



## Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 23 April 2025 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  
Long  
Lorber  
Maurice  
Mitchell  
Molloy  
Shah

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Aden, Afzal, Chohan Ethapemi, Fraser, Mahmood,  
Rajan-Seelan, Ketan Sheth and T.Smith

Councillors:

Kansagra and J.Patel

Councillors:

Clinton and 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 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 item on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.	
<b>3 Deputations (if any)</b>	
To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.	
<b>4 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	1 - 26
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.	
<b>5 Matters arising (if any)</b>	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
<b>6 Establishment of Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group</b>	27 - 30
To establish a Task Group to review how kerbside space in Brent could be more effectively utilised to enhance community benefits and environmental outcomes.	
(Agenda republished to include the attached report on Tuesday 22 April 25)	
<b>7 Build Quality in Brent</b>	31 - 40
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the council's approach to maintaining and ensuring high build quality standards across the Borough.	
(Agenda republished to include this item on 15 April 2025).	
<b>8 Complaints Annual Report 2023/24</b>	41 - 158
This report seeks to provide an overview of Brent's performance in	

handling and resolving complaints.

(Agenda republished to include this item on 15 April 2025).

**9 Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker** 159 - 194

This report presents the scrutiny recommendations tracker for review by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

(Agenda republished to include an updated version of the report on 22 April 2025).

**10 Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25** 195 - 202

To provide an update on the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee's work programme 2024-25.

(Agenda republished to include an updated version of the report on 22 April 2025).

**11 Any other urgent business**

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

**Date of the next meeting:**      **To be advised**



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- 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** **Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 6.00 pm**

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

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

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) welcomed members of the Scrutiny Committee to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shah.

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

There were no declarations of interest made during the meeting.

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

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 28 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

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

There were no matters arising raised at the meeting.

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

No deputations were raised at the meeting.

### **6. Order of Business**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business on the agenda to enable the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25 (Agenda Item 10) and Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker (Agenda Item 9) to be considered as the first main items of business on the agenda. The minutes therefore reflect the order in which the items were dealt with at the meeting.

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

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director Democratic Services, which presented the 2024-25 work programme for the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

In considering the report, members were advised that the work programme had been developed to reflect a key change that the agenda item 'Community Wealth Building and Social Value' had been renamed to 'Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth Building, and Social Value.'

Having reviewed the proposed work programmed it was RESOLVED to note the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme (as updated) for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

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

In relation to the Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker report, the Chair reported that updated responses had been received from the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration department. It was additionally noted that updated responses had been received from the Finance and Resource department.

## **9. Quarter 3 Financial Forecast 2024/25**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) was invited to introduce a report providing an overview of the financial forecasts for the general fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant, and the capital programme as of Quarter 3 for the financial year 2024/25. In presenting the report, members were advised that the forecast overspend stood at £17.6 million against the revenue budget, reflecting an increase of £2.8 million compared to the previous quarter. The primary area of overspend was identified within the housing service. It was noted that homelessness and temporary accommodation costs continued to rise, now reaching £15.2 million since the last quarter's forecast. Additional pressures had emerged within the Children and Young People Directorate and the Community and Health and Wellbeing Directorate. The Council had implemented several mitigation measures to control the overspend, with plans aiming to achieve in-year savings targets wherever possible. The current budget had additionally incorporated £8 million of savings agreed by the Full Council in February 2024, with the status of these savings detailed in Appendix A. Despite the Council's considerable efforts to manage its financial position, the wider economic context remained volatile, with small changes in demand disproportionately exacerbating financial pressures. This was particularly evident in the areas of children's social care and adult social care packages, both in terms of volume and complexity. Additionally, the costs associated with temporary accommodation and the loss of housing benefit subsidy from central government were highlighted. It was reiterated to the Committee that Brent was not unique in experiencing these financial pressures. Across London, the net deficit on homelessness services was projected at £101.5 million for 2024/25, higher than the previous year.

Having thanked Councillor Mili Patel for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the Quarter 3 Financial Forecast 2024/25, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- As an initial query, the Chair inquired whether there were any new concerns or serious risks to the Council that had not been discussed in depth over the past three to six months. Additionally, the Chair questioned if there were any measures being taken to reduce the deficits that were proving ineffective, indicating a potential shortage of viable options. In response, Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) acknowledged the emerging issues within social care, particularly in terms of

commissioning, which were on the rise. Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance and Resources) added that there were no additional risks beyond those already identified regarding Quarter 3 of 2024/25. The awareness of broader issues in the medium term was highlighted. It was noted that the financial forecast for 2025/26 presented significant challenges. The Committee was informed that the budget for the Full Council meeting on 27 February 2025, had been prepared, and updates on the medium-term financial strategy for the following three years had been provided. It was indicated that further challenges were anticipated to arise.

- With reference to paragraph 4.1.1, which highlighted a £1 million pressure on the strategic commissioning and capacity building budgets, marking an increase of £0.9 million since Quarter 2, members inquired whether it would be possible to improve forecasting models and early warning systems to better anticipate and manage fluctuations in home care demand moving forward. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) affirmatively, stating that discussions had been ongoing across teams about moving to a more granular monthly forecasting model. The aim to transition to a monthly forecasting regime and to examine the root causes of fluctuations alongside savings was noted. It was acknowledged that current tracking of in-year pressures was inadequate and committed to implementing monthly forecasting going forward.
- Following up, members inquired whether there was any investment in preventative measures to reduce long-term reliance on home care. In response, Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) explained that work was being undertaken to rightsize care, particularly focusing on care packages that involved up to five hours a week. It was emphasised that such packages were largely about contact rather than care. The focus was on technological solutions for check-ins and supporting individuals through community offerings rather than home care. It was noted that the Council had a high number of placements in this area compared to other Councils and that efforts were being made to reduce home care interventions.
- The Chair raised questions around the role of the NHS in alleviating the financial pressures faced by the Council, particularly in relation to shared budgets. The Chair referenced previous Budget Task Group discussions concerning funds owed by the NHS and sought an update on progress made in recovering these funds. In response, Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) informed that consistency had been achieved in case-by-case management, and funds were beginning to be recovered. However, it was acknowledged that a few high-cost placements remained under debate. It was highlighted that the discharge funding moving into the Better Care Fund next year would enable more consistent planning. It was further mentioned that the challenge of pooling budgets with the NHS was largely due to their financial constraints, emphasising the importance of building relationships to ensure funds were allocated to teams that prevented hospital admissions. Optimism was expressed around increased efforts in admission avoidance.

- Additional questions were raised regarding the short-term and long-term targets set for reducing placement costs while ensuring high-quality care for children and young people. In response, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People) addressed the targets for placement costs, focusing on supporting young people, particularly those who had left care. Targets aimed at transitioning young people from high-cost supported accommodation to more independent living arrangements were outlined. The importance of moving young people through the system at an appropriate pace rather than focusing solely on individual unit costs was also emphasised. Progress was reported in moving young people to less supported accommodation and successfully recouping local housing allowance, resulting in the post-18 provision being on budget or slightly underspent. It was further noted that independent fostering agency costs were also under budget. In continuing the response, Nigel Chapman identified residential children's home costs as the area under the most pressure, due to the high cost and low number of placements. The difficulty in predicting the number of children requiring residential care and the high demand for placements nationally was highlighted. The upcoming opening of a council-owned children's home, which would help manage costs and achieve savings targets starting next year was further mentioned. The importance of maintaining manageable numbers of children in care and managing demand effectively was also stressed. In concluding the response, Nigel Chapman noted the success in reducing the number of children in care to under 300, the lowest in over ten years, attributing this to early intervention and preservation of health services.
- Referring to paragraph 7.9.1, which stated that the revised budget for the schools project was set at £28.3 million, yet the current forecast had dropped to £20.7 million, reflecting a slippage of £7.9 million, members posed questions around the primary causes of these delays and the extent to which they were preventable. Additionally, members cited paragraph 7.9.3, highlighting communication challenges, and questioned how these issues had contributed to the slippage and what steps were being taken to improve coordination and ensure future projects remained on track and financially viable. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance and Resources) advised that the capital programme was managed within the Property Assets Department, overseen by Neil Martin, the Head of Service. It was noted that individual issues within the schools programme could have varied reasons. It was suggested that a written response be provided after the meeting to address the inquiry in detail. The Chair agreed to put forth an information request regarding this following the meeting.
- The Chair sought details around the projected estimates on the financial benefits of running a council-owned children's home, as well as ensuring high standards of care for young people through insourcing. In response, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People) confirmed that modelling had been conducted and presented to the Cabinet for approval, resulting in the allocation of capital to build the children's home. It was reported that the latest estimates indicated that staffing costs and the cost of running the home were on track. Confidence was expressed that the provision would meet high standards, comparable to those in the private



sector. Interest was noted from council staff in joining the home, which was viewed positively.

- Reference was made to the table in paragraph 1.6 within the committee report, which indicated no overspend or underspend, while paragraph 1.5 stated there were pressures requiring budgetary savings. Clarification was sought around how councillors could find out what the specific cuts to services were, as these were not itemised. In response, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) informed that the savings for 2024/25 were approximately £1 million in staffing, resulting from a recent restructure of the housing service. This restructure involved shifting from a centralised approach to a model where area tenancy managers (ATMs) were placed back on estates. The new structure included 26 ATMs, each responsible for 300 to 350 units, handling rent collection, tenant liaison, and other estate-related services. The savings referred to in the committee report were primarily achieved through this staff restructuring. The allocation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, the impact of government rent increase caps, and the challenges of balancing the budget while meeting environmental targets were also highlighted.
- Following up, the Chair questioned tenants and leaseholders were informed of the cuts. In response, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) explained that rent setting consultations were a statutory requirement. Tenant engagement had been conducted over the summer on estates, discussing service limitations. Additionally, building safety regulator requirements necessitated engagement in larger blocks. A recent tenant and leaseholder event in the Grand Hall had over 500 attendees, addressing concerns, primarily around repairs.
- The Chair (as a request arising from the discussion) recommended that housing teams enhance their support for Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), which should include, but not be limited to, providing suitable arrangements for their meetings and ensuring that TRAs can operate efficiently. Given the crucial role of TRAs in receiving feedback from tenants and the importance of tenant and leaseholder involvement in discussions, it was felt that housing teams should further contribute to improved communication and engagement with tenants and leaseholders. In response, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) agreed that supporting TRAs was important. It was noted with interest that a new Tenant Engagement Strategy had been agreed upon, and the Tenant Engagement Service would be moving back into the Housing department from Regeneration and Environment, as of 01 April 2025. Optimism was expressed that this change would improve the process.
- Members commented on the issue of temporary accommodation, noting that such accommodations often consisted of rundown houses classified as hotels, charging exorbitant rents for rooms that were sometimes rat and mouse infested and entirely unsuitable. Deep concern was expressed that this was unfair to tenants, the council, and council taxpayers, and called for measures to stop this practice.

- As a further issue highlighted, members inquired about the identification of an emerging risk associated with supported accommodation, initially estimated at £6 to £9 million, and questioned if this figure had changed. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance and Resources) confirmed that the current forecast for the end of the year was approximately £4.5 million. It was explained that initial forecasts were based on worst-case scenarios, but as more information became available and schemes stabilised, the figures were adjusted accordingly. Additionally, Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) addressed the standard of temporary accommodation, noting that Brent was part of a London Council Scheme called Setting the Standard, which involved an inspection regime grading properties from A to E. Properties graded D or E were not used, and enforcement actions were taken against unsuitable providers. Regarding supported exempt accommodation, it a two-pronged approach was explained involving both providers and tenants. Efforts were made to tighten the criteria for new providers joining the exempt accommodation status, and better data was obtained to identify providers abusing the system. Meetings were arranged with identified providers causing the majority of subsidy loss to address the support they were providing. Furthermore, assessments were conducted to determine the ongoing support needs of individuals in such accommodations.
- The Chair sought details around the capacity to enforce standards and prevent the identified providers from applying for additional rent money if the provision was not fit for purpose. In response, Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) clarified that the identified providers were not necessarily failing to provide support but were causing the most subsidy loss. Upcoming legislation that would introduce a licensing scheme for providers, ensuring regulation and appropriate inspections was also highlighted.
- Views were sought around the confidence in the placement of individuals into supported exempt accommodations, given the pressures on placements and housing. The Chair questioned whether these individuals would have been placed in commissioned services under better circumstances, but due to current demand, they were being placed in supported exempt accommodations, which at least offered some form of rolling support. In response, Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) conveyed that the majority of these placements were not made by the Council but by voluntary sector organisations. Individuals often approached organisations like Crisis for housing support, and Crisis officers sourced the supported exempt accommodation themselves. Part of the review process would involve meeting with voluntary sector partners to discuss the criteria they applied when identifying the support needs of individuals.
- Members inquired whether Brent could reclaim funds if providers were found to be overcharging for services in relation to both supported exempt accommodation and temporary accommodation. In response, Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) comprehensively explained that regarding temporary accommodation, reclaiming money was not possible as placements were made at agreed prices due to the need for accommodation. Concerning supported exempt accommodation, the

situation was similar, as prices were agreed upon by housing benefit or the rent officer, and referrals were made at those agreed prices by various organisations, including other Councils and voluntary sector organisations.

- As a separate issue, members questioned whether properties were inspected prior to individuals moving into them. In response, Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) confirmed that properties were inspected for temporary accommodation but not for supported exempt accommodation. It was noted that upcoming legislation would introduce regulations for exempt accommodation providers.
- Clarification was sought around the criteria used to assess temporary accommodation properties. In response, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) explained that 15 years ago, Supporting People funds were used to commission supported accommodation. For individuals with chaotic behaviour who would not meet the statutory homelessness duty, these individuals might be placed by organisations like Crisis, receiving limited support that qualified them for exemption from Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and higher rents. The Council funded this amount, as the government did not cover it. It was additionally noted that legislation introduced nearly two years ago had not yet been implemented but was now under consultation. Once enacted, it would provide a framework for managing these placements properly.
- The Chair highlighted concerns regarding the ongoing issue of the subsidy gap in housing-related expenditures, and questioned whether there was any indication that this gap would be addressed, allowing Councils to reclaim the full amount of money spent, rather than having to cover the shortfall. Laurence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support) responded that it was highly unlikely that the subsidy gap would be fully addressed. It was noted that extensive lobbying efforts were being made through London Councils, the Greater London Authority (GLA), and various advocacy groups to highlight this issue to central government. Despite these efforts and revisions to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) a few years ago, doubt was expressed that the government would resolve the subsidy gap. The Committee was assured that lobbying efforts would continue.
- The Chair additionally raised concerns about void management in Council properties, noting that despite reports of year-on-year improvements, there were still properties left unused for extended periods. The Chair cited anecdotal evidence from Councillors in various wards, including their own, about properties void for up to five years. The Chair questioned why properties were still falling through the gaps and emphasised the importance of prioritising void management and turnover. In addressing the concerns raised, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) acknowledged the issue and requested specific addresses of properties that had been void for extended periods to follow up on them. It was explained that long-term voids were often due to structural problems, insurance issues, or other significant obstacles. It was noted that efforts had been made to reduce the number of long-term voids. Issues with general voids, such as absconding tenants or those handing in keys, and identified inefficiencies in the initial stages of void management was also

highlighted. It was further mentioned that the centralisation of teams had led to too many handoffs, causing properties to be lost in the system. The introduction of Area Tenancy Managers (ATMs) responsible for 350 units each was intended to improve void management. The challenges with squatting in void properties, which prolonged the void period was further noted. Members were also reassured that rent loss was decreasing each year, although it remained higher than desired.

- Members acknowledged the success of the I4B initiative in remaining self-financing and delivering over £4 million in annual savings on temporary accommodation costs, and inquired whether this success justified an expansion of the program and asked about other similar cost-saving measures being pursued. In response, Peter Gadson (Corporate Director Partnerships Housing and Resident Services) registered an interest in the question, noting his current role as a Director of I4B and First Wave Housing, along with Councillor Muhammed Butt. It was explained that a prudent approach had been taken with the companies, avoiding significant developer risk. Dissimilar to places such as Croydon and Brick by Brick, which borrowed heavily to buy and develop properties, I4B operated on a turnkey basis, purchasing properties and quickly turning them around for rental. This approach ensured financial stability. Limitations due to the rent charged, which was based on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, and the need to cover all expenses over the 50-year business plan while still turning a profit was highlighted. Market conditions affected by high interest rates and potential opportunities with developers looking to offload turnkey properties was further mentioned. Upcoming acquisitions and ongoing efforts to identify opportunities within the constraints of the business model was also highlighted.
- As a final point, Chair inquired about concerns regarding the Council's underperformance in recycling and its financial impact, to which Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance and Resources) expressed significant concern around the financial pressures caused by underperformance in recycling. The Chair requested that Alice Lester (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) address the Committee on the issue of recycling during the next financial report presentation, with the medium-term strategy, in light of its importance to the budget.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Quarter 3 Financial Forecast 2024/25 Report.

The Committee took the opportunity to thank Peter Gadson (Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing, and Resident Services) for his numerous contributions to the Resources and Public Realm Committee meetings, in light of his impending departure, and extended their best wishes for his future endeavours.

## 10. **Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value Report**

Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) was invited to introduce a report providing an update on current procurement, strategic

commissioning and community wealth building and social value activity, as well as outlining planned next steps and opportunities in these areas. In presenting the report, members were advised that the paper detailed the current and proposed approaches to commissioning, procurement, community wealth building and social value. Councillor Rubin highlighted the fundamental principles of the commissioning approach, emphasising a focus on prevention. The objective was to transition from addressing issues at crisis points to implementing long-term preventative interventions. A comprehensive stream of work was underway, aimed at radical play space leadership, responding to issues where residents reside and addressing local needs. The Committee were informed that the Council had commissioned an external expert to undertake a review of procurement to provide a critical, friendly perspective on the Council's procurement practices. The report was scheduled for receipt on 15 March 2025 and the paper also suggested reporting back to the Committee on the implementation of the Action Plan. The priorities in procurement included an insourcing-first approach, as detailed in paragraph 5.32 of the committee report, to assess the feasibility of insourcing services when contracts and tenders came up for renewal. Additionally, the forthcoming Procurement Act 2023 that would come into effect in 2025 presented several opportunities outlined in the report. The approach to community wealth building, advocating for a shift from the current definition to a more exhaustive and extensive one was also highlighted. This approach aimed to transform economic development by retaining more wealth and opportunities for the benefit of local residents. The five pillars of community wealth building were delineated in paragraph 5.30 within the committee report. Collaboration with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies was planned to review processes and develop an action plan for implementation. The concept of social value was also addressed, which involved looking beyond the financial cost of contracts to consider how commissioned and procured services could enhance the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the local area. Proposals for policy changes included adjustments to the threshold and weighting of social value in contracts. The necessity of robust governance and assurance oversight for effective implementation was also emphasised. The terms of reference for the current commissioning and procurement board were under review to enhance oversight and assurance and included the Lead Member's (Councillor Rubin) involvement, consideration of a Forward Plan for upcoming contracts, a enhanced process for insourcing services, a keen focus on contract management, and the assessment of social value for upcoming contracts, such as the South Kilburn development.

Having thanked Councillor Rubin for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value Report, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- Members requested a detailed breakdown of the Council's commissioning expenditure between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and, within the context of community wealth building, a breakdown between VCS, social enterprises, and private companies based in Brent, ideally those that paid their business rates in Brent, and private companies that were not based in Brent. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) acknowledged the information request and informed the Committee that a comprehensive review of procurement data had been undertaken. It was assured that the necessary data could be extracted.

Councillor Rubin further mentioned the consideration of local spend definitions and the possibility of including a breakdown in the report. Furthermore, plans to establish a reporting mechanism to the Cabinet, either on a six-monthly or twelve-monthly basis was highlighted, regarding commissioned and procured services.

- Following up, members questioned whether the commissioning process considered the component of local spend during price analysis, specifically considering the potential return of funds if services were awarded to companies based in Brent. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) confirmed that the analysis of wealth flows into the local community was an aspect being reviewed by the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES). Members were assured that this information could also be included in the information request. It was emphasised that this consideration was reflected in the price analysis during procurement. Willingness was expressed to share examples and include them within the information request. Councillor Rubin concurred and further added that the reporting and analysis of these components would be integrated into future commissioning processes.
- Member inquired about the new commissioning framework, specifically how it would strengthen the long-term stability of Brent-based charities. It was questioned whether contract allocations would prioritise local charities over those based externally and in other Boroughs, and whether this would be embedded into the procurement process to ensure financial stability moving forward, including covering ongoing operational costs and increased financial pressures. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) highlighted that the Council was exploring approaches to integrate into the commissioning framework that would enhance resilience across the sector. It was noted that future arrangements for the social infrastructure contract, currently provided by CVS Brent, would be one avenue. It was additionally stated that the Procurement Act 2023, which had recently come into force, provided mechanisms to promote opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to bid for and benefit from Council commissioning contracts. The opportunity to further develop these mechanisms was emphasised, which would be a key tenet of the framework.
- Members sought clarification on how the Council would support ongoing costs for charities, given their reliance on these contracts to maintain services. Concern was expressed about ensuring the stability of services for residents amidst increasing costs, such as rents, energy, and staffing, while also protecting the Council's long-term position. The Chair also suggested considering the financial contributions of voluntary sector organisations that subsidised services provided on behalf of the Council through grants, funding, trusts, and donors. The Chair questioned how effectively the Council would take into account the financial income these organisations brought into the borough, which saved money for the Council, the NHS, and other statutory organisations. The Chair proposed using this financial value as part of the contract's financial assessment. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) noted the

increased flexibility provided by the Procurement Act 2023. It was explained that one of the significant changes was the shift towards reviewing bids and tenders based on the most advantageous tender rather than the most economically advantageous tender. The additional value brought by locally based organisations and their inherent relationships and connections were additionally highlighted. It was further mentioned that proposals to collaborate with the sector and others to attract additional social investment into the Borough, contributing to ongoing sustainability within the sector were underway.

- With reference to previous committee discussions about the percentage of Brent Council staff who were Brent residents, which was approximately 44%, the Chair inquired about the extent to which the Council considered organisations that paid business rates in Brent and employed staff who paid council tax in Brent as part of the social value framework. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) affirmed the importance of examining the entire supply chain, including who commissioned organisations employed and where their money was subsequently spent. It was indicated that the CLES review would focus on wealth flows from the Council and the supply chain of commissioned organisations.
- Members inquired whether the changes introduced by the new Procurement Act would facilitate or hinder the ambitions outlined in the committee report, compared to the status quo. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) conveyed that, in his view, the changes would facilitate their ambitions, as there was a greater emphasis on local expenditure. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) concurred and further added that, from a corporate perspective, the requirement to publish an annual plan detailing upcoming procurements and the structure provided by the new Act would reinforce consistency in their approach. It was believed that the balance between structure and freedom was appropriate for their needs.
- Members expressed curiosity around the reliance on the local voluntary community centre in Brent, which was employed to assist in achieving key objectives in commissioning, community wealth building, and social value. Details were sought on the sector's capacity to meet these demands and how the Council was supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in addressing past delivery issues, given the challenges that had previously been faced. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) informed the Committee that he had recently met with the new CEO of CVS Brent, who faced a significant task in turning the organisation around. Confidence was expressed in the CEO's capabilities and ideas. Intentions to set clear aims and convene a meeting of officers to discuss and clarify objectives were outlined. Councillor Rubin planned to meet with the CEO on a monthly basis to ensure that CVS Brent could be revitalised, and that capacity could be built within the voluntary sector in Brent. Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) echoed Councillor Rubin's points and further highlighted that many of the proposals in their emergent thinking were informed by the VCS's engagement with the Council. The importance of building resilience and

capacity within the sector by understanding the needs of different organisations was emphasised. It was further mentioned that feedback received had indicated that social value commitments from supply chains did not always reach genuine community organisations and needs and thus, better brokering connections between suppliers and smaller community organisations to maximise impact had been proposed.

- The Chair cited a previous recommendation from the budget task group meeting regarding shared framework agreements with the voluntary sector to foster true partnership in delivering commissioning and procurement arrangements. The Chair noted that the voluntary sector in Brent had long requested such partnerships, which had been underutilised. Satisfaction was expressed that this was now a priority, as the recommendation had previously underperformed.
- Members welcomed the Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value Report, Local Government Association (LGA), and the peer review. While it was acknowledged that the full peer review report was not due to be published until March 2025, members requested any early insights from the peer review regarding the work already undertaken, areas of strength and of weakness. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) highlighted that in terms of areas of strength, the review found that the Council was particularly strong in data management, having the necessary data readily available. However, the need for more forward planning and a governance arrangement was noted to ensure that contracts were not addressed only a few months before their expiration. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) additionally noted that, while the Council possessed the necessary tools and techniques, there was inconsistency in their application across services and procurement. Feedback had indicated a lack of clarity regarding responsibilities and accountability, with some perceiving procurement as solely a procurement role rather than a service-driven approach to achieve better value. The need for cultural change, consistency, and forward planning were also highlighted in the corporate peer challenge.
- Member inquired whether the new procurement strategy would encompass roles and responsibilities, governance, and cultural setting, to which Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) confirmed that the officer structures were being reviewed in line with the structural changes to governance outlined by Councillor Rubin. Ongoing work to adopt a community of practice approach across services, focusing on upskilling officers and clarifying roles and responsibilities was further highlighted.
- Members questioned whether the new Procurement Act 2023, while strategically beneficial, would require additional resources from the Council for flexible procedures and market engagement. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) reassured members that the Council was prepared for the forthcoming Procurement Act, with preparations having been underway for some time. An officer implementation group had been driving the process forward. On 24 February 2025, the Council's senior management group was briefed on the



implications and opportunities of the Act. The importance of consistent planning, the annual procurement plan, and the activity pipeline was emphasised. The opportunities presented by the social value aspects of the Act, particularly in tailoring contractual opportunities to maximise value were also highlighted. Confidence was expressed that the Council was on track to achieve the best value through consistent planning and trained officers.

- Reference was made to paragraphs 5.32 and 5.33 of the committee report, with members seeking details on how the Council determined whether a service should be outsourced or brought in-house, the criteria used to evaluate the cost-effectiveness and social impact of each approach, and how the review would enable greater consideration of insourcing. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) stated that the current approach reassured that insourcing was considered when contracts were procured. The importance of having the pipeline of contracts presented to the Cabinet, as done by other local authorities, to ensure public scrutiny and oversight was emphasised. It was assured that insourcing was a priority and that the Commissioning and Procurement Board would assess and discuss the best way to commission services, whether through insourcing, outsourcing, or a combination approach.
- Members highlighted the challenge of considering insourcing as a vital selection ahead of procurement, noting the need for substantial lead time to plan effectively and questioned whether that motivated treating insourcing as a standalone approach to be considered on an annual basis or years before contracts were due for procurement, rather than adhering to the normal schedule. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) affirmed that greater time for planning would enable better decision-making regarding the best approach for residents and cost-effectiveness for the Council. The importance of having a governance arrangement that allowed for long-term horizon scanning was also emphasised. The Chair recommended making it clear that insourcing was an option actively pursued by the Council. It was believed that this would strengthen the Council's negotiating position with suppliers, as the possibility of bringing services in-house would prompt suppliers to offer more competitive terms. The Chair also stressed the importance of transparency for residents to understand the decision-making process.
- Details were sought around whether the Council was exploring partnerships with other local authorities to enhance procurement efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen social value outcomes by leveraging collective buying power, sharing best practices, and supporting local suppliers across multiple Boroughs. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) acknowledged that the Council had already collaborated with other Councils in certain areas, such as the West London Waste Authority, which addressed significant aspects of waste and recycling. It was affirmed that while such partnerships were beneficial, they also carried risks, particularly when administrations changed and the adoption of different approaches. It was agreed that exploring these partnerships was worthwhile but needed to be approached with caution, considering the risks.

- Members raised questions around the relaxation of due diligence requirements for local SMEs. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) explained that the Procurement Act provided mechanisms to support local SMEs by reducing burdens and promoting opportunities. Ongoing initiatives were highlighted, such as the upcoming business forum in March 2025, which aimed to upskill and support smaller SMEs to better position them to bid for and win Council contracts. The importance of fairness and transparency in the approach was emphasised and various platforms and tools, such as the e-tendering portal and Match My Project were cited, which facilitated supplier engagement and project matching. Members were assured that efforts were being made to encourage local suppliers to register their interest and participate in Council procurement opportunities.
- Member noted a lack of clarity in the Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value report regarding the concepts of social value and community wealth building and sought clarification on how these concepts, along with procurement, were integrated to deliver value in the community. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) appreciated the report feedback and agreed to clarify how these concepts interrelated. It was explained that community wealth building was the overarching strategy, with procurement and social value being integral parts within the strategy. The aim was to enhance the local economy by ensuring that spending contributed to community wealth.
- The Chair reiterated the importance of understanding that community wealth building extended beyond the charity sector's investment through social value, and emphasised that every contract commissioned or procured by the Council should contribute to bringing wealth into the Borough, benefiting local businesses and residents. The Chair stressed the need for clear communication of this commitment.
- Members were keen to seek details on how the community wealth building approach would support residents in reducing their cost of living by increasing access to fair and ethical financial services. Members additionally highlighted the role of credit unions in financial resilience and questioned whether the Council could do more to promote and support their use among residents and Brent's own employees. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) affirmed that this was an area that could be further explored. It was suggested that the Council could work with the Centre for Local Economic Studies during the Community Wealth Building Review to examine the role of credit unions and their integration into the strategy. Following up, members asked whether the check-off facility could be promoted more among staff, noting that there was a credit union eager for its promotion, but the Council had not actively promoted it, to which Councillor Rubin committed to investigating this matter further.
- Questions were raised around whether the Council had conducted an analysis of the social value commitments made by suppliers and followed up

on their impact and implementation. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) indicated that the procurement team would be best placed to answer this query comprehensively but acknowledged that while some assessments had been undertaken, the new governance arrangements aimed to enhance contract management and accountability for social value commitments. In continuing the response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) added that monitoring and tracking the delivery of social value commitments was currently inconsistent. It was mentioned that mechanisms were in place, such as data dashboards, which showed over £3.4 million in equivalent financial value of contracted social commitments for the current financial year. The need for further meaningful visibility of the impact and delivery of the commitments, and the priority of greater monitoring was additionally emphasised.

- Members requested further information on the Council's current policy regarding social value. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) comprehensively explained that the Council's social value policy set out the overarching framework and linked to the corporate plan and priorities. The performance measures and key performance indicators (KPIs) used to support employment, skills development, community events, volunteering, and other contributions were also described. It was further noted that while tools and levers were in place to maximise opportunities around social value, there was a need for more consistent use and a refresh to ensure alignment with community needs and priorities.
- Members additionally questioned whether the input from the peer review would sufficiently focus on social value to identify gaps, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) expressed confidence that the combination of feedback from the sector social value network and the peer review would help the Council advance its social value strategy. The importance of consistency in driving improvements was highlighted and existing examples of successful social value delivery were noted. In acknowledgement of the response provided, members emphasised the importance of using social value strategically to maximise benefits from suppliers and also reiterated the significance of integrating spend thresholds and categories of spend into the new social value strategy to tailor requirements for different suppliers.
- The Chair acknowledged the difficulty in monitoring and evaluating the impact of social value offers within the current arrangements and suggested that moving towards more tangible social value contributions, such as direct investment in services or organisations providing services on behalf of the Council could be beneficial. The Chair was keen to seek details around whether teams had the capacity to establish specific targets in future social value negotiations. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) agreed that social value should not be a form of corporate PR and acknowledged the complexity of requesting cash contributions, as it could affect the price paid for services. Reference was made to the Community Chest initiative, which allocated approximately

£100,000 for voluntary sector support, as a successful example of cash-based social value input. A preference was expressed for a single Brent community fund and the importance of jobs and apprenticeships for local residents was emphasised. The Chair stressed the need for effective follow-through on apprenticeship provisions and suggested partnering with local employment organisations, such as Brent Works, to prioritise offering apprenticeships to local residents. In addressing the Chair's remarks, Councillor Rubin confirmed plans to address contract management of social value and cited examples of successful practices, such as the collaboration with Wates to advertise apprenticeships through Brent Works. There was a commitment to monitoring these initiatives at a high level and incorporating them into the Commissioning Board's priorities.

- Members raised questions regarding the Council's support for fair trade and its integration into the new social value contract, noting the lack of fair-trade considerations in existing catering contracts. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) expressed openness to incorporating fair trade into both social value and procurement strategies and invited further discussion regarding its integration, specifically with regards to social value.
- Concerns were highlighted regarding the underutilisation of several newly built community centres, with members questioning the possibility of exploring the inclusion of a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in contracts to specify the number of hours these centres should be available for public use, to prevent them from remaining empty and unbeneficial. In response, Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power) acknowledged the importance of asset utilisation as one of the five pillars of community wealth building and agreed that this was an area that needed to be addressed to drive wealth and uplift the local economy. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing) further noted that though the issue pertained more closely to property and assets management, there was a commitment to review whether it was a contracting issue or a matter of working with stakeholders to better utilise the spaces. The connectedness to social value in understanding the usage of these buildings was emphasised.
- Members inquired about the financial savings and social value generated by the market rent policy for affordable rents for charities in the Borough, and questioned the factors considered when setting market rent reductions, such as whether a staggered system based on proven social value would be implemented, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building) informed the Committee that a set of criteria was being piloted to determine market rent reductions and proposed to take this inquiry as an information request and provide further details in an information note. Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) agreed to share the scoring system used to evaluate the value of social contributions.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value Report. As a result of

the outcome of the discussion, the suggestions for improvement and requests for additional information identified were AGREED as follows:

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- (1) Upon completion, sight the Committee on the draft Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for feedback.
- (2) Upon completion, publish the final Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for the benefit of residents, businesses, and community organisations.
- (3) Engage residents in understanding community wealth building and social value, highlighting their key roles in council activities, particularly in procurement and commissioning.
- (4) Revise the official council report template to include dedicated sections for Community Wealth Building and Social Value Considerations, ensuring these factors are assessed and reported in all council reports where relevant.
- (5) Explore how credit unions and the promotion of their services can be embedded within Community Wealth Building initiatives to strengthen financial inclusion, enhance local economic resilience, and provide greater support for residents.
- (6) Develop a robust, systematic approach to reviewing service contracts that enables transparent, evidence-based decisions on preferred forms of delivery (e.g., in-house, outsourced, or hybrid), guided by defined criteria, detailed cost-benefit analysis, and internal capability assessments.
- (7) Promote and support the long-term sustainability of voluntary and charity sector (VCS) organisations in the council's revised commissioning and procurement frameworks, where legally permissible. This should include a focus on removing and/or reducing barriers to VCS organisations participating in council tender activities.
- (8) Subject to risk analysis, explore additional joint procurement opportunities with neighbouring boroughs to leverage collective buying power, share best practices, and support local suppliers across multiple boroughs.
- (9) Continue to adopt and embed across all procurement and social value activity sustainability commitments, including fair trade and efforts to combat climate change.
- (10) Explore including clauses in all future procurement tenders requiring suppliers to demonstrate proactive steps to ensure transparency, compliance, and accountability in operations. This should include a commitment to respecting and upholding workers' rights to join trade unions, where applicable.

- (11) Where legally permissible, acknowledge and incorporate external financial contributions secured by VCS organisations that are linked to the tender into procurement evaluations, ensuring these funds are recognised as part of social value and community wealth building.
- (12) Explore integrating factors such as organisations whose staff pay council tax and those paying business rates within the borough into the social value and community wealth building criteria for procurement evaluations, where legally permissible.
- (13) Where practicable, ensure procurement contracts include tailored social value commitments, encouraging bidders to shift from 'in-kind agreements' to direct investments in existing or planned council-led initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to local communities.
- (14) Strengthen collaboration between suppliers and Brent Works and Employment Services Team to actively facilitate the targeted recruitment of local and underrepresented residents into job opportunities created through procurement.
- (15) Develop a publicly accessible contract performance dashboard to track and report on key metrics, including social value commitments, ensuring transparency and clear accountability for contract outcomes.

#### **INFORMATION REQUESTS**

- (1) Provide a detailed breakdown of commissioned services income received over the last three years, categorised by organisation type.
- (2) Provide a detailed breakdown of funding allocated to externally commissioned services, distinguishing between organisation types—private companies (small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large enterprises/corporations), VCS organisations, and social enterprises—while also indicating whether each organisation is local or non-local.
- (3) Provide details, including examples, of how the council supports local SMEs in its procurement process.
- (4) Provide a copy of the Market Rent Reduction Framework, including the scoring criteria used to assess applications from VCS organisations seeking to rent council premises at reduced rates.

#### **11. Brent's Emerging Employment Strategy (2025-2030)**

Councillor Harbi Farah (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills) was invited to introduce a report providing an overview of Brent's Draft Emerging Employment Strategy (2025-2030). In presenting the report, members were advised that the information provided detailed the draft Brent Employment Strategy 2025-2030 which aimed to create a more inclusive, dynamic, and resilient workforce by addressing key employment challenges and promoting sustainable career opportunities. The strategy aligned with Brent's local labour market, ensuring that residents—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds—could access employment, apprenticeships, and skills development programmes. It leveraged

council influence through planning and procurement, strengthened partnerships, and supported residents in securing long-term, quality employment.

Alice Lester (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) additionally outlined the objectives for the emerging strategy and emphasised the anticipated outcomes, acknowledging the challenges posed by factors beyond their control, such as the cost of childcare as a barrier to employment and changes to National Insurance. The importance of focusing on areas within their scope and the capacity to deliver within a small team was stressed.

Having thanked Councillor Harbi Farah for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to Brent's Draft Emerging Employment Strategy (2025-2030), with the following comments and issues discussed:

- As an initial query, the Chair inquired about the impact of addressing childcare costs as a barrier to, and also questioned whether an impact analysis had been conducted to determine which barriers would yield the most significant return on investment. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) responded that the barriers were identified through extensive data analysis and community engagement. The next step involved presenting these findings to a diverse group of stakeholders for prioritisation and testing of new approaches. It was noted that no analysis had been conducted on optimal resource allocation for tackling the barriers identified through the Outcome Based Review (OBR), but several projects that tested ways of addressing them were underway, including the opening of the new Horizon Centre in Roundwood and the testing of a 6-month membership model intended to increase work readiness of members. It was also mentioned that an impact analysis would be conducted after the first 6 to 8 months of testing.
- Members raised questions about opportunities within procurement processes to achieve employment outcomes and the extent of ongoing discussions on this matter. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) explained that they were testing the market rent reduction framework for three assets – namely, Roy Smith House, Picture Palace, and the Civic Centre. The market rent reduction framework method statement was detailed, which included questions related to community value. Bidders were required to demonstrate alignment with the Borough Plan and deliver outcomes for local populations. The evaluation of bids for these assets included a focus on employment skills outcomes and moving people closer to the job market. Alice Lester (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) added that the evaluation of bids included a detailed breakdown of the social value offer, with metrics on apprenticeships and job opportunities for under-represented groups, such as ex-offenders and unemployed young people. It was suggested that moving from actions to outcomes was an area for potential improvement in the social value sector.
- The Chair queried whether working alongside existing organisations in the Borough, such as PLIAS and Brent Works, would be more effective than relying on companies to advertise apprenticeships, and sought opinions on whether active mentoring and support would enhance effectiveness. In

response, Ala Uddin (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) confirmed that organisations already collaborated with Brent Works and further mentioned that developers had obligations under section 106 to recruit apprentices and employees. The direct work with suppliers and the support provided to meet job and apprenticeship requirements were also highlighted.

