal working days to reduce the additional charges for litter picking and bin emptying that were being incurred previously.

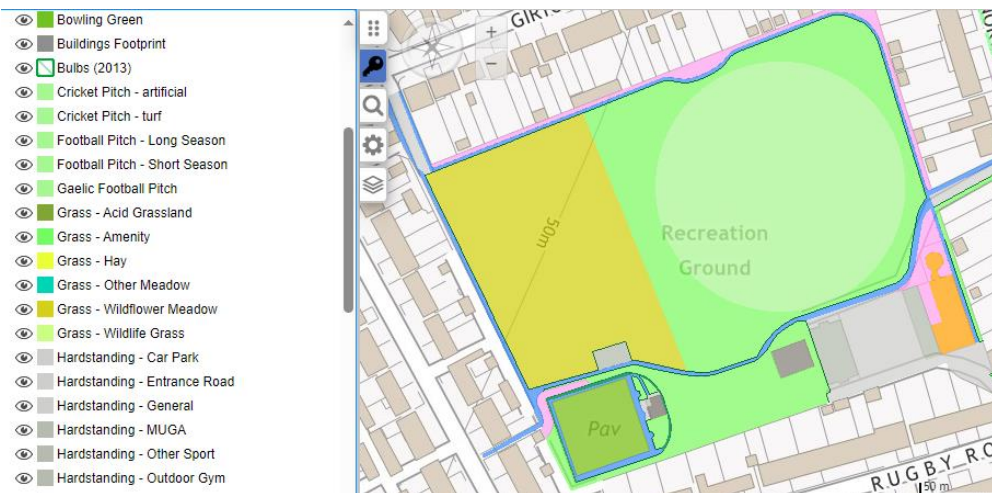
The edging schedule is a rolling 5-year plan to carry out 20% of grass edging on pathways in parks and on public highways, by removing grass creep. This



has been very successful in the first year and the teams have been able to use new sweeping machinery with a particular edging tool to carry out this edging work. The quality of the maintenance of the sports pitches in parks has also improved with the new contract and in general feedback from sports clubs has been positive.

- 3.4 The contract is groundbreaking in London, in that the request at point of tender was for all fleet, machinery and tools to be electric, significantly reducing the carbon footprint of the contract. Continental Landscapes delivered a 100% electric fleet and 90% electric machinery and tools, excluding only leaf blowers (for technical reasons) and tractors, as there are no available electric tractors on the market.
- 3.5 The first activity when staff transferred from the previous contractor, Veolia, was to undertake a comprehensive training programme including health and safety, toolbox talks on the new specification and training on the new tools and machinery as well as on the new IT system and handheld work programme reporting systems. Staff morale improved with this training, in addition to clear support for the work they were undertaking and brand-new equipment and vehicles. The new electric machinery had the added bonus of reducing hand and arm vibrations and so improving working conditions for the teams on the ground. Efficiencies were made in respect of a brand-new automated pitch line marking robot which reduced the time to mark out a sports pitch as well as increase the accuracy of the markings and a new remote controlled verge cutting machine which works on steep banks, reducing health and safety issues for staff mowing these areas.
- 3.6 There is a new and clear process of monthly contract monitoring in place, which allows for the review of operational and performance issues by a contract performance monitoring team.
- 3.7 All locations for the very first time were mapped on a GIS layer, allowing council staff and the contractor to clearly see which sites are on contract and what works are required at each site. This applies to all parks, housing sites and highways verges. Figure 1 shows an example of this breakdown of works in a park; with colour coded areas matching a linked legend.

**Figure 1. Sample Park mapping**



3.8 Continental's IT system, ATAK, has been a great improvement on previous operational spreadsheets that held location data and the system aims to allow staff to check any location at any given time to see what work has been completed and what work is outstanding. This system has worked well for litter bin collections, with data being readily available and photos of work undertaken being loaded onto the system.

However, there have been challenges with other aspects of the IT system, in way that the jobs are presented on the handheld devices for staff. An entire weeks' worth of activities were being loaded at once, which meant that whilst work was being undertaken, staff were overloaded with information and not uploading the photos and closing down the jobs on the system. This meant that performance figures were not reflective of the work that was being carried out and there were challenges in being able to check the ATAK system to confirm that work had been undertaken. This then led to a vast increase in e-mail requests for information from the Operations and Contract Managers at Continental regarding completed works and made accurate performance reporting more challenging. Weekly Operations review meetings have been put in place with the Contractor to address this issue whilst the relevant system changes are being made.

3.9 The Fix My Street reporting system has been integrated directly into ATAK IT system. This allows reports of littering, overflowing bins and verge issues to be reported directly to the contractor, streamlining the process. There are, however, still improvements to be made to the system, especially in the way that the free text detail integrates into the ATAK system and impacts the ability of the contractor and council officers to interrogate the data in sufficient detail.

3.10 There were other challenges during the first year of the contract. Whilst the contract mobilised in August (and there were a few weeks of grass cutting across parks and housing sites by the start of October) the weather worsened and by November there was frequent heavy rain. The contractor was able to cut and collect all wildflower meadows, verges and roundabouts and continue to work on general maintenance. But by January, there were three consecutive

high-pressure storms, which led to the water table being so high that the ground was completely saturated and many areas were flooded. Verge cutting was attempted in line with the intended schedule in March, but the heavy machinery was causing more damage to the verges and it was not physically possible to mow the grass. A delayed start to verge cutting was agreed with officers. As the weather got warmer and the rain continued, grass grew at a rapid speed and grass cutting across all aspects of the contract were adversely impacted by the weather and some issues with electric machinery.

- 3.11 The 'perfect storm' of conditions ensued from early 2024, which impacted service delivery in the first year. When grass cutting on verges and housing estates commenced, the electric machinery struggled to cope with longer wet grass. The actual battery run times were proving to be shorter than expected, as the much longer grass, which was also still wet, put additional strain on batteries which would last 1.5 hours compared to 4 or 5 hours. This led to less grass being cut in a day than expected. Whilst additional batteries were provided, the duration was still far short of the expected run time. This meant that verges and estates would be half completed, and the team would move onto the next location trying not to fall behind the schedule. The visual aspect of this led to complaints and teams having to return to cut areas, again delaying the cuts for other sites, which led to additional complaints. There were also some staffing issues which further compounded the issue although Continental worked quickly to seek additional staff.
- 3.12 Whilst many of the issues mentioned above were essentially compounded by a mixture of adverse weather conditions and electric machinery, Brent were not alone in this situation and other boroughs were also experiencing challenges with cutting verges through the spring and summer, leading to longer grass and higher levels of resident complaints. Brent's situation was exacerbated by the fact that every park, open space, highways verge, allotment, closed churchyard and all housing sites are on the same GM contract, so any issues experienced due to machinery impacted the entire operation.
- 3.13 However, when the scale of the issue was identified, regular review meetings were set up with Continental to ensure that issues were being managed effectively and that alternative solutions were being implemented. The Lead member was kept up to date on a regular basis and solutions confirmed, agreed and implemented quickly.
- 3.14 An example of this is the solution that was agreed to bring verges and housing land back within specification quickly. Continental Landscapes advised that they were in discussion with the manufacturers of the electric equipment, to work with them to find a long-term solution to avoid a repeat of the issues in future years. They also arranged for the delivery of replacement mowers and handheld tools that would run on an environmentally friendly fuel (Aspen) which produces 99% less emissions than fossil fuels. This machinery was implemented mid-July and allowed for a faster catch up on the backlog of work.
- 3.15 The contract specification requires Continental to litter pick verges prior to mowing. This was generally achieved well enough, even with the long grass.

On occasion, some litter was missed and a small number of enquiries were received about shredded litter on verges after a cut. When these reports were received, such as in Harrowdene Road, officers raised it with the contractor and an inspection carried out. The issue was not highlighted again in any successive verge cut, showing that concerns were taken seriously by the contractor and raised with the team on the ground. Whilst the majority of main verges were being cut on a schedule (albeit a slower schedule due to the weather), these delays and issues with machinery meant that some of the smaller sections of verge were missed on the scheduled cut, such as the raised grass area on Station Approach in Sudbury. When the issue was raised with the contractor, they ensured that the area missed was cut at the earliest opportunity. These areas are all mapped and there have been no further reports of these locations being missed on the next series of scheduled cuts.

- 3.16 Parks did not fare as badly during this time as the grass in these sites can be cut by tractors; however, there were still times during June where tractors were getting stuck because the ground had not dried out sufficiently in certain locations within parks such as Roe Green and One Tree Hill.
- 3.17 The new contract has set high expectations for the improved maintenance of all of our parks. Given the issues experienced during 2024, there was a higher volume of queries about maintenance than in the last year of the old Grounds Maintenance contract. One set of queries related to Gladstone Park. Queries were raised about the maintenance regime of the acid grassland area, the cutting of the playground grass, maintenance of the pond, weeds in pathways and the amount of litter across the park. A site visit was held with ward Councillors, Parks Service staff and the Contract Operations Manager. Clarifications were provided on the contract specification and timescales were provided for the remedy of the issues raised.
- 3.18 The general maintenance across all sports pitches has improved in quality with reinstatement works being carried out on football pitches at the end of the season and Continental worked hard to improve drainage for the Rugby Club. Cricket pitches received high quality maintenance before the start of the season and positive feedback has been received from sports clubs. One issue which has impacted some of our football and Gaelic Football pitches is that of sunken drainage lines. The image below shows the repairs carried out to the Gaelic Pitch at East Lane this year. The sunken drainage lines can impact pitch quality but is a known issue with clay soil. Although not included as a regular maintenance item in the contract, the Parks Service had identified the need to carry out works at some locations where underground drainage has led to compacted clay soil which had sunk. The only remedy for these is regular topping up of the sunken areas with soil. This issue was raised with the service by one of our Gaelic sports teams, concerned at the pitch quality given a recent renovation. The Parks Service updated the sports club with the work expected to bring the pitch back up to specification before the start of the season.



- 3.19 One issue that came to light in Housing grounds was the change in approach agreed with the contractor in principle for estates at commencement of the contract. Some estates have large verges surrounding them. There is no obvious boundary between these and the rest of the grounds and these look like part of each estate. The contractor agreed to maintain these verges in line with other highways verges, which is on a different cutting schedule to amenity grass.

However, the practical implication of this, for example seen in St Raphael's Estate, was that the verges were being mowed on a different frequency to the rest of the grass and residents were unhappy as it looked as though only part of the estate was being maintained. Upon investigation and discussion with the contractor, Continental proposed the realignment of the schedules for housing verges with the remainder of the estate amenity grass, resolving the issue of perception of non-completion of works.

- 3.20 Weed removal from Housing sites has been a challenge whilst staff were trained and awaited certification to allow them to carry out chemical weed spraying. However, there is a regular review of sites and Continental are working closely with Housing colleagues to remedy this situation.
- 3.21 Other operational issues in the first year include the removal of a large volume of fly tips and litter. The previous contract did not include detailed monitoring of tonnage. This contract provides monthly tonnage figures as well as the annual accumulated volume of flytips. Continental are collecting an average of 50 tonnes of litter and flytipped waste, per month, from our parks and open spaces.

To date, 360 flytips (around 500 cubic metres) have been removed from our parks. The teams are working closely with enforcement colleagues and much of the waste being left next to bins and flytipped in parks is household waste. Despite the large amount of waste that is being left in our parks, Continental have dedicated litter teams and there has been increased frequency of collection from some parks in the last year. Since the introduction of a dedicated park keeper at Roundwood, complaints about litter have reduced. This was a historic post that was re-introduced by the contractor to manage a particular

issue and there is not scope for dedicated park keepers in any other park location. There are proposals for the coming year to review the frequency of bin collections across all locations to understand whether the current system can be improved.

### **Changes and Improvements for the coming year**

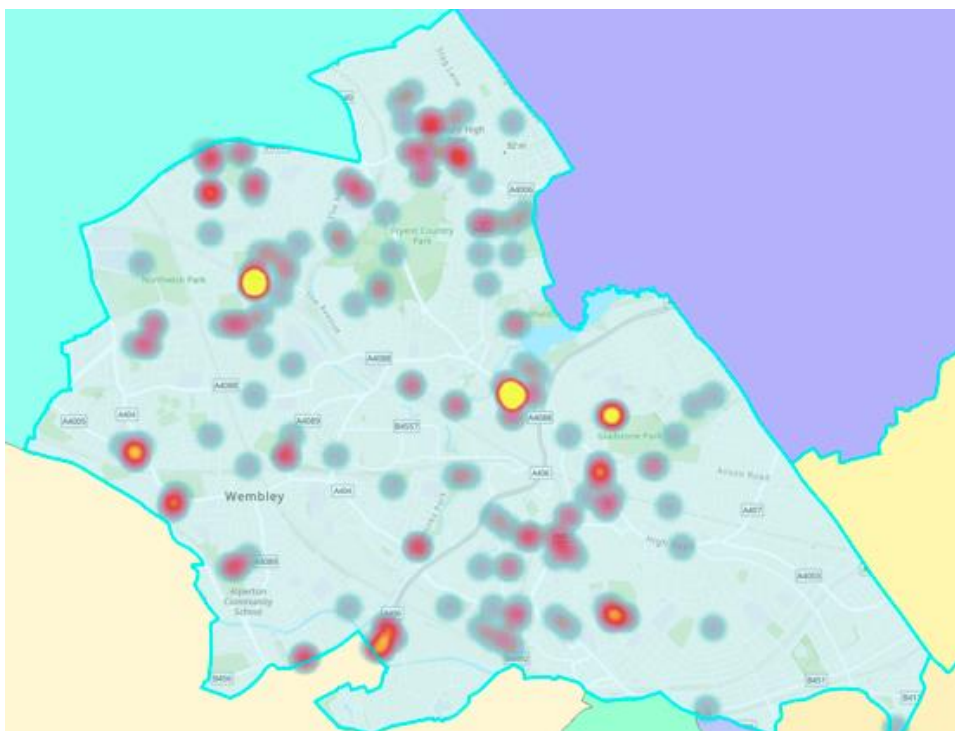
- 3.22 There is recognition of the need to publish a schedule for verge cutting and this will be provided for residents in early 2025. There will be changes to the way that Housing land is managed, by adopting a more comprehensive approach to works at each site in any given visit and ensuring that work is completed before moving on to the next location. Continental is working on the development of a new IT system, which will allow Housing tenants to be able to search directly for the dates of the last visit of the grounds team and the date of the next visit. There are also improvements being made with the delivery of the daily work schedule to the handheld devices of the grounds maintenance team allow them to provide updates once work schedules have been completed with greater ease. There will also be a new dedicated manager working with the Contract Operations Manager from the beginning of September. This is an additional post created by Continental to support the contract and be able to address issues and provide solutions even faster for the remainder of the contract.

### **Monitoring and performance management**

- 3.23 There are a number of systems and processes in place to monitor the contract including monthly operational and contract management meetings, led by the Parks Service and Contract Management Teams respectively. Continental provide a monthly status report; a copy of this is in Appendix 2. There are also weekly operational meetings to work with Continental to address the works to verges and housing land, most of which are now back on track regarding scheduled maintenance work. There are a few sites where there are continued issues and Continental are working closely with Housing colleagues to resolve these issues quickly. Continental provide regular updates to Councillor Krupa Sheth at Lead Members Briefing meetings and a sample copy of this report can be seen in Appendix 1.
- 3.24 The contract has 31 Key Performance Indicators and relative penalties that set the baseline for the monitoring of the contract, see Appendix 3. There have been difficulties in monitoring some of these effectively during the first year relating to the ATAK system and the way in which Brent seeks to monitor the data. Much of the monitoring data is currently obtained through Fix My Street reports and the way in which the description of the information entered into these reports then feeds into the ATAK system, does not currently allow for interrogation of the information in the manner which we would like.
- 3.25 However, the system is currently undergoing a complete overhaul to allow for flexibility in interrogating the data to meet our requirements. In the short term, Continental are working to provide a dashboard that holds the key performance information that we need to assess contract performance. Continental's IT team are working with us to provide more detailed information, such as the flytipping

hotspot map below in Figure 2, which we can then use in the coming year to target available resources to try to reduce flytipping in particular locations.

**Figure 2. Sample Heat Map of reported Parks fly tips in the last year**



3.26 The data below in Figures 3 and 4 provides an overview of the year's performance to date; including compliance with the contract's performance figures and response figures to Fix My Street reports. The KPI's not included in this table are annual targets which do not require monthly monitoring.

**Figure 3. A summary table of monitored KPI's**

| KPI title   | FY 2023/24 |      |      |                   | FY 2024/25                      |
|---|------------|------|------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
|   | Q2*        | Q3   | Q4   | Quarterly Average | Q1                              |
| No. of Complaints completed on time               | 83%        | 100% | 80%  | 86.67%            | Managed directly by the council |
| Freedom of Information completed on time          | 100%       | 100% | 100% | 100%              | Managed directly by the council |
| No. of RIDDOR reportable incidents                | 1          | 5    | 1    | 2.33              | 0                               |
| (Weeds) Notify on the discovery of invasive weeds | 18         | 15   | 0    | 11                | 60                              |

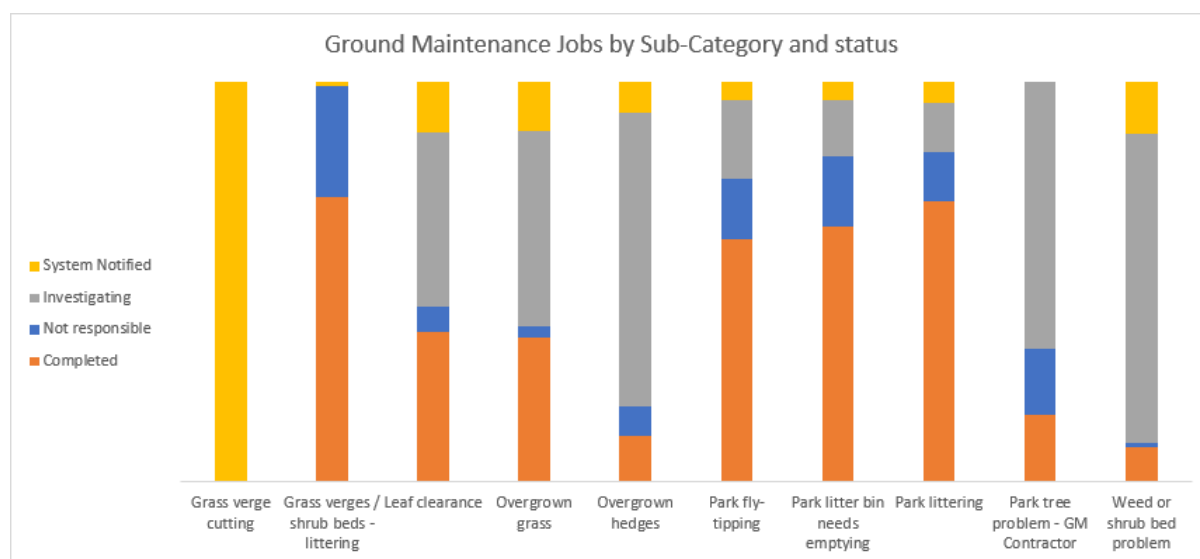
|  |        |        |        |                                       |           |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Cleaning Hard standing areas (Asphalt path)          | 21     | 30     | 12     | 21                                    | 8         |
| Tennis Court Maintenance                             | 1      | 3      | 1      | 1.67                                  | 4         |
| 20% of Parks Edges restored per Year                 | N/A    | N/A    | N/A    | Separate plan provided by Continental | Completed |
| 20% of highway Verges edges restored per Year        | N/A    | N/A    | N/A    | Separate plan provided by Continental | Completed |
| Height of Grass (* No of reports)                    | 28     | 14     | 4      | 15.33                                 | 304       |
| Maintain Hedges                                      | 2      | 6      | 4      | 4                                     | 27        |
| Removal of Branches                                  | 0      | 0      | 1      | 0.33                                  | 14        |
| Repairs of Sport Pitches                             | 5      | 1      | 1      | 2.33                                  | 0         |
| Overflowing Litter Bin dealt with in sufficient time | 89.71% | 83.33% | 66.67% | 79.90%                                | 100%      |

3.27 The data below highlights the type of task reported through Fix My Street and the percentage of those tasks that are updated on the system as being completed. The data below shows that 57% of all jobs are being completed. This does not necessarily mean that the tasks are not being actioned, as the category of notified means that the request has been passed to the contractor to resolve. If the work is not closed down on the system, then it will still show as being investigated. We are working with Continental to ensure that all requests received are being closed on the system as well as being actioned. Feedback received from the public in relation to any tasks that are marked as completed but have not been actioned are fully investigated. This allows better understanding of the reasoning and whether this is an operative error or a task that needs to be allocated to a different contractor to action, an option which is not currently available within the Fix My Street system.

3.28 To provide some context to the number of requests that are being sent to the Contractor, there is an average of around 100 Fix My Street reports a month, with the highest number; 472 reports, being received in June and 258 received as of the 21<sup>st</sup> August. The range of categories of reports being made can be seen below.



**Figure 4. A summary of responses to Fix my Street reports**



| <u>Sub Category</u>                   | <u>Not responsible</u> | <u>Completed</u> | <u>Investigating</u> | <u>System Notified</u> | <u>Total Count</u> | <u>%</u>       |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Grass verge cutting                   |                        |                  |                      | 31                     | 31                 | 1.09%          |
| Grass verges / shrub beds - littering | 183                    | 472              |                      | 6                      | 661                | 23.32%         |
| Leaf clearance                        | 1                      | 6                | 7                    | 2                      | 16                 | 0.56%          |
| Overgrown grass                       | 16                     | 196              | 264                  | 67                     | 543                | 19.16%         |
| Overgrown hedges                      | 6                      | 9                | 59                   | 6                      | 80                 | 2.82%          |
| Park fly-tipping                      | 82                     | 327              | 108                  | 23                     | 540                | 19.05%         |
| Park litter bin needs emptying        | 50                     | 181              | 39                   | 13                     | 283                | 9.99%          |
| Park littering                        | 72                     | 407              | 72                   | 29                     | 580                | 20.47%         |
| Park tree problem - GM Contractor     | 1                      | 1                | 4                    |                        | 6                  | 0.21%          |
| Weed or shrub bed problem             | 1                      | 8                | 73                   | 12                     | 94                 | 3.32%          |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>412</b>             | <b>1607</b>      | <b>626</b>           | <b>189</b>             | <b>2834</b>        | <b>100.00%</b> |
| <b>Column %</b>                       | <b>15%</b>             | <b>57%</b>       | <b>22%</b>           | <b>7%</b>              |                    |                |

### Summary of first year

3.29 The challenges of the first year have been recognised and acknowledged by the Council and the contractor. These were mainly related to the adverse weather, challenges with electric equipment and the usual (and expected) challenges in implementing a new contract and a new contractor. Nevertheless, Continental have been quick to work with us and resolve issues and to identify positive solutions. The work that is being undertaken by the teams is of high quality and a good standard and is meeting the requirements of the contract. There is a very strong partnership ethos between the Council and Continental and when issues have been experienced, both have worked together to develop a practical, deliverable solution. The Parks Service and Housing Service have developed a much closer working relationship throughout this first year and the shared experiences with all parties this year have made that

relationship stronger and better able to deliver a comprehensive, quality service for the next seven years.

#### **4.0 Member and Stakeholder Consultation**

4.1 There has been none carried out for this report.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 There are a number of Contract variations for new or missing locations that are being reviewed to determine any increase in the overall contract cost. The Pricing Schedule will be updated to reflect any changes.

5.2 There is no financial growth applied to year two of the contract. This may impact how the contract is managed and require changes to service delivery. At the moment, no changes are anticipated.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 There are a number of Contract variations for new or missing locations being reviewed by Legal to allow for their permanent inclusion into the maintenance contract.

#### **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

7.1 There are no equity, diversity or inclusion considerations with this review.

#### **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 The grounds maintenance contract was tendered on the basis that the new contractor would be able to meet the Council's environmental objectives and ideally deliver as much electrification as possible in respect of fleet and machinery. The Continental contract offers a fully electric fleet, including all vehicles used to collect litter and carry out works across all parks and Housing land and all machinery including mowers and handheld tools, significantly reducing the carbon footprint of the contract. The only exclusions are tractors, as there are not yet electric versions available, and leaf blowers, which were trialled but found to overheat. One of the KPI's requires Continental to provide an annual report on emissions and we are expecting this report shortly, but there have been no issues with the electric fleet during this year. The use of ASPEN fuel in mowers to allow for catch up work on the verges and housing land will have a minor impact on the carbon emissions this year but will set a clear baseline position to monitor the remaining years of the contract against.

8.2 With biodiversity commitments, Continental have fully understood our requirement to minimise the use of pesticides across the contract. There are key performance targets in place for meeting the biodiversity requirements of the contract specification, which for clarity, are provided below.

**BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

*The Contractor is required to look at ways of reducing chemical usage, creating a circular economy by reusing materials, such as leaf mulch and creating their own compost, through the re-use of green waste, as well as water conservation opportunities.*

*New meadow areas may be considered by the Authority in any location and such proposals can be suggested by the Contractor for discussion, through the monthly Contract Management Group meetings.*

*New planting should be considered in the context of climate change, extreme weather conditions, drought and heavy flooding. Perennials are preferable in any new planting scheme and a wide variety of planting should be considered to ensure a range of seasonal interest.*

*Where possible, single bloom flowering plants and trees should be selected to encourage pollinators and ensure easy access to a food source for insects.*

*Mulching should be utilised wherever possible on shrub beds and around tree bases to prevent the use of chemicals and reduce the need for weeding.*

*The Authority may seek to introduce rain gardens in areas of known flooding in parks, open spaces or housing management land. Any such suggestions will be discussed in full with the Contractor.*

- 8.3 In practice, Continental have worked with us to introduce new climate adaptable planting schemes in Heather Park and work with Highways colleagues to sustainably replant areas on the North Circular Road and in the South of the borough on Chamberlayne Road and we have many schemes programmed where they will be delivering new sustainable planting schemes.

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

- 9.1 There are no Human Resources or Property considerations with this review.

**10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 There are no communications considerations at this time.

**Report sign off:**

**Alice Lester**

Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and  
Regeneration

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## Lead Member Briefing

**To:** Cllr Krupa Sheth – Lead Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action

**From:** Paul Norton (Operations Director), Marcin Bergius (Operations Manager), Vincent Nurse (Contract Manager)

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024



**KPI's:-**

Please see KPI's below taken from the IMPACT system for Apprentices, Low Emission Mileage, Waste Disposal, Fly tipping, Training, Community Group Work and ongoing work on the Pocket Farm (Roundwood). The information has been updated up until the end of March 2024.

### Brent Fly Tip Removal



Figure 1 Image of IMPACT Monthly records of collected Fly tips including April 2024

Large fly tips collected in April again showed an increase in the amount of large dumped items collected from Parks and Open spaces. Contributing factors to this increase were the collection of dumped materials on an encampment in One Tree Hill Park, Large fly tips in King Edward VII Park and a number in other parks across the borough.

In total 55m<sup>3</sup> of large fly tips were collected during April 2024

The list below indicates the specifics sites and sizes of collected Fly tips in April 2024.

| Qty. | Unit | Task-ID | (Client) Instructions                               | Team    | Status    | Description                                 | Price |
|------|------|---------|---|---------|-----------|---|-------|
| 3    | M3   | 387498  | 3m3 of fly tip Job originally raised in issues task | VO-TEAM | Completed | Broadview, Kingsbury - By the park entrance | 129.3 |
| 2    | M3   | 399638  | Welsh Harp Car Park Fly tip - 1-2m3 Raised as iss   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Welsh Harp Open Space                       | 86.2  |
| 3    | M3   | 399639  | Fly Tip cleared - 3m3 Raised as issue               | VO-TEAM | Completed | Kensal Green Open Space                     | 129.3 |
| 2    | M3   | 399640  | Fly Tip cleared - 1-2m3 Raised as issue             | VO-TEAM | Completed | Church Lane Recreation Ground               | 86.2  |
| 3    | M3   | 399642  | Fly Tip cleared - 3m3 Raised as issue               | VO-TEAM | Completed | Kenton Grange                               | 129.3 |
| 2    | M3   | 399643  | Fly Tip Cleared - 1-2m3 Raised as issue             | VO-TEAM | Completed | One Tree Hill Park                          | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 399644  | Nearing Far Exit Fly Tip Cleared 1-2m3 Raised as    | VO-TEAM | Completed | One Tree Hill Park                          | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 399646  | Fly Tip cleared - 2m3 Raised as issue               | VO-TEAM | Completed | One Tree Hill Park                          | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401414  | Fly Tip cleared - 2m3 raised as issue - 399647      | VO-TEAM | Completed | Vale Farm Sports Ground                     | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401416  | Fly Tip cleared 2m3 Raised as issue - 399570        | VO-TEAM | Completed | King Edward VII Park                        | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401417  | Fly Tip cleared 2m3 Raised as issue - 399382        | VO-TEAM | Completed | Welsh Harp Open Space                       | 86.2  |
| 6    | M3   | 401418  | Fly Tip Cleared 6m3 Camp Removal Raised as iss      | VO-TEAM | Completed | One Tree Hill Park                          | 258.6 |
| 2    | M3   | 401419  | Fly Tip Cleared 2m3 Raised as issue 399905          | VO-TEAM | Completed | Welsh Harp Open Space - Welsh Harp Car Park | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401473  | Fly Tip cleared 2m3 Raised as issue 400183          | VO-TEAM | Completed | Longstone Avenue Open Space                 | 86.2  |
| 3    | M3   | 401474  | Fly Tip cleared - 3m3 Raised as issue - 400930      | VO-TEAM | Completed | Gibbons Recreation Ground                   | 129.3 |
| 2    | M3   | 401475  | Fly Tip cleared - 2m3 Found By Crew                 | VO-TEAM | Completed | Butlers Green                               | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401478  | Fly Tip Cleared 2m3 Fly Tip found by team           | VO-TEAM | Completed | Maybank                                     | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401479  | Fly Tip Cleared 2m3 Found by team                   | VO-TEAM | Completed | King Edward VII Park                        | 86.2  |
| 2    | M3   | 401707  | Fly Tip Cleared 2m3 Raised as issue - 401682        | VO-TEAM | Completed | Roundwood Road Open Space                   | 86.2  |
| 1    | M3   | 401895  | Fly Tip 2m3 Raised as issue - 401753                | VO-TEAM | Completed | Fryent Country Park (Inc. Barn Hill)        | 86.2  |
| 1    | M3   | 401896  | Fly Tip Cleared 2m3 Raised as issue - 401682        | VO-TEAM | Completed | Roe Green Park                              | 86.2  |
| 1    | M3   | 401897  | Fly Tip cleared - 2m3 Raised as issue - 401275      | VO-TEAM | Completed | Neasden Recreation Ground                   | 86.2  |
| 1    | M3   | 402014  | Fly Tip Cleared 3m3 Raised by crew                  | VO-TEAM | Completed | Abbey Estate Open Space                     | 129.3 |
| 1    | M3   | 399645  | Water Container collected as fly tip - 1m3 Raised   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Milton Avenue                               | 0     |
| 1    | M3   | 401415  | Fly Tip cleared 1m3 raised as issue - 399701        | VO-TEAM | Completed | Bacon Lane car park                         | 0     |
| 1    | M3   | 401471  | Fly Tip collected 1m3 raised as issue - 400350      | VO-TEAM | Completed | Fryent Country Park (Inc Barn Hill)         | 0     |

Figure 1 list of completed Fly tip collections for April 2024



Figure 2 Images of Fly tips in Maybank and Butlers Green

# Brent General Waste Disposal

Activity feed   More info   All logs   Cross-tab report   Downloads   SDGs   Evidence

📅 04/08/2023 → 📅 30/04/2024 Total: 393.02 Tonnes

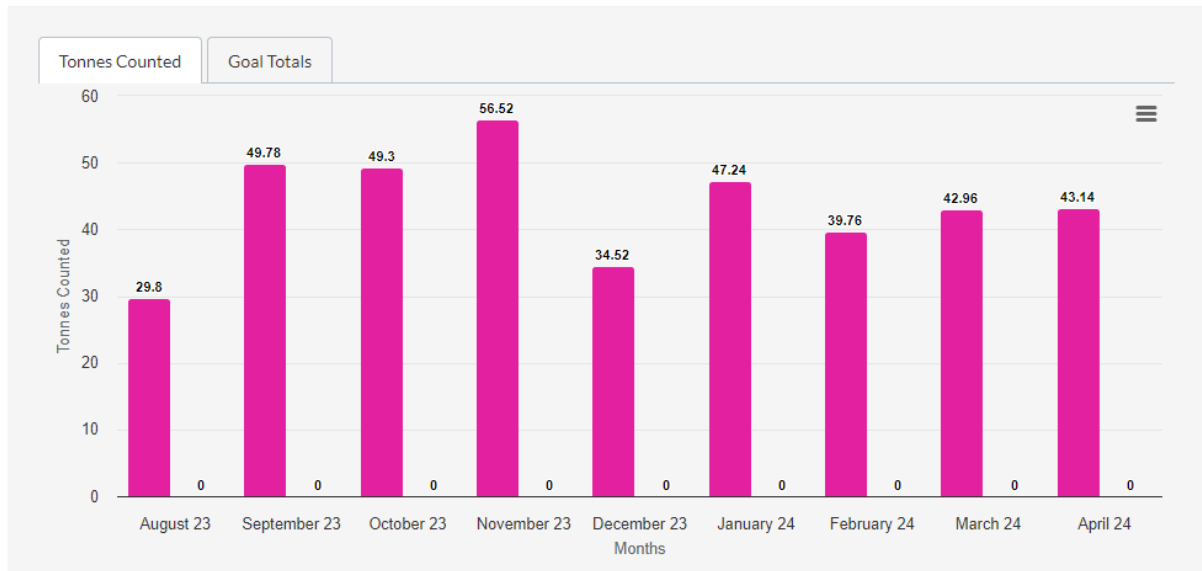


Figure 3 Image of IMPACT Monthly records of Tipped waste for April 2024

## Cleansing

In April 2024 we have noticed an increase in the amount of litter dumped in parks and open spaces. We continue to collect Fly tips and household waste from bins, along with constant full bins and litter in parks. At present a large amount of our resource is being utilised on waste clearance.

We collected 43.14 tonnes of Waste in April 2024.



Figure 4 Image of waste next to bins in Kind Edwards Park and Roundwood Pocket Park



## Brent Low Emission Miles



Figure 5 Image of IMPACT Monthly records of Low Emission Miles including April 2024

**Vincent Nurse Counted 8,074 Miles** between 30/03/24 and 30/04/24 (4 weeks)  
 Brent Low Emission Miles - Logged 22 hours ago

8074 Low emission miles calculated in April 2024.

**Project Brent**

A total of 8074 Electric Miles were driven in April 2024 (between 30/03/24 and 30/04/24), We are now starting to see an increase in the mileage we are completing as team are out cutting grass and back up teams are out following behind Grass cutting teams to complete strimming and blowing tasks

Figure 6 Image of IMPACT records for Apprentice working weeks including April 2024

### Training

In April we employed four new starters for seasonal GM work and completed 32 hours (8 hours per person) of Induction training covering Risk Assessments, Procedures and Policies and also training on the ATAK system. We also had four operatives complete refresher training for PA1 / PA6 and 10 operatives completed Manual Handling Online training course.

A total of 61 hours training was completed in April 2024 and information including Certificates and dates were uploaded to our training Matrix to keep data for scheduling refreshers and making sure our staff are compliant and registered to work safely and with a range of Machinery.

### Brent Training Hours

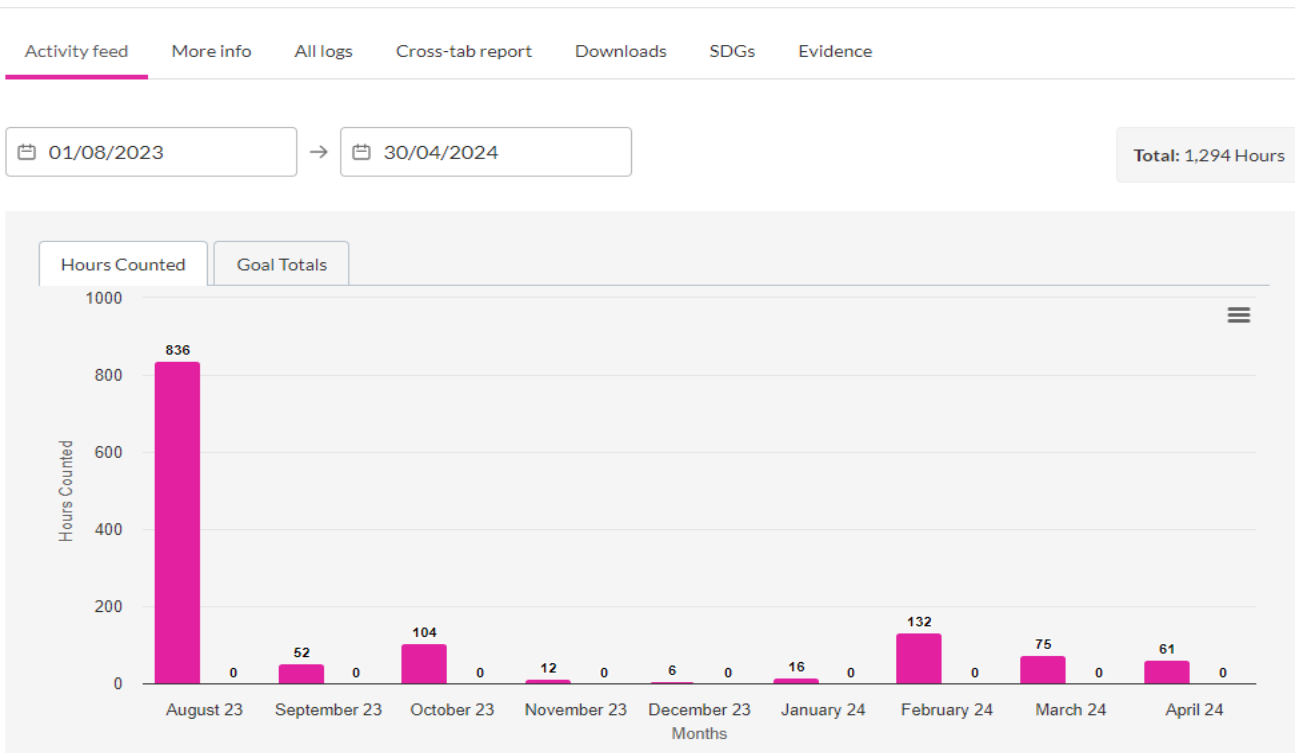


Figure 7 Image of Training records logged on IMPACT including April 2024

## 2.2 (Brent) Apprenticeships

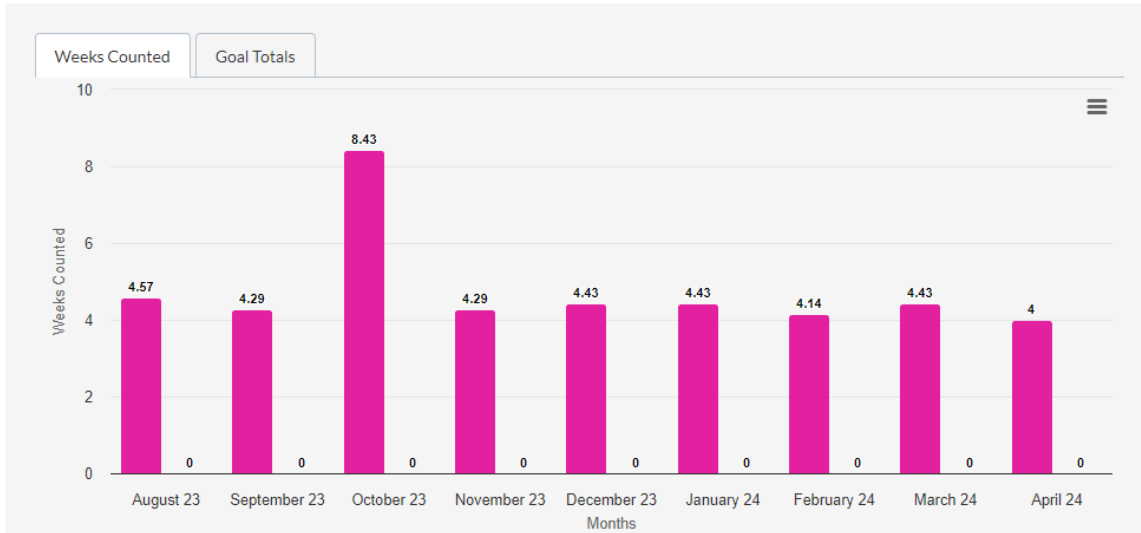
Activity feed   More info   All logs   Cross-tab report   Downloads   SDGs   Evidence

01/08/2023



28/04/2024

Total: 43 Weeks



### CSR and Roundwood Pocket Farm

In April Our CSR Team leader carried some impressive work with both the Roundwood and Gladstone Park community Groups. They worked on Edging and weeding herbaceous beds and cutting grass around the beds. They also worked on Rose Beds, weeding and replacing stakes.

One of our colleagues from another contract assisted in creating a Bug Hotel and Bird Boxes for the Pocket farm. These were collected from our Head office and delivered to site during April.

### Contributing activities

#### 4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4

£14,682.44

#### 4.4 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI

£8,003.36

## (Brent) Helping with community clear-up days gardening and food growing projects

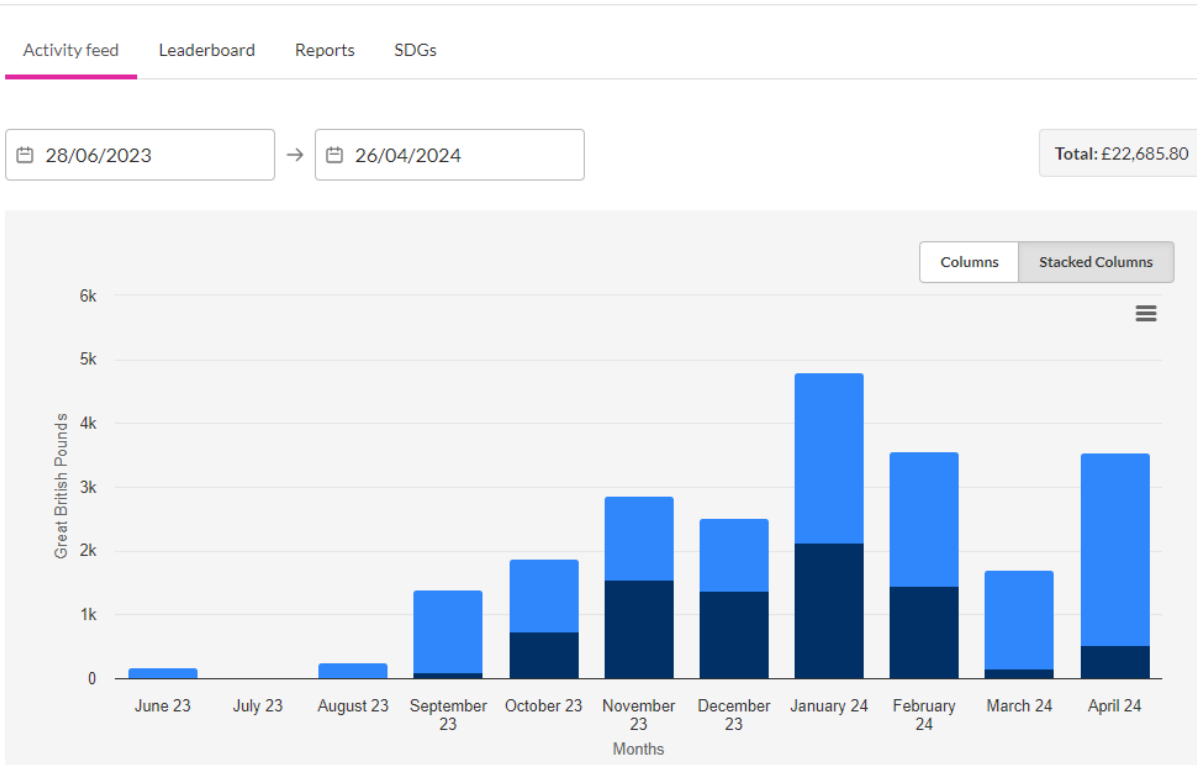


Figure 8 KPI reports from Entries added to IMPACT for community work with Park Community Groups and Roundwood Pocket farm.



**Vincent Nurse Counted £146.10** on 17/04/24

4.4 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI - Logged 1 week ago

Collected Bird Boxes and Bug Hotel which were made for Brent Roundwood Pocket farm from our Head office in Bicester.

**Project Brent**

⋮









### Vincent Nurse Counted £262.98 on 03/04/24

4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4 - Logged 2 weeks ago

Gladstone gardening club 8.30-2 x2 grass cutting and edging 11-12 x8 volunteers. Weeding. Corpse work

Project Brent



### Vincent Nurse Counted £409.08 on 17/04/24

4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4 - Logged 1 week ago

Gladstone Park gardening club 8-3 x2 8 volunteers weeding. Replace old rose stakes with new ones. Cut grass and Edge herbaceous borders. Blow pathways

Project Brent



Figure 9 Images from IMPACT entries for work carried out in the Gladstone Park and Roundwood Pocket Farm

## Community Engagement

During April we assisted with some community Litter picking sessions in Woodcock Park and Roundwood Park. We delivered Bags and Litter pickers to two community groups and collected the bags of waste after the sessions.



### Vincent Nurse Counted £58.44 on 13/04/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 5 minutes ago

Dropped off a box of black bags for Friends of Wood cock park community group for a litter picking session and collected waste after the event

Project Brent



### Vincent Nurse Counted £116.88 on 20/04/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 2 minutes ago

Roundwood Park - Donated 20 x Litter pickers and bags to Mgr. Damian Hawrylko Project Assistant Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services Brent Council for a litter pick group session. Team also collected bags at the end of the session to take to the tip.

Project Brent

Evidence

RE Event approved for the Litter picking Thank you to Brent Resident event (1).msg

**Health and safety:**

There were no RIDDOR’s and one incident in April 2024

The incident in April involved a Third Party Vehicle causing minor damage to one of our Company Vehicles on the North Circular

**Accident Log**

| 2024     | Feb          |                 |                 | Mar          |                 |                 | Apr          |                 |                 |
|----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Contract | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days |
| Brent    | 0            | 1               | 1               | 0            | 0               | 0               | 0            | 1               | 0               |

**Variations: -**

The majority of Variation work completed in April relates to reports of fly tipping or clearing waste from Parks and Opens spaces. We have worked on the Gaelic Football Pitch in Vale farm filling drain lines and also planted the three shrub beds in Heather Park. Replanting scheme in Kensal Corridor (between Station Terrace and Chamberlayne Rd) will commence after the first bank holiday in May as the plants have now been delivered.

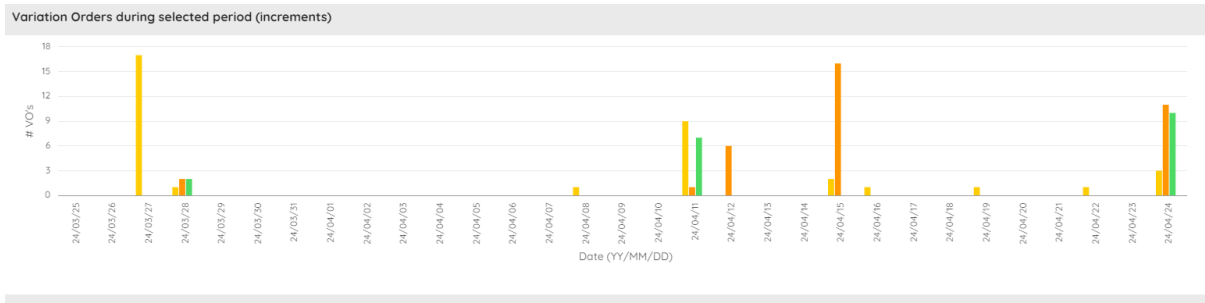
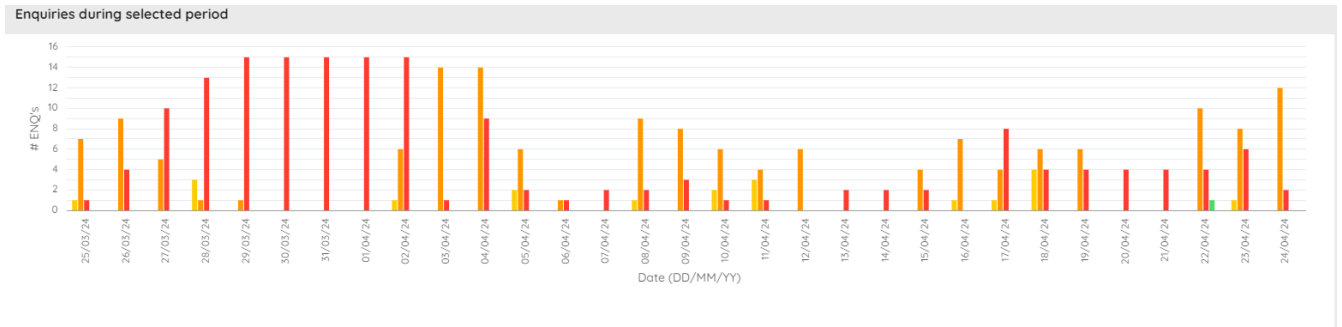


Figure 10 Variation orders schedule performance report from ATAK (April 2024)

**Enquiries and Issues**

We had a number of issues and enquiries during April and did our best to attend to all in the allocated time. Some GM tasks were delayed due to weather conditions, all waste and cleansing enquiries were collected.



## Schedules and ATAK updates

Teams have been allocated daily sites to visit with an approximate measurement of 4000 - 5000m<sup>2</sup> of Grass to cut per day. This information was sent to client to display to residents, due to the delay with weather and some issues with Electric Machinery, we were delayed with the start of the schedule in Early March and when the team started to cut at the end of March in to early April they started with following the schedule which was still set on ATAK from the beginning of March. This meant they were not working on the list of roads below (25.03.24) and were working on Week 3 / week 4. This has been informed to the client and we have also been responding to issues and enquiries raised in regards to areas with long grass.

