



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

**Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 17 November 2025
at 10.00 am**

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Kim Wright (Chief Executive) with Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development) acting as her representative.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made during the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 13 October 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising (if any)

None identified.

5. Petitions (if any)

5.1 Experimental Traffic Order Scheme between Kingswood Avenue & Salusbury Road

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Sanjay Nazerali (as lead petitioner) to the meeting who he advised was attending to present a petition regarding the Experimental Traffic Order (ETO) scheme between Kingswood Avenue & Salusbury Road.

In thanking the Leader of the Council for the opportunity to present the petition, Sanjay Nazerali advised that the representations made followed on from the presentation of a previous petition to Cabinet by Alastair Balfour a year ago, which had included reference to the ETOS between Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road. Given the exclusive focus of the current petition on the Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road scheme, he felt this could be regarded as Phase II of the same process highlighting the similar number signatures contained within the current petition as evidence that the issues had not disappeared.

In outlining the concerns being raised, Mr Nazerali advised that the ETOs between Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road had created deep division within the local community resulting in what petitioners saw as a two-tier ward whereby the relief enjoyed by the few, as a result of the ETOs, corresponded with equal levels of nuisance for their neighbours, reflecting not just an issue related to traffic but also wider community cohesion. As such, it was felt the Council had not listened to the earlier issues raised, with concern expressed that the most recent report published relating to Queens Park Healthy Neighbourhoods had stated the 1,400 signatories to the previous petition 'welcomed the scheme', which he confirmed was not factually accurate. As a result of those comments, residents had made a formal complaint seeking amendment of the report with further concerns raised, from a governance perspective, around the process followed in relation to the investigation of that complaint involving the officer who had prepared the original report.

Concern was also expressed at the process of engagement with local ward councillors in Queens Park given what the petitioners felt to have been a lack of response when queried about the representation of constituents' views in the report, which had subsequently been escalated to the Leader of the Council. Given the number of signatures across both petitions which had now been presented to Cabinet, concerns were also highlighted at the view that the sentiment being expressed in opposition to the scheme was only held by a small group of residents.

In summarising the impact of the ETO scheme on the community, Mr Nazerali felt that it represented a socially regressive policy that had caused division in the community and eroded trust in the Council's commitment to transparency. As a way forward, given the strength of feeling represented by the number of signatures across both petitions which had been presented to Cabinet, he advised the petitioners were calling on the Council to cancel what was felt to be the divisive and unfair ETO scheme between Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road and to develop a more holistic solution that would benefit the many rather than a few in a way that would restore trust in the Council.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement) thanked Sanjay Nazerali and others for attending Cabinet to ensure the views of residents in Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road and the surrounding area were represented. In noting the content of the petition and presentation, Councillor Krupa Sheth assured the petitioners that the Council welcomed all feedback and felt it important to highlight the extensive engagement with the community on the scheme, including 575 emails. This had generated wide ranging feedback with strong views expressed for all options, with residents raising objections as well as expressing support for the scheme and its principles. In seeking a way forward, the petitioners were advised that all feedback would be considered alongside evidence-based traffic monitoring data such as traffic surveys, air quality results and the impact of other planned improvements in order for the Council to develop a well-balanced and evidence-based recommendation on the way forward, working with both local residents and councillors to ensure the best outcomes for Queens Park.

The Leader then invited Councillor Nerva to speak (as a local Queens Park ward councillor) who highlighted the challenge of managing traffic in inner city areas. Whilst recognising the nature of ETOs as experimental he was keen to ensure that a final way forward and recommendation on the future of the ETO scheme in

Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road was reached as soon as possible. The opportunity was also taken to welcome the funding secured for a traffic study on the area to the west of Chamberlayne Road, which he felt would also provide important insights as to the impact of traffic in the area. In concluding, he highlighted the balance local councillors were required to strike between the views and expectations expressed by residents in one area when compared with others from the wider area and was pleased to note the commitment made to the use of an evidence-based process to ensure an informed decision could be reached on the future of any scheme affecting Kingswood Avenue and Salusbury Road.

As a final contribution and in summing up, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) also took the opportunity to thank Sanjay Nazerali and the other residents present for attending the meeting to present the petition. Whilst recognising the views expressed about the impact of the scheme on the local community the opportunity was also taken to once again reassure the petitioners of the commitment made by the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement to ensure a fair and evidence-based approach was taken in relation to any final decision on the future of the scheme.

5.2 Addressing the mess and nuisance being caused by pigeons under the Network Rail Green Bridge, Kilburn Station

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised that following consultation with the lead petitioner, the petition had been withdrawn from presentation to Cabinet.