- The Chair expressed surprise at the low number of apprenticeships, noting that only 51 apprenticeships were available in the year, and not all were filled. Given the number of contracts and the 10% social value requirement, the Chair suggested that more apprenticeships should have been negotiated. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) conveyed that the Council was proficient in delivering apprenticeships required via section 106 agreements. The need for a more robust approach to social value in procurement was emphasised. Subsequent to the meeting, Jim Jessop had since circulated additional information to provide further insight and context regarding the figures presented on the number of apprenticeships delivered by Brent Works. In clarifying the understanding, he informed that the figure of 51 represented the number of apprenticeships delivered year to date. The final outcome for the year was 61, with Brent Works delivering outcomes for over 95% of the apprenticeships offered. Apprenticeship volumes varied annually depending on the sites. At present, there were 20 active sites of significantly varying scales. Site reports could be provided to demonstrate that the sites were compliant with section 106 apprenticeship targets and that Brent Works was exceeding these targets in its delivery.
- The Chair inquired about the long-term objectives of the Stonebridge Outcome Based Reviews (OBR) and sought information on the implementation of pilot initiatives. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) explained that OBRs focused on co-producing new solutions to cross-cutting issues and had been a transformation approach for 7 to 8 years. The long-term legacy of early OBRs, such as the Brent Hubs model and family wellbeing centres was highlighted. Current initiatives, including the new Horizon Centre in Roundwood and the market rent reduction framework being tested with three assets (Roy Smith House, Picture Palace, and the Civic Centre) was outlined. The potential for these models to expand and deliver significant outcomes was also noted.
- Members raised concerns about the job market's impact on young people, particularly post-Covid, and questioned changes in the Stonebridge area since the 2021 census. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) stated that no like-for-like data was available since the census, but other datasets, such as Universal Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance claimants, were used to augment the data. Ongoing engagement activities and the forthcoming service-level data from the Horizon Centre to assess job and skills outcomes were also highlighted.
- Members inquired about the steps to ensure that engagement from the trial scheme reflected the diverse experiences of Brent residents, particularly in Stonebridge. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) described the OBR approach, which began with a discovery phase



involving quantitative and qualitative data collection. Various community research methods, including pop-up events, conversations, and ethnographic interviews were detailed. The importance of synthesising this data and presenting it to stakeholders to develop solutions such as the new Horizon Centre and the market rent reduction approach was emphasised. Councillor Harbi Farah (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills) provided assurance that further emphasis would be placed on engaging diverse communities, particularly in Stonebridge, to address issues of deprivation and low outcomes. The importance of working with familiar local organisations to maximise engagement was also highlighted.

- Following up, the Chair questioned the representation of the Irish Traveller community in the qualitative interviews and stakeholder group to which Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) conceded that there had been no direct engagement with the Traveller community. The Chair highlighted that the lack of engagement with the Traveller community was a gap that needed to be addressed.
- Details were sought around the measures being taken to address barriers to employment, such as the costs of childcare and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), with members also questioning whether a broad approach would be taken to tackle all barriers to employment or if a more strategic focus on a specific group would be more effective. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) noted that addressing the costs of childcare was not within their current scope due to the complexity and regulatory challenges involved. Supportive planning policies for proposed childcare facilities and the potential for incorporating childcare into social value could be explored, though this was not seen as a long-term solution. Regarding ESOL, it was highlighted that numerous courses were offered, with outreach efforts in various libraries. It was suggested that further discussions with the lead member were needed to determine whether to focus efforts on a particular group. Ala Uddin (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) added that 38% of the provision was dedicated to ESOL, both at the centre in Stonebridge and across 33 community centres. The significant need for ESOL and the capacity challenges faced were also highlighted. The use of grant money within Brent Start to provide childcare for ESOL students was further mentioned, though it was insufficient to cover all needs. Discussions ensued around exploring external funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to potentially cover childcare costs for those seeking full employment. The importance of addressing key barriers, including language and health issues, and the approach of taking services to the community was emphasised. Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) also informed the Committee about the upcoming childcare entitlement of 30 hours per child, effective from September 2025. Ongoing conversations with Early Years colleagues were had to leverage this entitlement to increase employment opportunities for residents. The need to prioritise efforts to achieve significant job outcomes was also acknowledged. Alice Lester (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) further noted that grants from the Greater London Authority (GLA) or the West London Alliance were typically targeted at specific groups identified as needing support. The limited availability of their own funding sources, aside from some UKSPF funding was further mentioned. Ala Uddin

(Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) highlighted the work plan program initiated as part of the central government's White Paper, aimed at supporting individuals with learning difficulties or special needs. Reference was made to the 'Connect to Work' program, which assisted people with learning disabilities and special needs. The close collaboration with the West London Alliance (WLA) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to implement these programs effectively was also described.

- The Chair inquired whether the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was an under-utilised source of funding that could assist organisations in the borough with their bids. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) comprehensively explained that bids to DWP funding, or via their dynamic framework, required demonstrating that no other provision could deliver the equivalent service. Even then, bids competed with other organisations on the framework, often resulting in organisations from outside the Borough, such as Birmingham, winning the bids. Despite significant interest in the 'Connect to Work' funding, only three large prime organisations met the financial requirements, all of which were already operating in the Borough, unlike smaller local businesses.
- As a separate issue, members questioned whether public transport links were considered in relation to employment rates. In response, Alice Lester (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) informed that the Strategic Transport Team was responsible for examining connectivity in general, rather than specifically in relation to employment rates.
- Members highlighted a successful DWP-funded outreach scheme in Bolton Council, which operated at the Reebok Stadium, reducing barriers to engagement by being on-site, and suggested that similar initiatives could be implemented to ensure better high-paid opportunities in the Borough, particularly with organisations like Transport for London (TfL) and the public sector, which offered career and pay progression pathways. In continuing the line of questioning, the Chair acknowledged that housing costs were a significant barrier to employment and inquired whether residents were securing full-time, well-paid jobs through apprenticeships and the Council's relationships with employers. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) stated that the Council had worked with employers across all pay levels, including higher-level apprenticeships. It was noted that the majority of apprenticeships now started at London Living Wage and extended to higher levels. Partnerships with large companies like HS2, which offered excellent progression schemes was further mentioned. It was acknowledged that there was a need for further analysis on apprenticeship progression. The Council's robust CRM tracking system, which monitored partnerships for a year, was also highlighted.
- Members sought details around the evolution of employment support at Roy Smith House, measurable outcomes in job placements and skills development, and the Council's efforts to ensure long-term effectiveness in addressing employment barriers. In response, Jon Cartwright (Head of Change and Customer Insight) advised that Roy Smith House was currently vacant and undergoing refit work for transformation into a usable community space, with completion expected in June or July 2025. The Chair expressed

anticipation for an update on the project six months after the refit work was completed.

- Members were also keen to seek details around how colleges and partner organisations were working with the Council to prioritise applications from residents in targeted areas within the Borough and underrepresented groups. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) elucidated that the Council commissioned several voluntary sector organisations to work with specific areas of specialism. It was further mentioned that a consortium of providers had been targeting ethnic minority groups, particularly the Somali community, and a specialist provider for homeless and disabled individuals, focusing on mental health. The partnership with these organisations to provide access to job opportunities through Brent Works and other initiatives was also emphasised.
- As a further issue highlighted, members inquired about the specific training programs and courses currently available in Brent to address the national shortage of bricklayers. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) noted that there were no specific programs for bricklayers at present. However, it was highlighted that sector-based work academy training programs were implemented when funding was available, and they collaborated with the local college, College of North West London, to address skill shortages. Jim Jessop agreed to investigate this further. In continuing the response, Ala Uddin (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) highlighted the strong relationship with the College of North West London, one of the most prominent colleges in the Borough. The investment in a Green Skills Centre, the first of its kind in London, providing specialist training resources for Brent residents was cited. It was noted that while data on achievement and work progression for the current year was not yet available, analysis would be conducted. It was explained that sector-based work academies offered tailored programs for specific jobs, such as retail or construction, guaranteeing interviews upon course completion. The ongoing collaboration between partners, the college, and Brent Works to support areas with skill shortages was emphasised. Further to this, Jim Jessop provided an example of the gas engineering bootcamp, which received substantial funding support and achieved an 80% completion rate, leading to high-value, well-paid careers for participants.
- The Chair posed questions around prioritising Stonebridge residents for employment opportunities and whether this was integrated with the Outcome Based Reviews (OBR) to target Stonebridge residents specifically. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) explained that recruitment efforts involved the College of North West London, NHS, and Health Academy. Members heard that a mini jobs fair was held in Stonebridge, resulting in high engagement, with 26 attendees and many follow-up interviews. It was noted that outcomes were still pending though appeared promising.
- As a final query, the Chair questioned the effectiveness of advertising employment opportunities and whether one annual jobs fair was sufficient for the Brent Works offer. In response, Jim Jessop (Employment Delivery Senior Manager) detailed that the annual jobs fair was the Council's major event,

attracting over 8,000 attendees and resulting in 300 job placements. It was highlighted that the jobs fair was the largest in West London and the second largest in London. The partnership newsletter and the possibility of adding councillors to its distribution list and providing a link on the website would be explored.

The opportunity was also taken to highlight that the Employment and Skills Team would be transitioning to Housing Resident Services effective from 1 April 2025, with Kibibi Octave (Director Communities and Partnerships) being designated as the new relevant corporate director.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of Brent's Draft Emerging Employment Strategy (2025-2030). As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the suggestions for improvement and requests for additional information identified were AGREED as follows:

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

- (1) In developing the upcoming employment strategy, expand on the engagement from the Employment and Skills Outcome-Based Review (OBR) by strengthening outreach with underrepresented groups to ensure equitable outcomes.
- (2) Collaborate with Brent's procurement teams to integrate employment-related social value commitments into future tenders, encouraging suppliers to offer flexible employee packages that better support working parents.
- (3) Maximise the development of higher-paid job opportunities as a core objective of the upcoming employment strategy.
- (4) Enhance and diversify communication and engagement efforts to raise awareness of Employment and Skills support available in the borough, with a particular focus on promoting Brent Works services and the Work Well programme.

### **INFORMATION REQUESTS:**

- (1) Provide an update on the Roy Smith House initiative after its reopening, measuring its effectiveness in addressing the challenges outlined in the Stonebridge Outcome Based Review (OBR) and reviewing the outcomes of the council's Market Rent Reduction Framework.
- (2) Provide detail on any targeted training programmes in Brent to meet industry demands, particularly the national shortage of bricklayers.
- (3) Share data on the number and types of roles secured through training at the Green Skills Centre, facilitated by the partnership between the Council and the College of North West London.


## **12. Any other urgent business**

No items of urgent business were identified.

The meeting closed at 8:54pm.

COUNCILLOR RITA CONNEELY  
Chair

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	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 23 April 2025
	<b>Report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance</b>
<b>Establishment of Kerbside Management 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> <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> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Democratic & Corporate Governance <a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a>  Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources <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 Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to establish a task group to conduct an in-depth review of Brent's current kerbside management strategies and assess whether further value could be added to foster a more sustainable, inclusive, and connected community.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 For the Resources and Public Realm Committee to agree the establishment of the Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group, noting the membership and terms of reference outlined below.

## 3.0 Detail

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

3.1.1 The work of the proposed task group aligns with the council's commitment to creating long-lasting positive change in Brent for the benefit of local communities. Through its review, it will specifically support the Borough Plan 2023-2027 priorities by further enabling:

- Thriving Communities
- A Cleaner, Greener Future
- A Healthier Brent
- Prosperity and Stability in Brent

## 3.2 Background

3.2.1 A scrutiny task group is proposed to assess how kerbside space in Brent could be more effectively utilised to promote sustainable and inclusive travel, enhance public spaces, and ensure equitable community benefits and environmental outcomes.

3.2.2 Brent Council's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency in July 2019 set in motion an ambitious commitment to achieve borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2030—recognising the scale and urgency of the climate crisis.

3.2.3 The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, with the most vulnerable communities hit hardest—many of whom were already at heightened risk from the worsening impacts of climate change.

3.2.4 Alongside these challenges, the council continues to face growing financial pressures, highlighting the ongoing necessity for creative, climate-friendly approaches to policy and income generation in alignment with the Borough Plan. The Task Group will explore innovative, cost-effective solutions wherever possible.

### Terms of Reference

3.2.5 The terms of reference for the Task Group will be to:

- **Review Kerbside Use:** Assess the wide range of kerbside uses and identify opportunities to enhance existing council strategies, policies, practices, and measures for optimal community benefits and environmental sustainability.
- **Undertake Stakeholder Engagement:** Gather insights from cabinet members, senior departmental officers, and any other relevant stakeholders.
- **Draw on Expert Advice:** Leverage expert knowledge and best practices from local authorities and other relevant bodies.
- **Formulate Recommendations:** Develop robust recommendations and agree a draft report for submission to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee for consideration.



## Membership

3.2.6 It is proposed that the Task Group will consist of the following non-executive members:

- Cllr Mary Mitchell (Chair)
- Cllr Anthony Molloy
- Cllr Saqib Butt
- Cllr Janice Long
- Cllr Jayanti Patel
- Cllr Ajmal Akram

## Timeline

3.2.3 It is envisaged that the Task Group will present its findings and recommendations to the Resources and Public Realm Committee in July 2025. If approved, the Committee will then present a recommendations report to Cabinet for consideration in September 2025.

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

4.1 Ward members and other relevant stakeholders will be engaged as part of the Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group Review, with insights reported back to the Resources and Public Realm Committee in July 2025.

## **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 EDI considerations for the purposes of this report.

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

8.1 The work of the proposed task group will support the Borough Plan 2023-2027 priorities for 'A Cleaner, Greener Future' and 'A Healthier Brent'. It will also align with key strategies and policies, including the Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030, the Brent Long-Term Transport Strategy 2015-2035, and the Brent Active Travel Implementation Plan 2024-2029.


## **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 and Corporate  
Governance

	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 23 April 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</b>
	<b>Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property (Cllr Teo Benea)</b>
<b>Build Quality in Brent</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <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> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration <a href="mailto:Tanveer.Ghani@brent.gov.uk">Tanveer.Ghani@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The council has a significant portfolio of construction projects relating to new build affordable housing, mixed use developments and facilities for children and young people. These projects vary in scope, size, complexity, cost and sector.
- 1.2. Members are asked to note that the scope of this report focuses on how the council seeks to uphold build quality in new build Council housing, refurbishment of community/social infrastructure and providing facilities for children and young people.
- 1.3. The council, through its various contractual methods monitors build quality through a range of mechanisms and approaches. The report discusses these in relation to pre-construction, handover and building operation across council led schemes, council acquired schemes and development agreements. The report also outlines statutory compliance requirements with respect to Planning and Building Regulations, and implications of the Building Safety Act.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To note the contents of this report as to how the Council goes about upholding Build Quality within the context of new build Council housing, refurbishment of community/social infrastructure and providing facilities for children and young people.

## **3.0 Detail**

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

- 3.1.1 Delivering build projects can achieve a wide range of council objectives and priorities. There are many of the outcomes of the borough plan that have been and/or currently are being delivered through capital investment. These range from new school places, new council homes and modern community spaces including to libraries, leisure centres, day centres and family wellbeing centres.
- 3.1.2 Maintaining build quality for these types of projects ensures that the council is a trusted delivery partner and that residents, businesses, community organisations and partners can use the buildings (whether new or refurbished) for years to come and make a difference to the residents of Brent.

### **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 The council has a significant portfolio of construction related projects with the majority of the spend relating to affordable housing, mixed use developments and facilities for children and young people. These projects vary in scope, size, complexity, cost and sector. In general, projects can be categorised into one of the following three categories:
1. Council Led:
    - a. Refurbishment schemes
    - b. Part new build, part refurbishment
    - c. New build schemes
  2. Open-market acquisitions
  3. Developer Led
- 3.2.2 Council led schemes are where the council is the client / employer and is responsible for contracting directly with construction industry organisations such as designers, contractors and surveyors. The open-market acquisition schemes involve the council acquiring the development from a third party (e.g. s106 affordable homes) and the scheme is delivered to the council. Developer led schemes are where the council and developer enter into an agreement to deliver mutual benefits (e.g. affordable homes for the council, private units for the developer) and will typically involve the disposal of interest in council land.
- 3.2.3 Regardless of the category, there are a number of legislative and regulatory requirements that need to be met including Building Regulations, Planning Regulations and Health and Safety Regulations as well as industry or sector

best practice and guidelines (e.g. Department for Education Area size guidelines for school capital projects).

### **Council Led Schemes**

3.2.4 For council led schemes, the council is the client or employer and is wholly responsible for build quality throughout the life of the project. The council uses the Royal British Institute of Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work which splits the delivery of a project into eight stages (0 – 8). Design work is progressed through stages 0 – 4, construction works during stage 5, handover of the project is stage 6 and stage 7 relates to the building being in use/operation.

3.2.5 Generally, there are two strategies for delivering a capital project, either using a traditional method which involves the client fully designing the scheme to RIBA 4 before appointing a contractor to build the scheme, or a design and build (D&B) strategy where the client designs to a certain point (usually RIBA 3) before appointing a contractor to complete the design and then build the scheme. Figure 1 below summarises this.

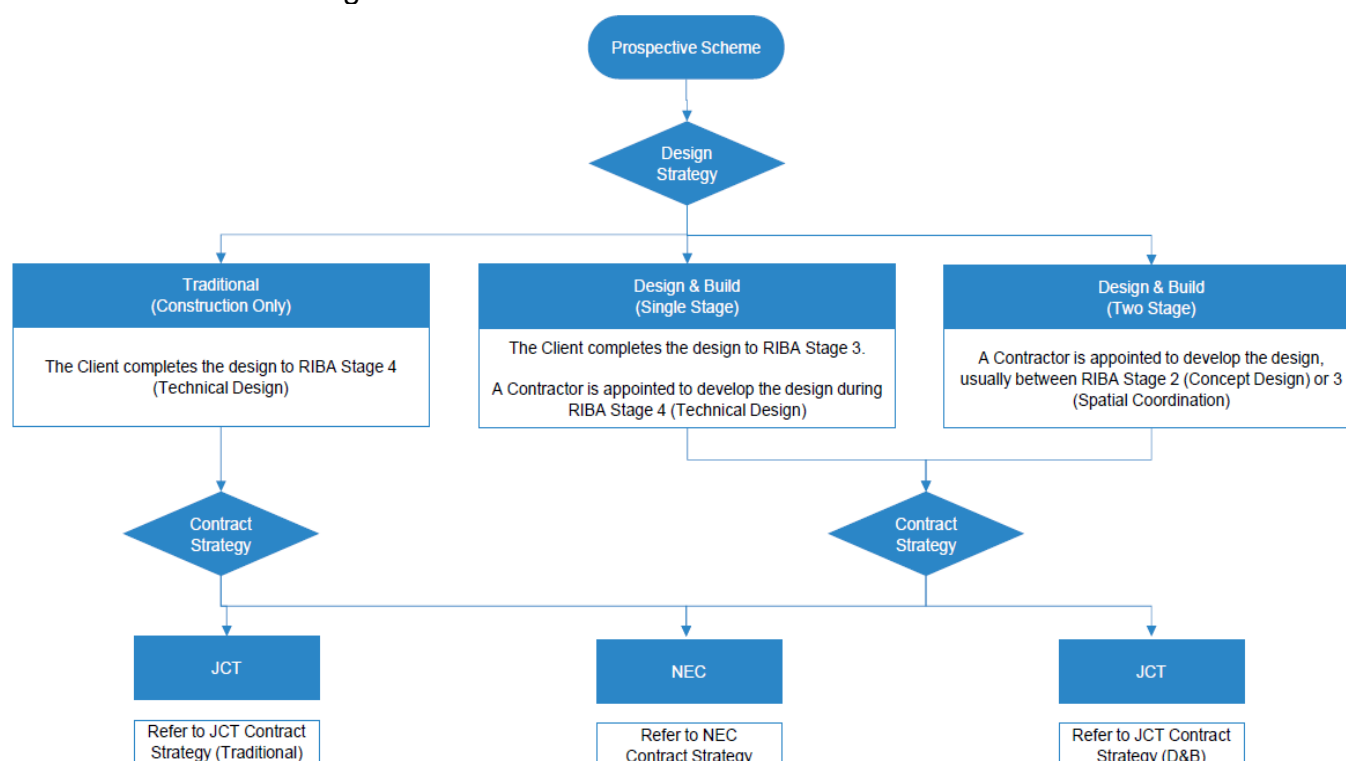


Figure 1 – Summary of Design Strategy Options

3.2.6 Under the design and build (D&B) strategy, a client can either opt for a single stage D&B or a two-stage D&B. A single stage D&B is often used where the design is relatively straight forward and/or really well developed to allow the contractor to fix their design and build cost at tender stage and commence on site with early packages prior to the full design being completed.

3.2.7 A two-stage D&B is often used for more complex projects where the client wishes to pass risk onto the contractor or perhaps where the design is less developed. Here the contractor provides a cost plan for the works and a fixed cost to complete the design in the first stage or pre-construction phase (PCSA).

The contractor then engages with their supply chain to provide a fixed cost at the end of the PCSA to the client for consideration before triggering the second stage to deliver the works. Should the contractor's proposals not meet the council's requirements then the council has the option of not triggering the second stage and can re-procure. Examples of when the council has not triggered the second stage include the school expansions at Byron Court Primary School, The Stonebridge School and Uxendon Manor Primary School.

*Pre-construction (RIBA 0 – 4)*

- 3.2.8 The council undertakes a number of activities/milestones to ensure high-quality build provision for the schemes it directly delivers prior to commencing construction activities:
1. Appointment of suitably qualified and experienced designers (architects, engineers, surveyors, advisors, Building Safety Act Principal Designer) and consultants (cost consultants, employer's agent)
  2. Obtain necessary statutory approvals (Planning, Building Regulations, Building Safety Act)
  3. Contractor Procurement
  4. Contractual Provisions.
- 3.2.9 The council does not have in-house designers/consultants and therefore procures suitably qualified and experienced organisations. These commissions also set the council's employer's requirements that the contractors will have to meet when designing and/or building the scheme. These appointments are made through competitive opportunities and officers ensure that the successful organisations are vetted prior to appointment for their experience, resources, etc.
- 3.2.10 Once appointed, the consultants and designers will ensure the design of the building/scheme meets the necessary legislative and regulatory requirements as well as any industry guidance and best practice. This includes obtaining Planning Permission and Building Regulations approval prior to starting on site. For schemes that involve High Risk Buildings under the Building Safety Act, the scheme will be taken through the Gateway process and approval from the Building Safety Regulator is required prior to starting on site.
- 3.2.11 In order to build the scheme, the council requires a suitably qualified and experienced contractor. These appointments are made through competitive opportunities such as open tenders, construction frameworks and competitive dialogue and officers ensure that the successful organisations are vetted prior to appointment for their experience, resources, financial strength, etc.
- 3.2.12 Further, the council sets out its contractual provisions and protections (e.g. retention, performance bond, parent company guarantee, ability to claim liquidated damages for delay, step in rights in case of contractor insolvency) prior to entering into the contract with the contractor. These set out the council's position on risk management and protections and ensures the contract sets out

the council's quality assurance requirements as well as providing the employer's requirements to which the scheme is to be built to.

3.2.13 The council also sets out quality control parameters prior to entering into the contract with the contractor. These include any warranty provisions, expected lifespan of items as well as consistency with any industry best practice guidelines. The contract will also set out the enforcement of these standards during the build contract in terms of required sign offs from statutory bodies, system manufacturers and warranty providers.

3.2.14 Larger schemes (e.g. South Kilburn, Wembley Housing Zone, London Road SEND School) have seen the council appoint a Technical Advisory Team or 'Design Guardian' when a contractor is undertaking design work. This team or Design Guardian seeks to ensure the original vision and design intent of the scheme is followed through into detailed design and construction and not diluted. The team or Design Guardian champion quality in the design and build of the scheme, including selection of materials. This role, when it works well can assist in maintaining design quality and consistency throughout a project – but risks of the role include potential for increased costs, delays and conflicts.

#### *Construction Management (RIBA 5)*

3.2.15 During the construction stage (RIBA 5), the council monitors build quality throughout the contract and employer's requirements provisions detailed above and receives information on how the contractor is performing via a number of methods.

3.2.16 The council utilises its appointed consultants to monitor contractor performance and progress via design technical advisors or Design Guardian, employer's agent, cost consultant as well as a Clerk of Works. The latter is a specific appointment that attends site frequently and often twice a week to review the contractor's build quality and construction methods. Reports are compiled and shared and action trackers monitored to ensure the contractor closes out concerns/issues raised as well as ensuring they are aware their methods are being monitored.

3.2.17 Alongside the Clerk of Works, the council's other appointed consultants track and monitor contractor performance in relation to the employer's requirements and statutory provisions. Any failure to meet these requirements can lead to non-payment or withholding of funds until suitably rectified through liquidated damages and other contractual mechanisms.

3.2.18 Failure to utilise these resources effectively can leave the council in difficult situations in the future. For example, Granville New Homes will require significant funding to rectify issues with fire safety and water ingress due to poor build quality by the contractor at the time of construction.

3.2.19 Build quality during the works stage can also be impacted by the contractor's financial strength and position. The council contracted with Lakehouse Contracts to deliver the expansion at Uxendon Manor Primary School. During

the contract, the contractor went into administration and so left the council with incomplete buildings to which significant investment was required to complete the buildings in line with the council's requirements. Therefore, the importance of financial surety and protection is important for the council to have in place to recover from any issues with the build progress.

#### *Handover and Operation (RIBA 6 and 7)*

- 3.2.20 As the build programme nears the end and the contract parties are preparing for handover of the building(s). This involves obtaining the relevant sign offs for specific building elements (heating systems, fire alarm, building warranties etc.) and these can come from system manufacturers, warranty providers and alike which demonstrates the contractor has constructed/installed in line with the specific requirements.
- 3.2.21 The building will have to be signed off by either Building Control or the Building Safety Regulator if considered a High-Risk Building (i.e. over seven storeys or 18 metres) under the Building Safety Act. This sign off ensures that the building has been assessed to have been constructed in line with Building Regulations. This is the responsibility of the contractor, and the council links the obtaining of this statutory approval to the handover of the building to the council.
- 3.2.22 Further, the Building Safety Act Principal Designer will need to submit evidence and confirmation that the project was completed in line with Building Regulations. This adds another layer of protection to the council that the contractor's work has been assessed in line with the Building Regulations.
- 3.2.23 The building is also snagged (to identify and rectify any issues with the building) and tested and commissioned to identify any issues prior to handover. This assists in identifying any potential operational issues as well as deals with them prior to handover and occupation. The contractor will also handover / transfer to the council details on the building, its components and how to maintain and operate the building for its expected lifespan. This information is used by the building operator to manage and maintain the building to prevent any deterioration to the building caused by misuse or a lack of aftercare.
- 3.2.24 Once all the necessary sign offs (including statutory) are in place and confirmation that the building has met the council's employer's requirements, then practical completion can be achieved, which means the building is handed over to the council to occupy.
- 3.2.25 Contractually, the council withholds a percentage of the contract sum as retention. This is typically between 3 and 5 per cent and this incentivises the contractor to ensure delivery of the contract. Half of this retention is released at practical completion with the remainder scheduled for release upon successful completion of the defects liability period which is typically 12 months from practical completion.
- 3.2.26 During this defects liability period, the contractor monitors the building's performance and if any issues arise, the contractor is responsible for rectifying



in this period. Upon successful completion of the defects liability period, the contractor is paid their final retention figure and the contract comes to an end.

3.2.27 Despite the contract ending, the contractor is liable for any latent defects. These are defects that appear at a later date and often take time to manifest themselves. These are usually 6 – 12 years, depending on how the contract was executed. However, the Building Safety Act has enacted changes to the Defective Premises Act 1972 and Limitation Act 1980 by extending the liability for dwellings completed before 28 June 2022 to 30 years and 15 years for buildings completed after 28 June 2022.

3.2.28 Once the building is built, the assessment of build quality does not stop there. The contractor provides information on the operation and maintenance of the building and the council ensures that its maintenance contractors adhere to the recommendations and requirements to ensure buildings are kept of a high quality for the building's expected lifespan.

3.2.29 The council also undertakes post-occupancy evaluations and assessments to ensure the building is doing what it is expected to. This can also be part of any certification received for the building (e.g. BREEAM). Consultees can include the occupiers/tenants to obtain end-user feedback on how the building is performing.

3.2.30 The council concludes the project delivery by completing a project closure report which includes any lessons learned during the project's delivery which can be applied for any current and future projects.

### ***Acquisitions***

3.2.31 Recently, the council has acquired buildings from external organisations to assist in meeting council housing needs and house building targets. This has included the acquisition of affordable homes from Developers either as part of their section 106 agreements to provide affordable homes, or straight acquisition of what would otherwise have been delivered as private housing. Examples of recent acquisitions include Grand Union Phase 2 (115 homes) and Fulton Road (294 homes) both of which will handover in 2025/26.

3.2.32 On these schemes, the council is not directly responsible for any of the build quality requirements as these are the responsibility of the Developer and their appointed consultants and contractors. However, the council does employ its own Employer's Agent and Clerk of Works to monitor the Developer's contractor and construction progress and reports to the council who in turn raises any issues with the Developer.

3.2.33 On these schemes, the council ensures that all necessary statutory approvals and warranties, etc. are in place prior to agreeing to taking handover and occupying the scheme. Any final payments due to the Developer are not processed until satisfactory completion and receipt of all necessary information is in place.

### ***Council led schemes delivered through Development Agreement***

- 3.2.34 The remainder of the South Kilburn Regeneration Programme will deliver developments across 8 sites over a period of 10 -15 years. The model of delivery is through a Development Agreement as opposed to Direct Delivery discussed above. The Council will be entering into a long-term agreement based on partnering principles which promotes collaboration between the parties and has the flexibility and resilience to adapt over the term of the agreement.
- 3.2.35 The agreement covers a wide remit of development matters such as viability, master planning, phasing, estate management, value uplift etc, and although commercial it is not a narrow transactional arrangement between a client and a build contractor.
- 3.2.36 The Council sets out its vision and objectives for the Programme including focus on design and build quality and produces a design and master planning framework which broadly aligns with RIBA 0-1 level of design development. This is then shared with the bidding developers through the tendering process and series of dialogues sessions are held to essentially align the vision and objective of the two parties (Council and Developer) alongside testing their capabilities, capacity and demonstrable experience, track record including ability to build well.
- 3.2.37 The Development Agreement is entered into based on a shared understanding of the vision and objectives of the Programme. Once in contract the Development Management team of the Partner, however accountable to the Council will progress the designs up to RIBA Stage 4 and undertake the activities described in paras. 3.2.8 – 3.2.10. This process crucially enables early input of the build contractor and their supply chain in real time safeguarding the quality of build and design whilst maintaining Council's ability to input, shape and influence the design development.
- 3.2.38 The construction is then carried out (typically) by the Development Partner's construction arm, the capabilities and experience of whom is tested as part of the tendering process of the Development Partner. The protections described in paras 3.2.12 above are incorporated in the Development Agreement to ensure the full suite of statutory and regulatory requirements and the rigour of a Design and Build contract is maintained.
- 3.2.39 During this period and throughout the term of the Agreement the Council will typically retain consultant advisory services including quality assurance services of Employer's agent and Clerk of works akin to the process described in paras 3.2.14 – 3.2.17 above. This provides an additional layer of assurance independent of the Developer's own quality assurance processes.
- 3.2.40 Crucially in a long – term partnership arrangement the performance of a Development Partner including quality of their build is continually monitored and development sites are released incrementally and based on their performance at the previous phase(s), this incentivises positive behaviours.

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

- 4.1 Stakeholders such as building users are updated on capital project progress throughout the project's life. This includes consultation events, engagement as well as involvement in post occupancy monitoring.
- 4.2 Ward Members are kept up to date on project progress, including any significant milestones such as planning applications and completion dates.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 There are no specific financial considerations relation to the proposals within this report. However, the council has a significant capital portfolio of which is funded through various grants, receipts and £900m of council borrowing.
- 5.2 Failure to achieve the required build quality can lead to significant costs both during and after the scheme's delivery. Delays to obtaining the necessary build quality can increase the cost of a capital project through increased maintenance, potential legal recourse with contractors and developers and delays to generating benefits of the project (e.g. delays to moving in tenants and generating rental income). Avoiding unnecessary additional costs is particularly vital at the current time because high interest rates already having a significant impact on the viability of capital projects.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 When delivering capital build schemes, the council needs to follow its own contract standing orders and constitution when procuring and awarding contracts.
- 6.2 The council makes use of the JCT and NEC suite of contracts when delivering its schemes. These contracts come in a standard form and the council, alongside its advisors provide a number of amendments to reflect the project's requirements as well as strengthen the council's position where necessary.
- 6.3 The Building Safety Act 2022 has brought in new requirements when ensuring the quality of building projects. These include new duty holder positions of which the council is the client and needs to appoint a Principal Designer and Principal Contractor. Each role has specific requirements and duties and the council needs to be aware of its requirements and duties and ensure that any appointed roles demonstrate suitable experience and qualifications to complete the required role.
- 6.4 In the developer led schemes, the council will prepare a first draft of the development agreement which forms part of a suite of documents which comprise the procurement documents. The development agreement will contain all of the provisions referred to in paragraph 3.2.12 to provide protection for the council. The Development Agreement also refers to the approved design and the detailed planning permission which the Developer has to comply with.

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

- 7.1 There are no direct EDI considerations for this report, but the council delivers projects for some of its most vulnerable residents and so the impacts of not achieving high build quality could impact on residents with protected characteristics.
- 7.2 Further, any poor-quality build could lead to impacts to user's health, either through the building not operating effectively or exposing users to unnecessary stress and concern due to having to occupy a poor-quality building.

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

- 8.1 None

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

- 9.1 None


## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 None

### **Report sign off:**

**Alice Lester**

Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods and  
Regeneration

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 23 April 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources</b>
	<b>Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Cllr Milli Patel)</b>
<b>Complaints Annual Report 2023/24</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Eight: Appendix A: Complaints Annual Report 2023 – 2024 Appendix A(i): Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Report Appendix A(ii): Children’s Social Care Statutory Complaints Report Appendix A(iii): Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Comparison with other London Authorities Appendix A(iv): Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023-2024 Appendix B: Compensation Breakdown for last three years Appendix C: Correlation between issue types and outcomes of complaints by department 2023-2024 Appendix D: Learning and improvements arising from complaints 2023-2024
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Martin Stollery Interim Complaints and Casework Manager (job share), Democratic and Corporate Governance Martin.Stollery@brent.gov.uk 0208 937 1029

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides a breakdown of complaints received by department and the top five issues of complaint for those respective departments. The report also provides a breakdown of the number of complaints that have been upheld, not upheld, partly upheld, rejected or withdrawn for each department.
- 1.2 Appendix C provides a correlation between the root causes and their issue types and outcomes of complaints.
- 1.3 Appendix A, the Annual Complaints report 2023 sets out complaint's performance in Brent Council for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and focuses on the nature of complaints and the learning they provide to inform Brent's future approach to service improvement.
- 1.4 Some complaints concerning Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Social Care are governed by separate statutory complaint procedures and individual summary reports have been provided for statutory complaints about these services in Appendices A(i) and A(ii) respectively as part of the Annual Complaints Report 2023-24.
- 1.5 A comparison of the Council's performance with other London boroughs provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has been provided as part of the annual complaints report in Appendix A(iii).

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Scrutiny is asked to note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints.

## **3.0 Detail**

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

- 3.1.1 Complaints provide important learning points for the Council and allow us to inform the Council's priorities in many different ways. Through these learning points, we can make changes to achieve and further our priorities and move forward together. Complaints provide an opportunity for the Council to understand issues and put things right, also ensuring that they do not reoccur.
- 3.1.2 Complaints are wide-ranging and dealt with across the Council. Owing to this, they touch upon all the priorities within the Borough Plan as detailed below:
  - *The Best Start in Life* - Being able to deal with concerns at crucial stages of people's lives allows them to get the best start in life. Assisting our looked after children and children with special educational needs with issues that they may have, and providing advocacy to bring these issues forward to the Council will ensure that they are provided with the necessary support in life.

□ *Thriving Communities* - Providing our residents with a route to complain and provide feedback not only encourages resident engagement but allows us to make improvements and inform change. In turn, by addressing their concerns and developing solutions that will benefit them, communities are given the opportunity to thrive.

□ *A Cleaner, Greener Future* - The Council receive a number of complaints regarding environmental issues, which are reviewed and help us target specific areas. This also allows the Council to evaluate services that are being provided to ensure they meet our aspirations for a cleaner, greener future.

□ *Healthier Brent* – Complaints regarding leisure services and our parks allow the Council to investigate and develop more initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and those that visit Brent. During our complaints process we also signpost to relevant services that can assist our complainants, such as Mental Health services.

□ *Prosperity and Stability in Brent* – Analysis of complaints received about housing needs is fundamental in terms of providing the tools and initiatives to support, empower and equip residents, and ensure long term stability.

- 3.1.3 Complaints feed into some of the current strategies, priorities and plans set out for Brent, such as the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028. The Complaints Service ensures residents and service users are provided with access to the complaints procedure in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED). The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 also plays a pivotal role when looking at how users are accessing our services and how they are logging complaints. The Complaints Service have made it easier for users to log complaint casework, view the history of what they have logged, and access everything in one place.

## **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has asked for a cover report on the themes and issues resulting from complaints and a comparison of compensation paid over the last three financial years. This is provided in Appendix B.
- 3.2.2 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has also asked for a breakdown by department of the key issues and the outcomes of complaints that are investigated by the Council. This is provided in Appendix C, with headlines summarised in this section.

### **Breakdown of complaints received by department and issue type**

- 3.2.3 A breakdown is provided below of the top five issues where available for each department. The Councils commissioned services' complaint issues have been incorporated in the overall data. On the issue of commissioned services, Appendix A(i), the Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Report, includes details relating to complaints received by ASC's Commissioning Contracting and Market

Management. Appendix C provides further details for Housing Management Property Services and services provided by parking contractors.

### 3.2.4 Breakdown

Adult Social Care received 157 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Social Worker – 32
- ☐ Hospital discharge – 22
- ☐ ASC Mental Health – 13
- ☐ Access and Information – 12
- ☐ Care Package Review – 8

CYP received 169 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Input from Service – 32
- ☐ BFFD/MASH/NRPF - Quality of Service – 24
- ☐ Social Workers – 20
- ☐ SEND Specialist Services – 17
- ☐ School Admissions – 10

Customer Access received 437 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Council Tax - Other – 115
- ☐ Council Tax - Enforcement – 91
- ☐ Benefits Assessment – 40
- ☐ Council Tax - Payments, Refunds and Direct Debits – 26
- ☐ Benefits – Delay in Payment – 19

Housing Needs received 205 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Homeless Application - Family – 72
- ☐ Homelessness Application - Single Person – 60
- ☐ Application for Social Housing Waiting List – 25
- ☐ Offers of Accommodation – 16
- ☐ Temporary Accommodation or Bed and Breakfast – 14

Housing Management Property received 445 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections) - 218
- ☐ Communal Repair – 71
- ☐ Outstanding Repairs - Other – 66
- ☐ Complaints about Wates – 26
- ☐ Damp and/or Mould – 11

Housing and Neighbourhoods received 130 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Anti-Social Behaviour - 31
- ☐ Housing Customer - Other – 31



- ☐ Estates Services – 12
- ☐ Leasehold enquiries – 9
- ☐ Poor Customer Service – 7

PHS received 53 stage one complaints. The top five specific issues were:

- ☐ Landlord Licence - Other - 7
- ☐ Application – 7
- ☐ Contractor – 6
- ☐ Housing Enforcement – 5
- ☐ Grants and Adaptations – 4

Environment and Leisure received 128 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Anti-Social Behaviour - 17
- ☐ Parking Enforcement – 13
- ☐ Permits – 13
- ☐ Parking - Other – 12
- ☐ Highways Defects – 8

Property and Assets received 14 stage one complaints. The top issues were:

- ☐ Commercial Property - 7
- ☐ Facilities – 4

Finance received 9 stage one complaints. The top issues were:

- ☐ Insurance - 4
- ☐ Payments – 4

### **Service improvements**

- 3.2.5 Service areas use the information gathered from complaints to make service improvements. Once a complaint has been investigated any corrective actions that arise from the complaint are recorded on the Council's case management system to be tracked and monitored to completion. Officers are asked to upload any evidence so that it is readily available and can be retrieved when requested.
- 3.2.6 Appendix D provides more details on learning and improvements arising from complaints during 2023-2024.