### North Verges Week 1 - Commencing 25.03.24

| Road Name                 | Postcode |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Mollison Way              | HA8      |
| De Havilland Road         | HA8      |
| Holyrood Gardens          | HA8      |
| Melrose Gardens           | HA8      |
| Beverley Drive            | HA8      |
| Stag Lane                 | HA9      |
| Tewkesbury Gardens        | NW9      |
| Capitol Way               | NW9      |
| Brinkburn Close           | HA8      |
| Brinkburn Gardens         | HA8      |
| North Way                 | NW9      |
| Queensbury Station Parade | HA8      |
| Honeypot Lane             | NW9      |
| Sandhurst Road            | NW9      |
| Sherborne Gardens         | NW9      |
| Hay Lane                  | NW9      |
| Fairfields Close          | NW9      |
| Bacon Lane                | NW9      |
| Roe Green                 | NW9      |
| Ash Tree Dell             | NW9      |
| Buck Lane                 | NW9      |
| Hillside                  | NW10     |
| Oak Tree Dell             | NW9      |
| Springfield Gardens       | NW9      |
| Lodore Gardens            | NW9      |
| Mardale Drive             | NW9      |
| Coniston Gardens          | NW9 /HA9 |
| Highmeadow Crescent       | NW9      |
| Bowater Close             | NW9      |
| Kingsbury Road            | NW9      |
| Vine Court                | HA3      |

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Sunningdale Gardens | NW9 |
| Old Kenton Lane     | NW9 |
| Larkspur Close      | NW9 |
| Leybourne Road      | NW9 |
| Melbury Road        | HA3 |
| Minterne Road       | HA3 |
| Lindsay Drive       | HA3 |
| Ormesby Way         | HA3 |
| Melcombe Gardens    | HA3 |
| Gooseacre Lane      | HA3 |
| Hillview Avenue     | HA3 |
| Lidding Road        | HA3 |
| Regal Way           | HA3 |
| Kenyngton Place     | HA3 |
| Sedgecombe Avenue   | HA3 |
| Woodcock Hill       | HA3 |

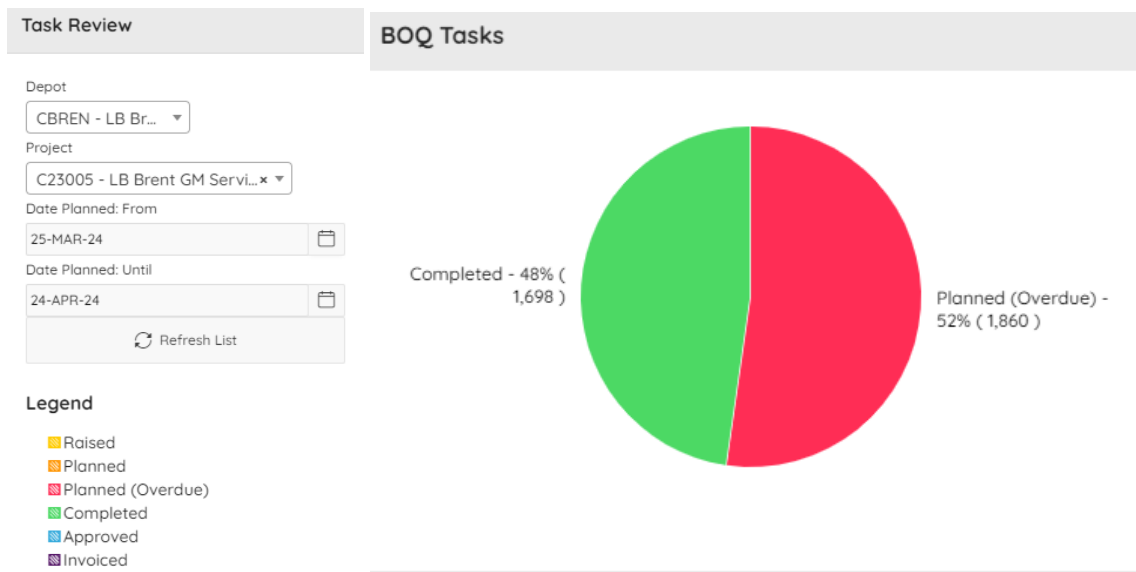
Figure 11 Example of daily Verge Grass cutting schedules

## Operations Overview March 2024

The Information below shows completed and overdue tasks for the BHM, cleansing, Sports and Verge / Grass Cutting teams during April 2024.

Due to the wet weather we have experienced during March and Early April our Grass cutting schedules have been delayed and now pushed back. We have put in a recovery plan to deal with all Grass cutting schedules and in particular on Grass verges and BHM we have doubled up on teams in the larger areas that require immediate attention.

We are dealing with all waste enquiries in a timely manner and this has utilised a large amount of our resources.





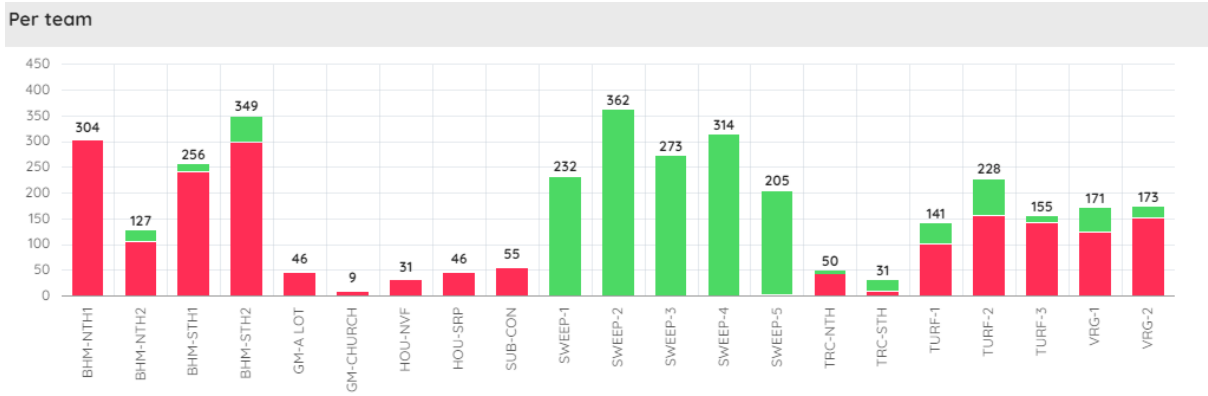


Figure 12 April 2024 team performance records from ATAK

**Sweep Teams** – The sweep teams have done well with cleansing of sites and signing off the tasks on the ATAK system, they have also assisted and responded to issue raised on Fix My Street and Fly tipping in Parks and open spaces during April. There has been an increase in the amount of litter and Fly tips in Parks, which has impacted on resources and tasks.

**BHM** -Due to the weather conditions that continued during April, grass cutting had a huge delay in the start of the cutting schedule in March. The teams have done well to get around and visit sites, cutting grass and tidying shrub beds and shaping and cutting back vegetation. We are aware that there have been enquiries and complaints, but we are working to schedule and sites will be visited fortnightly to attend to any outstanding or overdue work



Figure 13 Images of Grass cutting and shrub maintenance in Cavendish Close



*Figure 14 Images of Grass cutting and Shrub maintenance In Bryan House*

## **Sports**

With the end of the football and Rugby Season and the beginning of Cricket approaching, the teams have been working on preparation of the cricket tables, bowling greens and the restoration of the football pitches. We also worked on the Gaelic football pitches, filling drain lines on the Vale farm Pitch and cutting grass.



*Figure 15 Image of Grass cutting on Kinsbury Bowls and Cricket table at Vale Farm.*



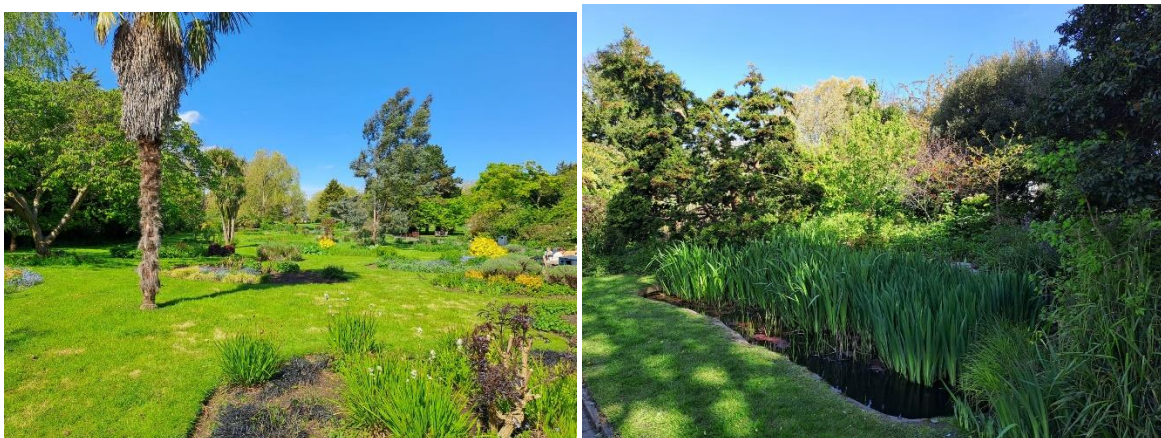
*Figure 16 Image of Vale Farm Gaelic Pitch - Drain lines being filled with top soil*

### **Hedges and Shrubs**

BHM teams and Verge Shrub teams continued to work on cutting back, reducing and shaping Shrubs across housing sites and highway verges.

During April, this work will still continue alongside Grass cutting to keep areas tidy and reduce any outstanding hedges and shrubs before the height of Bird nesting season.

Parks teams are also working hard on shrub bed and hedge areas in Roundwood Park and have completed some great work around the pond and Herbaceous beds areas



*Figure 17 Image of completed Shrub maintenance in Roundwood Park*



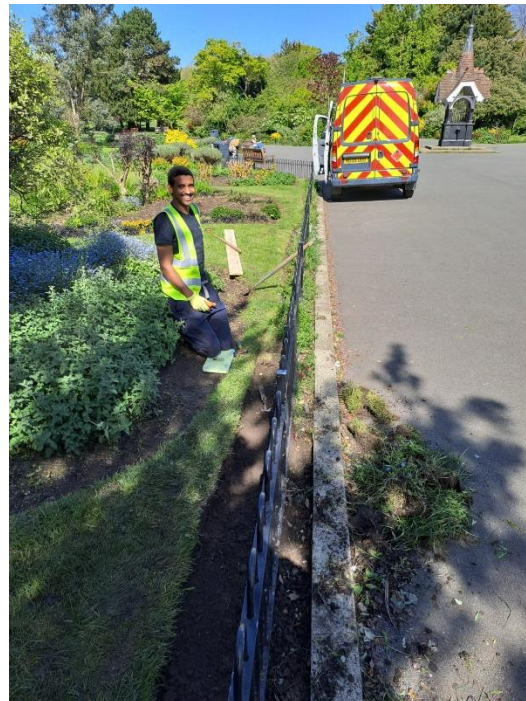
*Figure Images of Shrub Pruning on Cavendish Close and Alpha House*

**Parks** – During April our tractor and Ride on have worked hard in regards to grass cutting and getting out to sites that had finally had time to dry out. The tractors managed to get around all of the larger sites and cut the large areas, however we did have a few occasions where they reported causing some damage to areas that were still very wet. Our ride on teams were using the RINO electric mowers and have had some issues with the run time and power of the machine tackling longer wet grass. With the improvement of weather conditions, the grass cutting schedule in Parks should be achieved.

Teams have also achieved some great work on herbaceous beds and Pond in Roundwood Park, edging and weeding beds.



*Figure 18 Images of Grass cutting in Lindsay and Roundwood Park*



*Figure 19 Images of Work on bedding area in Roundwood Park*

**Verges** – Grass cutting commenced on Verges in late March, During April we were still facing wet weather and this had an impact on the schedules. We had a number of occasions where our equipment got stuck in wet /soft ground conditions and required our tractors to recover them safely.

We missed the start of the schedule due to the delays with weather and when the weather improved we commenced. Teams followed the schedules on their work programme rather than catching up from week one. We are informing Client officers of the difficulties to achieve the schedule and have pushed back the schedule to fall in line with the weekly schedule sent to the client.

We have also had some issues with the running time of the electric equipment, this may be partly due to the long and wet grass. The RINO ride on mowers were not fulfilling their recommended daily working hours of up to 7 hours and there were days when machines were out of power by midday. We have been in discussions with the supplier to resolve these issues.

Our recovery plan was to currently revert back to using our Ransome Diesel Ride on Mowers and doubling up on our South Verge cutting team to get grass cutting back on schedule and this has also been informed to the client.

These setbacks will not stop us from perusing with the Electric Models, but we understand that the schedule of works needs to be achieved, so we will continue to work with our suppliers on developing and resolving some of the reported problems.

We hoping to see improved weather conditions going forward and once the majority of Grass has been cut the Electric Vehicles should have improved performance. We are responding to issues and enquiries and will do our best to clear these without as little disruption to the schedules as possible.



Figure 20 images of New RINO Electric Mower and Ransome Mower cutting verges

## Equipment Update

As mentioned earlier we have had some issues with the power and running time of our electric equipment, we have been in discussions with suppliers of our Electric RINO ride ons and expect a visit from the Manufacturer in May. We were also visited by the Manufacturers Makita in April, the Assistant CEO, an Engineer and designer visited and discussed some of the issues we have faced with the equipment in terms of the how the electric range is suiting our work and some developments to some of the repairs we have reported.



## Depots Update

**Vale Farm:** 28.03.24 - Issue with Power Supply at the end of March, Reported to UK Power Network to inspect and repair. This was resolved and all power restored.

**Roundwood:** Operational. No new issues

**John Billam:** Operational. No new issues

**Gladstone / Rickyard:** Operational. No new issues

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## Grounds Maintenance Contract Management Group Meeting

(8<sup>th</sup> July 2024)



### Depots Update

**Vale Farm:** Operational. No new issues

**Roundwood:** Operational. No new issues

**John Billam:** Operational. No new issues

**Gladstone / Rickyard:** Operational. No new issues

**KPI's:-**

Please see KPI's below taken from the IMPACT system for Apprentices, Low Emission Mileage, Waste Disposal, Fly tipping, Training, Community Group Work and ongoing work on the Pocket Farm (Roundwood). The information has been updated up until the end of May 2024.

**Brent Fly Tip Removal**

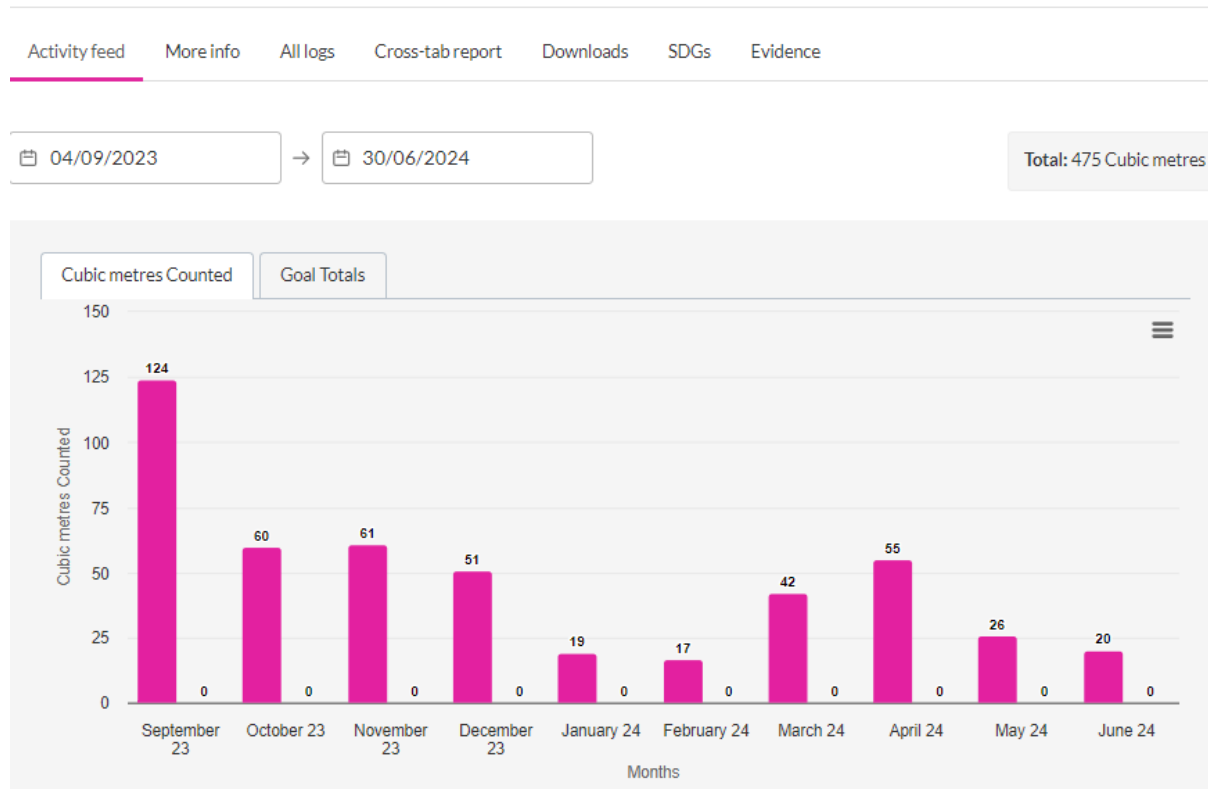


Figure 1 Image of IMPACT Monthly records of collected Fly tips

Large fly tips collected between May and June 2024 were lower than previous months. In total 26m<sup>3</sup> of large fly tips (over 2m<sup>3</sup>) were collected during May 2024 and 20m<sup>3</sup> were collected during June 2024. However this does not reflect against the amount of waste collected and tipped during this period where we continue to see an increase in the amount of tipped waste left in parks and open spaces throughout the borough. A large contribution to these figures is the amount of household waste and black bags dumped in parks measuring under the 1m<sup>3</sup>.

The list below indicates the specific dates, sites and sizes of collected Fly tips during May and June 2024.

**May and June 2024**

| Planned   | Completed | Qty. | Unit | Task-ID | (Client) Instructions | Team    | Status    | Description               |
|-----------|-----------|------|------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 15-May-24 | 15-May-24 | 3    | M3   | 403616  | Fly tip cleared -3m3  | VO-TEAM | Completed | Roundwood Road Open Space |

|           |           |   |    |        |                       |         |           |   |
|-----------|-----------|---|----|--------|-----------------------|---------|-----------|---|
| 15-May-24 | 15-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 403617 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Preston Park                                    |
| 15-May-24 | 15-May-24 | 3 | M3 | 403618 | fly tip cleared 3m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Sherrins Farm Open Space                        |
| 15-May-24 | 15-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 403619 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | River Brent Walk (Cambridge close)              |
| 15-May-24 | 15-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 403615 | Fly Tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Crouch Road Open Space                          |
| 17-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 403621 | Fly Tip - 2m3         | VO-TEAM | Completed | The Compass (Dudden Hill Lane Corner)           |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407795 | Fly tip cleared - 2m3 | VO-TEAM | Completed | St. Davids Close/Chalkhill Open Space           |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407797 | Fly Tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Chalkhill Sports Grounds                        |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407798 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Tokyington Open Space                           |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407799 | Fly Tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Abbey Estate Open Space                         |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407800 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Fryent Country Park (Inc. Barn hill open space) |
| 28-May-24 | 28-May-24 | 2 | M3 | 407801 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Fryent Country Park (Inc Barn Hill open space)  |
| 13-Jun-24 | 13-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 409439 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed |   |
| 13-Jun-24 | 13-Jun-24 | 3 | M3 | 467730 | fly tip cleared 3m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Roe Green Village                               |
| 17-Jun-24 | 17-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 408909 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed |   |
| 17-Jun-24 | 17-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 410857 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Gladstone Park - Kendall Road jw Lancaster Road |
| 19-Jun-24 | 19-Jun-24 | 3 | M3 | 471141 | fly tip cleared 3m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Retreat Close Open Space                        |
| 20-Jun-24 | 20-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 471159 | Fly tip cleared 2m3   | VO-TEAM | Completed | Quianton Street Open Space                      |

|           |           |   |    |        |                     |         |           |                         |
|-----------|-----------|---|----|--------|---------------------|---------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 24-Jun-24 | 24-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 472049 | Fly tip cleared 2m3 | VO-TEAM | Completed | Grove Park              |
| 24-Jun-24 | 24-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 471770 | Fly tip cleared 2m3 | VO-TEAM | Completed | Abbey Estate Open Space |
| 30-Jun-24 | 30-Jun-24 | 2 | M3 | 409665 | Fly tip cleared 2m3 | VO-TEAM | Completed | Kingsbury Green         |

Figure 1 list of completed Fly tip collections for May 2024



Figure 2 Images of Dumped Furniture and also Encampment clearance at Tokynton Open Space

# Brent General Waste Disposal

Activity feed   More info   All logs   Cross-tab report   Downloads   SDGs   Evidence

📅 04/08/2023 → 📅 17/07/2024 Total: 514.02 Tonnes

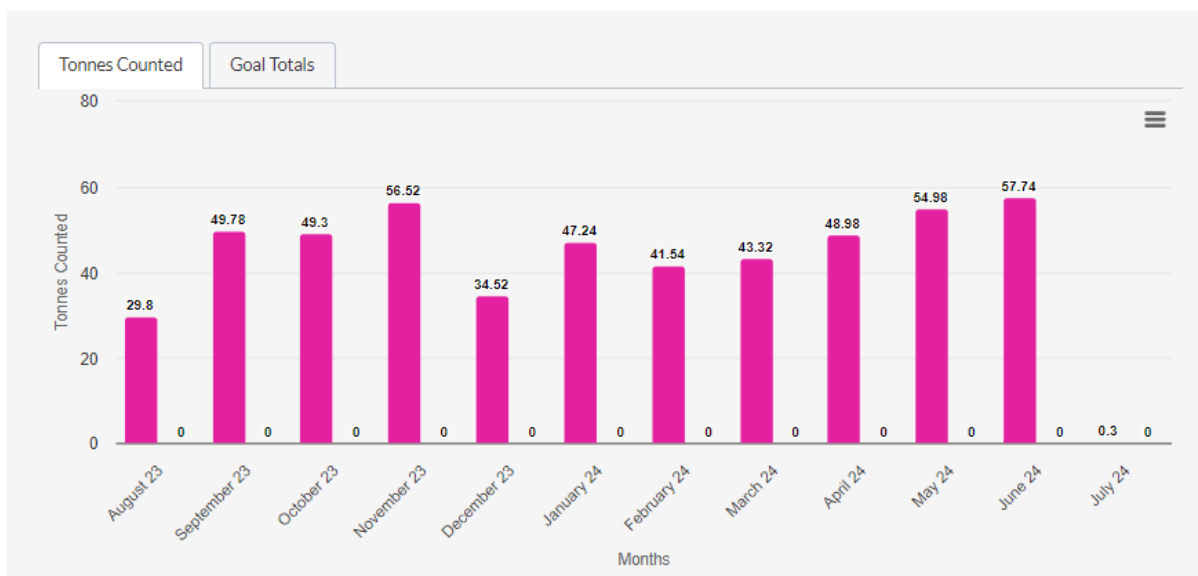


Figure 3 Image of IMPACT Monthly records of Tipped waste

## Cleansing

During May / June 2024 we saw an increase in the amount of waste collected across the borough, this consisted of Emptying Litter bins, litter picking, Fly tips, household waste left near bins and general waste collected from Parks and Open Spaces. We will continue to monitor the levels of waste collected and see if the increase continues with the greater use of Public spaces as the weather improves. The majority of waste collected accumulated from household waste left near bins, which is still a major issue particularly in Parks and Carparks.

We collected 49.60 tonnes of Waste in May and 57.74 tonnes in June 2024.



Figure 4 Images of dumped household waste in Woodcock Park



# Brent Training Hours

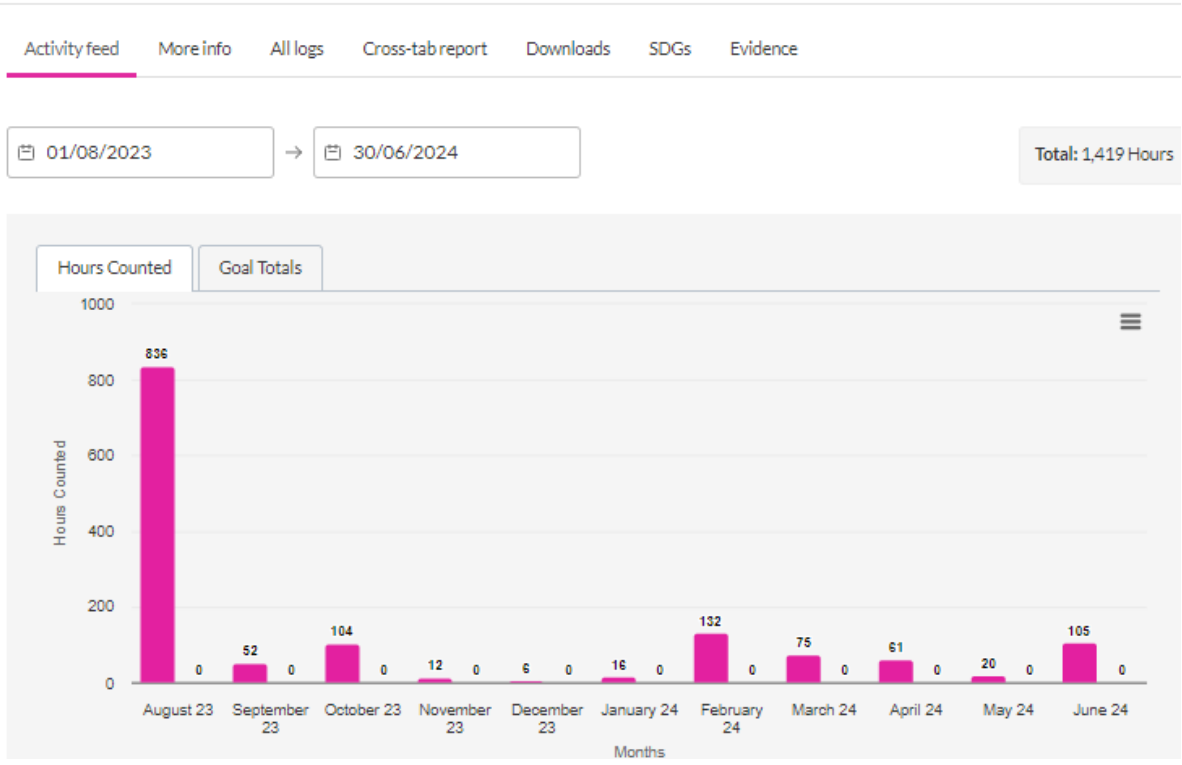





Figure 6 Image of Training records logged on IMPACT

In the periods between May and June 2024 we carried out Manual Handling online training for operatives. We also completed IOSH Managing and Working Safely courses for our tractor drivers and Management team. We continue to update the operatives with Manual Handling training, Banksman and H&S Toolbox talks including full day inductions for new starters.