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

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

7. Change in Order of Business

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Chair) advised that as he had accepted requests to speak in relation to Agenda Item 8 (Willesden Green Health & Wellbeing Integrated Hub) and Agenda Item 10 (School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28 Second Refresh) he intended to change the order of the agenda to enable Item 8 and 10 to be considered in advance of the remainder of the agenda.

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

8. Willesden Green Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub

Prior to considering the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Dr Muhammed Najim (as a lead GP located within the Willesden Green surgery and NHS Brent's Clinical Director for Health Inequalities) and Tom Shakespeare (Managing Director, Brent Integrated Care Board) to the meeting who he advised had requested to speak in support of the proposals Cabinet were being asked to consider relating to development of the Willesden Green Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub.

In addressing Cabinet, Dr Muhammed Najim began by advising members of the background to the proposed development of the Integrated Hub starting with the longstanding nature and role played by the Willesden Green Surgery as a family run GP practice in providing primary health care services for some of Brent's most deprived communities. Highlighting the success of the surgery in terms of numbers of GP appointments being offered, high early cancer detection rates and innovative services available, including the provision of ultrasound guided surgery, which had resulting in them being shortlisted for GP Team of the year in the National General Practice Awards 2025, it was pointed out this had also created challenges with the registered patient list size having increased from 3,000 to 15,000 over the previous 7 years. This had resulted in the practice currently serving the healthcare needs of approx. 5% of Brent's resident population out of a converted makeshift 3-bedroom ground floor apartment operating in a space with the least square footage of all 400 GP practices in the NHS North West London area.

As such, he advised that all staff at the surgery were excited to have been involved in developing the proposals to deliver a new Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub on the Gladstone Park Youth and Community Centre site, designed to deliver modern health services, community amenities and wellbeing spaces for the local community including relocation of the Willesden Green Surgery. In expressing support for the proposals being presented to Cabinet, the opportunity was taken to highlight that the Integrated Hub would be the first of its kind in NHS North West London with the building based on a modern and sustainable design also making it one of the lowest carbon and energy efficient NHS buildings in London.

In providing further detail, Dr Najim highlighted that the new local Integrated Neighbourhood Team would have access to clinical and non-clinical space on site, serving the healthcare needs of all local residents (including not only those currently registered at the surgery) with the scheme providing new outdoor community space including an outdoor gym, padel court, and wellbeing studio space as well as a community café. Recognising the need to encourage more active lifestyles, he highlighted the role the Hub would be able to play in empowering that type of activity and in creating a social space for everyone. Outlining the engagement already undertaken with the Friends of Gladstone Park, Dr Najim advised of the ongoing focus (working with a range of community groups) to ensure the additional community space and facilities being provided were welcomed by local residents also outlining plans to include the provision of a new community pharmacy as part of the Hub.

In summing up, Dr Najim ended by assuring members of the care and focus on the design of the building, involving the engagement of a leading healthcare architect and reflecting the commitment to enhance existing features within the park. The opportunity was also taken to thank the Council for their support in seeking to deliver what it was felt would be a unique and exciting flagship hub that would serve Brent residents for many decades.

The Leader then invited Tom Shakespeare (as Managing Director, Brent Integrated Care Partnership) to speak who highlighted that the proposal had been developed in partnership with the NHS, reflecting the transition towards an Integrated Neighbourhood model and drive to deliver good quality primary health care space within the borough with the Hub designed as a flagship centre for health and wellbeing as well as a centre for green excellence.

Having thanked Dr Najim and Tom Shakespeare for their comments, the Leader then invited Councillor Teo Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property) to introduce the accompanying report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration seeking approval for redevelopment of the Gladstone Park Youth & Community Centre site to deliver the new Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub along with the required Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) funding allocation and delegated authority to enable disposal of the site and lease arrangements for delivery of the scheme.

In introducing the report, Councillor Benea began by thanking Dr Najim for his comments in support for the proposals and for his engagement in seeking to take forward the scheme, which it was pointed out represented a significant regeneration opportunity for the existing site. Highlighting the building on the current site as beyond economic repair, members were advised the proposal would enable its replacement with a modern Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local community and demonstrating the way in which planning, investment and partnership could be combined and used to deliver better social outcomes for residents of the borough from underused public land.

Referencing the schemes close alignment with the Council's wider regeneration objectives, including improving access to essential services, supporting nearby growth areas, and making better long-term use of Council assets, it was felt the co-location of GP services with community health facilities, a pharmacy and flexible activity spaces within the Hub would create a genuine focal point for the area, reducing barriers to care and helping to address persistent health inequalities in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods within the borough. In terms of funding, members were also reminded that approx. 60% of the project costs were being covered through confirmed external NHS and GP practice funding, representing a major investment for Brent that was also felt to demonstrate the value of partnership-led regeneration, with the SCIL contribution designed to help unlock funding while retaining freehold of the site in Council ownership. Members were advised that the report also set out the practical steps required to deliver the scheme, including lease arrangements and securing vacant possession through the relocation of Kilburn Cosmos Rugby Football Club (RFC), which would ensure the development could proceed on time and in a way that would deliver long lasting benefits as part of a positive and forward-looking investment with those officers involved also thanked for their support in development of the proposals.