### **Outcomes**

- 3.2.7 Breakdown of Stage 1 complaint outcomes by Department

There are several outcomes to a complaint. A definition has been provided below for each outcome:

*Upheld*

If substantive evidence is found to support the complaint, then the complaint should be recorded as upheld.

#### *Not upheld*

If there is no evidence to support any aspects of a complaint made, the complaint should be recorded as not upheld.

#### *Partly upheld*

If a complaint is made about several issues and one or more, but not all, are upheld then the complaint should be recorded as partially upheld.

#### *Withdrawn*

Sometimes people choose not to pursue their complaint. This may be because the issues have since been resolved, for personal reasons or because of a change in circumstances.

#### *Rejected*

Complaints may be rejected if the issues are currently being dealt with through court proceedings, a safeguarding investigation is ongoing or if it has been more than twelve months since the issue occurred.

Department	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
ASC	38	74	35	4	6	157
CYP	75	46	32	8	7	169
Customer Access	242	76	86	10	23	437
Housing Needs	85	56	17	32	15	205
Housing Management Property	103	46	252	3	41	445
Housing and Neighbourhoods	48	46	21	8	7	130
Private Housing Services	44	4	2	2	1	53
Environment and Leisure	53	37	25	11	2	128
Planning and Development	14	5	1			20
Property and Assets	6	7	1			14
Finance	3	2	3	1		9

3.2.8 The table above shows the breakdown of Stage one complaint outcomes by department type.

3.2.9 A breakdown of the departments which received the highest amount of Stage one complaints and their uphold rate is provided below:

□ The Housing Management Service (combining the figures for Housing Management Property and Housing and Neighbourhoods) received 575 Stage one complaints. Of these 575 complaints, 365 cases were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 63% of cases some fault was found.

□ Customer Access received 437 Stage one complaints. Of these 437 complaints, 162 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 37% of cases some fault was found.

□ Housing Needs received 205 Stage one complaints. Of these 205 complaints, 73 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 35% of cases some fault was found.

□ CYP received 169 Stage one complaints. Of these 169 complaints, 78 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 46% of cases some fault was found.

□ ASC received 157 Stage one complaints. Of these 157 complaints, 109 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 69% of cases some fault was found.

□ Environment and Leisure received 128 Stage one complaints. Of these 128 complaints, 62 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 48% of cases some fault was found.

Department	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
ASC	1	1				2
CYP	23	7	4			34
Customer Access	26	5	3			32
Housing Needs	20	18	4			42
Housing Management Property	13	37	45			95
Housing and Neighbourhoods	13	5	4	1	1	24
Private Housing Services	13	1	1			15
Environment and Leisure	19	11	4			34
Planning and Development	6					6
Property and Assets	3	2				5

3.2.10 The table above shows the breakdown of Stage two complaint outcomes by department type.

3.2.11 A breakdown of the departments which received the highest amount of stage two complaints and their uphold rate is provided below:

□ The Housing Management Service (combining the figures for Housing Management Property and Housing and Neighbourhoods) received 119 Stage two complaints. Of these 119 stage two complaints, 89 cases were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 75% of cases some fault was found.

□ Housing Needs received 42 Stage two complaints. Of these 42 Stage two complaints, 22 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 52% of cases some fault was found.

□ Environment and Leisure received 34 Stage two complaints. Of these 34 Stage two complaints, 15 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 44% of cases some fault was found.

□ CYP received 34 Stage two complaints. Of these 34 Stage two complaints, 11 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 32% of cases some fault was found.

□ Customer Access received 32 Stage two complaints. Of these 32 Stage two complaints, 8 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 25% of cases some fault was found.

□ PHS received 15 Stage two complaints. Of these 15 Stage two complaints, 2 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 14% of cases some fault was found.

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

4.1 The Annual Complaints report was discussed at Cabinet and is on the agenda for scrutiny committee.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 The details provided in the Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 (Appendix A) on compensation payments and in Appendix B – Compensation Breakdown for last three years reflect the monetary impact of not getting things right the first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience thus minimising the financial penalties incurred by the Council.

5.2 The total amount of compensation awarded in 2023-2024 has increased by just over 7% compared to 2022-2023.

5.3 The total compensation awarded/offered in 2022/23 was £177,754.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care fall under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included as part of the complaints annual report in appendices B and C with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints.
- 6.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman provide the final stage in the complaints process, where an individual has complained to the Council and remains dissatisfied with the outcome.
- 6.3 The LGSCO can investigate allegations of maladministration in connection with the exercise of a local authority's administrative function, allegations regarding a failure in a service which it is the local authority's function to provide, an allegation or an apparent failure to provide such a service pursuant to the Local Government Act 1974 as amended.
- 6.4 The Housing Ombudsman investigates complaints and resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities), as well as for voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents).
- 6.5 The Social Housing Regulation Act gave the Housing Ombudsman considerable new powers. The Housing Ombudsman is now able to order a landlord to evaluate a particular policy or practice to prevent service failure being repeated. Previously, these types of orders would have only been recommendations, which the landlord was not legally required to act upon (although it has always been the Council's policy to do so). The expanded powers enable the Ombudsman to require landlords to go beyond the scope of individual complaints and seek to address any wider issues.

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

- 7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its functions to have 'due regard' to the need:
  - (a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity; and
  - (c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.
- 7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Although there have been no equality implications identified as a result of this report, the Council is improving the complaints system so that equalities data is captured, and data analysis can be used to identify issues that may disproportionately affect different equality groups.

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

8.1 Not applicable

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

9.1 Not applicable

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 The Housing Ombudsman as well as the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issue spotlight reports to address thematic issues. The Complaints Service ensure that these reports and any other significant communications from the Ombudsmen are highlighted to the relevant services.

10.2 The Council continues to advertise its complaints procedure and policy on its website and in correspondence with residents.

### **Report sign off:**

***Minesh Patel***

Corporate Director, Finance and Resources

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> 12 November 2024
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Law &amp; Governance</b>
	<b>Lead Member – Deputy Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Councillor Milli Patel)</b>
<b>Complaints Annual Report 2023 – 2024</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Four Appendix A(i): Adult Social Care Complaints Appendix A(ii): Children's Social Care Complaints Appendix A(iii): Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Performance comparison with other London Boroughs Appendix A(iv): HMS Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Martin Stollery Interim Complaints and Casework Manager (job share) 0208 937 1029 <a href="mailto:martin.stollery@brent.gov.uk">martin.stollery@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This annual report sets out complaints performance in Brent Council for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and focuses on the nature of complaints and the learning they provide to inform Brent's future approach to service improvement.
- 1.2 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Social Care are governed by separate statutory complaint procedures and individual summary

reports have been provided for these services in **Appendices A(i) and A(ii)** respectively.

- 1.3 A comparison of the Council's performance with other London boroughs provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has been provided in **Appendix A(iii)**.
- 1.4 The report also contains in **Appendix A(iv)** the Council's Housing Management Service Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2023/2024 which is now a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code has been added as an appendix to the report.
- 1.5 Brent's performance positively assessed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO):

Independent, external assessment of the quality of Brent's complaint performance is provided by the relevant Ombudsmen. Sections 3.23 to 3.56 of this report and Appendix A(iii) provide detailed information about this. Brent continues to perform well against some key measures. The LGSCO carried out 24 detailed investigations into Brent complaints in 2023/2024, of which 21 were upheld. While this indicates that there is still work to do, it places Brent in the top half of the table on these measures compared to other London boroughs. The LGSCO also noted that Brent complied with 100% of the remedies proposed by their complaint investigations. This demonstrates that Brent is embedding learning identified by Ombudsman investigations.

- 1.6 Dealing proactively with challenges in complaints performance:

Section 3.7 highlights the escalations to the second stage of the complaints procedure which increased to 309 in 2023/2024, 14% more than the previous year. The most marked increase in escalations in 2023/2024 were in the Housing Needs Service and the Housing Management Service. There are underlying factors driving this, primarily the ongoing housing crisis. Nevertheless, action can be taken to address the increase in escalations. The Complaints Service and these Services are therefore working together to improve complaints performance. For example, senior officers from the Complaints Service regularly attend Housing Needs Service DMTs to review trends and advise on improving complaint handling. Training has been provided to the Housing Management Service on issues such as resolving complaints at the first point of contact by taking immediate action to deal with the customer's concern, where this is possible, for example by fast tracking a repair, before complaints become formalised.

Section 3.2.15 and the chart accompanying it in Appendix A(iv), the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024, highlight that one of the reasons for Housing Management Service complaints escalating from the first to the second stage is 'follow up actions not carried out'. This was the primary reason for escalation in 21 out of a total of 134 escalated Housing Management Service complaints (just over 15% of cases). This is also an issue in other service areas. A facility exists on the complaints database to create and monitor actions, with



timescales, assigned to specific officers. This enables the fulfilment of promises and commitments made in first stage complaint responses to be tracked through to completion and evidenced. The Complaints Service is working with all Council departments to reiterate the importance of creating actions that can be monitored in this way each and every time a promise or commitment is made in first stage complaint responses. This should help to reduce unnecessary escalations.

#### 1.7 Capturing customer voice by recording compliments:

The complaints data outlined in this report provides extensive information about our residents' and customers' dissatisfaction with services and the Council's efforts to resolve this dissatisfaction. Section 3.57 of this report provides data on and some examples of compliments received. This is another, more positive side of the story, where residents and customers take the trouble to proactively praise and express gratitude for what the Council does, outside of the standard consultation and feedback processes.

It is acknowledged that the Council could do more to capture our residents' and customers' voices when we receive spontaneous compliments. The Complaints Service will work with relevant Services across the Council this year to further publicise the facility for recording compliments on the database and to underline the importance of officers doing so as when they are received. This will provide useful qualitative data to supplement that recorded through other means, such as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures outlined in sections 3.2.44 to 3.2.47 of Appendix A(iv), the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024, and other activities that take place within departments.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to note and review Brent's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code in Appendix A(iv).
- 2.3 Cabinet is asked to approve the progress of this report to the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

### 3.0 Detail

#### 3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

Complaints provide important learning points for the Council and allow us to inform the Council's priorities in many different ways. Through these learning points, we can make changes to achieve and further our priorities and move forward together. Complaints provide an opportunity for the Council to understand issues and put things right, also ensuring that they do not reoccur.

Complaints are wide ranging and dealt with across the Council. Owing to this, they touch upon all the priorities within the Borough Plan as detailed below:

- *The Best Start in Life* - Being able to deal with concerns at crucial stages of people's lives allows them to get the best start in life. Assisting our looked after children and children with special educational needs with issues that they may have, and providing advocacy to bring these issues forward to the Council will help to ensure that they are provided with the necessary support in life.
- *Thriving Communities* - Providing our residents with a route to complain and provide feedback not only encourages resident engagement but allows us to make improvements and inform change. By addressing their concerns and developing solutions that will benefit them, communities are given the opportunity to thrive.
- *A Cleaner, Greener Future* - The Council receives a number of complaints regarding environmental issues, which are reviewed and help us target specific areas of improvement. This also allows the Council to evaluate services to ensure they meet our aspirations for a cleaner, greener future.
- *Healthier Brent* – Complaints regarding leisure services and our parks allow the Council to resolve challenges and develop more initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and those that visit Brent. During our complaints process we also signpost to relevant services that can assist our complainants, such as Mental Health services, where appropriate.
- *Prosperity and Stability in Brent* – Analysis of complaints received about the Housing Needs and Property and Assets Service, for example, helps to shape the tools and initiatives to support and empower residents, and contributes to long term stability.

Complaints feed into some of the current strategies, priorities and plans set out for Brent, such as the Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028. The Complaints Service ensures residents and service users are provided with access to the complaints procedure in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED). The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 also plays a pivotal role when looking at how users are accessing our services and how they are logging complaints. The Complaints Service have made it easier for users to log complaint casework, view the history of what they have logged, and access everything in one place.

## **Background**

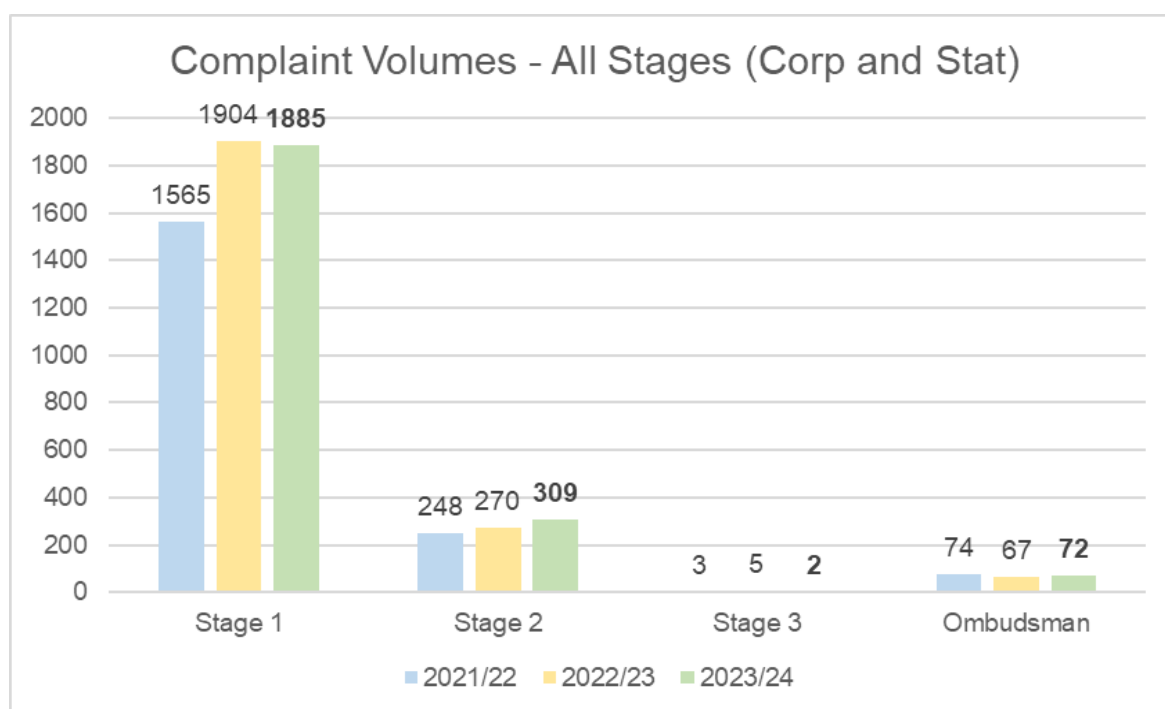
- 3.2 The Council has three different processes for managing complaints:
  - a two stage corporate complaints process;
  - a two part Adult statutory complaints process; and
  - a three stage Children's statutory complaints process.
- 3.3 The complaints data and information provided in this report is based on information recorded on the Resident Feedback and Complaints (RFC) system.
- 3.4 Brent Council has a clear, corporate commitment to a positive customer experience. The organisation is committed to its Customer Access Strategy which sets out what Brent residents should expect from staff, including service standards in relation to complaints. The aim is for the organisation to be sensitive to customer needs, prioritise communication and provide clear, accurate and current information.

- 3.5 In this context, the Council prioritises customer complaints to ensure that these are dealt with appropriately and efficiently. The central Complaints service monitors the numbers of complaints received and the quality and timeliness of responses. The Team works closely with Service Areas to ensure that corrective actions are put in place and learning from complaints is built into service design. There is a strong commitment to improve responses and reduce the number of complaints.
- 3.6 The key headlines from complaints performance in 2023/24 are as follows:
- Housing repairs, Council Tax and Homeless applications are the top three concerns for customers.
  - The number of Brent Stage 1 complaints (corporate & statutory) have decreased by 19 complaints (↓ green) compared to last year.
  - The number of Brent Stage 2 complaints (corporate & statutory) have increased by 14 % (up by 39 cases) (↑ red) compared to last year.
  - There were 21 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) cases upheld against Brent in 2023/24, which is one more than last year (↑ red).
  - The total number of cases where compensation was offered or awarded has increased by 34% (up by 90 cases) compared to last year, the total amount of compensation has also increased to £177,754. Compared with the previous year, this is an increase of 7%. (↑ red)
  - There has been a slight decrease in the timeliness of stage 1 corporate and statutory complaints and stage 2 corporate complaints when compared to 2022/2023. There has been a slight 1% point decrease in corporate complaints timeliness at stage 1 and a 2% decrease for corporate complaints at stage 2. (↓ red)
  - Statutory complaints timeliness has decreased by 9% at stage 1 however there has been a 25% increase in the timeliness of statutory stage 2 complaints compared with last year. (- amber)

### **Volume of Complaints received**

- 3.7 The chart below shows the volume of corporate and statutory complaints received at Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 over the past 3 years. The key points to note are that:
- In 2023/2024 Brent received 1,885 Stage 1 complaints (corporate and statutory). This is a decrease of 19 complaints compared to the previous year.
  - Stage 2 complaints (corporate & statutory) have increased from 270 cases in 2022/2023 to 309 cases during 2023/24. This is an increase of 39 complaints compared with last year.
  - There were two Stage 3 Review Panels convened during 2023/24, which is a decrease of three compared to the number of panels convened in 2022/23.
  - The number of Ombudsmen enquires has risen in 2023/2024. This has increased by 5 as there have been 72 in 2023/2024 compared to the previous year where 67 were received.

- 3.8 The majority of complaints for 2023/24 relate to the housing service, which is expected given the nature of the service and the number of properties managed by Brent Council. Of the 1,885 stage 1 complaints received in 2023/24, 864 related to the Housing department. This is a decrease from last year which saw 997 complaints related to this department.



### Timeliness of Complaints

- 3.9 The table below highlights the percentage of complaints closed on time. There has been an increase in the timeliness of resolving stage 2 statutory complaints in 2023/2024 and this has continued to increase over the past three years. There has been a slight decrease in the number of cases closed on time for corporate complaints at stage 1 and stage 2, with stage 1 corporate decreasing by 1% and stage 2 decreasing by 2% from 2022/2023. There has been a decrease of 8% from 85% to 77% in the timeliness of response to Stage 1 statutory cases with this being 85% in 2022/2023 and decreasing to 77% in 2023/2024. Overall, there has been an improvement in both stage 1 and stage 2 corporate and statutory complaint response timeliness in 2023/2024 and 2022/2023 in comparison to 2021/2022.
- 3.10 As stated in last year's annual complaints report, the fall in performance in 2021/2022 related to a restructure that took place and an increase in long-term staff sickness. At the time, there was also a shortage of independent investigators available to investigate children's statutory complaints meaning that the majority of statutory complaints were not responded to on time. The restructure has now been embedded and is working well. Furthermore, last year the Council also commissioned an external company on a spot purchase basis to assist with CYP statutory investigations, leading to significant improvement.

Year	Brent - % of Cases Closed on Time			
	Stage 1 - Corporate	Stage 1 - Statutory	Stage 2 - Corporate	Stage 2 - Statutory
2021-22	88%	71%	68%	25%
2022-23	96%	85%	98%	72%
2023-24	95%	77%	96%	90%

### Complaint Outcomes

- 3.11 The percentage of cases upheld or partly upheld has increased for stage 1 corporate and statutory complaints as well as at stage two for corporate complaints. There has been an increase of 7% of stage 1 corporate complaints being upheld or partly upheld in comparison to in 2022-2023. 47% of stage 1 corporate complaints have been upheld or partly upheld and this figure is the same as in 2021-2022. Stage 1 statutory complaints have seen an increase of 4% from 61% of cases being upheld or partly upheld in 2022/2023 to 65% in 2023-2024. There has been a slight increase in Stage 2 corporate complaints being upheld or partly upheld as this has risen 2 percentage points from 58 to 60 percent.
- 3.12 However, as the table below shows, the number of stage 2 statutory complaint cases that have been upheld or partly upheld is lower than the previous two years. 56% of stage 2 statutory complaints have been upheld or partly upheld in 2023-2024 and this is down by 19 percent. This is mainly due to the fact that there were 29 statutory cases completed in 2022/23 compared to 17 statutory cases in 2023/24 with 6 not upheld in 2022/23 and 4 not upheld in 2023/24.

Year	Brent - % of Cases Upheld or Partly Upheld			
	Stage 1 - Corporate	Stage 1 - Statutory	Stage 2 - Corporate	Stage 2 - Statutory
2021-22	47%	57%	51%	64%
2022-23	39%	61%	58%	75%
2023-24	47%	65%	60%	56%

### Complaints not accepted

- 3.13 The Council also records the types of complaints made that were not accepted. In 2023/2024, 200 complaints were not accepted at stage 1 of the complaints process. This included 191 Corporate Complaints, 81 ASC-Statutory Complaints and 1 CYP-Statutory Complaints. Of the complaints not accepted, 82 complaints were withdrawn/not pursued and 118 were rejected. The types of complaints not accepted vary but the top three most common case types were related to Homelessness applications, Housing Repairs and Benefit Assessments. Homelessness applications and Housing repairs are two of the top concerns raised by residents. Due to the high number of complaints received regarding these issues, it is understandable that this would be reflected in the number of cases not accepted. It is also relevant to note that homeless applications and

housing benefit have their own appeal procedures so another reason why some of these complaints were rejected as they would be more appropriately dealt with through these alternative routes.

- 3.14 The most common reason recorded for complaints being rejected or withdrawn/not pursued was that the complaint had already been investigated or was a duplicate request. This was the case for 75 complaints. Other reasons for complaints not being accepted were: that the complaint was about non-Council related service (13 complaints), that the customer has the right of Appeal under a different process (10 complaints), the reasons for escalation were not given or not valid (7 complaints), the complaint was out of time / Over 12 month period (3 complaints), the complaint was about a Legal / HR issue (3 complaints) and the complainant not having permission to act on behalf of service user (2 complaints).

### **Compensation**

- 3.15 The table below shows the total amount of compensation paid in Brent at all stages of the corporate and statutory process, including Ombudsmen cases. Compensation can be offered at any stage of the complaints process. The total number of cases where compensation was awarded or offered has increased by 34% (90 cases) compared to last year and the amount of compensation awarded/offered for each case on average has decreased by £127, which is a 20% decrease.

Year	All Brent		
	Cases	Total Comp.	Avg / Case
<b>2021-22</b>	314	£167,500	£533
<b>2022-23</b>	263	£165,827	£631
<b>2023-24</b>	353	£177,754	£504

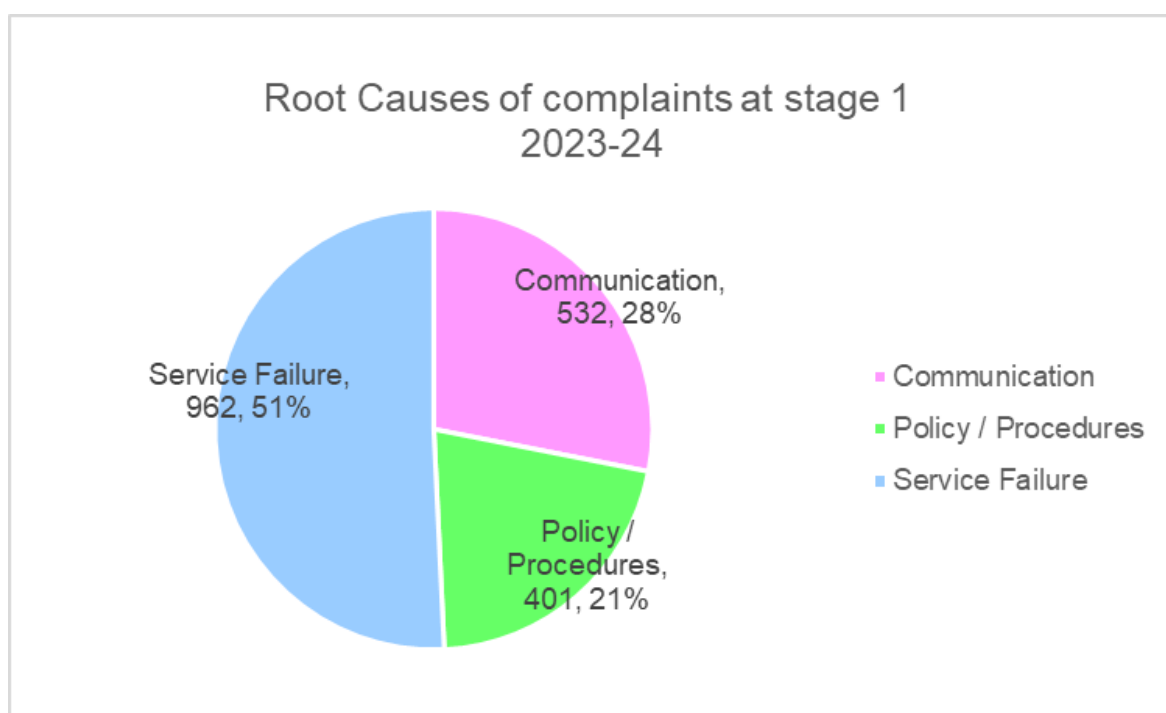
- 3.16 Compensation can be awarded/offered for time and trouble, distress, as a goodwill gesture, or in the form of a refund, reimbursement, or the offset/waiving of arrears. The increase in the number of cases where compensation was awarded/offered is indicative of the fact that the Council is proactively offering remedies including compensation where it is justified. Offering remedies earlier on in the process can prevent the need to offer higher levels of compensation at a later stage. There is no direct correlation between the amount of compensation awarded/offered one year compared to compensation awarded/offered in another because each complaint is unique and compensation is awarded/offered under different circumstances. However if there have been more cases received there are likely to be instances where compensation has been paid.
- 3.17 The majority of compensation in 2023/24 was offered at stage 2 of the Council's complaints process with £98,448 being offered at this stage. At stage 1, £54,017 was offered, £450 at stage 3 which only relates to children's statutory procedures and £24,744 was awarded across the Council at the Ombudsman stage. The highest amount of compensation paid out for a case was £5,500 at stage 2 and this related to a Housing Needs Case. Compensation was awarded in 353 cases,

an increase of 90 cases compared to the previous year, however, the amount awarded was lower on average per case than the previous two years.

- 3.18 Overall, the Housing directorate accounted for 86% of all the compensation awarded/offered (£153,457). This was averaged at £531 per case and was disbursed in 289 cases.

### Root Cause of Complaints

- 3.19 Root causes of complaints are categorised by the Council under the following types: Service failure; Communication; and Policy/Procedures. As shown in the pie chart below, 51% of complaints closed at stage 1 were categorised under Service Failure in 2023/2024. Issues with communication constituted 28% of complaints whilst dissatisfaction with policy/procedure comprised 21% of all complaints closed.



- 3.20 Housing repairs, including surveyor inspections, Council Tax, and Homelessness applications were the central issues that made up residents' concerns. On average, the Housing Management service carry out 36,000 repairs per annum, and this means that there is likely to be a correlation between the large number of repairs carried out and the relatively high number of complaints received.
- 3.21 In 2023/2024, a significant number of complaints were received relating to Council Tax. This is largely due to the rising pressures of the cost of living and residents struggling to keep up with payments. Additionally, the Council received a number of complaints relating to Homeless applications and this also stems from the increased cost of living and the housing crisis as well as changes in the private rented sector.

## **Service Improvements implemented**

3.22 Partly as a result of complaints received by Brent Council, many service improvements have been implemented. These improvements include:

- The Children and Young People department restructuring the SEN service to ensure there is a dedicated team managing the demand on EHCPs and to ensure statutory deadlines could be met.
- The Housing Management Service introducing new procedures for surveyors' inspection reports to ensure quicker turnaround times, with a separate inbox for the surveyors to send their inspection reports being created to improve the timeliness of work orders being raised following inspections.
- Environment and Leisure service setting up unannounced communal spot checks once each quarter for a gym which was the focus of a complaint investigation. For the women-only areas, they implemented carrying out a minimum of bi-annual checks focussing on the cleanliness of the changing areas and general upkeep of the sites.
- Adult Social Care updating their procedure to ensure target timescales are indicated for each element of the safeguarding process to ensure steps are not missed.
- The Customer Access Team reviewing the customer promise guidelines and developing an action plan to reinforce officers' understanding across the Council of the customer promise commitment.
- The Children and Young people department updating wording on letters to care leavers to make sure that the entitlement to an allocated Personal Adviser up to the age of 25 is clear.
- Housing Management revising the procedure for ensuring equal access for non-English speaking tenants.
- The Planning and Development Service developing a web page including information on Planning Performance Agreements and pre-application presentations to the Planning Committee to achieve more transparency in these areas.

## **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Decisions and Learning Points**

3.23 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman provides an Annual Review report every year which focusses on the Council's performance in relation to complaints that have been referred to it.

3.24 In summary:

- The number of referrals made to the Ombudsman for Brent was 141 which has increased by 42 complaints compared with 99 last year. The borough with the highest number of referrals in 2023/24 was Lambeth at 249, and the lowest was City of London with 9.
- The LGSCO decided to do a detailed investigation into a lower number of referred complaints at Brent compared to last year where 29 detailed investigations were carried out. In 2023/24, 24 cases were investigated out of the 141 referred.



- Brent's upheld rate at 88% has increased from last year, when the upheld rate was 76%. However, this is likely due to the Ombudsman being more selective on investigations that they take on, meaning that they are finding more fault in a narrower range of cases. Brent was joint 10<sup>th</sup> highest with Harrow, Haringey and Enfield out of all London boroughs on this performance indicator. Barking and Dagenham, Southwark and Greenwich had the highest uphold rates with 100% of cases requiring a detailed investigation upheld.
- Although the uphold percentage rate is high, when comparing the number of actual cases upheld by the Ombudsman, Brent were 13<sup>th</sup> lowest out of all London Councils. Croydon had the highest number of cases with 43 upheld.
- Of the 24 investigations completed for Brent:
  - three complaints were not upheld;
  - seventeen complaints were upheld with further recommendations; and
  - the remaining four were upheld, but the Council had already implemented its own recommendations which had been accepted by the LGSCO as a suitable remedy, or there were no further recommendations made by the Ombudsman.
- Compliance with the Ombudsman's recommendations remains at 100%.

#### LGSCO Volumes and Outcomes

- 3.25 There were 141 enquiries and complaints referred to the Ombudsman in 2023/24 which is 42 enquiries higher than the 99 enquiries made the previous year. In 2023/24 the LGSCO made decisions on 139 cases which is 45 more and an increase of 48% compared to the previous year. However, of the 139 cases decided in 2023/24 only 24 cases required a detailed investigation, 21 of which were upheld and 3 cases not upheld.
- 3.26 LGSCO categories of cases not taken forward for investigation include: 'advice given'; 'referred back for local resolution'; 'incomplete or invalid'; and 'closed after initial enquiries'.
- 3.27 The Ombudsman have explained that they have become more selective about the complaints they look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. It has meant that changes in upheld rates last year and this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases referred to them. They are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues or cases, so they are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall. The statistics also show an increase in the complaints referred and cases which the Ombudsman have referred back to the Council or closed after initial enquiries. The table below shows a 3-year comparison of LGSCO outcomes of Brent Council cases:

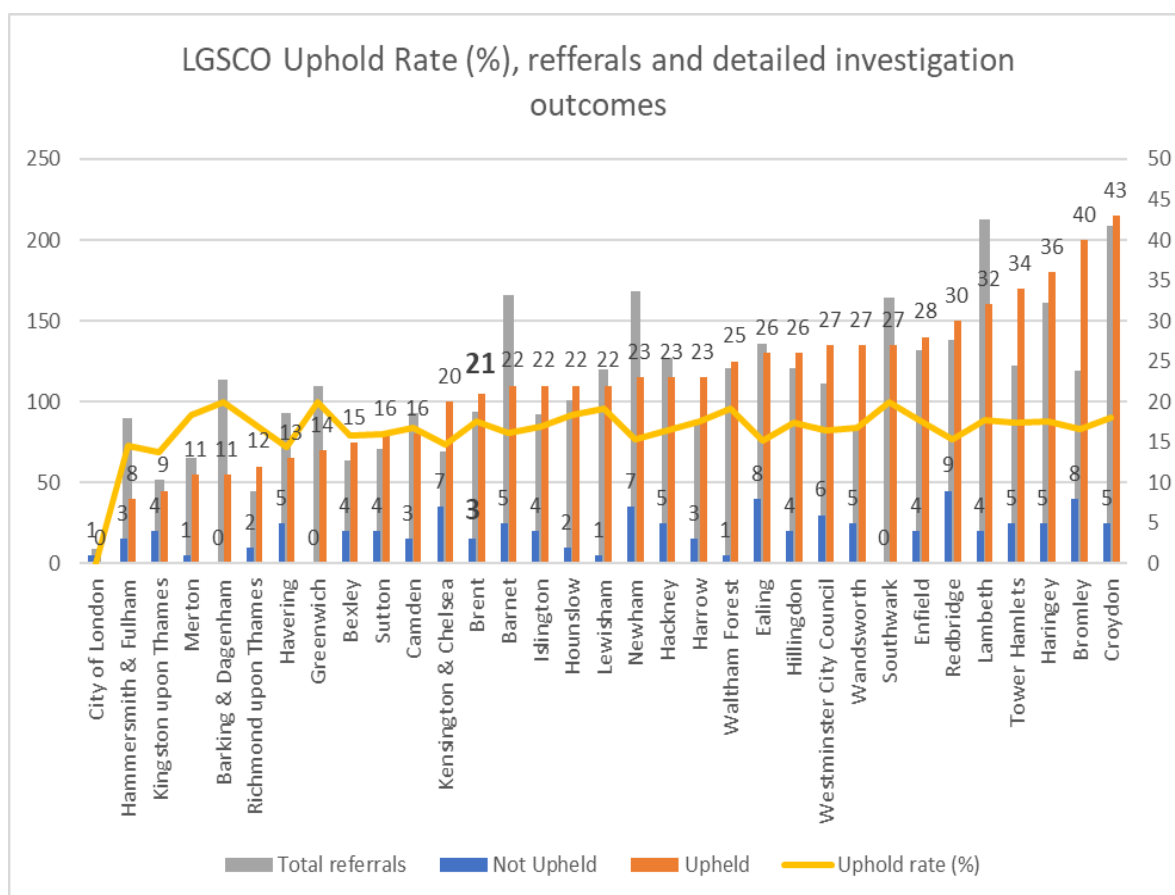
Year	LGSCO Outcomes						
	Not upheld	Upheld	Advice given	Referred back for local resolution	Invalid or incomplete	Closed after initial enquiries	Total
<b>2020 - 21</b>	1	<b>12</b>	3	35	1	25	<b>77</b>
<b>2021 - 22</b>	11	<b>22</b>	8	39	7	31	<b>118</b>
<b>2022 - 23</b>	7	<b>22</b>	6	25	5	29	<b>94</b>
<b>2023-24</b>	3	<b>21</b>	11	46	11	47	<b>139</b>

3.28 In comparison with all 32 London boroughs in 2023/24, Brent fares mid table on most of the criteria measured:

- 13<sup>th</sup> highest at providing a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman, in 14% of cases
- 13<sup>th</sup> joint lowest in number of detailed investigations undertaken
- 13<sup>th</sup> lowest in number of LGSCO upheld cases
- 14<sup>th</sup> highest in number of referrals to the LGSCO
- 13<sup>th</sup> highest LGSCO uphold rate (88%) in 2023/24.

3.29 The table below shows the Ombudsman uphold rate, cases referred to the Ombudsman and number of cases upheld and not upheld in 2023/24 compared with all London boroughs. Of the 24 detailed investigations undertaken by the LGSCO, 21 cases were upheld for Brent. This provides a uphold rate of 88% which is 13<sup>th</sup> highest out of all London Councils in percentage terms, however 13<sup>th</sup> lowest in the number of cases actually upheld. Brent was also joint 10<sup>th</sup> lowest when comparing upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

3.30 A performance comparison of all the LGSCO categories with other London boroughs has been provided in Appendix A(iii).



### LGSCO Upheld Cases

3.31 There were 21 cases upheld against Brent in 2023/24 in the following services:

- Housing - 7
- Adult Care Services – 6
- Education & Children Services – 3
- Highways and Transport - 3
- Benefits and Tax – 1
- Planning and Development - 1

3.32 Brent came 13<sup>th</sup> highest of all London councils for upheld cases where a satisfactory remedy had already been provided before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. Of the 21 cases which were upheld during 2023/24, the Council had already offered a satisfactory resolution to the complaint before it reached the Ombudsman on three occasions. This equates to 14% of our total upheld cases and is above the London average of 12%. For these three cases, the Ombudsman confirmed no further action was required and just upheld the complaint because the Council had identified some fault and also upheld the complaint. There was also one case where fault was found but there was no injustice and therefore there was no remedy required.

3.33 The Ombudsman recommended a specific remedy in relation to 17 upheld cases. The Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council had successfully implemented its recommendations to remedy these complaints, achieving a 100% compliance rate.

- 3.34 This is an encouraging outcome and shows that the Council is complying with remedies set by the Ombudsman.
- 3.35 A brief summary of the cases upheld by the LGSCO for each area has been provided below.

#### Adult Care Services

- 3.36 Out of the seven complaints investigated, six complaints were upheld within this category for 2023/24 which is the same as last year. Five of which were statutory complaints, and one of which was corporate. Topics covered: capacity of a complainant's mother to manage financial and property affairs; support provided by the Mental Health team; accommodation provided under s117 of the Mental Health Act; procedures following discharge from NHS treatment; Council and Trust safeguarding review procedures and issues regarding a disabled bay. The Council provided apologies and financial redress and the following service improvements were made:
- work with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to review its Section 117 aftercare policies and procedures, to ensure these are in line with the Mental Health Act Code of Practice.
  - share a copy of the investigator's final decision with all staff in their adult social care team who have responsibility for completing mental capacity assessments
  - installation and widening of path for access to the disabled bay

#### Housing

- 3.37 Complaints concerning Housing Management are referred to the Housing Ombudsman. Seven complaints relating to other housing services were upheld after being submitted to the LGSCO, which is a decrease of 2 complaints compared to last year.
- 3.38 In two of the cases a remedy had already been provided during the Council's complaints process, therefore the LGSCO made no further orders or recommendations. In one of the cases only an apology was recommended. In the other cases an apology and financial redress was recommended. The majority of cases upheld related to housing needs.
- 3.39 Case one – The Ombudsman decided not to investigate this complaint about the Council's handling of Miss X's housing application. The Council had upheld the complaint and agreed to remedy Miss X's injustice by paying her £750 and taking actions to prevent recurrence. The LGSCO determined that further investigation by them would therefore not be proportionate.
- 3.40 Case two - Mrs Y complained about the Council's handling of her application for a Disabled Facilities Grant. The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault in how the Council considered Mrs Y's application. They did however find fault in the way the Council dealt with Mrs Y's first stage complaints.

- 3.41 Case three - Ms X complained that the Council was at fault in the way it dealt with her homelessness application as she remained in emergency accommodation for 19 months. The Council accepted it was at fault as it delayed in progressing with Ms X's application. The Council had already apologised and offered a suitable payment in recognition of the distress caused.
- 3.42 Case four - Miss X complained the Council failed to properly consider her application for medical priority on our housing register, did not identify her housing needs and delayed managing her complaint. The Ombudsman found the Council failed to send Miss X an allocation letter after its housing assessment and delayed responding to Miss X's complaint causing uncertainty and distress. The Council provided a further apology and paid her £200 in recognition of uncertainty and distress caused.
- 3.43 Case five - Miss X is a wheelchair user and complained the Council left her in unsuitable accommodation for a long period of time. The Ombudsman considered the Council's remedy was not sufficient and the Council agreed to an increased compensation payment.
- 3.44 Case six - Mrs B complained about how the Council handled her homelessness application when she was threatened with homelessness in June 2022. She said its communication was poor and it wrongly closed her case. The Ombudsman found fault with the Council for delays offering Mrs B interim accommodation and progressing her homelessness application. The Council apologised and made a financial payment Mrs B to remedy this. Service improvements were also made.
- 3.45 Case seven - Miss Y complained the Council did not properly consider her unsuitable housing conditions when assessing her application to the housing register. The Ombudsman found fault by the Council, causing injustice. The Council agreed to remedy this injustice by apologising to Miss Y and making a payment to reflect the upset caused. It has also made service improvements.