20 Hours of Training completed in May 2024.

- 
**Vincent Nurse Counted for 8 hours (8 Hours) on 24/05/24**  
 Brent Training Hours - Logged 2 days ago  
 IOSH Working Safely - Dean Whitfield (1 Day)  
 Project Brent
- 
**Vincent Nurse Counted for 8 hours (8 Hours) on 07/05/24**  
 Brent Training Hours - Logged 2 days ago  
 IOSH Managing Safely Refresher Course - Vincent Nurse (1 day)  
 Project Brent
- 
**Vincent Nurse Counted for 4 hours (4 Hours) between 01/05/24 and 31/05/24 (4 weeks)**  
 Brent Training Hours - Logged 2 days ago *Updated*  
 Manual Handling (IHasco) -Online training completed by 4 x Operatives  
 Project Brent

105 Hours of Training completed in June 2024.

- Vincent Nurse Counted for 48 hours (48 Hours) between 26/06/24 and 28/06/24**

Brent Training Hours - Logged 26 minutes ago

IOSH Managing Safely -3 day training (8hrs per day) x 2 (L Murdoch, J Saba)

Project Brent

⋮
- Vincent Nurse Counted for 24 hours (24 Hours) on 21/06/24**

Brent Training Hours - Logged 30 minutes ago

IOSH Working Safely (1 day - 8hrs Training) 3 x Tractor Drivers (G, Singers, S Porterfield, J Ramos)

Project Brent

⋮
- Vincent Nurse Counted for 8 hours (8 Hours) on 10/06/24**

Brent Training Hours - Logged 13 minutes ago

New Starter Induction and H&S inductions (Including Risk Assessments) 1 x Driver Operative C Brazao

Project Brent

⋮
- Vincent Nurse Counted for 1 hour (1 Hour) between 01/06/24 and 30/06/24 (4 weeks)**

Brent Training Hours - Logged 34 minutes ago

Banksman Essentials Online Training (iHasco) 1hr x 1 operative.

Project Brent

⋮
- Vincent Nurse Counted for 24 hours (24 Hours) between 01/06/24 and 30/06/24 (4 weeks)**

Brent Training Hours - Logged 36 minutes ago

Manual Handling Online training (iHasco) 1 hr x 24 Operatives.

Project Brent

⋮

## 2.2 (Brent) Apprenticeships



Figure 7 Image of IMPACT records for Apprentice working weeks

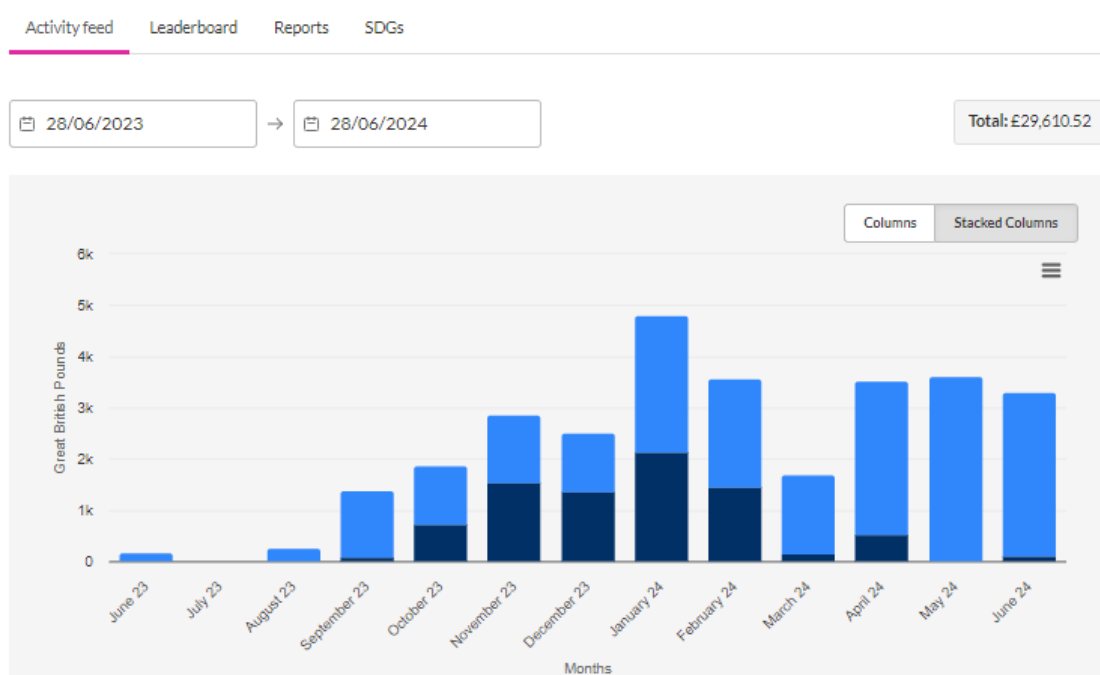


## CSR and Roundwood Pocket Farm

Our CSR Team Leader has continued to work with the community groups in both Gladstone and Roundwood Park. Some great work has been achieved in the wall Garden at Gladstone Park and Roundwood has now started to see some similar work taking place on the Herbaceous bedding area and Pond.

Volunteers and CSR Team worked hard during May and June in preparation for London In Bloom Judging in a number of parks and Gardens across the borough including Mapesbury Dell, Harlesden Town Gardens, Gladstone Park, Woodcock Park and Roundwood Park.

### 4.4 (Brent) Helping with community clear-up days gardening and food growing projects



#### 4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4

£21,490.28

#### 4.4 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI

£8,120.24

Figure 8 KPI reports from Entries added to IMPACT for community work with Park Community Groups and Roundwood Pocket farm.



**Vincent Nurse Counted £350.64 on 23/05/24**

4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4 - Logged 3 days ago

Roundwood Park 8.30- 2.30 (x2) plant verbena in the gaps on the herbaceous beds. Pull of bindweed off shrubs. Clear weeds along the edges. Volunteers x3 10- 12

Project Brent



**Vincent Nurse Counted £379.86 on 29/05/24**

4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4 - Logged 3 days ago

Gladstone Park 8.00- 2.30 (x2) cut and strim grass. Edging. Wedding. Clear green waste. Volunteers x8 10-12

Project Brent



**Vincent Nurse Counted £394.47 on 12/06/24**

4.4 (Brent) Support with KPI 4.4 - Logged 4 hours ago

Gladstone. 8.15- 3x2 Hedge cutting Grass cutting. Strimming. Blowing. Clear green waste

Project Brent



Figure 9 Images from IMPACT entries for work carried out in the Gladstone Park and Roundwood Pocket Farm

## Community Engagement

During May our teams assisted with some community engagement tasks including Preparation of a roundabout in Regal Way / Vista Way, Bag Collection after community litter pick in Gladstone Park and Ground renovation work in Wembley FC ground.

**Vincent Nurse Counted £87.66** on 17/05/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 25 minutes ago Updated

Tractor assisting with ground renovation works for Wembley FC for 3 x Hours

Project Brent

⋮

**Vincent Nurse Counted £58.44** on 24/05/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 22 minutes ago Updated

Tractor Assisting with renovation works in Wembley FC for 2 x hours

Project Brent

⋮



**Vincent Nurse Counted £116.88** on 15/05/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 16 minutes ago

Regal Way / Vista Way - Work completed on Roundabout to prepare area for planting project. 2 x Operatives for 2hrs.

Project Brent

⋮

**Vincent Nurse Counted £29.22** on 26/05/24

4.3 Resources Provided to Achieve KPI copy - Logged 13 minutes ago

Gladstone Park Community Litter pick. Collected bags in the afternoon.

Project Brent

Evidence

Re Litter Pick Bag Collection Yesterday.msg

⋮

## Health and safety:

There were no RIDDOR's and one incident in May or June 2024

The incident in May was a reported break in at Roundwood Depot at approximately Lunch time on the 24/05/24. An attempt was made by a suspect in a white van to break into the garages in the depot (Reported to Police and captured on CCTV). In June we had 2 minor Vehicle Incidents and 1 operative had an incident (Slip / Trip).

## Accident Log

| 2024         | Apr          |                 |                 | May          |                 |                 | June         |                 |                 |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Contract     | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days | No of RIDDOR | No of accidents | No of lost days |
| <b>Brent</b> | 0            | 1               | 0               | 0            | 1               | 0               | 0            | 3               | 0               |

Page 71

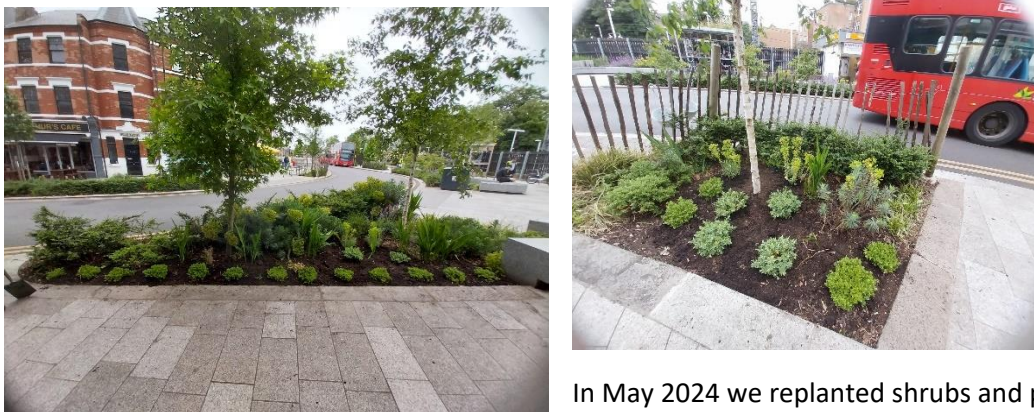
**Variations: -**

Heather Park (Installation of 3 x Shrub beds) and Gaelic Football drain line repairs were completed at the end of April leading into May 2024.



Figure 10 Images of Drain Lines repairs on Gaelic Football and Shrub bed installation in Heather Park

**Chamberlayne Terrace / Kensal Rise Planting**



In May 2024 we replanted shrubs and plants in Beds near Station Terrace. We still have some additional beds to quote for planting and fencing to be installed and will continue with these tasks as soon as we receive delivery of additional plants and can fit the work into the schedule.

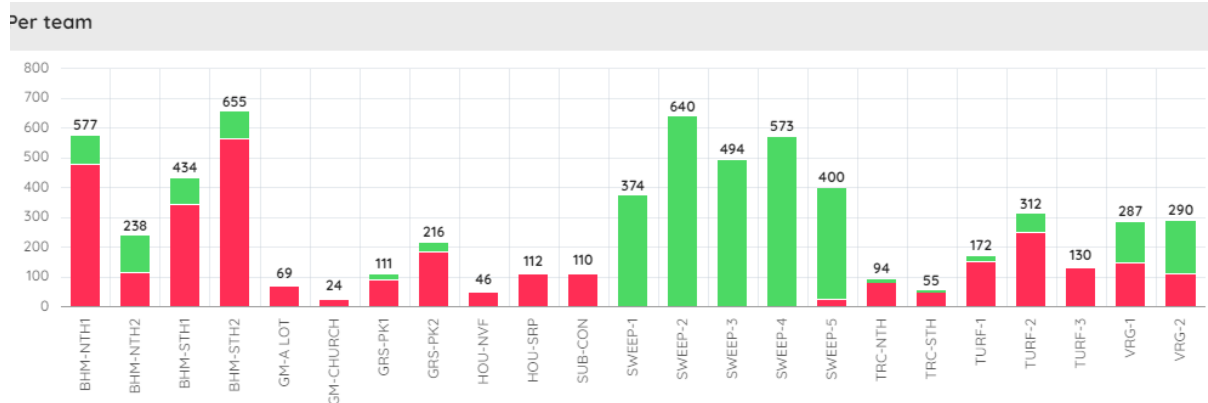
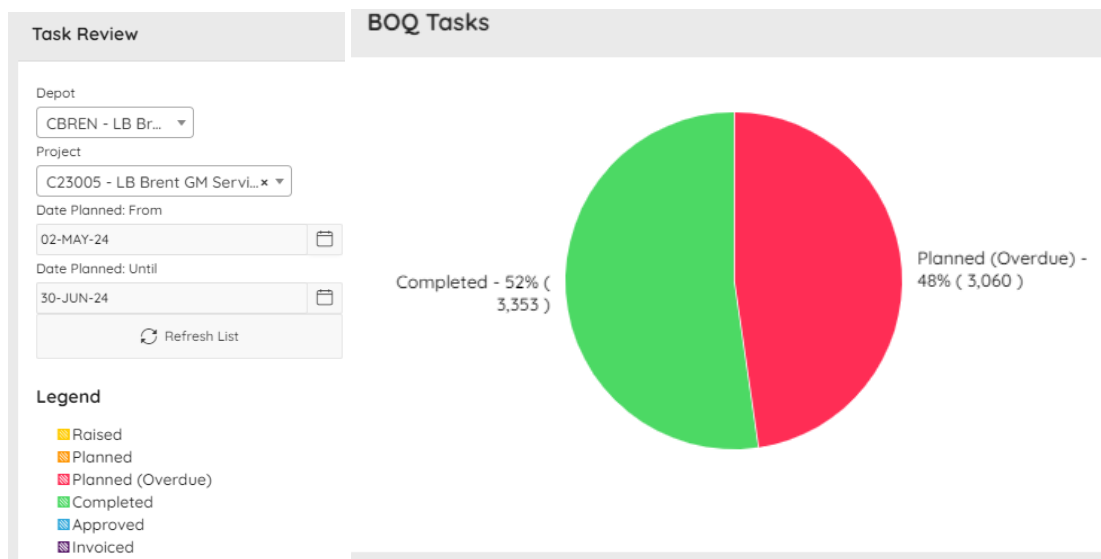


Figure 11 Variation orders schedule performance report from ATAK (May 2024)

# Operations Overview May / June 2024

The Information below shows completed and overdue tasks for the BHM, cleansing, Sports and Verge / Grass Cutting teams during May and June 2024.

Due to the wet weather and Machinery issues we experienced during March / April our Grass cutting schedules were still behind schedule in May and in June we were beginning to get back on track as the teams are working overtime to catch up. We should see an improvement with the tasks signed off in ATAK and meeting schedules in July as teams have been retrained and new starters trained on how to use the ATAK systems on their mobile devices.



**BHM** - Due to the weather conditions and some issues with equipment during March / April, there were a number of Housing sites where complaints were received for long grass, weeds and general Grounds Maintenance for our teams to deal with. Grass cutting in May was still quite difficult for our teams as the machines struggled to cut through long grass, meaning more time spent on sites. We have had issues with some of the electric machinery, due to the pressure of cutting through the long grass and equipment not being robust enough to deal with the Ground conditions. We advised teams to do their best to visit all sites on the daily schedule to keep up with the expectations of

residents and areas having a visit on their scheduled days. There was a delay in teams being able to attend all daily scheduled sites to complete all outstanding tasks on one visit. We understand that schedules are behind and have now tasked a team to work over the weekend catching up with schedules and working on the Client Action Plan. We are also in the process of recruiting two additional teams (1 x Driver and 1 x Operative) to assist the BHM teams with the number of weekly tasks they are scheduled to complete. During June teams worked overtime on the weekends on BHM sites and towards the end of the month we employed new operatives to assist with the catch up work. This is still ongoing as we go through process of changing some of the electric equipment and machinery to the Fossil fuelled equivalents.



Figure 12 Images of Grass cutting completed at St Laurence Close and Kingston House



Figure 13 Images of Grass cutting at Landau House and Carlton House

## Sports

The Sports teams have been actively Marking Pitches and preparing sites for Weekend fixtures. Our tractors have been out cutting outfield for cricket and Gaelic Football and Sports teams have prepared wickets and marked boundaries on a weekly basis.

All goalposts for Rugby and Football were completely removed and pitches were assessed for post season renovations.

We have had a number of issues where sites are prepared and unauthorised use has damaged some of the work prior to booked sessions.



*Figure 14 Image of Cricket wicket preparation (Vale Farm) and Grass cutting (Northwick Park)*

## Hedges and Shrubs

BHM teams and Verge teams have concentrated solely on Grass cutting during May / June 2024, we understand there will be some shrubs and hedges that will need pruning and cutting back and team have responded to any sites we have sent them to for any complaints raised. We are however being very mindful of bird nesting season.

Our CSR team completed some hedge and shrub pruning work in Mapesbury Dell.

Mapesbury dell 8.00- 2.00pm x2 cut hedges and collect. Blow pathways

Project Brent





*Figure 15 Image of completed Hedge / Shrub pruning in Mapesbury Dell*

**Parks** – Teams are continuing to cleanse, removing small branches and twigs and reduce and tidy vegetation in Parks across the borough. Grass cutting commenced at the end of March, but a number of sites were still very wet / saturated and therefore not able to cut with heavier machinery.

During May we have been able to cut all large areas in Parks with the Tractors, we were behind schedule in regards to Ride on and strimming work but teams are now aware of their schedules and ride on mowers are out in both the North and South of the borough cutting the areas where the tractors cannot access.



*Figure 16 Images of grass cutting in Streatley Road Pocket Park*

Our Gardeners have also been working on Shrub beds and Planting areas in Barham Park and will be moving onto Woodcock Park during June 2024

During June we were able to get back up work (strimming and blowing) actioned behind the main grass cutting, a lot of the attention was concentrated on sites leading up to the London in Bloom Judging.





Figure 17 Images of Barham Park and Eton Grove

### Wild Flower Meadows

Work was completed on the installation of Wild flower meadow in Sherrins Farm, where our tractor cut and collected cuttings over an area of 5000m<sup>3</sup>, to prepare for our subcontractor to scarify and seed the area.



**Verges** – Grass Verge cutting was still a struggle during May 2024, we were already behind schedule from the end of March leading into April due to the weather and problems with some of our Electric Machinery. We worked hard to keep teams cutting daily and made arrangements for a delivery of Diesel Powered Ride on Mowers to cover the service. There were some delays in the process of receiving the machinery and making sure they were serviced and ready to be deployed safely. By the end of the month we began to catch up with the schedule (particularly in the south of the Borough) and the teams worked hard to get back on track of a 3 week back log of tasks. Overtime has been worked over the weekends to deal with complaints and an additional ride on was deployed as agreed with the client to cut down areas with long grass, with back up / strimming to be completed at a later date.



c



*Figure 18 images of Ransome Ride on Cutting Verges and Operative blowing verges*

During June we were able to catch up with the schedule on both the North and south of the borough and the majority of areas received at least their second cut / visit within this time. All areas that were raised as priority or received complaints were visited and actioned.



*Figure 19 Image of Twyford Abbey verges*

## Champions League

Towards the end of May we worked hard to get areas surrounding Wembley stadium and close to Fryent Way (FA and coaches parking area) cut and looking tidy. This work was taking place alongside scheduled Verge cutting and teams were working hard to keep to schedule, whilst adhering to requests for particular areas to be cut within the deadlines.

Teams worked hard to cut back the Verges along Fryent way, which were originally listed as Wildflower meadows. The teams cut as per their usual schedule and had to return the day before the deadline working into the early evening of Friday 31st



*Figure 20 Images of Fryent Way Verges and Car park before Champions League Finals*

## London in Bloom Judging

Mapesbury Dell, Harlesden Town Gardens, Roe Green Walled Gardens, Gladstone Park and Walled Gardens, Roundwood Park, Fryent Country Park and Woodcock Park were all judged for London in Bloom over 2 days in June (21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>). Teams worked hard to get sites clean and tidy and grass cut for the judging days and with facing issues with machinery and staff sickness, our best efforts were given to meet the deadlines. Volunteers and our CSR Team leader deserve praise for their efforts in working on some beautiful work in Walled Gardens and Parks across the borough.

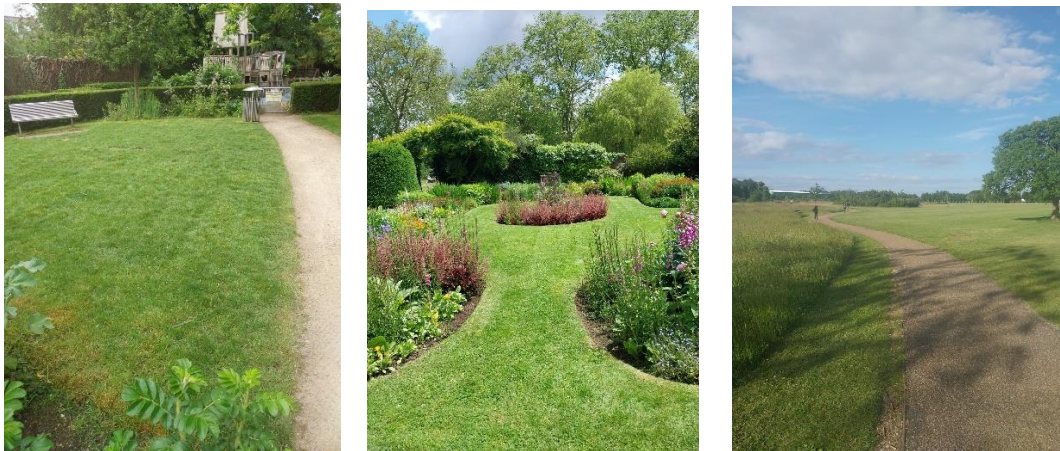




Figure 21 Images of Mapesbury Dell, Gladstone Walled Gardens and Woodcock park before London in Bloom Judging

### Schedules and ATAK updates

We are still working with our operatives to make sure they are logging into ATAK and signing off completed tasks. This has been an ongoing issue, we continue to work towards getting this right.

There has been an issue with our ATAK system showing duplicate photos when searching for images of completed work, this has been reported to IT and they are still investigating this problem.

We have been working on Outstanding BHM sites listed in an Action Plan and will continue to carry out catch up work with additional teams we have now employed.

### Equipment and Machinery

We have faced some mechanical problems with our fleet of Electric Ride on Mowers and as a temporary measure have had to revert to conventional Fossil fuelled equivalents.



Figure 22 images of the Electric RINO ride on mower and Ransome HR300 in action

Our Electric range of Makita hand held equipment and pedestrian mowers have also been an issue with not being robust enough to deal with the required tasks and we are liaising with suppliers to help solve issues with repairs and replacements.