In highlighting support for the scheme, Councillor Grahl (as local ward councillor) commended the approach outlined in seeking to transform the existing site for use as a flagship development providing a Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub delivering modern primary health services alongside a range of community amenities and wellbeing spaces. All those involved in development of the scheme were thanked for their work and efforts to engage with the local community, with the case in support felt to have been well presented. In commending the scheme, it was also hoped that the permanent name for the facility would be able to reflect the Hub's location within the Cricklewood and Mapesbury ward.

having noted the integral role the Hub would play in support of the NHS's transition from institution to community-based services, members also welcomed the way in which the scheme had been designed to reflect the Council's objectives and

community vision along with the engagement undertaken with the Friends of Gladstone Park, Library and other park users. The focus on delivery of local health support within the communities served as well as on preventative care and in seeking to reduce health inequalities and improve health outcomes for residents through the co-location of services (including the community pharmacy) was also welcomed with the opportunity also taken to highlight the combination of funding sources supporting the project and wider value of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts being driven through delivery of the ambitious programme of regeneration across Brent in supporting schemes such as the Integrated Health & Wellbeing Hub.

In once again thanking Dr Najim (on behalf of the Willesden Green Surgery) & Tom Shakespeare (on behalf of the ICB) for their support and collaboration in development of the Integrated Hub proposals, recognising the wider benefits identified in relation to the provision of the Integrated Hub, Cabinet **RESOLVED** having noted the additional valuation information contained within the exempt appendix to the report, to:

- (1) Approve the allocation of up to £2.97m Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) funding to support the redevelopment of the Gladstone Park Youth and Community Centre site into the Willesden Green Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub, as set out in section 3.14 (Option 1) of the report, subject to the conditions in (2) below.
- (2) Approve the release of SCIL funding in staged payments, aligned to delivery milestones and contingent upon:
 - Planning consent being granted;
 - Confirmation of the full external funding; and
 - Completion of the agreement to lease with Willesden Green Surgery.
- (3) Approve the granting a 150-year peppercorn lease to Willesden Green Surgery to enable delivery of the Hub, with the Council retaining the freehold and securing lease clauses to protect health and community uses in perpetuity.
- (4) Authorise the Director of Property and Assets to agree the detailed terms of the agreement to lease and long lease disposal and to enter into the necessary legal agreements to facilitate the disposal and development and to take all necessary steps to complete the transaction.
- (5) Note the intentions to relocate Kilburn Cosmos Rugby Football Club (KCRFC) from the Gladstone Park Youth & Community Centre to the Gladstone Park Pavilion to secure suitable alternative premises for KCRFC and full vacant possession of the site to enable on-site delivery.
- (6) Note that Willesden Green Health and Wellbeing Integrated Hub would be a temporary working name for the new facility. The permanent name would be determined following discussions with key stakeholders, to reflect the hub's location within the Cricklewood and Mapesbury ward and to ensure the name was appropriate and inclusive.

9. School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28 Second Refresh

Prior to considering the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Councillor Kennelly to the meeting who he advised had requested to speak in relation to the refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028. In addressing Cabinet, Councillor Kennelly advised he had requested to speak (as a local ward councillor) in support of the strategy and approach outlined towards the expansion of local SEND provision, including proposals for the development of the Strathcona site within his ward to provide additional primary places to meet the increasing demand for specialist provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the borough. In thanking the Cabinet Member and all officers involved for their work to increase the provision of SEND places across the borough, he was keen to recognise the additional benefits this approach would provide in terms of reducing the reliance on the use of out-of-borough placements and placements within the independent sector from both a financial perspective and in terms of ensuring that children and young people with SEND had the opportunity to access appropriate, high quality education provision closer to home within the borough.

Having thanked Councillor Kennelly for his comments, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) then invited Councillor Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) to introduce the report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People & Community Development which detailed the second refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28. In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl began by thanking Councillor Kennelly for his comments in support of the strategy and approach towards the delivery of SEND provision across the borough including the proposals in relation to use of the Strathcona site. Referring to the refresh of strategy, the opportunity was taken to highlight the focus in continuing delivery on the commitment to provide sufficient, sustainable and high-quality school places in Brent based on every child being able to access a local school, while also supporting schools in adapting to changing demand levels. As such, members were advised the strategy had been refreshed to respond to growth in certain areas while managing surplus capacity in others.