#### Planning and Development

- 3.46 One case was upheld under this category. The complainant complained about the Council's failure to take planning enforcement action against a business that operates near the business the complainant operates. The Council agreed to carry out a review of its practice and procedure to ensure it imposes the planning conditions it intends to. The Council agreed to consider whether it has any power to require safe vehicular access to and from a site and if so, whether it should use it.

#### Education and Children Services

- 3.47 Mrs X complained the Council delayed issuing her son, F's, amended Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan following an annual review in December 2021. She also complained F was not receiving provision in line with his EHC plan between December 2021 and May 2022. The Council made payments to Mrs X to recognise the injustice this caused to both her and F.

- 3.48 The Council accepted fault when it investigated Mrs X's complaint about school transport for her disabled child. However, the Council's delay to complete the actions agreed in its complaint response was further fault which caused Mrs X injustice. The Council agreed to apologise, take the action it agreed to, make a payment to Mrs X and improve its services for the future.
- 3.49 The Ombudsman found fault with the Council for failing to deliver the education, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy to which Ms X's son was entitled. The Council has already partly remedied the injustice caused to Ms X and her son. The Council also agreed to take further action for the missed occupational therapy provision.

#### Highways and Transport

- 3.50 The Ombudsman decided to not investigate this complaint about highway maintenance and complaint handling. This is because they were satisfied with the actions taken by the Council and it is not a good use of public resources to investigate complaint handling where they are not investigating the substantive matter.
- 3.51 Ms X complained the Council stopped her parking near her home and told her the area is a car free development. Ms X said this affected her family's health and caused distress. There was fault in the way the Council did not enforce its agreement to stop any parking within the development. This fault did not cause an injustice to Ms X.
- 3.52 Mr X complained about how the Council dealt with a refund application for a visitor's parking permit. This caused Mr X distress, frustration and time and trouble chasing for updates and complaining. The Council took action to remedy the injustice caused.

#### Benefits and Tax

- 3.53 Mr X complained about delay in processing his Housing Benefit claim. Mr X said the Council failed in its duty to forward the relevant documentation to the Housing Benefit Appeals Tribunal in a suitable timeframe. There were avoidable delays when considering Mr X's second appeal, and submitting Mr X's appeal to the Tribunal which caused uncertainty and frustration. The Council agreed to the Ombudsman's recommendations.

#### LGSCO Compensation

- 3.54 In 2023/24, the LGSCO asked the Council to pay an additional £9,075 in compensation across thirteen cases. This is £5,125 less than the previous year 2022/23 where £14,200 was paid in compensation over ten cases.
- 3.55 Payments over £1,000 included a total of £3,600 compensation awarded in one of the Housing Needs cases for the amount of time the complainant was in unsuitable accommodation. In another Housing Needs case, £1,400 was offered to recognise the time in unsuitable interim accommodation. In the Education and Children's Service category £1,450 was awarded in one case for the lack of

education provision and for distress and uncertainty caused. In the Adult Social Care case an additional £1000 was awarded for distress as a result of the faults identified and for complaint handling.

### **Housing Ombudsman (HO) Decisions & Learning Points**

- 3.56 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet provided its annual report and therefore we are unable to report on cases that have been referred to it for 2023/2024. The Housing Ombudsman has however asked that the comments from their 2023/2024 report when provided are included in the Council's annual report for 2024/2025. The Housing Ombudsman data will therefore be provided in the next reporting cycle as stipulated by the Ombudsman. A report on Housing Management complaints has been included in Appendix A(iv).

### **Compliments**

- 3.57 In 2023/2024 116 compliments were logged on the system for the Council, an increase of 44 from the previous year where 72 compliments were logged. Customers can send feedback to the Complaints team or to service areas directly. Some of the compliments have been provided below:

#### Housing Needs

*"I would like to thank you XX for your support during my homeless duration and to say your efforts, your acknowledgement, your patience and your sympathy for me and my kids has not gone unnoticed."*

*"I consider myself very fortunate to have had you helping me so thank you so much for all your help. I really appreciate it."*

#### Libraries

*"I just wanted to drop an email to mention how happy I have been with the wonderful service provided by XX at the Queens Park Library. He has been so polite and helpful with both myself and my young daughter"*

*"I WAS AMAZED! It is exactly the type of place that I wish more libraries were like!"*

#### CYP - Inclusion

*"XX is approachable, non-judgmental, intuitive and supportive of any situation. No task or case is ever too big or too small for her. She truly cares about what she does and her vision is crystal clear – making a positive impact and improving lives of young people. She has been a tower of strength for our school and it would be wonderful to have more people like XX providing the high standard service for the good of our young people and their families"*

#### Complaints Team

*"Dear XX, Thank you for your time today, it was reassuring talking to you, I felt you understood what I was saying and you were very supportive"*

## ASC - Commissioning Contracting & Market Management

*"I am writing to tell you how delighted I have been for all that you have done for us. My husband and I are most grateful for your choice of care home for my mum-in-law. She is now settled in a bigger and brighter room, looking happier and very comfortable and all at a lower cost to us. It was a pleasure dealing with you. We always appreciate your prompt response and excellent advice. I would like to thank you for your most efficient and kind services and send you my very best wishes in all you do".*

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

- 4.1 This report has been discussed with Lead members and Corporate Directors and will be discussed at Cabinet and the relevant scrutiny committees.

### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 The details provided on compensation payments in sections 3.15 – 3.18 and throughout this report, reflect the monetary impact of not getting things right the first time as an organisation, and the need to improve the customer experience, thus minimising the financial penalties incurred by the Council.
- 5.2 The total number of cases where compensation was awarded/offered has increased by 34% when compared to 2022/23. However, the amount of compensation awarded/offered for each case on average has decreased by £127.
- 5.3 The total compensation awarded/offered and paid in 2023/24 was £177,754 (353 cases), which is a 7% increase to the previous year. The costs implications and budgetary impacts to the Council are being continuously monitored.

### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care fall under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included in appendices A and B with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints.
- 6.2 The Ombudsman is the final stage in the complaints process, where an individual has complained to the Council and remains dissatisfied with the outcome. The LGSCO can investigate allegations of maladministration in connection with the exercise of a local authorities' administrative function, allegations regarding a failure in a service which it is the local authorities function to provide, an allegation or an apparent failure to provide such a service pursuant to the Local Government Act 1974 as amended.
- 6.3 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that the Council is obliged by law to follow the requirements set out in the Code. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on



the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. The Council's procedures and policies have been updated to take account of these changes.

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

7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:

- (a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity; and
- (c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.

7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

7.3 Although there have been no equality implications identified as a result of this report, the Council are improving data that is collected on the complaints system so that data analysis can be used to identify issues that may disproportionately affect different equality groups.

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

8.1 Not applicable

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

9.1 Not applicable

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 Not applicable

**Report sign off:**

**Debra Norman**

Corporate Director of Law & Governance

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## Complaints Annual Report 2023 – 2024

### Appendix A(i) – Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of statutory complaints made about Brent Adult Social Care (ASC) services during 2023–2024, as required under The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, the Health and Social Care Community Health & Standards Act 2003 and the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006.

#### 2. Statutory Complaints Process

- 2.1 The Department of Health defines an adult social care complaint as, *“an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a Council’s adult social care provision which requires a response”*.
- 2.2 Anyone who has received a service, is currently receiving a service or is seeking a service from the Council can make a complaint. This includes anyone affected by decisions the Council makes about social care, including a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Council. In such a case, they can complain directly to the provider or to the Council. External providers are required to have their own complaints procedures and must comply with them. They are also required to share information on complaints and outcomes with the Council. The Council is reviewing the process to ensure that complaints procedures are streamlined.
- 2.3 There is only one stage in the statutory process, which the Council has interpreted as a provisional response (stage 1) and a final decision (stage 2). All complaints made to the Council are logged and acknowledged on our internal complaints database. The Council will try to resolve the provisional complaint as soon as possible, and within 25 working days of receipt. If delays are anticipated, the complainant is consulted and informed appropriately. All responses, regardless of whether a timescale has been agreed with the complainant or not, must be completed within six months of receiving the complaint.
- 2.4 The Head of Service should sign all provisional complaint responses and if complainants are still unhappy, they will be given the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed by the Director, Adult Social Care or the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing. In some cases, complaints may need to be passed to the Safeguarding leads as appropriate and the complaints process suspended in order to allow the safeguarding process to be completed. In cases where the complaint relates to several organisations, a single organisation will act as the lead and co-ordinate a joint response to the complainant. The final complaint response must advise the complainant their right to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) should they remain dissatisfied.

### **3. Headlines**

- 3.1 The Adult Social Care department made some changes to team names in March 2022. For the purpose of this report that data has been amalgamated and represents the new service area names; Access, Information and Long Term Support, Commissioning Contracting and Market Management, Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist, Learning Disability and Mental Health, and Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker.
- 3.2 The main performance headlines from ASC statutory complaints are as follows:
- 131 complaints were received at the initial stage of the complaints process in 2023/24, an increase of 16% on 2022/23.
  - The highest volume service areas for first stage complaints are as follows – Access, Information and Long Term Support (35%), Learning Disability and Mental Health (23%), Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management (21%) and Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist (20%).
  - 66% of provisional responses were upheld or partly upheld.
  - 36% of stage 2 cases were upheld or partially upheld.
  - 79% of stage 1 and all stage 2 cases complaints were responded to on time.

### **4. ASC Service Users**

- 4.1 In order to provide some context in relation to complaints submitted, in 2023/24 ASC received 11,087 contacts, 5,697 via Brent Customer Services and ASC supported 2,611 out of hospital. ASC carried out 8,219 assessments and 1,087 mental health assessments, as well as 5,630 reviews. Currently 1,600 people are receiving homecare and 758 people are receiving support in supported living or extra care sheltered housing. At the end of March 2024 ASC was providing funded support to 4,609 people.

### **5. Complaints Received**

- 5.1 In 2023/2024, ASC received 131 stage 1 statutory complaints compared to 113 in 2022/2023 and 74 the previous year, showing a rise of approximately 16% from last year and a year-on-year increase of 77% over the past two years. This is mainly due to more uptake in services.
- 5.2 When complaints are received, they are directed to the Complaints Service for triaging. The Team will receive complaints by email, online through the web form or My Account, telephone and by letter. Brent Customer Services will also refer complainants to the Complaints Service. The ASC complaint legislation is explicit that the Council must receive complaints by any means. The ASC complaints process should be easy for all to access, and therefore the Team have provided a telephone number on the website especially for ASC clients. Staff within the Complaints Service will assist complainants as necessary, and if required will assist them in obtaining an advocate.
- 5.3 Statutory complaints largely related to a service users' care needs assessment or the provision of social care needs through either homecare services or residential care. Anyone can approach the Council and is entitled to receive a care needs

assessment. The main areas where ASC received complaints were Access, Information and Long-Term Support, Commissioning Contracting and Market Management and Learning Disability and Mental Health. Details of the services they provide and the figures relating to complaints across these areas are as follows:

- ***Access, Information and Long Term Support:***

5.4 In 2023/2024, the service received 35% of all statutory complaints made to ASC at stage 1. This percentage is the same as last year (35% in 2022/2023) and a slight increase from the year before (31% in 2021/2022). This team deals with more complex support cases and have to manage service users' and families' expectations about the package of care to which they are entitled. The complaints that are received by the team relate to disagreements with the decisions around care packages / assessments, delays in receiving an assessment and complaints concerning communication from social workers. The service users and their families will often have a higher expectation of the services they should receive than the Council can provide. The Council has to consider value for money, as well as the needs of the service user when providing services. These are complex and often sensitive matters and can lead to understandable disputes between the parties involved. Given that this service has restructured since 2021 and taken on a larger amount of cases, this reflects a larger amount of complaints as a result. There has been a concerted effort to improve complaint handling throughout the service and develop a more robust working relationship with the Complaints Service to help reduce the number of complaints.

- ***Commissioning Contracting and Market Management:***

5.5 In 2023/2024, complaints relating to these services accounted for 21% of all complaints received by ASC, which is an increase from the previous year (13% in 2022/2023). Overall, 31 complaints were received for this service area in 2023/2024 at stage 1 and stage 2. The increase in complaints from 15 in 2022/2023 to 31 in 2023/2024 is a significant increase of just more than double the number of complaints compared to the previous year. The ongoing pressure on care homes, the cost-of-living crisis, and workforce pressures have likely contributed to more users raising concerns.

- ***Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist:***

5.6 Of the 131 cases received at Stage 1 for ASC, this service received 26 complaints (20% of all complaints received by ASC at stage 1). At stage 2, only one complaint was received from this service meaning overall this service received 27 of the 142 complaints which is 19% of the complaints received by ASC at stage 1 and 2. This service has been changed from Urgent Care as it now includes cases related to Occupational Therapy which previously fell within Complex Care (now Access, Information and Long Term Support).

- ***Learning Disability and Mental Health:***

5.7 This service accounted for 23% of all complaints received by ASC at stage 1 in 2023/2024, a marginal increase of 1% from the previous year. This service is

smaller in comparison to others in ASC however this service deal with cases of a complex nature.

- **Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker:**

5.8 This service rarely receives complaints because issues of safeguarding are usually reviewed within the service areas in which customers are provided support. The one case received related to a Doctor from a GP practice who made a safeguarding referral regarding one of their patients. The Safeguarding Team closed their enquiries however the complainant was not happy about this so requested a complaint investigation.

5.9 The chart below shows the number of ASC statutory complaints received in 2023/2024. Of the 131 statutory complaints received at stage one, 11 were escalated to the final review stage, which is one less than last year. In 2022/2023, 12 complaints were escalated and in 2021/2022 10 were escalated to the final review stage. This indicates a consistent pattern in the escalation rate over the past three years.

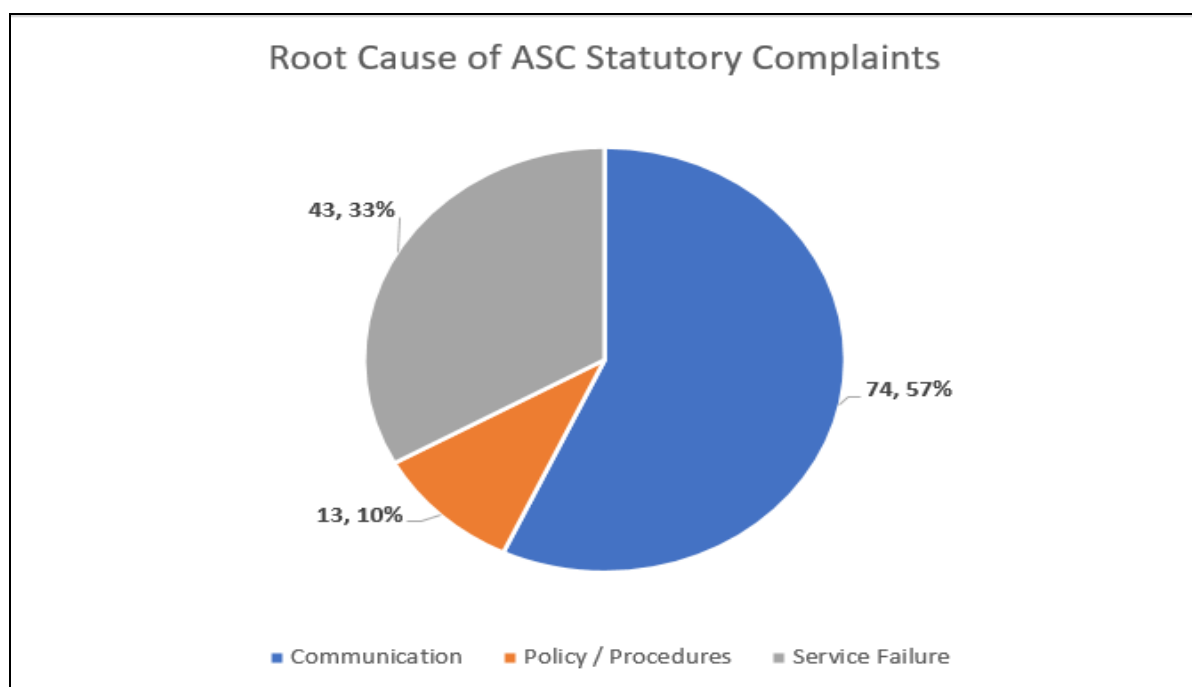


5.10 In 2023/2024, the escalation rate for statutory complaints is 8% compared to 11% in 2022/2023 and 13.5% in 2021/22. The decrease in complaint escalations demonstrates the work being undertaken to resolve concerns at the provisional stage. Outcomes from these cases are discussed later in the report. ASC actively tries to resolve concerns, however, despite this, some of the more complex cases do escalate. The Learning Disability and Mental Health service received the highest

number of escalations to stage to 2, with 4 out of 30 complaints being escalated (13%). However, the service has demonstrated improvement in complaint handling at the first stage as the number of escalated complaints for this service has decreased from the previous year with 20% of cases being escalated in 2022/2023.

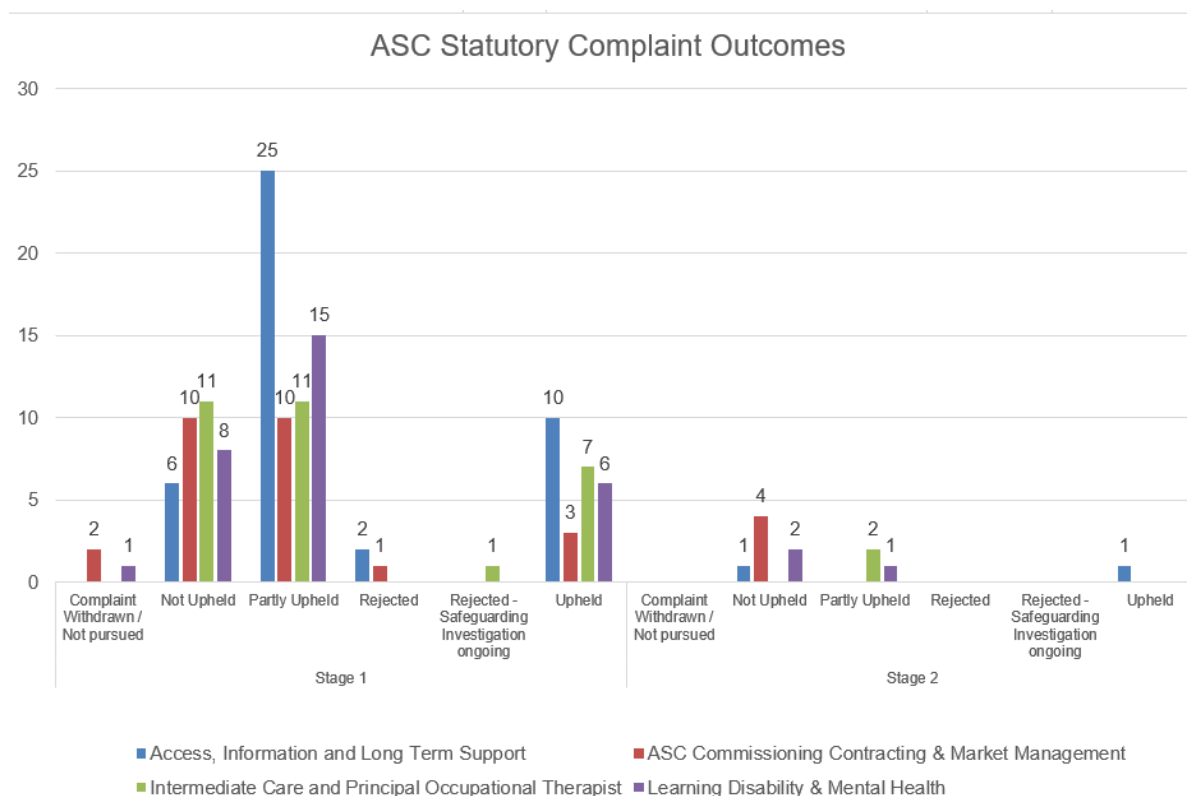
## 6. Nature / Reasons for Complaints

- 6.1 In 2023/2024, communication issues accounted for 57% of all complaints received, demonstrating an increase from 2022/2023 when this was the case for 50% of complaints. This rise suggests there are still ongoing challenges with keeping service users informed and updated. Service failure accounted for 33% of complaints, showing a decrease from 44% the previous year, indicating some improvement in services. Complaints related to policy or procedure increased to 10%, in comparison to this accounting for 6% in the previous year.



## 7. Complaint Outcomes

- 7.1 The chart below shows the outcome of statutory complaints at stage 1 and final review stage:

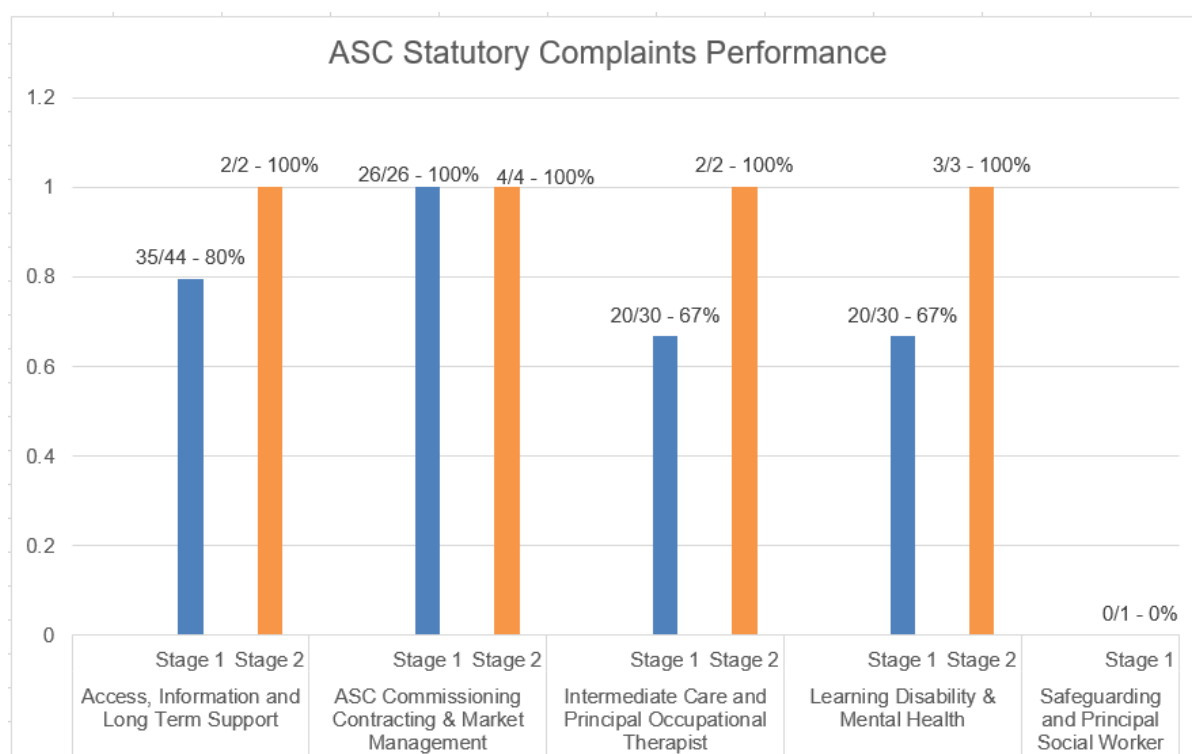


- 7.2 Complaints received at the provisional stage show that some fault (upheld or partly upheld) by the Council was found in 66% of cases, showing an increase compared to some fault being found in 62% of cases in 2022/2023 and 53% in 2021/22. This shows a willingness to accept fault and make service improvements.
- 7.3 Complaints of a complex nature and which involve a number of teams are more typically escalated to the final review stage. At the final review stage, some fault was found in 36% (4/11 stage 2 complaints received) of cases, this is a significant decrease from 2022/2023 where some fault was found in 61% of cases as well as from 2021/22 where 55% of complaints were either upheld or partly upheld. This relates to a greater acceptance of fault at the provisional stage meaning that no further fault is found at the final stage.
- 7.4 The Complaints Service continues to work with ASC to review the accuracy and quality of stage 1 responses, where they have escalated to the final stage, and report the findings to the ASC Management Team in order to implement strategies to reduce the number of escalations.
- 7.5 The Complaints Service are also working to ensure that the different departments within ASC are better coordinated when dealing with complaints about services that crossover the various teams by providing advice and regular complaints training.
- 7.6 Some service improvements identified at the final review stage have been included in point 14 - Learning from Complaints.



## 8. Timeliness of Responses

8.1 The chart below shows complaint response timeliness across the various ASC service areas in 2023/24:



8.2 In 2023/2024, ASC responded on average to 79% of all stage 1 complaints within timescales, a decrease from 84% in 2022/2023. Stage 2 response times have remained consistent from last year, with all cases responded to on time providing a 100% performance rate for the investigated cases.

## 9. Compensation

ASC	Amount
Stage 1 / Provisional	£100
Stage 2 / Final	£800
Ombudsman	£1,850
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,750</b>

9.1 ASC paid a total of £2,750 in compensation for the year 2023/24, comprising seven cases. This was the same number of cases awarded compensation as the preceding year where ASC awarded £3,450 in total in compensation for seven cases. Compensation was awarded in one case at stage one, with £100 being paid. At stage 2, one case was also awarded compensation, and this amounted to £800 which was awarded due to service failures and for the distress and inconvenience caused in pursuing the complaint. Five cases were awarded compensation at the Ombudsman stage, with the highest amount awarded at this stage being £1000.

- 9.2 All compensation awarded by the Council is in accordance with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman remedies guidance.

## **10. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Decisions in 2023/2024**

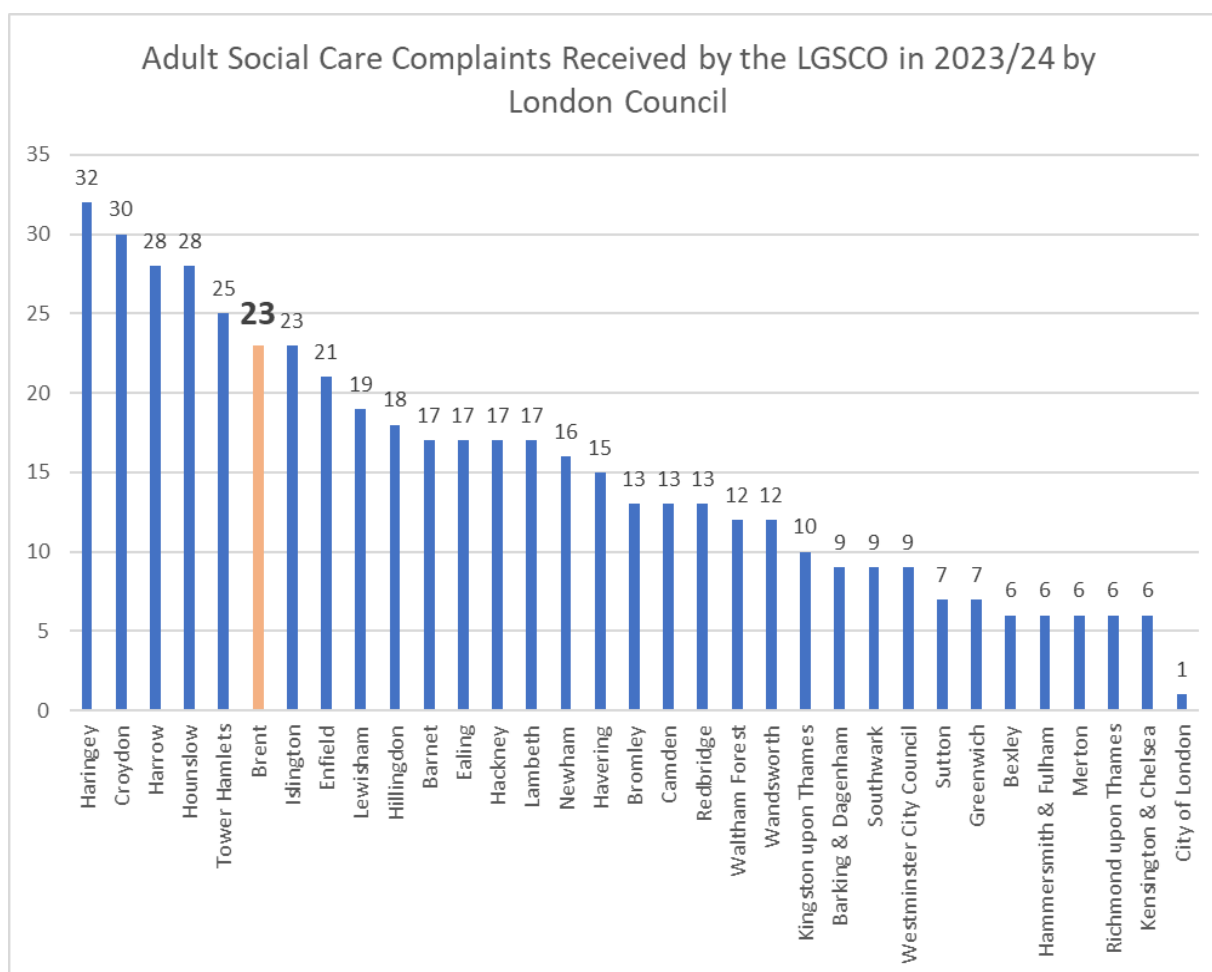
- 10.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provide statistics for cases received and decisions made during the financial year as a complaint that has been received in one period may be decided in the following financial period. In 2023/2204 the LGSCO received 141 complaints (corporate and statutory) and enquiries across the Council and of those 23 related to Adult Social Care, which is nine more than the previous year. In total, 139 decisions were made by the LGSCO in 2023/24 for Brent of which 25 decisions related to ASC, which is twelve more when compared to the previous year where 13 decisions related to ASC. The LGSCO's decisions included referring nine cases back to the Council for local resolution as the Council's complaints process had not been completed. Five cases were closed by the Ombudsman as there was insufficient information or invalid information to proceed, one case was closed as advice had been given and three cases were closed after initial enquiries as there was no worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation. Detailed investigations were carried out in 7 cases. Of those, 6 were upheld (the same as 2022/23) and 1 was not upheld. Five of the cases upheld were statutory cases and a summary for them has been provided in section 10.3. The other two cases were corporate cases and a summary has been provided in the Annual Complaints cover report.
- 10.2 The uphold rate to the LGSCO for ASC cases is 86%, which is more than the previous year at 75%. The Ombudsman have explained that they have become more selective about the complaints they look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. It has meant that changes in upheld rates last year and this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases referred to them.
- 10.3 A summary of the complaints upheld by the LGSCO is provided below:
- One of the complaints centred around the support provided by the Mental Health Team and issues of recognising the relevant support required. The complaint was partly upheld at stage 2 and the Ombudsman made additional recommendations such as meeting with the client to discuss their needs and providing a formal apology letter.
  - Another case was a long-standing case which we had commissioned an independent investigator to review at stage 2. The Ombudsman took a considerable amount of time to investigate this case due to the complexities and made various recommendations such as ensuring the Council is carrying out joint investigations with the relevant Trusts, paying additional compensation and ensuring the outcomes of a safeguarding review is shared with the complainant.
  - This complaint was that the Council and the NHS Trust who cared for the complainant's brother failed to follow correct procedures when he was being discharged from NHS treatment. The Ombudsman requested a financial assessment be back dated to the complainant's brother's discharge in November 2021.

- This complaint was that the accommodation provided to the complainant's brother under s117 of the Mental Health Act was inappropriate. The Ombudsman found that the Council could have done more to address the complainant's concerns at the time they were raised.
- This complaint related to the complainant's mother's capacity to manage her financial and property affairs. The Ombudsman awarded compensation for this. There was also a delay in responding to an allegation of physical abuse which the Ombudsman was satisfied was remedied at stage 2.

## 11. Benchmarking Data

11.1 Brent Council belongs to the North West London Social Care Complaint Managers Group. Unfortunately, many Councils have not yet completed their Complaints Annual Report or are reluctant to share their data.

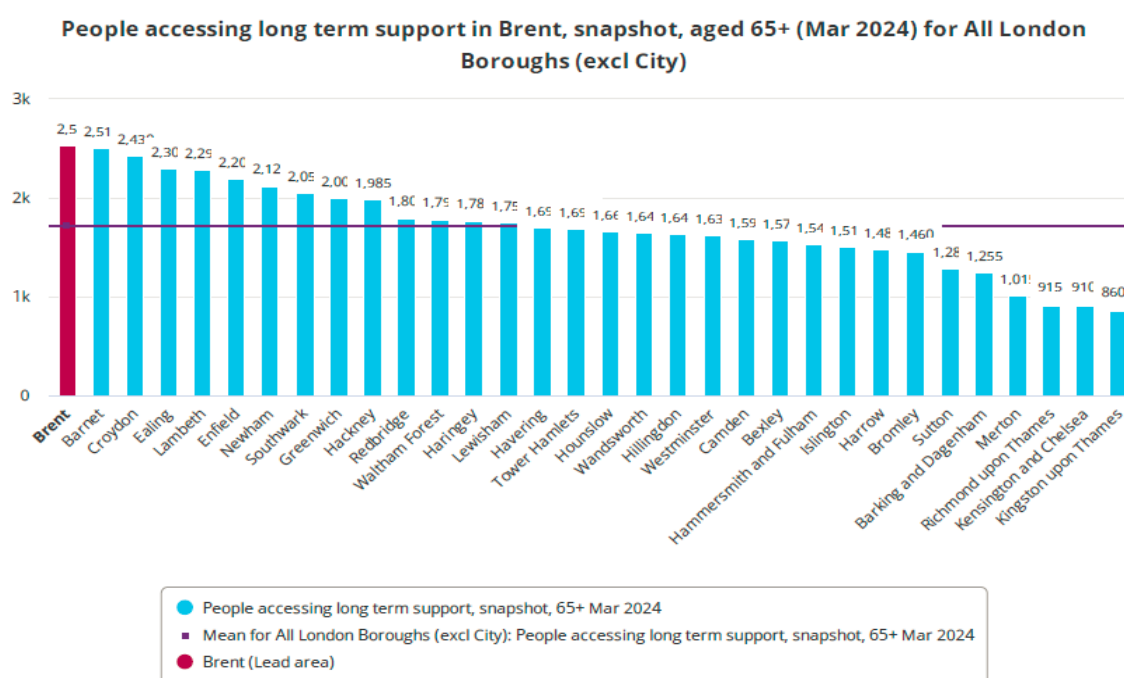
11.2 The graph below shows data provided by the LGSCO with regards to the number of Adult Social Care complaints/enquiries received for each London borough.



11.2 The graph includes corporate as well as statutory complaints. In terms of complaints/enquiries received by the Ombudsman in relation to ASC, Brent has a high number of complaint/enquiries compared with other Councils. There are five

London boroughs that had a higher number of complaints received. The complaints received are nine higher than the previous year for Brent, however, generally the number of complaints received regarding ASC across London is increasing, with a total of 379 received last year compared to 491 received this year for all London Councils. The figures provided do not necessarily mean that the complaint/enquiries were warranted but does show that ASC complaints are on the increase.

- 11.3 The data below from the Local Government Association also shows that Brent is supporting the most people aged over 65+ which means more complaints are to be expected. In addition to this, there are Councils supporting fewer people who are seeing more ASC LGSCO complaints than Brent.



Source: Department of Health and Social Care, Monthly statistics for adult social care (England), People accessing long term support, snapshot, aged 65+, Data updated: 15 Jul 2024

## 12. Customer Feedback and Engagement

- 12.1 The majority of customer contact with the Complaints Service is reactive in that the Team responds to direct contact from customers and their representatives when they report a problem. Through this initial contact the team, in conjunction with ASC managers, has been able to informally resolve a number of complaints at an early stage of contact, e.g. delayed OT assessments / care assessments, identifying resolutions to invoicing / billing queries that could have progressed to formal complaints.

## 13. Compliments

- 13.1 Customers and their representatives are encouraged to tell the Council if they are satisfied with their care or to highlight good service. People are able to send

feedback to the Complaints Service or ASC directly. In 2023/2024, ASC and the Complaints Service received 27 compliments about ASC. The Complaints Service Team is working with ASC to ensure they capture all compliments directly received by the service. Below are examples of compliments that staff in ASC have received:

- *Commissioning Team*

*“As always, thank you for being efficient, supportive and above all patient with me and my mum’s case”.*

*“This is such a great outcome for all of us. I am particularly happy for X; and I hope she settles well in her new home. I must mention the amount of work that X and her team put into making this a success story! I applaud them on the attention paid to detail! Never seen a team work so well!”*

- *Access, Information and Long Term Support*

*“Hi X I would like to start by thanking you personally for your assistance with helping my parents arrange respite care for my gran.*

*From the initial call, it was clear that you understood our requirements and the desperate situation we were in, you went beyond the scope of duty to ensure the correct outcome was achieved in a very short time frame. Updates were provided in a timely manner and any questions we had were responded to without delay”.*

*“I wanted to thank you for your assistance in securing a new care agency for my mum. You have made a significant difference in my mum's life, as well as a significant difference to my role caring for her. The situation had become very difficult and the new care agency has already made a positive impact on my mum's well-being, and we are cautiously optimistic about the quality of care she will receive now”.*

- *Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist*

*“Dear XX, Many thanks for your email and thank you for all your help, it has been extremely helpful. Thank you for being so kind and patient with my father, it is greatly appreciated”.*

- *Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker*

*“I spoke to XX from the foodbank this evening. XX and XX contacted her after your meeting with them and were told her that you were very kind, sensitive and really helpful. They are all so relieved and grateful to you and your colleague. Thanks so very much for helping them and for being so sensitive and victim focused. Thank you for sharing all that you are doing to assist XX.*

## 14. Learning from Complaints

14.1 Feedback from adults who experience social care services offers important insights into what we do well and what we can improve on. Throughout 2023/24 we

continued to gather and analyse feedback from service users and carers (gathered as part of Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) returns and locally), as well as complaints, enquiries and requests. The results from our most recent Adult Social Care Survey 2023/24, broken down by demographic groups, show that overall, 87% of people are happy with the care and support they receive. Most people feel they have a good quality of life and feel safe.

14.2 Brent ASC considers the learning from complaints and compliments an integral part of their Quality Assurance process. Dependant on the learning points identified, ASC operate several different methods for developing and sharing improvement to their practice across the services. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Development of new guidance and practice updates
- Practice updated and disseminated in supervision, team meetings or learning forums
- Provision of training and development
- Case file audits to ensure the quality of practice
- Sharing the learning from complaints with other areas within the Council e.g. Brent Customer Services

14.3 Learning from the lived-experiences of residents using services can help identify where services, policies and procedures can be improved; helps to ensure that senior managers are informed of issues that are important to residents and improves communications and strengthens relationships. ASC have recently launched a Coproduction and Community Partnership approach to promote and engage with residents and partners in the coproduction and codesign of services to better reflect needs and develop services that matter most to people with the intention of reducing the number of complaints received.

14.4 ASC carry out quarterly reviews of complaints via DMT to share learning and agree actions to be implemented to address complaints by type and issues. To ensure service standards and recommendations as a result of complaints, ASC carry out direct engagement with staff teams to clarify service standards and expectations.

## Complaints Annual Report 2023 – 2024

### Appendix A(ii) – Children’s Social Care Statutory Complaints

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of statutory complaints made about Brent Council Children’s Social Care Services during 2023-2024 as required under The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- 1.2 This report provides information about all statutory complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 under the complaints and representations procedures.