### Additional Resources and Machinery

Due to the issues with back log of Tasks, we are now in the process of employing additional Staff and hiring Machinery – This should give us 2 additional teams to assist with BHM Shrubs / hedges and catch up work.

|    | A   | B  | C   | D                                 | E                    | F                       | G                                 | H                           | I   | J   |
|----|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 1  | SCHEDULE 4 - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK                     |  |   |                                   |                      |                         |                                   |                             |   |   |
| 2  | APPENDIX 2 - PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND ASSOCIATED PARAMETERS      |  |   |                                   |                      |                         |                                   |                             |   |   |
| 3  | Date: 28 January 2022   |  |   |                                   |                      |                         |                                   |                             |   |   |
| 4  | Performance Standard Number / Performance Standard Failure Number | Specification Reference  | Performance Standard (PS) and Performance Standard Failure (PSF)  | Monitoring Frequency <sup>1</sup> | Rectification Period | Repeated Failure Period | Performance Failure Deduction (£) | Repeated Failure Multiplier | Deduction Applied to  | Monthly Performance Deduction Threshold (£) |
| 5  |   |  |   |                                   |                      |                         |                                   |                             |   |   |
| 6  | Contract Management   |  |   |                                   |                      |                         |                                   |                             |   |   |
| 7  | 1   | 39.6, 39.10, 39.13, 39.14, 39.22   | PS: The total up-time (i.e. accessibility) of the MIS does not fall below 99.9% during a Contract Year.<br>PSF: The total up-time of the MIS falls below 99.9% during a Contract Year.<br>Note: The up-time will be calculated over 8,760hrs (i.e. 24 hrs/per day x 365 days)   | A                                 | N/A                  | N/A                     | £10,000                           | N/A                         | each 0.1% difference from the availability target of 99.9%.<br><br>Note: For example, if the total availability in a Contract Year was 99.75%, a deduction of £15k would apply (i.e. £10,000 x (99.9% - 97.75%) ÷ 0.1%).                                    | £0  |
| 8  | 2   | 39.9   | PS: At least one of the nominated ICT personnel are available within the specified hours to facilitate timely resolution of issues.<br>PSF: Unavailability of nominated ICT personnel during the specified hours to facilitate timely resolution of ICT issues.   | D                                 | 2 hours              | 1 Hour                  | £200                              | 2                           | Per incident<br>(Note: If the Authority tries to contact the nominated ICT personnel at 10am and 3pm, and if they were not either available or did not respond within 2 hours at both times, they will be considered as two separate incidents.)            | £200  |
| 9  | 3   | 39.2, 39.4, 39.31, 40.27, 43.7, 43.9 to 43.13, 43.16, 47.6, 47.12, 49.6.18, 50.3.18, 51.11, 4.4, 29.1.5, 47.16, 29.1.7, 29.1.8, 29.2, 7.6, 6.6, 25.1, 25.11, 26.5, 27.37, 28.2, 39.4, 39.30.1, 39.30.3, 39.41, 40.13 | PS: Information required on the MIS is available, up-to-date and are accurate.<br>PSF: Information required on the MIS is unavailable, not up-to-date or inaccurate.<br><br>[This PSF applies only:<br>- when the MIS is accessible; and<br>- to the documents and information and their corresponding formats as agreed during the Mobilisation Period]  | D                                 | N/A                  | N/A                     | £100                              | N/A                         | per unavailable OR not up-to-date OR inaccurate report/information.<br><br>For example, each bullet point under 42.3 will be considered as a separate report/information.<br><br>Note: Daily Performance Failure Deduction for this PSF is capped at £1000. | £500  |
| 10 | 4   | 39.15, 39.16, 47.3, 47.5   | PS: MIS is integrated and exchanges accurate information with the Authority's CRM system (excluding periods when Authority CRM may be unavailable).<br>PSF: MIS fails to exchange accurate information with the Authority's CRM system (excluding periods when Authority CRM may be unavailable).   | D                                 | 4 Hours              | N/A                     | £250                              | N/A                         | per day the MIS fails to exchange accurate information with the Authority's CRM system.   | £0  |
| 11 | 5   | 47.3, 47.4, 47.7, 47.8, 47.14, 47.20   | PS: Information requests (excluding Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and Environmental Information Requests) from the Authority are addressed within the timescale and the Authority is able to comply with the Communications Response Time Limits.<br>PSF: Failure to provide the information requested by the Authority or support the Authority in complying with the Communications Response Time Limits. Note: This PSF does not apply to Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and/or Environmental Information Requests. | D                                 | N/A                  | 1 Day                   | £100                              | 2                           | per request not addressed within the timescale  | £200  |

|    | A                                   | B                             | C  | D | E          | F              | G      | H   | I   | J  |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|------------|----------------|--------|-----|---|--|
| 12 | 6                                   | 39.32, 47.4, 47.3, 47.7, 47.8 | PS: Information requests specific to Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and/or Environmental Information Requests from the Authority are addressed within the timescale by the Contractor and the Authority is able to comply with the Communications Response Time Limits.<br>PSF: Failure to provide the information requested by the Authority regarding Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and/or Environmental Information Requests and/or support the Authority in complying with their corresponding Communications Response Time Limits. | D | N/A        | 1 Day          | £250   | 2   | per request not addressed within the timescale  | £0   |
| 13 | 7                                   | 39.34                         | PS: The Authority is notified within the specified timescale of a Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) or Subject Access request related to the Contract or Services received directly by the Contractor from a source other than the Authority.<br>PSF: Failure to notify the Authority within the specified timescale of a Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) or Subject Access request related to the Contract or Services received directly by the Contractor from a source other than the Authority.          | D | N/A        | 1 Day          | £250   | 2   | per request not notified  | £0   |
| 14 | 8                                   | 40.1.2, 40.1.3, 40.1.4        | PS: Gains ISO9001, ISO14001, ISO45001, ISO50001, ISO27000 or agreed equivalent accreditation within the relevant timescale and continuously maintain these accreditations thereafter.<br>PSF: Failure to gain ISO9001, ISO14001, ISO45001, ISO50001, ISO27000 or agreed equivalent accreditation within the relevant timescale and continuously maintain these accreditations thereafter.  | A | N/A        | M              | £500   | 2   | per failed accreditation per month  | £0   |
| 15 | 9                                   | 7.6, 7.7, 40.16               | PS: The Authorised Officer is notified immediately of any RIDDOR reportable incident, or any environmental incident which requires reporting to the Environment Agency.<br>PSF: Failure to immediately notify the Authorised Officer of RIDDOR reportable incident or any environmental incident which requires reporting to the Environment Agency.   | D | N/A        | N/A            | £500   | N/A | per incident not notified within 2 hours of occurrence  | £0   |
| 16 | 10                                  | 43.1                          | PS: Key Personnel are available during the Operational Hours.<br>PSF: Unavailability of Key Personnel during the Operational Hours.  | D | 1 hour     | 30 minutes     | £100   | 2   | Per incident<br>(Note: If the Authority tries to contact one of the Key Personnel at 10 am and 3pm, and if that person was not either available or did not return the call within 1 hour at both times, they will be considered as two separate incidents.)   | £500   |
| 17 | 11                                  | 44.5, 44.18                   | PS: Performance against Performance Standards are properly monitored and any resultant Performance Deductions are accurately calculated and reported.<br>PSF: Failure to properly monitor performance against Performance Standards and accurately calculate and report corresponding Performance Deductions.  | M | N/A        | N/A            | £5,000 | N/A | per Month in which the Contractor fails to properly monitor performance against Performance Standards and accurately calculate and report any corresponding Performance Deductions.<br>Note: This PSF will only apply if the Authority identifies and reports 10 or more PSF incidents (which can be one or more incident under the same PSF Number) which the Contractor ought to have been aware of and reported to the Authority, if good Contract management and monitoring arrangements were in place. | £5,000 (for the first three months of Contract Year 1)<br>£0 (from 4th Month of the Contract Period) |
| 18 | 12                                  | 44.22, 44.23                  | PS: Accurate Daily Exception Reports and subsequent updates are provided during days in which such reports are required.<br>PSF: Failure to submit an accurate Daily Exception Report and/or provide updates as specified in the Specification [Note: only applicable on days when Service delivery or performance is affected due to unplanned events].   | D | N/A        | N/A            | £100   | N/A | per day in which the PSF occurred<br>Note: applies only to days on which the Contractor ought to have provided a Daily Exception Report   | £0   |
| 19 | 13                                  | 44.22, 44.24                  | PS: Accurate Monthly Service and Performance Management Reports are submitted.<br>PSF: Failure to provide an accurate Monthly Service and Performance Management Report.   | M | N/A        | 2 Working Days | £500   | 2   | per incident  | £0   |
| 20 | 14                                  | 44.22, 44.25                  | PS: Accurate Annual Service and Performance Management Reports are submitted.<br>PSF: Failure to provide an accurate Annual Service and Performance Management Report  | A | N/A        | 7 Days         | £500   | 2   | per incident  | £0   |
| 21 | 15                                  | 50.3.6                        | PS: Nominated direct contacts answers Authority's calls outside the Operational Hours.<br>PSF: The nominated direct contact does not answer the Authority's call outside the Operational Hours.<br><i>[Note: PSF 10 to apply during the Operational Hours]</i>   | D | 15 minutes | 10 minutes     | £100   | 2   | per incident of unavailability.   | £200   |
| 22 | 16                                  | 50.3.16, 50.3.17              | PS: Staff identification, uniform and presentability requirements are complied with at all times.<br>PSF: Failure to comply with Staff identification, uniform and presentability requirements   | D | N/A        | N/A            | £25    | N/A | per staff member per day  | £250   |
| 23 | 17                                  | 58.9                          | PS: The Exit Plan, Business Continuity Plan and Contingency Plan is reviewed and updated as necessary.<br>PSF: Failure to review and update, where necessary, the Exit Plan, Business Continuity Plan and Contingency Plan.  | A | N/A        | 30 Days        | £500   | 2   | per incident (for each Plan)  | £0   |
| 24 | <b>Grounds Maintenance Services</b> |                               |  |   |            |                |        |     |   |  |
| 25 | 18                                  | 6.1                           | PS: An Annual Weed Control and Removal Plan are submitted and agreed by their corresponding timescales.<br>PSF: Failure to submit and agree an Annual Weed Control and Removal Plan by the corresponding timescales.   | A | N/A        | 7 Days         | £500   | 2   | per plan not submitted  | £0   |
| 26 | 19                                  | 6.1                           | PS: Implement Annual Weed Control and Removal Plan as agreed.<br>PSF: Failure to implement the agreed Annual Weed Control and Removal Plan.  | M | N/A        | 2 Days         | £250   | 2   | per incident  | £0   |



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|   |  |
|---|--|
|  <p><b>Brent</b></p>   | <p><b>Resources and Public Realm<br/>Scrutiny Committee</b><br/>4 September 2024</p>   |
|   | <p><b>Report from the Chair of i4B<br/>Holdings Ltd and First Wave<br/>Housing Ltd</b></p>   |
|   | <p><b>Lead Cabinet Member - Cabinet<br/>Member for Regeneration, Planning<br/>&amp; Growth</b><br/><b>(Councillor Shama Tatler)</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Delivery of Affordable Housing by i4B Holdings Ltd and First<br/>Wave Housing Ltd</b></p>   |  |
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>  | All  |
| <b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>   | Not Applicable   |
| <b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br><small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph<br/>of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local<br/>Government Act)</small> | Open   |
| <b>List of Appendices:</b>  | Four<br>Appendix 1: i4B 2023/24 Key Tasks Summary<br>Appendix 2: i4B 2024/25 Key Tasks (Q1 update)<br>Appendix 3: FWH 2023/24 Key Tasks Summary<br>Appendix 4: FWH 2024/25 Key Tasks (Q1 update) |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>   | None   |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br><small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>   | Alice Lester<br>Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods &<br>Regeneration<br>Tel: 020 8937 6441<br>Email: <a href="mailto:Alice.Lester@brent.gov.uk">Alice.Lester@brent.gov.uk</a>                    |

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This is a report providing an update on i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B) and First Wave Housing Ltd.'s (FWH) operational, financial, and strategic performance. This will include providing an update on the delivery of the policy objectives of providing good quality affordable housing and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
- 1.2. The report has been produced to assist the Committee in seeking to understand and assess whether i4B and FWH have made effective investment decisions for the Council in achieving key strategic priorities.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the report and provide feedback as to whether the companies are making effective decisions to help the Council achieve key strategic priorities.

## **3.0 Context and Background Information**

### **3.1 i4B**

- 3.1.1 i4B the Council's wholly owned local authority company, was set up in 2016 with the purpose of acquiring, letting, and managing a portfolio of affordable, good quality private rented sector (PRS) properties. Properties would be let to homeless families at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels. This would enable the Council to either prevent or discharge its homelessness duty and therefore reduce temporary accommodation (TA) costs.

- 3.1.2 The Company has a Board of Directors that meet on a monthly basis to discuss company performance. The Board of the Company is chaired by independent voting Director Andrew Hudson. The other directors of the Company are:

- Independent board member Akintoye Durowoju;
- Councillor Saqib Butt;
- Dr Melanie Smith, the Director of Public Health; and
- Peter Gadsdon, the Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services.

- 3.1.3 The Company has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Brent Council to provide a range of services to support the Company's operations, including:

- Corporate and Financial services;
- Property purchasing and refurbishment;
- Housing management.

- 3.1.4 The SLA enables the Company to operate with minimal staff and to benefit from economies of scale in its operating costs. Across the Council, there are a number of Council officers involved in the end-to-end processes of the Company, from the property negotiation and purchase to the property refurbishment, tenancy nominations and lettings, and the subsequent management of the property once it is let.

- 3.1.5 To ensure that operational performance meets the targets set out in the SLAs, i4B have implemented a comprehensive monitoring framework. The Board receives a bi-monthly performance report accompanied by a monthly scorecard that details both month-to-date and year-to-date performance against targets, allowing for close oversight. Additionally, the companies' officers hold monthly SLA meetings with the council and Mears to address any areas of concern or underperformance. To further reinforce this, i4B officers conduct fortnightly conveyancing and voids meetings, weekly panel meetings with property buyers and a separate fortnightly meeting with Housing Companies Operational Manager. These regular meetings provide

opportunities to discuss specific cases or challenges and maintain high standards of service delivery.

3.1.6 In addition to this, i4B has a contract with external managing agent Mears for the management of its 75 properties in the Home Counties. As with the Brent SLA, this includes all aspects of housing and property management including rent collection, repairs, void refurbishment works, etc.

### 3.2 FWH

3.2.1 First Wave Housing Limited ('FWH'), formerly Brent Housing Partnership ('BHP') is a local authority owned company of the London Borough of Brent and is limited by guarantee. The Company is a registered provider of social housing. It was established in 2002 to manage the property portfolio previously owned by Brent's (now dissolved) arm's length management organisation ("ALMO"), Brent Housing Partnership.

3.2.2 FWH currently owns 216 street properties and one commercial unit. The street properties are categorised as follows:

- 166 Settled Homes - These properties were purchased with a grant providing the tenants with protected rights including the right to buy their home. These acquisitions took place in the early 2010s under FWH's former name, Brent Housing Partnership and a previous approach to acquisitions. Settled Homes are a form of long-term temporary accommodation. They are let on assured shorthold tenancies at the lower of the LHA rate and the affordable rent (80% of market rent). When business plan surpluses are sufficient, properties will be converted, on an incremental basis, to affordable rents on assured tenancies.
- 45 Market Rented - When market rented properties become void, they are let at LHA levels to households through a nomination agreement between the Council and FWH. This helps assist the Council's homelessness reduction agenda.
- 5 General Needs - These tenancies are Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreements with rents protected at social rent levels, which are below 50% of market rent. FWH has five new build social rented houses.

3.2.3 The Company has the same Board of Directors as i4B which meets monthly.

3.2.4 Like i4B, FWH has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Council to support the Company's operations. Under the SLA, the Council provides corporate services such as governance, financial, and legal services. The Council's Housing Management Service (HMS) provides FWH with services to support the Company's landlord function such as housing management, repairs, and void management.

## 4.0 Performance against Overall Aims/Purpose

4.1 i4B has increased the amount of affordable housing tenures in Brent and the Home Counties.

4.2 As of July 2024, 446 properties have been purchased to be let at affordable rates. Economic conditions meant the company had to pause acquisitions in 2022 but was able to recommence purchases in June 2023 and acquired 16 properties in that year. The Company has a financial model that guides all acquisitions, including strict criteria to ensure that loan repayments can be met in a timely manner. This ensures that property purchases are viable, and the Company is able to meet future financial commitments. The financial model is regularly reviewed to ensure its appropriateness and therefore the Company's ongoing financial viability. Properties have been refurbished to a high standard.

4.3 Table One provides a breakdown of i4B's portfolio.

Table One – i4B portfolio as of July 2024

|                             | 1 Bed | 2 Bed | 3 Bed | 4 Bed+ | Total      |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------------|
| <b>Purchased Properties</b> | 61    | 191   | 141   | 53     | <b>446</b> |

4.4 i4B has housed and discharged the Council's housing duty to 473 families and 1075 children. The majority of these families were previously housed in stage one TA. The number of families housed is higher than i4B's PRS portfolio due to a number of families moving on to other accommodation, with new families moving in.

Table Two – Breakdown of families accommodated by i4B as of July 2024

| <b>Previous Accommodation</b> | <b>No. of Families</b> | <b>No. of Children</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Direct to i4B                 | 116                    | 216                    |
| Women's Refuge                | 2                      | 15                     |
| TA Stage One – B&B            | 316                    | 724                    |
| TA Stage Two - Leased         | 39                     | 120                    |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>473</b>             | <b>1075</b>            |

4.5 i4B has been housing Council homelessness nominees since 2016. Although the number of households on the waiting list has increased substantially between 2016 and 2024, the figures would be significantly higher without the company's involvement.

4.6 At the end of July 2024, there were 1884 Brent households in temporary accommodation; this figure includes 3194 children. Without the 415 households currently occupying i4B properties, the number of households in temporary accommodation would be significantly higher. Not all of i4B's properties are currently occupied, due to a combination of recently acquired

and vacated properties being in refurbishment or ready to be re-let, at which point more families will be able to come off the waiting list.

- 4.7 Based on the current highest cost B&B providers, a net cost avoidance of £88k each week has been achieved by moving the 355 households from Temporary Accommodation into i4B units. This assumes that there is a nil cost or surplus to the i4B units as rents received are used to pay any loan repayments and refurbishment costs. Any surplus rents are used to invest into new supply.

| Provider Name          | Room Size | Highest Nightly Rate (£) | Households moved from TA to i4B units | Gross weekly cost incurred by council if those households were still in TA | South Brent BRMA Jan 2011 LHA - 10% * Households | Net cost avoidance per week |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| LHG                    | Single    | 55                       | 53                                    | £20,405.00   | £12,402.00                                       | £8,003.00                   |
| National Housing Group | Double    | 65                       | 151                                   | £68,705.00   | £46,206.00                                       | £22,499.00                  |
| Buckingham Hotel       | Triple    | 100                      | 106                                   | £74,200.00   | £42,930.00                                       | £31,270.00                  |
|                        | Quad      | 150                      | 45                                    | £47,250.00   | £20,700.00                                       | £26,550.00                  |
|                        |           |                          |                                       |  |  | <b>£88,322.00</b>           |

- 4.8 i4B also owns a 153-unit block, which is let to public sector key workers; Lexington has now been operational for three years and is fully occupied with a small amount of turnover due to re-lets. This provides sub-market rent homes to a mix of staff from Brent and other local authorities, NHS, schools and emergency services, who are able to remain there as long as they satisfy the eligibility criteria. Rental rates are capped at 65% of market rent, although current rents are closer to 50% of market rent.

- 4.9 Similarly to i4B, FWH brings a greater diversity and flexibility to the delivery of the Council's housing objectives. As a Registered Provider, FWH has the opportunity to access grant funding through the Greater London Authority and remains available for such opportunities, e.g. if the new government makes further or new forms of grant funding available. In addition, as the Company is not restrained by rent caps within the Council's Housing Revenue Account, it has the ability to charge a variety of rental products as outlined in 3.2.2; this allows the company to set higher rents for certain properties and tenants who can afford these, which strengthens the business, allows the company to do more for other tenants and fosters greater confidence in future investments.

## 5.0 Progress against the Companies' 2023/24 Business Plans

- 5.1 The Appendices to this report show the key objectives and tasks within the i4B and FWH annual business plans for 2023-24 and 2024-25. These provide detailed updates on the progress of tasks within the previous financial year, and in this financial year so far. The companies' four strategic objectives are:

- Providing a consistently good housing service
- Delivering safe and sustainable homes
- Running a viable business

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough

5.2 More detail on progress against each strategic priority will be provided in the section below.

## **6.0 Strategic Priorities for 2024/25**

6.1 The 2024/25 Business Plans for i4B and FWH are now in operation. To accompany the appendices, this section provides a detailed update on progress of business plan tasks throughout 2023-24 and in 2024-25 so far.

6.2 Operational performance is generally stable with the main focus for performance improvements being void turnaround times and rent collection. As noted, the majority of housing management is carried out by Brent Council's Housing Service via the SLA or by Mears, while the Board of i4B have a responsibility to monitor and drive good performance and do so on an ongoing basis including via monthly performance reports.

### **6.3 Providing a consistently good housing service**

6.3.1 This objective relates to improving tenant satisfaction, ensuring tenants are able to afford their rent and sustain their tenancies, and overall providing an effective and consistent housing service.

6.3.2 During 2023/24, new tenant satisfaction measures were implemented some transactional feedback from tenants was received. While the initial results were in line with Council benchmarks, they fell short of the levels we would have liked to achieve. The companies are actively working to improve these outcomes with regular monitoring and collaborative work with the Quality Assurance and Standards Manager to implement an improvement plan that focuses on making tangible changes to enhance tenant experiences. One of the key initiatives is the development of more robust complaints reporting to better identify recurring themes and areas for improvement, with the company specific reporting set to begin in October 2024.

6.3.3 The Housing Companies Tenant Services Managers are also increasing their contact with tenants through more frequent phone communications, as well as conducting home and estate visits. These efforts will build stronger relationships with tenants and ensure that any concerns are promptly addressed.

6.3.4 Additionally, i4B are in the process of re-tendering the Home Counties contract, with a focus on refining the contract specifications and management arrangements. These improvements are intended to enhance the quality and efficiency of the services provided, ensuring that our housing operations consistently meet the needs and expectations of our tenants.

### **6.4 Delivering safe and sustainable homes**

- 6.4.1 This objective involves ensuring that homes are of a good quality, safe, legally compliant, and environmentally sustainable.
- 6.4.2 During 2022-23, i4B and FWH commissioned an audit of its health and safety compliance arrangements, managed primarily through its Service Level Agreement with Brent Housing Service. The audit identified potential risks to health and safety compliance including a lack of detailed oversight, and in response, a monitoring tracker was created to track all compliance elements for all street properties and blocks. Brent's Housing Management Service (HMS) have adopted the True Compliance system for long-term monitoring and reporting of compliance across all areas.
- 6.4.3 The Housing Companies are focussed on ensuring that our housing stock not only meets current safety standards but also aligns with future sustainability goals. Addressing disrepair is a key priority, and we have taken proactive measures to identify and rectify potential issues early on. This approach is critical in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our tenants.
- 6.4.4 In response to the Building Safety Act 2022, i4B have prepared a comprehensive building safety case for Lexington; a higher risk building over 7 storeys. This ensures that we are fully compliant with the new regulations, reflecting our commitment to tenant safety. Health and safety compliance across the portfolios remains strong.
- 6.4.5 Furthermore, the companies are developing an asset management strategy. A significant focus of this strategy is on improving the energy performance of our housing stock, with the goal of bringing all properties up to a minimum EPC C rating, to achieve the government's 2030 target. This initiative is essential for both maintaining the value and quality of assets and supporting broader sustainability objectives and is expected to bring health and financial benefits to tenants.

## 6.5 Running a viable business

- 6.5.1 This objective relates to improving the operational and financial performance of the companies in order to remain financially viable and thus continue to bring benefits to the Council.
- 6.5.2 The key operational issue for i4B and FWH is high void times. Efforts to manage and reduce voids have faced several challenges. One issue is the difficulty in letting Mears properties to accepted Brent homeless applicants, who often prefer to remain within the borough rather than relocating to the Home Counties. Additionally, delays caused by third-party freeholders in completing necessary repairs have further impacted our turnaround times for voids. As set out in the sections on operational performance, a number of improvement actions and projects are in place, which will be brought together in a deep-dive session led by the Board to identify further opportunities for reducing void times and rent loss.

6.5.3 An internal audit of the financial controls and billing arrangements for the Companies was carried out in May 2024. Several areas for improvement were identified and recommendations have been implemented:

- Lack of oversight of legal disrepair claims – there was inadequate communication regarding disrepair claims, leading to situations where the companies were unaware of claims until they are resolved. To improve oversight, officers working for the companies have worked with the Council’s Legal section to introduce a monthly performance report in addition to the quarterly report that is already in place. This new report provides a comprehensive overview of open and recently closed cases, including progress and costs.
- Oversight and inspection of void works – following the audit, direct billing between the companies and Wates has been introduced to improve financial monitoring and forecasting. Additionally, an action log has been introduced into the bi-weekly i4B/FWH voids meetings, detailing owners and target resolution dates for any follow up actions set.
- Council tax billing processes – following improvements recommended in the audit the companies have worked with the Council Tax team to develop a clear and effective process for reviewing and paying council tax liabilities. This process has been formalised in a procedure document to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Lack of policies and procedures – there was previously no comprehensive documentation outlining the billing and management processes for legal disrepair, council tax, or void repair work outside of the SLA between the Council and the companies. The companies’ management team has drafted and circulated process notes that clearly outline the roles, responsibilities, and arrangements for managing and monitoring new voids, council tax, and disrepair cases.

6.5.4 During 2023/24, the Board approved a value for money strategy for i4B and FWH, with focus on improving performance levels, efficiencies and outcomes for tenants and other stakeholders in the following key areas.

- Voids performance
- Income recovery and arrears management
- Asset management and energy efficiency
- Housing management costs
- Tax efficiency
- Value for money for tenants

6.5.5 Improvement plans and actions in these areas are closely monitored by the Board through dedicated quarterly reports.

6.6 *Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough*



- 6.6.1 The primary aim of the Housing Companies is to improve the Council's affordable housing offer through the acquisition and letting of properties in Brent and neighbouring boroughs.
- 6.6.2 First Wave Housing and i4B have a common acquisition and development strategy, under which opportunities are progressed through either company in the way that is most beneficial to the overall Council housing strategy. For example, i4B carries out the companies' ongoing street property acquisition programme. As a Registered Provider, FWH is eligible for certain grant opportunities not available to i4B.
- 6.6.3 For 2024/25, i4B has a street property acquisition target of 25; as of July 2024, i4B have purchased 14 street properties with a further 17 in conveyancing. i4B are also in the final stages of purchasing a new build development of nine units in Brent, which, once handed over, will be available for immediate letting. This will put the company ahead of its target for the year and will also use the majority of current loan finance available to the companies.
- 6.6.4 While FWH has not recently taken forward any Section 106 or grant opportunities, the Company is working with the Council on the potential leasing of 118 units at the Fulton Road new-build development in Wembley Park at London Living Rent.
- 6.6.5 The companies are in discussion with Council staff about the future of the acquisition programme and the scope for further loan funding: these discussions are partially dependent on upcoming grant announcements from the government. The Board is committed to playing a full part in increasing housing supply in the borough through the most appropriate routes, so as to continue to reduce the use of insecure and costly Temporary Accommodation for homeless families.