The strategy also included, as a key priority, proposals relating to the expansion of local SEND provision recognising that demand for specialist provision was continuing to rise and with a focus on reducing reliance on more costly out of borough placements as well as those within the independent sector. In highlighting the benefits of this approach not only on families, in terms of keeping children closer to home, it was pointed out the approach would also assist in managing the associated financial pressures on the Council recognising the ambition already shown through the major investment in new provision including the opening of the Wembley Manor Special School which represented a capital investment of £22m and which now had children placed and learning there.

Attention was also drawn to the focus within the strategy on the importance of early years education in shaping life chances, with reference made to the impact which the Government's roll out of the 30 free hours childcare offer would also have on working families in Brent being able to access affordable, high quality support and the Council committed to encouraging uptake of the entitlement in order to ensure every child had the best opportunities to thrive regardless of background or circumstances. In summing up, Councillor Grahl advised that the refreshed strategy reflected the Council's determination to work in partnership with schools

and local communities to ensure all children in Brent were able to continue accessing quality education, with the efforts made to retain existing school provision also commended given the ongoing pressures across some areas in relation to demand.

Following on, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Community Development) also took the opportunity to outline the work being undertaken in partnership with schools across the borough in order to design solutions focussed on maintaining the sufficiency of places and sustainability of schools (recognising the varying patterns of demand which impacted on school planning areas). Given the comments made prior to consideration of the report, members were assured this would include the provision of a further report relating to development of Phase II of the SEND Capital estate investment programme.

Having welcomed the support expressed for the strategy and thanked all those involved for their ongoing work to support schools across the borough, Cabinet **RESOLVED**, having commended the way in which the strategy was felt to demonstrate the ongoing commitment to Brent's children and young people, to:

- (1) Approve the second refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (2) Note the continued focus on planning for the sufficiency of places and the sustainability of schools, based on varying demand patterns impacting on school planning areas in Brent.
- (3) Note the very early signs of a reversal of declining pupil numbers in the borough and that a requirement to accommodate higher demand in some planning areas may be required in the future.
- (4) Note there continued to be increasing demand for places that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 and the intention to further develop the SEND estate capital investment programme as Brent's strategy to address this need, as set out in Section 3.7 of the report.
- (5) Note the school place planning actions completed in the first year of the strategy and the actions planned for the coming academic year as set out in section 4 of the report.
- (6) Note the update on the success measures set out in the original strategy in section 3.1.3 of the report.

10. **Draft Budget 2026 - 27**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2026-27. The report also provided a general update on the Council's overall financial position, including not only the Council's General Fund revenue budget but also Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and Capital Programme as well as an overview of the current economic outlook.

In introducing the report, Councillor Mili Patel began by outlining the responsibility faced by Labour being in power at national, regional and local level and in seeking to make a real difference to communities being served. As examples of the difference being made, reference was made at national level to recent introduction of the Renters Right Act and uplift being delivered in workers rights supported by activity being led by the Mayor for London at regional level in addressing air quality and the provision of free school meals. At a local level, this had included the Administration in Brent delivering record levels of Community Infrastructure Levy investment in public realm and youth facilities alongside the track record in delivery of new affordable homes across the borough. The approach needing to be delivered by Labour (as the governing party) in providing careful stewardship of taxpayers money and public finances was contrasted against that adopted by other parties in seeking to make populist and unfunded pledges without taking account of their wider impact, resulting in the need identified to ensure an honest approach with local residents. As such the budget proposals detailed within the report were commended in seeking to provide a clear and evidenced based direction for Brent aimed at fixing the foundations to continue running an efficient, fair and future focussed Council despite the challenging and uncertain operating environment and wider economic context within which it continued to function.

Members were advised that it was within this context that the Council's recent Autumn Budget proposals "Building a Better, Bolder Brent" had been submitted to the Chancellor. The proposals set out six quick wins identified by the Council which it was felt would help to turn ambition into action. These included backing the West London Orbital rail line, reforming gambling laws to protect the boroughs high streets, giving councils powers to introduce a visitor levy on overnight accommodation, ensuring major events at Wembley contributed directly to local culture, creating a new long-term housing partnership with Government and delivering much needed reform to local government finance.