#### 2. Statutory Complaints Process

- 2.1 The purpose of the Children’s Act 1989 and Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 is to ensure local authorities have a formal complaint handling procedure in place for children and young people who wish to make a representation or complaint about social care.
- 2.2 It is helpful to be clear on what constitutes a complaint. The guidance “Getting the best from Complaints” produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides advice for local authorities on implementing the Children Act 1989 complaints procedure for children and young people. It defines a complaint as: ***‘A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.’***
- 2.3 ***Who Can Make a Complaint?***

Section 26(3) and section 24D of the Children Act, 1989 and section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002 require Councils to consider complaints made by:

- any child or young person (or their parent or someone who has parental responsibility for them) who is being looked after by the local authority, or is not looked after by them but is in need
- any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies)
- children leaving care
- special guardians
- a child or young person (or parent of his) to whom a Special Guardian order is in force
- any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F (3) or (4) of the Children Act 1989
- any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians
- persons wishing to adopt a child
- any other person to whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend
- adopted persons, their parents, natural parents, and former guardians



- such other person as the local authority considers has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.

2.4 The Council will accept complaints received through any medium, through contact with the Complaints Service, phone, email, online complaint form, by post or in person.

2.5 The regulations set out three stages:

- **Stage 1: Local Resolution** – this is the most important stage of the complaint procedure. The department and external contractors provide services on behalf of the Council and are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial stage. The statutory social care complaints procedure requires first stage complaints to be responded to within 10 working days. However, Heads of Service can request an extension of a further 10 working days where a complaint is considered complex or there is a need for a number of external organisations to be consulted. They will need to consult with the Complaints Service before an extension can be applied and also inform the complainant of the new timescale.
- **Stage 2: Independent Investigation** – this stage is triggered when the complainant is dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1. As a first step, the Complaints Service will consider mediation to resolve ongoing concerns at the end of the Stage 1 process, and before commencing the Stage 2 process. If a complaint does progress to Stage 2, this requires an investigation by an 'Independent Officer', a person external to the service and usually independent of the Council. In addition, the Council is also required to appoint an "Independent Person" who is independent of the Council and not related to any members or officers of the Council. The purpose of the 'Independent Person' is to represent the complainant in the process. The Stage 2 investigation report is then considered by the Director, who provides an adjudication letter to the complainant to confirm whether they agree with the report and the steps to be taken to address any recommendations. Stage 2 complaints which fall within the statutory process must be dealt with in 25 working days. Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within this timeframe an extension can be applied up to a maximum of 65 working days.
- **Stage 3: Review Panel** – where complainants are dissatisfied with the result of a Stage 2 investigation and wish to continue with their complaint about statutory social service functions, the Council is required to establish a Complaint Review Panel. The Panel consists of three independent panellists who have no connection to the Council; a Chair who is appointed by the Complaints Service and is also separate from the Council. The Chair consults with the Complaints Service on the selection of the other two panel members. The Panel undertakes an investigation and makes recommendations via a panel report. This will then be adjudicated by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People (CYP) who makes the final decision on the complaint.



- 2.6 If the Complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have the right to refer their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO will carry out their own investigation requesting information from both parties and provide an outcome with any recommendations if appropriate.

### 3. Headlines

- 3.1 The main performance headlines from Children’s Social Care are as follows:

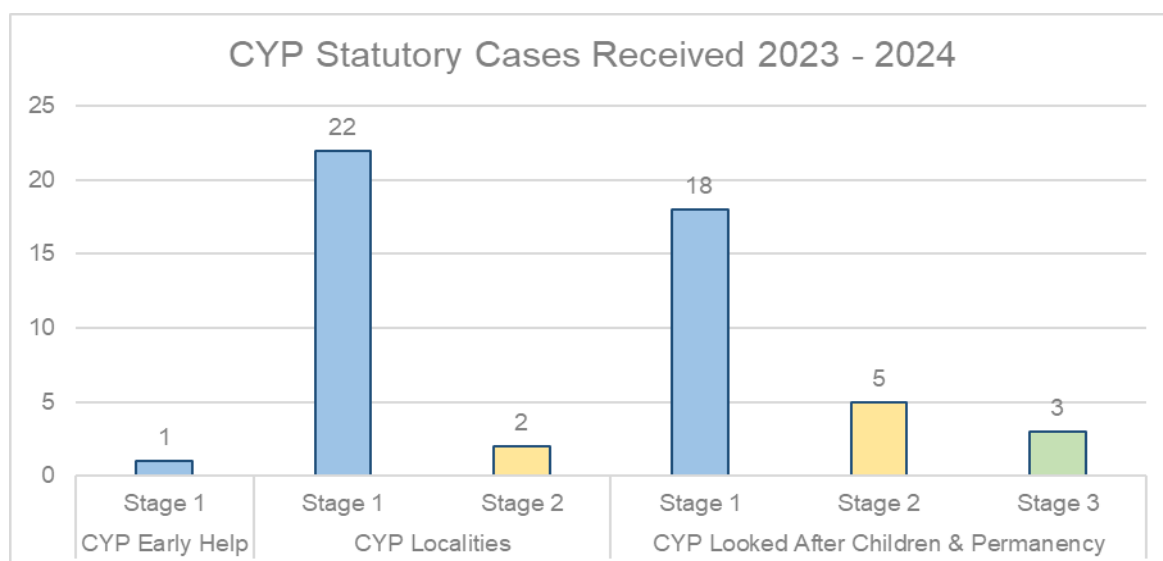
- The department received 41 statutory stage 1 complaints in 2023/24
- Stage 1 statutory complaint numbers decreased by 50% in 2023/24
- There were seven stage 2 investigations completed compared to six the previous year
- 79% of stage 1 statutory complaints were responded to within target in 2023/24, against a target of 100% (compared with 85% in 2022/23)
- £6,095 was paid in compensation for the period 2023/24 on ten cases, a decrease from £13,800 paid in the previous year.

### 4. Children’s Social Care Service Users

Children’s Social Care received a total of 3777 referrals and completed 3226 Child & Family Assessments. As of 31 March 2024, the Council had 2729 open Children in Need cases and 361 children were the subject of a Child Protection Plan. There were 307 Looked After Children and the Council had 612 care leavers aged 18-25 in receipt of services.

### 5. Complaints Received

- 5.1 Brent Council CYP received a total of 41 stage 1 statutory complaints in 2023/24, a decrease of 50% from last year where 82 complaints were recieved. There were seven stage 2 requests received which is one more than last year and three stage 3 panels convened, which is two less than last year.



- 5.2 Early Help received one complaint whereas last year no complaints were received for this service. The number of stage 1 complaints received for Localities also decreased with 22 complaints received in 2023/24 compared to 46 complaints received in 2022/23 (a decrease of 52%). The number of complaints received at stage 1 for Looked After Children and Permanency decreased by 47% from 2022/23 with 18 complaints received in 2023/24. Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships did not receive any complaints whereas last year 2 complaints were received.
- 5.3 The Localities Service accounted for 22 complaints, 54% of the total number of stage 1 complaints received. These are split between East Localities, West Localities, Children with Disabilities and Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/Family Front door/ Families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). These complaints concerned the communication and attitude of social workers, the accuracy of reports and assessments and disagreements over the size of support packages.
- 5.4 The Children with Disabilities team received 14 stage 1 complaints in 2023/24 and two were escalated to stage 2. These cases commonly related to communication and information contained within records and reports and disagreements over care packages. The Family Front Door/MASH/NRPF team received 6 stage 1 complaints, these generally concerned unhappiness with the behaviour of the allocated social worker and the process following a referral to Brent Family Front Door (BFFD).
- 5.5 Looked after Children accounted for 18 complaints, 44% of the total number of stage 1 complaints received. The complaints received are split between Care Planning, Young People in Care, Fostering and Adoption and Kinship. Cases within Looked After Children are typically raised by the young person themselves so the Complaints Service will give the option of an advocate to help them navigate the complaints process, should this be required.
- 5.6 The Council received 7 Stage 2 requests in 2023/24, compared to 6 in 2022/23. Five of these complaints related to the Looked after Children and Permanency Service. The other two cases fell under Localities, more specifically the Children with Disabilities Service.
- 5.7 Under the children's statutory procedure, a complainant has a right for their complaint to be heard by an Independent Review Panel at Stage 3. In 2023/24 the Council received 3 requests for Stage 3 panels, and 3 panels were held during the year. A summary of the complaints that resulted in a Stage 3 Panel has been provided at point 10.3.

## **6. Profile of complainants and method of contact**

- 6.1 When complaints are received, they are directed to the Complaints Service for triaging. Of all the statutory children's stage 1 complaints received, the team received 73% by email, 22% by self-service online, and 5% by telephone. The number of complaints received via email remains similar compared to last year. There also hasn't been much change in the percentage of complaints received by

telephone and the online portal. The complaint legislation explicitly states that the Council must receive children's statutory complaints by any means.

- 6.2 The varied method of contact demonstrates that this is happening. Whilst the team has provided a telephone number on the web site, especially for children's social care complaints, email appears to be the preferred mode of delivery for complainants. There are three options to log complaints online through the customer portal: anonymously, unregistered or registered. The portal allows complainants to log and monitor the progress of their complaints all in one place. There are also other mechanisms in place by which children and young people can raise issues before needing to raise a formal complaint. This is via a commissioned Advocacy service and Looked After CYP have an Independent Reviewing Officer who is able to advocate on CYP's behalf as well.
- 6.3 The Council has limited information about the ages of complainants as many complainants do not provide this information. Only 17 complainants provided their age out of a possible 41 complaints that were received. Two of the complainants were aged 24 and 25, the remaining complainants who lodged complaints were 35 or over. The majority of complaints received in relation to Localities are raised by parents regarding their children, however, the majority of complaints received by the Looked after Children service are raised by the young person themselves.
- 6.4 In terms of ethnicity of complainants, 14 complainants selected an option when submitting their complaints through the portal. The data captured is as follows:

Any other ethnic group	1
Asian Indian	1
Asian Other	1
Asian/Asian British: Indian	1
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	2
Black British	1
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British: African	2
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	1
Mixed Other	1
Other Arab	1
White British	1
White Other	1

- 6.5 To improve responses around this, the Complaints Service are reviewing ways of implementing a post-investigation feedback form.

## 7. Nature / Reasons for Complaints

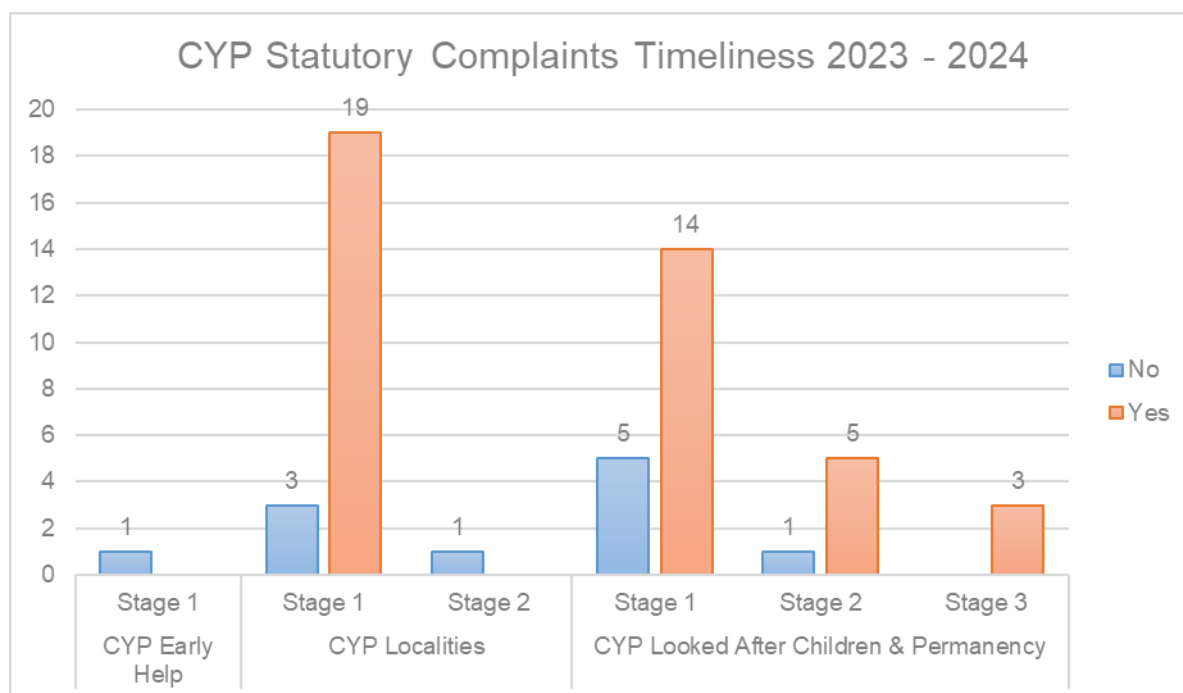
- 7.1 The main reason for complaints received in 2023/24 related to service failure which is a change from the last two years where communication was the main reason for complaints. Complaint root causes are categorised in three main categories: Communication, Service Failure and Policy and Procedure. In 2023/24 just over half (51%) of the stage 1 complaints closed were categorised under the category service failure. Communication accounted for 46% of cases and policy and procedure for 2%. Complaints concerning communication generally related to complainants not

feeling they were kept informed or updated on key issues, with 54% of cases being upheld or partly upheld as a result. The Directorate continue to make improvements on how they communicate with service users to manage expectations. In response to learning from a complaint, one of the changes made for care leavers over the age of 21 years is to offer them the option of continuing to have an allocated personal advisor. The letters sent out to care leavers once they reach 21 years have been amended accordingly. This takes account of the diversity of need amongst care leavers in discharging our corporate parenting responsibility.

- 7.2 Numerous complaints also concerned social workers' conduct or attitudes. Families may not always agree with the Council's decision, but Children's Social Care has a legal obligation to assist and act in the child's best interests. As a result, complaints are often directed at specific social workers who frequently have to walk a difficult line between parents who are at odds. Complaints against social workers are most frequently made when one parent disagrees with a decision and accuses the social worker of siding with the other parent. In the majority of cases where staff conduct was identified as a root cause, the complaint was not upheld.
- 7.3 Complaints concerning parents who are in a conflict situation, with regards to access and care of their children, are on the rise. Usually this has been where the partners disagree about the care the child or children are receiving from the other parent. Some feel that the Child and Family Assessment or court reports are not completed in an impartial way and that the social worker has failed to communicate with them at an early enough stage in proceedings. This presents a challenge for social workers who must find a balanced approach through these relationships.
- 7.4 The Complaints Service provide complaints handling training to relevant staff members within CYP and attend team and management meetings to discuss key themes and learning from complaints.
- 7.5 Examples of the types of root causes of complaints that arise are listed below: -
  - ***Alleged poor staff attitude*** - much of the work of Localities staff involves them taking actions in connection with highly sensitive child protection or child in need issues, which parents or carers may often disagree with. There have been a number of comments about social workers where the family member perceives a bias, leading to complaints about the alleged impartiality of assessments.
  - ***Service failure*** - on completion of a Child and Family Assessment, or reports to the Initial Child Protection Conference, social workers had not kept all the interested parties updated with the completed assessment and reports. In addition to this, not all parties agree to the information within reports which has been recorded as 'not up to standard.'
  - ***Looked After Children*** - the main area of complaints related to leaving care. Most of the root causes are recorded as young people not being kept informed. This suggests the need for more awareness around time scales and procedures which need to be made clearer to customers.

## 8. Timeliness of Responses

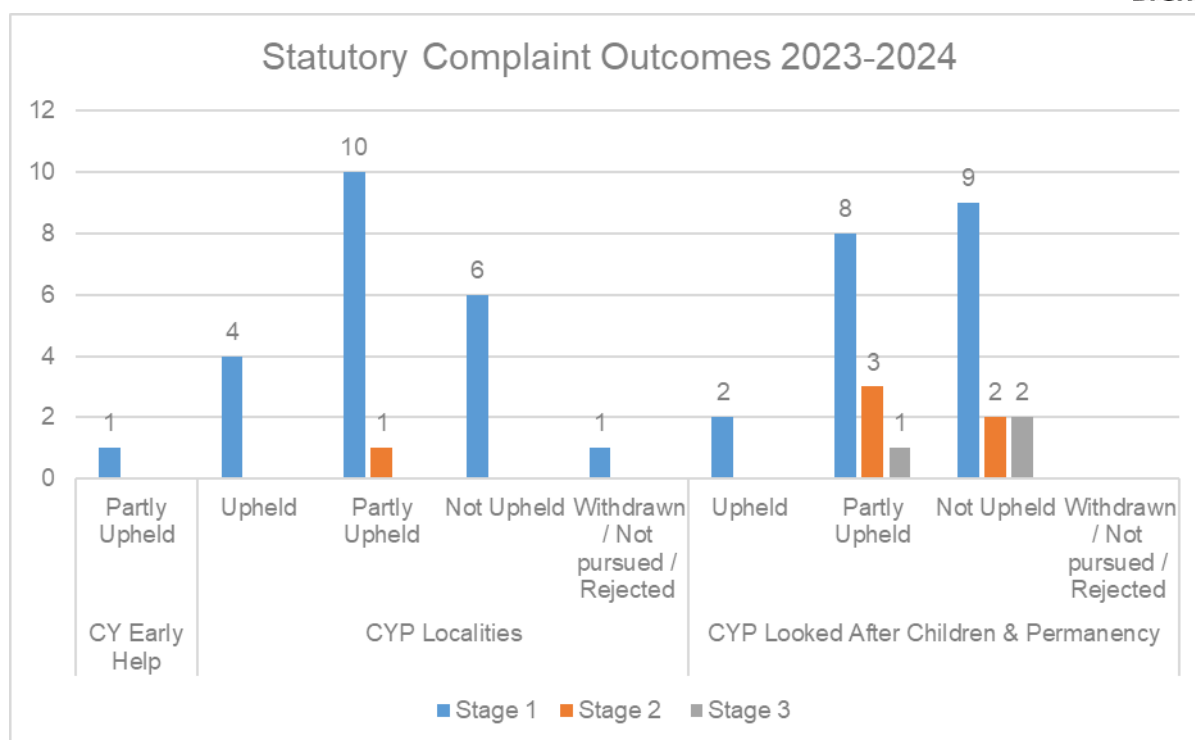
- 8.1 The Council responded to 79% of all children's statutory complaints within the appropriate timescales. This is a decrease of 3 percentage points compared to the previous year.



- 8.2 It is important to note that the statutory children's complaint legislation allows the Complaints Service to extend the target deadline by 10 working days in complex cases.
- 8.3 In 2023/24, 42 stage 1 statutory complaints were due for a response. The performance rate at stage 1 was 79%, with 33 out of 42 complaints responded to on time, whereas the performance rate for stage 2 complaints increased on last year with 5 out of 7 cases responded to on time, which is below the required standard but an increase of 50% compared to the previous year. This was due to delays in independent investigators providing their reports due to the complexity of the cases. We have since managed the relationships with the independent investigators to encourage reports being completed in a timely manner.

## 9. Complaint Outcomes

- 9.1 There are four possible outcomes for complaints: withdrawn/not pursued/rejected, not upheld, partly upheld and upheld. The chart below shows the outcomes of statutory complaints at stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3 in 2022/23 as recorded on the Council's case management system.



## 9.2 The key findings are:

- Of the 41 cases closed at stage 1 during 2023/24, the Council found some merit in 61% of complaints, with 25 complaints either upheld or partly upheld. This percentage is the same as the previous year although 20 less complaints were upheld or partly upheld. A 'Not Upheld' outcome was decided in 15 cases at stage 1 and 1 case was either withdrawn, not pursued or rejected. Service areas continue to show a willingness to admit errors or mistakes and to remedy concerns raised.
- The Council closed 6 stage 2 statutory complaints during 2023/24 which is 50% less than the previous year. Four complaints were partly upheld (67% of complaints) and two were not upheld. Last year 91% of stage 2 complaints were upheld so there has been a positive decrease of 24% compared to this year.
- In 2023/24 three stage 3 panels were completed, one was partly upheld and the other two were not upheld. This provides an uphold rate of 33% at stage 3 which is better than the previous year where the uphold rate was 65%.

## 10. Analysis and Learning from Complaints

- 10.1 Lessons learnt from complaints can help shape and improve services and the customer experience. CYP for managers and staff are committed to using this learning to improve outcomes for service users.
- 10.2 Detailed below is a summary of the cases escalated to stage 2 and where a detailed investigation was undertaken. It also includes any learning points and service improvements identified as a result of the complaint. The Council wishes to learn from its complaints and improve the service it provides.

- Localities had one stage 2 investigation in 2023/24. The theme of this complaint was contact with the social worker and supervisor and information recorded in contact reports. The recommendations resulting from this complaint included:
  - Staff were reminded that it is essential that all communication relating to a case is entered on the electronic system, this would include letters, emails, telephone calls and texts.
  - Staff were reminded of their responsibilities to ensure that commitments given in complaint responses (including adjudications) are implemented
- Looked after Children and Permanency had five stage 2 investigations – Three of the five cases related to a lack of support from the care leaver's allocated Personal Advisor. The other two cases related to long standing issues raised by the parents of young people who are placed in care. Recommendations included:
  - Letters to Care Leavers being updated to reflect their right to have a PA allocated to them beyond 21 years old and up to 25 years old.
  - Ensuring processes are followed in a timely manner and in line with the statutory duty.
  - Social workers to ensure that they make thorough and detailed recordings of significant events within the case records and escalate such matters, as required.

#### 10.3 There were three stage 3 review panel adjudications during the year:

- Case 1: The complainant raised various concerns regarding the lack of support received by the Leaving Care Team between 2019 and 2021 and that his allocated PA did not do enough to secure a suitable property via Housing Needs. In total there were 9 separate points of complaint. The Panel changed two of the outcomes from the stage 2 investigation and made some additional recommendations.
- Case 2: This case was made by a father of a child under a Special Guardianship Order. The complainant was concerned about the welfare of the child and lack of confidence in the social work team. The Panel did not change the outcome of the stage 2 however they did make some additional recommendations.
- Case 3: This case was made by an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker via an advocate. The complainant felt he was not adequately supported in his education, pursuing an insurance claim and applying for travel documents. The Panel did not change the outcome of the stage 2 however they did make some additional recommendations.

#### 10.4 The Children and Young People's department has recently launched a new Practice Framework called "This is Brent CYP, This is How We Grow" which sets out the way in which staff are expected to work collaboratively and constructively with families.



The Brent CYP 'Practice Promises' were launched in February 2022 and set out standards and expectations of what families can expect to receive. 'Practice Promises' are reviewed as part of the CYP core audit programme to ensure that standards are being consistently met or exceeded. Children Services also have a Quality Assurance and Performance meeting to track activity and service improvement. Children Services also have a Quality Assurance and Performance meeting to track activity and service improvement.

## 11. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Decisions in 2023/24

- 11.1 There were twenty-four corporate and statutory Education & Children's Services complaints escalated in 2023/24 which is fifteen more complaints than the previous year 2022/23. The LGSCO made decisions on twenty-two cases during 2023/24 of which thirteen were closed after initial enquiries were made, two were invalid or incomplete, four were referred back to the Council for local resolution, three were upheld. In summary, from the twenty-two cases decided, fault was found in three of the cases, which provides a 14% uphold rate. This an improvement on last year where the uphold rate was 18% (two cases upheld out of 11 decided).
- 11.2 All three of the cases upheld fall under the corporate complaints process so are summarised in the covering Annual Complaints Report.

## 12. Compensation

- 12.1 Children's Social Care awarded a total of £6,095 in compensation in 2023/24 across ten cases. This is a decrease of 56% from £13,800 which was awarded in 2022/23, across fifteen cases. This breaks down as follows:

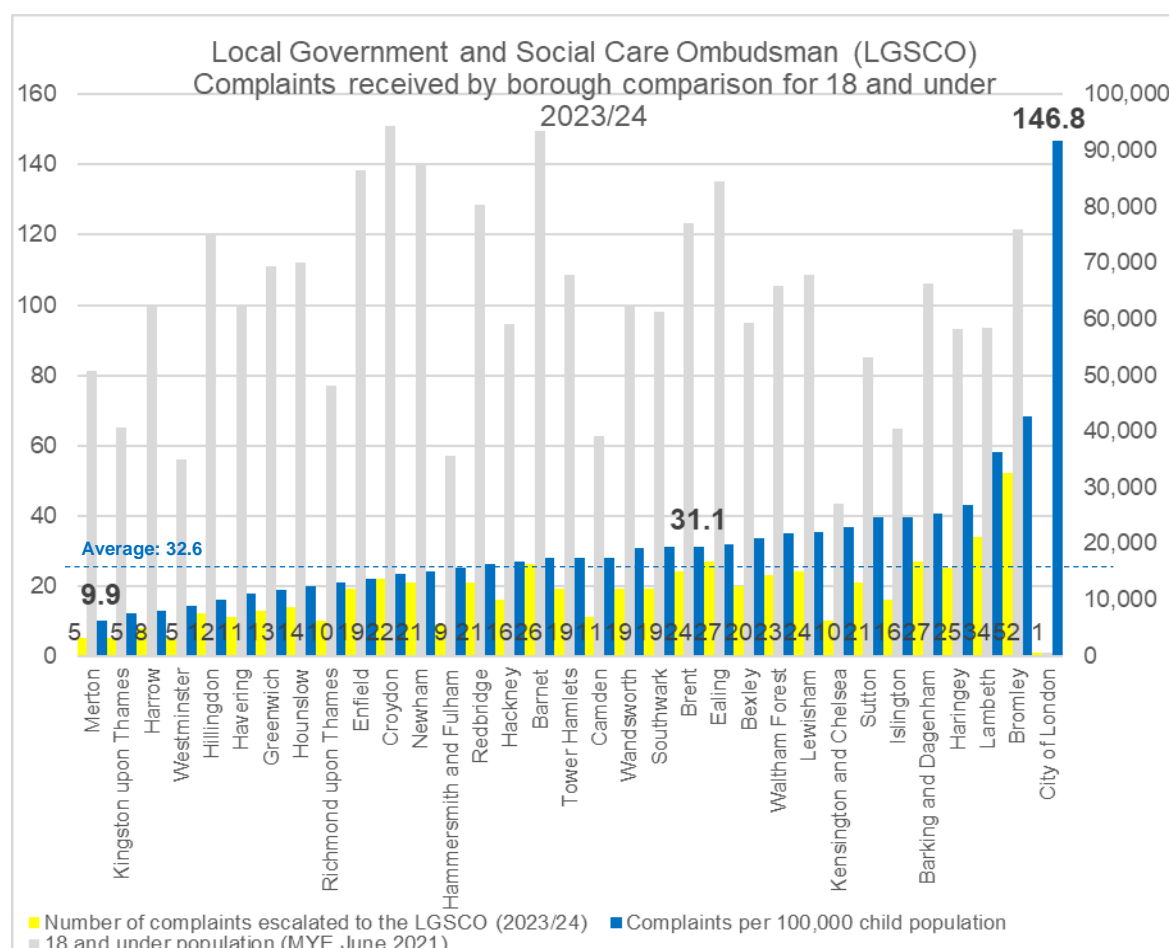
- A total of £4,300 was offered in three cases at stage 1 of the statutory complaint procedure. The compensation was paid for loss of accommodation, loss of earnings and a lack of meaningful PA support.
- A total of £1,345 was paid out at stage 2 across five cases. In three of these cases, compensation was paid due to a failure or delay in providing a service. In one case compensation was paid due to time and trouble. There was also one case where £95 was awarded at mediation stage for a historic savings payment that there was no evidence had been paid.
- Compensation of £450 was awarded at stage 3 of the statutory complaints process in two cases. One payment of £250 related to distress and the other payment of £200 related to a delay or lack of service.
- The Ombudsman did not recommend the Council pay any compensation in 2023/24.

Children's Social Care	Amount
Stage 1	£4,300
Stage 2	£1345
Stage 3	£450
Ombudsman	£0
Total	£6095



## 13. Benchmarking

- 13.1 Brent Council belongs to the North West London Social Care Complaint Managers Group. The majority of Councils have not yet done completed their Annual Complaints report or have chosen not to share data. Comparative data has therefore been provided below on Education and Children's services cases that were received by the LGSCO during 2023/24. Data from the Office of National Statistics was also used to illustrate the number of complaints received relative to size of population of children within each borough. The average for all London Councils is 32.6 per 100,000 population whereas Brent is 31.1.
- 13.2 This means that Brent Council is performing better than average for complaints received by the LGSCO when compared to its projected population in 2021 of children 18 and under. There were 24 complaints escalated to the LGSCO in relation to Education and Children's Services in 2023/24, which is an increase of fifteen complaints compared to 2022/23. The Ombudsman did highlight there would be an increase and this can be seen across the majority of London boroughs. The estimated population for children 18 and under within Brent for mid-year 2021 was 77,113.



## 14. Compliments

- 14.1 The Service doesn't just learn from complaints. Positive feedback can also provide useful insights. In the period covered by this report, the Children and Young People department logged 65 compliments on the Council's complaints and compliments

database, which is 49 more compliments logged than the previous year. Managers are encouraged to log all compliments they receive. CYP Good News is a regular forum where CYP staff hear about, celebrate and learn from positive feedback. Below are examples of some of the compliments received in 2023/24.

- **Localities – East Locality team**

*“sometimes we as humans meet people who are a complete stranger to us in terms of social rules, we categories them as (strangers) because they're different from us, not related to us and of course*

*they're not part of the family, you came into my life and my kids's life as a stranger, but you were so close to my heart and soul, I really wish if I can keep you in my life for longer and longer, I wish if I can listen to your opinion and advice, you took*

*your place in my lonely life as a soul sister, I appreciate you , I appreciate your advice and I take this advice seriously, in my 13 years living in this country, you were the only one who understood me , my position, and took my kids seriously, I am definitely not the best mummy in the world, but I am doing my best , I will always keep you and your advice close to my heart , I am very thankful to God that he made you come to my life , I am thankful to you because you understood me, my kids , and our circumstances. You'll always be remembered, and listened to, even if you are not part of our life any longer. I wish you the happiest life , I wish you a safe and peaceful future, and I pray for God to protect you and guide you throughout your journey and wherever your life takes you....”*

- **Early Help – Early Years**

*“We just want to acknowledge all xxxx hard work and effort she put into making childrens and families lifes that much better due to her Triage intervention.”*

- **Looked after Children & Permanency - Fostering & Adoption Team**

*“just want to thank you for all you did for me and my boys. I feel that you are so approachable! you were so empathetic to my situation, such a warming, kind and down to earth lady you wouldn't have even thought you were a social worker it felt as though we had known each other for a long time!*

*I really appreciate all you've done honestly from when I first came to you I was a big mess but you made sure me and my boys were safe and were able to move on with our next chapter and you are the first and only social worker I have ever met and I will remember you forever!”*

- **Localities – NRPF and Homeless Team**

*“We greatly thank you and the team so much. Thank you for the good works you still continue to do for other families in need.*

*God bless you all for the immense efforts and also grant you all your heart desires. A big thank you NRPF/H Team.”*

- **Inclusion – Inclusion Service**

*“I would like say a massive thank you to xxx for supporting my son xxx. xxx has been extremely supportive and constantly communicating with me. xxx has been able to explore all the options available, helping us to make the right choice regarding my son and stopped a permanent exclusion from being finalised at xxxxxx. It is well appreciated all the hard work that he has put in for my son to be in education regardless the end outcome.*

*I hope the team recognises how amazing xxxx is. Many thanks !.”*

- **Inclusion – SEND Service**

*“I can’t thank you enough for your help in securing a place for my son xxxxx at the xxxxx school. You have been amazing throughout this process and kept me up to date at each stage.*

*I am truly grateful for everything that you have done for us.”*

- **Early Help – Early Years**

*“Xxxx is truly amazing positive early years practitioner and team member. We all value xxxxx so much and feel blessed to have xxxxx in our FWC and community, always ensuring the quality delivery and Start for Life for our children and families.”*

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## Appendix A(iii) – LGSCO Comparison with other London Authorities


Authority Name	Population (estimated)*	Referrals to LGSCO	Detailed Investigations	Upheld	Uphold Rate	Remedy Rate
Barking and Dagenham	218,534	121	11	11	100%	27%
Barnet	388,639	158	27	22	81%	9%
Bexley	246,543	81	19	15	79%	20%
Brent	338,918	141	24	21	88%	14%
Bromley	329,830	154	48	40	83%	13%
Camden	210,390	137	19	16	84%	0%
City of London	8,618	9	1	0	0%	
Croydon	390,506	186	48	43	90%	2%
Ealing	366,127	156	34	26	76%	27%
Enfield	329,601	180	32	28	88%	7%
Greenwich	289,254	114	14	14	100%	29%
Hackney	259,956	132	28	23	82%	13%
Hammersmith and Fulham	183,295	72	11	8	73%	13%
Haringey	264,130	175	41	36	88%	17%
Harrow	260,987	98	26	23	88%	4%
Havering	262,022	96	18	13	72%	0%
Hillingdon	304,792	125	30	26	87%	8%
Kingston	287,940	135	24	22	92%	9%
Islington	216,767	124	26	22	85%	23%
Kensington and Chelsea	143,940	89	27	20	74%	15%
Kingston upon Thames	167,845	59	13	9	69%	0%
Lambeth	317,498	249	36	32	89%	9%
Lewisham	299,810	155	23	22	96%	18%
Merton	215,324	72	12	11	92%	18%
Newham	350,626	167	30	23	77%	22%
Redbridge	309,836	153	39	30	77%	10%
Richmond upon Thames	195,232	54	14	12	86%	25%
Southwark	306,374	175	27	27	100%	15%
Sutton	209,517	77	20	16	80%	13%
Tower Hamlets	312,273	182	39	34	87%	6%
Waltham Forest	278,050	146	26	25	96%	12%
Wandsworth	328,367	119	32	27	84%	7%
Westminster	205,087	96	33	27	82%	7%

Key: Outer London

Inner London

\*As per the Office of National Statistics' Mid-Year Estimates June 2021

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	<b>Cabinet</b> 12 August 2024 (cancelled)
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Law and Governance</b>
	<b>Lead Cabinet Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform (Cllr. Mili Patel)</b>
<b>Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Council's Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Mariza Barros Complaints and Casework Manager Brent Council 0208 937 1381

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This annual report sets out complaints performance for the Housing Management service for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report focuses on volumes of complaints, complaint outcomes, compensation offered, and the nature of complaints as well as the learning and service improvements as a result. Complaints regarding housing management fall under the Housing Ombudsman and therefore a separate report has been prepared for this purpose.
- 1.2 The report also contains the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code at Appendix A.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet are asked to note Brent Housing Management's performance in managing and resolving complaints.
- 2.2 Cabinet are asked to note, and review Brent's latest self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's updated Complaint Handling Code.

## 3.0 Detail

### 3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

- (a) Complaints provide important learning points for the Council and allow us to inform the Council's priorities in many different ways. Through these learning points, we can make changes to achieve and further our priorities and move forward together. Complaints provide an opportunity for the Council to understand issues and put things right, also ensuring that they do not reoccur.
- (b) Complaints are wide ranging and dealt with across the Council. Owing to this, they touch upon all the priorities within the Borough Plan as detailed below:
- *The Best Start in Life* - Being able to deal with concerns at crucial stages of people's lives allows them to get the best start in life. The Housing service provides residents with an opportunity to have somewhere to call home. For residents to live comfortably and become independent or bring up their families. Having housing as a build block to progress in life.
  - *Thriving Communities* - Providing our residents with a route to complain and provide feedback not only encourages resident engagement but allows us to make improvements and inform change. In turn, by addressing their concerns and developing solutions that will benefit them, communities are given the opportunity to thrive.
  - *A Cleaner, Greener Future* - The Council receive a number of complaints regarding environmental issues, which are reviewed and help us target specific areas. This also allows the Council to evaluate services that are being provided to ensure they meet our aspirations for a cleaner, greener future.
  - *Healthier Brent* – Complaints regarding green spaces within estates and tackling antisocial behaviour allow the Council to investigate and develop more initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. During our complaints process we also signpost to relevant services that can assist our complainants, such as Mental Health services.
  - *Prosperity and Stability in Brent* – Analysis of complaints received about housing needs is fundamental in terms of providing the tools and initiatives to support, empower and equip residents, and ensure long term stability.

Complaints also feed into some of the current strategies, priorities and plans set out for Brent, such as the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028 to ensure residents and service users are provided with access to the complaints procedure and that we use equalities data to concentrate on providing support to individual needs and in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED). The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 also plays a pivotal role when looking at how users are accessing our services and how they are logging complaints. We are making it easier for users to log complaint casework, view the history of what they have logged, and access everything in one place.



## **3.2 Background**

3.2.1 The Council's corporate complaints fall under two separate governing bodies, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Complaints relating to Housing Management fall under the Housing Ombudsman and complaints about any other service fall under the LGSCO.

3.2.2 This report focusses on complaints that fall under the Housing Ombudsman only. The report includes some data (not separated out) on properties that are managed by the Council which include I4B Holdings and First Wave Housing. Since last October 2023, complaints related to these properties have been recorded – and will be reported - separately

3.2.3 The main performance headlines from Housing Management complaints are as follows:

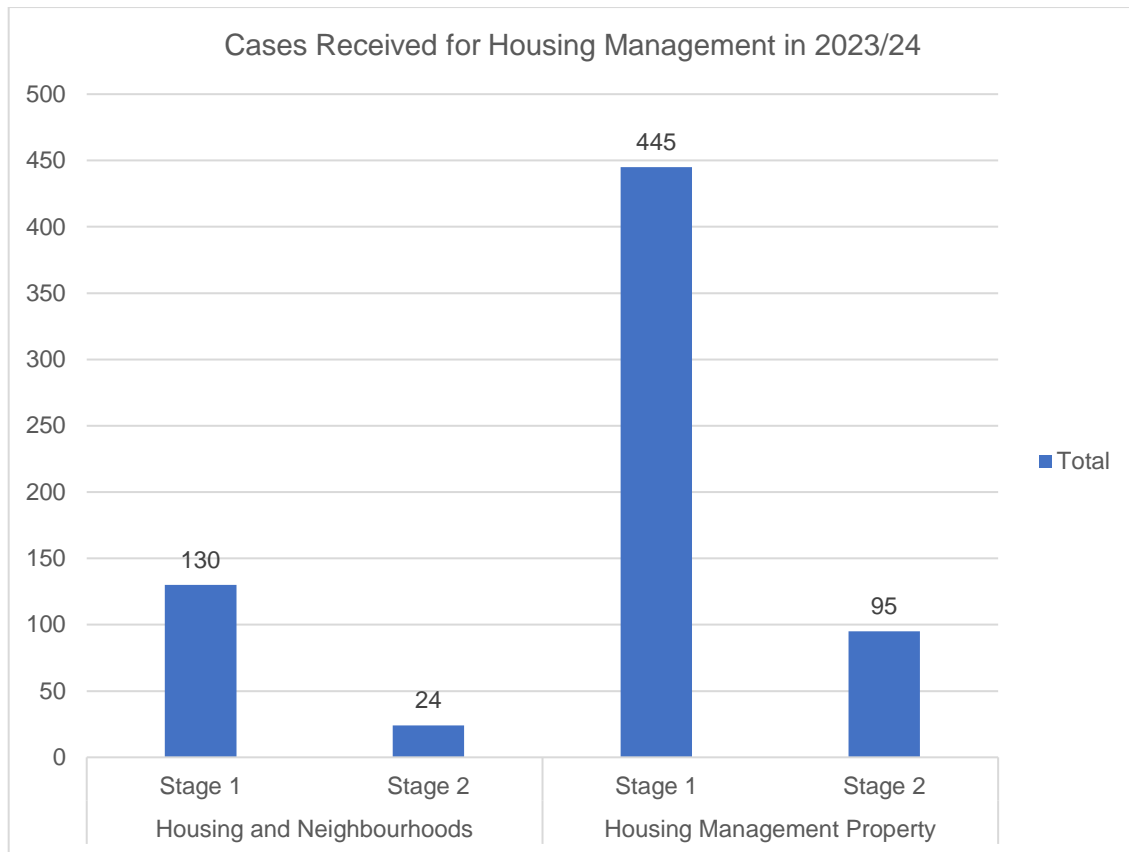
- 575 complaints were received at the initial stage of the complaints process in 2023/2024, a decrease of 26% on 2022/2023.
- The majority of issues raised related to service failure (494 complaints) and more specifically delay in a service being provided which accounted for 261 complaints.
- Many of the complaints were escalated to stage 2, because the complainant did not agree with the decision at stage 1. This was the reason in 54% of cases that were escalated.
- 291 complaints were upheld at stage 1 and 91 complaints partly upheld which provides a 64% uphold rate.
- 78% of stage 2 cases were upheld or partially upheld.
- 48 complaints were rejected at stage 1 and 1 complaint was rejected at stage 2. In 43 of the stage 1 cases, the complaint was rejected because it was a duplicate request or had already been investigated.
- 98% of all stage 1 Housing Management complaints were responded to on time and 96% of stage 2 complaints were responded to on time.
- A total of £96,024 was paid out in compensation at stage 1 and 2.

### **Housing Management Stock**

3.2.4 The Housing Management service currently manage 13,1670 properties which are a mixture of tenanted and leasehold properties. As a housing landlord, Brent manages 10,781 flats and maisonettes, 2202 houses and bungalows, as well as 187 New Accommodation for Independent Living (NAIL) properties.

### **Complaints Received**

3.2.5 In 2023/2024, the Housing Management service received 575 stage 1 complaints compared to 780 the previous year, showing a decrease of 26%.



3.2.6 The escalation rate for complaints received by Housing and Neighbourhoods is 18% compared to 21% for Housing Management Property. In 2022/2023 a total of 118 stage 2 complaints were received which is one less than in 2023/2024.

### **Nature / Reasons for Complaints**

3.2.7 We record root causes of complaints at stage 1 once a complaint has been closed, therefore we look at the complaints that were closed in 2023/2024 rather than received. This is why the total number of complaints that we have recorded root causes for is 601 which is higher than the 575 complaints received at stage 1.

3.2.8 The Council classifies root causes of complaints into three main areas: Communication, Policy/Procedures, and Service Failure.

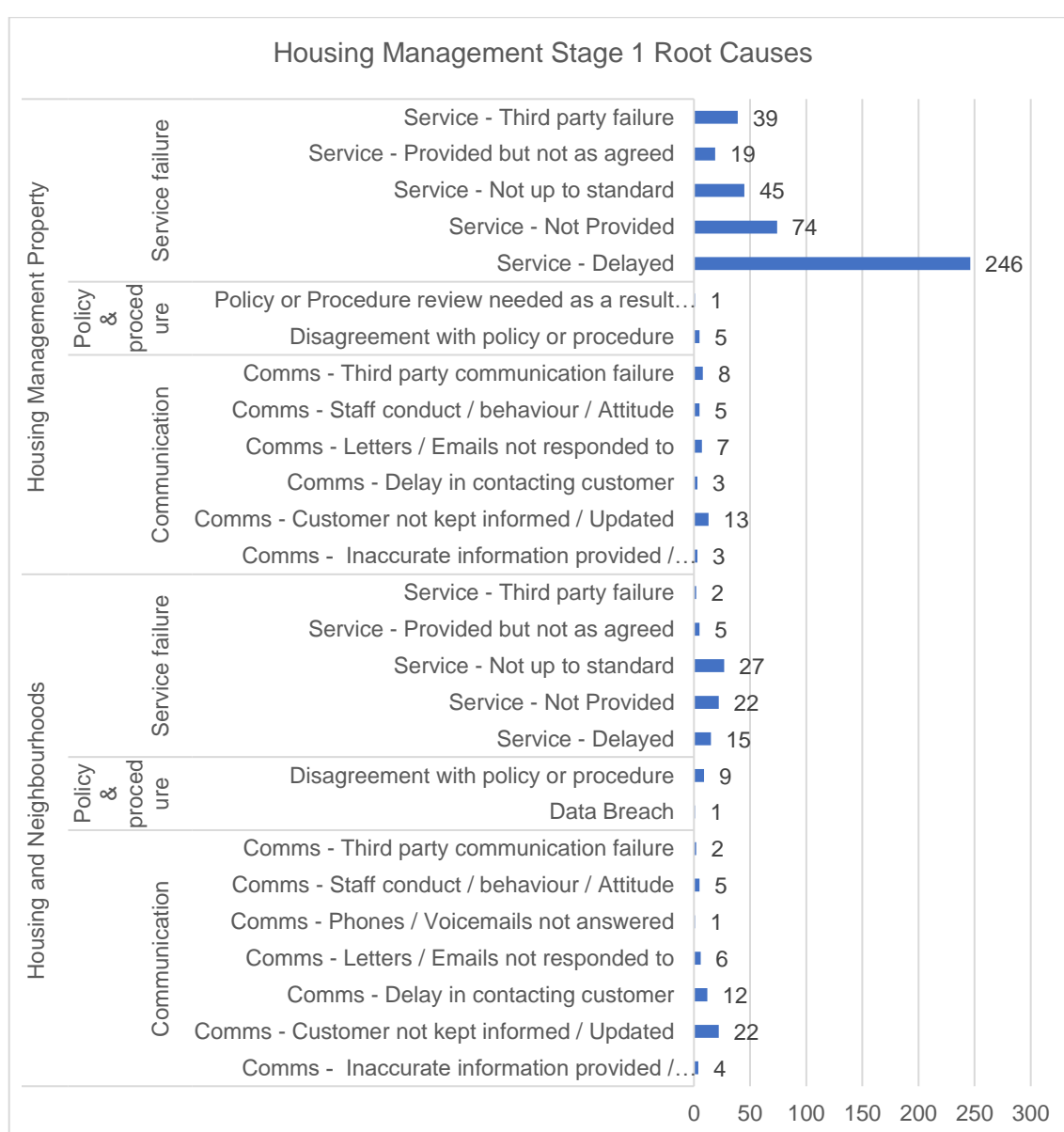
3.2.9 The data below shows that for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 53% of complaints (71 out of 133) were due to service failures and that this was primarily related to services being perceived as not meeting standards. This was the case for 27 cases which is 20%. Communication issues constituted 39% of the complaints (52 out of 133), with the predominant issue being that customers were not kept informed or updated. Policy/procedure was the root cause for 8% of complaints for Housing and Neighbourhoods.

3.2.10 In comparison, for Housing Management Property 90% of complaints (423 out of 468) were due to service failures, with delays in service provision being the main issue (246 complaints, 53%). This shows a 37% increase from Housing

and Neighbourhoods to Housing Management Property regarding service failures. The second highest root cause for Housing Management Property was communication. Communication issues made up 8% of the complaints (39 complaints) and this mainly related to failures in third-party communication (8 complaints, 2%) and lack of updates (13 complaints, 3%). Issues with policy/procedure were less prevalent at 1% with 6 complaints.

3.2.11 Overall, across Housing Management, service failure was the most common root cause for complaints. Service failure accounted for 82% of all complaints received at stage 1. Service Failure being the main reason for complaints is consistent with other local authorities.

3.2.12 Communication issues accounted for 15% of the overall complaints (91 complaints), and policy/procedure issues accounted for 3% (16 complaints).

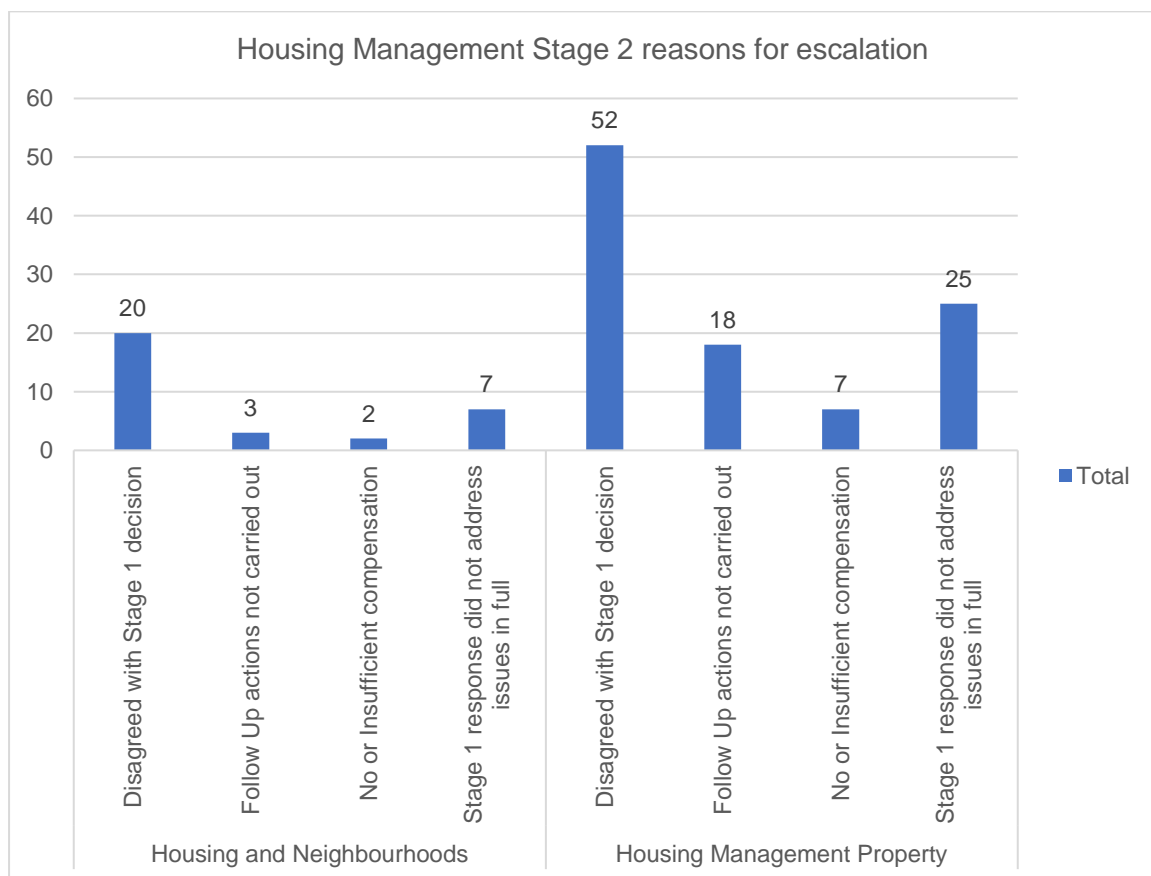


## Reasons for escalation

3.2.13 Housing and Neighbourhoods saw a total of 32 escalated complaints which provides an escalation rate of 25%. The most frequent reason for escalation was disagreement with the stage 1 decision, accounting for 63% of complaints. Other reasons included follow-up actions not being carried out (3 complaints, 9%), no or insufficient compensation (2 complaints, 6%), and that the stage 1 response did not address issues in full (7 complaints, 22%).

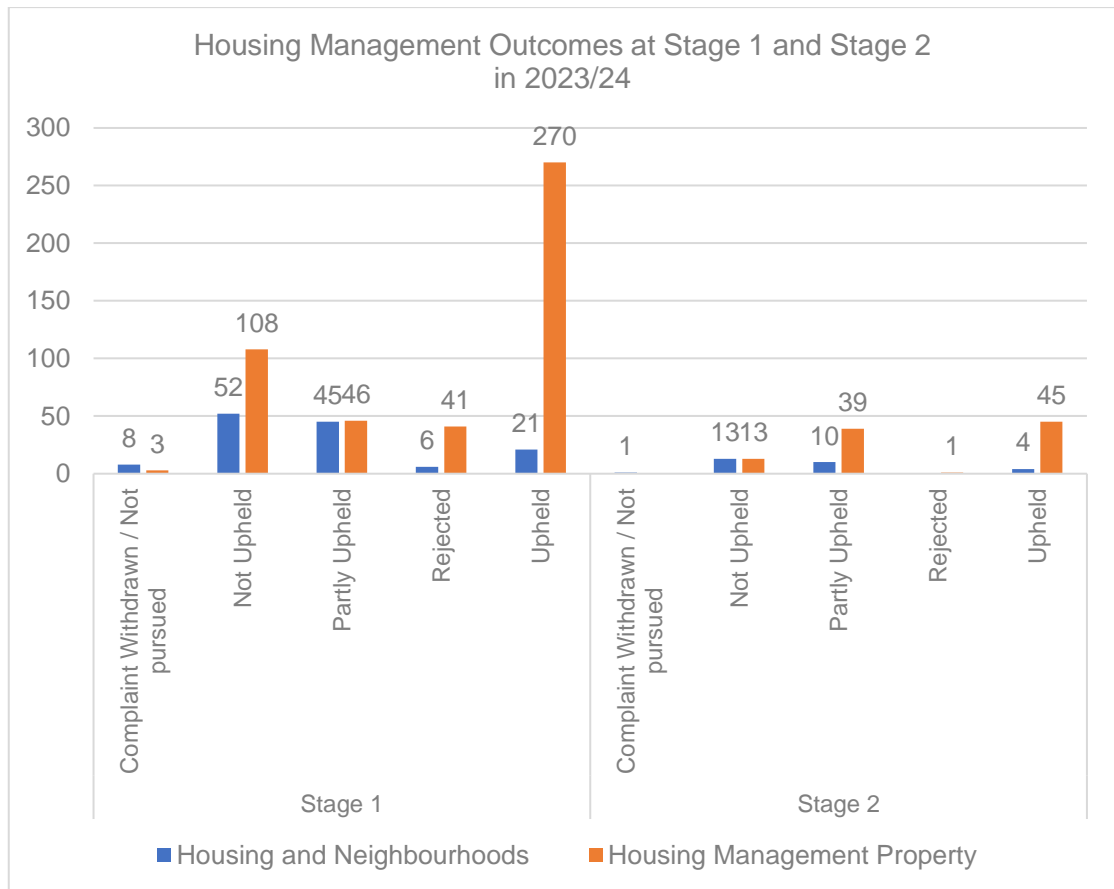
3.2.14 Housing Management Property received the most complaints and the most complaints escalated however the escalation rate was lower than the previous year at 17%. In 2023/2024, there were 102 escalated complaints. Similar to Housing and Neighbourhoods, the leading reason for escalation was disagreement with the stage 1 decision, which had 52 complaints and accounted for 51% of the escalated complaints. Additional reasons for escalation were that follow-up actions were not carried out (18 complaints, 18%), no or insufficient compensation awarded (7 complaints, 7%), and that the stage 1 response did not address the issues in full (25 complaints, 25%).

3.2.15 Overall, 134 complaints were escalated to stage 2. The most common reason for escalation was disagreement with the stage 1 decision, with 72 complaints (52 in Housing Management Property and 20 in Housing and Neighbourhoods), accounting for 54% of all complaints escalated.



## Complaint Outcomes

3.2.16 The chart below shows the outcome of complaints at stage 1 and final review stage:



3.2.17 At stage 1 of the complaints process, for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 45 complaints were partly upheld (34%) and 21 were upheld (16%), resulting in 50% of complaints being either upheld or partly upheld overall.

3.2.18 For Housing Management Property at stage 1, 46 complaints were partly upheld (10%) and 270 were upheld (58%), resulting in 68% of complaints being upheld or partly upheld.

3.2.19 Overall, for both Housing and Neighbourhoods and Housing Management Property, 59% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

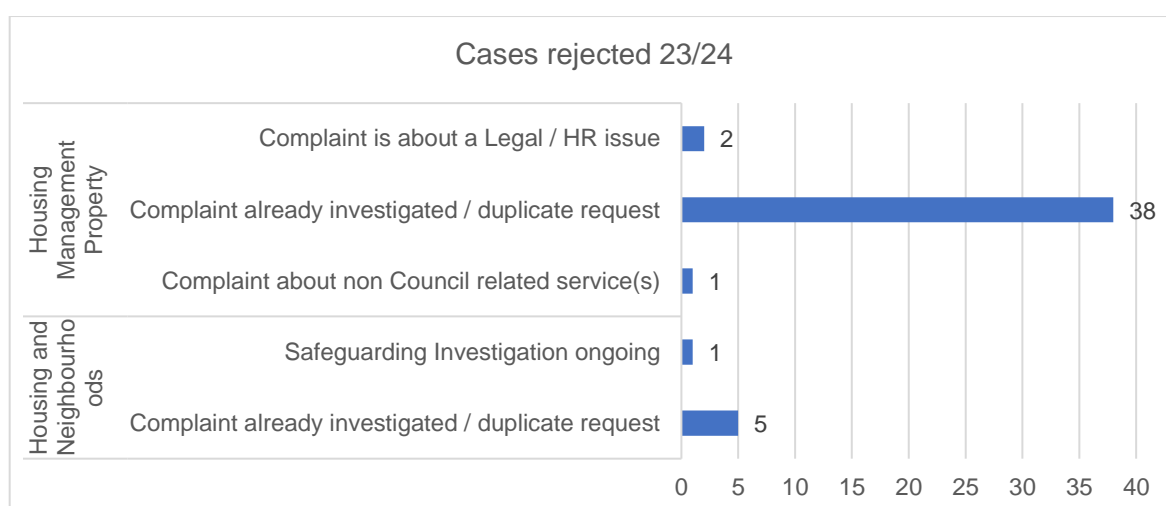
3.2.20 At stage 2, for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 10 complaints were partly upheld (36%) and 4 were upheld (14%), meaning 50% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

3.2.21 For Housing Management Property, 39 complaints were partly upheld (41%) and 45 were upheld (47%). This meant 88% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

3.2.22 Overall, for both Housing and Neighbourhoods and Housing Management Property, 78% of stage 2 complaints were upheld or partly upheld. This shows that there is a 19% increase in the complaints being upheld or partly upheld from stage 1 to stage 2 and this indicates that Housing Management could do better complaint investigations and responses at the first stage to avoid escalation to the next stage but also that the Council is willing to accept when things have gone wrong, demonstrating ownership and acceptance of issues raised.

3.2.23 The Complaints Service continues to work with managers in the Housing Management Service to ensure the quality of complaint investigations and responses provided to the complainant address all issues raised.

3.2.24 Some service improvements identified at the final review have been included in point 14 - Learning from Complaints.

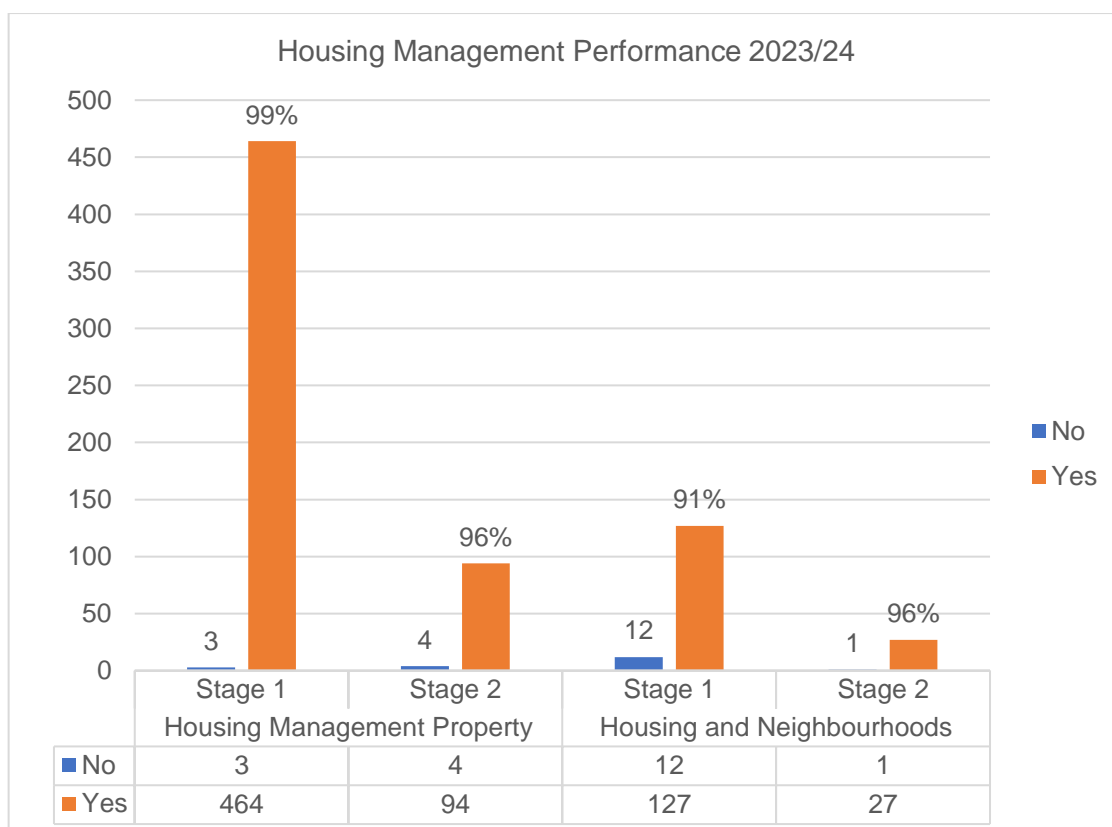


3.2.25 At stage 1, 47 complaints were rejected. As seen in the chart above, the main reason for this was that the complaint had already been investigated and that it was a duplicate complaint request. This was the reason for 91% of complaints rejected and for 43 complaint rejections overall across the Housing Management Services. In addition, two complaints were rejected due to being about Legal or HR issues and therefore were investigated through different routes. Other reasons that cases were rejected included one complaint relating to non-Council related services, and another complaint was rejected because there was an ongoing safeguarding investigation.

3.2.26 Only one complaint was rejected at stage 2. This was because it had already been investigated as part of a previous complaint and no new issues had been raised.

### Timeliness of Responses

3.2.27 The chart below shows complaint response times across the Housing Management Service in 2023/24:



3.2.28 In 2023/24, at stage 1, 99% of complaints from Housing Management Property were responded to on time, while 91% of Housing and Neighbourhoods complaints were responded to within the expected timeframe. At stage 2, 96% of Housing Management Property complaints were responded to on time, and this figure was the same for Housing and Neighbourhoods.

3.2.29 At stage 1, out of the 606 complaints due across the Housing Management Service, 591 were responded to on time. This means that 98% of all stage 1 complaints received a timely response. At stage 2, 96% of complaints were responded to on time, with this being the case for 121 of the 126 complaints due overall.

### Compensation

Stage	Total number of cases	Amount
Stage 1	154	£41,865
Stage 2	104	£54,159
Total	258	£96,024

3.2.30 The Housing Management Service paid a total of £96,024, in compensation for the year 2023/24, comprising a total of 258 cases. At stage 1, 154 cases were awarded compensation with a total of £41,865 compensation given overall. Stage 2 involved 104 cases, where £54,159 was awarded in compensation.

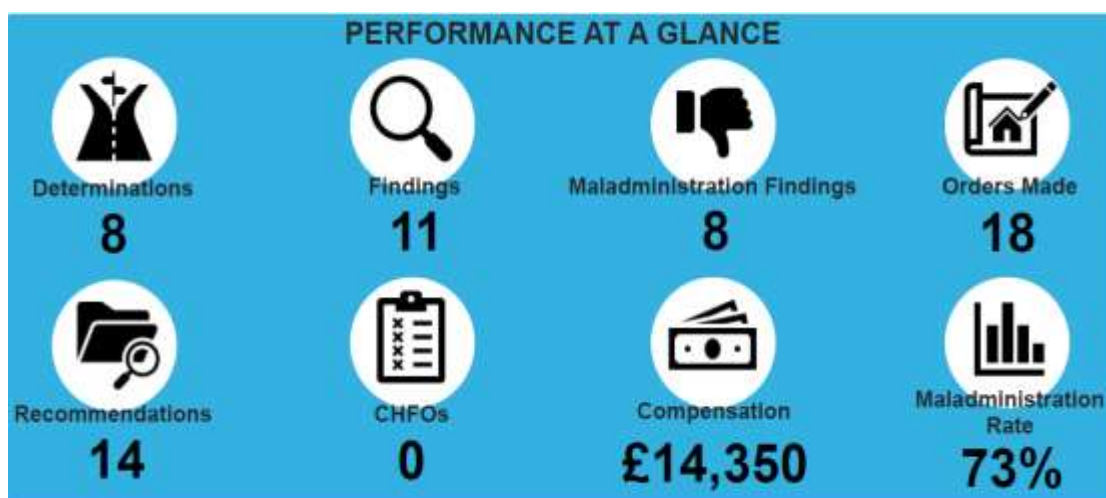
3.2.31 The main reason recorded for awarding compensation, was due to delay or failure to provide service. This accounted for 190 cases and 73% of the cases

where compensation was awarded across stage 1 and stage 2. The other two main reasons for compensation being paid were for time and trouble which was the reason compensation was given in 37 cases and reimbursement for costs incurred which was the reason given for awarding compensation in 14 cases. Other reasons for awarding compensation included distress and incorrect actions. When awarding compensation, we credit a resident's rent account if they are in arrears, make direct payments to their bank or, if the amount awarded is under £500, compensation is awarded as a postal voucher to be claimed at any post office.

3.2.32 All compensation awarded by the Council should be benchmarked against the Housing Ombudsman's remedies guidance.

### **Housing Ombudsman Decisions in 2022/23**

3.2.33 The Housing Ombudsman provided its annual report on 1 August 2023 and the below information was included in the previous years' annual report. The Housing Ombudsman has set as one of its requirements in the Complaints Handling Code to add information in regards to Ombudsman cases received in the previous year. As it has not and will not provide its report until late summer/early autumn, the information provided below has therefore been taken from the Council's 2022/2023 Annual Complaints report which contains information and graphs from the Housing Ombudsman's 2022/2023 report. A copy of this annual report is available on the Council's website.



3.2.34 The performance data above relates to the Housing Ombudsman's decisions in 2022/2023. The maladministration rate is 30% higher than the previous year 2021/2022. This is mainly due to the increased awareness of the Housing Ombudsman, publication of their spotlight reports and the government's 'Make Things Right' advertising campaign. The introduction of Awaab's Law, in memory of Awaab Ishak who tragically lost his life due to conditions in his social home has also encouraged tenants to raise issues with landlords and then escalate to the Housing Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the action taken.



3.2.35 Recent changes in legislation around consumer standards for social housing has also improved access to complaints for tenants and leaseholders. The focus is on creating a culture of accountability; where tenants voices are heard and listened to. The Social Housing Regulator and Ombudsman expect Local Authorities to actively campaign to provide access and encouragement to tenants to complain when they are dissatisfied. This should be noted as it is expected to drive up complaints, which should be welcomed as a sign of tenant engagement and participation, and an opportunity to learn what is important to residents and how to put things right.

3.2.36 Brent Council performed similarly when compared to landlords of similar size and type. Although the maladministration rate is high, there were no cases of severe maladministration or Complaint Handling Failure Orders issued.

3.2.37 In terms of the recommendations and orders, many of these had already been agreed during the Council's own complaints process and the Ombudsman had asked the Council to complete these if we hadn't done so already. The same can be said for compensation where the Council had already agreed to pay compensation but the Ombudsman increased the compensation amount and included the total figure awarded during the complaint process rather than the additional amount ordered or recommended. Although the graphic above, produced by the Housing Ombudsman, states that they awarded £14,350 compensation, in fact they only asked the Council to pay an additional £3,800 on top of what the Council had already offered during its complaints process.

3.2.38 The table below provides a breakdown of the areas of complaints which were received by the Housing Ombudsman in 2022/23.

<b>Complaint Decision</b>	<b>Severe Maladministration</b>	<b>Maladministration</b>	<b>Service failure</b>	<b>Mediation</b>	<b>Redress</b>	<b>No Maladministration</b>	<b>Outside Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Property Condition</b>	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	6
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
<b>Complaints Handling</b>	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>

3.2.39 The cases related to the following sub-categories:

- Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould
- Responsive repairs - general
- Noise

- 3.2.40 The Council complied with all of the Housing Ombudsman's orders, achieving a 100% compliance rate.
- 3.2.41 The Council use the learning from complaints to inform decisions on areas of improvement within the Housing Management Service. The Council also carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure compliance with the Code. A copy of the self-assessment has been provided in Appendix A and is available on the Council's website.
- 3.2.42 The Housing Ombudsman has released a series of reports in which they have put the spotlight on issues identified through complaints that they have investigated and resolved. The Damp and Mould spotlight report contained a number of recommendations for landlords. The Council therefore self-assessed against these recommendations and provided a copy of the results in last year's 2022/23 annual report. The Council have also undertaken a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management and are currently self-assessing against the latest spotlight report on attitudes, respect and rights.

### **Benchmarking Data**

- 3.2.43 Given the short timescale the Ombudsman has given to provide the annual report, it has not been possible to benchmark against any other Council's annual reports. However as referenced above, the Housing Ombudsman's previous annual report evaluated how the Council compared in comparison to other similar landlords based on data from April 2023 to March 2024 and found that the Council's overall performance is similar to other landlords of a similar size and type, despite the maladministration percentage being higher than the national average.

### **Customer Feedback and Engagement**

- 3.2.44 The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard set out by the Social Housing Regulator requires all registered providers of social housing to collect and report annually on their performance using Tenant Satisfaction Measures. These are a set of defined measures that provide residents with more transparency regarding their landlord's performance. Through this, we can engage with residents and glean further information around their housing concerns and satisfaction levels.
- 3.2.45 In 2023/2024, there were 7800 tenants in Brent and the total sample size achieved for the tenant satisfaction survey was 708 responses. When asked, taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the service provided by the landlord, 125 tenants reported that they were very satisfied. 239 reported that they were fairly satisfied while 89 stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However, 106 tenants were fairly dissatisfied and 149 reported that they were very dissatisfied. Overall, 51.4%

of tenants that took part in the survey reported that they were satisfied with the service provided by the landlord.

3.2.46 Tenants were also asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the overall repairs service from the landlord over the last 12 months and the proportion of tenants who reported that they were satisfied with the repairs service was 55.1%. It is important to highlight that overall in terms of complaints received annually in 2023-2024, Housing repairs was one of the top concerns for residents. On average, the Housing Management Service carry out 36,000 repairs per annum, and this means that there is likely to be a correlation between the number of repairs carried out and the number of complaints received.

3.2.47 However, it is also worth noting that the proportion of respondents who reported making a complaint in the last 12 months and who are recorded as satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling is 17.4%. This illustrates a significant area for improvement in addressing the concerns of tenants and in ensuring their overall satisfaction with the complaints handling procedure.

### **Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements**

3.2.48 Feedback from residents offers important insights into what we do well and what can be improved.

3.2.49 Learning from the lived experiences of residents can help identify where services, policies and procedures can be improved, and this helps to ensure that senior managers are informed of issues that matter to residents. This also helps to improve communication and strengthen relationships.

3.2.50 As a result of complaints received by Brent Council, many service improvements have been implemented. Some of the service improvements that have been implemented by the Housing Management Service as a result of complaints include:

- a) As a result of poor communication between Wates, HMS and Socotec (the asbestos contractor), regarding asbestos testing, weekly meetings with Wates were implemented to monitor follow on actions and work more collaboratively with Socotec. The Housing Management Service are working to ensure that appointments are being booked for Wates to attend, if required for assistance with access for asbestos testing.
- b) Implementing a suited key system to all void properties to avoid keys being lost and access issues resulting in delayed void turnaround. Ensuring officers are careful when handling keys to void properties and highlighting to officers the importance of carrying out thorough checks.
- c) The Housing Management Service have also carried out and overseen various types of training in order to capitalise on learnings from complaints. For example, as a result of complaints received, training has taken place on

acting in accordance with the anti-social behaviour policy, the process of complaint investigations and vulnerability assessments. Customer empathy training has also been conducted following complaints related to Wates officers' behaviour and refresher training has been provided regarding correspondence and communicating with residents with officers being reminded to read emails fully and triage to the correct service area.

- d) New procedures have been set for surveyors' inspection reports to ensure quicker turnaround times, with a separate inbox for the surveyors to send their inspection reports being created to improve the timeliness of work orders being raised following inspections.
- e) The Complaints and Casework Manager and Principal Complaints Investigator are also working with Housing Management and have also attended Housing Management Senior Team Meetings to ensure key issues are addressed as well as to discuss learning that can be taken from complaints.
- f) A copy of the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code has been included in the tender pack for the new repairs contract to ensure new contractors are aware of the standards they are expected to meet.

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

- 4.1 This report will be discussed at Cabinet and the relevant scrutiny committees.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 The details provided on compensation payments in sections 3.2.30 - 3.2.32 and throughout this report reflect the monetary impact of not getting things right the first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience thus minimising the financial penalties incurred by the Council.
- 5.2 The total compensation offered for Housing Management complaints during the Council's own complaint procedures in 2023/2024 was £96,024 (258 cases), which is an increase of 26% compared to the previous year. The costs implications and budgetary impacts to the Council are being continuously monitored.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 Complaints concerning Housing Management fall under the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is the final stage in the complaints process, where an individual has complained to the Council and remains dissatisfied with the outcome.
- 6.2 The Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that the Council is obliged by law to follow the requirements set out in the Code. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing

Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. The Council's Complaints Policy has been updated to take account of these changes.

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

- 7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:
- (a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity; and
  - (c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.
- 7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Although there have been no equality implications identified as a result of this report, the Council is improving the way in which equalities data is captured and analysed so it can be used to identify issues that may disproportionately affect different equality groups.

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

- 8.1 Not applicable

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

- 9.1 Not applicable

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 The Housing Ombudsman issues spotlight reports to address thematic issues and has commenced publishing a monthly report on cases of severe maladministration by landlords. Although the Council has not been featured in any of these reports, it is imperative that we learn from these reports to avoid severe maladministration decisions in the future.
- 10.2 The Council continues to advertise its complaints policy on the Council's website and in correspondence with residents. A copy of the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling Code is also available on the Council's website along with a copy of this report once it has been through the relevant governance procedures. Comments from Cabinet in relation to the report will be included.

**Report sign off:**

***Debra Norman***

Corporate Director of Law and Governance

### **Comments on the report from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council**

We welcome this report, which is part of our longstanding political commitment to continuously improving the council and the way it works for and responds to residents.

Learning from complaints is an important part of the story for all local authorities. They allow us to reflect on where we have performed well, and where we need to go much further if we are to be trusted by residents. At Brent Council, the lessons learned from complaints are a core component of the iterative process of developing and adjusting our strategies, priorities and plans for Brent.

This report around Housing Complaints details the progress being made around our casework systems, in particular the welcome news that officers will find it easier using newer systems to access complaint casework and a fuller history of events in one place.

It is particularly encouraging news that 97% of all stage 1 complaints from housing management are responded to on time. In a perfect world, no complaint would need the intervention of the Housing Ombudsman, but when orders are received, as a council we have ensured that 100% of orders have been acted upon. Residents should take this as testimony to the fact that this council will hold its hands up when things go wrong.

Although there is welcome reading in this report, it is clear that the volume of complaints remain high, as exemplified by the level of compensation paid to residents. There are specific concerns here for the Housing team to act upon in order to avoid further Stage 2 complaints, and we hope to see significant improvements by the team over the next year as they continue the work of restructuring their teams to better respond to service pressures.

We strive to work harder to engage residents and communicate in a more systematic, regular and open way – especially if we are to maintain and restore trust in our services. Recently, the Cabinet have passed a Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy as a first step towards addressing some of the historic issues around visibility and communications; which all lead to complaints.

Over the next four years, this new strategy will signal a shift in culture that works harder to put the views and experiences of Tenants & Leaseholders in the centre of focus, and continues to address the need for high quality service delivery.

In summary:

- **Fewer Complaints:** We had a 26% decrease from last year in the number of complaints. Most complaints were about delays in service, and we are working hard to address these issues and to reduce the number of complaints.
- **Better Responses:** We resolved 97% of complaints on time at the first stage and 96% at the second stage. We will work hard to make sure that we get even better.
- **Improvements in Service:** We have made several improvements, such as better communication with contractors, a new key system for vacant properties, and additional staff training to ensure better service.
- **Your Feedback Matters:** Your complaints help us learn and improve. We are committed to making our services better and ensuring that your voices are heard.

## Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.



## Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i>	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>  (Under point 3.1)	The definition in the Complaints Policy reads: “A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or several individuals.” The reference to residents has been removed as anyone can make a complaint, not just residents.
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>  (Under point 3.1)	Residents do not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as one. As per the policy and definition above, a complaint could be made about the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in taking action without good reason</li> <li>• Failure to provide a service</li> <li>• Mistakes in the way a decision was taken</li> <li>• Not following the law or the Council’s own rules</li> <li>• Broken promises</li> <li>• Giving incorrect or misleading information</li> <li>• Bias or discrimination</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rude, unhelpful or inappropriate behaviour by staff</li> <li>• Poor communication</li> </ul> <p>Complaint training provided to staff also reiterates that residents do not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.</p>
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.1)	The Council recognises the difference between a complaint and a service request. It mentions in its Complaints Policy, "Some issues do not fall within the category of a complaint and are more appropriately dealt with as a service request. This can include instances where a customer is 'complaining' about a problem that the Council has not created, such as neighbour noise nuisance. The same can be true for a 'complaint' received to report a repair request. These are requests to the Council for appropriate action to be taken."
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.1)	The Council will log a complaint where the complainant is not happy with the way in which their service request/s has/have been handled. The Council will continue to take action on the requests raised whilst the complaint is being investigated.

1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	Awareness of complaints process in tenant satisfaction surveys	The Council will outline where appropriate, how a resident can raise a complaint should they express dissatisfaction through a survey or any other feedback mechanism. We will include in our tenant satisfaction surveys information on how residents can pursue any dissatisfaction with the service they have received through the complaints process.
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## Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 8.1)	The Council accepts all complaints unless there is a valid reason not to, including where it falls within Appendix 1 of the Complaints Policy.
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.4)	The Complaints Policy clearly outlines what can and cannot be considered under the Council's complaints process. The circumstances are fair and reasonable and

	<p>must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.</li> <li>• Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.</li> <li>• Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.</li> </ul>			in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance.
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.4)	The Council accepts complaints that are made within 12 months of the issue occurring or the complainant becoming aware of the issue unless they are excluded on other grounds. There may be occasions where the Council will apply discretion to investigate complaints which exceed the 12 months period. The Complaints Policy states: "A complaint can be made at any time; however, the Council will not normally accept a complaint where the customer has delayed raising the complaint with the Council by more than 12 months. The Council recommends that contact is made as soon as possible, to ensure access to data is

				readily available. Complaints exceeding 12 months will be considered on a case by case basis.”
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.4)	If a complaint is not to be considered, the resident will still receive a response detailing reasons why the complaint cannot be considered and the response will include escalation rights.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.4)	The Council will consider complaints exceeding 12 months on a case by case basis. This is noted in the Complaints Policy.

### Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.3)	Complaints can be raised via email, in person, by telephone or using the online form or portal. They can also be submitted via a Councillor or directly to officers if the

	Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.			<p>resident asks for an issue to be processed through the complaints process. We accept all forms of communication including verbal, written or online.</p> <p>The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents can access its services and are not disadvantaged in any way. Below are some of the adjustments that can be offered which are outlined in the Council's Complaints Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of email or telephone in preference to hard copy letters</li> <li>• use of plain English or Easy Read service on our website</li> <li>• communication through a representative or intermediary</li> <li>• rest or comfort breaks in meetings.</li> <li>• provision of information in appropriate alternative formats (eg. large print, Braille, coloured paper etc.)</li> <li>• provision of auxiliary aids</li> </ul> <p>The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which the Council considers when carrying out day-to-day functions, crafting policies and delivering services. All staff undertake equality and diversity training, which is part of the Council's essential training programme. The Council's Equalities Strategy Lead officer is currently</p>
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				undertaking an overarching piece of work which is reviewing accessibility to the Council – not just in terms of physical access but also looking at how residents and customers are able to interact with us and access services/support based on, for example, our use of language in corporate materials. Our Equalities Strategy, due for circulation next year alongside our Borough Plan, will set out a detailed approach on how we aim to remove inequalities and build a better, stronger, more inclusive Brent.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Complaints are accepted in person, on the phone, via email and social media channels	Officers within the Council are made aware of the complaints process. Services know how to log their own complaints and there is a corporate team within the Council to offer assistance and provide training. The Housing Department have a dedicated team who log all housing complaints.
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	We provide this narrative in our Annual Complaints Report	The Council welcomes complaints as a way of learning and agrees that the number of complaints is not indicative of a high number of issues within the borough, it can demonstrate awareness of the complaints process.
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>	Our complaint policy is available on the Council's website in a clear and accessible format for all residents. The policy is

	residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.		<a href="#">How to make a complaint   Brent Council</a>	available with voiceover, and can be translated from the toolbar in a number of languages, viewed using screen mask or with enlarged text. The policy explains the complaint stages, what will happen at each stage, and timeframes for a response.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 7)	The Complaints Policy, the Housing Ombudsman scheme, a copy of the Council's self-assessment of the code and the Code itself are all publicised on the Council's complaints webpages. The Policy includes information about the Housing Ombudsman and the Code. Our final review complaint responses also signpost residents to the Housing Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied. The Housing Management Service will include in regular correspondence (leaflets, posters, newsletters) details of the Housing Ombudsman and Complaints Handling Code as well as the Complaints Policy. The Housing Management Service will also be providing information on notice boards within Council blocks, at Resident Associations and will insert an advert banner on all their emails to residents for short periods across the year promoting the complaints process.
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.2)	The Council accept complaints from advocates, a representative or family member as long as consent from the complainant has been provided. Where



	accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.			reasonable they are also able to attend any meetings.
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>  (Under point 3.7)	Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman are available on the Council's webpages and a direct link to the Ombudsman website is also provided. The Complaints Policy details a complainant's right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint.

#### Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	We have a Corporate Complaints team who report to the governing body.	The Housing Management Service have a dedicated support team and a Complaints Officer managing complaints. In addition, our principal repairs contractor has a dedicated complaints officer and we have weekly complaints meetings to address lessons learnt from complaints and work on next steps. The Council also have a corporate complaints team that monitor and track all complaints received by the Council. The corporate complaints team compile complaint reports to Cabinet on a yearly basis.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to	Yes	The Corporate Complaints team interact with staff at all	All complaint handlers receive training on dealing with complaints and complainants.

	facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.		levels and have the authority and autonomy to resolve complaints. The team also hold a compensation budget for stage 2 complaints	They have autonomy to resolve complaints and approve lower level compensation payments. There is also direct access to senior staff to facilitate quick resolution and approve higher level payments or complex remedies.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	Complaint Handling training is provided to officers	All relevant staff are suitably trained to handle complaints. Services are reasonable resourced to handle complaints and we have a corporate complaints team which is a core service that delivers refresher training sessions for staff across the Council.

## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>	The Council has one single Policy for dealing with complaints which details all the necessary information in regards to the management of complaints. All complainants are treated fairly and in line with the policy. They are not treated adversely if they complain.

5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.5)	If the Council feels that a complaint can be resolved at first point of contact, the resident will be asked whether they are in agreement for the service to take action. They will be told in writing that after the action is taken, if they are still dissatisfied, they can progress their complaint through the Council's complaint procedure.
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>	The Council operates a two stage complaint process.
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	We have agreements in place with contractors in relation to complaints handling	We ask any third parties to whom we have delegated complaint handling to respond at stage 1 of the process and if the complainant remains dissatisfied they have a right to escalate to stage 2 in which the Council will investigate and respond.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	This is included in our third party agreements	We provide third parties with the process which they must follow and ask that they handle complaints in line with the Code. We also hold regular meetings with our contractors to discuss volumes and complaints handling.

5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Complaint acknowledgements have been updated to reflect this	Complaint acknowledgements include a brief summary of the area of complaint and officers dealing with the complaint will promptly contact the complainant to request clarification if any aspect of their complaint is unclear or should the outcome the resident is seeking also not be clear.
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Complaint acknowledgements have been updated to reflect this	Complaint acknowledgements make clear what aspects of the complaint are to be investigated and confirm any aspects that fall outside of the policy or aspects for which we are not responsible.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;</li> <li>b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;</li> <li>c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</li> <li>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</li> </ul>	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>  (Under point 3.5)	All complaint handlers receive relevant training on complaints handling to conform to the points listed. There is also guidance on the Council's intranet pages to reinforce these points to officers. Annual Data Protection training is also a mandatory training requirement for all officers. If a complaint concerns a particular individual it is assigned to their line manager. The Corporate Complaints team investigate stage 2 complaints independently of the service about which a complaint has been made.

5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.6)	Where reasonable, officers will keep residents updated with the progress of their investigation. Complainants are informed in advance on the rare occasions when there will be a delay in responding and will agree on regular updates until a full response is provided.
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.2)	The Council makes reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate. The Complaints Policy provides examples of some of the reasonable adjustments that can be made. Residents can indicate when raising a complaint whether they have any disabilities or require any adjustments. This information is then recorded on their complaint record.
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.5)	The Council does not refuse to escalate a complaint through its complaints procedure unless there is a valid reason. Reasons why a complaint may not be escalated are stipulated in the Council's Complaints Policy. A response will be provided to the resident outlining why we will not escalate the complaint.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with	Yes	This is all contained within the Council's case management system and can be downloaded	All records of the complaint are logged on the Council's case management system. This includes dates of complaint receipt and responses, relevant correspondence and documentation, and details of any compensation and corrective

	other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.			actions/service improvements and outcomes. Corrective actions and service improvements are separately monitored by the service to ensure actions are carried out. We also record issue types and root causes of complaints.
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Officers handling complaints have the autonomy to suggest and implement appropriate remedies at any stage of the complaints process	We do our best to resolve a complaint at the first point of contact. We consider the issues and after full consideration will propose a reasonable solution. Any immediate actions will be taken as soon as possible.
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Vexatious Complaints Policy	The Council's Vexatious Complaints Policy provides procedures on how to manage unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint. When a person is restricted we keep all evidence in a folder and a reason for restriction is provided in our restriction letter. We have a review period for restrictions. The Council are working on a Council-wide unreasonable behaviour policy
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Vexatious Complaints Policy	Restrictions placed following unacceptable complainant behaviour and managed through the Vexatious Complaints Policy consider the Equality Act 2010 and impact on individual complainants. Only necessary restrictions are applied relating to specific issues. We always allow residents in these

				circumstances to access Council services more generally. We also have review periods for restrictions. The Council are working on a Council-wide unreasonable behaviour policy.
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## Section 6: Complaints Stages

### Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.5)	The Council will aim to respond to complaints as early as possible and specifically where there are any risks or vulnerabilities involved and the issue is current/live as well as if the complaint raises something urgent, like an outstanding repair, we will seek to progress that as soon as possible, at the same time as pursuing a complaint investigation. Where the complaint relates to historic issues or is complex these may take longer to investigate.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <b><u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u></b>	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.5)	The Council logs and acknowledges all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. This is also stipulated in our Complaints Policy.

6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <b><u>within 10 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.6)	The Council responds to complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.6)	Where the Council requires more time to investigate the issues and provide a response, an email is sent to the resident explaining the reason for the extension and providing a new deadline date which does not exceed 10 working days.
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Email acknowledgements have been updated to reflect this.	When we request for an extension of the timescales in our email to the complainant we will include details of the Ombudsman.
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under 3.7)	A complaint response is provided once an investigation has been completed and no later than the maximum timescale outlined in the Complaints Policy. Any actions required following the investigation will be logged with a timescale and tracked until completion on the Council's complaints system.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition	Yes	The Council has a template letter which officers need to	The Council addresses all points raised in the complaint, clearly providing reasons for



	and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		follow when responding to complaints to ensure a thorough response is provided	decisions, and referencing any relevant law/good practice.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>  (Under point 3.6)	Where additional complaints are raised during the investigation, these will be incorporated if relevant and if the response has not yet been issued. If the issues require significant time to be looked into and would delay the response, a new complaint will be logged, or new timescale will be agreed with both parties.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and	Yes	The Council has a template letter which officers need to follow when responding to complaints to ensure all points are covered.	The Council has a template available for officers to use so that all the points (a-g) are addressed within the response.

	g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.			
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## Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	We have a two stage process, and escalation details are provided in all stage 1 responses.	All stage 1 complaints inform complainants that if they remain dissatisfied, they can escalate their complaint to stage 2 and details are provided of how they can do this.
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	All stage 2 complaints are acknowledged, defined and logged within 5 working days as per the Complaints Policy	All stage 2 complaints are defined and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Officers make reasonable enquiries to determine what points are outstanding.	The Council will make reasonable efforts to understand why complainants remain unhappy, however, if it is not clear we will ask the complainant for clarification so that we can ensure we address all the issues they remain unhappy with and avoid any misunderstanding.

6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.5)	All stage 2 responses are investigated by the Corporate Complaints team who are independent of the service area and officer who has responded at stage 1. Corporate directors review and decide stage 2 complaints. If they are unavailable, this is delegated to a director to approve and sign off.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <b><u>within 20 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.6)	The Council aims to respond to all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days of acknowledgement, where possible.
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 3.6)	When considering a complaint escalation that has been received and it is clear that due to complexity or other factors that more time will be required to investigate we will inform the complainant in the acknowledgment or a further email of the new expected timescale which will not exceed an additional 20 working days.
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Complaint acknowledgements have been updated to cover this	We shall provide details of the Ombudsman when we require an extension of the response timescales.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a>	A complaint response is provided once an investigation has been completed and no

	answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		(Under point 3.7)	later than the maximum timescale outlined in the Complaints Policy. Any actions required following the investigation will be logged with a timescale and tracked until completion on the Council's complaints system.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	The Council has a template letter which officers need to follow when responding to complaints to ensure a thorough response is provided	The Council addresses all points raised in the complaint, clearly providing reasons for decisions, and referencing any relevant law/good practice.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Yes	The Council has a template letter which officers need to follow when responding to complaints to ensure all points are covered.	At the completion of a stage 2 investigation, a response is issued which includes the points stated. The response includes a summary of the complaint, a chronology of any relevant events, the decision and reasons for it. It also includes any actions and learning with timescales for implementation and a reasonable remedy which may include compensation.

6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 6.1)	All relevant officers are consulted before a second stage complaint response is finalised, to ensure that the decision is a properly corporate one.
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## Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologising;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> </ul>	Yes	In complaint responses if we are in the wrong we will apologise, explain what happened and provide information on what actions will be taken to remedy the issue whether that be a change in policy or procedure, sending a reminder to staff, taking specific action or providing a financial remedy. All actions are documented on the Council's complaints system and assigned to an officer to action.	The Council will always try to resolve the issues as soon as possible. If the Council is at fault, it will accept fault, offer an apology, and provide a plan of action to put things right if the issues have not yet been resolved.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 4.1)	The Council follows the remedies guidance provided by the Housing Ombudsman. All remedies are considered on their own merit and in line with published guidelines. The Council will try its best to manage expectations of what remedies can and cannot be delivered.
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Remedies are logged on the Complaint system and assigned to an officer with a timescale for completion	Any actions to be taken to remedy fault will be explained and clear timescales will be provided. Corrective actions will be monitored and tracked to completion.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.		<a href="#">Complaints Policy August 2024</a> (Under point 4.1)	The Council follows the Housing Ombudsman guidance on compensation and considers payments that are required by law, any refunds/reimbursement of losses, time and trouble, distress and inconvenience.

## Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and	Yes	Open data link to annual reports: <a href="#">Annual Report Data</a>	The Council produces an annual report which includes our self-assessment of the

	<p>service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.</li> <li>b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;</li> <li>c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</li> <li>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</li> <li>e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</li> <li>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</li> </ul>			<p>Code, quantitative and qualitative data on performance and the types of complaints received, any findings of non-compliance with the Code, any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman, and any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</p> <p>The report is then reviewed through the Council's governance procedures which includes Cabinet and relevant scrutiny committees. This years' annual report includes separated data on Housing Management complaints.</p>
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of	Yes	Copy of latest annual report on relevant website page: <a href="#">Latest Annual Report</a>	The annual complaints report is reported to the Council's governing body and to the relevant scrutiny committees. The annual complaints report is also published on the Council's website on the

	its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.			Complaints page. The governing body's response to the report can be found in the Cabinet report minutes under the relevant governance page along with a copy of the report. The report for this year has gone through the relevant governance procedures and the response from the Leader and Deputy Leader has been provided within the report.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Our last self-assessment was carried out this year and was included as an appendix in our Housing Management Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report for 23/24	The Council will carry out a self-assessment if there have been significant changes. The outcome of the self-assessment is reported to elected members. It is also published on the Council's website and included in the annual complaints report.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	We self-assess against the Code on an annual basis and when asked by the Ombudsman.	Noted. The Council has not been asked to do this.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website. Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes	We will alert the Ombudsman and resident if we are unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional reasons.	The Council will inform the Ombudsman if due to exceptional circumstances we are unable to comply with the requirements of the Code. We will advise complainants who may be affected and we will publish on our website a timescale of when we will be returning to compliance with the Code.



## Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Learning and improvements are included in the Council Annual Complaint Report	The Council will always look beyond the circumstances of the complaint and try to learn lessons from complaints and implement any more general service improvements to benefit residents.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	We discuss complaints in our departmental management meets and report on performance and quality of responses on a quarterly basis.	The Council uses the learning and feedback from complaints to inform decisions, learning and improvements across the Council. The Council continuously scrutinise complaints data to identify themes and trends so that change can be made to prevent issues occurring.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Wider learning and improvements are included in the annual report which goes to relevant scrutiny committees. We also discuss complaints during residents' panels	Learning from complaints is included in the Council's annual complaints report which goes to Cabinet and is considered at scrutiny committees. If some of the recommendations include training needs or reminders to staff, senior managers will communicate this. Residents are informed in complaints responses of any service improvements that will be implemented as a result of their complaint.

				<p>Under the new tenant engagement strategy and model there is a clear commitment to respecting resident feedback and how this is not only implemented in the service but positive change is communicated back to the resident. Examples include: A tenant and leaseholder led review of complaint responses a minimum of once per year; communicating learning from trends in our complaints in tenant targeted communications; using complaints as a form of insight when reviewing policies.</p> <p>To effectively embed a culture of respect for resident feedback, the service responsible for engagement will carry out training and briefings with individual teams and a quality management system will be linked to the new strategy to measure impact and identify gaps in practice.</p>
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	The Director of Housing Services is the appointed person	The Director of Housing Services is the senior lead person accountable for complaint handling for Housing Management complaints. The Director is provided with data on stage 1, stage 2 and Ombudsman enquiries and has the autonomy to direct service changes.

9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	The Deputy Leader of the Council is the MRC	The Deputy Leader has complaints within their portfolio. Complaints are reported quarterly to the Council's Management Team (CMT) and annually to Cabinet, Policy Co-ordination Group (PCG) and the relevant Scrutiny Committee. The Deputy Leader will be known as the MRC.
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	The MRC has access to staff who will provide the relevant information for discussion with the governing body	The Deputy Leader of the Council will receive regular updates on complaint performance data and is copied into all upheld Ombudsman decisions (the anonymised report only). They have a direct line in to the Director of Law & Governance who oversees the corporate complaints team.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to	Yes	The MRC is updated quarterly and receives the annual complaints report which includes all the data outlined	Information relating to complaints is provided quarterly to CMT which includes: volumes, performance, outcomes, compensation, root causes, and Ombudsman cases. All Ombudsman decisions are circulated to Corporate Directors, Directors, Heads of Service and officers involved with the complaint when the decision is received. The upheld Final Decisions are also circulated to the Chief Executive, the Leader, and Deputy Leader as portfolio holder. A summary of the upheld cases is also included in the Council's annual

	severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			complaints report. The self-assessment the Council undertakes in relation to the Housing Ombudsman Code will be included in the Council's annual complaints report if there have been any significant changes.
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Yes	We share our objectives with staff and contractors that are working on our behalf to ensure there is one goal and we work together to achieve it for the benefit of our residents	The Council works collaboratively with teams across departments to achieve a joined up approach to complaints. Council services collectively take responsibility and identify solutions to make things right.

## **Appendix B: Complaint compensation breakdown for last three financial years**

<b>Financial Year 2023-24<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>£ Total compensation paid at first, second and Ombudsman stages</b>
<b>ASC</b>	
Access, Information and Long Term Support	1900
Urgent Care	1150
Learning Disability and Mental Health	400
<b>Total</b>	<b>3450</b>
<b>CYP</b>	
Early Help	200
Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships	300
Inclusion	4850
Localities	2000
Looked After Children and Permanency	6294.69
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>136,94.69</b>
<b>Environment and Leisure</b>	
Community Protection	850
Healthy Streets and Parking	575
Highways Management	100
Regulatory Services	300
Neighbourhood Management	825
<b>Total</b>	<b>2650</b>
<b>Finance and Resources</b>	
Property and Assets	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Resident Services</b>	
Affordable Housing and Partnerships and Tenant Engagement	2844
Customer Services and Assessments	2276.96
Housing Management Customer Services	2480
i4B	778.75
Housing and Neighbourhoods	23028.53
Housing Management Property	88269.12
Housing Needs	36645
PHS	700
Registration and Nationality	35
Revenue and Debt	752.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>157,810.17</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£177,754</b>

<b>Financial Year 2022-23</b>	<b>£ Total compensation paid at first, second and Ombudsman stages</b>
<b>ASC</b>	
Access, Information and Long Term Support	1400
Urgent Care	950
ASC Central North West London (CNWL)	500
Complex Care	1050
Commissioning Contracting and Market Management	500
Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>4650</b>
<b>CYP</b>	
Early Help	8300
Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships	75
Inclusion	10100
Localities	3250
Looked After Children and Permanency	11900
<b>Total</b>	<b>33625</b>
<b>Environment and Leisure</b>	
Commercial Services	340
Community Protection	100
Parking	110
Highways Management	400
Planning and Development	290
Regeneration	2200
Neighbourhood Management	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>3690</b>
<b>Resident Services</b>	
Customer Services and Assessments	6870
Customer services Operations	30
Digital Transformation	14855.97
Housing Management Customer Services	2720
Housing and Neighbourhoods	14108.62
Housing Management Property	60259.28
Housing Needs	21350
PHS	1900
Registration and Nationality	50
Revenue and Debt	1720
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,862.90</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£165,827</b>

<b>Financial Year 2021-22</b>	<b>£ Total compensation paid at first, second and Ombudsman stages</b>
<b>ASC</b>	
Urgent Care	2500
ASC Central North West London (CNWL)	
Complex Care	2450
Commissioning Contracting and Market Management	1400
<b>Total</b>	<b>5350</b>
<b>CYP</b>	
Early Help	600
Inclusion	12100
Localities	2375
Looked After Children and Permanency	2200
<b>Total</b>	<b>17275</b>
<b>Environment and Leisure</b>	
Commercial Services	240
Community Protection	1700
Parking	475
Highways Management	200
Planning and Development	200
Regeneration	2100
Neighbourhood Management	660
<b>Total</b>	<b>5575</b>
<b>Resident Services</b>	
Customer services Operations	2328.23
Housing Management Customer Services	8370.00
Housing Management Property	60747.47
Housing Needs	66083.67
PHS	250
Registration and Nationality	586
Revenue and Debt	945
<b>Total</b>	<b>139,300.40</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£167,500</b>

<sup>1</sup> Committee members should note that the figures cited here for 2023/2024 differ from those in appendix B – Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Report, Appendix C - Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints Report, and Appendix E - Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024. This is because appendices B and C only report on statutory complaints, whereas the figures above relate to all complaints (corporate and statutory). Regarding Appendix E - the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024, this report did not include compensation awarded by the Housing Ombudsman 2023/2024, whereas this current report does. This is because the Housing Ombudsman published its report for 2023/2024, including Brent compensation figures, only after the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024 was initially published.

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**Appendix C - Correlation between issue types and outcomes of stage one corporate and statutory complaints by department 2023-2024**

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>ASC</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>157</b>
Social Worker	2	18	11		1	32
Hospital Discharge	4	10	7		1	22
ASC Mental Health	2	9	2			13
Access and Information	2	7	2		1	12
Other <sup>1</sup>	7	1	2		1	11
Care Package Review	1	4	2		1	8
Care Package	2	2	3			7
Communication	3	3		1		7
Mental Health - Other	1	4		1		6
Care Home - Residential Service	2	3		1		6
Rehab and Reablement	2	2	1			5
Supported Living	2	1		1	1	5
Community Equipment	4	1				5
Client Invoices	2	3				5
OT assessment	1	3				4
Duty Team		2	1			3
Care Assessor		1	1			2
Direct Payments			2			2
Legal Framework	1		1			2

<sup>1</sup> The category 'other' is used in this table to amalgamate a range of issue types which were statistically negligible, i.e. of which one or at most two instances were recorded.

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>CYP</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>169</b>
Input from Service	13	9	10			32
BFFD/MASH/NRPF - Quality of Service	8	8	2	3	1	24
Social Workers	14	3	2	1		20
SEND Specialist Services	3	8	4		2	17
School Admissions	9		1			10
Other	3	3	2		1	9
East Locality	3	2	1	1	1	8
CYP LAC and Permanency - Other	3	4				7
Care Planning - Leaving Care	2	2	1	2		6
West Locality	5			1		6
Care Package		1	4			5
Care Planning - Other	2	2				4
Family Solutions	2	1	1			4
Child Protection Conference	2				2	4
Direct Payments	1	1	1			3
Child Protection	3					3
Children and Young People with Disabilities	1		2			3
Commissioning		2				2
School Effectiveness	1		1			2

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>Customer Access</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>437</b>
Council Tax - Other	97	9	4	3	2	115
Council Tax - Enforcement	64	14	11		2	91
Benefits Assessment	8	1	19	2	10	40
Council Tax - Payments, Refunds and Direct Debits	12	5	9			26
Benefits – Delay in Payment		19				19
Council Tax - Discounts/Exemptions	13	3	1		1	18
Council Tax - Poor Customer Experience	3	2	7		2	14
Benefits - Delay In Assessment	2	6	2	1		11
Libraries - Other	5	3	3			11
Other	3	3	3	1	1	11
Libraries – Environment	1	3	5			9
Contact Centre – Staff Attitude	1	2	5	1		9
Libraries – Poor Customer Service	2	2	3			7
Local Welfare Assistance	1	1	5			7
Customer Access Operations - Other	3		2	2		7
Freedom Pass	6					6
Housing Benefit - Other	3	2			1	6
Libraries - Noise			4		1	5

Hubs	4				1	5
Debt Recovery	3				1	4
Business Rates	4					4
Births, Marriages and Deaths	1	1	1			3
Council Tax Banding	3					3
Overpayments	1				1	2
Client Affairs	1		1			2
Contact Centre – Incorrect Information	1		1			2
<b>Department and Main Issue Types</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>	<b>Partly Upheld</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued</b>	<b>Rejected</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Housing Needs</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>205</b>
Homeless Application - Family	25	16	7	19	5	72
Homelessness Application - Single Person	26	18	5	7	4	60
Application for Social Housing Waiting List	16	4	2	2	1	25
Offers of Accommodation	6	4	1	4	1	16
Temporary Accommodation or Bed and Breakfast	7	5			2	14
Other	4	2	2		1	9
Banding		3		1		4
Bedroom Entitlement		3		1		4
Officer Conduct	1	1		1	1	4

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>Housing Management Property</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>445</b>
Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections)	54	4	141	3	16	218
Communal Repair	16	13	36		6	71
Outstanding Repairs - Other	8	11	43		4	66
Complaints about Wates	3	5	14		4	26
Other	6	5	4		5	20
Damp and/or Mould	4	3	4			11
Asbestos Safety	3				4	7
Gas Safety	5	2				7
Water Safety		1	6			7
Complaints about Oakray	2	2	1		1	6
Lettings Process	1		2		1	4
Fire Safety	1		1			2
<b>Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>130</b>
Anti-Social Behaviour	13	14	2		2	31
Housing Customer - Other	7	13	4	2	5	31
Estates Services	6	4	2			12
Leasehold enquiries	2	6	1			9
Poor Customer Service	3	2	2			7
Other	1		3	3		7
Arrears	4	2				6
Communal Cleaning	1	2	1			4
Parking	1	2	1			4

Payment / Arrears	2		1	1		4
Bedroom Entitlement	1		1	1		3
Ground Maintenance	3					3
Right To Buy	1		2			3
Rent Refund	2					2
Waste Maintenance		1	1			2
Noise Nuisance	1			1		2

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>Private Housing Services</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>53</b>
Other	20	2	1	2		25
Landlord Licence - Other	6	1				7
Application	7					7
Contractor	4	1	1			6
Housing Enforcement	5					5
Grants and Adaptations	3				1	4

Department and Main Issue Types	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
<b>Environment and Leisure</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>128</b>
Anti-Social Behaviour	13	3	1			17
Parking Enforcement	5	1	5	2		13
Permits	1	7	5			13
Parking - Other	6	3	2		1	12
Other	4	5	1	1	1	12
Defects	6		2			8
Bins	2	3	1	2		8
Blocked drains, Leaks and Floods	3	2	2			7
Parks	2	2	1			5
Bailiff Action	2	1		1		4
Environmental Strategy and Climate Change	1		2	1		4
Neighbourhood Management	2	2	1			5
Cemeteries		2		1		3
Community Group	2	1				3
Disabled bay	1			1		2
Trees	2					2
Flytipping	1	1				2
Street Cleaning		1		1		2
Pest Control		1	1			2
Public Realm		1		1		2
Early / Late Pickup / Drop Off		1	1			2

<b>Department and Main Issue Types</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>	<b>Partly Upheld</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued</b>	<b>Rejected</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Planning and Development</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>20</b>
Other Planning Matters	11	4	1			16
Enforcement	3	1				4
<b>Property and Assets</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>14</b>
Commercial Property	3	4				7
Facilities	1	2	1			4
Other	2	1				3
<b>Finance</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>9</b>
Insurance	1	1	1	1		4
Payments	1	1	2			4
Other	1					1



## **Appendix D - Learning and improvements arising from complaints – summary and selected examples 2023/24**

Complaint investigations provide learning and improvement opportunities across all areas of the Council. Sections 3.36 to 3.53 of the complaints annual report for 2023/24 (appendix A) include detailed information on learning points arising from Ombudsman complaints. Service improvements arising from complaints are also detailed in sections 3.2.48 to 3.2.50 of the annual housing complaints report (appendix E), in section 14 of the annual ASC complaint report (appendix B), and section 10 of the annual CYP complaint report (appendix C).

The further examples below from second stage corporate complaint investigations during 2023/24 have been selected to indicate the range of learning and improvements highlighted to various areas of the Council:

### *Housing Management*

- A Housing Management Service complaint in which the complainant was adamant that repairs operatives did not bring ID cards with them when carrying out repairs led to a general reminder to contractors of the importance of carrying and displaying ID cards when carrying out work to tenants' homes.

### *Housing Needs Service*

- A Housing Needs Service complainant claimed to be unaware that her homeless application had been closed. This resulted in Housing Needs Service officers being reminded of the importance of notifying applicants in writing when their applications are closed due to a lack of engagement from the applicant. If the application is not formally closed, and the applicant contacts the Housing Needs Service again at a later point, they can claim that they have been waiting for further contact from their case worker and that the service is responsible for delay in progressing their case.


### *Planning and Development Service*

- A complainant alleged an apparent lack of transparency relating to pre-application presentations to the Planning Committee when major developments are proposed. This resulted in further information being added to the Council's website. The planning pages of the Council's website now explain in more detail the role of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs). The pages explain that the purpose of a PPA is to provide a framework, agreed between the local planning authority and applicants or potential applicants, about the process for considering major development proposals. The website also provides transparency on the fees that need to be paid for engaging in this process.

### *SEND*

- The parent of a child with special educational needs complained about a delay in providing him with a speech and language therapy (SALT) IT programme that had been approved to assist his learning. The delay was caused by poor communication. The standard text in written communication about this issue was therefore improved, making the purchase and reimbursement process entirely clear for parents, to ensure that there is no future delay in delivering this type of support to children with special educational needs after its provision has been approved by the service.

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	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 23 April 2025
	<b>Report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance</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> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix A: Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Democratic & Corporate Governance <a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a>  Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources <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 for consideration.

## 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 tabled at the 23 April 2025 meeting relates to the current municipal year (2024/25). However, it also includes entries from the 27 February 2024 meeting on the 'Draft Property Strategy' item (2023/2024 municipal year).
- 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 actioned 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 and  
Corporate Governance

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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.

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

Meeting date and agenda item	Suggestion for improvement	Council Department/External Partner	Response / Status
27 Feb 2024 – <b>Draft Property Strategy</b>	Upon completion, sight the Committee on the draft Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for feedback.	<del>Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property &amp; Assets, Finance &amp; Resources</del>  Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<p><b>Response received on 12/04/24:</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> <p><b>Updated response received on 01/11/2024:</b></p> <p>A review of the council's social value approach is now in progression and linked into the strategic change programme. This includes a review of the council's current Social Value Policy and a refresh of the council's priorities for social value contributions to ensure they maximise the opportunity to align supplier contributions to areas of most impact. Additional enabling areas of work are also being developed including a social value charter and redesign of the council's social value method statement. This will include specific consideration of property and assets with link to this strategy. Opportunities are</p>

			also being identified through which pilot activity can be implemented to test application of social value in respect of property and assets. For example, this maybe through consideration of rent incentivisation schemes. A working group linked to the Change Programme will provide ongoing oversight.  <i>Further response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Upon completion, publish the final Corporate Social Benefits Assessment Methodology for the benefit of residents, businesses, and community organisations.	<del>To be confirmed.</del> Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
28 Jan 2025 - <b>Safer Brent Partnership (SBP) Annual Report 2024</b>	Explore and implement solutions to improve information-sharing with London authorities and relevant voluntary/community sector organisations regarding out-of-borough placements, enhancing community safety assessments and safeguarding measures in Brent.	Laurence Coaker – Director, Housing Needs & Support, Resident & Housing Services  Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Community Development	<b>Response received on 11/04/25:</b>  Under homelessness legislation, councils who place people out of their area into Temporary Accommodation (TA) have a statutory duty under section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 pt 7 to notify the receiving authority when they place a person in their area.  The Housing Needs team will share the S208 notifications we receive with the community safety team, which would alert them about people being placed in our borough.
	Provide detailed context, analysis, and narratives, to complement any figures/data in future scrutiny committee reports.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<b>Response received on 11/04/25:</b>  Future committee reports will provide more detailed context analysis with current changes being made at SBP delivery groups to ensure we better measure the impact of delivery.
	Provide a more detailed analysis on the impact of commissioned provider delivery on community	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young	<b>Response received on 11/04/25:</b>  The Community Safety Team have met with commissioned providers to discuss some changes to KPIs targets to include year on year impact and more detailed



	safety priorities in future scrutiny committee reports.	People & Resident Community Development	post evaluation on individuals engaged or supported, where we can clearly evidence positive outcomes, The 2 Year Safer Brent Action Plan update is due 31 March 2026 which will provide a full evaluation on the delivery of our community safety priorities.
	Develop an effective Communication and Engagement Plan for community safety projects that ensures consistent messaging about available support, promotes varied communication methods, and strengthens engagement practices with local communities.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<b>Response received on 11/04/25:</b>  A forward plan for community safety projects is in development and will be shared with the committee by end of May 2025.
	Explore alternative solutions, such as employment pathways, partnership initiatives, and funding opportunities for both the council, and voluntary and community sector groups, to more effectively address the health, social, and rehabilitative needs of older, high-risk offenders.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b>  Brent Employment Services Team ran a successful pilot, Bright Futures, in 2019-20 commissioned with the Forward Trust which had some success in tackling the complex support needs of this group. It was funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Following that no funding has been available to repeat the provision, though there is a template/model for delivery and evaluation learnings from the previous programme should funding be made available. Officers will explore the recommendation with the DWP District Operations Manager at meeting on 28 April 2025 and report back to the committee.
25 Feb 2025 - <b>Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value</b>	Engage residents in understanding community wealth building and social value, highlighting their key roles in council activities, particularly in procurement and commissioning.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Revise the official council report template to include dedicated sections for Community Wealth Building and Social Value Considerations, ensuring these	Amira Nassr– Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>

	factors are assessed and reported in all council reports where relevant.		
	Explore how credit unions and the promotion of their services can be embedded within Community Wealth Building initiatives to strengthen financial inclusion, enhance local economic resilience, and provide greater support for residents.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Develop a robust, systematic approach to reviewing service contracts that enables transparent, evidence-based decisions on preferred forms of delivery (e.g., in-house, outsourced, or hybrid), guided by defined criteria, detailed cost-benefit analysis, and internal capability assessments.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Promote and support the long-term sustainability of voluntary and charity sector (VCS) organisations in the council's revised commissioning and procurement frameworks, where legally permissible. This should include a focus on removing and/or reducing barriers to VCS organisations participating in council tender activities.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Subject to risk analysis, explore additional joint procurement opportunities with neighbouring boroughs to leverage collective buying power, share best practices, and support local	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>

	suppliers across multiple boroughs.		
	Continue to adopt and embed across all procurement and social value activity sustainability commitments, including fair trade and efforts to combat climate change.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Explore including clauses in all future procurement tenders requiring suppliers to demonstrate proactive steps to ensure transparency, compliance, and accountability in operations. This should include a commitment to respecting and upholding workers' rights to join trade unions, where applicable.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Where legally permissible, acknowledge and incorporate external financial contributions secured by VCS organisations that are linked to the tender into procurement evaluations, ensuring these funds are recognised as part of social value and community wealth building.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Explore integrating factors such as organisations whose staff pay council tax and those paying business rates within the borough into the social value and community wealth building criteria for procurement evaluations, where legally permissible.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Where practicable, ensure procurement contracts include	Rhodri Rowlands –	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>

	tailored social value commitments, encouraging bidders to shift from 'in-kind agreements' to direct investments in existing or planned council-led initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to local communities.	Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	
	Strengthen collaboration between suppliers and Brent Works and Employment Services Team to actively facilitate the targeted recruitment of local and underrepresented residents into job opportunities created through procurement.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy  Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Community Development	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
	Develop a publicly accessible contract performance dashboard to track and report on key metrics, including social value commitments, ensuring transparency and clear accountability for contract outcomes.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 13/06/25.</i>
25 Feb 2025 – <b>Emerging Employment Strategy 2025-2030</b>	In developing the upcoming employment strategy, expand on the engagement from the Employment and Skills Outcome-Based Review (OBR) by strengthening outreach with underrepresented groups to ensure equitable outcomes.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Community Development	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>To achieve this the strategy will build upon the outreach model currently in delivery by Brent Works which includes a weekly presence in outreach venues throughout the borough but with a particular emphasis on targeting identified disadvantaged priority wards, which we plan to continue and build upon. These currently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufra – New Horizons Centre</li> <li>• Community Hubs – Harlesden, Willesden, Kilburn, Kingsbury</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brent Library</li> <li>• JCP Harlesden</li> <li>• JCP Neasden</li> </ul> <p>The team also hosts recruitment events in Stonebridge Community Centre (e.g. for NHS, Construction, and apprenticeship roles) which will continue and be built upon.</p> <p>Brent Works is part funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) though, in 2025-26 with only 27% of the previous year's budget allocation for 2024-25, and offers additional support to Unemployed and Economically inactive residents which we plan to continue along with a focus on delivering to disadvantaged communities in identified priority wards.</p> <p>The strategy will continue to build upon support to residents from disadvantaged backgrounds including: Care leavers, Carers, Ex Offenders, Disabled People, SEN, Domestic Abuse victims and Homeless people, within resource and funding restrictions.</p> <p>We will measure progress on delivering equitable outcomes, harnessing and analysing the demographic data captured by our CRM system with input from the Cabinet Member and Senior Officers.</p> <p><b>SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS</b></p> <p>Subject to funding, the strategy will aim to continue and build upon the Supported Internships Programme the Employment Team has been delivering in partnership with the College of North West London (CNWL) and Kaleidoscope Enterprise.</p> <p>The programme provides our young neurodiverse residents with the opportunity to gain vital work experience and employability skills to kickstart their careers and is open to Brent residents aged 17-24 with an active Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, and it has been carefully designed to help young neurodiverse Brent residents gain new skills and find jobs. The programme is based at Brent Civic Centre and includes neighbouring employers. There's also a sister programme based at Charing Cross Hospital.</p>
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			<p><b>SPECIALISED SUPPORT PROGRAMMES</b></p> <p>Thanks to Greater London Authority (GLA) funding, in 2024/25 the team commissioned two specialist programmes. One focused on working with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents and the second focused on supporting those with disabilities or long-term conditions especially Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).</p> <p>The funding has now come to an end and the strategy will task the team to continue looking for funding opportunities to be able to deliver these and other allied services. For example, we are currently drafting a CIL application to be able to deliver outreach employability and digital skills services in Priority Wards aimed to those more vulnerable such as BAME, disabled and young people though the application process for this is currently placed on hold.</p>
	Collaborate with Brent's procurement teams to integrate employment-related social value commitments into future tenders, encouraging suppliers to offer flexible employee packages that better support working parents.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Community Development	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>We will continue and build upon the Brent Good Work Standard which works strategically with organisations to address employment standards including London Living Wage (LLW), workplace wellbeing, skills and progression, and diversity and recruitment.</p> <p>As part of the current job brokerage offer via Brent Works, local businesses are encouraged to offer flexible hours/working patterns to support childcare needs for employees and other child-friendly employee packages to better support working parents as this is key to ensure sustainable job outcomes.</p> <p>Actions for 2025:</p> <p>The Employment team will work and collaborate with the procurement team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To update the current procurement policy to create greater accountability and more tangible employment related outcomes when awarding council contracts and;</li> <li>• To better integrate employment related social value commitments including creating flexible employee packages to better support working parents. This includes hybrid working arrangements where possible; spending accounts that can be used for childcare or activities and encouraging a family first attitude.</li> </ul>

	<p>Maximise the development of higher-paid job opportunities as a core objective of the upcoming employment strategy.</p>	<p>Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People &amp; Community Development</p>	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>For 2025 and onwards the strategy will support the ongoing work of the team which includes supporting local businesses to grow and develop their workforce by offering the opportunity to access the council's apprenticeship levy transfer scheme. This encourages businesses to invest in and create apprenticeships, in particular in higher-level apprenticeships, to up-skill existing staff and increase potential for progression and higher paid salaries. The team also work in partnership with developers and larger businesses to create higher level apprenticeships including quality surveying and engineering as part of the regeneration schemes which will continue and be built upon as part of the new strategy.</p> <p>Subject to funding, we will continue our Skills Bootcamp Gas Engineering Programme in partnership with <u>Qualified 4 Life</u> which we have delivered since November 2022 and designed for Brent residents aged 19 + to earn a Level 3 qualification in gas engineering as part of the Skills Bootcamps for Londoners initiative.</p> <p>Over 16 weeks, participants receive training in high-demand skills and are guaranteed a job interview. Qualified 4 Life offer state-of-the-art training facilities which enables learners to experience interactive learning whilst in the classroom and a real working environment when undertaking practical sessions in the workshops. Experienced gas engineers provide the training, assisting learners in the classroom and coaching them to prepare for real-life scenarios and challenges.</p> <p>The programme is part of Brent's Borough Plan to provide high-quality skills and job opportunities to its residents. It requires no prior experience, just a strong interest in working as a gas engineer and a driving licence. It also benefits employers to fill specific skills shortage vacancies. 79 Brent residents to date have been placed in high quality jobs as an outcome of the programme which will continue as part of the action plan delivered within the new strategy.</p> <p>Currently over 82% of the vacancies the Brent Works team recruits to on behalf of employers pay LLW and above. The team encourages employers to pay LLW and promotes the benefits of doing this. With the increase in apprenticeship levels up to level 7 and the amount of older people (over 25) taking up apprenticeships this has seen a growth in apprenticeship salaries.</p>
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			<p>The team play an active part in the council's Good Work Standard initiative and have attended employer events and spoken in workshops on LLW and diverse recruitment.</p>
	<p>Enhance and diversify communication and engagement efforts to raise awareness of Employment and Skills support available in the borough, with a particular focus on promoting Brent Works services and the Work Well programme.</p>	<p>Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People &amp; Community Development</p>	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>As part of the Brent Works Wembley Stadium Jobs Fair in July 2025 the team will use several communications channels to promote services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business E-Letter</li> <li>• Business Social Media Platforms</li> <li>• Members Bulletin</li> <li>• LinkedIn</li> <li>• Eventbrite</li> <li>• Brent Magazine</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Posters</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Transport Hubs</li> </ul> <p>There is also a brochure created for Jobs Fair attendees to have on the day that includes information about the event, the partners and support services, and Brent Works' calendar of yearly events.</p> <p>Actions for 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase visibility of the employment programmes across the borough in community hubs and family centres through both marketing campaigns and through regular outreach programmes</li> <li>• To re-establish quarterly partnerships forums to raise visibility of the employment programmes across the borough and encourage greater awareness of opportunities among stakeholders and VSC organisations in the borough</li> </ul>



**Information requests from RPRSC to Council departments/partners**

Meeting date and agenda item	Information requests	Council Department/External Partner	Responses / Status
4 Sept 2024 – <b>Delivery of Affordable Housing by i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd (FWH)</b>	Provide Asset Management Strategy upon completion.	<del>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</del>  Sadie East – Director, Communications, Insight & Innovation, Service Reform & Strategy	<p><b>Response received on 07/10/24:</b></p> <p>This will be presented to the i4B/FWH Board meeting on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November and, dependent on any feedback from directors and further work required, will be available to share with the committee in December 2024.</p> <p><del><b>Updated response received on 14/02/25:</b></del></p> <p><del>The draft strategy was presented at the December i4B/FWH Board meeting. The Board have requested more detailed financial analysis which is to be implemented into the business plan. The strategy is expected to return to the Board in February/ March 2025 for approval.</del></p> <p><b>Updated response received on 15/04/25:</b></p> <p>The draft strategy was presented at the December i4B/FWH Board meeting. The Board has requested more detailed financial analysis. The strategy is expected to return to the Board in early summer 2025 for approval.</p>
	Provide a breakdown of the expected costs associated with enhancing energy performance and retrofitting the i4B/First Wave Housing stock.	<del>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</del>  Sadie East – Director, Communications, Insight & Innovation, Service Reform & Strategy	<p><b>Response received on 07/10/24:</b></p> <p>This information will be included in the asset management strategy, which will be presented to the i4B/FWH Board meeting on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November and, dependent on any feedback from directors and further work required, will be available to share with the committee in December 2024.</p> <p><del><b>Updated response received on 14/02/25:</b></del></p> <p><del>The draft strategy was presented at the December i4B/FWH Board meeting. The Board have requested more detailed financial analysis which is to be</del></p>

			<p>implemented into the business plan. The strategy is expected to return to the Board in February/ March 2025 for approval.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 15/04/25:</b></p> <p>The draft strategy was presented at the December i4B/FWH Board meeting. The Board has requested more detailed financial analysis. The strategy is expected to return to the Board in early summer 2025 for approval.</p>
5 Nov 2024 - <b>Quarter 2 Financial Forecast 2024/25</b>	Submit a progress report in six months on the efforts of the 'Supported Exempt Accommodation' Working Group, highlighting ongoing and completed projects, as well as the associated impacts, including cost benefits to the council.	<p><del>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services</del></p> <p>Laurence Coaker – Director, Housing Needs &amp; Support, Resident &amp; Housing Services</p>	<i>Response to be provided by 30/05/25.</i>
	Provide an update in six months on the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, highlighting its impact in enhancing quality standards and achieving cost savings in Supported Exempt Accommodation.	<p><del>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services</del></p> <p>Laurence Coaker – Director, Housing Needs &amp; Support, Resident &amp; Housing Services</p>	<i>Response to be provided by 30/05/25.</i>
	Provide a progress update in six months on the debt recovery	<del>Peter Gadsdon –</del>	<i>Response to be provided by 30/05/25.</i>

	improvement initiatives and strategies in place to enhance collection rates across all debt types. This update should include a detailed overview of Council Tax collection, and an assessment of the Council Tax Support Scheme reduction, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of measures to mitigate the impact on affected residents.	<del>Corporate Director, Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services</del>  Ravinder Jassar – Deputy Director, Corporate & Financial Planning, Finance & Resources	
	Provide data on Council Tax collection rates by tenure for the last three years.	<del>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services</del>  Ravinder Jassar – Deputy Director, Corporate & Financial Planning, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 17/02/25:</b></p> <p>Unfortunately, a decision was made to remove tenure data that did exist in 2019, this was because it is not strictly needed for collection purposes. Nevertheless, the Service started to update its data base with recovery profile information from 2023, acknowledging that is useful in targeting recovery action and understanding performance difference between recovery types. The recovery profiles now in place are listed below. Because the data has only recently started to be gathered 78,000 of the 135,000 properties are in the default profile, while the number in receipt of CTS only shows 2,758 compared to the 15,000 plus in receipt. Given the gaps in the data the collection performance is not currently analysed in this way and only the whole borough collection is provided. The year end process and the likely advent of a revised CTS scheme mean that profiles are updated. Once completed the Service will look to provide collection data by profile class in the next financial year. The main ones will be: default, CTS recipient, private tenant, owner and Brent/Housing Association (HA) tenant.</p> <p>Collection profiles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Default</li> <li>2. Breathing space – mandatory pause</li> <li>3. Brent and HA tenants</li> <li>4. Care leaver</li> <li>5. Council Tax Support recipient</li> <li>6. Members – required as payment affects ability to vote</li> <li>7. No Summons – where there is a hold on action</li> <li>8. Pending write-off – identified for write off</li> </ol>

			9. Previous arrears – arrears outstanding from earlier years to identify them for further action 10. Private tenant 11. Owner 12. Write-off – agreed for write-off or written off 13. Bulk Write-off 1993-2014 – exercise to remove some old debt in 2023
28 Jan 2024 - <b>Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report 2024</b>	Provide a copy of the Safer Brent Community Safety Action Plan 2024-2026.	Response to be provided by 30 April 2025.	<i>Response to be provided by 30/04/25.</i>
	Provide comprehensive data on the effectiveness of closure orders in reducing anti-social behaviour and crime.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<i>Response to be provided by 30/04/25.</i>
	Provide a detailed analysis of the factors contributing to the significant rise in racist hate crimes in the Cricklewood & Mapesbury and Willesden Green wards highlighted in the annual report, along with an overview of the current interventions aimed at addressing these increases.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<b>Response received on 11/04/25:</b>  Please see supporting paper (i) included as a separate attachment.
	Provide a copy of the Internal Audit Report 2024-25 (Social Housing Act – Anti-Social Behaviour).	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	Report sent to committee by email on 17/04/25.

25 Feb 2025 – <b>Quarter 3 financial Forecast 2024/25</b>	Provide a detailed breakdown of business rates income received over the last three years, categorised by organisation type.	Ravinder Jassar – Deputy Director, Corporate & Financial Planning, Finance & Resources	<i>Response to be provided by 30/04/25.</i>
	Provide breakdown of compensation paid for complaints over the last three years, categorised by department and type of complaint.	Amira Nassr – Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources	<b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b>  Information provided in Complaints Annual Report 2023/24 (due for review by committee at its meeting on 23 April 2025).
	Provide a detailed breakdown of compensation payments made, categorised by claim type, along with the associated legal fees incurred over the past five years.	Darren Armstrong – Deputy Director, Organisational Assurance & Resilience, Finance & Resources	<i>Response to be provided by 30/04/25.</i>
25 Feb 2025 - <b>Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value</b>	Provide a detailed breakdown of commissioned services income received over the last three years, categorised by organisation type.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 09/05/25.</i>
	Provide a detailed breakdown of funding allocated to externally commissioned services, distinguishing between organisation types—private companies (small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large enterprises/corporations), VCS organisations, and social enterprises—while also indicating whether each organisation is local or non-local.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 09/05/25.</i>

	Provide details, including examples, of how the council supports local SMEs in its procurement process.	Rhodri Rowlands – Director, Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy	<i>Response to be provided by 09/05/25.</i>
	Provide a copy of the Market Rent Reduction Framework, including the scoring criteria used to assess applications from VCS organisations seeking to rent council premises at reduced rates.	Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b>  Please see supporting paper (ii) included as a separate attachment.
25 Feb 2025 – <b>Emerging Employment Strategy 2025-2030</b>	Provide an update on the Roy Smith House initiative after its reopening, measuring its effectiveness in addressing the challenges outlined in the Stonebridge Outcome Based Review (OBR) and reviewing the outcomes of the council's Market Rent Reduction Framework.	<p>Sadie East – Director, Communications, Insight &amp; Innovation, Service Reform &amp; Strategy</p> <p>Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property &amp; Assets, Neighbourhoods &amp; Regeneration</p>	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>The commercial unit at Roy Smith House is part of the test of the council's new Market Rent Reduction Framework, which is designed to allow local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to have a reduced rent for council assets where they can demonstrate delivery of significant community value from their proposed use of the asset.</p> <p>Three bids were received for Roy Smith House from VCS organisations and were evaluated in March 2025. All bidders have been notified of the outcome of their bids and the comparative merits of their bid in comparison to the highest scoring bid.</p> <p>Officers are due to meet with the highest scoring bidder later this month to understand their proposal in more detail and discuss/agree heads of terms for a new lease.</p> <p>The organisation with the highest scoring bid demonstrated a proven track record of delivering community value and positive outcomes for residents, including opportunities to build confidence, skills and become more employable.</p> <p>Pending the outcome of negotiations, agreed deliverables will be included as a Schedule in the lease to be monitored by the lead service.</p>

			The commercial unit at Roy Smith House is currently empty and in need of fit-out works. A procurement exercise to appoint a provider to complete the fit-out works is currently live. The works are anticipated to complete in Summer 2025, which is the earliest the highest scoring bidder would be able to move in to the unit and begin delivering their proposed service.
	Provide detail on any targeted training programmes in Brent to meet industry demands, particularly the national shortage of bricklayers.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>The Employment and Skills teams has worked with training providers and local employers to meet the needs of several specific sectors. Bricklaying and other sector courses are accessible to Brent residents through our partners, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skills For Life</b> - hosting a number of Bricklaying NVQ courses in partnership with local developers</li> <li>• <b>The Forge</b> - offering a Hoist Operator course starting in June 2025</li> <li>• <b>Reds10</b> - funding Traffic Marshall Training throughout 2025</li> <li>• <b>Qualified 4 Life</b> - delivering a 16-week gas engineering bootcamp programme that converts over 80% of participants into jobs and has placed 79 Brent residents into well paid quality careers since the start of the programme in Nov 2022, leveraging £751k of GLA funding for delivering this to Brent residents to date. An additional £263K is being sought for 2025-26 to support 40 more learners.</li> <li>• <b>Wallace School of Transport and Veolia</b> - delivering HGV qualifications</li> <li>• <b>Ultra Education</b> – providing support to residents interested in working in digital and creative industries.</li> <li>• <b>The Forward Trust</b> - delivering support to those wanting to work in the Green Sector</li> <li>• <b>HS2, the Forge @ Park Royal (OPDC) and West London College</b> - supporting training for in demand construction roles, including a</li> </ul>

			tunnelling pre-employment programme, a 3-day introduction to construction, and a 5-day introduction to dry lining and hoist operator training
	Share data on the number and types of roles secured through training at the Green Skills Centre, facilitated by the partnership between the Council and the College of North West London.	Kibibi Octave – Director, Community Development, Children, Young People & Resident Community Development	<p><b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b></p> <p>We have asked the college for a response and await a return on this data.</p>



# HATE CRIME IN CRICKLEWOOD & MAPESBURY, AND WILLESDEN

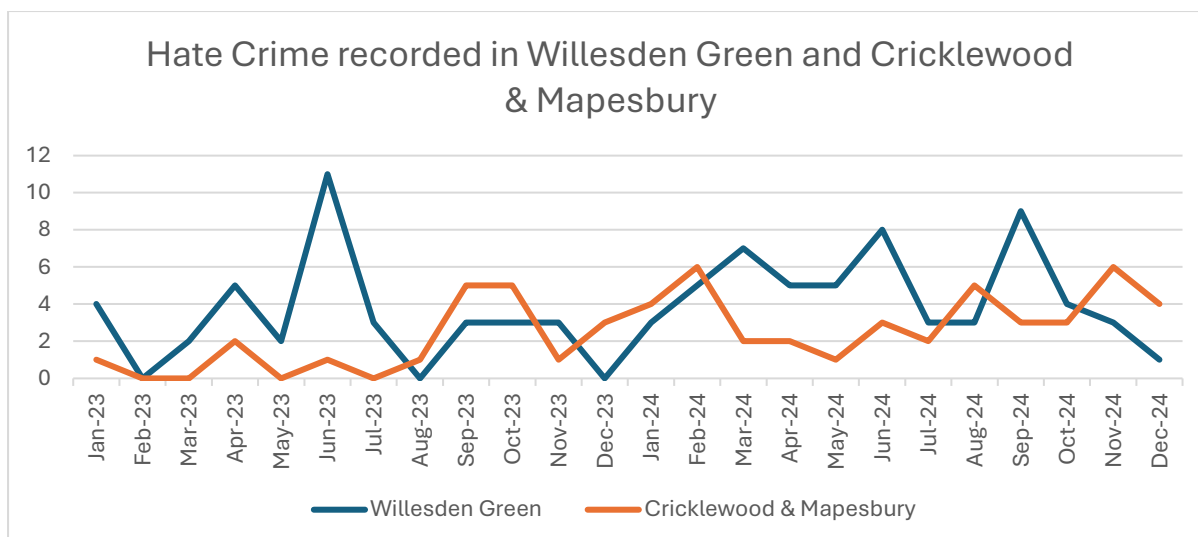
## Headlines

The greatest increase in Hate Crime in Cricklewood & Mapesbury and Willesden Green wards was seen in “Racist and Religious Crime”, with increases in these hate crime categories of 56% for Willesden Green, and 116% in Cricklewood & Mapesbury. Despite the small numbers, significant increases were seen in Cricklewood & Mapesbury relating to Faith and Anti Semitic Hate Crimes, with Faith Hate Crime more than quadrupling.

CRICKLEWOOD & MAPESBURY			
Hate Crime Category	2023	2024	% Change
Racist & Religious	19	41	116%
Racist	19	34	79%
Faith	2	9	350%
Antisemitic	2	5	150%
Islamophobic	0	3	
Homophobic	4	2	-50%
Transphobic	1	2	100%
Disability	2	0	-100%

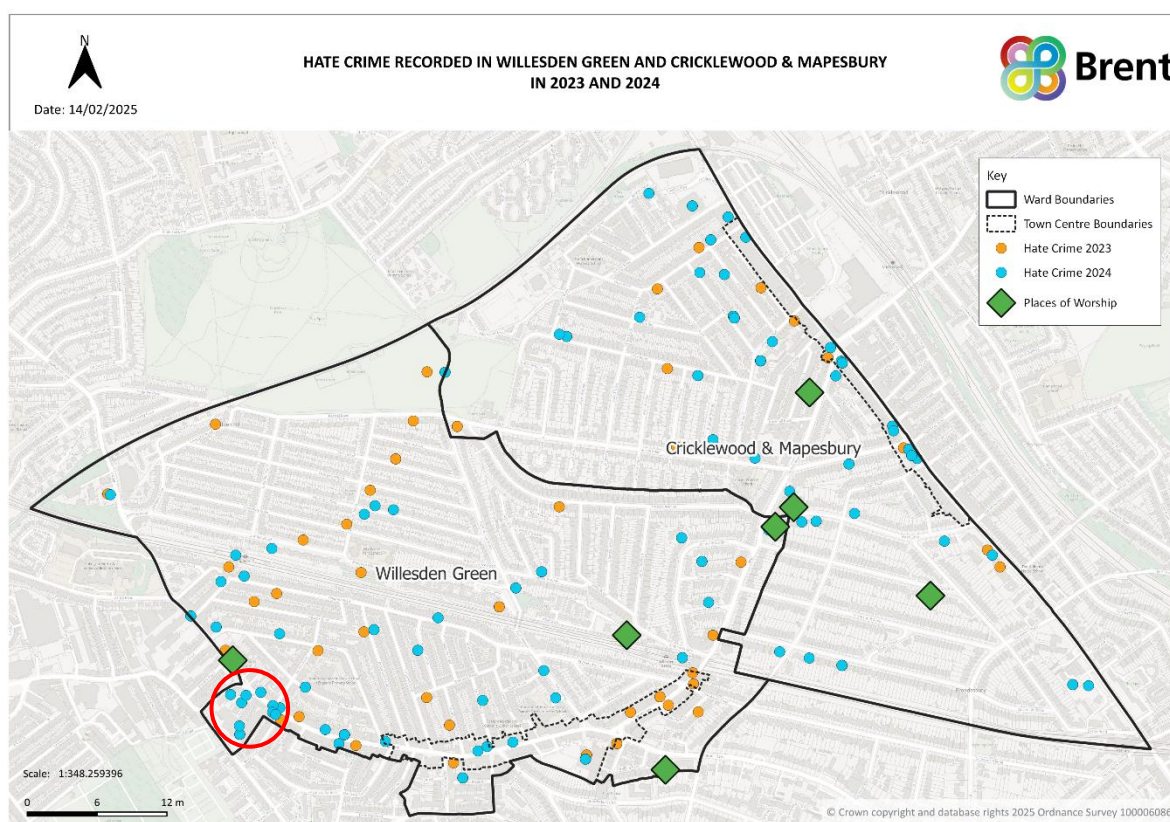
WILLESDEN GREEN			
Hate Crime Category	2023	2024	% Change
Racist & Religious	36	56	56%
Racist	35	52	49%
Faith	4	4	0%
Antisemitic	1	1	0%
Islamophobic	3	0	-100%
Homophobic	1	3	200%
Transphobic	1	0	-100%
Disability	1	2	100%

The below data relates specifically to offences recorded as Racist or Religious recorded in 2023 and 2024. From month to month, the most notable trend within the data is the beginning of 2024, following the major conflict in the Middle-East from October 23. This rise in Hate Crime into 2024 was more notable in Willesden Green, with numbers remaining higher for much of the rest of the year, whilst in Cricklewood & Mapesbury numbers fell in February to levels similar to those seen in 2023 before steadily rising again throughout 2024.



There were a couple of significant spikes in Racist & Religious Hate Crime recorded in Willesden Green in 2024, in June and September. Much of the UK saw anti-immigration demonstrations and riots between July and August, and whilst there were no notable incidents in Brent, there may have been a knock-on effect which caused the increase in September. The June spike doesn't seem to line up with a specific event, however, could still be considered as part of the increase seen since December 2023 in relation to increased tensions due to the Middle-East conflict.

## Location



Mapping Hate Crime in 2023 and 2024 across the two boroughs doesn't show any significant hotspots, though there are a couple of clusters of offences seen in 2024 that weren't in 2023. In the south west of Willesden Green (highlighted with the red circle) there was a cluster of Racist & Religious offences recorded. This area covers the end of the High Road however is outside the boundary of Willesden Town Centre. There is also a bus garage in the area which has seen high numbers of ASB over the last couple of years.

The green diamonds on the map represent religious buildings or places of worship; the highlighted cluster of Hate Crime in Willesden is close to a Portuguese/Spanish language Catholic Church. Unfortunately, victim-level data available at this time is not detailed enough to understand the precise demography of victims of Hate Crime in these areas, however the vicinity of this cluster to foreign-language church may be significant. There have been a few offences reported in the vicinity of other places of worship in the wards, however no large clusters. Of possible note, however, is that when looking at offences in 2023 (orange dots), the number of offences reported in the area of places of worship is even lower.

## **Offences**

The table below shows a breakdown of the top offence types that were flagged with Racist or Religious Hate Crime (only the top 10 are shown below, full tables have been pasted at the end of the report). Due to the classification and naming of certain offences in the past couple of years, direct comparisons between offences year-on-year aren't reliable; in 2024, for example, there were 32 separate offences recorded by the MPS (Metropolitan Police Service) which included the words 'Racially or Religiously Aggravated' compared to just 10 in 2023 (full tables at the end of the report)

<b>Racist &amp; Religious Hate Crime 2023 (Top 10)</b>	
<b>Offence</b>	<b>Total</b>
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress	18
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety	8
Public Fear Alarm or Distress	5
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Assault without Injury	3
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Vehicle	2
Attempted Residential Burglary of a Home	1
Threats to Kill	1
Assault without Injury	1
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury	1
Harassment	1

<b>Racist &amp; Religious Hate Crime 2024 (Top 10)</b>	
<b>Offence</b>	<b>Total</b>
Racially or religiously aggravated harassment alarm or distress	24
Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment alarm or distress	16
Send indecent or grossly offensive communication to cause distress or anxiety	5
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress	4
Harassment	4
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	3
Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating	3
Threats to kill	3
Hate Offence - Racial Incident	2
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety	2

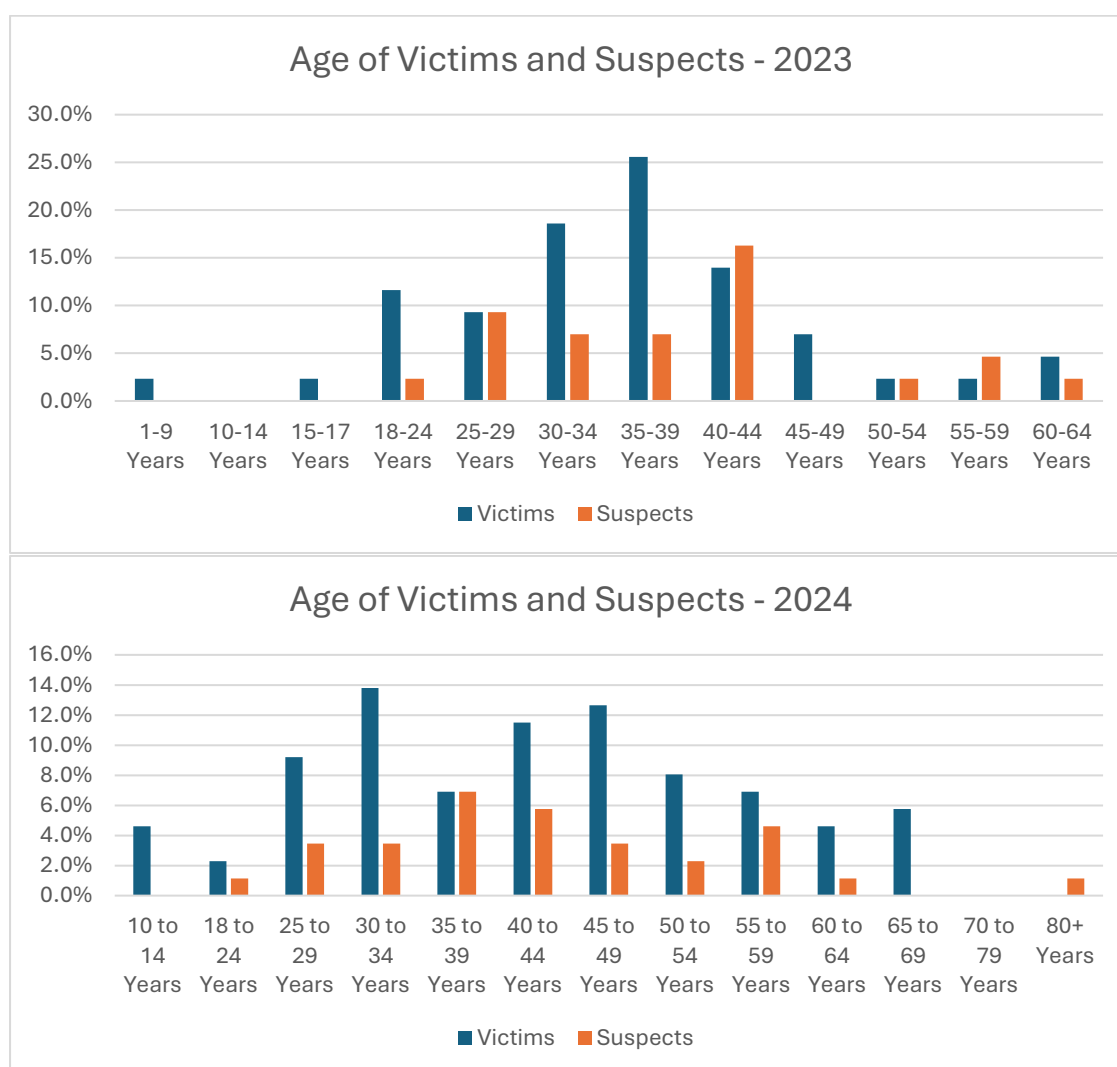
In 2023, only one offence recorded with a Racist or Religious Hate Crime flag in Mapesbury & Cricklewood or Willesden Green wards was related to physical violence, however in 2024 there were 8 total offences of physical violence. Whether this is due to differences in the recording of hate offences, or a more concerning rise in violence within the two boroughs is

unknown. Of the 8 violent offences, 3 occurred in Willesden Green, and 5 in Cricklewood & Mapesbury.

The majority of Hate Crime offences were classified as causing alarm, distress or fear, and there was a fairly even spread between the two boroughs.

### **Victims/Offenders**

Data relating to the demography, specifically of offenders of Hate Crime, is limited; 49% of suspect/offenders' details in 2023 are unknown, and 67% of suspect/offender details for 2024, making it difficult to form reliable insights from the available data. There is also difficulty specifically in relation to ethnicity – the available data only records the top-level ethnicity categories of White, Black, Asian, or Other, making nuanced analysis into race and ethnicity impossible. The data that is available has been broken down below and relates to all Racist and Religious Hate Crime offences recorded in Willesden Green and Cricklewood & Mapesbury wards.



The frequency of different age groups for both victims and suspect/offenders has changed significantly across 2023 and 2024. In 2023 the majority of Hate Crime victims were aged 35-39 but in 2024 there was no significant majority; 30-40 was the most frequent age group, but 40-44 and 45-49 were within only a couple of percent. Suspect/offender age groups were also much more spread out in 2024, with 30-35, 40-44, and 55-59 again only being within a few

percent of the most frequent age group, whilst in 2023 there were almost double the number of 40-44 year old suspect/offenders than the next most frequent age group.

The most notable difference in the sex of victims and suspect/offenders from 2023 to 2024 was that the proportion of female suspect/offenders in 2024 more than doubled since last year, from just 11.5% in 2023 to 25.6% in 2024. Female victims also increased by 10% whilst male victims remained consistent. Due to the rise in female suspect/offenders, males suspect/offenders also reduced.

	2023		2024	
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects
<b>Female</b>	39.5%	25.6%	28.7%	11.5%
<b>Male</b>	58.1%	27.9%	56.3%	37.9%
<b>Unknown</b>	2.3%	46.5%	14.9%	50.6%

As mentioned, data relating to the ethnicity of both victims and suspect/offenders is difficult to gain valuable insight from due to the amount of data missing and the absence of more detailed categories. The data for Hate Crime in Willesden Green and Cricklewood & Mapesbury for 2024 is missing 43% of victim ethnicity, and 65.5% of suspect/offender ethnicity.

Of the data that is available, the most notable change is the increase of White suspects and decrease of White victims, despite more victim ethnicity data being available as a whole.

	2023		2024	
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects
<b>Asian</b>	16.3%	4.7%	14.9%	3.4%
<b>Black</b>	18.6%	11.6%	21.8%	12.6%
<b>Other</b>	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%
<b>White</b>	30.2%	9.3%	17.2%	16.1%
<b>Unknown</b>	34.9%	74.4%	43.7%	65.5%

## **Additional Data**

### **Full Offence list 2024 – Racist & Religious Hate Crime**

Offences	Total
Racially or religiously aggravated harassment alarm or distress	24
Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment alarm or distress	16
Send indecent or grossly offensive communication to cause distress or anxiety	5
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress	4
Harassment	4
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	3
Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating	3
Threats to kill	3
Hate Offence - Racial Incident	2
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety	2
Attempted - Robbery (of Personal Property)	2
Public Fear Alarm or Distress	2
Theft from shops and stalls where the values of goods stolen is less than £200	2
Racially or religiously aggravated fear or provocation of violence	2
Harassment alarm or distress (S5 POA)	1
Theft from the person of another	1
Sharing intimate photograph or film to cause alarm distress or humiliation or for sexual gratification.	1
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle where value of that damage is under £500	1
Harassment - Pursue course of conduct in breach of Sec 1 (1) which amounts to stalking	1

Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury	1
Assault without Injury	1
Criminal Damage to a Vehicle	1
Causing intentional harassment alarm or distress	1
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm without intent	1
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Harassment	1
Racially or religiously aggravated assault or assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Assault without Injury	1

### Full offence list 2023 – Racist & Religious Hate Crime

Row Labels	Count of URN
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress	18
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety	8
Public Fear Alarm or Distress	5
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Assault without Injury	3
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Vehicle	2
Attempted Residential Burglary of a Home	1
Threats to Kill	1
Assault without Injury	1
Harassment	1
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury	1
Other Theft	1
Other Offences Against The State & Public Order	1

### All offences Religiously or Racially Aggravated offences 2023

Offence Title
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress
Hate Offence - Racial Incident
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Assault without Injury
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Harassment
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Vehicle
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Building Other than a Dwelling
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Other Criminal Damage
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Dwelling
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm without intent

### All offences Religiously or Racially Aggravated offences 2024

Offence Title
Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment alarm or distress
Racially or religiously aggravated harassment alarm or distress
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Public Fear Alarm or Distress
Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating
Racially or religiously aggravated fear or provocation of violence
Racially or religiously aggravated Harassment or stalking without violence
Racially or religiously aggravated assault or assault occasioning actual bodily harm
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Assault without Injury
Hate Offence - Racial Incident
Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage
Racially or religiously aggravated wounding or grievous bodily harm

Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a dwelling where value of that damage is under £500
Racially or religiously aggravated Harassment or stalking with fear of violence
Attempted - Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment alarm or distress
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle where value of that damage is under £500
Possession of racially inflammatory material (Acts intended to stir up racial hatred)
Attempted - Racially or religiously aggravated fear or provocation of violence
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Other Criminal Damage
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Harassment
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage other
Attempted - Racially or religiously aggravated Harassment or stalking without violence
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury
Use of words or behaviour or display or written material (Acts intended to stir up racial hatred)
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm without intent
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a dwelling
Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to other property where value of that damage is £500 or over and under £5000
Attempted - Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating
Attempted - Racially and/or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle where value of that damage is under £500
Attempted - Racially or religiously aggravated harassment alarm or distress
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Dwelling
Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage to a Building Other than a Dwelling

# Hate Crime Response in Brent

Brent Council has secured one-off funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to commission hate crime preventative services. These projects listed below are due to be delivered imminently for 6 months.

## **Stop Hate UK's Schools' training and 24/7 Third-party reporting line.**

The project aims to tackle hate crime and discrimination among young people through a series of four interactive workshops. These workshops focus on key topics such as hate crime awareness, online hate and misinformation, the role of upstanders, and empowering educators to address hate and discrimination effectively.

Additionally, the project will establish a 24-hour hate crime reporting hotline that will provide Brent residents with a safe, accessible means to report incidents and seek support without police involvement, fostering trust in the community. The data collected will be shared with Brent Council, helping to inform future strategies against hate crime. These initiatives are important as they empower young people and staff to create safer, more inclusive environments, address the root causes of hate, and promote tolerance and understanding within the community.

The hotline serves as a vital resource for communities hesitant to report incidents to authorities and ensure that all voices can be heard. This project's introduction in Brent in February 2025 brings us in compliance with the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry 1999, Recommendation 16:

*"That all possible steps should be taken by police services at the local level in consultation with local Government and other agencies and local communities to encourage the reporting of racist incidents and crimes.  
This should include the ability to report at locations other than police stations; and the ability to report 24 hours a day".*

## **Protection Approaches' Community Capacity Building Project**

This six-month project will simultaneously strengthen the capacity of at least 30 community and faith-based organisations in the London Borough of Brent to understand, identify, and respond to hate crime, while integrating consultation directly into each training session to capture local needs and experiences. Alongside these reciprocal training-consultation sessions, additional surveys, interviews, and wider community consultations will develop a robust evidence base illustrating the scale and impact of hate crime in the borough. The findings will culminate in practical, evidence-based recommendations for Brent Local Authority, outlining how to address current gaps in provision, improve prevention efforts, and enhance support for victims.

Through a series of training and consultation sessions, the project will not only equip participants with the knowledge to support victims and raise awareness but will also capture local insights on the prevalence and impact of hate crimes in the area. This will involve additional research through surveys and interviews, leading to the development of actionable recommendations for Brent Local Authority.

## **MOPAC Funded Pan-London Hate Crime Victim Service**

CATCH give specialist advice and help to people targeted with violence, abuse or harassment because of their race, religion, disability, sexuality or gender identity. CATCH is an advocacy



service for people facing hate crime in London. It focuses on working with people in the highest levels of risk, impact and need. CATCH is a service for people over 18 years old in London, including those who live in Brent.

CATCH is a collaborative initiative among various charities (listed below) focused on combating different types of hate crimes, such as those based on sexual orientation, race, and religion.

Galop- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender hate crime

The Monitoring Group (TMG)- Race hate crime

East European Resource Centre (EERC)- Eastern European hate crime

The Community Security Trust (CST)- Antisemitic hate crime

Tell MAMA- Anti-Muslim (Islamophobic) hate crime

Choice in Hackney - Anti-Disability hate crime

Stay Safe East - Anti-Disability hate crime

Real- Anti-Disability hate crime

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## **Market Rent Reduction Guidance**

- 1.1 This document outlines a 'Market Rent Reduction' framework for select new lettings, through which Brent Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations wishing to lease Brent Council premises may be eligible for reduced rent rates reflecting the value the proposed use of the premises may bring to the local community.
- 1.2 This framework is currently being trialled and applies to select lettings only.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 The reduction applies to rent charges only, and tenants will still be liable for all other charges and costs associated with the premises.
- 1.4 To ensure the greatest community value is derived from the Council's assets, there are general criteria that organisations will be required to meet to be eligible for a Market Rent Reduction. All bidders are required to complete the 'Market Rent Reduction Eligibility Checklist', as well as the 'Market Rent Reduction Response Sheet'.
- 1.5 Bids will be scored against a set of criteria, which will determine the potential band of rent reduction that can be granted (Tables 1 and 2).

### **2. Measuring Community Value**

- 2.1 A panel of Brent Officers will evaluate bids against the points matrix (Table 1). The points matrix will determine the number of points scored by a bid, which will determine the band of rent reduction (Table 2).

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<sup>1</sup> This framework is currently being trialled and applies to select new lettings only. This document relates to the community space at Roy Smith House, 71 Hillside, NW10 8LN.

**Table 1: Points matrix**

Property Strategy Priority:	<b>Strategic Alignment</b> (max. 3 points)	<b>Community Benefit</b> (max. 3 points)	<b>Social</b> (max. 2 points)	<b>Environmental</b> (max. 2 points)	<b>Economic Viability</b> (max. 10 points)
Question:	<b>Q1.</b> Do proposals align with Brent's vision and strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Borough Plan 2023 - 2027</a></li> <li><a href="#">Health Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2027</a></li> <li><a href="#">Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028</a></li> </ul>	<b>Q2.</b> Do proposals demonstrate knowledge of the local area and local communities?  Do proposals address a gap in service provision or build on or improve existing provision, for the benefit of local communities?  <i>Data on Brent's residents and demographics including the JSNA, Census 2021 and others can be found on Brent Open Data:</i>  <a href="https://data.brent.gov.uk/">https://data.brent.gov.uk/</a>	<b>Q3.</b> Do proposals support positive social outcomes? This could include indicators related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting education</li> <li>Employment and skills, including London Living Wage</li> <li>Social wellbeing</li> <li>Reduction in crime and exploitation</li> </ul>	<b>Q4.</b> Do proposals support any climate action objectives (i.e. reduce carbon emissions) and/or improve the natural environment (i.e. ecological improvements, enhance biodiversity/green spaces etc)?	<b>Q5.</b> Do proposals provide clear and acceptable KPI's and deliverables for social outcomes?
<b>Points awarded:</b>					
0 points	No or some reservations	No or some reservations	No	No	Up to <b>10 points</b> awarded based on estimated value of deliverables and outcomes.  This will be calculated using trusted sources including <a href="#">Greater Manchester New Economy Model: Cost Benefit Analysis Tool 2022</a>
1 point	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat	Somewhat	
2 points	Good	Good	Yes	Yes	
3 points	Outstanding	Outstanding			

2.2 Bids can score a maximum of 20 points.


2.3 The number of points received will determine the band of rent reduction bids are eligible for (Table 2).

**Table 2: Band and rate of reduction**

Points	Band	Rent reduction
10 or under	0	0%
11 – 13	1	20%
14 – 16	2	35%
17 - 20	3	50%

- 2.4 A minimum score of **11** is required for an organisation to be deemed as delivering community value.
- 2.5 Decisions in respect of which band of contribution will be applied in any given case will predominantly take account of the above. Following detailed discussions with the winning bidder the council may opt to agree a rate of rent reduction not stated in Table 2. Other factors which may impact on decisions may include existing partnership arrangements with the Council and the Council's own financial and budget position.
- 2.6 The final decision will be wholly at the discretion of the Council, with no appeal process at this stage.
- 2.7 Outcomes and KPI's of the winning bidder will be included in the Lease. The successful Tenant will be required to provide annual monitoring and evidence demonstrating delivery against these.
- 2.8 If you have any questions relating to this process, please get in touch with the contact email stated on the advert. Note, queries and clarifications will be accepted up until 1 week before the submission deadline.

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	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 23 April 2025
	<b>Report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance</b>
<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work 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> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Jason Sigba, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Democratic & Corporate Governance <a href="mailto:Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk">Jason.Sigba@brent.gov.uk</a>  Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk">Amira.Nassr@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide an update on the changes to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That committee members note the report and the changes to the work programme within.

## 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 It is intended to be a flexible, living document that can adapt and change according to the needs of a committee. The following amendments set out in this report reflect this:

- The agenda item titled 'Build Quality' has been updated to reflect the change in cabinet responsibility to Councillor Teo Benea, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property
- The agenda item titled 'Complaints Annual Report 2023/24' has been updated to reflect the change in officer responsibility to Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources
- The agenda item titled 'Establishment of Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group' has been added to the meeting on 23 April 2025 for review

Please see changes highlighted in red in Appendix A.

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

4.1 Ward members are regularly informed about the committee's work programme in the Chair's report to Full Council. There is ongoing consultation with other relevant stakeholders.

## **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 and  
Corporate Governance

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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 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>
Findings of the Local Government Ombudsman regarding a failure to attach a condition to a 2012 planning consent	Cllr Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	
CIL and 106	Cllr Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	
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	

**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	
Safer Brent Partnership Report 2024/25	Cllr Harbi Farah, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills	Peter Gadsdon, Corporate Director – Partnerships, Housing, and Resident Services	Metropolitan Police
People Strategy	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Debra Norman, Corporate Director – Law and Governance	

**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	
Employment & Skills	Cllr Harbi Farah, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Peter Gadsdon, Corporate Director – Partnerships, Housing, and Resident Services	
Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth Building, & Social Value	Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power	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 Teo Benea, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	
Complaints Annual Report 2023/24	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	

Establishment of Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group	Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
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