## **7.0 Future of the Companies**

- 7.1 The impact of i4B and FWH on the Council's housing challenges has been significant and positive. Without the existence of the Housing Companies, the waiting lists for housing would be considerably higher, and the strain on the Council's resources even more severe.
- 7.2 i4B has a continued commitment to acquiring street properties in order to house homeless families, reducing both the waiting list and the Council's reliance on expensive temporary accommodation, providing a more sustainable and cost-effective solution to the housing crisis within the borough.
- 7.3 The recent change in government may bring new opportunities for funding or grants. The Companies are prepared to explore any such opportunities to further enhance our capacity to support the Council's objectives. By remaining adaptive and maintaining our focus on strategic acquisitions, we aim to continue making a meaningful contribution to the reduction of homelessness and the provision of affordable housing within Brent.

7.4 As well as increasing supply, the focus of the Company Boards is on driving consistently good performance in areas where issues have been identified, particularly on void times and tenant satisfaction for both companies as well as rent collection for i4B.

## 8.0 Financial Considerations

8.1 As at end of March 2023/24 the total loan owed by i4B and FWH to Brent Council was £220.2m, split between i4B, £185.9m and FWH £34.3m. The loans are all secured against the properties acquired for the 2 subsidiaries and are below market interest rates.

8.2 The loan terms have been structured not to exceed the terms of loans Brent contracts from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). As of 31st March 2024, both i4B and FWH had met loan repayment commitments to date and are on track to meet future repayment obligations.

8.3 Brent Council has made provision for a further loan facility of £40m in its 2024/25 Capital Strategy and Budget report to finance additional acquisitions by i4B. Draw down of the facility by i4B will be subject to i4B finding viable properties that align with the Council's housing priorities. Also, the terms of the loan will be set at the time of draw down to reflect latest economic indicators in order not to put i4B or the Council in a financially disadvantaged position.

### 8.4 i4B Financial Update

The current year to date financial forecast as at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 for i4B is as follows:

| <b><u>i4B 24/25 July Forecast</u></b>                          | <b>Budget Full Year (£'000)</b> | <b>Forecast Full Year (£'000)</b> | <b>Variance Full Year (£'000)</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Income   | 11,021                          | 10,475                            | (546)                             |
| Expenditure  | (3,743)                         | (3,743)                           | 0                                 |
| Financing  | (5,292)                         | (5,292)                           | 0                                 |
| <b>Profit (Loss) before tax, revaluations and depreciation</b> | <b>1,986</b>                    | <b>1,440</b>                      | <b>(546)</b>                      |

### 8.5 Income

8.5.1 Forecast Gross Rental Income for the full year is calculated, based on the estimated collection rate (95.1% of budgeted income).

### 8.6 Void Rent Loss

8.6.1 Forecast void loss has been calculated at £443k for the year based on Brent housing data only for the first 4 months. Data on void loss for Mears managed

properties was unavailable at the time of publication. The forecast will be updated once data becomes available.

## 8.7 Operating Costs

8.7.1 Forecast spends on operating costs are based on budget and will be updated once data becomes available. Certain areas of expenditure such as Leasehold Service Charges and Property Maintenance Costs show a surplus earlier in the year with billing picking up later in the year. Financing costs related to interest payments are fixed.

8.8 The i4B Holdings Ltd 30 Year business plan approved earlier this year projected an overall profit before tax for the last year in the model (2053/54) of £8.999m

## 8.9 FWH Financial Update

The current Year to date financial forecast as at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 for FWH is as follows:

| <b><u>FWH 24/25</u></b><br><b><u>July Forecast</u></b>   | <b>July 24</b><br><b>Actual</b><br><b>(£'000)</b> | <b>Budget</b><br><b>t</b><br><b>YTD</b><br><b>(£'000)</b> | <b>Budget</b><br><b>Full Year</b><br><b>(£'000)</b> | <b>Forecast</b><br><b>Full Year</b><br><b>(£'000)</b> | <b>Variance</b><br><b>Full Year</b><br><b>(£'000)</b> |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income   | 1,173   | 1,174   | 3,430   | 3,430   | 0   |
| Expenditure  | (502)   | (614)   | (2,667)   | (2,667)   | 0   |
| Financing  | 0   | 0   | (685)   | (685)   | 0   |
| <b>Profit (Loss)</b><br><b>before tax,</b><br><b>revaluations</b><br><b>and</b><br><b>depreciation</b> | <b>671</b>  | <b>560</b>  | <b>78</b>   | <b>78</b>   | <b>0</b>  |

## 8.10 Income

8.10.1 Gross Rental Income is understated by £3k, due to new tenancy rental income charged higher in the 2024/25 Budget.

## 8.11 Void Rent Loss

8.11.1 Void loss currently showing favourable surplus of £2k, due to average void loss at 3% over the first 4 months. The budget for the year has assumed a void loss of 4%. However, the commercial unit owned by FWH currently remains void.

## 8.12 Operating Costs

8.12.1 Overall Operating Cost showing a favourable surplus of £112k, however, when broken down by individual costs:

- 8.12.2 Leasehold Service Charges are showing a surplus; this is due to the timing of billing, as this can be variable throughout the year with an increase in billing near to year end.
- 8.12.3 Property Maintenance Costs are also showing a surplus, for the same reasons cited for the above. However compensation costs as of July are over budget, which could contribute to a possible overspend on the allocated budget for the year.
- 8.12.4 FWH accounts as at the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 show a Profit before tax of £111k. However, this is only for expenditure captured to July 2024. Billing for expenditure is variable throughout the year with billing picking up near to year end, which aligning within budget should enable us to achieve the budgeted profit of £77k.
- 8.12.5 The FWH 30 Year business plan approved earlier this year projected an overall profit before tax for the last year in the model (2053/54) of £1.022m.

## **9.0 Legal Considerations**

- 9.1 i4B and FWH are two local authority housing companies established for the distinct purposes set out at paras 3.1 and 7.1 respectively. Constraints on Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) borrowing since the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (largely removed following the abolition of the HRA borrowing cap since 30th October 2018) resulted in local authorities such as Brent Council moving to housing provision outside of the HRA, often using wholly owned companies such as those referred to in this report. The two companies share the same medium- to long-term objectives and Board membership, and they do not directly employ staff, so any work is carried out by Brent staff or contracted organisations.
- 9.2 Part 4 of the Constitution describes the membership and terms of reference for the Council committees and sub-committees including the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.
- 9.3 The Council is empowered to establish local housing companies under “incidental” powers within Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 2 (LGA 1972) to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its’ functions. This incidental power must however be exercised in conjunction with a main housing function vested in local authorities under the Local Government Act 1972 in pursuit of housing duties conferred on them under the Housing Act 1996.
- 9.4 A wider legal power (the General Power of Competence (GPC)) is provided to local authorities within section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them, amongst other things, to establish companies to help them fulfil their legal functions and duties. The General Power of Competence allows local authorities to “do anything that individuals generally may do.” This allows for a more novel approach, to be taken, including the establishment of local

authority housing companies such as those referred to in this Report, to help the Council carry out service delivery for one of its' functions ("Service Delivery Company") or to trade in commercial activities ("Trading Company") *subject to limits* set out in sections 3 and 4 of the Localism Act 2011.

- 9.5 Since the purpose of the two local authority companies described in this report is non-trading and service delivery-focused, and whilst the rents referred to in this Report remain at social or affordable rent levels, the two companies established by the Council are Service Delivery Companies and may provide the housing services that are described in this Report using the General Power of Competence, subject to the restrictions in Section 3 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 9.6 Section 3 prevents a Service Delivery Company from charging for a non-commercial service using the General Power, or its' use of the General Power where there is an overlapping power already in existence, to provide that non-commercial service. NB Section 3 does not prevent the charging by a Service Delivery Company of social rents or affordable rents. The charging of anything that resembles a market rent or commercial rent by a service delivery company would however be prevented under Section 3.
- 9.7 If the Council proposes to change the purpose of the Companies to those of a Trading Company and to charge commercial rents for the purposes of income generation at any time, then the restrictions and conditions in section 4 of the Localism Act 2011 will need to be observed.
- 9.8 Brent Legal, through its residential Property team, carries out the legal and conveyancing work on behalf of i4B and FWH and regular meetings are held between the legal team and i4B/FWH to ensure the timely acquisition of the properties.
- 9.9 Brent Legal, through its Contracts team, also provides support on any loan arrangements or transactional arrangements between the Council and i4B and prepares all the necessary loan, security, and other contractual documentation.
- 9.10 Brent Legal, through its Housing and Civil Litigation team, provides support on legal disrepair claims for i4B and FWH on properties based in the Borough of Brent. It also responds to related legal claims, and deals with possession claims on the grounds of breach of agreement, namely arrears and or anti-social behaviour.
- 9.11 Following the internal audit the Chief Lawyer for Housing and Civil litigation will be attending regular meetings between legal and i4B/FWH along with the provision of monthly and quarterly reports on disrepair cases.

## **10.0 Climate Considerations**

- 10.1 In line with re-confirmed government targets, the companies are aiming at an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C across the stock. To meet this

target will be costly and resource-intensive, so to facilitate and plan for this the companies are in the process of developing an asset management strategy for Board approval. The companies have a good understanding of the energy performance of their stock, and the strategy will include plans to access grant schemes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, work with the Council on the retrofit of blocks, and engage other freeholders to ensure that improvement works are carried out to communal and external areas of blocks where required.

## **11.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

11.1 The Housing Companies do not collect information on the protected characteristics of their tenants. All tenants are Council homeless nominees.

**Report sign off:**

***Peter Gadsdon***

Director of i4B Holdings Ltd

| i4B 2023/24 Key Tasks                                      |   |   |  |          |          |  |
|--|---|---|--|----------|----------|--|
| Housing Company objective                                  | Priority for 2023/24  | Key tasks for 2023/24   | Task owner   | Due date | RAG      | Update January 2024  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 1. Explore future financing arrangements with Council       | Explore new financing arrangement with Council that allows companies to forward borrow                          | Strategy and Delivery Manager  | Sep-23   | Complete | The Council has indicated that future loan finance would be available to the housing companies following the use of remaining loan funding.  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 2. Review feasibility of a block acquisition                | Work with consultants to review market for potential block acquisitions, which would include adapted properties | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Sep-23   | Complete | Strategy session with Red Loft held in May 2023, and Board agreed to explore and progress s106 and bulk purchase opportunities where appropriate. Schemes continue to be explored  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 3. Review feasibility of new build purchases                | Work with consultants to review market for new build opportunities, which would include adapted properties      | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Sep-23   | Complete | Strategy session with Red Loft held in May 2023, and Board agreed to explore and progress s106 and bulk purchase opportunities where appropriate. Schemes continue to be explored  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 4. Review feasibility of re-entering street property market | Review street property market in June 2023  | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Jun-23   | Complete | Board decision taken in May 2023 to resume street property acquisitions. Forecast of 12 acquisitions across 2023-24 in line with targets, and 25 acquisitions in 2024-25   |
|  |   | Dependent on review, consider re-entering street property market  | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Jul-23   | Complete | Board decision taken in May 2023 to resume street property acquisitions.   |
| Running a viable business                                  | 5. Carry out project to reduce arrears                      | Review sign-up process and tenancy sustainment approach   | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer           | Sep-23   | Complete | The sign-up process has been revised and is in a pilot phase, with officers now assisting with Universal Credit and Council Tax applications, as well as advance payments. A newly introduced welcome pack and Nominations Panel are ready for implementation to enhance tenancy sustainment. Work has also begun with the employment assistance organisation BEAM, to help tenants find and sustain employment. |
|  |   | Review rent collection and arrears management processes   | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer           | Sep-23   | Complete | Additionally, ongoing improvements are being made to rent collection and arrears management, with a focus on providing a more comprehensive service. A dedicated Housing Companies Operational Team has been appointed to support these improvements.  |
|  |   | Evaluate historic highest arrears cases to assess ongoing suitability   | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer           | Sep-23   | Complete | Where properties are identified as unsuitable there is a process in place to refer back to Housing Needs for review.   |
| Running a viable business                                  | 6. Implement VfM strategy                                   | Implement actions outlined in value for money strategy  | Strategic Support Officer  | Dec-23   | Complete | Value for Money Strategy & Action Board approved at October Board and actions are progressing. Update provided to January Board in VfM statement alongside business plan. Where actions are not yet complete, these have been included in the business plan key tasks for 2024-25  |
| Running a viable business                                  | 7. Reduce void costs  | Implement project plan to reduce void costs   | Head of Housing Property Services  | Dec-23   |          | Voids hit squad now in place, with an update on outcomes to be provided at the January Board. All voids are now handled by Wates Living Space and undergo pre-inspection, in-progress inspection, and a joint post-inspection by a Wates Supervisor and a Brent Surveyor. The cost of void works has been reduced by carefully scrutinising specifications and implementing an approval hierarchy.               |
| Running a viable business                                  | 8. Significantly improve void turnaround times              | Implement project plan to significantly improve void turnaround times   | Head of Housing Property Services  | Dec-23   |          | As above   |

|   |   |  |   |         |          |  |
|---|---|--|---|---------|----------|--|
| Running a viable business                     | 9. Explore potential stock rationalisation            | Review financial and energy performance of properties following energy modelling work  | Strategic Support Officer                                     | Jun-23  |          | Action remains overdue but on course within financial year. Survey data on future energy performance of portfolio and decarbonisation potential across the stock is in the process of being modelled into the financial business plan, and the impacts will be assessed on a property- and stock-level to inform a future asset management & stock rationalisation approach  |
|   |   | Consider potential disposals for under-performing properties   | Strategic Support Officer                                     | Jul-23  |          | Dependent on the above.  |
|   |   | Carry out other disposals as appropriate, e.g. Home Counties properties  | Strategic Support Officer                                     | Ongoing |          | Ongoing.   |
| Running a viable business                     | 10. Review tax efficiency                             | Carry out a tax planning review for the business   | Senior Financial Analyst                                      | Sep-23  | Complete | EY advice and conclusions presented to October Board, with regular tax planning exercises being set up.  |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes         | 11. Monitor health and safety compliance              | Continue short-term monitoring and reporting of each compliance area   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer | Jun-23  |          | Monitoring and reporting to Board will continue on a monthly basis until True Compliance fully implemented.  |
|   |   | Monitor implementation of True Compliance system for i4B   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer | Dec-23  |          | Updated reports have been received from True Compliance and reviewed. Ongoing work with True Compliance Support to finalise the data contained in the widgets, with the aim that full reporting will be in place by June 2024; rolled over into 2024-25 Business Plan  |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes         | 12. Implement plan in response to Building Safety Act | Develop and implement project plan to ensure compliance with Building Safety Act   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer | Mar-24  |          | There are three key actions for Lexington in response to the Building Safety Act.<br>1. Registration with Government/Building Safety Regulator - this has been completed in collaboration with Quintain.<br>2. Registration with London Fire Brigade - registration has been completed, and the Compliance team are engaging the LFB on any further information required.<br>3. Preparation of Building Safety Case to the Building Safety Regulator. The deadline for this is 31 March 2024, and i4B officers, the Compliance Team and Quintain are collaborating on the completion of the Safety Case. |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes         | 13. Develop decarbonisation strategy                  | Use results of energy modelling work to develop an i4B decarbonisation strategy, which may include stock rationalisation where appropriate | Strategic Asset Manager / Strategic Support Officer           | Sep-23  |          | Action remains overdue but on course within financial year. Survey data on future energy performance of portfolio and decarbonisation potential across the stock is in the process of being modelled into the financial business plan, and the impacts will be assessed on a property- and stock-level to inform a future asset management & stock rationalisation approach  |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes         | 14. Develop disrepair policy                          | Review disrepair cases   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer | Jun-23  | Complete | Report presented at the July Board meeting providing an update on all live disrepair cases.  |
|   |   | Develop disrepair policy   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer | Jun-23  | Complete | Report presented at the July Board meeting outlining the legislation around managing disrepair cases, and Brent Housing's approach to proactively managing disrepair. Going forward, the Board will receive updates on live & settled disrepair cases through the regular performance report.  |
| Providing a consistently good housing service | 15. Review tenant satisfaction                        | Review initial results following implementation of new tenant satisfaction measures  | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                            | Jun-23  | Complete | Initial results presented at July Board meeting.   |
|   |   | Review results of transactional feedback from tenants  | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                            | Jun-23  | Complete | Initial results presented at July Board meeting.   |
|   |   | Identify and carry out actions to improve tenant satisfaction  | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                            | Dec-23  |          | Board to receive six-monthly reports going forward; next report in February 2024   |



|   |   |   |   |        |          |   |
|---|---|---|---|--------|----------|---|
| Providing a consistently good housing service | 16. Improve complaints oversight and monitoring | Review complaints policies and procedures for i4B | Complaints and Casework Manager / Strategic Support Officer | Sep-23 | Complete | A separate hierarchy on the Council's complaints processing system has now been set up for i4B, enabling company complaints to be monitored and reported on separately. The complaints triaging team has been briefed on this. Plans for reporting to Board will be agreed with the Housing Companies Operational Manager, likely to commence in July 2024 alongside the tenant satisfaction report |
|---|---|---|---|--------|----------|---|

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**i4B 2024/25 Key Tasks**

| Housing Company Objective                                  | Priority for 2024/25   | Key Tasks for 2024/25  | Task Owner   | Due Date          | RAG | July 2024 Update   |
|--|--|--|--|-------------------|-----|--|
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 1. Monitor and improve income collection performance                         | Monitor and improve income collection performance  | Housing Companies Operational Manager  | Mar-25            |     | Rent collection KPI monitored through monthly performance reports; performance is currently below target but expected to improve following resolution of issues with benefit payments, which will give a more accurate picture of collection performance   |
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 2. Monitor results of new tenant satisfaction measures                       | Monitor the result of new tenant satisfaction measures and provide regular reporting on tenant satisfaction every 6 months                 | Housing Companies Operational Manager  | Sep-24            |     | First report on new TSMs presented to Board, with a further report due in September which will provide the national picture on tenant satisfaction. Based on initial results for i4B and the Council, which put them below London and national averages, a large-scale project is required over the coming months to identify and implement targeted improvements to delivery of service. This is being taken forward by the Council Management Team/Director of Housing Services and the Board will receive more information on this in September; deadline updated to then |
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 3. Monitor complaints using improved portal                                  | Monitor complaints using new improved portal and implement regular reporting to the Board on complaints oversight                          | Housing Companies Operational Manager  | Dec-24            |     | Plans to be aligned with reporting on tenant satisfaction and the new regulatory consumer standards - first report due in September  |
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 4. Re-tender Home Counties housing management contract                       | Re-tender Home Counties housing management contract  | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Aug-24            |     | Procurement has been slightly delayed due to resourcing, but is expected to go out to tender in September. The contract is being extended in the meantime to ensure there is cover. The action will therefore not meet the deadline but will be progressed as soon as possible, and cover will be provided by Greystone for as long as is required under the terms of the contract   |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 5. Fully implement True Compliance   | Fully implement True Compliance, including setting up reporting widgets to be incorporated into the housing management performance reports | Head of Housing Property Services & Strategic Support Officer                                | Complete          |     | True Compliance is fully set up, and performance will be reported as part of scorecard from September onwards. Monthly monitoring of compliance performance will continue, with a six-monthly report from the i4B management team added to the forward plan  |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 6. Fulfill the requirements of the Building Safety Act                       | Develop the Building Safety Case for Lexington   | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Complete          |     | Completed - Quintain will contact officers if further information is required in future, and if the safety case is requested by the Building Safety Regulator  |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 7. Continue to effectively monitor and manage disrepair                      | Review and respond to the Regulator's response to the submission<br>Continue to effectively monitor, manage and report on disrepair cases  | Strategy & Delivery Manager<br>Head of Housing Property Services & Strategic Support Officer | Sep-24<br>Ongoing |     | No response from Regulator as yet<br>Reporting on disrepair has increased via the bi-monthly performance report, and the Boards continue to have a greater focus on disrepair. Detailed financial reporting is being worked on - reporting terms have been agreed with the Legal team, and the first report on all live and recently closed cases has now been received  |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 8. Refine and implement asset management and decarbonisation strategy        | Develop and implement asset management and decarbonisation strategy  | Senior Finance Analyst & Head of Housing Property Services                                   | Sep-24            |     | Meetings being held with Finance, Asset Management and Climate teams to determine strategic approach to asset management and decarbonisation. Modelling from stock condition and energy surveys confirms that forecast capital requirements on company - including works to improve EPC ratings of those below C - are overall affordable. On track  |
|  |  | Develop and agree a stock rationalisation approach   | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst                                       | Oct-24            |     | To follow on from above work and tie in with company asset disposal policy which the Board have now approved   |
|  |  | Explore grant funding opportunities for energy efficiency  | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Dec-24            |     | No current opportunities identified, but grant horizon scanning will form part of meetings with Climate team   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 9. Monitor and carry out actions to improve voids performance                | Review improvement actions on voids performance, monitor and carry out actions accordingly   | Head of Housing Property Services  | Mar-25            |     | To be monitored through monthly performance reports. Performance shows signs of progress but times remain high and Board have requested a deep dive session into this  |
|  |  | Implement actions arising from value for money review of void costs  | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Jun-24            |     | Action slightly overdue, to be resolved by end of July. A final meeting is being scheduled to reach an agreement on contentious items and to finalise the issuance of a credit note back to i4B  |
|  |  | Carry out re-let voids pilot and review outcomes   | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Sep-24            |     | Pilot likely to run through first six months for 2024/25. The first 5 or so void cases from C&C have had positive feedback from the surveyor in terms of timing, cost and quality. Once the pilot has progressed, a detailed report will come back to the Board  |
|  |  | Consider disposal of Home Counties properties  | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Ongoing           |     | Mears-managed voids are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with no recommended disposals so far   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 10. Carry out mid-year review of the financial business plan                 | Present mid-year review of business plan, including stress testing, back to Board  | Senior Financial Analyst   | Oct-24            |     | On track   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 11. Implement actions arising from financial controls audit                  | Implement actions arising from financial controls audit  | Senior Financial Analyst   | Aug-24            |     | Deadline updated following presentation of final report to Board. Process improvements are in place, and draft process notes to formalise this are with the Finance team to comment and agree by the deadline  |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 12. Introduce regular tax planning exercises                                 | Introduce regular tax planning exercises to improve forecasting and implement tax efficiencies where required                              | Senior Financial Analyst   | Jun-24            |     | To be picked up by the Senior Financial Analyst for the business plan stress test review in September  |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 13. Continue street property acquisition programme                           | Acquire 25 properties in 2024-25   | Strategy & Delivery Manager  | Mar-25            |     | i4B remains on track to meet this target, with 12 properties purchased in Q1 and over 20 properties in conveyancing and expected to complete within the year   |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 14. Identify and appraise potential block acquisitions                       | Identify and appraise potential block acquisitions   | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst                                       | Ongoing           |     | Information on potential block acquisitions will be presented to the Board on an ad hoc basis, either via the regular opportunities report or via separate reports   |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 15. Identify and appraise the potential acquisition or leasing of new builds | Review the market for new build opportunities and identify and appraise the potential acquisition or leasing of new builds                 | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst                                       | Ongoing           |     | Information on potential new build opportunities will be presented to the Board on an ad hoc basis, either via the regular opportunities report or via separate reports. The July opportunities report will include information on the acquisition of 9 units at Tailor Court and Creek Mews which is due to complete in August  |

|  |   |  |                             |         |  |   |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|---------|--|---|
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 16. Engage Council on future of company | Engage Council on future of company beyond use of current loan funding | Strategy & Delivery Manager | Ongoing |  | A £40m provision for potential further funding to i4B has been allocated in the Council's 2024/25 budget; the impact of the new Local Authority Housing Fund on i4B's pipeline will be determined pending a decision from incoming Government. Conversations with the Council are taking place regarding new loan finance to fund further street property acquisitions, and the July opportunities report will also request approval on a proposal to draw down funding for the acquisition of a portfolio of 5 units |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|---------|--|---|