At the same time, it was felt that the Council's budget proposals also served to highlight wider progress focussed locally on the delivery of cleaner streets, safer town centres, better transport, fairer housing, all of which had been designed to unlock pride in the borough. In seeking to fix the foundations, however, the need to be honest about the challenges faced and to be realistic about the measures needed to address them was also recognised given the ongoing impact being experienced as a result of the previous 14 years of austerity. Highlighting how local authorities such as Brent were not alone in facing these challenges, members were reminded that 30 Council's across England (including 7 in London) had already required Exceptional Financial Support to balance their immediate budgets with more expected to follow and Brent not exempt from those same pressures. Despite the considerable efforts to maintain financial control, innovate, identify efficiencies and generate income Councillor Mili Patel advised that the budget gap within Brent totalled approx. £30m over the next 3 years with a third of that falling during the 2026-27 financial year. This reflected rising demand for temporary accommodation, unprecedented demand in Adult Social Care and significantly increased costs for children's placements, which members noted continued to place immense strain on local budgets and services. In acknowledging the challenging nature of decisions required as a result, the proposed 4.99% rise in Council Tax being recommended for 2026/27 was not, it was pointed out, a decision which had been taken lightly but had been identified as necessary to generate £9.1m in funding that could be used to protect vital frontline services with members assured that every effort would

continue to be made to ensure Brent's Council Tax Support scheme and hardship funds continued to shield households from the sharpest pressures of the cost-of-living crisis.

Whilst aware of the challenging nature of the pressures faced by the Council, the opportunity was also taken to outline the range of measures being taken to mitigate against them including expansion of the housing portfolio (with 900 new properties due to be delivered over the next financial year), progress being made with delivery of the South Kilburn regeneration project and reform of social care provision in seeking to support families earlier and commission more efficiently with a focus on prevention as much as care. Members were advised this approach would continue to be supported by lobbying for additional funding while also seeking to protect the key services relied on by local residents.

In concluding her introduction, Councillor Mili Patel once again highlighted how challenging and difficult development of the budget proposals had been. Cabinet Members and officers were thanked for their support in the process with the detail provided within the report felt to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to undertaking the budget setting and consultation process as transparently as possible and priority in seeking to protect residents across the borough in taking the tough decisions required to deliver a balanced budget and minimise impact on the delivery of frontline services. The efforts made to ensure the Council remained in a robust position were also felt to highlight the fiscal prudence and collaborative approach which had been adopted. Recognising the process of careful planning, financial management and decisive early action designed to deliver financial sustainability and maximum value for money, members were assured that where pressures had emerged, prompt mitigating action had and would continue to be taken in order to ensure that the Council's overall financial position remained stable including, as an example, the proactive approach taken towards cost control as a means of avoiding over £8m worth of additional expenditure.

Looking forward, members were reminded that Brent had previously been faced with difficult budgets and financial challenges but always emerged stronger as a result with the budget proposals presented within the report focussed on continuing that same level of resilience. In noting the approach as cautious but ambitious, members were advised of the way in which the proposals remained grounded in the values of fairness, responsibility and putting pride back into Brent with the task not only to navigate through the next financial year, but to ensure the Council was able to continue delivering for residents, investing in the borough and taking the tough decisions required to deliver a balanced budget.

In supporting the comments made, Cabinet Members recognised the difficult nature of the challenges and financial pressures identified and also took the opportunity to thank the finance team for their work in developing the budget proposals whilst also seeking to safeguard, as far as possible, key services and support for local residents and ensure the Council's resources were being used as effectively as possible.

In terms of specific proposals and priorities, members welcomed:

- the ongoing commitment to improving the customer experience and resident support based around the streamlining of processes and making resident

services easier to access, more responsive and digitally enabled. Highlighting the digital transformation proposals outlined within the report, members noted these had been designed to generate £1.4m of savings focussed around the use of automation and self-service tools with the technological innovations designed to enhance residents' access to essential support while enabling staff to dedicate more time to focus on the provision of direct assistance for those most in need of support.

- The ongoing support for cultural initiatives maximising use of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding as a means of continuing to invest in priorities identified by local residents enabling support to continue being provided for events like the Kilburn Music Mile.
- The work being undertaken to address the pressures and challenges in relation to demand for services relating to children and young people (including support being provided through the Family Wellbeing Centres and significant investment in additional SEND provision and to address the demand and increasing cost of residential care through the provision of a new children residential care centre within the borough) in order to maintain support for residents and families across the borough and ensure the best possible outcomes for all.
- The investment of over £14m in Public Realm improvements including highway and footway repairs, upgrading street lighting, enhancing parks and play areas and expanding the CCTV network in order to ensure Brent remained a welcoming, and vibrant place. Whilst recognising that the budget reflected the challenging nature of financial pressures faced it was felt the investment outlined alongside the ongoing commitment to tackle fly tipping through the Don't Mess with Brent Campaign, expansion of bike hangers, EV infrastructure, food waste recycling and strengthening of trading standards, highlighted the efforts being made, whilst not avoiding the tough decisions required, to create a cleaner, greener safer and a more accessible environment delivering real improvements for residents.
- The significant regeneration achievements which were continuing to be delivered, despite the challenging financial position faced by the Council. This included the efforts being made, despite wider market pressures, to support the delivery of new affordable housing (with reference made, as an example to the recent approval of the Argenta House development providing an additional 180 affordable homes) as a means of addressing the housing crisis and in enabling the Council to exceed its commitment to deliver 5,000 affordable homes and 1,700 council homes by 2028. This approach was also supported through the revised Property Strategy and Local Plan review in seeking to ensure the Council was able to maximise the value of its assets, bringing underused sites back into productive use whilst also prioritising the type of developments residents genuinely need in the right places and supported by the right infrastructure. At a time when many Councils were stepping back from these commitments, members felt it important to recognise that Brent was still seeking to deliver working closely with developer and partners to secure the new housing and supporting infrastructure required.

- The innovation and transformation being sought in service delivery, along with the efforts being made to treat staff with fairness and respect, acknowledging the work being undertaken across the Council to continue effectively delivering services in such challenging circumstances.
- The focus in seeking to continue driving efficiency measures and service transformation through commissioning and procurement arrangements as a means of delivering further savings on a collaborative and cross cutting basis that could be used to protect key services and maintain the focus on the Council's core priorities and improvements to the borough.
- The continued focus on efforts to address the housing crisis within the borough not only in seeking to mitigate against ongoing pressures relating to homelessness and the supply of Temporary Accommodation, utilising all available funding streams (including Local Authority Housing Fund & Council Homes Acquisition Programme) alongside a range of other options such as acquisitions and leasing and ongoing delivery of the Council's new build programme, but also through the Council's Preventing Homelessness Programme. These efforts were also being supported by work to drive up standards and protect tenants in the private rented sector including the Council's Landlord Licensing Scheme and focus on the Supported Exempt Accommodation market with the opportunity also taken to commend the additional protections for tenants introduced by the Government through the Renters Right Act.
- The ongoing aim to continue prioritising the most vulnerable in society whilst also seeking to protect essential services particularly in relation to health and adult social care, including the support and care being provided through the expansion of Supported Living and Extra Care provision as a longer term alternative strategy to residential care, more accessible model of assessment and ongoing benefits being delivered through Brent Health Matters in seeking to address health inequalities on a more joined up basis.

Prior to summing up, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance & Resources) was also invited to comment, with members advised that the impact of any announcements relating to the outcome of the Government's Fair Funding review and final Local Government Financial Settlement (both expected during December 2025) would need to be factored into the final proposals presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. In terms of the assumptions outlined it was, however, noted that whilst the funding figures included in the draft budget would need to be updated following the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement the position regarding any multi-year funding settlement and Funding Review was not, expected to impact until 2027-28.

In summing up Councillor Muhammed Butt once again highlighted the need to recognise the significant financial pressures and challenges that continued to be faced by the Council in seeking to set a balanced budget and operate in a financially sustainable and resilient way. Highlighting the impact of the budget gap identified as needing to be addressed, this had required the Council to bring forward a new series of savings proposals which (subject to approval following consultation and scrutiny) would need to be implemented during 2026-27 in order to set a balanced budget, recognising the provisional Local Government Funding

Settlement still be announced and assumptions on which the 2026-27 budget proposals had been based, as outlined in the report.

Referring to the new saving proposals (as detailed in Appendices A & B of the report), the Leader felt it important to highlight the change in approach adopted, with the proposals built around more collaborative and cross-cutting themes focussed on identifying high-impact opportunities, including cross-directorate working, improving productivity, better use of digital solutions, and increasing income generation. In outlining the specific themes identified in relation to commissioning and procurement, digital transformation, efficiency improvements, workforce productivity, income maximisation, resident experience, and service-specific proposals the opportunity was taken to reference the priority saving opportunities identified, which it was noted had either been categorised as service specific or more strategic and cross cutting programmes. Whilst acknowledging the challenging nature of the decisions to be made members were, however, assured of the emphasis throughout the process in seeking to ensure the Council remained financially sustainable with the proposals focussed around the delivery of efficiency measures, service transformations, cost reductions and income generation with a view to protecting front line services, continuing to innovate, collaborate, invest and also improve how residents experienced Council services.

In concluding, the Leader ended by outlining the commitment to ensure the consultation and decision-making process on the budget proposals was as transparent and open as possible and designed to safeguard, as far as possible, frontline services for residents to ensure no one was left behind whilst seeking to deliver a balanced budget.

Having noted the current financial context in which the budget proposals had needed to be developed Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the overall financial position, as detailed within the report.
- (2) To agree to consult on the new budget proposals, as set out in Appendices A and B of the report.
- (3) To agree to consult on a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (consisting of a 2.99% general increase plus 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept) in 2026/27.
- (4) To endorse the approach to the statutory process of consultation, scrutiny and equalities between November 2025 and February 2026, as set out in section ten of the report.
- (5) To endorse the changes to the technical budget assumptions underpinning the budget, as set out in sections six and seven of the report.
- (6) To note the position with regard to the funding for Schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section eleven of the report.
- (7) To note the position with regard to the Housing Revenue Account, as set out in section twelve of the report.