| FWH 2023/24 Key Tasks                                      |   |  |  |          |          |  |
|--|---|--|--|----------|----------|--|
| Housing Company objective                                  | Priority for 2023/24  | Key tasks for 2023/24  | Task owner   | Due date | RAG      | Update January 2024  |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes                      | 1. Monitor health and safety compliance                     | Continue short-term monitoring and reporting of each compliance area   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer            | Jun-24   |          | Monitoring and reporting to Board will continue on a monthly basis until True Compliance fully implemented.  |
|  |   | Monitor implementation of True Compliance system for FWH   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer            | Jun-24   |          | Updated reports have been received from True Compliance and reviewed. Ongoing work with True Compliance Support to finalise the data contained in the widgets, with the aim that full reporting will be in place by June 2024; rolled over into 2024-25 Business Plan  |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes                      | 2. Implement plan in response to Building Safety Act        | Develop and implement project plan to ensure compliance with Building Safety Act   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer            | Apr-23   | Complete | FWH does not have any high-rise buildings that need to be registered with the Government/LFB in the initial stages of the Building Safety Act. Any changes impacting FWH will be monitored. FWH's blocks at Arnoux and Addis Court as mid-rise buildings were required to be registered with the Regulator of Social Housing as part of its fire safety survey, which has been completed.                        |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes                      | 3. Develop decarbonisation strategy                         | Use results of energy modelling work to develop an FWH decarbonisation strategy, which may include stock rationalisation where appropriate | Strategic Asset Manager / Strategic Support Officer                      | Sep-23   |          | Action remains overdue but on course within financial year. Survey data on future energy performance of portfolio and decarbonisation potential across the stock is in the process of being modelled into the financial business plan, and the impacts will be assessed on a property- and stock-level to inform a future asset management & stock rationalisation approach                                      |
| Delivering safe and sustainable homes                      | 4. Develop disrepair policy                                 | Review disrepair cases   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer            | Jun-23   | Complete | Report presented at the July Board meeting providing an update on all live disrepair cases.  |
|  |   | Develop disrepair policy   | Head of Housing Property Services / Strategic Support Officer            | Jun-23   | Complete | Report presented at the July Board meeting outlining the legislation around managing disrepair cases, and Brent Housing's approach to proactively managing disrepair. Going forward, the Board will receive updates on live & settled disrepair cases through the regular performance report.  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 5. Explore future financing arrangements with Council       | Explore new financing arrangement with Council that allows companies to forward borrow   | Strategy and Delivery Manager  | Sep-23   | Complete | The Council has indicated that future loan finance would be available to the housing companies following the use of remaining loan funding.  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 6. Review feasibility of a block acquisition                | Work with consultants to review market for potential block acquisitions, which would include adapted properties                            | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Sep-23   | Complete | Strategy session with Red Loft held in May 2023, and Board agreed to explore and progress s106 and bulk purchase opportunities where appropriate. Schemes continue to be explored  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 7. Review feasibility of new build purchases                | Work with consultants to review market for new build opportunities, which would include adapted properties                                 | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Sep-23   | Complete | Strategy session with Red Loft held in May 2023, and Board agreed to explore and progress s106 and bulk purchase opportunities where appropriate. Schemes continue to be explored  |
| Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough | 8. Review feasibility of re-entering street property market | Review street property market in June 2023   | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Jun-23   | Complete | Board decision taken in May 2023 to resume street property acquisitions for i4B.   |
|  |   | Dependent on review, consider re-entering street property market   | Operational Director Property and Assets / Strategy and Delivery Manager | Jul-23   | Complete | Board decision taken in May 2023 to resume street property acquisitions for i4B.   |
|  |   | Review sign-up process and tenancy sustainment approach  | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer           | Sep-23   | Complete | The sign-up process has been revised and is in a pilot phase, with officers now assisting with Universal Credit and Council Tax applications, as well as advance payments. A newly introduced welcome pack and Nominations Panel are ready for implementation to enhance tenancy sustainment. Work has also begun with the employment assistance organisation BEAM, to help tenants find and sustain employment. |


|   |   |   |  |         |          |  |
|---|---|---|--|---------|----------|--|
| Running a viable business                     | 9. Carry out project to reduce arrears          | Review rent collection and arrears management processes                               | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer | Sep-23  | Complete | Additionally, ongoing improvements are being made to rent collection and arrears management, with a focus on providing a more comprehensive service. A dedicated Housing Companies Operational Team has been appointed to support these improvements.  |
|   |   | Evaluate historic highest arrears cases to assess ongoing suitability                 | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods / Strategic Support Officer | Sep-23  | Complete | Where properties are identified as unsuitable there is a process in place to refer back to Housing Needs for review.   |
| Running a viable business                     | 10. Implement VFM strategy                      | Implement actions outlined in value for money strategy                                | Strategic Support Officer                                      | Dec-23  | Complete | Value for Money Strategy & Action Board approved at October Board and actions are progressing. Update provided to January Board in Vfm statement alongside business plan. Where actions are not yet complete, these have been included in the business plan key tasks for 2024-25  |
| Running a viable business                     | 11. Reduce void costs                           | Implement project plan to reduce void costs   | Head of Housing Property Services                              | Dec-23  |          | Voids hit squad now in place, with an update on outcomes to be provided to the January Board meeting. All voids are now handled by Wates Living Space and undergo pre-inspection, in-progress inspection, and a joint post-inspection by a Wates Supervisor and a Brent Surveyor. The cost of void works has been reduced by carefully scrutinising specifications and implementing an approval hierarchy. |
| Running a viable business                     | 12. Significantly improve void turnaround times | Implement project plan to significantly improve void turnaround times                 | Head of Housing Property Services                              | Dec-23  |          | As above   |
| Running a viable business                     | 13. Explore potential stock rationalisation     | Review financial and energy performance of properties following energy modelling work | Strategic Support Officer                                      | Jun-23  |          | Action remains overdue but on course within financial year. Survey data on future energy performance of portfolio and decarbonisation potential across the stock is in the process of being modelled into the financial business plan, and the impacts will be assessed on a property- and stock-level to inform a future asset management & stock rationalisation approach                                |
|   |   | Consider potential disposals for under-performing properties                          | Strategic Support Officer                                      | Jul-23  |          | Dependent on the above.  |
|   |   | Carry out other disposals as appropriate  | Strategic Support Officer                                      | Ongoing |          | Ongoing.   |
| Providing a consistently good housing service | 14. Review tenant satisfaction                  | Review initial results following implementation of new tenant satisfaction measures   | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                             | Jun-23  | Complete | Initial results presented at July Board meeting.   |
|   |   | Report on new tenant satisfaction measures to Regulator of Social Housing             | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                             | Jun-23  | Complete | For smaller providers, reporting is only required once every two years with a census approach to sampling. Requests from Regulator to be monitored and actioned  |
|   |   | Review results of transactional feedback from tenants                                 | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                             | Jun-23  | Complete | Initial results presented at July Board meeting.   |
|   |   | Identify and carry out actions to improve tenant satisfaction                         | Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods                             | Jan-24  |          | Board to receive six-monthly reports going forward; next report in February 2024   |
| Providing a consistently good housing service | 15. Improve complaints oversight and monitoring | Review complaints policies and procedures for FWH                                     | Complaints and Casework Manager / Strategic Support Officer    | Sep-23  | Complete | A separate hierarchy on the Council's complaints processing system has now been set up for FWH, enabling company complaints to be monitored and reported on separately. The complaints triaging team has been briefed on this. Plans for reporting to Board will be agreed with the Housing Companies Operational Manager, likely to commence in July 2024 alongside the tenant satisfaction report        |

**FWH 2024/25 Key Tasks**

| Housing Company Objective                                  | Priority for 2024/25  | Key Tasks for 2024/25  | Task Owner  | Due Date | RAG    | July 2024 Update   |
|--|---|--|---|----------|--------|--|
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 1. Monitor and improve income collection performance                | Monitor and improve income collection performance  | Housing Companies Operational Manager                         | Mar-25   | Yellow | Rent collection KPI monitored through monthly performance reports; performance is currently below target but expected to improve following resolution of issues with benefit payments, which will give a more accurate picture of collection performance   |
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 2. Monitor results of new tenant satisfaction measures              | Monitor the result of new tenant satisfaction measures and provide regular reporting on tenant satisfaction every 6 months   | Housing Companies Operational Manager                         | Sep-24   | Yellow | First report on new TSMs presented to Board, with a further report due in September which will provide the national picture on tenant satisfaction. Based on initial results for FWH and the Council, which put them below London and national averages, a large-scale project is required over the coming months to identify and implement targeted improvements to delivery of service. This is being taken forward by the Council Management Team/Director of Housing Services and the Board will receive more information on this in September; deadline updated to then |
|  |   | Report on new tenant satisfaction measures to Regulator of Social Housing  | Housing Companies Operational Manager                         | Sep-24   | Green  | To be submitted on Regulator's online system when required   |
| Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service              | 3. Monitor complaints using improved portal                         | Monitor complaints using new improved portal and implement regular reporting to the Board on complaints oversight  | Housing Companies Operational Manager                         | Dec-24   | Green  | Plans to be aligned with reporting on tenant satisfaction and the new regulatory consumer standards - first report due in September  |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 4. Fully implement True Compliance                                  | Fully implement True Compliance, including setting up reporting widgets to be incorporated into the housing management performance reports                                   | Head of Housing Property Services & Strategic Support Officer | Jun-24   | Green  | True Compliance is fully set up, and performance will be reported as part of scorecard from September onwards. Monthly monitoring of compliance performance will continue, with a six-monthly report from the FWH management team added to the forward plan  |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 5. Fulfill the requirements of the Building Safety Act              | Monitor and action any further requirements of the Act impacting FWH   | Strategy & Delivery Manager                                   | Apr-24   | Green  | No further requirements at present   |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 6. Continue to effectively monitor and manage disrepair             | Continue to effectively monitor, manage and report on disrepair cases  | Head of Housing Property Services & Strategic Support Officer | Ongoing  | Green  | Reporting on disrepair has increased via the bi-monthly performance report, and the Boards continue to have a greater focus on disrepair. Detailed financial reporting is being worked on - reporting terms have been agreed with the Legal team, and the first report on all live and recently closed cases has now been received   |
| Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes                      | 7. Refine and implement asset management & decarbonisation strategy | Develop and implement asset management and decarbonisation strategy  | Senior Finance Analyst & Head of Housing Property Services    | Sep-24   | Green  | Meetings being held with Finance, Asset Management and Climate teams to determine strategic approach to asset management and decarbonisation. Modelling from stock condition and energy surveys confirms that forecast capital requirements on company - including works to improve EPC ratings of those below C - are overall affordable. On track  |
|  |   | Develop and agree a stock rationalisation approach   | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst        | Oct-24   | Green  | To follow on from above work and tie in with company asset disposal policy which the Board have now approved   |
|  |   | Explore grant funding opportunities for energy efficiency  | Strategy & Delivery Manager                                   | Dec-24   | Green  | No current opportunities identified, but grant horizon scanning will form part of meetings with Climate team   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 8. Monitor and carry out actions to improve voids performance       | Review improvement actions on voids performance, monitor and carry out actions accordingly   | Head of Housing Property Services & Strategic Support Officer | Mar-25   | Yellow | To be monitored through monthly performance reports. Performance shows signs of progress but times remain high and Board have requested a deep dive session into this  |
|  |   | Implement actions arising from value for money review of void costs  | Strategy & Delivery Manager                                   | Jun-24   | Green  | Action slightly overdue, to be resolved by end of July. A final meeting is being scheduled to reach an agreement on contentious items and finalise the issuance of a credit note back to FWH   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 9. Carry out mid-year review of the financial business plan         | Present mid-year review of business plan, including stress testing, back to Board  | Senior Financial Analyst                                      | Oct-24   | Green  | On track   |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 10. Implement actions arising from financial controls audit         | Implement actions arising from financial controls audit  | Senior Financial Analyst                                      | Aug-24   | Green  | Deadline updated following presentation of final report to Board. Process improvements are in place, and draft process notes to formalise this are with the Finance team to comment and agree by the deadline  |
| Running a Viable Business                                  | 11. Introduce regular tax planning exercises                        | Introduce regular tax planning exercises to improve forecasting and implement tax efficiencies where required  | Senior Financial Analyst                                      | Jun-24   | Yellow | To be picked up by the Senior Financial Analyst for the business plan stress test review in September  |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 12. Remain available for acquisition opportunities                  | Explore and model the CHAP scheme as a potential future route for affordable acquisition of properties and understand its implications within the Council's Housing Strategy | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst        | May-24   | Green  | The main current acquisition grant scheme that is being explored is the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) which the Council have made an application to. The outcome of this is pending a decision by the incoming Government  |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 13. Identify and appraise potential block acquisitions              | Identify and appraise potential block acquisitions   | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst        | Ongoing  | Green  | Information on potential block acquisitions will be presented to the Board on an ad hoc basis, either via the regular opportunities report or via separate reports   |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 14. Develop proposed lease arrangement for Fulton Road              | Develop proposed lease agreement with the Council for Fulton Road  | Strategy & Delivery Manager & Senior Financial Analyst        | Oct-24   | Green  | The Board have now agreed the high-level principles of the Fulton Road lease agreement, and further detailed work on this will be presented back to the Board later in the year - deadline updated accordingly   |
| Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing in the Borough | 15. Engage Council on future of company                             | Engage Council on future of company beyond use of current loan funding   | Strategy & Delivery Manager                                   | Ongoing  | Green  | Future acquisitions are likely to mainly go via I4B or the Council using LAHF, but potential opportunities for FWH will continue to be monitored   |

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| <br><b>Brent</b> | <b>Resources and Public Realm<br/>Scrutiny Committee</b><br>4 September 2024 |
|   | <b>Report from the Deputy Director,<br/>Democratic Services</b>              |
| <b>Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker</b>   |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>  | All  |
| <b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>   | Non-Key Decision   |
| <b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br><small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open   |
| <b>List of Appendices:</b>  | One<br>Appendix A: Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>   | None   |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br><small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>   | Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Law & Governance<br>020 8937 2036<br><a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a><br><br>Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic Services, Law & Governance<br>020 8937 5436<br><a href="mailto:Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk">Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk</a> |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the progress of any previous recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and information requests of the Committee be noted (Appendix A).

## 3.0 Detail

### 3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1.1 Borough Plan 2023-2027 – all strategic priorities.

## **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 The Recommendations Tracker provided for this meeting relates to the current Municipal Year (2024/25). However, it also includes updates from the 24 January 2024 meeting on the item regarding Budget Scrutiny (2023/2024 municipal year). These responses will remain on the tracker for ongoing monitoring, with Cabinet expected to provide further comments in time for 5 November 2024 meeting.
- 3.2.2 In accordance with Part 4 of the Brent Council Constitution (Standing Orders of Committees), Brent Council scrutiny committees may make recommendations to the Full Council or the Cabinet with respect to any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive, or of any functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive, or on matters which affect the borough or its inhabitants.
- 3.2.3 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee may not make executive decisions. Scrutiny recommendations therefore require consideration and decision by the appropriate decision maker; the Cabinet or Full Council for policy and budgetary decisions.
- 3.2.4 The Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker provides a summary of any scrutiny recommendations made to Cabinet/Full Council/external stakeholders and implementation progress. It also includes suggestions for improvement and information requests to council departments/external stakeholders, as captured in the minutes of the committee meetings.
- 3.2.5 Recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and information requests are removed from the tracker when they have either been implemented or rejected.

## **4.0 Procedure for Recommendations from Scrutiny Committees**

- 4.1 Where scrutiny committees make recommendations to the Cabinet, these will be referred to the Cabinet (and/or relevant cabinet member/s) requesting an Executive Response. If relevant, the item will be published on the Council's Forward Plan.
- 4.2 Regarding recommendations to Full Council (e.g. in the case of policy and budgetary decisions), the same process will be followed, where a report containing the scrutiny recommendations will then be forwarded to Full Council alongside the Cabinet's responses to those recommendations.
- 4.3 Where scrutiny committees have powers under their terms of reference to make reports or recommendations to external decision makers (e.g. NHS bodies), the relevant external decision maker shall be notified in writing, providing them with a copy of the respective Committee's report and recommendations, and requesting a response.
- 4.4 Once responses are received, they will be added to the Recommendations Tracker for review and consideration.

## **5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

## **6.0 Financial Considerations**

6.1 There are no financial considerations for the purposes of this report.

## **7.0 Legal Considerations**

7.1 Section 9F, Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000, *Overview and scrutiny committees: functions*, requires that Executive arrangements by a local authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committees have the power to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are or are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the Authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

7.2 Section 9FE, *Duty of authority or executive to respond to overview and scrutiny committee*, requires that the authority or executive;-  
(a) consider the report or recommendations,  
(b) respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority, or the executive, proposes to take,  
(c) if the overview and scrutiny committee has published the report or recommendations, publish the response, within two months beginning with the date on which the authority or executive received the report or recommendations.

## **8.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

8.1 There are no EDI considerations for the purposes of this report.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

9.1 There are no climate change and environmental considerations for the purposes of this report.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 There are no communication considerations for the purposes of this report.

**Report sign off:**

**Amira Nassr**  
Deputy Director, Democratic Services

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## Appendix A

### Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (RPRSC) Recommendations Tracker 2024/25

The Recommendations Tracker is a standing item on committee agendas, and documents the progress of scrutiny recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and information requests made by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee at its public meetings and as part of task and finish group reviews. Scrutiny recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and information requests will not be removed from the tracker until full responses have been provided to the Committee by either the Cabinet, Full Council, council departments, and/or external partners.

#### Recommendations to Cabinet from RPRSC

| Subject   | Scrutiny Recommendation  | Cabinet Member, Lead Officer/s, and Department   | Executive Response   | Review date |
|---|--|--|--|-------------|
| 24 Jan 2024 –<br><b>Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings (2024/25 and 2025/26)</b> | <b>Improve budget communications:</b><br>Include a concise, summary page in the Budget (and in future budgets), adopting more accessible language which makes it clear what its vision, aims, and priority protection areas are. | Cllr Muhammed Butt –<br>Leader of the Council<br><br>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy<br>Leader, Cabinet Member<br>for Finance & Resources<br><br>Minesh Patel – Corporate<br>Director, Finance &<br>Resources<br><br>Rob Mansfield – Head of<br>Communications,<br>Conference, & Events,<br>Partnerships, Housing, &<br>Resident Services | <b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b><br><br>This recommendation is agreed. The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee will be invited to meet with the Head of Communications and the Leader of the Council, to provide feedback on the previous communications campaign to support the budget consultation.<br><br>It will also provide an opportunity for members of the Scrutiny Committee to present any suggestions for improvements on future campaigns.<br><br>The Cabinet Member foreword will summarise the budget proposals for 2025/2026 in a one-page format and additional materials such as an infographic will be produced to support Members. | 05/11/2024  |

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|  | <p><b>Shared Outcomes Framework:</b></p> <p>Explore a shared-outcomes framework with the voluntary sector for the benefit of residents/service users. As part of this work, the Council should urgently discuss and collaborate with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in relation to budget proposals that involve them and/or may have an impact on their service provision.</p> <p>This discussion could build on the Task Group's recommendation from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Review 2023/24 which suggested a collaborative strategy with the VCS to enable these organisations to identify and secure new income streams.</p> | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Cllr Fleur Donnelly-Jackson – Cabinet Member for Resident Support &amp; Culture</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Partnerships, Housing, &amp; Resident Services</p> | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>We are in the early stages of reviewing the (independently) proposed Community Engagement Framework and related recommendations on how we can work more closely with the community, including the voluntary sector in co design, collaboration, and consultation.</p> <p>We will utilise existing quarterly VCS forums to ensure the Council has an opportunity to communicate current and near future initiatives to ensure engagement and feedback from the sector.</p> <p>To address the urgent request – it is proposed that an event, with the support of CVS is arranged, to deliver an outline of budget 2024/25 recommendations to support the sector better understand the impact the budget savings will have on them.</p> <p>It is suggested that a mandatory sharing of all planned consultations with the voluntary sector is introduced as part of the wider best practice Consultation at Brent to create a consistent model of engagement cross council with the VCS.</p> | 05/11/2024 |
|  | <p><b>Establish a strategic approach to income generation:</b></p> <p>Develop a longer-term, strategic approach to income generation (accompanied with yearly action plans) rather than focusing on piecemeal proposals year to year.</p> <p>The strategy should include a robust monitoring process that enables holistic working across all</p>   | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p>  | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>The Council has an Income and Debt board that reviews all income and debt across the Council.</p> <p>It is proposed to amend the terms of reference of this board to ensure there is a consistent approach to income generation across the</p>  | 05/11/2024 |

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|  | <p>departments to create synergies for income generation.</p> <p>Specifically, allocating a dedicated, cross-departmental resource to work across the Council to investigate and identify additional opportunities for income generation e.g. compliance with mandatory HMO licensing, compliance with council tax on empty properties, and business rates evasion.</p>   |  | <p>Council, consider opportunities for new income generation and benchmarking.</p> <p>As always, if members have any areas where they wish Cabinet Members to explore alternative areas that could lead to additional income generation, please let us know.</p>  |            |
|  | <p><b>Implement additional shared service arrangements:</b></p> <p>Explore further opportunities for shared service arrangements, learning lessons from current arrangements and from good practice of the shared service models that already exist across the country.</p>   | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt –<br/>Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy<br/>Leader, Cabinet Member<br/>for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate<br/>Director, Finance &amp;<br/>Resources</p> | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>A good example of a successful shared service arrangement in Brent is the Shared Technology Service.</p> <p>A report that sets out lessons learned from current arrangements and good practice will be organised so that it can be shared with senior management.</p> <p>Where appropriate, any opportunities for considering such arrangements can be considered as part of future budget challenge meeting.</p>                     | 05/11/2024 |
|  | <p><b>Housing Subsidy Loss:</b></p> <p>Work with neighbouring local authorities, London Councils, and the Local Government Association (LGA) to lobby for positive change to the Housing Benefit subsidy rules which currently caps the amount the Council can claim back from the Department of Work &amp; Pensions (DWP) to 90% of the 2011 LHA rates per household for TA provided, and which places financially onerous restrictions on the types of TA the Council can provide to be eligible for housing benefit subsidy.</p> | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt –<br/>Leader of the Council</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate<br/>Director, Finance &amp;<br/>Resources</p>  | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>This will continue to be a key part of the council’s public affairs approach, lobbying for changes at the highest level which address the historic disconnect between what the council is obliged to spend to house residents in Temporary Accommodation, versus what it can claim back in subsidy.</p> <p>Public Affairs work is underway at London Councils and the Local Government Association to continue to press this case</p> | 05/11/2024 |

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|  |   |  | forward to the new government over the coming months ahead, as this continues to be a key contributor to financial pressures across a number of councils.   |            |
|  | <p><b>Wembley Stadium: 'Community Impact' Ticket Levy:</b></p> <p>Explore options with the Stadium for a ticket levy, whereby the Council receives a proportion of each ticket sale in order to fully recover costs incurred or to provide for further enhancement of the Council's event day operations.</p>   | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Kim Wright – Chief Executive</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p> | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>As part of our partnership working with Wembley Stadium, the council does receive funding to ensure that our highways, enforcement, and clean-up costs are reimbursed. A proportion of the income derived from ticket sales is also awarded to Wembley National Stadium Trust, who in turn invest in and around Brent.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, Kim Wright will also raise this recommendation with the senior Leadership team at the Wembley Stadium/Football Association and Ovo Arena.</p> <p>We are reviewing the announcements of Cambridge City Council and Manchester City Council relating to a Tourism Levy to understand whether the initiative could be replicated, with our existing legal powers in Brent and more widely across London, as this might be better suited to a regional rather than local approach.</p> | 05/11/2024 |
|  | <p><b>Delegation of budgets and decision making to Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP):</b></p> <p>Continue to advocate and make the case to North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB) for both a better alignment of NHS resources to population need and for an increased delegation of budgets and decision making to Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).</p> | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Cllr Neil Nerva – Cabinet Member for Community Health &amp; Wellbeing</p>                          | <p><b>Response received on 09/07/24:</b></p> <p>NWL ICB are continuing to develop common-core specifications for all health services across NWL. Brent ICP are involved through various routes in developing these specifications. Whilst Brent is anticipated to be a net beneficiary in terms of investment resulting from this work, it is expected that only new funding will flow disproportionately to</p>  | 05/11/2024 |



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|  |  | <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Rachel Crossley – Corporate Director, Community Health &amp; Wellbeing</p>   | <p>Brent, which is likely to mean that any significant improvement will be slow.</p> <p>Brent ICP has developed detailed business cases for investment into key gaps in provision. In particular for special school nursing, mental health access in NW2 and NW10 and childhood continence where there are significant immediate gaps in provision. NWL MH Exec have agreed to fund £850,000 new investment in MH (pending ICB Exec approval), and Brent ICP have agreed to use non-recurrent S256 funding to meet the gaps in provision pending decisions from NWL.</p> <p>Our focus for 2024/25 will be for additional investment into community health services, where there are significant gaps in provision, including district and community nursing, as well as securing existing additional investment through the Better Care Fund. We will also continue to work locally through ICP Executive around the additional NWL investment into health inequalities, and use of locally held S256 funding.</p> |  |
| <p><b>17 July 2024</b><br/> <b>Budget update: Medium Term Financial Strategy</b></p> | <p>Lobby central government to end the privatisation of Children’s social care services.</p> | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Gwen Grahl – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People &amp; Schools</p> <p>Nigel Chapman – Corporate Director, Children &amp; Young People</p> | <p><i>Awaiting response.</i></p>   |  |

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|  | <p>As part of work with London Councils, lobby for a greater co-ordinated approach between local authorities in the commissioning of services that curbs profiteering by private companies, creates new insourcing opportunities, enables mission-led procurement outcomes, and that delivers greater cost efficiencies overall.</p>   | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt –<br/>Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Jake Rubin – Cabinet<br/>Member for Employment,<br/>Innovation &amp; Climate<br/>Action</p> <p>Rachel Crossley –<br/>Corporate Director,<br/>Community Health &amp;<br/>Wellbeing</p> | <p><i>Awaiting response.</i></p> |  |
|  | <p>Continue lobbying efforts for the urgent reform of local government finance that provides local authorities with greater options for how they raise and spend their resources (e.g. fiscal devolution options leading to more freedoms over local revenues such as 100% business rates retention and flexible use/spend of community infrastructure levy (CIL) monies).</p> | <p>Cllr Muhammed Butt –<br/>Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Mili Patel - Deputy<br/>Leader, Cabinet Member<br/>for Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate<br/>Director, Finance &amp;<br/>Resources</p>                          | <p><i>Awaiting response.</i></p> |  |

**Suggestions for improvement from RPRSC to Council departments/partners**

| Meeting date and agenda item                 | Suggestion for improvement   | Council Department/External Partner   | Response / Status  |
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| 6 Sept 2023 – <b>Planning Enforcement</b>    | Undertake an audit to determine the wards with the highest amount of planning breach complaints, and the wards with the highest amount of enforcement activity. This intelligence should be used to develop a targeted strategy to prevent planning breaches e.g. targeted planning education and/or communications campaigns etc. The Audit should also categorise the types of breaches receiving enforcement notices. | Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Employment, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration | <p><b>Response received on 24/10/23:</b></p> <p><del>We will look to do this but are currently waiting for our new software to be introduced. Currently scheduled for April 2024.</del></p> <p><b>Updated response received on 11/04/24:</b></p> <p>There has been a delay on the implementation of the new software. Testing is now not going to take place until June 2024 and go live is unlikely to take place until Autum 2024. Therefore we will not be in a position to produce this information until February 2025.</p>   |
| 27 Feb 2024 – <b>Draft Property Strategy</b> | Upon completion, sight the Committee on the draft Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for feedback.   | Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Finance & Resources                            | <p><b>Response received on 12/04/2024:</b></p> <p>The Council is currently reviewing its social value approach at an organisational level and the property strategy will fit into the wider organisational approach to community wealth building and social value. This ensures consistency and enables the property strategy to align with broader council objectives. The development of the assessment methodology itself falls outside of the Property and Assets Team's direct remit, consequently, at this stage we do not have immediate access to the specific details of the methodology. However, once the approach becomes clearer, we will get back in contact with further information about who can consider the recommendation.</p> |
|  | Upon completion, publish the final Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for the benefit of residents, businesses, and community organisations.   | <i>To be confirmed.</i>   | <p><b>Response received on 12/04/2024:</b></p> <p>Please see above response.</p>   |
| 23 Apr 2024 – <b>Regenerat</b>               | Provide a member briefing session on viability assessments, covering   | Gerry Ansell – Director of Inclusive Regeneration &   | <p><b>Response received on 19/06/24:</b></p>   |

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| ion in Brent  | key topics such as affordable housing and social value.   | Employment, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration   | This is currently offered to members of the planning committee as part of their training and can be extended to all members. David Glover Head of Planning and Victoria McDonagh Development Management Manager have been tasked with bringing this action into effect and this is targeted for Sept 2024.  |
| 17 July 2024<br>– Budget update: Medium Term Financial Strategy | To address low collection rates, review relevant strategies for debt collection to ensure robust interventions are in place to target those evading Council Tax/Business Rates. This should also include a review of the protocol in place to engage local councillors and to utilise their local knowledge in identifying those avoiding the payment of council tax or business rates. | Tom Cattermole – Director, Resident Services, Partnerships, Housing, & Residents Services | <p><b>Response received on 23/08/24:</b></p> <p>Overall, the Service follows the Council's Ethical Debt Recovery Policy that also includes specific policies relating to council tax, business rates and overpaid housing benefit. The service also collects sundry debt and adult social care contributions.</p> <p>There are existing robust interventions in place through the existing primary and secondary legislation. These rules allow the Council to follow a legal route to pursue non-payment for council tax and business rates. The Council obtains LOs (liability orders) in the magistrates' court. It is the LO that permits the Council to take steps to enforce payment from the resident or business. This enforcement takes several forms, i.e.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Attachment of earnings (AOE)</li> <li>ii. Attachment of benefits (AOB)</li> <li>iii. Distress referral to enforcement agent (bailiff)</li> <li>iv. Insolvency</li> <li>v. Charging orders</li> <li>vi. Imprisonment</li> </ol> <p>Historically, the most common route to enforcement is via enforcement agents (bailiffs). The Council uses 4 separate bailiff service providers. During 2023/24 over 19,000 cases were sent to bailiffs worth a total of £26.072m. The income from bailiffs totalled £4.256m.</p> <p>Over the last few years with improved technology that helps the Council match debtors with benefit and employment records the numbers on Attachment of Earning (AOE) and Attachment of Benefits (AOB) has increased. During 2023/24 the numbers on AOE and AOB was 283 and 738 respectively up from 18 and 298 in 2022/23. Increasing AOE and AOB means a method of enforcement better suited to the circumstances of the resident in accordance with Council policy.</p> |

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|  |  |  | <p>Insolvency and charging orders are used less often, although they are effective when dealing with debtors who have property assets, such debtors are in a minority. Although the realisation of funds from charging orders can be significant, there is usually a time lag with a charge in place most often until the property is sold. The Council currently has 345 cases of secure debt to a value of £2,183,917.</p> <p>Committal to prison is not something that has been used by the Council for several years. Nevertheless, commencing the process is a tool that the Council may use against those refusing to pay. The prospects for starting this process are currently being reviewed.</p> <p>Service improvements now being implemented to improve collection include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sustained Direct Debt payment is the most reliable payment method and is promoted on an ongoing basis with publicity and incentives, it is currently 61% (71,959) up from 59,656 in March 2022, an increase of over 17%. DD take-up is an indicator too of deprivation, top collection in London is achieved by Richmond and Kingston with DD levels at around 80% and collection at over 98%</li><li>2. As stated above the most common form of enforcement is by referral to bailiffs. Typically, around 80% of this remains uncollected, and with low prospects of recovery given the lack of means and assets of the residents. To seek to maximise collection of these static arrears the service is procuring the services of debt collection agencies to review and seek payment on old debt that has already been through all processes. For this work the agencies will retain a percentage of the debt they collect. If this final attempt is not successful, the debt will be written off. In reviewing this the team are also working with credit reference agencies to better understand the data and the propensity to pay of debtors.</li><li>3. In a significant change this year the existing Dynamics portal is being replaced by the one that comes from the supplier of the main business system (NEC) and so works in sync with that system allowing residents improved access to their accounts, increasing the self-service and reducing phone calls. This will allow the team to focus more on debt collection.</li></ol> |
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|  |  |  | <p>4 Other service improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Providing access to Open Banking which enables secure sharing of customers banking data with third-party financial service providers, enhancing transparency and security. Within debt recovery, it is used to understand residents' financial situations better, allowing for personalised and affordable repayment plans.</li><li>ii Utilising automated outbound telephone, RCS (Rich Communication Services) and email campaigns aimed at prompting engagement with residents. This is targeted at residents who have debt outstanding from previous years, directing residents to recovery officers or Hub advisors for assistance, the Council's "Pay it" webpage or open banking platform.</li><li>iii 2023 saw a new service organisation put in place designed to focus on resident needs above that of internal Council issues, which expanded the number of staff trained in council tax, with all colleagues understanding council tax plus one other line of debt, previously the teams were simply focused on a single line of debt. There is now a dedicated team focused on providing support to individuals who demonstrate that they can't pay across all lines of debt. The aim is to intervene at an early stage to prevent debt accumulating, supporting customers with financial hardship and the rising cost of living.</li><li>iv Regular reviews of entitlement to exemptions, discounts and premium charges are in place. These focus of single person discounts, empty homes, and those in receipt of a reduction while probate is awaited. These are successful in maintaining accuracy of data, increasing revenue, and ensuring that owners are incentivised not to leave property empty.</li></ul> <p>Regarding input from councillors using their local knowledge in providing information to the service is always very welcome. These are already received on a regular basis, most commonly, identifying properties that are recorded as occupied but are in fact empty. One recent case identified this month by a councillor has led to the identification of a property that is empty, leading to a large amount of council tax to be backdated. However, there is no council system that can be made available to members. The systems used for</p> |
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|  |  |  | <p>business rates and council tax cannot be made available outside the approved council staff due to the wide-ranging information contained. Similarly, the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) is not available as it contains data used by Ordnance Survey on a commercial basis. The LLPG, business rates system and council tax system all have their information matched against government information from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) on a regular basis. Within Brent it is the LLPG system that creates the UPRN (Unique Property Reference Number) used by both systems. On a pilot basis we have been carrying out a detailed check of the property details held in Kilburn between the 3 systems, some naming differences have been identified and some properties are on the LLPG that are not on the council tax nor the business rates system. This happens when the VOA have removed a property from their list so no charges apply, normally in advance of redevelopment. The most effective system for members to use for checking business or domestic properties is to use the service available here <a href="https://www.gov.uk/find-a-business-rates-valuation">Find a business rates valuation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> for a commercial property and here <a href="https://www.gov.uk/check-your-council-tax-band">Check your Council Tax band - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> for a domestic property. Where more information is required, the local member should of course raise their enquiry by emailing <a href="mailto:members.enquiries@brent.gov.uk">members.enquiries@brent.gov.uk</a> in the usual way.</p> |
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#### Information requests from RPRSC to Council departments/partners

| Meeting date and agenda item                | Information requests   | Council Department/External Partner   | Responses / Status   |
|---|--|---|--|
| 6 Sept 2023–<br><b>Planning Enforcement</b> | Provide a breakdown of:<br>1. Planning breach complaints by ward and;<br>2. Types of breaches that have received enforcement notices by ward | Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Employment, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration | <p><b>Response received on 24/10/23:</b></p> <p><del>Need to await for new software to be installed. This is scheduled for April 2024.</del></p> <p><b>Updated response received on 11/04/24:</b></p> <p>There has been a delay on the implementation of the new software. Testing is now not going to take place until June 2024 and go live is unlikely to take place until Autumn 2024. Therefore we will not be in a position to produce this information until February 2025.</p> |

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| <p>24 Jan 2024 –<br/><b>Safer Brent Partnerships Annual report 2022/23</b></p> | <p>The timeframe for implementing the response at Wembley Stadium and Wembley Arena to support the victims of sexual violence.</p> | <p>Kibibi Octave – Director, Communities &amp; Partnerships, Partnerships, Housing, &amp; Residents Services</p> | <p><b>Response received on 15/02/24:</b></p> <p>A meeting was held with the Football Association (FA), the Police and the Community Safety Team in November 23 to discuss better supporting victims of sexual violence. One of the key initiatives was to train Wembley Stadium stewards to better understand the behaviours associated with sexual violence.</p> <p>The department is awaiting a follow up meeting from the FA to develop the initiatives and timeline for completion (likely to be June 2024).</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/07/24:</b></p> <p>The project completion date has been revised due to staffing changes within the FA. Brent Council and the Police have requested a meeting with FA, to be held in July 2024 to agree a timeline for all Wembley Stadium Stewards, to be trained by October 2024.</p>   |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| <p>23 Apr 2024 –<br/><b>Regeneration in Brent</b></p>                          | <p>Provide a breakdown of the amount of affordable housing units (by housing product type) delivered since 2020/21.</p>            | <p>Gerry Ansell – Director of Inclusive Regeneration &amp; Employment, Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</p>     | <p><b>Response received on 07/07/24:</b></p> <p>Data and details have been requested and are presently being verified. These will be available in time for September’s committee meeting.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 29/07/24:</b></p> <p>The affordable breakdown since 2020/21 is as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="1106 981 2033 1361"> <tr> <td>Discount Market Rent</td> <td>136</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Discount Market Sale</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intermediate Other</td> <td>1209</td> </tr> <tr> <td>London Affordable Rent</td> <td>212</td> </tr> <tr> <td>London Living Rent</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>London Shared Ownership</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self-Build and Custom Build</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Rent</td> <td>215</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Affordable Rent (not at LAR benchmark rents)</td> <td>476</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td><b>2429</b></td> </tr> </table> | Discount Market Rent | 136 | Discount Market Sale | 47 | Intermediate Other | 1209 | London Affordable Rent | 212 | London Living Rent | 47 | London Shared Ownership | 81 | Self-Build and Custom Build | 6 | Social Rent | 215 | Affordable Rent (not at LAR benchmark rents) | 476 | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>2429</b> |
| Discount Market Rent   | 136  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| Discount Market Sale   | 47   |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| Intermediate Other   | 1209   |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| London Affordable Rent   | 212  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| London Living Rent   | 47   |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| London Shared Ownership  | 81   |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| Self-Build and Custom Build  | 6  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| Social Rent  | 215  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| Affordable Rent (not at LAR benchmark rents)                                   | 476  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>2429</b>  |  |  |                      |     |                      |    |                    |      |                        |     |                    |    |                         |    |                             |   |             |     |  |     |              |             |



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|  | <p>Provide further detail on the Council's affordable housing targets (broken down by affordable housing product type).</p> | <p>Gerry Ansell – Director of Inclusive Regeneration &amp; Employment, Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</p> | <p><b>Response received on 07/07/24:</b></p> <p>Please see above.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 29/07/24:</b></p> <p>The affordable Housing Targets are set out in the Brent Local Plan 2022 as follows:</p> <p><b>POLICY: BH5 AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b></p> <p>In Brent the strategic affordable housing target that will apply is 50% of new homes in the period to 2041. London Plan Policy H5 Threshold Approach to Applications will be applied. The affordable housing tenure split required to comply with London Plan Policy H5 is for:</p> <p>Non-Build to Rent developments of 10 dwellings or more is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 70 per cent Social Rent/ London Affordable Rent and;</li> <li>b) 30 per cent intermediate products which meet the definition of genuinely affordable housing, including London Living Rent, affordable rent within Local Housing Allowance limits and London Shared ownership. These must be for households within the most up to date income caps identified in the London Housing Strategy or London Plan Annual Monitoring Report.</li> </ul> <p>Build to Rent developments: 100 per cent at London Living Rent equivalent rents or lower.</p> <p>Developments of between 5-9 dwellings will be required to make a financial contribution for the provision of affordable housing off-site.</p> <p>Housing Mix BH6 is as follows:</p> <p><b>POLICY: BH6 HOUSING SIZE MIX</b></p> <p>The council will seek to deliver a target of 25% of new homes as family sized (3 bedrooms or more) dwellings. For every four dwellings included within developments at least one must be 3 bedrooms or more. Exceptions to the</p> |
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|  |   |  | <p>provision of family sized dwellings will only be allowed where the applicant can show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the location or characteristics of the development are such that it would not provide a high quality environment for families, or</li> <li>b) its inclusion would fundamentally undermine the development's delivery of other Local Plan policies.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>23 Apr 2024<br/>–<br/><b>Redefining Local Services (RLS) Contracts - Year 1</b></p> | <p>Provide a 'Fix My Street' heatmap visualising report locations with breakdowns by issue type, user type (e.g. resident, councillor, neighbourhood manager etc), and ward.</p>  | <p>Chris Whyte –<br/>Director, Public Realm Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</p>                  | <p><b>Response received on 13/06/24:</b></p> <p>We will provide a summary report to the Committee on Fix My Street for the period April 2023 - March 2024 with a breakdown as requested by the end of July 2024.</p> <p>Fix My Street also have a heatmap functionality available for members &amp; relevant council officers to use. At present ward members and neighbourhood managers can access raw data reports broken down by issue / user type to gather insight on their own wards. Residents do not have access to this level of functionality. They only have access to Aerial and Road map views. They can, however, view reports by wards, category and status. The attached link <a href="#">Brent Council - Summary reports :: FixMyStreet</a> provides access to reports by wards which could be further broken down by status and categories.</p> <p><b>Additional response received on 26/07/24:</b></p> <p>Fix My Street summary report (for the period April 2023 - March 2024) circulated to the Committee by email.</p> |
| <p>17 July 2024<br/>–<br/><b>Budget update: Medium Term Financial Strategy</b></p>     | <p>Provide further detail on the effectiveness and impact of the "Growing the In-house Fostering Service and "Promoting Care Leavers Independence" workstreams in alleviating the financial pressures faced by the Council.</p> | <p>Palvinder Kudhail –<br/>Director, Early Help &amp; Social Care, Children &amp; Young People</p> | <p><b>Response received on 23/08/24:</b></p> <p>Growing inhouse Fostering Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West London Fostering Hub live from 13/5/2024. There has been a total of 73 initial contacts and 9 initial enquiries to date.</li> <li>• New, improved Brent Fostering Offer live from April 2024</li> <li>• We became a "Fostering Friendly" borough on the 13/6/2024 and there is a marketing campaign being designed currently</li> <li>• 1 new foster carer approved since April 2024</li> <li>• 7 applicants in Stage 1 (fostering assessment process)</li> <li>• 2 applicants at Stage 2 and booked into Sept and Oct Fostering Panels for approval</li> </ul>  |

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|--|---|---|--|
|  |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children placed with Brent FC-60.5% fostering setting and 50% of this cohort are with BFCs</li> </ul> <p>Promoting Care Leavers Independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Housing Allowance (LHA) – for approximately 90-100 young people we are taking the equivalent of Housing Benefit at source from the placement fee. This reduces weekly supported accommodation costs for 18+ young people.</li> <li>Brent Shared House model test and learn pilot is going live in Sept 2024 which has a lower weekly average cost per young person and will support young people into independence whilst waiting for their own tenancy.</li> <li>60 young people are approved, registered with Brent Housing via LOCATA and have active bidding numbers. This is an increase of 15 young people since April 2024 demonstrating evidence of successful independence development for young people</li> </ul> |
|  | Provide information on the number of agency staff (social workers) in Children & Young People's Services who have transitioned to permanent employment contracts over the past two years. | Palvinder Kudhail – Director, Early Help & Social Care, Children & Young People           | <p><b>Response received on 23/08/24:</b></p> <p>In 2022/23 there were 6 social qualified staff that converted to permanent contracts.</p> <p>In 2023/24 there were 13 social work qualified staff that converted to permanent contracts.</p>   |
|  | Provide information on the number of agency staff (social workers) in Adult Social Care who have transitioned to permanent employment contracts over the past two years.                  | Claudia Brown – Director, Adult Social Care, Community Health & Wellbeing                 | <i>Awaiting response.</i>  |
|  | Provide the percentage of those struggling to pay Council Tax and Business Rates due to financial hardship and the percentage evading or refusing payment.                                | Tom Cattermole – Director, Resident Services, Partnerships, Housing, & Residents Services | <p><b>Response received on 28/08/2024:</b></p> <p>The number struggling to pay council tax and business rates remains a significant issue. However, there is no easy way to separate non-payers into those that are trying and those that are not paying through wilful neglect. Only through dealing with debtors case by case could a view be taken and the service would not make a note to that effect, because there very few if any debtors would actually state that. Nevertheless, the arrears of debt remains a issue and debtors are pursued rigorously in line with Council policy to recover all monies</p>  |

|                            |  |  | owed. A small minority of residents believe they are right in refusing to pay, some adopting the falsehood that ancient laws mean they should not pay, this fallacy is addressed on the Council's website: <a href="#">What happens if you don't pay your Council Tax   Brent Council</a>   |                             |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----|-----|-----|---|-------------|----|-----|-----|---|-------------|----|-----|-----|---|----------|----|-----|-----|---|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|----------------|-----|-----|-----|---|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--|
|                            | Provide insights on whether additional investment in planned repairs could reduce the costs associated with reactive repairs, saving the Council more money long term.                                 | Spencer Randolph – Director, Housing Services, Partnerships, Housing, & Residents Services               | <p><b>Response received on 30/08/2024:</b></p> <p>Investing in planned repairs has the potential to significantly reduce the costs associated with reactive repairs, which could save the Council money in the long term. In fact this is a strategy that has been taken in South Kilburn with the refurbishment of the high rise blocks. That capital investment in our high-rise blocks will reduce the number of responsive repairs raised. Previous investment at Watling Gardens has generated a significant reduction in responsive repairs compared to other high-rise blocks as can be seen in the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Block name</th> <th>Number of dwellings</th> <th>Number of repairs raised between April 2019 and September 2021</th> <th>Average Repairs Per Block</th> <th>Ranking (Highest to Lowest)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>KILBURN SQUARE</td> <td>75</td> <td>564</td> <td>7.5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LODGE COURT</td> <td>32</td> <td>240</td> <td>7.5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MANOR COURT</td> <td>33</td> <td>328</td> <td>9.9</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>THE OAKS</td> <td>38</td> <td>358</td> <td>9.4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WATLING GARDENS (3 BLOCKS)</td> <td>105</td> <td>441</td> <td>4.2</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WINDMILL COURT</td> <td>110</td> <td>881</td> <td>8.0</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Grand Total</b></td> <td><b>393</b></td> <td><b>2812</b></td> <td><b>7.2</b></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Block name                  | Number of dwellings | Number of repairs raised between April 2019 and September 2021 | Average Repairs Per Block | Ranking (Highest to Lowest) | KILBURN SQUARE | 75 | 564 | 7.5 | 4 | LODGE COURT | 32 | 240 | 7.5 | 4 | MANOR COURT | 33 | 328 | 9.9 | 1 | THE OAKS | 38 | 358 | 9.4 | 5 | WATLING GARDENS (3 BLOCKS) | 105 | 441 | 4.2 | 6 | WINDMILL COURT | 110 | 881 | 8.0 | 3 | <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>393</b> | <b>2812</b> | <b>7.2</b> |  |
| Block name                 | Number of dwellings  | Number of repairs raised between April 2019 and September 2021   | Average Repairs Per Block   | Ranking (Highest to Lowest) |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| KILBURN SQUARE             | 75   | 564  | 7.5   | 4                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| LODGE COURT                | 32   | 240  | 7.5   | 4                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| MANOR COURT                | 33   | 328  | 9.9   | 1                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| THE OAKS                   | 38   | 358  | 9.4   | 5                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| WATLING GARDENS (3 BLOCKS) | 105  | 441  | 4.2   | 6                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| WINDMILL COURT             | 110  | 881  | 8.0   | 3                           |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>         | <b>393</b>   | <b>2812</b>  | <b>7.2</b>  |                             |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
|                            | Provide benchmark figures for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves, along with a comparison of costs related to servicing HRA debt and interest payments to tenants across other London authorities. | Spencer Randolph – Director, Housing Services, Partnerships, Housing, & Residents Services               | <i>Response circulated to the Committee by email on 03/09/2024.</i>   |                             |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |
|                            | Provide detail on the metrics used to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Council's budget communications campaigns, along with the performance scorecard/evaluation from the last              | Rob Mansfield – Head of Communications, Conference, & Events, Partnerships, Housing, & Resident Services | <p><b>Response received on 27/08/2024:</b></p> <p>The most important metric used to determine the effectiveness and impact of the council's budget communication and engagement campaign is the number of consultation responses received. This is because the main objective of these campaigns is to encourage residents to review and feedback on the draft budget and ensure it reflects their priorities. After this, there are secondary</p>  |                             |                     |  |                           |                             |                |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |             |    |     |     |   |          |    |     |     |   |                            |     |     |     |   |                |     |     |     |   |                    |            |             |            |  |

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|  | <p>communications campaign for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 Budget.</p> |  | <p>metrics which are also scored such as attendance at Brent Connects meetings and engagement with social media posts.</p> <p>The performance for the last communications and engagement campaign for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 budget proposals can be found below. Anecdotally, it is felt that due to the complexity and length of the draft budget, this can hinder or prevent some residents and stakeholders from engaging with the consultation process. That's why last year, the council developed a short animated video and several infographics to explain the budget in a short and concise way. This was then shared across the council's corporate communication channels and received good engagement, however ultimately did not lead to a significant uptake in consultation responses compared to previous years. Often, more specific topic-based consultations on individual changes perform much better so we will be looking for ways to incorporate this model into the budget consultation moving forward.</p> <p><b><u>Budget Consultation 2023: Communications and Engagement Performance Analysis</u></b></p> <p>The success of the 2023 consultation was measured by:</p> <p><b>Consultation responses</b></p> <p>210 people completed the budget consultation.</p> <p><b>Participation level of across all events and sessions</b></p> <p>Participation in the Brent Connects Winter sessions was average overall, with varying levels of engagement across the different connect areas. Some attendees were more active in their participation than others.</p> <p>Participants had the option to ask questions either through the chat or directly to the representatives. Participants received information on the budget consultation and were signposted to take the survey. Organisers then sent the survey and the whole presentation to all the 212 registered attendees.</p> <p><b>Attendance at public events across the five Brent Connects areas</b></p> |
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|  |  |  | <p>While there were 212 registrations recorded on Eventbrite, the actual number of residents who attended the Brent Connects Winter sessions was 106. This figure is based on data extracted from Zoom and is detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harlesden – 19</li><li>• Kilburn – 23</li><li>• Kingsbury and Kenton – 21</li><li>• Wembley – 17</li><li>• Willesden – 26</li></ul> <p><b>Response from identified targeted groups</b></p> <p>Overall, the target groups responded fairly well, with many attending the Brent Connects rounds before completing the survey. This is demonstrated by the widespread response received from residents throughout the borough.</p> <p><b>Other metrics</b></p> <p>The following metrics were also tracked to monitor engagement with the overall campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boosted post one (animation): video played 9,247 times for at least 15 seconds, reached 6,591 people and picked up 10,288 post engagements</li><li>• Boosted post two (graphic two): 873 link clicks (consultation page), reached 8,084 people and picked up 890 post engagements</li><li>• Organic social media stats: posts have reached 3,561 people, picked up 11,097 impressions and the link has been clicked on 311 times (budget news story)</li></ul> |
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