- (8) To note the position with regard to the Capital programme, as set out in section thirteen of the report.
- (9) To note the revised Debt Recovery Policy, as set out in Appendix C of the report.

11. Approval to Proceed with Alternative Heat Supply for Willesden Green Library- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) Phase 4

Councillor Rubin (as Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Community Power) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Regeneration seeking approval for the allocation of resources to enable the installation of an alternative, low carbon heating solution at Willesden Green Library and other energy conservation measures following the Council's successful bid for grant funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 4 (PSDS P4).

In presenting the report, Councillor Rubin outlined how the proposed scheme had been designed to represent another practical approach in the delivery of Brent's climate and energy commitments through the retrofitting of the existing and outdated heating system at Willesden Green Library with a low carbon Air Source Heat Pump. Members were advised that the project aimed to deliver significant carbon savings whilst improving energy efficiency and reducing operational costs which would not only strengthen the resilience of the building as an important community asset but would also support the Council in bringing heat production back under its control and helping to move towards its Net Zero 2030 goal. In highlighting that the majority of investment required to deliver the scheme would utilise funding secured through a successful Salix bid under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 4, the provision of additional funding through the Council's Carbon Offset Fund was also commended and acknowledged as a sensible future focussed investment supporting wider climate ambitions whilst also delivering operational savings.

In support of the proposals outlined, members were keen to recognise the value of Willesden Green Library as a community asset recognising libraries as trusted, accessible spaces that served as hubs for learning and engagement with the integration of sustainable practices also welcomed as a means of being able to transform the spaces into living examples of environmental responsibility. Recognising the way in which the installation of the alternative, low-carbon heating solution proposed at Willesden Green Library would address the outdated heating system currently in place, which it was noted had disrupted the provision of services within the building, members were keen to commend use of the Carbon Offset Fund to support the introduction of a modern, energy-efficient system that would enable the library to operate more reliably whilst delivering significant financial savings, reducing energy consumption and cutting carbon emissions.

Residents and service users were also thanked for their patience whilst delivery of the scheme was being developed, with officers also confirming the plans in place and timetable designed to ensure completion of the project within the required timescale under the grant conditions.

In welcoming the way in which the scheme had been designed to support the Council's wider climate ambitions whilst delivering financial savings and addressing

heat supply issues in a well-used and much valued building Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Approve a total capital budget of £917,628, which included £807,000 for installation, £111,000 contingency, and staff capitalisation costs.
- (2) Note that the total capital budget of £917,628 would be sourced from £667,628 Salix grant and £250,000 from the Carbon Offset Fund. The budget would be split across delivery of the following two projects: Willesden Green Library and Willesden New Cemetery.
- (3) Acknowledge the findings of THE Equality Impact Assessment (detailed within Appendix 1 of the report) regarding the installation of an alternative heat supply at Willesden Green Library that included the results of a public consultation undertaken.
- (4) Note the grant spend timeline stipulated by Salix and its implication on the delivery of the project, particularly when it comes to the requirement to spend all grant funding by March 31st, 2026, as set out in section 5.3 – 5.4 of the report.
- (5) Note the significant financial, energy and carbon savings that the delivery of an alternative heat supply at Willesden Green Library would provide as set out section 3.7 of the report.

12. **Adopting the Socio-Economic Duty**

Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) introduced a report from the Chief Executive setting out proposals for the Council to formally adopt the Socio-Economic Duty (SED) as part of its commitment to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

In presenting the report, Councillor Mili Patel began by outlining the way in which the proposed adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty would represent another significant step forward in demonstrating the Council's commitment to the integration of EDI considerations as part of its decision-making processes. As additional background and context, members were advised that the socio-economic duty had been included as part of the previous Labour Government's introduction of the Equality Act in 2010 and required public bodies to include transparent and effective measures designed to address inequalities when making decisions about how they delivered services and functions in order to ensure that no-one suffered as a result of their socio-economic circumstances.

Despite not being mandated under the subsequent coalition and Conservative governments, pride was expressed that the Council had been implementing the principles for some time, with the decision now being sought designed to ensure that the approach and those values were formally embedded in the framework of the Council, supported by a revised Equalities Impact Assessment process in order to ensure that decisions being made continued to be informed by a clear understanding of the impact on the lives of local residents. In thanking everyone who has contributed to the development of the refreshed approach, including Councillor Donnelly-Jackson for her support in originally initiating the process, along

with the EDI team and colleagues who provided invaluable feedback during its development, Councillor Mili Patel ended her introduction by highlighting the aim to deliver a fairer and more compassionate approach in seeking to strengthen the Council's response to the root causes of inequality that were still felt to exist across the borough and provide every resident with the opportunity to thrive.

In welcoming and supporting the approach outlined within the report towards adoption of the duty, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson took the opportunity (highlighting her own personal experience and having originally advocated for the process) to also thank those involved in its delivery, which it was felt would represent a landmark milestone for the borough. Highlighting the extent of the challenges faced across the borough in seeking to address the impact of poverty, financial exclusion and the cost-of-living crisis, it was felt adoption of the duty would provide a lasting legacy in deepening the Council's ability to tackle the root causes of inequality still being experienced in Brent.

Members were also keen to acknowledge the wider links adoption of the duty would have in relation to the work and findings of the Poverty Commission, Borough Plan and EDI Strategy recognising the impact which the inclusion of socio-economic disadvantage as a key consideration in the Council's strategic decision-making process would have in terms of it being treated as equivalent to a protected characteristic. In recognising the way this would require the impact of proposals on those experiencing poverty (including children and young people), financial exclusion or housing insecurity to be assessed and reflected within Equality Impact Assessments and service design, members welcomed how it was felt this would enable the rights and needs of those most disadvantaged to be embedded within the culture of the organisation, reflecting strong leadership ahead of anticipated wider national legislation.

In support of the approach outlined and recognition that socio-economic disadvantage also represented a significant driver of inequality Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the Council's formal adoption of the socio-economic duty, on the basis outlined within the report.

13. **Authority to participate in Collaborative Procurement in respect of Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) Sexual Health Services Contract**

Councillor Nerva (as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Service Reform & Strategy seeking approval for participation in a collaborative procurement with two other councils in respect of a new Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) sexual health services contract.

In presenting the report, Councillor Nerva began by reminding members of the critical role the provision of sexual health services played in relation to the Council's public health responsibilities with continuation of the collaborative approach towards the procurement arrangements with Ealing and Harrow for Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) sexual health services designed to further enhance service integration across borough boundaries, enabling the seamless sharing of best practice and resources and ensure residents retained access to high-quality and confidential sexual healthcare.

In commending the approach outlined within the report, members were advised that Brent, Ealing, and Harrow Councils had jointly commissioned sexual health services through the Outer Northwest London (ONWL) Sexual Health Programme since 2015. During this period, service performance had met or exceeded London averages for testing coverage, chlamydia detection, and HIV treatment outcomes with the services recognised as demonstrating consistent and robust HIV care with 99% ART coverage and 96.9% viral suppression rates, highlighting the vital protection offered through the programme to residents across Brent. In support of the proposal, reference was also made to the continued high utilisation of contraceptive clinics, with more than 10,400 residents having attended since April 2025, alongside Brent's lower-than-London-average STI positivity rates, which it was pointed out also represented an example of the effective prevention and community engagement activity being delivered by the service.

In considering the report, members noted the amendment identified in relation to recommendation 2.1 which they were advised would not be required on the basis that approval was being sought for participation in a collaborative procurement arrangement rather than direct award of the contract, as also clarified within the legal considerations detailed within section 7 of the report.

In recognising the way in which the proposals had been designed to ensure Brent was able to continue meeting its public health obligations efficiently whilst maintaining service continuity, delivering value for money and supporting a responsive model aligned with public health priorities and community needs, Cabinet **RESOLVED** on the basis of the amendment to the recommendations identified at the meeting:

- (1) To note the deletion of recommendation 2.1 within the report.
- (2) To approve the Council's participation in a collaborative procurement with Ealing and Harrow Council's.
- (3) On the basis of the legal considerations within the report, to approve an exemption from the usual tendering requirements of Contract Standing Orders 84(a) to enable Ealing Council act as the lead authority in the collaborative procurement detailed in (2) above for the reasons detailed in section 3 of the report and accordingly that the collaborative procurement is undertaken in accordance with its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- (4) To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure, to agree the award of contract on completion of the procurement process for a period of 5 years with an option to extend for a further 4 years to (a total of 9 years) to London North West University Healthcare Trust (LNWHT).

14. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

15. **Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

Prior to ending proceedings, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised that it was sadness he had to announce the recent death of former Mayor and Councillor Mr Harbahjan Singh.

Members were advised that former Councillor Singh had represented Welsh Harp ward where his passion and commitment to making a positive impact on behalf of the local community were recognised and fondly remembered.

On behalf of all members of Cabinet and in advance of formal tribute being paid by the Mayor at the next Full Council meeting, the Leader offered his condolences to the family of former Councillor Singh.

The meeting ended at 11.20 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair