



## Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday 4 November 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, Ethapemi, Collymore, Mahmood,  
Ketan Sheth, T Smith, and 2 vacancies

Councillors:

Kansagra and J Patel

Councillors:

Clinton and Matin

**For further information contact:** Rebecca Reid, Governance Officer  
Tel: 020 8937 2469 Email: [rebecca.reid@brent.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.reid@brent.gov.uk)

For electronic copies of minutes and agendas please visit:  
[Council meetings and decision making | Brent Council](#)

### **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 items 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 meetings</b>	
To approve the minutes of the previous meetings as a correct record:	
(a) Wednesday 16 July 2025	1 - 28
(b) Tuesday 2 September 2025	29 - 51
<b>5 Matters arising (if any)</b>	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
<b>6 Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26</b>	51 - 58
To provide an update on the changes to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee's work programme.	
(Please note that the agenda was republished to include this item on 31 October 2025).	
<b>7 Quarter 2 Financial Forecast 2025/26</b>	59 - 128
This report sets out the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant and	

the Capital Programme, as at Quarter 2 2025/26.

**8 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Brent** 129 - 142

This report provides an update on the development and support of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Brent. The report provides information on the sector, current VCSE and community grant funding and capacity building support.

(Please note that the agenda was republished to include this item on 29 October 2025).

**9 Social Value: Draft Policy and Whole-Council Approach** 143 - 160

This report sets out the case for a new approach to social value, rooted in national policy developments and Brent's local priorities. It proposes a shift from a narrow, procurement-only focus to a whole-council, place-based model that embeds social value in all areas of the council's work.

**10 Procurement Improvement Programme and Emerging Procurement Strategy** 161 - 174

This report provides an update on the developments following the Procurement Peer Review and the established Procurement Improvement Programme, emerging Procurement Strategy and opportunities arising from adopting a new definition of "local" suppliers and engagement of Brent businesses.

**11 Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group Findings**

To present the findings and recommendations of the Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group, following its review of how kerbside space in Brent could be more effectively utilised to support sustainable and inclusive travel, enhance public spaces, and deliver equitable community benefits and environmental outcomes.

(Please note that this item has been rescheduled for consideration on 21 January 2026).

**12 Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker** 175 - 192

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

**13 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Deputy Director of Democratic and Corporate Governance or their

representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

**Date of the next meeting:            Wednesday 21 January 2026**



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

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

This page is intentionally left blank



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

### MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on 16 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

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

ALSO Present: Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement, for item 6), and Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council, for item 7)

#### 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 Councillors, Ahmadi-Moghaddam, Maurice and Shah.

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Mili Patel (Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources).

#### 2. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest raised during the meeting.

#### 3. Deputations (If Any)

No deputations were raised at the meeting.

#### 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meetings held on Thursday 3 April 2025 and Wednesday 23 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

The opportunity was also taken to provide feedback for future consideration, noting that where an agenda item contained a proportion of exempt or 'below the line' information, this should be clearly indicated on the agenda, with dedicated time allocated for its separate consideration. It was felt that this approach had not been followed in relation to the recent Call-In meeting, resulting in certain matters not being adequately discussed.

The Chair undertook to raise this issue with the Scrutiny Team and relevant Corporate Directors, to review how information is shared with the Committee while ensuring compliance with public access requirements.

## **5. Matters Arising (If Any)**

There were no matters arising 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 2025/26 (Agenda Item 9) and Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker (Agenda Item 8) 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 & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26**

The Chair began by reminding members that the Committee's Work Programme was a flexible and responsive document. It was noted that the programme had been developed collaboratively with Committee members and informed by feedback and concerns raised throughout the year. The Chair confirmed that, at this stage, the Committee was content to proceed with the current iteration of the Work Programme, while remaining open to future amendments as necessary.

Having reviewed the work programme report, it was **RESOLVED** to note the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

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

The Chair referred to the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report presented at the Committee's meeting in April 2025. Particular concern had been expressed regarding the data relating to housing, repairs, and maintenance. In response to these concerns, the Committee had requested further scrutiny of the matter and was pleased to welcome the attendance of Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services), Spencer Randolph (Director Housing Services), and representatives from Wates.

The Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to Housing Complaints as part of the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- Members queried the overarching strategic plan in place to significantly reduce complaints related to repairs, particularly those of a recurring nature, and also sought clarification on the role of staff training and the extent to which the approach moved beyond incremental improvements. In response, Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) confirmed that a strategic review had been undertaken, with a particular focus on staff training and service improvement. The review had been led by Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) who had prepared a presentation on the subject. In continuing the response, Lizzie Skillen proceeded to outline the scope and findings of the review and informed the



Committee that she had joined Brent Council in October 2024, coinciding with the launch of the project. The review had been driven by resident insights and experiences, gathered through surveys and other engagement methods, with the aim of delivering tangible outcomes for residents. It was emphasised that the review sought to overhaul the complaints handling process within Housing Services, with a view to establishing a holistic and resident-focused complaints service. The objective was to rebuild trust, rectify failings, and embed a culture of continuous improvement. Key areas identified for improvement included, systems and guidance, staff training and internal campaigns, governance and performance monitoring, complaint definition, triage, and resolution timeframes, root cause analysis of recurring issues; and data accuracy and reporting mechanisms. Ongoing work to improve housing monitoring and controls around resolution timelines was highlighted, ensuring that outcomes were being met. Members heard that the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report for 2025 was in development and would provide further insight into areas requiring improvement. Close collaboration was underway with Councillor Donnelly-Jackson as the Lead Member for Complaints, to ensure robust oversight and transparency. It was stressed that the project was not seeking quick fixes but rather a fundamental restructuring of the complaints system. The Committee was advised that once the complaints handling framework was firmly established, attention would shift to service improvements informed by complaint insights. It was anticipated that this would lead to a reduction in complaints in targeted areas.

Findings from the review had been disseminated across Residents and Housing Services, contributing to a reframing of the approach to complaints and resident experience. Several headline findings, included:

- 1) An overreliance on service requests, resulting in underreporting of complaint;
- 2) The need for improved complaint acknowledgement and expectation-setting;
- 3) Repairs-related issues as the primary drivers of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints;
- 4) Limited data issues, with plans to enhance analysis by trade, outcome, and compensation type
- 5) Concerns regarding housing customer service, particularly in relation to access and communication

In concluding the response, Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) noted that the review had been positively received across the service and was expected to yield significant improvements in complaints handling and resident satisfaction.

- Members raised queries regarding the historical pattern of complaints, particularly those arising from repeated poor workmanship by various contractors and noted that this had been a key rationale behind the restructuring of the repair contract and the establishment of the in-house Handyperson Service unit. Clarification was sought on whether there was any evidence, at the level of complaints, to suggest that this restructuring had led to improvements. In response, Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) acknowledged that further work was required to investigate the

complaints data in greater detail and advised that the current system outputs did not provide the necessary level of detail to draw firm conclusions. However, she referenced a recent resident survey which had highlighted recurring themes of dissatisfaction, notably a lack of response and ineffective solutions. It was stated that while these themes were evident, it was not yet possible to attribute them to specific service improvements. Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) added that the new contracts referenced by members had only recently commenced and explained that the contract with Wates had been initiated at the end of May 2025, while a second contract was scheduled to begin on 1 October 2025. As such, it was too early to assess performance or make comparative evaluations between contractors. Spencer Randolph expressed optimism that future data would enable meaningful comparisons and facilitate the identification of best practice. He further commented on the importance of the patching model within the Handyperson Service, noting that one of the key sources of complaint had been the lack of continuity in personnel attending to repairs. The patching model was designed to foster accountability between the resident and the operative, thereby improving service delivery and resident satisfaction.

- Members raised concerns regarding data collection and administration, particularly in relation to the monitoring of service improvements and customer service retraining and queried when performance statistics would be available for Committee review, and whether such data would be accessible within the early part of the new municipal year. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) indicated that it was unlikely that comprehensive data would be available within that timeframe and informed the Committee that the Council was in the process of implementing a new system, NEC, which constituted an 18-month project. The first phase, focused on repairs and customer interaction, was expected to span nine months. It was estimated that a full comparative analysis of current and future performance would be feasible within approximately one year, once the recommendations from Lizzie Skillen's team, the new contracts, and the improved data systems had been embedded. Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) provided reassurance that improvements in service delivery were anticipated to be visible on the ground in the short term. However, he noted that enhancements in reporting and data analysis would take longer to materialise.
- Members questioned how the Council had arrived at a position where there was a significant gap in data and knowledge, which had hindered early identification and resolution of issues, and enquired whether this was attributable to outdated systems, insufficient training, or administrative shortcomings. In response, Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) advised that the deficiencies were largely the result of legacy systems which had not been updated in line with technological advancements. Modern tools such as GIS and complaint mapping were cited as examples of innovations that had not yet been adopted. Members were assured that efforts were now underway to address these gaps.
- The Chair requested further clarification on the definition of complaints and the noted overreliance on service requests. In response, Lizzie Skillen (Quality

Assurance and Standards Officer) explained that, while the Council had a formal definition of a complaint, namely, an expression of dissatisfaction however made, there was a need to ensure that staff were trained to apply this definition in practice. The importance of recognising dissatisfaction during resident interactions and proactively offering the opportunity to lodge a formal complaint was emphasised. Lizzie Skillen further elaborated on the distinction between service requests and complaints. A service request typically involved a first-time request for a service, whereas a complaint indicated a failure in service delivery. It was noted that, over time, the boundaries between the two had become blurred, with service requests increasingly being used improperly, and advocated for clearer guidance and processes to ensure that complaints were properly identified and investigated. The Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that complaint systems were accessible to all residents and that artificial barriers to lodging complaints were not created. The Chair reiterated that the Committee's original concern stemmed from the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report, which had revealed that over 60% of complaints were being upheld. This indicated not merely a high volume of complaints, but a significant level of service failure. The Chair cautioned against interpreting the data as a reflection of system blurring and instead urged a focus on addressing the underlying issues of service quality.

- Members sought details around whether the number of upheld complaints constituted a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for triggering penalty clauses within the newly established contracts. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) informed that while upheld complaints were not explicitly defined as a KPI triggering penalty clauses, the contracts did contain provisions enabling the Council to take action where dissatisfaction with service delivery was evidenced. It was confirmed that repeated complaints concerning similar issues could be used to invoke contractual remedies, including penalty clauses, where appropriate.
- The Chair expressed concern that upheld complaints, where service failure had been formally confirmed, were not being used to inform KPIs. The Chair referenced comments made by Martin Stollery (Principal Complaints Investigator) during the Housing Management Complaints Annual Review in April 2025, in which he had stated that all contracts should contain mechanisms for holding contractors accountable for upheld complaints and associated service failures. The Chair emphasised that the Complaints Team was required to report on compensation payments, and that failure to align this data with contractual performance measures represented a missed opportunity to ensure accountability and value for money. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) acknowledged the concern and explained that the contracts currently in place had been developed over a two-year period and may not fully reflect the latest expectations regarding complaint data integration. It was noted that while the contracts were not legacy in nature, they had been initiated prior to the current scrutiny and reform efforts. Members were informed that the Council was working towards a position where complaint data would be sufficiently detailed to identify patterns of service failure. This would enable the Council to hold contractors to account, either through penalty

clauses or by reallocating work between contractors where performance was found to be lacking.

- The Chair requested information on the number of penalties issued under historic contracts over the past five years. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) advised that he was unable to provide that information at the time of the meeting. The Chair suggested that the details be provided as an information request following the meeting.
- The Chair recommended that the Council prioritise the integration of complaint data into KPI frameworks, noting that such measures were essential for holding contractors accountable. The Chair stated that penalty clauses represented one of the most effective tools available to the Council for driving service improvement and ensuring value for money. The Chair cautioned that failure to use these powers proactively would undermine efforts to deliver high-quality services to residents. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) concurred, stating that contract management under the new arrangements must be significantly more robust than in previous years.
- The Chair questioned where ongoing performance and quality management updates would be reported, noting the importance of transparency and oversight. In response, Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) explained that performance updates would initially be reported to the Lead Member, followed by the Council Management Team (CMT), and subsequently to Cabinet. Following up, the Chair asked whether such updates would also be presented to the Scrutiny Committee, given its responsibility for overseeing housing management. In response, confirmation was provided that performance updates would indeed be presented to Scrutiny.
- Members queried the process followed when a resident reported a problem within their property, specifically whether a Council Housing Officer attended first to assess the issue or whether a contractor was allocated to undertake the initial evaluation. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) conveyed that the approach varied depending on the nature of the repair. Ordinarily, under the Council's price per property contract model, the contractor would attend directly. This model encompassed a predefined basket of standard repairs, each priced and agreed in advance. For example, if a resident reported a leaking radiator, the contractor would attend without the need for a surveyor, as such repairs fell within the standard scope. However, in cases involving more complex issues, such as damp and mould or multiple interrelated faults, a surveyor would be required to attend, specify the necessary works, and pass the specification to the contractor for implementation.
- Additional queries were raised regarding the evaluation of proposed solutions, asking whether the Council reviewed the appropriateness and completeness of the contractor's response to reported issues. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) highlighted the importance of understanding whether repeat service requests at a given address were attributable to contractor failure, tenant behaviour, or property-related issues. It was

suggested that such data would be instrumental in improving the effectiveness of repair delivery.

- Members were keen to seek details around how repair visits and proposed solutions were documented, noting that clear communication with residents regarding the scope of works was essential to reducing complaints. It was also questioned if such communication was consistently provided and whether it was documented in writing. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) conveyed that the process began with a call to the Council's call centre, which operated under a separate contract. Call centre staff were expected to set clear expectations during the initial contact, ensuring residents were not misled regarding the nature or timing of the repair. For larger jobs, an inspection would be conducted to determine priorities and establish a plan of action. For routine repairs, the aim was to achieve a first-time fix by allocating a suitably experienced contractor. It was explained that if additional works were identified during the visit, the operative was expected to report these and communicate the next steps to the resident. In cases where follow-on work was required, residents should be provided with a follow-on card detailing the nature of the work and the anticipated timeline. While an exact date could not be provided immediately, residents would be kept informed as the order progressed. Members suggested that the Council review its complaints data to determine whether complaints stemmed from actual service failures or from unmet expectations due to unclear communication and also emphasised the importance of documenting interactions in plain language, particularly given the diverse nature of Brent's population. It was suggested that improved documentation and communication could reduce the volume of complaints and enhance service satisfaction.
- Further information regarding how the Council was managing the financial implications of repeat repairs was sought by members and whether the associated costs, including compensation payments, were being integrated into contract performance assessments. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) noted that the Council's price per property contract model meant that contractors were paid a fixed annual sum per property, approximately £500-£600, regardless of the number of visits required. Consequently, if a contractor had to return multiple times to address the same issue, they would not receive additional payment. This arrangement incentivised contractors to complete repairs correctly on the first visit, as repeat visits incurred costs to the contractor rather than the Council.
- The Chair queried whether compensation payments issued in response to service failures were funded by the Council or by Wates. The Chair also raised concerns regarding the price per property contract model, noting that if repair tracking systems were insufficiently robust, repeat repairs might be incorrectly flagged as new issues. This could result in duplicate charges to contractors, particularly where residents delayed reporting unresolved issues due to personal circumstances. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) clarified that under the price per property model, the contractor received a fixed lump sum per property, irrespective of the number of visits required. Therefore, repeat visits did not incur additional charges to the Council.

Regarding compensation, it was explained that liability depended on the source of the service failure. If the fault lay with Wates, they would bear the cost; if the failure originated within the Council's housing service, the compensation would be paid from Council budgets. Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) further advised that the Council was currently paying approximately £5,000 per week in compensation across various cases and expressed hope that the ongoing review and improvement efforts would lead to a reduction in compensation levels.

- Details were sought around the impact of staffing levels and turnover within the Housing Repairs and Contract Management teams on service delivery and performance. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) noted that staff retention varied across service areas. In tenancy management, staffing levels were stable and retention had improved, resulting in a noticeable increase in compliments received. In contrast, the repairs service had experienced higher turnover until recently. Recruitment to permanent positions was underway, and it was hoped that the new appointments would bring greater stability. Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) further informed that staffing changes did have a direct impact on service delivery and cited a recent case in which a change in homelessness caseworker had led to a service failure, emphasising the importance of continuity in staffing. Members suggested that the Council implement a formal policy to ensure that when a staff member leaves, their caseload is immediately transferred to a senior officer or manager and stressed that unresolved cases must not be allowed to stagnate, as repeated failures in this area were unacceptable and could not be mitigated by financial compensation alone.
- As a further issue highlighted, members queried how Wates' internal monitoring processes aligned with the Council's complaints data and how both parties were collaborating to identify root causes and implement shared solutions. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) acknowledged that the previous process had been fragmented and ineffective. It was reported that Wates now held weekly meetings with Brent Council to review outstanding complaints specifically related to repairs. These meetings focused on identifying issues, such as delays in material procurement, and analysing service failures. The aim was to implement corrective measures and prevent recurrence. It was further explained that the review process encompassed all complaint stages, including service requests, Stage 1 complaints, Stage 2 escalations, and Ombudsman referrals. A comprehensive approach was being developed to ensure clarity regarding roles and responsibilities across the complaint process. Lessons learned were being used to inform process changes and improve service delivery.
- Members asked whether the weekly meetings between Wates and the Council were formally documented. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) confirmed that all complaints reviewed during these meetings were recorded. Monthly reports were compiled, detailing the nature of service failures and identifying responsible parties. These reports were analysed holistically to detect trends. In addition to the weekly meetings with the Council, Wates held separate internal complaints meetings. It was stated that she was

working closely with Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) to strengthen the complaints process.

- Members queried the nature of recurring issues identified through complaint trend analysis, asking whether factors such as staff turnover or incomplete assessments were contributing to service failures, and what remedial actions were being considered. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) highlighted that one key issue previously identified was the allocation of direct labour resources. Staff assigned to day-to-day repairs were being diverted to address complaints, resulting in delays for other residents awaiting routine repairs. To address this, Wates had established a dedicated team of multi-skilled operatives specifically tasked with resolving complaints-related repairs. This separation of functions was intended to reduce missed appointments and improve service delivery, and had already shown positive results. Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) further added that further joint work was required to ensure consistency in data interpretation and reporting. It was noted that current classifications, such as 'service delayed', were insufficiently descriptive and did not support meaningful qualitative analysis. The need for improved data sharing and integration between the Council and its contractors was emphasised.
- The Chair sought clarification on whether complaints were managed solely by the Council or whether contractors operated their own internal complaints processes prior to escalation. In response, Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) confirmed that there should be a single, unified complaints process managed by the Council. However, it was acknowledged that in practice, cases had sometimes been raised initially with Wates, then subsequently escalated to the Council, and in some instances further referred to the Chief Executive's casework team. It was stated that efforts were underway to streamline and consolidate complaints handling across all landlord services, including repairs, estate services, and pest control, to ensure consistency and transparency.
- Members questioned why Wates had not invested in modern technology to improve service delivery, noting that reliance on physical follow-on cards appeared outdated. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) informed that Wates did utilise digital communication methods. Residents received text message confirmations immediately upon booking a repair appointment, with additional reminders sent 24 hours prior to the scheduled visit. On the day of the repair, residents received a further message allowing them to track the operative's arrival in real time.
- Members enquired about the usage rates of the Council's 'My Account' system and how residents typically reported repairs. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) advised that a review conducted by Housemark had found 'My Account' to be difficult for residents to use when reporting repairs. As part of the Council's system upgrade, residents would soon be accessing a new platform, NEC, which would be integrated seamlessly with 'My Account'. Residents would be unaware of the transition, but would benefit from

improved functionality, including the ability to report and track repairs more effectively.

- The Chair sought details from Wates on how their internal systems were being modernised. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) confirmed that Wates was in the process of implementing a dynamic scheduling system. This system would automatically allocate repair jobs based on operative availability and proximity, thereby reducing delays and missed appointments. The system would track all trades and locations in real time, enabling efficient job allocation and minimising disruption caused by staff absences or overruns on previous jobs.
- Highlighting concerns relating to operatives allegedly attending properties, but failing to knock or ring the doorbell, and leaving a calling card without attempting contact, raised further questions around how Wates monitored such incidents and verified whether the resident was genuinely unavailable or whether the operative had failed to attempt access. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) clarified that operatives were expected to knock or ring the doorbell upon arrival. If no response was received, they were required to telephone the resident using the contact details provided. Should this also fail, the operative was to notify the planning team, who would then attempt to contact the resident directly. If no contact could be made, the visit was recorded as a 'no access'. It was confirmed that operatives were required to take a photograph of the calling card being posted through the door as evidence of attendance. It was acknowledged that in cases involving residents with mobility or hearing impairments, additional notes should be recorded in the system to ensure appropriate adjustments were made, such as waiting longer or knocking more audibly.
- Following up from the previous question, members questioned whether operatives could call ahead to confirm their arrival time and ensure the resident was available. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) stated that she was actively encouraging operatives to make advance calls. However, it was noted that even if contact was made, operatives were still required to attend the property. It was acknowledged that some residents might be temporarily unavailable, such as being at a nearby shop, and that not all residents had access to mobile phones, which posed challenges for communication.
- The Chair requested detailed information on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to monitor missed appointments, including the thresholds for acceptable performance, the point at which penalties might be considered, and the criteria used to assess subcontractor performance and service quality. In response, Charmen Tulloch (Wates Representative) advised that she would need to consult with the contract leads and provide a formal



response at a later date. The Chair suggested that the details be provided as an information request following the meeting.

- Members queried the Council's approach to benchmarking complaints and performance against other local authorities. In response, Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) informed that Brent Council was actively engaged with other London boroughs and sector-wide organisations such as Housemark. These partnerships facilitated the sharing of research and best practice. The importance of data reliability when participating in benchmarking exercises was emphasised and noted that the Council was committed to increasing its contributions to sector-wide transparency and learning. Reference was also made to tenant satisfaction measures, which, while not designed for direct comparison, were increasingly being used as informal benchmarks.
- Views were then sought around the role residents played in monitoring service performance. In response, Spencer Randolph (Director of Housing Services) confirmed that the newly established Housing Management Improvement Board included both independent members and tenants. The Board would receive regular reports on service performance, including complaints and repairs. Lizzie Skillen (Quality Assurance and Standards Officer) further stated that a dedicated resident group focused on complaints was currently being developed. This group would co-design service improvements and receive regular updates on complaints performance.
- As a final query, members questioned whether the performance data and resident feedback would be escalated to the Lead Member, Cabinet, or relevant scrutiny committees. In response, confirmation was provided that all performance data would be incorporated into the Council's reporting structures, including the Council Management Team (CMT), Policy Coordination Group (PCG), and Cabinet.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of Housing Complaints as part of the Housing Management Complaints Annual Report. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following suggestions for improvement and information requests identified were **AGREED**:

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- (1) Collaborate with the procurement and complaints teams to assess how complaints data and areas of underperformance can be more effectively embedded into the management and monitoring processes of the Wates contract, and the upcoming Mears contract.

- (2) Develop a communication standard in collaboration with key contractors, such as Wates and Mears, to ensure consistent, transparent, and high-quality engagement with residents throughout the repairs and complaints journey.
- (3) Establish mechanisms that enable residents to play a meaningful role in monitoring the performance of the repairs service and in holding both the council and contractors accountable.
- (4) Ensure regular reporting on the performance management of the Wates and Mears contracts to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
- (5) Develop and implement a robust guidance framework for succession planning to be rolled out across relevant internal teams and extended to contractors, with a specific focus on managing staff turnover and maintaining continuity of service in the delivery of repairs for residents.

## **INFORMATION REQUESTS**

- (1) Provide a copy of the Housing Services Complaints Management Review Findings Report for 2024/25, along with a progress update on the implementation of the recommended interventions outlined in the report.
- (2) Provide details on the number of penalties issued under the Wates repairs contract over the past five years, specifically those related to upheld complaints in the repairs service.
- (3) Provide a yearly breakdown and comparison of compensation paid by Wates for repairs over the past five years, alongside compensation paid by the council over the same period in response to complaints about Wates' service.
- (4) Provide a summary of the responsibilities and service scope for both the Wates and Mears contracts.
- (5) Provide details on the key performance indicators (KPIs) and penalty clauses included in the Wates repairs contract.
- (6) Provide details on the proposed key performance indicators (KPIs) and penalty clauses in the upcoming Mears repairs contract.
- (7) Provide a clear overview of how the price-per-property model works in repairs, along with a five-year breakdown of the percentage of council properties that did not require any repairs each year.

*Please note that the specific wording of the suggestions for improvement and information requests was subject to refinement following the meeting, with the agreement of the Chair.*

At the conclusion of the previous item and prior to the commencement of the Budget Update item which was scheduled for formal discussion later in the meeting, the Chair invited Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services)

to comment on the issue of temporary accommodation (TA). The Chair noted that temporary accommodation continued to represent a significant financial pressure on the Council's budget and requested insight into any recent developments, interventions, or concerns. In response, Tom Cattermole (Acting Corporate Director, Residents and Housing Services) acknowledged that temporary accommodation remained a substantial and ongoing budgetary challenge. It was confirmed that while the issue of subsidy had been addressed, it had not been fully resolved. It was further noted the emergence of pressures relating to supported exempt accommodation, which warranted further discussion in collaboration with Lawrence Coaker (Director Housing Needs and Support). Tom Cattermole concluded by affirming that the matter continued to be a serious concern for the Council and was recognised as such by the political leadership.

## **9. Update on Recycling in Brent**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) was invited to introduce a report providing a comprehensive overview of the council's recycling performance by waste type (food, paper and card, dry mixed recycling, Garden Waste) and service delivery. The report provided background information on recycling performance data since the start of the contract in April 2023, which highlighted the recycling finances and improvements made including partnership and communications initiatives. The report also provided an overview of 'Simpler Recycling' expectations and upcoming legislative reforms over the next few years. The importance of recycling and the ongoing challenges associated with residual waste was highlighted. It was acknowledged that while progress had been made in improving recycling rates, further efforts were required to meet environmental and financial objectives. Members were reminded that recycling remained a critical priority, not only in contributing to a greener and cleaner Brent, but also in supporting broader climate objectives. It was noted that residual waste disposal continued to rise in cost, placing additional pressure on the Council's budget.

Having thanked Councillor Krupa Sheth for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the Update on Recycling in Brent, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- As an initial query, members questioned why Brent and other West London boroughs were achieving recycling rates below 35%, despite estimates suggesting that up to 80% of household waste was recyclable and the Mayor of London's target being set at 65%. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) advised that the primary barrier to improved recycling performance in Brent was contamination of recycling bins, particularly in communal properties. It was further explained that Brent had a higher proportion of such properties compared to neighbouring boroughs, which compounded the challenge. It was acknowledged that addressing contamination in these settings required more intensive and targeted intervention than in other areas.
- Members further queried whether the financial implications of low recycling rates had been modelled, to which Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) confirmed that the cost of sending residual waste to energy from waste facilities,

as opposed to recycling, represented a significant financial burden for the Council. It was stated that this had been modelled and was well understood. It was additionally noted that Brent offered a comprehensive recycling service that was broadly compliant with emerging national guidance on simpler recycling. However, it was emphasised that further optimisation was needed, particularly in two key areas, namely - reducing contamination and increasing food waste recycling. It was highlighted that food waste remained the heaviest component of residual waste and that Brent's food waste recycling service, particularly for flats, was still in the process of being expanded. Confidence was expressed that once the rollout was complete and participation increased, performance would improve significantly. Ealing Council was cited as an example of a borough with high recycling rates, largely due to a well-established and widely adopted food waste recycling service.

- Members referenced the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme and asked how Brent intended to utilise the anticipated £3.6 million in funding to improve recycling outcomes. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) explained that the funding could be used to support the introduction of new collection systems, equipment, and, crucially, education and engagement initiatives. It was reiterated that Brent already had a comprehensive recycling service in place, and the focus would be on optimising existing services, particularly food waste collection and reducing contamination at communal properties. It was confirmed that the funding would support a wide range of activities aimed at increasing participation and improving the quality of recyclable materials collected.
- Members raised questions around how the Council could improve public engagement to secure greater buy-in from residents for recycling initiatives. In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) noted that recent communications campaigns had gained significant traction on social media. In continuing the response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) elaborated on the communications strategy, explaining that it was highly targeted. It was stated that approximately 80% of households were already recycling correctly, and therefore the Council focused its resources on in-person engagement with the remaining 20% who were not. The success of the 'Contamination Monsters' campaign was highlighted, which had been promoted via social media and JCDecaux boards, achieving over 20,000 views. Reference was also made to a new initiative to reduce disposable nappy waste, which included offering £50 vouchers for reusable nappies. Since its launch in April, 50 Brent parents had registered for the scheme. The campaign was supported by libraries and registrars, who distributed information to new parents. In concluding the response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) stated that while overarching messaging and branding were important, the most effective results came from highly localised and tailored interventions. Ealing Council's 'Bin Pal' scheme was cited as an example of best practice, where bespoke solutions were developed for individual blocks in collaboration with residents. This approach had led to a 38-40% increase in food waste recycling in targeted locations. It was emphasised that Brent would benefit from adopting similarly localised and resident-focused strategies.

- The Chair sought clarification regarding the number of residents who had taken up the reusable nappy voucher scheme, noting that the committee report referenced 24 participants, whereas a figure of 50 had been cited during the meeting. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) confirmed that the figure of 24 reflected the position at the time the report was written. It was explained that the updated figure of 50 represented the most current data as of the date of the meeting, acknowledging a time lapse between the report's preparation and the present update.
- Additional questions were raised around whether it was accurate to state that 80% of households were recycling correctly, with 20% contributing to contamination. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) advised that the figure was indicative rather than definitive. The Council's contamination rate stood at approximately 20%, based on borough-wide collections. It was explained that this figure aligned with data from tagging systems and intervention outcomes. The Council had observed that certain households repeatedly contaminated recycling bins, while others responded positively to interventions such as stickers, letters, and in-person visits. However, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and properties with shared bins remained particularly challenging due to high turnover and limited resident engagement. It was clarified that the Council's approach was data-driven, with weekly visits targeted at properties reaching a third stage contamination threshold. While the specific households varied, the overall contamination rate had remained consistent. It was reiterated that the majority of households were compliant, which justified the Council's targeted engagement strategy, supported by a borough-wide communications campaign.
- The Chair challenged the assertion that 80% of all households in the borough were recycling correctly, noting that not all households, particularly those in certain flats, had access to recycling services. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) acknowledged that while Brent had a comprehensive network of recycling services, there were gaps. It was confirmed that food waste recycling was not yet fully rolled out to all flats, and that dry recycling services were not currently available to flats located above shops, due to challenges such as access via rear alleyways. It was stated that these gaps were recognised and that work was ongoing to address them. However, it was affirmed that, aside from these exceptions, dry recycling services were broadly available to households across the borough.
- The Chair summarised that the 80% figure referred to households with access to recycling services, rather than all households in the borough. Of those with access, approximately 20% were responsible for contamination, which significantly impacted the borough's overall recycling rate, currently around 30%. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) clarified that the earlier comments made referred specifically to dry mixed recycling, not food waste. It was noted that contamination was most prevalent in blue-lidded recycling bins, whereas food waste contamination was minimal. It was confirmed that the overall recycling rate included food waste, but the contamination data discussed related solely to dry recycling.

- Members raised concerns regarding the low levels of recycling observed across communal estates and noted that, despite the varying designs of these estates, a common issue appeared to be the poor condition and unclear labelling of communal bins. Members suggested that residents may be willing to recycle, but contamination of bins by the end of the week rendered recycling efforts ineffective and queried whether the allocated funding would be used to provide new bins, improve cleanliness, or simply apply clearer signage, and sought clarification on the measures being taken to incentivise recycling in communal blocks. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) acknowledged the issue of contamination in communal recycling and confirmed that the Council was actively seeking to improve recycling infrastructure in these areas. It was explained that high contamination levels rendered recycling financially unviable due to increased processing costs. As a result, the Council had invested in retrofitting of existing recycle bins, currently being trialled in selected locations. These bins featured reverse lids and auto-locking mechanisms, designed to prevent the disposal of entire bags of general waste and encourage proper use of the recycling aperture. It was further stated that the trial locations had been selected based on existing contamination levels, housing stock characteristics, and infrastructure suitability. Monitoring was being conducted in collaboration with Veolia, who were capturing photographic evidence and assessing the quality of recycling at the transfer station. Should the trial prove successful, the Council intended to use the available funding to expand the initiative. However, it was noted that managing agents were currently required to purchase bins from Veolia, which posed a barrier to implementation. The funding could potentially be used to overcome this barrier and improve infrastructure where most needed. Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) further added that the Council was exploring the creation of dedicated recycling stations, particularly within larger or more problematic estates. The aim was to physically separate recycling bins from general refuse, thereby establishing compounds that residents could take pride in and utilise appropriately.
- In response to further questioning regarding the handling of cardboard, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) clarified that the new bins were intended for mixed recycling. It was noted that, at present, paper and card were only separated at kerbside collections.
- Members then enquired about the enforcement powers available to compel housing management companies to improve recycling facilities. Additionally, the Member sought information on the timeline for rolling out recycling zones within Council-managed estates. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) acknowledged that enforcement remained a challenge due to the absence of specific legislation mandating recycling compliance. While recycling was compulsory, it was not enforceable under current central government legislation. The Council continued to work with the Housing Team to conduct compliance visits, particularly in cases where contamination was symptomatic of broader issues. These joint visits enabled a more holistic approach to resolving waste-related problems. It was confirmed that managing agents were reminded of their responsibilities under licensing terms, which required the provision of adequate waste and recycling facilities. However, it was reiterated that enforcement options were limited in the absence of legislative backing.

Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) further mentioned that recent organisational changes had resulted in caretakers being integrated into the Public Realm team. This restructuring enabled closer collaboration between caretakers and waste officers, facilitating more effective resolution of bin store issues and fly-tipping. The integration aimed to harmonise operations and improve service delivery across estates.

- Members sought clarification on whether there was any meaningful attempt to send recycling materials from communal estates to processing facilities, expressing concern that such efforts may be lacking. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) confirmed that communal recycling had been separated from kerbside collections following a service change, as its inclusion had previously diminished the overall quality of recycling. It was reported that kerbside recycling had since improved significantly, with a notable reduction in rejected loads due to contamination. The rebate received for recycling had increased year-on-year from 2023-24 to 2024-25, reflecting improved financial outcomes. It was explained that communal recycling remained problematic, with a recent waste composition analysis revealing contamination levels of approximately 34%. This exceeded the recycling processor's acceptance threshold of 20%, resulting in rejected loads and higher disposal costs. Consequently, the Council had adopted a targeted approach, assessing communal rounds individually. Veolia provided photographic monitoring, and a camera installed at the transfer station enabled the identification of cleaner rounds. Selected rounds were then permitted to proceed as recycling, contingent upon infrastructure improvements to reduce contamination. Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) emphasised the importance of addressing the reprocessing stage of the waste journey and noted that solutions were being explored to enable processors to accept more mixed waste and extract greater value, thereby reducing reliance on resident behaviour and placing greater responsibility on the processing system. In concluding the response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) highlighted that discussions were ongoing with the recycling processor regarding a tiered approach for heavily contaminated materials. Richmond Council was cited as an example of a borough operating its own mini recycling facility, allowing for pre-sorting prior to delivery to the main processor. However, it was noted that Brent currently lacked the infrastructure, resources, and financial capacity to implement a similar system. It was acknowledged that shared bins and limited resident accountability posed challenges across London.
- Members requested data on the proportion of communal versus kerbside recycling within the borough. The response confirmed that communal recycling accounted for approximately 200-300 tonnes per month, whereas kerbside recycling ranged between 1000 and 1200 tonnes per month.
- Further questions were raised around whether contaminated waste was being sent directly to incineration, to which Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) explained that contaminated communal recycling was treated as general waste. If such waste were sent to the recycling processor and subsequently rejected, the Council would incur dual handling fees and higher disposal costs. Therefore, it was more cost-effective to send known contaminated loads directly

to general waste. At present, 2-3 communal rounds were consistently processed as recycling, with others assessed on a rolling basis.

- Members were keen to seek details around whether the Council had explored the cost of establishing its own mini recycling facility, similar to Richmond Council's, and if this could be funded through the anticipated £3.6 million from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) advised that Richmond operated a dedicated facility for sorting waste prior to processing and noted that replicating such a model in Brent would likely exceed the funding available through EPR and would require a suitable physical footprint, which was currently scarce within the borough. It was suggested that a more feasible approach might involve collaboration with neighbouring boroughs, such as through the West London Waste Alliance, to develop shared infrastructure.
- Following up, members questioned whether such collaborative arrangements were currently being explored and how the EPR funds were expected to be allocated. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) stated that no formal programme or schedule of works had yet been developed. The need for expert input and coordinated discussions with other boroughs was emphasised to ensure alignment in processing arrangements and strategic ambition. It was indicated that the next 12 months would be critical in shaping the project and determining how the EPR funding would be utilised.
- Members expressed concern regarding the borough's recycling rate, noting that a rate of approximately 30% was insufficient in light of the financial implications associated with the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and suggested that the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding could be utilised to support strategic interventions, including the formation of partnerships and pilot schemes, particularly targeting food waste and communal properties. It was queried whether this approach aligned with the Council's broader strategic thinking. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) affirmed the importance of developing locally relevant collection solutions while ensuring alignment with regional reprocessing arrangements. It was emphasised that Brent's interventions must be targeted and context-specific, but also compatible with the wider West London Waste Authority infrastructure. It was noted that the challenge extended beyond Brent's boundaries and required coordinated efforts across the sub-region to ensure consistency between collection and reprocessing systems.
- Clarification was then sought regarding the definition of contamination within the recycling process. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) elucidated that contamination was categorised into two types: prohibited and objectionable. Prohibited items included materials that could not be recycled under any circumstances, such as food waste, nappies, black bin bags, and textiles. Objectionable items, such as soft plastics and coloured carrier bags, were sometimes recyclable depending on market conditions and processor capabilities. It was noted that contamination thresholds were determined by weight, with food waste and textiles being particularly problematic due to their density. Black bin bags, while visually prominent, were lighter and therefore



less impactful in weight-based assessments. It was highlighted that soft plastics were expected to be collected and recycled by 2027 under government legislation, despite the absence of a viable market. This issue had been raised by numerous local authorities through representative bodies.

- Details were also sought on whether all types of plastic bags were considered contaminants, to which Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) clarified that black bin bags were classified as prohibited, while coloured or clear carrier bags were deemed objectionable. The recycling processor's sampling methodology differentiated between these categories, but the Council's public messaging remained consistent that no plastic bags should be placed in recycling bins.
- Members enquired about the status of the national deposit return scheme and whether the Council could engage in lobbying to expedite its implementation. Additionally, suggestions were made around lobbying for increased charges on disposable black bin bags to discourage their use. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) reported that the deposit return scheme was currently scheduled for implementation in October 2028, according to the latest update from central government. It was noted that while the scheme could improve recycling rates, it might also reduce the volume of recyclables collected at Council facilities, potentially resulting in financial drawbacks. Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) additionally outlined key forthcoming milestones in waste policy, including the implementation of EPR in 2026, mandatory collection of plastic films and soft plastics in 2027, the launch of the deposit return scheme in 2028 and the introduction of the Emissions Trading Scheme post-2028, which would impose charges on waste streams with carbon content.
- Members queried what measures Brent was taking to discourage retailers from distributing free plastic bags. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration) opined that smaller retailers, such as corner shops, were exempt from the requirement to charge for plastic bags. However, she agreed to verify the legislative details.
- Reference was made to paragraph 5.1 of the committee report, with members noting that year-on-year comparisons of recycling tonnages failed to account for the increase in the number of households. Requests were therefore made for a more meaningful benchmark to assess performance. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) concurred that tonnage alone was not a sufficient metric and emphasised that the recycling rate, defined as the proportion of total waste sent for recycling, was a more accurate measure of performance. It was suggested that metrics such as kilograms of waste per household per year would provide a clearer picture of trends and efficiency, particularly in light of population growth and increased housing stock.
- Members reflected on the implementation of the blue bag recycling system, noting that the first year had been challenging, followed by marked improvement in the second year. Members recalled that the projected revenue for the third year was £1 million and queried whether this forecast remained accurate. In response, Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) acknowledged that the introduction of the blue bag system had initially resulted in a decline in

performance, primarily due to service disruption and widespread resistance to the change. However, it was reported that subsequent improvements had been achieved across four key indicators- namely, increased volume of recyclable material collected via the blue bag system, reduction in contamination levels, decrease in processing costs and growth in revenue generated from high-quality recyclables. It was confirmed that the system had experienced a temporary setback but had since demonstrated sustained improvement. The importance of maintaining and further enhancing this progress was also emphasised.

- As a point of clarification, members requested further details regarding the interpretation of a previous recommendation, noting that their appeared to be differing understandings of the recommendation. In response, the Chair clarified that the original recommendation had been for the relevant department to explore both the financial costs and potential benefits of offering a bin-based recycling option, as an alternative to the bag system. This would be made available to residents on an opt-in basis in specific areas of the borough. The recommendation also included the proposal to consider a trial of this alternative approach. Chris Whyte (Director, Public Realm) further clarified that the recommendation had been thoroughly considered at a previous scrutiny meeting, and a commitment had been made to explore its feasibility. However, several factors subsequently rendered the proposal unviable, such as that Veolia had advised that the bin-based system could not be implemented in a manner consistent with the Council's preferences; the use of bins was likely to result in increased contamination, posing a number of challenges; and the level of resident interest in a bin-based system had not been tested.
- The Chair requested data on the percentage of flats in the borough currently provided with access to food waste caddies. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) reported that all kerbside flats had access to food waste recycling and could order caddies free of charge. The Council actively promoted this service to households not currently participating. For blocks of flats, 25% had received indoor caddies with a roll of liners, alongside communal food waste bins. Additional blocks had received communal bins only, and the rollout of caddies was ongoing. Following on from the previous question the Chair asked when the rollout would reach full coverage, to which Penny Lee confirmed that the target date for achieving 100% coverage of communal flats with food waste caddies was March 2026.
- As a final point, the Chair enquired about the percentage of flats with access to basic recycling provisions, such as clear plastic recycling bags, even in the absence of full bin infrastructure. In response, Penny Lee (Waste & Recycling Manager) explained that clear plastic recycling bags were provided exclusively to flats located above shops. These residents could order bags online free of charge or collect them from local libraries. The Council also distributed bags directly to encourage usage. For blocks of flats, mixed recycling was facilitated through communal bins. All blocks were expected to have access to these bins, and where deficiencies were identified, the Council engaged with managing agents to ensure provision. Brent housing estates were monitored in

collaboration with the Housing Team to maintain consistent access to recycling facilities.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of Recycling in Brent. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following recommendations to Cabinet, suggestions for improvement, and information requests identified were **AGREED**:

#### **CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (1) To lobby central government for legislation to restrict the distribution of single-use plastic bags by businesses and promote recyclable alternatives as the standard where feasible. This recommendation focuses on discouraging businesses from providing plastic bags to customers and encouraging the use of recyclable alternatives, such as paper bags.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

- (1) Deliver a member briefing session on the council's recycling initiatives, outlining current efforts and opportunities for members to support promotion to constituents.
- (2) Strengthen collaboration between recycling, housing management, and regeneration teams to improve the robustness and accessibility of waste and recycling infrastructure in new builds and estate upgrades.
- (3) Strengthen outreach and boost engagement with young people to increase awareness and participation in recycling initiatives.
- (4) Enhance and diversify communication efforts, and strengthen collaboration with local partners to raise awareness about nappy disposal and recycling options.
- (5) Strengthen enforcement to ensure council waste and recycling requirements are consistently upheld across housing association premises.
- (6) Explore the provision of a more robust alternative to the compostable caddy liners currently supplied to residents as part of the food waste recycling service.

#### **INFORMATION REQUESTS**

- (1) Provide an analysis of the effectiveness of current initiatives aimed at reducing textile contamination in recycling, including any lessons learned and adaptations to the approach that have been made to improve efforts.
- (2) Provide data on the extent to which exempt households contribute to the average monthly 14–18% of paper and card incorrectly placed in blue-lidded recycling bins instead of blue sacks.

- (3) Provide a detailed breakdown of recycling contamination specifically attributed to garden waste over the last year (2024/25).

*Please note that the specific wording of the recommendations, suggestions for improvement and information requests was subject to refinement following the meeting, with the agreement of the Chair.*

## **10. Budget Update - Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) was invited to introduce a budget update on Brent's overall financial position by examining the Financial Outturn Report for 2024/25, the Quarter 1 financial forecast for 2025/26 and the medium-term financial outlook, which was part of the committee's role in undertaking budget scrutiny throughout the year and would be considered by Cabinet on 28 July 2025. It was reported that in relation to the Financial Outturn Report 2024/25, the Council continued to face financial pressures, particularly in relation to temporary accommodation. While an overspend had occurred, the final position was less severe than initially forecast, which was considered a positive development, albeit not ideal. It was confirmed that no new financial risks had emerged by the end of the financial year. Regarding the Quarter 1 financial forecast for 2025/26, it was noted that the first quarter of the new financial year remained an early stage in the reporting cycle. Emerging risks were evident, particularly in demand-led services. Despite these pressures, the Council was currently forecasting a breakeven position. Key areas of concern included temporary accommodation, Adult Social Care, and Children's Services. With regard to the medium-term financial outlook, Minesh Patel provided an update on the Government's approach to the Spending Review and the long-awaited Fair Funding Review 2.0. It was confirmed that the Government had now published the framework outlining the key areas of focus for the review, including the resetting of funding formulas used to determine the distribution of resources across local authorities. Members heard that a consultation on the Fair Funding Review was currently live, with a deadline of 15 August 2025. The consultation comprised 50 questions, covering all aspects of the proposed funding formulas. Each local authority was expected to submit a response. Disappointment was expressed that the government had not provided a standardised model for authorities to use in assessing the impact of the proposed changes. In the absence of such a model, various London Councils had developed their own, though none were deemed fully reliable due to differing assumptions. It was noted that Brent Council was actively working through the available models in collaboration with London Councils and external advisers. It was confirmed that Brent's response would incorporate relevant points raised by London Councils but would also be tailored to reflect the borough's specific circumstances and priorities.

Having thanked Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the Budget update & Medium-Term Financial Strategy, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- Members cited figures relating to housing needs, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) overspend, and supported exempt accommodation, and queried whether these indicators reflected any measurable improvement. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) explained that the

figures presented reflected the outturn position, which followed a forecast based on various assumptions. It was noted that significant work had been undertaken by officers during the previous year to reduce financial pressures through savings and revised approaches. However, it was emphasised that many of the challenges were demand-led, and therefore subject to fluctuation. As an example in relation to homelessness, there were peaks and troughs in demand which could significantly affect financial outcomes. While some progress had been made, the underlying issues remained persistent. The financial impact was illustrated by noting that a single additional child that requiring residential accommodation could cost the Council approximately £250,000 per annum. Cautious optimism was expressed regarding the forthcoming Fair Funding Review, which could offer a degree of financial relief.

- As a supplementary question, members queried whether the Council had any influence over the Fair Funding Review process. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) confirmed that a consultation was currently underway, and that London Councils were actively lobbying central government. It was reported that early indications suggested that 23 London boroughs were likely to lose funding under the proposed changes, with only 8 boroughs expected to gain. Brent was not among the gaining local authorities. This information had been shared during a recent meeting and presentation on indicative figures.
- Members observed the planned discontinuation of the New Homes Bonus and the consolidation of various grants into the Revenue Support Grant and requested initial projections on the financial impact of these changes and any potential policy implications. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) advised that while the full impact remained unclear, the consolidation of grants was, in principle, a positive development. It was explained that managing over 55 separate grants, each with distinct conditions, had been challenging. A single consolidated grant would offer greater flexibility and allow the Council to make more independent decisions regarding expenditure. Regarding the New Homes Bonus, it was confirmed that Brent was currently allocated £1.9 million for 2025/26, but the Government had not yet provided clarity on how much of this would be retained under the new arrangements. It was further explained that the Government had reduced the number of funding formulae from 15 to 9, and that Brent was currently analysing its comparative position across key service areas, including adult social care, children's services, housing, highways, and fire services. The complexity of this analysis was emphasised, noting that relative need varied significantly across regions. Concerns were expressed about the data sources underpinning the formulae, citing the outdated Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) and the 2021 Census, providing scope for inaccuracies. It was reiterated that while the implications were difficult to predict, the Council was approaching the changes with cautious optimism.
- Members questioned when the Council would be able to assess the full implications of the funding changes. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) informed that the Government had indicated an Autumn settlement and expressed hope that this would be received in early

Autumn. It was stated that the Council was continuing to run various models to assess potential outcomes and aimed to have a clearer understanding prior to the development of the draft budget. In acknowledging the uncertainty, Minesh Patel noted that different models produced widely varying results, some indicating significant losses, others suggesting minimal impact. It was anticipated that media coverage would highlight areas of the country facing substantial reductions. It was further noted that the Fair Funding Review would take into account historical decisions, such as councils choosing not to raise council tax in previous years. It was confirmed that such decisions would not result in penalties, and that the review aimed to ensure fair distribution.

- Members noted that only approximately 8 London boroughs were expected to benefit from the Fair Funding Review, with Brent likely to remain in a neutral position. In light of this, the importance of initiating early discussions regarding the Council's communications and engagement strategy was emphasised ahead of the 2026/27 budget. Members also stressed the need to actively consult residents, businesses and other stakeholders, and sought details around the plans to ensure that feedback was both captured and demonstrably acted upon. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) acknowledged the importance of early and effective engagement and recognised previous criticism of the Council's communications strategy. It was noted that the financial information involved was complex and not easily accessible to the general public. However, improvements in collaboration with the Communications Team were reported, including the use of simplified formats such as explainer videos and relatable examples. It was also confirmed that the Council would seek to translate technical financial matters into accessible content and would aim to engage a broad range of stakeholders. The value of early engagement was emphasised, particularly in explaining the inherent uncertainties, and stated that transparency from the outset would be more constructive than attempting to communicate changes at short notice. Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) further stated that the Council had been transparent in its reporting, including the identification of at least £30 million in required savings. It was confirmed that the Council was facing £10 million in cuts in the coming year merely to maintain existing service levels. The increasing reliance on reserves and the unsustainable nature of this approach was highlighted, as outlined in the financial report. The Council's commitment to openness with members, residents, and stakeholders was reiterated.
- Members queried whether the restructuring of central government funding streams represented a form of devolution, given the reduction in ring-fencing. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) elucidated that while the consolidation of grants into broader funding envelopes did offer greater flexibility, it did not constitute full devolution. It was noted that London already possessed certain devolved powers and that there were currently few discussions about further devolution. It was also explained that the consolidation of grants would allow local authorities to make more autonomous decisions, reducing the administrative burden of managing multiple funding streams with varying conditions. It was emphasised that the principal benefit of the new approach was certainty. While the funding levels

may not meet all needs, having a clear 3-year settlement would enable more strategic planning and implementation, as opposed to reactive annual budgeting.

- The Chair asked whether the Government was likely to include notional indicators within the adult social care ring-fence, specifying either the type of care (e.g. preventative) or simply the requirement to allocate funding to the sector. In response, confirmation was provided that both elements were likely to be included. It was anticipated that a portion of the funding would be earmarked for prevention, while another portion would be designated towards adult social care.
- The Chair expressed concern that any notional allocation might not align with Brent's actual service needs. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) acknowledged the complexity of aligning national funding models with local needs and noted that the growth in adult social care demand consistently outpaced the funding provided, even when growth assumptions were built into the settlement. Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) additionally noted that the Council now had greater clarity regarding future funding, including confirmation that the 5% council tax cap was fixed. It was also stated that this clarity would assist officers in long-term planning and allow for a more strategic approach to financial management.
- Members queried the status of SCIL funds that had been collected but remained unspent and asked why these funds did not appear in the financial accounts and what benefits were derived from them. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) explained that SCIL was a ring-fenced funding stream, designated for specific infrastructure-related purposes. Members learned that within the Council's treasury management strategy, unspent SCIL funds were utilised to reduce the Council's exposure to borrowing costs. This was achieved through internal borrowing, whereby available SCIL balances were used in place of external borrowing, thereby avoiding higher interest payments. This was likened to using a savings account to offset the need for a more expensive loan. When a call on SCIL funding arose, the Council would then borrow externally to replenish the internal borrowing. This approach was embedded within the Council's capital financing strategy, which was managed separately from the general revenue budget.
- The Chair proposed that future financial reports include a clear statement of the SCIL balance, along with an explanation of how it featured in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and other financial updates. This would enhance transparency and support the Committee in understanding the role of SCIL in financial planning.
- As a further issue highlighted, members asked what planned investments were in place to utilise the HRA surplus. In response, Amanda Healy (Deputy Director, Investment & Infrastructure) reported that the HRA had been closely monitored throughout the year, resulting in a surplus that had contributed to an increase in the operating reserve, now standing at £5.3 million. This exceeded the Council's target of maintaining reserves at 5% of HRA income. It was noted

that the reserves had previously been below this threshold, and efforts had been made to rebuild it to ensure resilience against unforeseen pressures. It was acknowledged that Brent's reserve levels remained lower than those of peer authorities, which continued to pose a risk. The surplus would support long-term planning for housing improvements and development. It was confirmed that progress had been made across both capital and revenue programmes, as outlined in the outturn report.

- Members questioned how the Council intended to manage financial risks to the HRA, continue building new homes, and ensure the account remained in surplus and queried the impact of these pressures on the HRA business plan. In response, Amanda Healy (Deputy Director, Investment & Infrastructure) acknowledged the challenge of balancing fire safety obligations with the continued delivery of new housing and reported that a significant number of new homes were due to complete within the current financial year, reflecting the success of the recent developments. However, a decline in the development pipeline was noted, largely due to affordability constraints. Members heard that the Council continued to explore alternative funding opportunities, including engagement with the Greater London Authority (GLA). While current grant levels were insufficient to sustain previous delivery levels, discussions were ongoing. It was confirmed that the HRA business plan had been structured to accommodate both planned fire safety works and future development, within the limits of available resources.
- Members were keen to seek details around the financial impact of Granville New Homes on the HRA, to which Amanda Healy (Deputy Director, Investment & Infrastructure) advised that a final figure had not yet been determined, as negotiations were ongoing. However, provisions had been made within the HRA business plan to account for the anticipated costs associated with Granville New Homes.
- As a final point, members observed that Brent currently held one of the highest levels of council tax arrears nationally, with an average figure cited at approximately £92.2 million, comparable to Croydon. Questions were raised around why previous interventions had not yielded greater success in reducing arrears and what impact the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme had had on residents' ability to meet payment obligations. In response, Minesh Patel (Corporate Director, Finance & Resources) acknowledged that while some figures reported in the press were factually inaccurate, the Council's collection rates were not at a satisfactory level. It was noted that the Government's Fair Funding Review assumed a 95% collection rate, whereas Brent currently achieved approximately 93%, which presented a risk under future funding assumptions. It was further explained that the Council had identified this issue in Autumn 2024 and had begun exploring alternative approaches to improve collection. Reference was made to previous discussions around the distinction between 'can't pay' and 'won't pay' cases, noting that Brent's post-COVID recovery had been less robust than in other areas, largely due to higher levels of deprivation. It was highlighted that the Council had prioritised support for vulnerable residents through its Ethical Debt Policy, which had been appropriately applied. However, this had resulted in insufficient resource



allocation towards pursuing debts from those with the capacity to pay but who had not done so. It was stated that a renewed focus was now being placed on balancing support and enforcement, with a concerted effort underway to improve the Council's debt position. It was additionally noted that a portion of the reported arrears figure included statute-barred debt that should have been written off. The Council had not undertaken regular write-offs in recent years, which had contributed to the inflated figure. It was clarified that writing off debt did not negatively impact the Council's financial position, as provisions were made elsewhere in the accounts to offset uncollectable amounts. Following up, members questioned whether the changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme had resulted in the majority of residents being able to meet their payment obligations, to which Minesh Patel advised that he was unable to provide the relevant data at the time of the meeting and undertook to provide a written response following the meeting.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Budget update & Medium-Term Financial Strategy. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following suggestions for improvement identified were **AGREED**:

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- (1) In future finance reports, provide detailed information on the balance of unallocated CIL funds, how they are being factored into financial planning, and their contribution to achieving the Council's strategic priorities and long-term objectives.
- (2) In future finance reports, provide detailed analysis of Council Tax collection, including any ongoing assessment of the current Council Tax Support Scheme's impact on collection rates, and the outcomes of initiatives aimed at improving collection performance.

*Please note that the specific wording of the suggestions for improvement was subject to refinement following the meeting, with the agreement of the Chair.*

#### **11. Any Other Business**

No items of urgent business were identified.

The meeting closed at 8:56pm.

COUNCILLOR RITA CONNEELY  
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank



## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

### **MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on 2 September 2025 at 6.00pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Conneely (Chair) and Councillors, Ahmadi Moghaddam, S Butt, Dixon, Long, Lorber, Mitchell, Molloy and Shah.

ALSO Present: Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property, for item 6 online), and Jehan Weerasinghe (New Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration)

#### **1. Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members**

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) welcomed members of the Scrutiny Committee to the meeting. The opportunity was taken to express gratitude to Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) for her dedicated service and valuable contributions to numerous Scrutiny Committee meetings during her time at Brent. Her successor, Jehan Weerasinghe (New Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) was also formally introduced.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kennelly and Maurice.

No other apologies were received.

It was noted that Councillors Lorber and Long would need to leave the meeting early in order to attend an additional committee meeting.

#### **2. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest raised during the meeting.

#### **3. Deputations (If Any)**

No deputations were raised at the meeting.

#### **4. Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26**

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance, which presented the 2025-26 work programme for the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

In considering the report, it was noted that the Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group was expected to present its findings at the 4 November 2025 meeting, a change to the programme that was welcomed by the Committee.

Having reviewed the work programme report, it was **RESOLVED** to note the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

## **5. Establishment of Budget Scrutiny Task Group**

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance seeking approval to establish a Task Group to consider the Cabinet's Draft Budget 2026-27.

In considering the report, the Committee noted the proposed remit and role of the Task Group in reviewing the forthcoming priorities and proposals to be identified as part of the 2026/27 budget-setting process. Comments and any draft recommendations from the Task Group were expected to be considered and agreed by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 21 January 2026. A report from the Committee would then be presented to Cabinet for consideration on Monday 9 February 2026, alongside the report from the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources on final budget proposals.

A member raised concerns regarding the current approach to budget scrutiny. It was observed that the Committee appeared to be reviewing Cabinet proposals rather than scrutinising the budget in its entirety. The member expressed the view that the information provided to Councillors was insufficient for effective scrutiny, particularly in relation to departmental spending. The need for greater transparency and detail in the financial data presented was emphasised, noting that the current format focused primarily on budget additions, deductions, and new allocations. In light of the current financial pressures, the member advocated for a revised approach that would enable scrutiny of actual expenditure within service units. It was suggested that the Finance Department be requested to provide more meaningful data to support this enhanced scrutiny. In response, the Chair thanked the member for their contribution and acknowledged the importance of the concerns raised. It was noted that the quarterly finance reports, which were also considered by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, contained relevant financial information. The Chair confirmed that these reports formed an integral part of the Task Group's work. In addressing the concerns regarding the presentation of the financial data, the Chair invited the member to provide specific feedback on perceived gaps in the information. It was further noted that the Chair would be meeting with the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources later in the month to discuss improvements to the quarterly finance reports, with the aim of strengthening financial scrutiny throughout the year. The Chair welcomed input from all members and confirmed that feedback from other Councillors and the Audit and Standards Committee had already been received regarding areas requiring greater clarity. The Chair expressed a commitment to ensuring that the scrutiny process remained robust and responsive to the Committee's needs.

As a result, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) Noting the Terms of Reference as set out in section 2.2 of the report, that a Budget Scrutiny Task Group be established, with its membership subsequently confirmed in the minutes of this meeting as detailed below, for agreement at the meeting scheduled for 4 November 2025:

- Cllr Rita Conneely (Chair)
- Cllr Ketan Sheth (Vice-Chair)
- Cllr Anthony Molloy
- Cllr Ihtesham Afzal
- Cllr Sandra Kabir (Co-opted member)

## 6. Brent Local Plan Review

Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property) was invited to introduce the report relating to the Brent Local Plan Review, which addressed points that the Scrutiny Committee had indicated that it wished to focus on in respect of the Brent Local Plan review. These were an overview of the Local Plan's performance to date, along with the key priorities, proposed scope, approach, and governance arrangements for the upcoming review. The Local Plan had a key role in balancing social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities. It was noted that London was distinctive in having a mayor responsible for a regional plan, enabling a more strategic approach across issues such as infrastructure, housing and employment, and ensured consistent policy application, such as minimum affordable housing requirements. It was further stated that London's economic strength also made it an attractive area for investment, leading to some of the highest standards of development, quality and environmental performance in the UK.

In continuing the response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) provided further context regarding the strategic challenges currently facing the delivery of development projects. It was acknowledged that, while economic cycles were often described as cyclical, a number of industry professionals had expressed the view that the present difficulties were more structural in nature. A range of approaches were being explored to address the prevailing challenges, with particular focus on establishing a framework to facilitate the effective delivery of projects on site.

Having thanked Councillor Benea and Alice Lester for introducing the report, the Chair then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the Brent Local Plan Review report, with the following comments and issues discussed:

- As an initial query, views were sought around the principal objective or focus that Brent's Local Plan should aim to deliver for residents. In response, Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property) emphasised the importance of delivering affordable housing that met the needs of Brent's diverse communities. It was noted that a mixed tenure approach, with particular attention to family homes, was essential. Reference was made to previous work undertaken to assess the concentration of student accommodation in Wembley Park and it was confirmed that future planning would prioritise family housing. It was further stated that housing targets must be realistic and achievable within Brent's context, while also aligning with the requirements of the London Plan. It was acknowledged that the current paper represented an early stage in the review process and that securing funding for the review remained a critical consideration. The Chair further clarified that the Local Plan document under consideration did not constitute a draft plan, but rather an early opportunity for scrutiny. The purpose of the discussion was to

explore emerging ideas and provide constructive feedback to inform future iterations of the Brent Local Plan.

- The Chair then invited officers to reflect on the performance of the existing Local Plan, identifying both areas of success and underperformance, and to outline key lessons that would inform the Brent's Local Plan review. In response, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) comprehensively explained that viability remained a significant factor in the delivery of development and would continue to be a central consideration in future planning efforts. While the current plan had successfully identified growth areas and facilitated considerable delivery, challenges persisted in achieving the appropriate mix of housing, particularly in relation to the affordable housing provision. David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) additionally reported that housing delivery had been strong until approximately 18 months prior, at which point a marked decline had been observed across the sector. It was noted that this trend was not unique to Brent but represented a broader issue affecting a number of Boroughs. The success of the Council's master planning approach was highlighted, particularly in designated growth areas, where comprehensive frameworks had been established. However, it was acknowledged that current market conditions had rendered many developments unviable, with limited activity outside of student accommodation and co-living schemes.
- Members queried the implications of post-Grenfell fire safety regulations on the viability of high-rise versus low-rise developments. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) explained that the requirement for dual staircases in buildings exceeding 18 metres had significantly affected development costs. It was further stated that this regulation reduced the amount of usable space per floor, thereby decreasing the number of homes or commercial units that could be accommodated. Consequently, construction costs had increased, impacting both private and public sector schemes. The necessity of the regulation from a fire safety perspective was acknowledged but it was noted that its implementation had compounded existing pressures, including rising construction, labour, and finance costs. It was reiterated that the Council's role was to enable development by providing clarity and certainty to investors, thereby encouraging investment and delivery within the Borough. Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) additionally noted that Brent had established a strong reputation within the development sector and attributed this to the collaborative efforts of officers, members, and senior leadership, with it being highlighted that the Council was regarded as a reliable and proactive partner. It was stated that, despite the challenges ahead, Brent remained a Borough in which developers were willing to invest, in contrast to other areas where there had been disengagement with investing.
- Members raised questions regarding the Council's approach to renovation and the utilisation of existing buildings, particularly in light of escalating build costs. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) informed that the Brent Local Plan encompassed all forms of development, including renovation, extensions, and changes of use. It was noted that in many cases, renovation did not require planning permission and would instead be

subject to building regulations. As such, while renovation was supported, it was not always captured within the scope of the Local Plan. It was confirmed that substantial change was occurring in Brent, and that the Council remained responsive to opportunities for adaptive reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings.

- The Chair posed questions regarding the scope of the Local Plan in supporting alternative methods of suitable housing delivery, with a specific focus on whether the Local Plan could outline targets related to renovation and other non-new build approaches. David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) responded by stating that flexibility in delivery mechanisms was essential to achieving meaningful outcomes. It was explained that the existing Local Plan had already identified intensification corridors and town centres as areas suitable for increased development. However, the form that such development might take would vary significantly depending on site-specific conditions. It was emphasised that the most effective approach was to establish clear parameters for each site, including expected building heights, land use composition, and the balance between residential and commercial uses. It was noted that flexibility should be maintained to allow for renovation, extension, or new build, depending on viability and context. Jehan Weerasinghe (New Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) referenced the current policy context and noted recent national announcements, including the allocation of £39 billion to the Affordable Housing Programme and the introduction of a ten-year rent settlement, which had provided long-term financial certainty to the sector and created a buoyant environment within which Registered Providers (RPs) could effectively work. The potential for cladding costs to be reclaimed through the Building Safety Fund was additionally noted, which had further increased delivery capacity. The importance of the Council engaging proactively with delivery partners to translate this positive policy context into tangible housing outcomes was stressed. Brent's strong reputation within the development sector was highlighted, with it being noted that Brent was currently among the top-performing boroughs in building social housing in London. In concluding the response, Jehan Weerasinghe highlighted the successful completion of the procurement process for a single delivery partner in South Kilburn, and extended gratitude to the officers involved in that work. The Chair noted for the public record that Registered Providers (RPs) would be responsible for delivering the social housing referenced.
- Details were sought around whether the Local Plan would strike an appropriate balance between promoting new development and investing in existing housing stock and infrastructure. Members expressed concern that infrastructure delivery often lagged behind housing development and asked whether the Local Plan would ensure that infrastructure readiness was embedded from the outset. In response, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) confirmed that an Infrastructure Delivery Plan would be produced alongside the Local Plan, which would set out the facilities required to support housing growth and include a structured approach to phasing and timing. Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) further added that development generated significant income for the Council through mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 obligations, the New Homes

Bonus, and increased council tax revenues. It was noted that while many of these funding streams were realised post-development, the Council had now accumulated sufficient infrastructure levy funds to begin allocating substantial resources to infrastructure projects, some of which would be delivered in advance of housing schemes. The balance between renovation and new development was further addressed, with it being explained that planning policy primarily governed new developments requiring planning permission, whereas renovation often fell outside the scope of the Local Plan. Nonetheless, the reuse of buildings was encouraged under the London Plan hierarchy in respect of carbon embodiment, and Brent's Local Plan would reflect this principle. The disparity between the Borough's housing targets and the capacity of small-scale schemes to meet those targets was highlighted. The Committee heard that the current Local Plan set a minimum target of 2,325 dwellings per annum, of which approximately 440 were expected to be delivered through small scale conversions, extensions, and changes of use. It was noted that the majority of housing delivery would therefore need to occur in designated growth areas through higher-density development.

- The Chair raised questions specifically regarding whether the Brent Local Plan was solely focused on growth areas and future development, or whether it could also address retrospective investment in areas where development had already occurred but where infrastructure gaps had since been identified. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) clarified that the Brent Local Plan was a statutory planning document concerned with development, including the construction of new buildings and changes in land use. It was explained that the Local Plan did not cover the maintenance or upkeep of existing buildings, as such activities typically did not require planning permission and therefore fell outside the remit of the Local Plan. It was further explained that the Council received Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions from new developments, which were required by legislation to be spent on infrastructure that supported development. While the funds were not tied to the specific developments from which they originated, they were required to demonstrate a link to development activity. This provided the Council with a degree of flexibility in determining how best to allocate infrastructure funding across the Borough, provided that the expenditure supported development in a general sense. However, infrastructure projects that were unrelated to development could not be funded through CIL, regardless of their merit, due to legislative limitations.
- Members sought clarification on earlier comments regarding the shift from cyclical to structural challenges in the development sector, questioning what specific structural issues were currently affecting delivery. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) explained that the challenges were multifaceted and cited a significant increase in construction costs, estimated at approximately 40% over the past 5 years. Although the rate of increase had slowed, costs had not decreased, resulting in a sustained elevation in development expenses. Restricted access to finance and the withdrawal of industry investors from the market were also highlighted as key structural issues currently hindering development.



- Members questioned the appropriateness of the term ‘Local Plan’, expressing concern that the process lacked meaningful local input from both councillors and residents. It was queried whether the term ‘local’ referred to the geographical location of development or to the decision-making process itself. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) informed that the Local Plan was indeed a local document, serving as the spatial development strategy for the London Borough of Brent. It was acknowledged that the Brent Local Plan was developed within the framework of regional and national policy. It was further noted that Brent had received recognition for its community engagement efforts during the preparation of the previous Local Plan, including an award from the Royal Town Planning Institute. David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) further mentioned that housing targets were based on evidence of need. It was explained that targets were also set for employment space, industrial capacity, and other land uses, based on analysis of what was required to support the Borough’s growth. It was acknowledged that the scale of housing need was significant and that there was ongoing debate about how best to meet that need, such as suburban intensification, increased building heights in well-connected areas, potential expansion into the Green Belt or a combination of strategies. In concluding the response, it was highlighted that the Brent Local Plan was evidence-based and designed to meet the Borough’s long-term housing and employment needs.
- Members expressed concern that the Local Plan placed insufficient emphasis on the quality of life for both existing and new residents and cited a recently constructed residential block in Alperton that remained largely unoccupied and was currently covered in plastic sheeting due to unresolved cladding issues. The living conditions were described as unacceptable, and it was questioned how such developments had been permitted. Concerns were also raised around the mismatch between local housing needs and the types of housing being delivered. It was noted that there was a clear demand for larger family units, yet a disproportionate amount of student accommodation had been approved. It was felt that this approach may have assisted in meeting financial targets but failed to address the actual needs of Brent residents. Members concluded by referencing a 1934 planning document for Wembley, which had prioritised quality design, open space, and liveability, and expressed regret that such principles appeared to have been lost in current planning practices.
- Further information was sought by members regarding the continued emphasis on tall buildings within the Local Plan, noting that the cost of construction increased proportionately with height and therefore flats located on higher storeys tended to be more expensive to build than those on lower levels, thereby impacting overall viability. It was queried whether financial experts could be engaged to assess what constituted a sensible and financially viable building height in the current climate. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) acknowledged the validity of the concern and affirmed that the Brent Local Plan was not solely focused on financial targets, but rather on delivering high-quality homes for residents. It was stated that while housing need calculations were essential, the priority remained the provision of suitable and liveable accommodation. Reference was made to

international examples of high-density living, and it was noted that Brent had developed Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), including the Residential Amenity and Place Quality SPD, to guide the delivery of well-designed, high-density developments. It was further explained that student accommodation had become more prevalent due to its increased viability but acknowledged that it did not necessarily align with the Borough's most pressing housing needs, which included affordable housing and family homes. In relation to building heights, it was confirmed that viability assessments were conducted during the preparation of the Brent Local Plan, as well as during the development of supplementary planning documents (SPD) and masterplans. These assessments considered the cost implications of different building types and identified thresholds at which construction became significantly more expensive. It was noted that given the Borough's limited land availability and the scale of housing need, it would not be feasible to meet targets solely through low-rise development. As part of the Local Plan review, residents would be consulted on their preferences, for example in relation to suburban intensification, increased height in growth areas, or a combination of both approaches.

- The Chair questioned whether the financial modelling undertaken as part of the Local Plan review could be shared with councillors, particularly through a working group similar to that established during the previous review. The Chair expressed interest in ensuring that councillors had the opportunity to engage with viability testing and contributions to the financial modelling. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) confirmed that such engagement would be possible and explained that the Council's viability modelling involved testing a range of development scenarios, including small-scale schemes such as the replacement of single dwellings with multiple flats. It was noted that while the number of scenarios tested was typically limited due to cost considerations, councillor priorities could be incorporated into the modelling process to ensure that the analysis reflected local concerns and aspirations. The Chair reiterated that, in addition to shaping the content of the Local Plan, members were keen to contribute to the consultation process itself, particularly given the early stage of the review.
- Queries were raised regarding the integration of neighbourhood plans into the Local Plan, with specific reference to the Kilburn Neighbourhood Plan. Members highlighted the extensive community engagement undertaken in the development of the plan and expressed hope that its findings would be reflected in the borough-wide strategy. Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) responded by confirming that the Council had maintained close engagement with neighbourhood planning groups, including those in Kilburn. It was stated that the Kilburn Neighbourhood Plan was regarded as a complementary plan to the Local Plan, with no duplication of plans. The Council had supported the neighbourhood planning process and had not raised any fundamental objections to the contents of the Kilburn Plan, which was currently at the examination stage. It was affirmed that the insights and community feedback gathered through the neighbourhood planning process would be considered in the development of borough-wide policies. It was also noted that the Council would seek to incorporate elements that neighbourhood groups had found

challenging to address independently, and it was recognised that the two planning documents evolved on different timelines.

- Members thanked Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property) for reaffirming the Council's commitment to affordable housing and acknowledged that this priority was widely shared across the local authority. Members observed the ongoing challenges in meeting affordable housing targets and questioned what targeted policy interventions or incentive mechanisms were being considered to increase the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) referred to the London Plan review currently underway and noted that the Council had not yet received the first draft of the revised London Plan, and that the initial consultation had been limited in detail. One of the key areas under review was the threshold approach to affordable housing delivery, which had been introduced by the Mayor of London to incentivise developers to meet minimum affordable housing levels without the need for detailed viability assessments. It was explained that under the current framework, schemes providing at least 35% affordable housing, or 50% on public sector land, were exempt from viability testing. This approach was intended to expedite the planning process by removing a significant source of delay and negotiation. It was stated that the Mayor was expected to review whether the current thresholds were set at appropriate levels and whether adjustments could further encourage affordable housing delivery. It was emphasised that if the threshold was set too high, it could render schemes unviable, whereas a threshold close to the viable point could incentivise developers to accept slightly reduced profit margins in exchange for greater certainty and faster planning consent. The importance of reviewing intermediate housing products was also highlighted, with concerns being noted about the affordability of shared ownership units. A growing demand for intermediate rented homes was identified, which could serve residents who were not eligible for social housing but could not afford private rented homes. It was felt that broadening the definition and scope of affordable housing would help address the needs of a wider range of residents in Brent.
- Following up, members questioned whether there were any specific policy interventions or incentives that Brent could implement at this stage of the Local Plan review, acknowledging the need to remain aligned with the Mayor's policy framework. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) advised that it was difficult to determine the scope for local interventions until the revised London Plan had been published. It was reiterated that Brent's Local Plan must operate within the parameters set by the regional strategy and that the Council's ability to introduce independent measures would depend on the content of the Mayor's policies. It was further mentioned that the Council's focus remained on ensuring the viability of development proposals and maximising the delivery of affordable housing within those constraints. Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) additionally highlighted that while the Local Plan review would involve policy choices, the Council would engage with a wide range of stakeholders during the review process, including councillors, residents, community groups, businesses, and developers. There were also opportunities

to pursue complementary actions outside of the Local Plan review. It noted that Jehan Weerasinghe, the newly appointed Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, would be leading this work, which would include discussions with development partners, actively reviewing its own assets, considering a portfolio approach for development, or disposal of some sites to reinvest capital into affordable housing delivery. Engagement with public sector partners was also underway to identify collaborative opportunities.

- The Chair sought details on whether the Council's recent property review would be reflected in the Local Plan. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) advised that the Local Plan would only incorporate specific site allocations where appropriate, such as Kilburn Square. It was clarified that planning policies were thematic and focused on land use rather than ownership. However, it was confirmed that the Plan would include provisions aimed at maximising the use of public assets to support development objectives.
- In addressing the balance between Brent's local housing needs and the wider London housing needs, particularly in relation to student accommodation, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) stated that Brent would be a formal consultee in the London Plan review and would use that opportunity to advocate for its own housing priorities. Concerns about the concentration of student housing in areas such as Wembley were acknowledged and it was confirmed that this issue would be examined closely during the Local Plan review. It was noted that viability remained a persistent challenge, and in recent years, student housing had often been the only form of development progressing due to its viability. While investment of any kind was welcomed during periods of market stagnation, the need to strike a balance between viability and meeting local housing needs was stressed. It was added that where the Council lacked grounds to refuse a student housing proposal, it could consider securing financial contributions in lieu of on-site affordable housing, which could then be redirected to support Brent's affordable housing objectives.
- The Chair expressed concern regarding the exploitative nature of much of the student accommodation being delivered. It was noted that such developments were often unaffordable for students and were sustained by a market underpinned by student loans. The Chair highlighted that students were frequently tied into inflexible contracts, even in cases where they withdrew from their studies, and that the cost of such accommodation often exceeded that of traditional shared housing. The Chair urged the Committee to challenge the assumption that student housing was inherently viable, given its reliance on a vulnerable demographic with limited housing choice.
- As an additional query, the Chair questioned whether there was a formal process for explaining instances where housing targets had not been met, particularly in cases where under delivery was the result of policy choices rather than market conditions. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) advised that no such formal mechanism currently existed. The Chair suggested that such qualitative feedback should be incorporated into Brent's response to

the London Plan. The Chair emphasised the importance of contextualising housing targets with explanations, particularly in relation to student housing, to ensure that Brent's strategic position was clearly understood.

- The Chair stressed the importance of understanding the financial implications of planning decisions. It was noted that the Council's temporary accommodation crisis had significant budgetary consequences and that the approval of certain housing types, or the inability to resist them, could exacerbate financial pressures. The need for the Local Plan review to include detailed discussions on the risks and consequences of planning decisions, particularly in relation to housing delivery and financial sustainability, was emphasised.
- With reference to paragraph 3.2.6 of the committee report (which highlighted a decline in new housing completions over the past 2 years), members questioned how lessons from delayed development sites, particularly those affected by viability issues, construction capacity, or regulatory delays, would inform future policy and delivery strategies. In response, Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) reported that the Council was still in the process of engaging with developers to understand the barriers to delivery. It was noted that many of the challenges were structural and beyond the Council's direct control. Nonetheless, the Council would continue to explore ways to facilitate development and support delivery partners. Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) further added that the policies in the current Local Plan were designed to support development across the full cycle but acknowledged that there was inflexibility in some areas. For example, while the Brent Local Plan set affordable housing targets, these were subject to viability assessments on a case-by-case basis.
- Details were sought regarding how the Brent Local Plan review would address the delivery of a balanced housing mix, particularly the provision of 3 bedroom and larger family homes, while also managing the challenges of viability and affordable housing targets. It was noted that the current delivery rate of such homes stood at less than 12.2%. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) informed that the current Local Plan policy already represented a compromise between identified housing need and viability considerations. It was explained that while the Borough's needs assessment indicated a higher requirement for larger homes, the policy target had been set at 25% due to the outcomes of viability testing. It was acknowledged that if viability conditions worsened, further prioritisation would be required, with some policy objectives potentially needing to be treated with greater flexibility, while others would remain non-negotiable. David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) further added that the Local Plan set out targets for a range of housing types, including family sized homes. However, at the planning application stage, decisions were made based on the specific circumstances of each scheme. It was additionally mentioned that in many cases, the target of 25% family homes was not met, particularly where the delivery of social rented housing was prioritised. It was also stated that the complex decision-making process was unlikely to change under the new Local Plan, as viability challenges associated with private 3 bedroom homes were expected to persist.

It was confirmed that the review would include a reassessment of the need for larger homes and the appropriate targets, but that each scheme would continue to be assessed on its individual merits, with decisions made on the basis of what would deliver the most benefit in each case.

- Clarification was sought on what consideration was being given to the impact of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) on the availability of family homes, particularly those with 3 or more bedrooms. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) explained that the Council had adopted a policy setting out the circumstances under which HMOs would be considered acceptable. It was highlighted that Brent had gone further than many other London boroughs by introducing an Article 4 Direction, which removed permitted development rights for HMOs. This meant that planning permission was now required for the conversion of a dwelling into an HMO, even where the number of occupants was fewer than 6. It was confirmed that the Council had refused a number of HMO applications, primarily on the grounds of quality and, in some cases, location, including access to public transport and local services. It was acknowledged that while HMOs were not classified as affordable housing, they did provide an important housing option for single individuals and couples with limited means. It was emphasised that the Council continued to balance the need for such accommodation with the need to protect family housing stock.
- The Chair was keen to seek details around the alternative approaches, powers or ideas that were being explored as part of the Brent Local Plan review, particularly in light of the persistent challenges in delivering affordable housing. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) conveyed that the Council was actively exploring all available options to increase affordable housing delivery. It was reported that significant efforts had been made to identify and bring forward Council-owned sites, many of which had progressed to the point of securing or nearing planning permission. However, it was emphasised that the fundamental issue remained the lack of sufficient subsidy for affordable housing, a challenge that had persisted since the 1980s.
- Enquires were made by the Chair as to what elements of the Brent Local Plan might be strengthened to effect meaningful change, with interest being expressed in understanding the initial thinking around what could be done differently in the development of a revised Local Plan. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) advised that the key differences in a new Local Plan would likely relate to the intensity of development and the further optimisation of sites beyond current levels. It was explained that a wide range of options had not been presented at this stage, as many of the strategic choices had already been made in the previous Local Plan and were now being addressed through individual planning applications. It was noted that the existing policy framework allowed for a degree of flexibility, enabling the Planning Committee to prioritise on a site-by-site basis rather than applying a uniform approach across all developments. It was further stated that, from a policy perspective, the principal means of increasing affordable housing delivery would be to raise the overall volume of housing delivered within the Borough. The constraints posed by limited land availability and the need to consider the Borough's character was acknowledged. It was highlighted that designated tall building zones had been

introduced, with indicative height limits set for developments within those areas. However, due to ongoing viability considerations, these were subject to continual review to assess their appropriateness. Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) additionally noted that while it was possible to explore a wide range of options, such choices must be grounded in practical realities. It was recalled that the previous Local Plan had presented residents with a number of choices. It was acknowledged that there had been limited availability of suitable housing sites. The Council's commitment to doing everything possible to foster confidence among developers and to simplify the planning process was reiterated. Planned workstreams were outlined, including the potential consolidation and expansion of the Neasden and Church End growth areas, and the exploration of suburban densification. It was also noted that Brent was among the few local authorities with an affordable housing policy applicable to small sites below the threshold of 10 units, which would contribute to affordable housing delivery.

- The Chair then queried the realism of the Borough's affordable housing targets, noting the disparity between Brent's stated target of 50%, the London Plan's target of 35%, and the Borough's actual delivery rate of 19%. The Chair questioned whether the targets were achievable or merely aspirational. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) acknowledged the importance of maintaining ambition within the policy framework. It was explained that the Council was bound by legislative requirements and viability assessments, and that each site presented unique challenges, particularly in relation to development costs. It was also emphasised that overall housing supply had a direct impact on affordability, and that failure to deliver private housing could also negatively affect housing affordability across the Borough. David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) further commented that the Council had been successful in securing new infrastructure, including parks, schools, and medical centres, as a result of clearly articulating its needs within the Local Plan. It was explained that these provisions were based on robust evidence and population projections and had been developed in collaboration with strategic partners such as the NHS and the Department for Education (DfE). The importance of monitoring changes within existing town centres was also highlighted, noting that the Local Plan provided a framework for managing such changes in a way that could positively or negatively impact residents, depending on how planning policies were applied.
- Members sought clarification on whether the Council's target of 50% affordable housing strengthened its negotiating position with developers. It was also queried whether the target served to communicate the Council's ambition and standards, and if it provided any tangible advantage during negotiations. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) confirmed that the target did assist in negotiations. It was explained that while national policy guidance imposed constraints, particularly in relation to viability assessments, the presence of a clear and ambitious target helped to set expectations. The example of the Mayor of London's affordable housing policy was referenced, with it being noted that initial refusals of non-compliant applications that had not achieved the required targets had a significant impact on developers'

understanding that their planning permission would be refused. This, in turn, influenced more realistic negotiations with landowners regarding land values. It was further elaborated that if the Council's targets were set at a level that rendered land sales unviable, landowners might be disincentivised from releasing land for development, thereby limiting opportunities for housing delivery. The importance of maintaining a balance between ambition and viability was emphasised, with it being noted that development would not proceed unless it remained financially worthwhile for landowners and developers. Reference was also made to national policy developments concerning Green Belt land, where the expectation was that such sites, previously undevelopable, would be valued at agricultural rates, thereby enabling the delivery of up to 50% affordable housing. However, it was noted that in Brent, much of the land had existing uses with value for other purposes, and therefore, to create additional development value, it was necessary to make those sites more viable and valuable for the landowners to release the land. Jehan Weerasinghe (New Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) provided assurance to the Committee, stating that the team would undertake a comprehensive review of all relevant assumptions and return to the Committee at a future date to present their findings. The importance of revisiting previous assumptions and policy boundaries was emphasised to determine which elements were essential and which could be reconsidered in light of the Borough's housing needs. The need to assess the implications of various policy choices on the overall delivery of homes, including considerations around tenure mix, asset utilisation, and alternative development options, such as conversions and refurbishments, was also highlighted. The commitment of the team to delivering increased numbers of affordable homes for the residents of Brent was reaffirmed.

- Members raised a further point regarding the Council's ambition in relation to building standards and climate change and noted that while the current Local Plan required a 35% carbon reduction from new buildings, other local authorities, such as Islington and Hackney, had adopted more ambitious targets, including net-zero carbon standards. Members suggested that Brent could consider not only encouraging but requiring the inclusion of features such as solar panels and heat pumps. Additionally, it was suggested that carbon offset payments could be made by developers, where they could not meet carbon reduction targets and could limit the use of carbon offset funds to a last-resort measure. Member also raised the potential to strengthen requirements around BREEAM standards. Members then enquired whether the Brent Local Plan review would include discussions on enhancing the Council's climate-related ambitions and building performance standards. In response, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) confirmed that these matters were central to the rationale for undertaking a review of the Local Plan. The Committee were advised that the Council was currently updating its Climate Action and Resilience Plan, and that the work of the climate team would inform the development of this piece of work. The importance of progressing in areas such as sustainable design, shading, flood resilience, drought mitigation, and energy efficiency. It was confirmed that the Council was already addressing some of these issues through planning decisions but



recognised the need to go further in ensuring that homes were designed to remain comfortable and sustainable in the face of climate change.

- Members raised a question regarding the potential financial implications for developers arising from the Council's ambition to enhance environmental and building standards. Members expressed concern that increased requirements, while necessary to address climate change, could result in higher development costs, and emphasised the importance of maintaining Brent's attractiveness as a Borough for investment, while ensuring that climate change remained a central consideration in policy discussions. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) acknowledged that enhanced environmental standards did incur additional costs for developers. However, it was noted that the industry had made significant progress in improving the quality of construction, particularly in areas such as building fabric, insulation, air tightness, photovoltaic panels, and heat pump technology. It was explained that as these technologies became more widely adopted, their costs had decreased, and their implementation had become more routine. It was reported that some developments were already achieving carbon dioxide emission reductions of 60-70% beyond current building regulations. It was stated that the planning system had played a key role in driving these improvements and confirmed that the Council would continue to raise expectations in this area. Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) further mentioned that the Council was mindful of the potential impact of environmental requirements on residents, particularly in relation to the cost of living. The importance of ensuring that measures such as heat networks were implemented in a manner that delivered tangible benefits to residents was emphasised. Jehan Weerasinghe (New Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) provided further assurance that the Council would engage with peer authorities, including Islington and Hackney, to learn from their experiences in delivering carbon-neutral developments. The Council's commitment to a comprehensive and inclusive approach was reaffirmed, ensuring that all relevant considerations were explored and that the Committee would be kept informed throughout the process.
- The Chair raised a further question regarding the Council's historical reliance on carbon offset payments and queried whether there was scope to adopt a firmer stance by requiring higher on-site carbon standards rather than accepting financial contributions in lieu. The Chair questioned whether the Council could push back against developers who sought to rely on offset payments. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) advised that the Council was currently undertaking a review of its carbon offset payment framework, supported by a viability study. Reference was made to the approach taken by Westminster City Council and, to a lesser extent, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, where a tiered system was in place. Under such systems, the level of offset payment decreased as developments achieved higher levels of carbon reduction. It was noted that while viability remained a key consideration, post-construction reviews of current schemes had shown encouraging performance. It was highlighted that the transition away from gas central heating, particularly in flatted developments, had contributed significantly to progress towards zero carbon outcomes. It was acknowledged

that while some developers continued to meet only the minimum requirements, there was a clear trend towards greater ambition in this area.

- Members referred to the work of the Kerbside Task Group and the importance of incorporating its recommendations into the Local Plan. Assurance was sought that the findings of the task group, particularly in relation to greening and climate resilience, would be considered and reflected in future policy development. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) confirmed that he had participated in the task group sessions and was aware of the recommendations. It was stated that the Planning Service worked closely with colleagues across departments, including Sandor Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) to ensure that such information intelligence and recommendations were taken into account in the policy.
- Members raised a point regarding the need to address conflicting policies within the Local Plan. An example was cited where a resident had sought to install external cladding to improve energy efficiency but had been deterred by the requirement to submit professionally produced technical drawings, which incurred a prohibitive cost. Members expressed concern that such requirements undermined the Council's stated support for retrofitting and energy-saving measures. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) advised that planning permission was not generally required for the installation of external cladding and offered to review the specific case outside of the meeting. It was acknowledged that while the Local Plan covered a wide range of policy areas, efforts were made to ensure alignment wherever possible.
- Members enquired whether there was an appetite, as part of the Local Plan review, to consider how communities could be more actively involved in the use of local green spaces, referencing examples such as community gardens and shared green spaces within new developments. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) informed that the Council had developed a significant body of guidance, including the Amenity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which addressed the acceptability and design of open spaces within developments. It was explained that part of this guidance related to the future management of such spaces. The Council sought to encourage a sense of ownership among residents, particularly in relation to decision-making about how these spaces were used. However, it was noted that the long-term maintenance of these areas remained a key consideration. It was observed that while community interest in managing green spaces could be strong at the outset, it often diminished over time, leading to challenges in sustaining upkeep. This issue applied both to spaces within private developments and to areas of public realm owned by the Council. It was confirmed that members of the team had supported community garden initiatives in the past, some of which had been successful, while others had struggled to maintain long-term engagement.
- As a further issue highlighted, members questioned whether the Local Plan would be the appropriate place to set out expectations regarding the ongoing maintenance of community-led spaces, including proposals such as community parklets, which were being considered by the Kerbside Management Task

Group. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) confirmed that maintenance expectations were typically secured through planning conditions within development proposals. It was conveyed that when a landscaping plan was submitted, it was generally accompanied by a requirement for ongoing maintenance in accordance with that plan. The guidance aimed to ensure that appropriate long-term management arrangements were in place.

- Concerns were highlighted regarding the usability of green spaces that were either protected or created through development. The example of a wildflower meadow introduced in Wembley Park was cited, with it being noted that while safeguarding such spaces was important, it was equally essential to ensure that they remained functional and accessible, particularly in the context of rising temperatures and increasing population density. Members urged that usability be considered alongside aesthetics in the design of green spaces. In response, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) confirmed that the Local Plan included policies to protect open spaces and to incorporate it within new developments. It was stated that community engagement would also be addressed as part of the review. Reference was made to the Council's tree strategy and the importance of integrating environmental protection, climate resilience, and maintenance considerations was noted.
- As a separate issue, members questioned how the Local Plan review would address the issue of overconcentration of gambling establishments in town centres. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) acknowledged the concern and confirmed that the Council already had a policy in place to manage gambling premises, which placed it ahead of some other local authorities. However, it was recognised that in certain centres, the policy had not been effective in limiting the proliferation of adult gaming centres. It was advised that the policy would be reviewed, and that one likely change would be to adopt a broader definition of gambling to encompass emerging forms of activity not currently captured by the existing policy. It was noted that while the number of gambling premises in the Borough had declined overall in the past decade, there had been an increase in adult gaming centres. It was explained that in some town centres, such as Wembley and Harlesden, the existing policy allowed up to 3% of the frontage length to be occupied by gambling establishments, which was deemed a considerable length. It was reported that the policy had been more effective in other centres, such as Neasden, where the Council had recently won an appeal on the basis of overconcentration. It was highlighted that the policy would likely be revised to provide greater clarity and less flexibility, thereby offering stronger grounds for refusal where appropriate. Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) further added that the Council intended to take a more robust approach to managing gambling establishments. The importance of supporting investment in town centres and ensuring that planning policies contributed to positive outcomes for local communities was reiterated. Alice Lester (Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) further noted that any revised policy would be subject to examination as part of the Local Plan review process. It was acknowledged that strengthening the policy would be challenging but

confirmed that officers would explore options for a more stringent approach, subject to acceptance by the Planning Inspectorate.

- The Chair sought clarification on how the Council's commitment to delivering community spaces through the Local Plan would be addressed in the review. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) confirmed that the current Local Plan already contained policies addressing this matter. It was explained that where there was a loss of a commercial unit within a parade or town centre, the Council's preference was for the unit to be repurposed for other commercial uses, social infrastructure, or local employment opportunities, before considering residential use. The challenges posed by permitted development rights was acknowledged, which allowed for the conversion of retail units into residential dwellings without the need for planning permission. The Council had sought to mitigate this through the use of Article 4 Directions in town centres, although these had not been extended to neighbourhood parades or individual shop units. It was additionally stated that the Local Plan included policies to support the provision of additional social infrastructure. Where such infrastructure was proposed, it was subject to a set of criteria to ensure its appropriateness. It was emphasised that the loss of existing social infrastructure would not be permitted without a robust assessment of alternative options. The Local Plan also sought to promote the diversification of town centres while protecting facilities deemed essential to community wellbeing.
- Members highlighted the proliferation of fried chicken outlets on Wembley High Road and Ealing Road, noting that these developments, alongside gambling establishments, were having a detrimental impact on the character and health of local communities. Members urged the Council to adopt a holistic approach to high street planning, taking into account mental, physical, financial, social, and environmental wellbeing. While acknowledging the influence of central government legislation, members stressed the importance of clearly identifying what could be controlled at the local level to avoid repeating past mistakes. In response, Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) agreed that town centres required a comprehensive and integrated approach. It was noted that Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) managed the town centres team and confirmed that opportunities existed to strengthen partnerships with local businesses and communities. It was emphasised that while planning policy could provide a framework, its effectiveness depended on collaboration and investment. Reference was made to small-scale interventions which had significantly improved the performance of town centres. Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) further stated that the Use Classes Order provided a high degree of flexibility, which complicated enforcement. It was explained that Class E permitted a wide range of uses, including retail, financial services, restaurants, cafés, and gyms. The distinction between a restaurant and a takeaway was often blurred, particularly when establishments included seating areas. It was noted that while standalone takeaways required planning permission and were subject to specific policies, it was often difficult to determine whether a premises fell within the takeaway use class or was operating as a restaurant with ancillary takeaway services. This ambiguity posed challenges for monitoring and enforcement.

- Members observed that officers had previously been unable to provide data on the number and type of businesses operating in town centres and suggested that the Council begin collecting such data to better understand what constituted a successful and holistic town centre.
- As a more general issue, members enquired about how the Local Plan review would strengthen policies to ensure that development continued to deliver well-paid employment and apprenticeship opportunities for Brent residents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) stated that the Council performed strongly in this area and explained that through existing policies and guidance, the Council secured targets for the employment of Brent residents as apprentices on development sites, as well as broader targets for local employment. Funding was also secured to support the Council's Employment and Skills Team, which was responsible for identifying, placing, and training apprentices. It was noted that where a development did not include employment space, such as in residential-only schemes, the Council still secured commitments for construction-related employment. In developments that included commercial premises, the Council also sought to secure ongoing employment opportunities following completion. It was confirmed that officers would explore whether further measures could be introduced to strengthen these provisions.
- Members were keen to seek details on how the Council intended to capture and respond to objections and concerns raised by residents, particularly in relation to issues such as gambling, as part of the Local Plan review process. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) stated that the report outlined the extent of consultation and engagement undertaken during the previous Local Plan review. It was confirmed that a similar approach would be adopted for the review, with improvements where possible. The Council's intention to enhance its digital engagement strategy was emphasised, noting that during the last review, the Council had utilised a platform called Commonplace. This tool enabled residents to identify specific locations on a map, express what they valued about those areas and highlight issues. Contributions were visible to others, fostering a forum-like environment for community dialogue. It was explained that this approach had supported the Council's place-shaping work by helping to identify local characteristics and opportunities. It was added that should funding be allocated within the Local Plan review budget, digital engagement tools would be further developed, not only to improve consultation but also to enhance the accessibility and interactivity of the Plan itself.
- The Chair asked which communities had been identified as priorities for engagement in the Brent Local Plan review, particularly those with whom the Council had not historically engaged effectively. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) advised that the Council had made efforts to engage with all communities during the previous review. Where response rates had been low, targeted follow-up engagement had been undertaken. It was explained that the level of engagement was proportionate to the potential impact those communities could have on the content of the Plan. The Council

had attempted to collect data on protected characteristics to better understand the demographics of respondents, although this had proven challenging due to low response rates. It was acknowledged that engagement with young people had initially been limited, but this had been addressed through collaboration with the Youth Parliament, which had provided valuable and distinct insights. It was also noted that local councillors had been encouraged to promote participation within their communities.

- The Chair then sought clarification on the funding arrangements for the Local Plan review and asked about the potential risks and implications, should funding not be secured. In response, David Glover (Head of Planning and Development Services) confirmed that there was no dedicated funding pot or external income source currently allocated for the Brent Local Plan review. The Committee was informed that officers would be submitting a request to Cabinet for the necessary funding. While alternative funding sources had been explored, none had been identified. It was stated that, as with previous reviews, it was likely that funding would need to be drawn from the Council's central budget, which was under significant pressure. It was emphasised that without adequate funding, the Council would be unable to proceed with the review. It was noted that the process required not only officer time but also the commissioning of evidence-based studies, public consultation, and examination, all of which incurred substantial costs.
- The Chair referred to paragraph 3.2.61 of the committee report, which estimated the cost of the Local Plan review to be between £500,000 and £1.6 million. The Chair also referenced the inclusion of a commitment to deliver pitches for Gypsy and Traveller communities. While agreeing that this was a core element of the Local Plan, the Chair questioned why it had been included within a paragraph on funding and sought clarification on the connection between the two. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) explained that the cost range reflected a number of assumptions. It was noted that the Council was aware of internal efforts to address issues at the Lynton Close site, which were progressing well. Should these efforts succeed, it might negate the need for the Local Plan to identify additional sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community. However, if the Council were required to allocate new sites, the process would be significantly more complex than in the previous Plan, where a criteria-based policy had been deemed sufficient. Under current requirements, the Council would need to identify and allocate specific sites to meet identified needs. Members were advised that this process was often contentious and would likely require multiple rounds of consultation before a final proposal could be submitted for examination. It was explained that this introduced additional risk and cost, including the need for site assessments and extended examination time. While not all of the estimated cost was attributable to this issue, it represented a significant potential cost pressure and had therefore been included in the funding considerations.
- As a final query, the Chair sought clarification regarding the extent to which underrepresented groups had been engaged in previous Local Plan consultations, asking specifically whether there was any evidence that the Gypsy and Traveller community had been consulted during earlier Local Plan

processes, and whether such engagement had been used as an opportunity to understand and reflect their concerns, particularly in relation to the historical lack of planning for site provision. In response, Paul Lewin (Spatial Planning Manager) confirmed that a Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment had been undertaken as part of the previous Local Plan review. This assessment had been conducted on a West London-wide basis, with each participating Borough, including Brent, receiving its own set of data and findings. As part of this process, the Council had engaged directly with the Gypsy and Traveller community. All households residing at the Lynton Close site had been invited to participate in interviews to assess their housing needs. It was explained that, at the time, the national planning policy framework included a specific definition of who qualified as a Gypsy or Traveller for the purposes of planning policy. This definition had since been subject to challenge and reinterpretation. Under the previous framework, despite the expressed needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community, the national policy position had concluded that there was no requirement for Brent to allocate additional pitches. This created a complex and challenging situation for the Council, as it was unable to fully address the needs of its residents within the constraints of national policy.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Brent Local Plan Review Report. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following suggestions for improvement identified were **AGREED**:

#### **SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 1) Include land value mapping in the evidence base supporting the upcoming Local Plan.
- 2) Set targets for Local Plan priorities that are realistic, achievable, and clearly deliverable to support effective implementation and buy-in.
- 3) Strengthen consultation and engagement with local neighbourhood groups throughout the Local Plan development process, drawing on lessons from previous efforts to ensure their input meaningfully informs the revised plan and supports ongoing, transparent dialogue.
- 4) Enhance outreach with underrepresented groups throughout the upcoming Local Plan development process, applying lessons learned from prior communications and engagement efforts.
- 5) Ensure that the Committee is regularly updated on delegated decisions made by Cabinet members and corporate directors throughout the Local Plan development process.
- 6) Ensure that councillors, via the Brent Local Plan Working Group, are actively involved in reviewing the findings of viability assessments, financial modelling, and policy options throughout the Local Plan review and the development of the updated Local Plan.

- 7) Explore, through the Local Plan review, opportunities to strengthen policy mechanisms that ensure all parts of Brent, not only designated Growth Areas, benefit equitably from development.
- 8) Explore innovative approaches through the Local Plan review to further strengthen the delivery of genuine affordable housing, climate resilience, sustainability, social infrastructure (such as community facilities), and green spaces across Brent, while addressing issues such as gambling overconcentration and other uses associated with social harm.
- 9) Consider strategies within the Local Plan review to support a balanced mix of green spaces across all areas of the borough, meeting community needs equitably.
- 10) Enhance developer requirements through the Local Plan review process by introducing higher standards for sustainability, climate adaptation and resilience, and build quality.
- 11) Leverage the Local Plan review process to limit the use of the carbon offset fund to a last resort for developers.

*Please note that the specific wording of the suggestions for improvement was subject to refinement following the meeting, with the agreement of the Chair.*

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

In relation to the Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker report, the Chair acknowledged and expressed thanks for the contributions of both the Recycling Team and the Procurement Team for the quality and depth of the information submitted and remarked that the Committee would be reviewing the updates in due course.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the updates provided within the Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker.


## **8. Any other urgent business**

No items of urgent business were identified.

The meeting closed at 8:52pm.

COUNCILLOR RITA CONNEELY  
Chair



	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance</b>
<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26.</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 2025/26
<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 the Committee. The following amendments set out in this report reflect this:

- The name of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration has been updated to reflect the appointment of Jehan Weerasinghe.
- The agenda item titled *Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group Findings* has been rescheduled from the meeting on 4 November 2025 to the later meeting on 21 January 2026 meeting.
- The agenda item titled *Safer Brent Partnership Report 2025/26* has been rescheduled from the meeting on 21 January 2026 to the later meeting on 2 April 2026.
- The agenda item titled *Approach to Tackling ASB Across Brent* has been rescheduled from the meeting on 2 April 2026 to the earlier meeting on 21 January 2026.

*All changes are 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

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix A

### Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26

#### 16 July 2025

Agenda Item	Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member	Corporate Director	External Organisations
Committee Work Programme 2025/26	Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Recycling in Brent	Cllr Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	
Budget 2025/26 Update: Medium Term Financial Outlook	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	

#### 2 September 2025

Agenda Item	Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member	Corporate Director	External Organisations
Establishment of Budget Scrutiny Task Group	Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Local Plan Review	Cllr Teo Benea, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Property	Alice Lester, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	

**4 November 2025**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>	<b>Corporate Director</b>	<b>External Organisations</b>
Budget 2025/26: In-Year Monitoring Update	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Social Value Policy (Draft)	Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power	Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director – Service Reform and Strategy	
Procurement Strategy (Draft)	Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power	Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director – Service Reform and Strategy	
Funding and Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)	Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power	Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director – Service Reform and Strategy	

**21 January 2026**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member</b>	<b>Corporate Director</b>	<b>External Organisations</b>
Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings	Cllr Rita Conneely, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Committee	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Kerbside Management Scrutiny Task Group Findings	Cllr Mary Mitchell, Member of Resources and Public Realm Committee and Task Group Chair	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Approach to tackling ASB across Brent	Cllr Harbi Farah, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills	Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Community Development	

Community Engagement and Consultation	Cllr Jake Rubin, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power	Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director – Service Reform and Strategy	
---------------------------------------	--	---	--

#### 24 February 2026

Agenda Item	Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member	Corporate Director	External Organisations
Budget 2025/26: In-Year Monitoring Update	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Complaints Annual Report 2024/25	Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	Minesh Patel, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources	
Littering and Fly Tipping	Cllr Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement	Jehan Weerasinghe, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	

#### 2 April 2026

Agenda Item	Cabinet Member/Non-Executive Member	Corporate Director	External Organisations
Allotments Management	Cllr Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement	Jehan Weerasinghe, Corporate Director – Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	
Safer Brent Partnership Report 2025/26	Cllr Harbi Farah, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills	Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Community Development	Metropolitan Police

This page is intentionally left blank



	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Councillor Mili Patel)</b>
<b>Quarter 2 Financial Forecast 2025/26</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non 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>	Two:  Appendix A: Savings Delivery Tracker 2025/26 Appendix B: Prudential Indicators
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Rav Jassar Deputy Director, Corporate & Financial Planning, Finance & Resources Email: <a href="mailto:Ravinder.Jassar@brent.gov.uk">Ravinder.Jassar@brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 1487  Amanda Healy Deputy Director, Investment & Infrastructure, Finance & Resources Email: <a href="mailto:Amanda.Healy@brent.gov.uk">Amanda.Healy@brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 5912

## 1.0 Executive Summary

This report sets out the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Capital Programme, as at Quarter 2 2025/26.

**1.1** The Council's revised General Fund revenue budget for 2025/26 is £431.4m. The forecast at Quarter 2 is an overall overspend of £9.2m against the revenue budget, £2.7m overspend against the Dedicated Schools Grant and £2.6m overspend on the Housing Revenue Account. The current budget also reflects £8.9m of savings agreed by Full Council in February 2025, the status of which are set out in Appendix A.

**1.2** The tables below show the forecast position against budget for the General Fund, Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme.

Table 1: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for the General Fund

	Budget	Forecast	Overspend / (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m
<b>Service Reform and Strategy</b>	181.5	183.6	2.1
<b>Children, Young People and Community Development</b>	96.0	98.2	2.2
<b>Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</b>	35.4	35.3	(0.1)
<b>Finance and Resources</b>	31.7	31.7	0.0
<b>Residents and Housing Services</b>	31.1	36.1	5.0
<b>Subtotal Service Area Budgets</b>	<b>375.7</b>	<b>384.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>Central Budgets</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total Budget Requirement</b>	<b>431.4</b>	<b>440.6</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>Funding</b>	<b>(431.4)</b>	<b>(431.4)</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Grand Total General Fund Budgets</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>DSG Funded Activity</b>	0.0	2.7	2.7
<b>Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</b>	0.0	2.6	2.6
<b>Net Total*</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>

\*DSG and HRA budgets have been presented as net figures in the table above. Gross income and expenditure budgets for the DSG and HRA are shown below.

Table 2: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for the Dedicated Schools Grant

<b>DSG gross income and expenditure</b>			
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Overspend / (Underspend)</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>DSG</b>			
<b>Income</b>	(252.0)	(252.0)	0.0
<b>Expenditure</b>	252.0	254.5	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Table 3: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for the Housing Revenue Account

<b>HRA gross income and expenditure</b>			
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Overspend/ (Underspend)</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>HRA</b>			
<b>Income</b>	(69.9)	(72.9)	(3.0)
<b>Expenditure</b>	69.9	75.5	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>

Table 4: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for the Capital Programme

<b>Portfolio / Programme</b>	<b>Original Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Revised Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Current Forecast</b>	<b>FY Variance</b>	
				<b>(Underspend)/ Overspend</b>	<b>(Slippage)/ Brought Forward</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
Corporate Landlord	9.7	11.9	11.0	(0)	(0.9)
Housing - GF	114.1	103.5	99.4	(4.1)	0.0
Housing - HRA	50.4	30.1	33.7	3.3	0.3
Public Realm	17.8	36.0	34.9	(0.1)	(1.0)
Regeneration	106.5	111.0	102.3	0.0	(8.7)
CYP & Community Development	17.1	26.1	23.1	0.0	(3.0)
South Kilburn	28.0	31.0	31.0	(0.9)	0.9

St Raphael's	3.2	3.5	0.4	0.0	(3.1)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>346.8</b>	<b>353.1</b>	<b>335.8</b>	<b>(1.9)</b>	<b>(15.5)</b>

### **Current Economic Environment**

- 1.3** In the current and medium term, the economic environment is weak. Although uncertainty due to global trade restrictions has reduced since the Q1 report, domestic and geopolitical risks around economic activity remain, which will continue to weigh down on GDP growth.
- 1.4** Inflation has fallen from a peak of over 11% in 2022, to close to the Bank of England's 2% target since the middle of 2024. In the August 2025 Monetary Policy Report, the Bank forecast that inflation will peak at 4.0% in September 2025 partly because of higher energy prices, before falling back to the 2% target by 2027. Since the Q1 report, the Bank has cut the interest rate by a further 0.25 percentage points to 4.0%. However, the Monetary Policy Committee acknowledged in the report that the temporary increase in inflation could put additional upward pressure on wages and price-setting, leading to a higher risk of inflation becoming sustained. If inflation remains high, the Bank may keep interest rates higher for longer than previously forecasted.
- 1.5** The residents of Brent face an equally challenging economic environment with the ongoing effects of the cost-of-living crisis exacerbated by levels of unemployment above national and London averages. After the effects of the recent high level of inflation, and continuing high interest rates, combined with global instability, mean that the cost-of-living crisis is unlikely to end soon.

### **Local Government Funding**

- 1.6** During 2025/26, the government has committed to fundamental reform of local government financing from 2026/27, with particular focus on diverting resources to authorities that need them most. As part of these reforms, the government has stated its intention to deliver a multi-year funding settlement to local authorities for 2026/27. This will provide greater certainty within which to plan budgets for future years.
- 1.7** To support long-term financial sustainability, a consultation on proposals to update and reform the funding system was carried out during the summer. Initial modelling of the proposed reforms was carried out with support from London Councils and LG Futures and a response to the consultation was submitted by Brent Council to central government in August.
- 1.8** The government will provide their response to the consultation in the autumn, followed by a local government finance policy statement and the first multi-

year settlement, expected to be delivered in December 2025. A further update on the impact of the proposed funding reforms on Brent Council's budget and MTFS will be provided to Cabinet alongside the 2026/27 Draft Budget report in November 2025.

### **Maintaining Financial Control**

- 1.9** Local government is facing the most challenging financial environment for many decades. Many councils are overspending and depleting their reserves, most are experiencing the adverse effects of a prolonged period of high inflation, high interest rates and significant increases in demand due to demographic changes. In 2025/26, the government agreed to provide 30 Councils with support to manage financial pressures via the Exceptional Financial Support process (up from 19 in 2024/25), including 8 Councils for which support has been agreed for prior years. Many more authorities are in talks, allowing them to use capital resources (such as borrowing or selling assets) to pay for day-to-day spending. Concerns about future levels of government funding are widespread. Against this backdrop, Brent has maintained a strong position in terms of financial resilience and sustainability with a good track record of delivering savings and balancing the overall budget. However, in 2024/25 the Council overspent its revenue budget by £14.9m and is forecast to overspend again in 2025/26.
- 1.10** Despite the considerable efforts of the Council to manage its position, the operating environment and wider economic context continues to be volatile with small changes in demand disproportionately materialising in large financial pressures. These are particularly in Children's social care and Adult social care packages in terms of volumes and complexities, and temporary accommodation volumes, costs of provision and loss of Housing Benefit subsidy from central government. The Council is also dealing with the impact of rising costs due to the continued high level of provider inflationary pressures, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis which also affects important income streams of the Council.
- 1.11** Since the Quarter 1 forecast report was presented to Cabinet in July 2025, the financial position has worsened. There is a forecast overspend of £5m in the Housing service, which continues to experience high levels of demand due to a rise in homelessness and a reduction in the supply of suitable temporary accommodation. Additionally, there are growing pressures in Children's and Adult social care due to increasing client numbers and the cost of care packages currently trending above that which was initially budgeted for. The sections below set out the Council's strategy and actions to deal with these pressures for the remainder of the year.
- 1.12** The introduction of spending controls and the Budget Assurance Panel in 2023 helped to facilitate a better grip of the Council's financial position and

stabilise in year overspends. This introduced a range of measures including proactive vacancy management, directorate led targeted non-essential spending control including agency and interim spend, alongside department led management action plans reflecting other actions being undertaken. These sensible, proactive and prudent measures are estimated to have led to cost avoidance of over £8m in 2024/25 and are providing more assurance over the Council's spending decisions.

- 1.13** While Brent is not currently in the financial situation of those Councils that have recently issued, or threatened to issue, a Section 114 notice (legally required when the council cannot balance its budget, unlike the NHS and other parts of the public sector, councils are not allowed to carry a deficit) all efforts must be focused on positively changing the financial position.
- 1.14** Given the current forecast overspend, these spending controls will continue throughout 2025/26. However, it is clear that further actions are now necessary. With the exception of maintaining health and safety, meeting a statutory requirement and fulfilling a contractual obligation, all other spending will be halted until further notice. In addition, controls on staff payments, recruitment and use of agency workers will be significantly enhanced. This change is to ensure decisions are made at the appropriate level with clear accountability.
- 1.15** Delivering these actions will be a significant challenge for the Council's services during the coming months, but this is considered to be a necessary step to ensure that the Council's budget can be returned to a sustainable position. Council officers and members will continue to work hard to minimise the impact on residents and provide the highest possible quality of service within the current resource constraints.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.
- 2.2** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the savings delivery tracker in Appendix A.
- 2.3** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the prudential indicators for treasury management in Appendix B.
- 2.4** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee notes the virements set out in section 9.21 of this report.

- 2.5** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the discretionary Business Rates reliefs to be awarded as set out in Section 9.18 of this report.
- 2.6** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the amendments to the capital budget as set out in paragraph 12.2.
- 2.7** That the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the delegation of authority to the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources to agree the terms of the £40m loan facility to I4B as set out in paragraph 12.2.

### **3.0 Cabinet Member Foreword**

- 3.1** Brent Council continues to navigate a landscape of profound economic and social challenges as we set out the financial forecast for the Council's budget. Despite careful financial prudence from officers and Members alike, spending controls, and in-year savings targets, the strains of budgetary pressures on local authorities now mean a forecasted overall overspend of £14.5m for Brent across the next financial year. This is a sobering reminder of the pressures we face, but it is also an opportunity to reflect on further cost avoidance measures as we fulfil our unwavering commitment to protecting services for our residents.
- 3.2** The pressures are not abstract – they are rooted in the lived experiences of our communities. In 2024 to 2025, we received 6,281 homelessness applications — including 3,538 from single individuals and 2,743 from families. While this represents a 14% reduction from the previous year, the demand remains high, and the cost of temporary accommodation continues to rise.
- 3.3** The Council continues to take a number of proactive interventions to alleviate these pressures on Housing, increasing supply through our wholly owned housing company, i4B, and increasing the Housing Needs and Support budget by £14 million this year. We are also implementing a new model of resident support, backed by £1 million in recurring funding, to help households build long-term resilience; and expect for 899 new properties to be added to our portfolio during the next two financial years as part of our capital programme.
- 3.4** Across the Council, we are delivering £8.9 million in agreed savings, with 91 per cent on track for delivery. We are investing in our people, our infrastructure, and our future. We are also working across departments to deliver the Embrace Change programme, transforming how we support residents and manage public money. And we are taking immediate steps to implement sensible, proactive and prudent measures across the Council,

with an end to all expenditure on non-essential items alongside wider spending controls.

**3.5** While Brent does not currently find itself in the position of its peers who have recently issued, or threatened to issue, an effective bankruptcy notice, we must be honest about the risks. The cost of social care packages continues to rise, with a 3.5% increase in service users and a 7% increase in average weekly costs in 2024 to 2025. The pressures in children's placements, particularly in residential and secure settings, as well as on our Dedicated Schools Grant, remain acute.

**3.6** We must continue to challenge ourselves, innovate, and collaborate. Brent has never shied away from difficult choices, and in the following financial quarters, we will continue to take whatever action is needed to retain this council's reputation for financial sustainability.

## **4.0 Revenue Detail**

### **Service Reform and Strategy**

Table 5: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Service Reform and Strategy

<b>Service Reform and Strategy</b>	<b>Budget (£m)</b>	<b>Forecast (£m)</b>	<b>Overspend / (Underspend) (£m)</b>
Adult Social Care	123.9	125.1	1.2
Strategic Commissioning & Capacity Building	16.6	17.3	0.7
Public Health	26.2	26.2	0.0
Leisure	1.8	2.0	0.2
Integrated Care Partnerships	0.1	0.1	0.0
Communications Insight and Innovation	12.9	12.9	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>181.5</b>	<b>183.6</b>	<b>2.1</b>

### **Summary**

**4.1** The Service Reform & Strategy department (SRS) budget for 2025/26 includes previously agreed savings of £4.7m. Growth funding has also been built into the budgets of £10.9m to account for assumptions around demographic and inflationary trends.

**4.2** The Directorate is forecast to overspend by £2.1m at Quarter 2. A number of financial pressures have arisen since the reported break-even position at the end of the first quarter.



- 4.3** Demand for social care services continues to see an increase. Growth for both demand for services and inflation was factored in as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26. Increases in excess of what was previously modelled is leading to budget pressures in the service. Since the beginning of the financial year, the number of service users has increased by 1.6%. This increase is broadly in line with the growth assumptions. The average costs of a placement is increasing above what was expected when the budget was set, with costs of new placements also being higher than existing placements. In addition to financial pressures arising from cost and demand increases, an increasing number of complex cases being presented is also leading to financial pressures. Pressures arising from care packages are forecast to be £0.5m.
- 4.4** Current actions to manage these pressures include exploring the option of stepping clients down into suitable accommodation, reviewing CHC/S117 eligibility and bringing an end to B&B temporary accommodation.
- 4.5** In addition, changes are being made to the front door of services to manage the flow of referrals more effectively. Triage at the front door is being strengthened to ensure that people are signposted to community or voluntary sector options before escalating to statutory services. Additionally, Reablement is being promoted as a first option before considering long-term care. This means that all new referrals will be considered for reablement to reduce the number of people going straight into high-cost packages. Carers assessments are being proactively offered, as well as support upfront to reduce breakdowns in care, which often lead to expensive residential placements.
- 4.6** Regarding flow and case review, a clear distinction is being made between short-term and long-term support, ensuring that packages are explicitly time-limited where appropriate. We are conducting early reviews to step down support if possible. Additionally, reviews for the top 10% of most expensive cases are being fast-tracked to check whether needs can be met in a different, lower-cost way.
- 4.7** Other mitigations/plans to reduce pressure on care costs include:
- Emphasis on assessing 1:1/2:1 care costs through timely assessments and intervention.
  - Evaluating short-term packages to ensure they are providing the necessary care provision and are not on the system for the longer duration.
  - Continuing engagement with Health regarding Section 22 funding, reviewing CHC/S117 funding. Greater clarity/ planning around post discharge of clients.

- Robust commissioning of new packages – ensuring providers are providing value for money and the most appropriate care package for our clients.
- Benchmarking placement costs with partners at NWL. Ensuring we are achieving Value For Money compared to the care market.
- Demand management is being monitored through QAM (Quality Assurance). £2.24m cost avoidance has been estimated to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This is based on calculations on cases where requests for new/increased service provision were not approved/resubmitted.

**4.8** The Council's community equipment provider has declared insolvency. Alternative provisions are being arranged in both the short and medium term in order to maintain service delivery. At the time of this publication, the extent of the financial pressure arising from this are unknown, however it is estimated to be £0.5m. In addition, the delay in implementation of charging for Telecare has caused an estimated pressure of £0.2m.

**4.9** Within Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building there is an estimated pressure of £0.7m. This pressure relates to Housing Related Support budgets, within which there was a planned savings target of £0.5m. At the time of this publication, it is unlikely that the savings will be delivered. Actions aimed at mitigating this pressure are being developed. A review of commissioned HRS services has been undertaken. This provided recommendations on both short-term and longer-term service enhancement and efficiency opportunities. Officers are working with providers to develop and implement short-term actions aimed at mitigating the pressure including looking at what can be done to reduce service use. The impact of this needs to be assessed and fully understood. A working group is in place to commence recommissioning of all services.

## **Risks and uncertainties**

### **Adult Social Care, Strategic Commissioning & Capacity Building and Integrated Care Partnerships**

**4.10** In addition to the risks linked to packages explained above, there remains a number of other risks and uncertainties which could impact on the budgets within the SRS department. These include the following:

**4.11** Recruitment and retention of staff remains a risk nationally in the social care sector. The sector continues to be faced with high staff turnover and vacancy rates. The shortage of qualified staff can have detrimental effects on the care provided to adult service users and added stress on existing staff. The national shortage of care workers has changed the workforce model across

social care leading to a reliance on agency staff that are more costly compared to permanent staff. Management continues to focus on agency to permanent conversions as part of its workforce planning strategy and to maintain stability for the clients. An internal realignment of staffing was undertaken to better align the structure to Brent's priorities.

- 4.12** Partnership working with the NHS is a key factor in management of finances within the social care sector, with linkages between the Council and NHS for Section 117 and Continuing Healthcare (CHC) clients. This relationship has seen significant improvement during the last year, and the continuation of this progress will be important to ensure that any financial pressures can be mitigated early on.

### **Public Health**

- 4.13** As of Quarter 1, the Public Health grant is forecast to break even, despite sustained inflationary pressures and rising costs in NHS-commissioned contracts under the national Agenda for Change framework. These financial pressures have been compounded year on year, as NHS pay awards have consistently exceeded the annual uplifts to the Public Health grant.
- 4.14** For 2025/26, the government has confirmed an increase in grant allocations to help address ongoing pay-related pressures arising from the 2024/25 NHS pay awards. While this uplift will help ease some of the strain, the council will also draw on its Public Health earmarked reserves to ensure the continued delivery of essential services. The allocation for 2025/26 also includes dedicated funding to support the expansion of supervised toothbrushing programmes.
- 4.15** Spending on targeted Public Health initiatives—funded through the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Recovery and Improvement Grant (DATRIG), Stop Smoking Grant, and Start for Life Grants—is progressing as planned and aligned with the outcomes set out in national guidance. The DATRIG, issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), has replaced the previous Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (SSMTRG) and Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) which, in recent years, have enabled a significant expansion of local treatment services, resulting in improved outcomes.

### **Leisure**

- 4.16** Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre officially closed on 31 July 2025, following an extended period of community consultation. The £0.25m overspend has resulted from part-year running costs.

- 4.17** Willesden Sports Centre continues to face significant financial pressures due to rising indexed unitary charges and increasing utility costs. The forecast assumes a full drawdown of the £0.4m smoothing reserve. The reserve is expected to be fully utilised within the current year. In response, the council is working closely with leisure providers to develop a sustainable delivery model that ensures the long-term affordability of the service.

### **Communications, Insight and Innovation**

- 4.18** For the Communications, Insight and Innovation service which includes Change and Customer Insight, Communications, Digital Strategy, and ICT Solutions (including Brent's funding for the Shared Technology Service), there are currently no significant risks to the budgets and savings delivery.
- 4.19** The service aims to manage any vacancies to support delivery of planned activities without disruption and ensure efficiency improvements are achieved through process automation and contract renegotiations. The service also oversees The Drum, which has undergone a review this year to optimise its commercial income potential.

### **Savings and Slippages**

- 4.20** A savings target for 2025/26 of £4.7m is planned to be delivered across several services within the department including staffing reductions, income generation, technology enabled care and managing demand. As mentioned above, the estimate pressure resulting from slippages against savings targets are £0.7m. The department will work to manage any risk as stated earlier.

### **Summary of Key Assumptions**

- 4.21** Table 6 summarises the main assumptions made in the forecast which could have a significant impact if there are changes.

Table 6: Summary of key assumptions in forecast for Service Reform and Strategy

<b>Key Assumption</b>	<b>Downside if worse</b>	<b>Upside if better</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Increases to the cost of social care packages above what has	A 1% increase over and above the modelled cost	A 1% decrease below the modelled cost	The Council is working closely with the service providers and

been modelled, with client numbers remaining in line with what was modelled	of care packages could result in a £0.7m pressure	of care packages will result in costs of £0.7m less than what was anticipated	provides robust challenge of individual package costs based on evidence as part of placement reviews.
Increases to social care client numbers above what has been modelled, with package costs remaining in line with what was modelled	Additional budget pressures should there be clients beyond those modelled as part of the MTFS.	Client numbers falling below those modelled would reduce the cost to the Council.	The Council is working on developing PowerBI tools to allow for better monitoring of placements. Consistent monitoring and reporting will be made to facilitate early identification of pressures so mitigating actions can be taken.
Leisure - Utility costs to stay within the expected forecast	Additional pressure on the leisure reserves	Reduced pressure on the reserves	Service is monitoring activity and pricing to ensure are updated and reflected in a timely and accurate way.

## 5.0 Children, Young People and Community Development (CYPCD) (General Fund)

Table 7: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Children, Young People and Community Development

CYP Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Overspend (Underspend) (£m)
Forward Planning, Performance & Partnerships	48.9	50.0	1.1
Inclusion	3.2	3.9	0.7
Setting and School Effectiveness	0.0	0.3	0.3
Virtual School	0.5	0.5	0.0
Early Help	3.3	2.8	(0.5)
Localities	0.4	0.4	0.0
LAC and Permanency	6.6	7.2	0.6
Children with Disabilities	14.8	14.2	(0.6)
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	2.3	2.2	(0.1)

Family Support and Child Protection	11.3	12.0	0.7
Community Development	1.6	1.6	0.0
Central Management	3.1	3.1	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96.0</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>

## Summary

- 5.1** As of July 2025, emerging pressures totalling £2.2m have been identified within the CYPCD General Fund budget, primarily due to rising costs in placement services for children in care. This budget falls within the Forward Planning, Performance & Partnerships (FPPP) service. Additional risks and uncertainties may impact on this position further as the year progresses.
- 5.2** Key pressures within the FPPP service are primarily driven by rising costs associated with residential, remand secure and welfare secure placements.

## Placement pressures

- 5.3** Residential and secure placements are experiencing significant pressures of £3.1m. However, these are being partially mitigated by projected underspend in other areas, including foster care and adoption due to reduced demand, along with reduced costs of placements in supported accommodation, and additional income and contributions, resulting in a net projected overspend of £1.1m.
- 5.4** The number of Looked After Children (LAC) at quarter 4 of 2024/25 was 298, compared to the London average of 292, although Brent has a significantly lower than average LAC rate of 40 per 10,000 children compared to the London average of 50 per 10,000 children. While the number of LAC has declined in the last year, there has been a sharp rise in children and young people entering care with complex needs, particularly since late 2024/25. This is reflected in the increase in residential placements with 41 children in residential care in mid-September 2025 – 11 more than the previous year. In addition, the average cost of residential placements has increased. Identifying residential children's home placements can be very challenging despite comprehensive nationwide searches using both the Commissioning Alliance direct Purchasing Vehicle framework and also spot purchase providers. This means the local authority has limited negotiating power in relation to initial costs. The FPPP Service has systems in place to renegotiate

costs as much as possible and has close monitoring of additional residential placement spend, for example reviewing the need for additional support worker hours.

- 5.5** Youth Justice data also indicates a higher-than-usual number of secure remand cases, with six young people in care at the start of 2025/26 and this has increased to 7 as of mid-September. The length of time of these placements is dependent on the speed of moving cases through the criminal justice system and beyond the local authority's control.
- 5.6** A number of measures are in place to manage down placement costs. Service areas across the CYP CD directorate are working collaboratively to plan successful step-downs from residential placements for young people when they are ready and there is a focus on reunification back home for looked after children where safe and appropriate. The Director of Education, Partnerships and Strategy is leading a review of all residential placements to ensure there is timely progress and active management of actions to move children to the most appropriate setting, where appropriate and in line with their care plan.
- 5.7** A Strategic Commissioning Group, chaired by the Corporate Director of CYP CD, aims to reduce costs through two primary initiatives: the expansion of in-house foster care provision and the enhancement of support for care leavers to promote independent living. The number of care leavers has increased significantly in recent years (currently 500 are eligible for support). The second initiative has realised some financial savings within the supported accommodation budgets (through housing benefit income). The shortage of housing in the borough means, however, that care leavers are not able to access permanent accommodation in line with their independence plans which is impacting on progress to reduce the cost of semi-independent accommodation. The recruitment of foster carers did not significantly change during the 2024/25 financial year, though six new foster carers were recruited against a target of 10. Actions taken to improve outputs include increasing allowance rates to the West London average, development of the Mockingbird programme that uses an extended family model to provide a range of support and working collaboratively with West London boroughs on a fostering hub to streamline fostering enquiries and enhance marketing activity.
- 5.8** Work continues with other West London authorities to improve local authority run residential home sufficiency, with Brent supporting the development of new provision across the sub-region. Places will be made available to local authorities on a spot-purchasing basis.

## **Other service pressures**

- 5.9** The Family Support and Child protection is forecasting an overspend of £0.7m. Mainly due to an increase in spend against the budget held for clients with no recourse to public funds. There are also staffing pressures within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub team and the Family Support and Child Protection teams. It has been agreed that the No Recourse to Public Fund and Homelessness CYPCD budgets and team will transfer to the Housing directorate to create some synergies by sharing knowledge, staff, and resources to achieve greater efficiencies and impact.
- 5.10** There is also a forecasted overspend of £0.7m within the Inclusion service area. Staffing budget pressures in the Educational Psychology and Special Needs team are driving this, as meeting statutory deadlines for Special Educational Needs assessments has required reliance on locum staff, who are more costly than permanent employees due to recruitment challenges.
- 5.11** LAC and Permanency is reporting a £0.6m overspend, mainly driven by legal costs (£0.3m), which are largely unavoidable, are influenced by the number of court proceedings and are challenging to predict. The pressure this year relates to a small number of legal challenges and high-cost legal disbursements linked to age assessments of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). There are also pressures in the contact team relating to payments to external agencies for out-of-borough cases. The service is reviewing the staffing structure to reduce reliance on agency staff and external contact centres within the borough, to mitigate staffing pressures against this budget.
- 5.12** The Setting and School Effectiveness service is reporting an overspend of £0.3m due to a shortfall of income against historic income targets applied to the Gordon Brown Short Break Centre. The service is assessing ways to reduce the impact of this pressure, including potential increases to fees and charges aligned with benchmarked rates.
- 5.13** Children with Disabilities (CWD) are reporting an underspend of £0.6m This is primarily due to lower projected costs for CWD placements and adjustments for prior year placement costs. The forecast assumes that all the income due from the ICB for 2024/25 and the estimated income for 2025/26 will be received.
- 5.14** The forecast against the Early Help budgets is an underspend of £0.5m, mainly derived from the Brent Family Solutions service and the efficiencies against the Barnardo's contract which supports the Brent Family Well Being Centres.



- 5.15** The directorate remains focused on closely monitoring non-essential expenditures, strategically holding vacancies where sustainable and ensuring continued progress is made on reducing agency staff costs.

### **Risks and Uncertainties**

- 5.16** The persistent overspend on high-cost residential and secure placements poses a major financial risk. While underspends may be identified later in the year through robust budget monitoring and achievement of further in-year savings, they cannot be guaranteed as an individual high cost residential or secure placement can cost over £0.5m per annum.
- 5.17** The in-house residential children's home that was originally planned to be operational from May 2025 and expected to contribute to the management of costs and placement sufficiency has been delayed further. This was initially due to a delay from Ofsted commencing the regulation process. However, a recent, unexpected incident which resulted in damage to the front of the property has added to the delayed opening as remedial capital works are required.
- 5.18** Significant risks exist in the No Recourse for Public Funds (NRPF) and budgets held for overstayers. This is a continuation of the pressures that the area experienced in 2024/25 due to the volume of clients and increased costs, specifically related to housing. This budget currently sits within the Family Support and Child Protection service area and is expected to move to Housing services later in this calendar year.
- 5.19** Other risks exist within specific service areas such as the Setting and School Effectiveness (that reflect an unachievable historic income target at the Gordon Brown Centre) and the Inclusion service (staff pressures to maintain Special Educational Needs assessment statutory deadlines).
- 5.20** The continued growth in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) may increase the pressure on some general fund services, such as SEN Transport. Increase in demand exacerbated by rising prices on taxi routes and other pressures such as the effect of the London Living Wage and National Insurance increases, retender of the taxi routes, and an ageing fleet will place financial pressures on the budget. Delivery of the Travel Assistance Policy Implementation Plan (TAPIP) is essential to manage transport costs in 2025/26. A set of Key Performance Indicators has been developed to monitor the success of the

plan. The Children with Disabilities budget within the Localities service could also be impacted by an increase in EHCPs.

- 5.21** Disputes and delays in cost-sharing agreements with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for complex care packages continue to pose a high risk, particularly when ICB engagement has not resulted in effective resolution in a number of cases. However there had been some positive engagement with the ICB during the last quarter. About half of the cases related to the accrued income for complex care cases during the 2024/25 financial year have been agreed with further discussions required to reach an agreement on outstanding cases, as well as the contributions for 2025/26.

### **Savings and Slippages**

- 5.22** The department has £2m of savings to deliver in 2025/26. Comprising: £0.751m from service reductions, £0.540m from increased income/contributions, £0.405m from restructuring, £0.290m from service transformation and £0.013m from Digital Transformation.
- 5.23** The service transformation saving of £0.290m, linked to the opening of the new in-house residential children's home, is currently at risk, as the home is now expected to open in the latter part of the financial year. The remaining savings are expected to be delivered as planned.

### **Summary of Key Assumptions**

Table 8: Summary of key assumptions in forecast for Children, Young People and Community Development

Key Assumption	Downside if worse	Upside if better	Mitigations
LAC and Care Leaver placements forecast assumes numbers of 822 FTEs and unit costs reflect current trends.	An increase in the number of high cost residential or secure placements would place additional pressure on the budget. e.g., an increase by 4	Increased step-down arrangements result in falling number of residential placements. A single stepdown from a residential placement to a semi-	Ongoing review of packages for best outcomes and focus on stepdown arrangements to support children to transition from residential to foster and/or semi-independent placements.

	placements in year could cause an additional pressure of £2m.	independent placement could reduce expenditure by c£0.2m in-year.	Supporting the transition of care leavers to their own tenancies, to improve outcomes and independence.  Innovative support and partnering with Health for CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing, among other preventative measures.
Health contributions for CYP placements and Children with Disabilities (CWD) packages will be lower than the 2024/25 levels.	The spend will not be mitigated by these contributions in proportion to the overall demand.	It will assist in mitigating overall net spend.	Maximising joint funding approaches with health to ensure contributions to placement costs where applicable. Targeted activity across ICS to ensure consistency in Continuing Health Care funding.
Mix of social work staff and caseloads in the Localities and LAC & Permanency service to include the use of agency staff at a similar level than 2024/25.	If increases of 15% during the year, there could be up to £0.4m additional spend on agency social work staff to manage the pressure.	There would be a reduction in the use of agency staff and the reduced caseloads could be attractive to social workers seeking permanent roles.	Continued management action to monitor caseloads across the service and review and manage social work resources and incentives. New/more targeted recruitment campaign
Assume numbers of SEN clients requiring transport do not increase significantly and the take up of Travel	An increase in the numbers would place additional	Reduction of the expected overspend	Tracking and monitoring KPIs with both Harrow and internally as well as continuous contract monitoring

Assistance is in line with expectations	pressure on the budget		
---	------------------------	--	--

## 6.0 Neighbourhoods and Regeneration

Table 9: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration

Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Overspend / (Underspend) (£m)
Public Realm	25.0	24.5	(0.5)
Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Action	2.2	2.2	0.0
Property & Assets	8.2	8.6	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>(0.1)</b>

### Summary

- 6.1** Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Directorate are currently forecasting a £0.1m underspend at Quarter 2.
- 6.2** Within Public Realm, the Parking service are forecasting a £1.7m underspend based on PCN issuance and current performance levels. This underspend is partially offset mainly by a £0.7m pressure in Waste, and other smaller pressures across the department leaving a £0.5m underspend position overall for Public Realm.
- 6.3** Property & Assets are forecasting a £0.4m which largely comes from Commercial Property who are facing a pressure on their income generation due to expired leases and vacant properties.

### Risks and uncertainties

- 6.4** Within Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Action there are pressures on income generated by Building Control and Planning.
- 6.5** Building Control's ability to generate fee income has been constrained by a decline in appointments for major developments, largely due to delays or cancellations driven by broader macro-economic conditions. Additionally, the introduction of high-rise building regulations by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in October 2023 has shifted the service's charging model to cost recovery, further impacting revenue. The department's capacity to

secure major project work has also been reduced, as the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) now assigns nearly all such projects directly to Local Authorities, removing the opportunity to compete in the open market. Ongoing staff shortages are compounding these challenges, limiting the service's ability to pursue additional work. In response, the department is actively exploring mitigation strategies, including reviewing recruitment processes, enhancing career development pathways, increasing agency pay rates, and considering a commissioning-based model.

- 6.6** Planning and Development services have experienced similar challenges to Building Control, with fee income from applications and pre-applications declining in recent years due to the broader financial climate. However, the fee levels set for 2025/26 are expected to be sufficient to avoid any financial pressures within the service during the year.
- 6.7** Within Public Realm, Service Development & Contracts Performance are due to overspend by £700k in 2025/26. High inflation has led to higher contract inflation than was budgeted for in both the Veolia and Grounds Maintenance contracts. Property growth and increased waste disposal tonnage costs with West London Waste Authority adds to the overspend. Targeted initiatives to reduce contamination levels in recycling collections to lower processing costs are underway. Education and campaigns around food recycling, further roll out of food waste collection to flats and communal properties have seen an increase in food waste tonnages. Messaging around recycling and reduction in household general waste is ongoing and we anticipate disposal cost reductions in quarter 2 as well. Early indicators suggest these measures are having a positive impact. The receipt of EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) funding from the government in the autumn will further help to drive down costs from waste and deliver initiatives to improve our recycling efforts. The service is working with the contractor to draw up a plan on EPR spend and how the funds could be utilised to boost our recycling rates and reduce our spend.
- 6.8** It was anticipated the new waste contract would face some pressure in the first few years, and as such an earmarked reserve was created to smooth any financial impacts between years. This reserve will be utilised in 2025/26 whilst the anticipated service improvements mentioned above become embedded.
- 6.9** Property and Assets must secure new tenants to replace those with expired leases and fill vacant properties in order to meet income targets. The current overspend stands at £0.6m. To mitigate this risk, the service is actively marketing available properties and working with agents where appropriate. Facilities Management continues to experience cost pressures, particularly due to overtime requirements in Cleaning and Security services, resulting in a forecasted overspend of £0.3m. Measures are being taken to manage these pressures, and any underspends within Property and Assets will be used to help offset the impact.

**6.10** Based on current forecasts from the Council's energy supplier, reflecting contracts already secured for future energy supply, energy costs are expected to decrease in 2025/26. The latest estimate indicates an underspend of £0.5m within the Energy budget. This underspend will contribute to reducing the anticipated overspend within Facilities Management and Commercial Services.

**6.11** As of the beginning of the 2025/26 financial year, the Strategic CIL fund held an opening balance of £156.9m. This entire amount has been allocated to planned infrastructure projects, with commitments categorised as follows:

- £80.0m: Formally commissioned by Cabinet; expenditure pending.
- £18.4m: Approved at sub-board level; awaiting Cabinet agreement.
- £58.5m: Provisionally allocated to prospective projects; subject to formal Cabinet approval.

All funds have been earmarked, and no uncommitted balance remains available for new initiatives at this time.

### **Savings and Slippages**

**6.12** Savings of £0.5m are expected for 2025/26 for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration. This main savings are expected from restructures across the department and increases in fees and charges within Waste.

**6.13** At Quarter 2 the department is currently expecting that all savings will be delivered in-year.

**6.14** The table below summaries the main assumptions made in the N&R forecast.

### **Summary of Key Assumptions**

Table 10: Summary of key assumptions in forecast for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration

Key Assumption	Downside if worse	Upside if better	Mitigations
----------------	-------------------	------------------	-------------

Building Control is able to mitigate pressure on its income generation.	In 24/54 the department reported a £530k overspend, without mitigation the same could occur	The department is able to generate more income providing additional revenue to the Council	Cases arriving through the BSR are being closely monitored to ensure accurate forecasting. A reserve was created in 2023/24 to mitigate pressures whilst a longer-term plan is implemented.
Recycling performance will improve and material prices for the recyclates will be in the forecast range.	The full reserve could be utilised and pressures spread into future years. There is a £560k difference between the central and worst case when modelling the cost of the recyclate reprocessing budget.	If recycling improves it will reduce the cost of waste disposal, leading to a rebate on forecast charges. Based on prior years this could be up to £500k. The reserve balance is not fully used and is available to repurpose and utilise for other pressures.	The monthly data around tonnage, rejections and market prices for recycling are closely monitored. With ongoing work to improve recycling performance.
The waste contract has some variable elements which are paid for as used, for example winter maintenance. It is assumed that usage will be within the expected range.	This will create a financial pressure for the service, likely leading to an overspend.	The expected budget for this element would not be utilised. This could then be used to cover pressures elsewhere.	The service are aware of the costs of the variable elements. The volume is therefore closely monitored to ensure that the usage is appropriate.

## 7.0 Finance and Resources

Table 11: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Finance and Resources

Finance and Resources	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Overspend / (Underspend) (£m)
-----------------------	-------------	---------------	-------------------------------

<b>Finance Services</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Organisational Assurance &amp; Resilience</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Shared Technology Services</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Human Resources &amp; Organisational Development</b>	4.2	4.2	0.0
<b>Legal Services</b>	5.1	5.1	0.0
<b>Democratic Services</b>	6.3	6.3	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>

## Summary

- 7.1** The Finance & Resources directorate is reporting a breakeven position at Q2, unchanged from Q1 forecast.
- 7.2** Organisational Assurance & Resilience experienced a pressure in 2024/25 within the Insurance Service. This was due to a change in the insurance offer for schools from the Government, meaning schools were able to utilise that offer rather than that of the Council. The service has been exploring other income sources and expects to be able to mitigate the pressure in 2025/26. The service is now also exploring ways to get schools back onto the Council's scheme. The effects of this may be seen this year or next.
- 7.3** Shared Technology Services (STS) is expected to breakeven, the costs for Shared Technology Services are split between Brent, Southwark and Lewisham, so income is equal to expenditure for STS.
- 7.4** Finance, Human Resources & Organisational Development, Legal Service and Democratic Services are all forecasting to breakeven as at Q2.

## Savings and Slippages

- 7.5** A total of £0.7m in savings was planned for Finance and Resources through staff reductions, service transformation, and income generation.
- 7.6** At Q2 all saving are expected to be achieved in 2025/26.

## Risks & Uncertainties

- 7.7** In recent years there has been a pressure in the Insurance service due to the changes to schools' insurance, but also the cost of insurance due to



claims for injuries and vehicle damage relating to footways and highways. These types of claims have seen increases, so could lead to cost increases if not addressed.

- 7.8** Improved recruitment and the realignment of staff in Legal Services is expected to address previous cost pressures around the use of agency and specialist staff. This will be monitored to ensure that is operating as expected and pressures can be managed.

## **8.0 Residents and Housing Services**

Table 12: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Residents and Housing Services

<b>Residents and Housing Services</b>	<b>Budget (£m)</b>	<b>Forecast (£m)</b>	<b>Overspend /(Underspend) (£m)</b>
Housing Needs and Support	13.0	18.0	5.0
Housing Partnership and Tenant Engagement	2.3	2.3	0.0
Private Housing Services	0.2	0.2	0.0
Residents Services	15.2	15.2	0.0
Housing and Resident Services Corporate Director	0.4	0.4	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>5.0</b>

### **Summary**

- 8.1** The Residents and Housing Service department is currently forecasting a possible £5m overspend for the financial year 2025/26 as significant pressures continue to be experienced by this directorate, largely in the Housing Needs and Support service.
- 8.2** The Housing Needs and Support budget overspent by £15.3m in 2024/25 due to an extremely high level of demand for this service and a lack of affordable Private Rented Sector (PRS) offers. In 2025/26, with an additional £3.4m funding allocated through the main Homelessness Prevention Grant and £12.6m of growth built into the base budget, there is an increase of £15m in the service budget in comparison to the previous financial year to deal with continuous pressures and demand. However, the demand continues to grow and the associated costs are high. Assuming the current monthly net expenditure continues at the same rate until the end of the year, total costs for the financial year could reach £18m, resulting in a £5m overspend.
- 8.3** The current average net cost of a household is £15k in Stage 1 accommodation. If 100 households were placed in social housing units or a homelessness duty was relieved through the PRS, with a total cost

avoidance of £15k per household over a 12-month period, the overall cost avoidance would be approximately £1.5m, reinforcing the importance of new and alternative supply as a key mitigation.

**8.4** If a household is moving out of a leased TA unit into the new council accommodation, then the void will be used to decant a family from Stage 1. However, if there is less than six months left on the lease, and the owner does not renew, which has been the case as more landlords are leaving the PRS market, a hand back will be required. Therefore, there is no void to use for a decant resulting in no cost avoidance.

**8.5** The service is undertaking several proactive interventions and projects focusing on increasing the supply and finding alternative arrangements for clients in the most expensive placements in order to mitigate the pressures. Although it is important to note that the overarching budgetary pressure from homelessness may not be significantly alleviated by these potential savings, as they are not immediately cashable against the backdrop of ongoing pressures and ongoing demand for the service.

## Demand

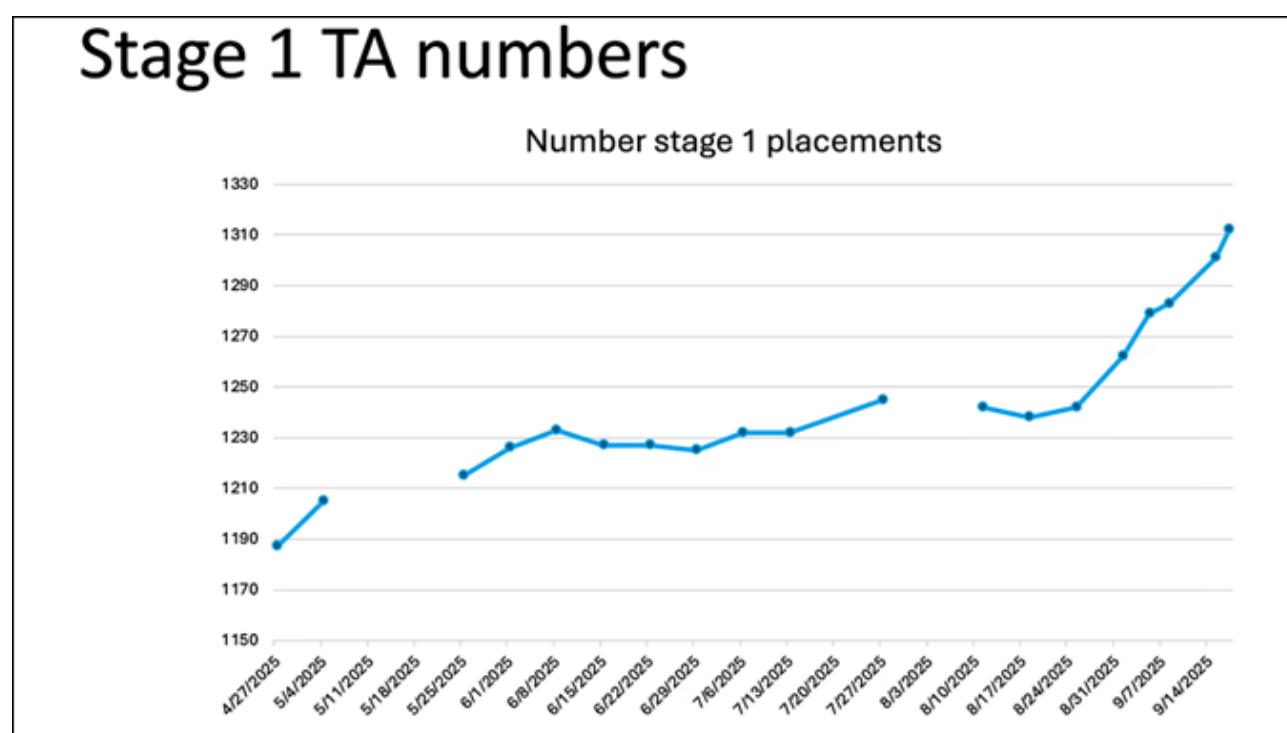
Cost per Night (£)*	Number of Households as @08/07/2025	Number of Households as @03/09/2025	% change
300	0	0	n/a
250	0	0	n/a
225	0	0	n/a
180 - 200	0	0	n/a
150 - 175	63	52	-17%
100 - 149	189	206	+9%
70-99	262	304	+16%
50-69	397	417	+5%
35-49	246	228	-7%
<35	72	73	+1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,229</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>+4%</b>

*\*To note that the table above illustrates the total cost per night for a household rather than the cost per room. The cheaper rooms are smaller rooms, normally only suitable for one or two people. Therefore, it is only smaller households that can be accommodated in one room, whereas the larger families, where a large proportion of the demand is, need to be provided with multiple rooms, leading to a higher nightly cost overall.*

**8.6** As illustrated above, the total number of households in B&B accommodation in the first week of September was 1,280, a 4% increase in comparison to the beginning of July. Officers have ensured all households have been decanted from the most expensive £180 to £300 per night rooms and there

has been a 17% decrease in the £150 - £175 per night group. However, there has been an increase in the use of rooms costing between £50 and £149 per night. In addition, the service is focusing on maximising spare capacity in the lower £35-£49 per night B&Bs when the opportunity presents itself. Officers negotiate the price of individual rooms to get the best price possible and are maximising the use of the lower priced B&B's, wherever possible.

- 8.7** There has been an overall increase of 8% (98 Households) in the use of B&B accommodation since the beginning of the financial year. While this represents a slower rate of growth compared to previous periods, the substantial increases seen in the previous financial years have resulted in a significantly high baseline of households in Stage 1 accommodation, along with increases in the nightly rate from current B&B providers, which remains a concern. The slower rate of growth is a direct result of the recent influx of new build social housing during the summer months that has been available to allocate to homeless households. In the first few weeks of September, the number of households has increased further by 3%.



- 8.8** The Council is expecting 899 new properties to be added to its portfolio during 2025/26 and 2026/27 as part of the capital programme. These are mostly HRA properties, some of which may house people in temporary accommodation, depending on allocations, therefore alleviating pressures on this service. Most recently, of the 66 social housing allocations made to homeless households from the Clearwater properties, 26 were direct offers targeting individuals in the most expensive forms of temporary accommodation. These households were prioritised based on their placement in higher priority bands (A and B), with the aim of reducing overall

accommodation costs. The remaining 40 properties were allocated through Locata via the Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) system. These were offered to households who submitted bids and are in the highest priority banding, with allocations made in order of longest waiting time. The absence of mandatory auto-allocations for households in the highest priority bands within the Locata system continues to be a limiting factor in managing housing demand effectively. The options for implementing this approach are being explored. An annual cost saving of approximately £1m can be achieved on stage 1 accommodation as a result, a £0.6m part-year saving for 2025/26.

- 8.9** If the remaining social housing homes within the current pipeline are made available with an average occupancy of 3 months during the financial year and used to target the households in the most expensive forms of temporary accommodation, this could result in a cost avoidance of circa £2.3m in 2025/26. However, due to the increasing level of demand, the number of households in TA and the associated costs, there is a risk that this benefit could be counterbalanced.

### **New Supply of Temporary Accommodation & PRS**

- 8.10** The increase in supply for new temporary accommodation is achieved by seeking new accommodation via acquisition or leasing.

#### Acquisitions

- 8.11** Two grant-funded programmes are currently supporting the delivery of temporary accommodation: the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), which aims to deliver 35 units for temporary accommodation alongside resettlement homes, and the Council Homes Acquisition Programme (CHAP). Acquisitions under the LAHF programme have been more viable, with an average grant offer of £226k per unit, compared to £95k under CHAP.
- 8.12** While 22 properties have been successfully acquired under the LAHF programme, the transition to bringing these homes into active use has progressed more slowly than anticipated. Following acquisition, some properties have remained vacant due to a combination of process-related delays and timing constraints associated with the utilisation of grant funding. This has led to further pressures on temporary accommodation provision into 2025/26, as households remain in B&B accommodation awaiting move-on opportunities. To mitigate this going forward, the team are implementing strengthened reporting and monitoring arrangements and are reviewing end-to-end processes to support a timelier progression from acquisition to occupancy.

#### Leasing

- 8.13** While various leasing options continue to be assessed to secure cost-effective nightly paid placements, progress in delivering new supply through this route has been limited. Since the completion of the 45 unit lease at Manor Park in March 2023, few opportunities have met the Council's affordability criteria. Negotiations for the Igar Hotel to provide 40 units (an increase of 5 units plus securing preferential cost) have experienced significant delays due to issues with the counterparty's solicitors, though the arrangement is now in its final stages. A new lease has recently been completed for the Best Western, which is expected to deliver 192 units from April 2026. For 25/26 the additional supply of 5 units provides minimal cost avoidance. To help accelerate progress and strengthen commercial negotiations, Greenlight Commercial & Consulting have been engaged to support this workstream.

#### PRS - I4B Holdings Ltd Acquisitions

- 8.14** I4B continue with an acquisitions programme and are on track to deliver 15 street property acquisitions to allow for discharge of duty to households from the housing waiting list into PRS. They regularly review the viability of S106 acquisition opportunities and new build/block purchases which could provide significant numbers of accommodation for the company. This route continues to provide steady investment in cost avoidance measures to mitigate our housing waiting list which currently saves the Council circa £4m per annum.

#### **Risks and uncertainties**

- 8.15** Housing Needs and Support continues to represent the most significant area of within for the department. This is primarily driven by an exceptionally high and sustained level of demand for housing services and emergency accommodation, a challenge that is experienced nationally but particularly acute within London. As at the end of 2024/25, the total demand for homeless support services in Brent stood at 6,281 households, comprising of 3,538 single individuals and 2,743 families. On average, this equates to approximately 121 new applications being submitted each week, underscoring the ongoing pressure on local homelessness services. While this level of demand reflects a 14% decrease compared to the 7,300 applications recorded during the 2023/24 period, the need for housing support and associated costs remain elevated. Despite the reduction in overall households, the volume of individuals and families requiring assistance continues to place considerable strain on resources, leading to sustained high costs for the provision of services. The total number of applications in 2025/26 is projected to reach approximately 6,862. This is in line with the amount received in 2024/25. Demand from families has remained stable, showing little to no change from previous levels. This divergence in demand patterns may have implications for resource allocation and budgeting, as family cases often require different levels and types of

support compared to single-person applications. The new Renters Reform legislation comes into effect in October 2025 which means more landlords will be exiting the private rented sector market, and serving notices, resulting in a possible increase of homeless applications. Projections will be updated once more data becomes available on the impact of the legislation. In comparison to 2023/24, there was a reduction in applications which was predominantly driven by a decline in applications from single individuals.

- 8.16** London Councils conduct ongoing analysis and benchmarking against peer authorities to provide insight into the housing situation across the capital. Their latest findings indicate that housing pressures are escalating significantly beyond budgeted projections. Specifically, Councils' net deficits on homelessness service expenditures are forecasted to increase by at least £170m (18.9%) in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25. Brent, in particular, has experienced a considerable 15% rise in its deficit between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. In March 2025, the total monthly expenditure on temporary accommodation (TA) across London reached £196m, marking a significant 86% increase compared to the same month in the previous year. During this period, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation rose by 13%.
- 8.17** Given that these challenges are experienced across London, the availability of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) and annex accommodation is severely limited throughout the capital. This shortage of suitable accommodation is driving reliance on higher-cost providers and, in some cases, placements outside of Brent. Such arrangements not only increase financial pressures due to elevated accommodation costs but also impose additional burdens on families, including increased travel expenses for children attending schools in Brent.
- 8.18** The supply of settled TA properties, leased from private landlords and intended to transition families out of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) and annex accommodation, has also declined. This reduction is primarily driven by a decrease in the procurement of new properties under Private Sector Leasing (PSL) schemes, coupled with landlords opting not to renew leases on existing properties upon expiration.
- 8.19** Findings from London Councils indicate that the PRS in London is being impacted by multiple factors contributing to a decline in the availability of rental properties. While demand for housing continues to rise, the overall supply across the market is contracting. Increased dependence on the PRS to accommodate lower-income households, combined with tightening housing benefit provisions, is further limiting affordability and availability of rental properties. Supply-side pressures such as changes in taxation, rising interest rates, and uncertainties surrounding future regulatory frameworks are notably constraining the supply of lower-end PRS properties. According

to the Office for National Statistics covering April 2025 average private rents across the UK increased by 2.7% in the 12 months. Rent inflation was highest in London at 8.4%.

- 8.20** A targeted programme of work has been established to address and contain the projected overspend. Multiple workstreams have been initiated, focusing on improving the affordability of temporary accommodation and exploring new and alternative housing supply options. Council officers are proactively renegotiating contract prices and identifying alternative solutions to relocate some of the highest-cost cases, with the objective of reducing overall expenditure within the Housing Needs service. Officers continue to rigorously assess and manage homelessness applications to prevent or relieve demand where possible. In the 2024/25 financial year, 51% of homelessness approaches were successfully prevented or relieved.
- 8.21** In the 2025/26 financial year, i4B is continuing its street property acquisition programme with an initial target of acquiring 15 homes. i4B, a housing company wholly owned by Brent Council, was established to acquire, let, and manage a portfolio of affordable, high-quality PRS properties. These properties are leased to homeless families at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, enabling the Council to prevent or discharge homelessness duties, thereby reducing reliance on temporary accommodation and associated costs while ensuring families have access to secure and responsible landlords. i4B remains self-financing, with the current portfolio generating annual savings in temporary accommodation costs. This self-financing portfolio generates annual savings exceeding £6m by reducing reliance on temporary accommodation. While new builds and acquisitions alone will not fully resolve the homelessness challenge, the Council is actively utilising its available resources and powers to expand housing supply. Any additional supply secured through i4B will contribute to mitigating the risk of overspending and help manage future housing costs.
- 8.22** In addition, supported exempt accommodation properties continue to create financial pressures for the Council and represent a budgetary risk for 2025/26. Unlike other landlords, providers of supported exempt accommodation are not bound by Local Housing Allowance (LHA) caps and can charge higher rents once they demonstrate that support services are being provided. Housing Benefit subsidy levels depend on Rent Officer determinations, which are based on the rent claimed by providers. This issue reflects a national challenge, highlighting the need for clearer regulation regarding the criteria that providers must meet to qualify as Supported Exempt Accommodation. Greater clarity on what constitutes minimal care would enable a more consistent approach to assessing individual support needs across the sector. Historically, costs associated with supported exempt accommodation have not posed a significant budgetary pressure for the Council and have been managed within corporate central budgets.

However, an overspend of £4m occurred in 2024/25 and this area of spend being carefully monitored. Based on the most recent data available up to week 17, the forecast overspend for 2025/26 is £1.8m.

- 8.23** A dedicated working group has been established within the Council with the objective of minimising opportunities for exploitative landlords to enter the Supported Exempt Accommodation market. The group has developed a clear strategy outlining the Council's processes for reviewing both new landlords seeking to join this market and those already operating within it. Senior managers have met with the providers with the greatest subsidy loss to the council to discuss options to reduce this loss. The reviews process will also assess individuals' support care needs and verify that providers are delivering the appropriate level of care. This strategy and reviews process should bring the cost of SEA under control and, in time, should lead to cost avoidance and/or savings. A consultation on the implementation of the Supported Exempt Accommodation Act was launched in February 2025 seeking views on plans to implement measures set out in the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and on the government's proposal to introduce a locally led licensing regime for supported housing across England, and new National Supported Housing Standards for the support provided. Brent Council submitted a substantial response to this outlining the Council's broad support for the Act and areas where it could go further. As the Government analyses the responses to the consultation on standards and licensing, the Council is proactively preparing to develop and implement the new licensing team. At the same time, the Council continues to make sure its activities and strategies remain aligned with emerging regulatory requirements.

## **Savings and Slippages**

- 8.24** A total of £0.9m in savings is planned to be delivered from the department's budgets in 2025/26. The main savings are expected from restructures, digital projects and income generation opportunities. The department is currently anticipating that all savings will be achieved in full.

## **Summary of Key Assumptions**

Table 13: Summary of key assumptions in forecast for Residents and Housing Services

<b>Key Assumption</b>	<b>Downside if worse</b>	<b>Upside if better</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
The additional number of homeless	Each person costs on average £397 per week to	Faster progress on homeless	The service is focusing on moving homeless



people can be managed within the existing forecast.	accommodate, therefore any further increases in demand would result in a circa £0.1m per quarter for every 20 people.	pathways or any decrease in demand will reduce expenditure by £397 per week per person.	clients along the various pathways.  Various project workstreams are focusing on sourcing additional housing supply to alleviate some of the pressures.
Rent collection rates for the Housing Needs service will not fall below the anticipated level.	A 5% worsening in the collection rate will cost £1m per quarter	A 5% improvement in the collection rate will recover £1m.per quarter	Collection rates are being closely monitored and investigations into the drivers for the movements in the collection rates are ongoing.
Other inflation-linked costs can be contained within existing budgets.	A 3% increase in costs above budgetary assumptions could cost an additional £0.8m per annum	A 3% cost reduction in costs would result in a circa £0.8m saving for the year.	The department continues looking for best way to achieve value for money, utilising the most efficient procurement and service delivery options and negotiations.

## 9.0 Central items

### Collection Fund – Council Tax

- 9.1** The net collectible amount for Council Tax for 2025/26 (after exemptions, discounts and Council Tax Support) as at 31 August 2025 is £241.3m. As at the end of August 2025, the amount collected was 43.2%, which is 0.1% lower than the amount collected in the same period in 2024/25, and 0.1% lower than the amount collected in the same period in 2023/24.
- 9.2** The service have set an in-year target for 2025/26 of 92.5% collection of Council Tax, which is an increase of 1.3% on the 91.2% achieved in 2024/25. Based on the collection in the year to date, a similar or lower level of collection on the current year liabilities can be expected at the end of 2025/26, compared to previous years, meaning that improvements are

required to collection across the remainder of this financial year in order to meet this target.

- 9.3** With this in mind and for the need for significant improvement, an external review of Council Tax collection has been completed. The review has identified areas within the service where changes can be delivered to achieve potential savings and benefits. The Council is currently developing internal improvement plans on the back of the review. Additional capacity has been provided within the service, meaning that the numbers of reminder notices and summons have been sent out in higher numbers in order to maximise collection.
- 9.4** At the meeting of Full Council on 27 February 2025, alongside the budget for 2025/26, an amended Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme from 1 April 2025 was approved. This introduced a standard 35% minimum payment for working age households and applied a percentage reduction to each of the income bands.
- 9.5** The collection rate at 31 August 2025 for those on CTS of working age is 36.54%, with 75% having made a payment toward the 2025/26 council tax. The numbers making payment have increased month on month following the dispatch of soft reminders in May and 7,134 formal reminders sent out in June 2025. Of these, 3,671 with a value exceeding £2m have been issued with a summons as no payment has been received following the formal reminder. At the summons hearing on 14 August the Council obtained 3,564 liability orders. For cases where deductions from benefits (AOB) have been set up to reduce the balances, the collection will be very slow and likely means that these individuals will carry forward significant arrears into 2026/27.
- 9.6** To offset the impact of the changes on the recipients of CTS, a Hardship Fund was agreed as part of the 2025/26 budget, providing £1.5m of support, £0.4m of which was funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA). As of 31 Aug 2025, 1,277 applications have been received for support from this fund, but only 67 (5%) have been approved. This is mainly because through open banking and credit checks it can be seen that the level of council tax should be affordable. The dispatch of recovery notices have generated more applications in this area. It should also be noted that assessments have been done in an average of 8 days from receipt, so decisions are made in a timely manner.
- 9.7** Collection continues beyond the end of the financial year, but a lower in-year collection target increases the pressure on the debt recovery team to collect more of that debt and achieve the 97% long-term collection that has been assumed as a part of Brent's revenue budget. Evidence suggests that debt becomes much harder to collect after two years have passed, so the

continued low in-year collection of Council Tax is a key risk to the Council's financial resilience in the medium term.

- 9.8** Any budget gap arising from reduced expectations for collection will have to be met either from reserves in the short term or from additional budget savings. The Council has already committed to a challenging programme of savings across 2025/26, with further savings of £30m to be delivered between 2026/27 and 2028/29 and the reserves have been depleted in recent years due to high inflation and demographic pressures. The Budget for 2025/26 approved by Full Council in February 2025, included a reduction in the assumed collection of Council Tax from 97.5% to 97%, but did not include any reductions in the growth in the taxbase. Ongoing low collection of Council Tax may result in a permanent reduction in resources for the Council through a further reduction in the taxbase used for budgeting purposes.

### **Collection Fund – Business Rates**

- 9.9** The budgeted net collectable amount for Business Rates (NNDR) for 2025/26 is £149.8m (after exemptions, reliefs and discounts). This was based on the forecast used for the NNDR1 form in January 2025 and has increased by 6.9% from £140.1m in 2024/25. This increase is largely driven by the reduction in Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief from 75% to 40% from 1 April 2025.
- 9.10** The actual net collectible amount for NNDR as at 31 August 2025 is £146.5m, a reduction of £3.3m from the budget in January 2025. This is driven by additional empty properties and reductions in the gross rates payable by businesses. Further adjustments to this may occur during the year due to increases or reductions in the number of non-domestic properties and successful appeals against rateable values.
- 9.11** Any movement in the net collectible amount for NNDR does not directly affect the General Fund in the current financial year as the overall resources that the Council receives from the Business Rates retention system are determined in the Local Government Finance Settlement. However, where the actual income to the Collection Fund is different to the budgeted amount, Brent's share of the resulting surplus or deficit estimated in January is distributed to or from the General Fund in the following financial year.
- 9.12** The reduction in business rates income resulting from the additional empty property relief is an unfunded relief, meaning that this will result in a deficit that will affect the 2026/27 budget. However, the Council holds a Collection Fund reserve for the purpose of smoothing out any surpluses/deficits on the

Collection Fund. It is expected that this deficit will be contained within the available reserve.

- 9.13** As of 31 August 2025, the amount collected for NNDR was 43.7%, which is in line with the amount collected in the same period in 2024/25 (43.7%). Collection in 2024/25 was 93.4%, which remains lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the service is targeting a return to 94.5% in-year collection in 2025/26. As of 31 August 2025, the collection is 0.8% down on the profiled target.
- 9.14** Collection performance is affected by large scale business rates assumed avoidance schemes amounting to £1.1m. The Home Office's recent decision to reject an application for change of use to a "place of religious worship" is a positive outcome in regards of recovery action options available to the Council. The decisions of other recent cases heard by the courts will also assist the Council in promptly identifying further attempts by agents in avoiding NNDR liability.
- 9.15** Based on historical data, the long-term collection target for NNDR is 98%. Historically, collection of arrears becomes significantly more difficult with each year that passes after the debt has been raised. Therefore, to achieve the long-term collection target, a marked improvement in the Council's collection of arrears must be seen quickly to make up for the lower expectations for in-year collection. It is also important for the Council to continue to make improvements to in-year collection, as this remains the best way of achieving the long-term target.
- 9.16** Furthermore, there remain a number of factors present in the economy which could have a negative impact on the ability of businesses to pay their Business Rates, such as high interest rates, the increase to employer's national insurance contributions and the reduction in consumer spending power as a result of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.
- 9.17** One key area of potential concern is the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) industry, which was particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic relief was provided to RHL businesses at 75% of the liability. In 2025/26, this relief has been reduced to 40% of the liability, more than doubling the amount of business rates these businesses must pay. The government has stated its intention to introduce two new multipliers from 2026/27, which will formalise the lower 40% relief as part of the business rates system. The impact of this change on the affected businesses is being monitored closely and further updates will be provided in future reports.

### **Collection Fund – Business Rates Discretionary Rate Reliefs**

- 9.18** The Council has the discretion to award rate relief to charities or non-profitmaking bodies. It also has the discretion to remit an individual National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) liability in whole or in part on the grounds of hardship.
- 9.19** Under the Business Rates Retention System, a percentage of the income from business rates is retained by Brent Council and the GLA. For 2025/26, the retained share in London is 67%, of which Brent Council's share is 30%. The total cost of awarding discretionary relief to the 6 organisations detailed in Table 14 is £7,209.53 for 2025/26.

Table 14: Discretionary business rates relief to be awarded

Name of person / business	Type	Level of award	Liability 2025/26	Cost to Brent at 30%
Punchdrunk Enrichment Ltd	Charity	20%	£7,714.50	£2,314.35
Jesus is the Lord Deliverance Ministry	Charity	20%	£5,364.25	£1,609.27
Markaz us-Sunnah CIO	Charity	20%	£2,644.70	£793.41
Islamia Primary School	Voluntary Aided	20%	£5,039.90	£1,511.97
Church of God (Seventh Day) West Hendon Ltd	Charity	20%	£1,746.50	£523.95
IQRAA Foundation	Charity	20%	£1,521.95	£456.58
			<b>£24,031.80</b>	<b>£7,209.53</b>

## Savings

- 9.20** The 2025/26 budget, agreed at Full Council on 27 February 2025, included an £8.9m savings target, of which £4.4m had been agreed in February 2024. Appendix A sets out the progress in delivery against this savings target and any mitigating actions. Of the savings for 2025/26, at quarter 2, 81% of these are on track to be fully delivered (87% at quarter 1), which equates to delivering £7.2m of the £8.9m budgeted savings required. Since quarter 1, the number of savings which are not on target to be fully delivered has increased to 4 (up 1), with an increase in the potential budget gap of £0.5m. For all of these savings, mitigation plans are currently being developed.

## Virements

- 9.21** Table 15 shows the virements and adjustments which have been entered to adjust the budgets at Corporate Directorate level between the budget approved at Full Council in February 2025 and 30 April 2025. Cabinet are recommended to approve these virements.

Table 15: Virements and adjustments in 2025/26 budget between 30.04.2025 and 31.07.2025

	<b>2025/26 In-Year Budget at 30.04.20 25</b>	<b>In-year growth</b>	<b>Transfer of functions between services</b>	<b>Technical Adjustments</b>	<b>2025/26 In-Year Budget at 31.07.2025</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Service Reform and Strategy</b>	180.5	1.1	(0.2)	0.1	181.5
<b>Children, Young People and Community Development</b>	95.6	0.2	0.2	0.0	96.0
<b>Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</b>	35.7	0.0	(0.3)	0.0	35.4
<b>Finance and Resources</b>	30.3	0.1	0.6	0.7	31.7
<b>Residents and Housing Services</b>	30.9	0.0	(0.4)	0.6	31.1
<b>Central Items</b>	(373.0)	(1.4)	0.1	(1.4)	(375.7)
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

- 9.22** In-year growth items are budget movements from the Central Items budget to Departmental budgets which were not actioned at the start of the financial year. The table above includes the following in-year growth items added from May to July 2025:
- Permanent funding for Microsoft Unified support in the Service Reform and Strategy directorate (£39k)

- Permanent funding for a new post in the Finance and Resources directorate (£0.1m)
- Temporary funding for the Communications team in the Service Reform and Strategy directorate to deliver Borough Plan initiatives (£0.6m)
- Temporary funding for the implementation of the Triple Value Impact programme in the Service Reform and Strategy directorate (£0.3m)
- Temporary funding for Vale Farm due to reduction in management fee in the Service Reform and Strategy directorate (£0.2m)
- Temporary funding for Home to School transport service improvements following approval of a business case in Children, Young People and Community Development directorate (£0.1m)
- Temporary funding for a fixed-term post in the Finance and Resources directorate (£0.1m)

**9.23** Transfers of functions between services are budget movements between Corporate Directorates, which occur when a department is moved from one service to the other. The virement ensures that the department and the related budget remain together. The table above includes the following transfer of functions between services items added from May to July 2025:

- Transfer of Strategic Support budget from the Service Reform and Strategy directorate to the Finance and Resources directorate (£0.3m)
- Transfer of staffing budget in respect of the Council's housing companies (I4B and First Wave Housing) from the Residents and Housing Services directorate to the Service Reform and Strategy directorate (£0.2m)
- Transfer of budgets between directorates following a restructure in the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration directorate (£0.3m). £0.2m to the Children, Young People and Community Development directorate and £0.1m to Central budgets
- Transfer of staff budgets from Housing in the Residents and Housing Services directorate to Legal in the Finance and Resources directorate (£0.2m)

**9.24** Technical adjustments are budget movements resulting from events which are provided for in the MTFS but only confirmed during the year (e.g. pay award), budget movements resulting from changes to processes (e.g. centralisation of budgets) or other budget movements between directorates resulting from changes to the Council's structure. The table above includes the following technical adjustment items added from May to July 2025:

- Permanent adjustments to service budgets following review of budgets subsequent to the budget load (£0.1m to Service Reform and Strategy, £0.2m to Residents and Housing Services and £0.7m to Finance and Resources, funded from Central Budgets (£1.0m)

- Temporary adjustment to the budget for Residents and Housing Services directorate for the expenditure budget in respect of the Greater London Authority's agreed £0.4m contribution to the 2025/26 Council Tax Hardship Fund, introduced to provide additional support with Council Tax bills following the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme implemented on 1 April 2025. This increase confirms a total budget for the 2025/26 Council Tax Support Hardship fund of £1.5m.

## 10.0 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Table 16: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Dedicated Schools Grant by block

Funding Blocks	Overall DSG Funding 2025/26	Forecast Expenditure	Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	125.9	125.9	0.0
High Needs Block	82.1	84.8	2.7
Early Years Block	41.4	41.4	0.0
Central Block	2.4	2.4	0.0
<b>Total DSG</b>	<b>252.0</b>	<b>254.5</b>	<b>2.7</b>

### Summary

- 10.1** At the end of July 2025, the DSG is projecting a £2.7m pressure increasing the current accumulative deficit to £16.3m by the end of this financial year. This includes a projected pressure of £1.3m against the budgets held for educating children in independent day schools and £2.1m against out-of-borough mainstream and special schools' budgets. These pressures are partially offset by a £0.4m underspend in mainstream top-up funding, additional recoupment income of £0.2m and an underspend against the SEN support services of £0.1m. These potential pressures are being closely monitored and, where necessary, will be mitigated against any underspend identified in other funding blocks.
- 10.2** The Council continues to monitor its High Needs Block Deficit Recovery Management Plan, which outlines a series of long-term actions aimed at reducing the cumulative deficit. The plan is overseen by the Corporate Director of CYP CD and the Corporate Director of Finance who coordinates and monitor actions set against the Plan. The Plan is grouped into three themes: a) managing demand, b) increasing the sufficiency of local places



and c) financial management adjustments. A combination of these longer-term recovery actions and anticipated funding increases is expected to achieve a continued reduction in the deficit and new Key Performance Indicators will be agreed to continue to monitor progress in 2025/26.

## **Risk and Uncertainties**

- 10.3** The number of children and young people with EHCPs continues to grow above forecast levels (in July 2025 the number reached 4000 for the first time). Over the years, this has created financial pressures with many authorities holding deficit balances. In addition, the increase in wages due to changes in the employer's national insurance contributions could see independent providers continuing to request high inflationary price increases.
- 10.4** The statutory override set out in the School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2021, which allows local authority to exclude DSG deficits from their broader financial accounts, preventing them from impacting Council's General Fund reserves, was initially scheduled to conclude at the end of 2022/23 financial year. However, recognising the financial challenges faced by local authorities in managing DSG deficits, the government extended the arrangement for an additional three financial years, ending in March 2026. The government has confirmed a further extension of the statutory override to end of March 2028. This protection ensures that overspending in the High Needs Block does not create immediate financial pressure on local budgets, allowing authorities more time to address structural funding challenges.
- 10.5** To mitigate this risk, the Council has a robust DSG deficit management plan, with a strong focus on managing demand, improving the sustainability of provision, and strengthening financial management to reduce the deficit. Alongside this, the outcome of the government's reforms to the SEND system is expected, which is expected to address the level of deficits held by local authorities, as this is a national issue and not unique to Brent.
- 10.6** Depending on the outcomes of the SEND reform, and in the wider context of the Fair Funding review, the Council will continue to develop and, where necessary, strengthen its deficit recovery plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose and responsive to changing circumstances.
- 11.0** **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

Table 17: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for Housing Revenue Account

<b>HRA gross income and expenditure</b>			
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Overspend/ (Underspend)</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>HRA</b>			
<b>Income</b>	(69.9)	(72.9)	<b>(3.0)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	69.9	75.5	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>

## Summary

- 11.1** Budgets for the Housing Management function are contained within the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which has a balanced budget for 2025/26 made up of £69.9m of income matched by expenditure.
- 11.2** The HRA is currently forecasting a £2.6m pressure for 2024/25 financial year, before utilising reserves. Mitigation measures are being implemented to address this shortfall, and reserves have been earmarked to cover the potential deficit at year-end if required. The fund continues to face significant risks and financial challenges in the prevailing fiscal environment.

## Risks and uncertainties

- 11.3** The ongoing high inflationary environment and high interest rates are exerting pressure on both operational and capital costs. Inflation is driving up the price of materials and labour associated with repairs and maintenance, while higher borrowing costs increase the expense of financing new build and improvement programmes. The interest charge for the year is forecast to be £1m higher than initially projected.
- 11.4** The HRA is also contending with elevated demand for repairs and maintenance services. A large volume of complex repairs, as well as increased instances of issues such as damp and mould, are placing substantial strain on budgeted resources. This heightened requirement for responsive maintenance is expected to continue throughout the year, leading to cost pressures beyond original estimates. Further adding to budgetary uncertainty is the recent implementation of new contracts for repairs and maintenance services. As these contracts are still in the early stages of embedding, there remains a level of unpredictability around actual costs and service delivery efficiencies, which could impact expenditure forecasts. It is

currently projected that repair and maintenance budgets could be overspent by £5m in 2025/26.

- 11.6** Further pressures stem from the capital programme, where insufficient government funding has been allocated to meet key environmental priorities and statutory requirements, including carbon reduction initiatives and fire safety requirements for housing stock. The lack of adequate financial support to address these priorities places additional strain on the HRA's capital resources, complicating efforts to invest in sustainable and energy-efficient improvements while balancing other essential investment needs.
- 11.7** In addition, the financial and operational risks associated with adding 428 properties to the housing portfolio within the financial year must be acknowledged. Growth in the portfolio can strain existing management and maintenance resources, potentially leading to increased operational costs and challenges in delivering consistent service quality. Effective planning and resource allocation are critical to mitigating these risks and ensuring that portfolio expansion supports long-term financial sustainability. A £0.5m pressure on staffing budgets is projected for 2025/26 due to additional resources required to deal with lettings, maintenance and other administrative tasks.
- 11.8** Effective management of rent debt levels is also crucial to maintaining the HRA's overall financial health. Rising rent arrears increase the risk of bad debt provisions, which directly impact revenue streams and the Council's ability to fund essential services and maintenance. Persistent or growing rent debt strains financial planning and necessitate higher bad debt write-offs, thereby affecting the HRA's budgetary position. Consequently, robust ethical debt recovery processes and proactive tenant engagement are essential to minimising rent arrears and safeguarding the financial stability of the housing service. It is currently anticipated that the allowance for impairment will need to increase by £1m more than initially projected. The service are exploring various options to mitigate this pressure, including deploying debt collection agencies and software to increase collection rates.
- 11.9** As a result of the Council's self-referral, the required remediation programme represents a significant risk to the HRA and results in financial pressures associated with addressing the identified compliance issues. Specialists are currently assessing the situation and developing a recovery plan, with anticipated costs yet to be detailed, however it is projected that £1m will be spent on the remediation programme in 2025/26.
- 11.10** Other additional pressures on various budgets across the fund, such as decants, council tax charges, insurance and pest control are projected to result in a further £1.1m pressure in 2025/26.

- 11.11** An additional £3m in rental income beyond budgetary expectations is expected to be achieved in 2025/26, partially offsetting the budgetary pressures outlined above. As part of the Council's capital programme, 899 properties are coming on stream during 2025/26 and 2026/27, most of which are HRA properties. 428 new units have already been added to the HRA portfolio, generating additional rental income.
- 11.12** The 2025/26 budget had anticipated a £4m revenue contribution towards capital expenditure. However, due to the current financial pressures on the fund, this contribution is no longer projected to be made. While this may result in increased borrowing costs, it frees up £4m to help alleviate revenue budget pressures. Consequently, the overall projected deficit for the year is forecast to be £2.6m.
- 11.13** While the authority's reserves currently stand at the target level of 5% of total turnover, this figure remains relatively low compared to the Council's peers. This comparatively smaller reserve base presents a financial risk, limiting the Council's capacity to respond effectively to unforeseen financial pressures or emergencies. Strengthening reserve levels will be important to enhance financial resilience and ensure greater flexibility in managing future budgetary challenges.
- 11.14** These risks are being continuously monitored and reflected in the HRA Business Plan and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

## **12.0 Capital Programme**

- 12.1** As at the end of July, the Capital Programme is reporting a (£17.4m) variance made up of £1.9m underspend and £15.5m slippage against the revised budget of £353.1m. The forecast position across the programme is still being refined as part of ongoing programme monitoring and review. Each Board continues to assess its portfolio, with key risks including delivery timelines, market conditions, and funding dependencies. These are being actively managed through regular oversight and adjustments to ensure the programme remains aligned with strategic priorities and delivery expectations.

Table 18: 2025/26 Quarter 2 forecast for the Capital Programme

Portfolio / Programme	Original Budget 2025/26	Revised Budget 2025/26	Current Forecast	FY Variance	
				(Underspend)/ Overspend	(Slippage)/ Brought Forward

	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Corporate Landlord	9.7	11.9	11.0	(0)	(0.9)
Housing - GF	114.1	103.5	99.4	(4.1)	0.0
Housing - HRA	50.4	30.1	33.7	3.3	0.3
Public Realm	17.8	36.0	34.9	(0.1)	(1.0)
Regeneration	106.5	111.0	102.3	0.0	(8.7)
CYP & Community Development	17.1	26.1	23.1	0.0	(3.0)
South Kilburn	28.0	31.0	31.0	(0.9)	0.9
St Raphael's	3.2	3.5	0.4	0.0	(3.1)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>346.8</b>	<b>353.1</b>	<b>335.8</b>	<b>(1.9)</b>	<b>(15.5)</b>

## Budget Additions

**12.2** The revised budget includes the following additions:

- An uplift of the Housing General Fund capital budget for the £40m loan facility to I4B to support its street property acquisition programme that Full Council approved as part of 2024/25 budget setting.
- Additional budget of £1.0m for the Housing HRA capital budget consisting of £0.5m for the Northgate Upgrade and £0.5m for staff capitalisation, primarily for the major repairs team. This capital budget uplift will be funded from borrowing with the interest costs covered by the revenue savings from capitalising these costs.
- Uplift of the Queen's Park Gyratory and Queen's Park and Cullen development budgets to reflect that Brent has entered into an agreement with the GLA to apply £4.4m Housing Infrastructure Funding grant to the project including reimbursement of the costs of the Falcon Pub.
- Following further detailed review of South Kilburn budgets ahead of the SDP procurement, £7.3m has been vired from the Regeneration contingency budget to the Neville, Winterleys, Carlton House and Carlton Hall (£3.9m), Carlton and Granville (£2.4m) and other South Kilburn projects (£0.9m) to bring those budgets in line with contractually agreed costs.

**12.3** The revised capital budget of £353.1m includes new projects approved by Cabinet since Q1 including £13.8m for roads, CCTV and parks (£0.7m of the SCIL award is considered revenue). Since Q1, the Infrastructure and Regeneration Board has approved additional SCIL of £0.4m for the fit outs

of Picture Palace (£0.2m) and Roy Smith House community centre under the new SCIL governance arrangements. Other changes from the original budget to the revised budget include brought forward balances from prior year slippage or accelerated spend, reprofiling, removal of budget for schemes not progressing and budget corrections for previously approved schemes.

### **Corporate Landlord**

- 12.4** The Corporate Landlord Board is responsible for overseeing the strategic management and investment in the Civic Centre, Digital Strategy, Libraries and other Council properties. There is a forecast variance of (£0.9m) due to slippage. The largest areas of forecast slippage are £0.5m on Grove Park Pavilion Nursery as officers assess the feasibility of refurbishment options and £0.4m on Digital Strategy due to delays with the commencement of the data lake upgrade programme as further development was required.

### **Housing**

- 12.5** The Housing General Fund is forecasting a variance of (£4.1m) driven by a £4.0m underspend on the Council's LAHF programme. The LAHF scheme provides funding for Brent to acquire local properties for temporary accommodation and resettlement to reduce pressure on future revenue housing budgets. The programme is on track to meet the target 42 properties by the end of the year (23 have already been purchased and 13 are in conveyancing) but with a lower unit mix than the original target. Further underspend has been caused by savings against the price cap. However, refurbishing the properties has taken longer than anticipated meaning that the programme has not had as significant impact on 2025/26 temporary accommodation costs as hoped for.
- 12.6** 2025/26 is a critical year for the Council's new home's programme with 889 new affordable homes expected to complete this year. Most projects remain on budget apart from Clock Cottages, which has a £0.8m overspend over the life of the project. A safeguarding bid for additional grant has been submitted to the GLA with an outcome expected shortly. The budget for Claire Court / Watling Gardens has been re-profiled with £7.2m brought into 2025/26 from 2026/27 reflecting a faster than initially forecast completion timetable. On the other hand, £15.2m of the Edgware Road budget for 2025/26 has been reprofiled to future years following the decision to tender for a new contractor in July.
- 12.7** Rising interest and build costs, as well as the current HRA budget position, make further new build development very challenging from a viability perspective. Officers continue to explore alternative ways of meeting Brent's housing needs.

- 12.8** The Housing HRA is forecasting a variance of £3.6m caused by £0.3m accelerated spend and £3.3m overspend on the Kilburn Square refurbishment project. Officers are exploring value engineering opportunities on the Windmill Court refurbishment as a way of mitigating the impact of this overspend.
- 12.9** The Windmill Court and Granville Homes' budgets have been reprofiled to future years to enable the major repairs team to focus on essential fire safety works following the self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing. The Council has brought in external consultants to review the major repairs programme and ensure that budget is allocated to the most critical areas. Officers are exploring ways of increasing capital available for major repairs without increasing borrowing, which would put more pressure on HRA reserves.

### **Regeneration**

- 12.10** Brent's Regeneration programme plays a vital role in delivering new homes, infrastructure, and community assets that support inclusive growth and long-term sustainability. The programme is currently forecasting a variance of (£8.7m) made up largely of slippage. £7.5m of slippage relates to Wembley Housing Zones due to delays in signing the new building contract for Ujima House in December 2024. £1.0m of slippage relates to the Neasden regeneration project, because TfL have requested a longer timeframe for technical modelling than the original bid timeline.

### **South Kilburn**

- 12.11** The key focus of the South Kilburn regeneration programme at the current time is the procurement of a Single Delivery Partner (SDP). The Council is reviewing the initial bids, and the intention is to invite three bidders to interview. The SDP model is a new way of the Council delivering a major regeneration programme intended to streamline delivery and improve co-ordination, but depending on a single partner and setting a framework for land receipts in advance also carries substantial risks. Officers are working with external development consultants and the GLA to mitigate these risks.
- 12.12** The programme is currently reporting to budget for 2025/26 but with £0.9m underspend offset by £0.9m accelerated spend. The largest area of accelerated spend is £0.4m for Kilburn Open Space as this project is progressing well following Cabinet's decision to award £4.4m SCIL in December 2024. The underspend is driven by William Dunbar and Saville (£1.4m) and Hereford and Exeter (£0.9m) but as these are SDP sites, there are likely to be significant changes to forecasts as the procurement progresses. Whilst the project is forecasting to budget for 2025/26, there is

a forecast overspend of £2.3m in future years for the Carlton and Granville development of affordable homes and community space due to project delays and disputes with the contractor.

- 12.13** The South Kilburn Energy Network is currently forecasting to budget. However, initial tenders have returned higher than anticipated bids and work is ongoing to review the viability of the scheme and revise capital budgets.

### **Children, Young People and Community Development**

- 12.14** The Children, Young People and Community Development capital programme has a variance of (£3.1m), consisting solely of slippage. Of this £3.1m, £2.5m relates to the Welsh Harp Post-16 Centre because construction will not start until 2026/27 with only design costs in 2025/26. The budget against the Onside Youth Centre has been removed as this project is not going ahead. Officers are working on proposals for alternative projects to improve youth facilities in the Borough.
- 12.15** A key challenge for the CYP capital programme has been the discovery of unforeseen issues such as ground or building condition issues during building works. This has increased the costs of works so Capital Programme Board approved a budget increase of £0.7m for the Schools Asset Management Programme funded by unallocated Basic Needs and Asset Management Programme grants. The same issue is affecting the project to develop additionally resourced provision for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), but these developments are still expected to come within the overall project budget.

### **Public Realm**

- 12.16** The Public Realm Board area focusses on improvements to community infrastructure in Brent such as roads, parks and CCTV. As at Q2, the area is forecasting a variance of (£1.1m) driven by £1.0m of slippage. The biggest contributors are the sports pitch improvements (£0.4m) due to changes in procurement law delaying tendering and Northwick Park Pavillion upgrade (£0.3m) due to health and safety issues that need to be addressed before the upgrade can progress.
- 12.17** Accurate forecasting is always particularly challenging in the Public Realm area because of the large number of relatively small projects, project delivery can be impacted by uncontrollable factors such as the weather, and the uncertainty and complexity of grant funding. A particular challenge in 2025/26 will be ramping up spending at speed following the award of £13.8m SCIL funding for capital projects part way through the year. The total revised budget of £36.0m compares to outturn of £18.1m in 2024/25 showing the extent of the delivery challenge.



## **St Raphael's**

- 12.18** As at Q2, St Raphael's is forecast to spend £0.4m, primarily on public realm improvements, compared to a budget of £3.5m. The cause of the slippage as officers are waiting for the outcome of a revised planning application.

## **Treasury Management Prudential Indicators**

- 12.19** In line with changes to the Prudential Code in 2021, the performance of the Council's treasury and capital activities against the approved prudential indicator for the year are now reported quarterly within these financial reports to members. Details of the performance against the indicators in the first quarter of the financial year and compliance with the limits are provided in Appendix B.

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

- 13.1** There are no stakeholder and ward member consultation arising from this report.

## **14.0 Financial Considerations**

- 14.1** This report sets out the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account, the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Capital Programme, as at Quarter 2 2025/26. Financial implications of agreeing to this report are included within the forecasts provided.

- 14.2** Under the Business Rates Retention System, a percentage of the income from business rates is retained by Brent Council and the GLA. For 2025/26, the retained share in London is 67%, of which Brent Council's share is 30%. The total cost of awarding discretionary relief to the 6 organisations detailed in Table 14 is £7,209.53 for 2025/26.

## **15.0 Legal Considerations**

- 15.1** The law requires that the council must plan to balance its spending plans against resources to avoid a deficit occurring in any year. Members need to be reasonably satisfied that expenditure is being contained within budget and that the savings for the financial year will be achieved, to ensure that income and expenditure balance (Section 28 Local Government Act 2003: the council's Financial Regulation 2.3 Revenue Budget Monitoring, Forecasting and Overspends).

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

**16.1** There are no EDI considerations arising out of this report.

**17.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

**17.1** There are no climate change or environmental considerations arising out of this report.

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

**18.1** There are no HR or property considerations arising out of this report.

**19.0 Communication Considerations**

**19.1** There are no direct communication considerations arising out of this report.

**Report sign off:**

***Minesh Patel***

Corporate Director, Finance and Resources

## Appendix A - MTFs Savings Delivery Tracker 2025/26

Department	Reference	Category	Description	2025/26 (£000)	RAG Status	Comments / Mitigating Actions
Service Reform and Strategy	2024-25 CHW01	Service Transformation	Enabling residents to self-manage their health and well-being, including preventing and reducing the need for care and support through technology so they can stay independent and well in their homes and communities	350	Amber	There is a slippage against the delivery of this saving. Deployment of new technology is scheduled for October 2025 and May 2026 respectively. Mitigating actions to manage this would be to offset the pressures following reviews from Direct Payment Clawbacks.
Service Reform and Strategy	2024-25 CHW02	Service Transformation	Managing demand and complexity of support to 23/24 with a consistent prevention and reablement offer and a focus on Care Act statutory responsibilities including integrated market management	365	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	2024-25 CHW03	Service Transformation	Reducing expenditure in mental health and learning disability including transitions so Brent benchmarks in the middle quartile with comparator authorities	275	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	2025-26 CHW01	Service Transformation	Developing a wider range of day opportunities with partners and communities and reducing building based provision	500	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	2025-26 CHW02	Reduction in provision	Reduction of contract value at 3 year break point for Homeless and ex-offenders	500	Amber	A review is currently underway, however there is a risk that the savings will not be delivered in 2025/26. A mitigation plan is being developed but it is proving to be difficult to reduce activity away from the current contract. Alternative cost reductions are also being explored to mitigate the risk of this slippage.
Service Reform and Strategy	2025-26 CHW03	Service Transformation	Commitment to reducing staffing cost across the Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate	300	Green	On track to be delivered.

Service Reform and Strategy	2024-25 RS01A	Digital	Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all former Resident Services departments (focusing on transactional services) with efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income.	49	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	2024-25 RS02	Digital	Reduction in business support posts through alignment of support functions across former Resident Services directorate, combined with improved forms and integration with back-office systems.	95	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	CHW01 25-26	Service Transformation	Offer reablement service to a wider range of customers, supporting them to remain independent and reduce their reliance on long-term care services.	800	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	CHW02 25-26	Service Transformation	Expand the Shared Lives programme to be able to provide additional respite capacity for individuals with learning disabilities and reduce reliance on residential respite placements.	200	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	CHW03 25-26	Digital	Modernise Adult Social Care Approach to Assessment and Review.	200	Green	On track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	CHW04 25-26	Income generation	Implementation of Telecare Service Charges.	500	Amber	There has been a delay with the implementation of this programme. Charges are due to be introduced on the 1 <sup>st</sup> of October. The service are reducing costs elsewhere to help to mitigate the impact of this slippage.

Service Reform and Strategy	PHRS01 25-26	Restructure	Staffing efficiencies and contract spend within the Shared Technology service	200	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	PHRS02 25-26A	Restructure	Staffing efficiencies within the Communications, Insight and Innovation department	251	Green	250k savings for SRS is on track to be delivered. £65k savings is for B05063 which is now under Finance & Resources.
Service Reform and Strategy	PHRS03 25-26	Income generation	Increasing commercial income generated from The Drum.	100	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	PHRS07 25- 26A	Restructure	Staffing efficiencies within the Communities and Partnerships Department	4	Green	This has been delivered.
Service Reform and Strategy	LG02 25-26	Procurement	Reduction In Car Club costs.	50	Green	This is on track to be delivered but will need to be monitored to ensure the saving materialises.
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>4,739</b>		
Children, Young People and Community Development	2024-25 RS01B	Digital	Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all former Resident Services departments (focusing on transactional services) with efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income.	13	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP01	Reduction in provision	Review the Willow Nursery delivery model to ensure the provision is sustainable without funding from the General Fund	250	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.

Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP02	Service transformation	Reduction in the placement budget for Looked After Children through operating a new residential children's home in Brent	290	Amber	The care home has not opened as planned due to processing delays with Ofsted. To offset this, we are reducing costs in current residential placements and support costs in other placements.
Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP03	Restructure	Reduction in management capacity within Early Help and Localities, through service realignment. This will entail a restructure and HR consultation. This will result in fewer handoffs for families and a more seamless step up and step down. Equivalent of up to 6 FTE. Review will also consider replacement of some social work posts with business support replacements where safe to do so.	330	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP04	Income generation	The proposal is that the Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre could generate further income by selling additional respite bed nights to other local authorities. Income generation. Current income target is £140k. Ensure centre capacity is managed effectively to allow an increase of bed nights sold by an additional 52 nights per annum.	40	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP05	Reduction in provision	To reduce the Family Wellbeing Centre (FWC) support service contract by 10% Contract currently operated by Barnardo's that provides a range of support services for families from the FWCs including general advice and parenting support. Contract expires in November 2024.	64	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	2025-26 CYP06	Income generation	Reduce general fund contribution to commissioned services that support children's school readiness and health and wellbeing through a joint	500	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.

			commissioning approach within the ICP.			
Children, Young People and Community Development	CYP01 25-26	Reduction in provision	LAC and Permanency/FPPP: Reduction in weekend use of the Gordon Brown Centre for care leavers as part of promoting independence work by 50% from £160k to £80k annually	80	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	CYP02 25-26	Reduction in provision	FPPP: Reduction in discretionary spend of when supporting children and families.	300	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	CYP03 25-26	Reduction in provision	Inclusion/Brent Virtual School: Cease the Safe Base Brent offer, which is a Mental Health and Wellbeing support service for care leavers attending higher education.	57	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
Children, Young People and Community Development	PHRS07 25-26B	Restructure	Staffing efficiencies within the Communities and Partnerships Department.	71	Green	Savings on track to be delivered.
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>1,995</b>		
Residents and Housing Services	2024-25 RS01D	Digital	Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all former Resident Services departments (focusing on transactional services) with	55	Green	On track to be delivered

			efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income			
Residents and Housing Services	2024-25 RS06	Restructure	Libraries and Heritage realignment of managerial responsibilities and posts. The restructure will focus on maximising income generation and delivering savings in 2025/26.	48	Green	On track to be delivered
Residents and Housing Services	2024-25 RS08A	Digital	To not recruit to vacant posts / move to digital – self-service / reduction in usage of Resilience Contract	33	Green	On track to be delivered
Residents and Housing Services	2024-25 RS09	Digital	Reduction in Benefit Assessment processing costs due to impact of Universal Credit (UC)	61	Green	On track to be delivered
Residents and Housing Services	PHRS04 25-26	Restructure	Achieving management efficiencies across Revenue and Debt, Customer Services and Assessments and Brent Community Hubs.	375	Green	On track to be delivered
Residents and Housing Services	PHRS05 25-26	Restructure	Achieving management efficiencies within Libraries, Arts and Heritage.	50	Green	On track to be delivered
Residents and Housing Services	PHRS06 25-26	Income generation	Increased income across Mortuary & Bereavement Operations (including Cemeteries) and Registration and Nationality.	184	Green	On track to be delivered
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>806</b>		
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	2024-25 RS01C	Digital	Based on 3 complex and 5 simple processes per year across all former Resident Services departments (focusing on transactional services) with efficiencies cashed through reduction in posts and/or increase in income.	33	Green	On track to be delivered



Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	2024-25 RS02	Digital	Reduction in business support posts through alignment of support functions across Resident Services, combined with improved forms and integration with back-office systems	27	Green	On track to be delivered
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	NR01 25-26	Income generation	Increase charge for bulky waste collection from £40 to £55.	30	Green	On track to be delivered
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	NR02 25-26	Income generation	Increase garden waste annual subscription from £65 to £69.	55	Green	On track to be delivered
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	NR03 25-26	Income generation	Increase to existing, or introduction of new, charges for additional and replacement waste containers (residual, recycling, food).	105	Green	On track to be delivered
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	NR04 25-26	Reduction in provision	Stop subscription for Recyclopedia.	6	Green	On track to be delivered
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	NR05 25-26	Restructure	Transformation restructures across public realm, regeneration and strategic housing.	250	Green	On track to be delivered

Subtotal				506		
Finance and Resources	2025-26 G01	Reduction in provision	There is scope to reduce the amount of administrative support provided within Executive and Member services.	60	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	2025-26 G02	Reduction in provision	Currently Legal Services has three traditional graduate level trainee solicitor posts. It is proposed to reduce this to one post. As trainees are a valuable source of recruits to qualified posts, it is proposed to over time convert two existing Legal Assistant posts to solicitor apprentice posts. These require a lower level of qualification, and the Apprenticeship Levy can be used to fund the qualification element of the training.	45	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	2025-26 G03	Income generation	Income from these sources has increased, for example through more schools buying into the services available from the Governance Department and work undertaken in relation to developments.	24	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	2025-26 G04	Reduction in provision	It is proposed to reduce the health and safety team by one post to reflect lower demand due to changes in the way training on Health and Safety is delivered and to the type of incidents in which the central team are required to be involved. Change in approach to schools inspections.	57	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	2025-26 G05	Service transformation	A review has identified several underutilised resources across the Governance department and ceasing to subscribe to these will enable savings to be made.	16	Green	On track to be delivered

Finance and Resources	2024-25 RS08B	Digital	To not recruit to vacant posts / move to digital – self-service / reduction in usage of Resilience Contract	33	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	FR01 25-26	Restructure	Transformation restructures across Finance and Resources	260	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	LG01 25-26	Reduction in provision	Reduction in Members Allowances budget.	50	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	LG03 25-26	Procurement	Outsource Occupational Health Service	100	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	LG04 25-26	Reduction in provision	Deletion of two Trainee positions in Legal Services	87	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	LG05 25-26	Income generation	Increase in income – Legal Services Property and planning.	13	Green	On track to be delivered
Finance and Resources	PHRS02 25-26A	Restructure	Staffing efficiencies within the Communications, Insight and Innovation department	65	Green	On track to be delivered
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>809</b>		
<b>Overall total</b>				<b>8,855</b>		

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Appendix B –Quarter Two 2025/26 Prudential Indicators**

### **Legislative Update**

In December 2021, CIPFA published its revised Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice following concerns around the commercial activity undertaken by several local authorities and the affordability of borrowing plans.

The Code required authorities to not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and all capital expenditure undertaken must be related to the functions of the authority. The Council has not undertaken any activities to invest for a yield or have any commercial plans within the capital programme.

The Code required the Prudential Indicators (which are approved as part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy) to be reported quarterly (from semi-annually) as part of the financial updates and will be a recurring addition to the quarterly financial reports.

### **Prudential Indicators**

The Council has a significant borrowing requirement and balance and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's treasury management strategy.

Prudential indicators have been calculated using the capital programme data as at quarter 2 of 2025/26 (August 2025).

Capital Expenditure & Financing at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total 2024/25-2027/28
	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Totals
Corporate Landlord	11.6	11.0	35.1	23.3	2.7	0.6	81.0
Housing GF	71.0	99.4	10.0	21.1	17.5	0.0	201.5
Schools	22.1	23.1	12.7	12.1	3.0	0.0	70.0
Regeneration	34.6	102.3	46.2	27.6	19.0	0.0	210.8
Public Realm	18.0	34.9	9.6	2.0	6.8	0.2	64.5
South Kilburn	20.4	31.0	24.5	17.1	7.0	0.3	93.1
St Raphael's	0.2	0.4	3.1	12.5	3.9	0.0	16.2
HRA	60.9	33.7	18.6	28.0	13.9	11.1	141.1
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>238.8</b>	<b>335.8</b>	<b>160.0</b>	<b>143.7</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>878.3</b>
<b>Financed By:</b>							
Grants	64.7	75.0	23.7	9.1	5.7	0.6	172.5
Section 106	17.1	46.4	29.2	21.2	14.4	0.0	113.9
Capital Receipts	10.0	6.3	9.8	7.8	2.1	0.4	33.9
Earmarked Reserves	0.7	5.3	2.4	1.0	0.9	0.0	9.4
Major Repairs Reserve	16.6	13.7	17.2	18.1	13.9	0.0	65.6
Revenue Contributions	11.6	6.3	3.8	0.6	0.6	0.0	22.3
Borrowing	118.2	182.8	73.9	85.9	36.2	11.2	460.8
<b>Total Capital Financing</b>	<b>238.8</b>	<b>335.8</b>	<b>160.0</b>	<b>143.7</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>878.3</b>

#### (a) Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement. This is the amount of the Capital Programme that is funded by borrowing. The Council's maximum external borrowing requirement for 2025/26 is shown in the table below. The indicator is set to ensure that the level of proposed capital expenditure remains within sustainable limits and to consider the impact on

External resources consist of grants and Developer contributions. Internal resources consist of use of reserves, capital receipts and revenue contributions.

CFR Movement at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
<b>Opening CFR</b>	<b>1,254.5</b>	<b>1,357.1</b>	<b>1,520.4</b>	<b>1,573.4</b>	<b>1,639.5</b>	<b>1,657.1</b>
Capital Expenditure	238.8	335.8	160.0	143.7	73.8	12.2
External Resources	(63.9)	(121.4)	(52.9)	(30.3)	(20.1)	(0.6)
Internal Resources	(46.5)	(31.6)	(33.2)	(27.5)	(17.5)	(0.4)
<b>MRP</b>	<b>(24.9)</b>	<b>(18.6)</b>	<b>(19.8)</b>	<b>(18.5)</b>	<b>(17.2)</b>	<b>(16.0)</b>
Capital Loans Repaid	(0.9)	(1.0)	(1.1)	(1.3)	(1.4)	(1.5)
Use of Capital Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Accounting Adjustments	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Closing CFR</b>	<b>1,357.1</b>	<b>1,520.4</b>	<b>1,573.4</b>	<b>1,639.5</b>	<b>1,657.1</b>	<b>1,650.8</b>

### (b) Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

To ensure that over the medium term, debt will only be for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years. This is a key indicator of prudence. The table below shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2025/26.

Gross Debt & the Capital Financing Requirement at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
External Loans	900.0	1,081.0	1,089.0	1,138.9	1,145.3	1,126.8
PFI & Leases	32.5	28.5	24.7	22.7	20.4	17.0
<b>Total External Debt Liabilities</b>	<b>932.5</b>	<b>1,109.5</b>	<b>1,113.6</b>	<b>1,161.6</b>	<b>1,165.6</b>	<b>1,143.9</b>
<b>Internal Borrowing</b>	<b>424.6</b>	<b>410.9</b>	<b>459.8</b>	<b>477.9</b>	<b>491.5</b>	<b>506.9</b>
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>1,357.1</b>	<b>1,520.4</b>	<b>1,573.4</b>	<b>1,639.5</b>	<b>1,657.1</b>	<b>1,650.8</b>

### (c) Liability Benchmark

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

Liability Benchmark at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
CFR	1,357.1	1,520.4	1,573.4	1,639.5	1,657.1	1,650.8
LOBO Loans	59.5	24.5	15.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Non LOBO Loans	840.5	801.8	745.1	715.4	685.7	656.0
Balance Sheet Resources	(616.7)	(615.7)	(614.7)	(613.7)	(612.7)	(611.7)
Net Loan Requirement	<b>852.7</b>	<b>806.3</b>	<b>740.1</b>	<b>700.4</b>	<b>670.7</b>	<b>641.0</b>
Plus Liquidity Allowance	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
<b>Liability Benchmark</b>	<b>872.7</b>	<b>826.3</b>	<b>760.1</b>	<b>720.4</b>	<b>690.7</b>	<b>661.0</b>

#### (d) Authorised limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

The Operational Boundary for External Debt is based on the Council's estimate of most likely i.e. prudent, but not worst-case scenario for external debt. It links directly to the Council's estimates of capital expenditure, the capital financing requirement and cash flow requirements and is a key management tool for in-year monitoring.

Other long-term liabilities comprise finance leases, Private Finance Initiative contracts and other liabilities that are not borrowing but form part of the Council's debt.

The Authorised Limit for External Debt is the affordable borrowing limit determined in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003. It is the maximum amount of debt that the Council can legally owe. The authorised limit provides headroom over and above the operational boundary for unusual cash movements.

Authorised Limit at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Authorised Limit	1,800.0	1,900.0	1,900.0	1,900.0	1,900.0
Operational Boundary	1,600.0	1,700.0	1,700.0	1,700.0	1,700.0

The Corporate Director for Finance and Resources confirms that there were no breaches to the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary during Quarter One of 2025/26



### (e) Upper Limits on one-year revenue impact of a 1% movement in interest rates

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans in the current year will be replaced at current rates.

Upper Limits on one-year revenue impact of a 1% movement in interest rates on Maturing Debt at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2025/26
	Approved Limit	Actual
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	5.0	0.5
Compliance with limits:		Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	5.0	(0.5)
Compliance with limits:		Yes

### (f) Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates. The Council uses the option date as the maturity date for its LOBO loans. Loans based on existing debt portfolio as at the reported period.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing at Q2 2025/26	Upper Limit	Lower limit	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26
			Actual Borrowing 31.08.2025	Actual Borrowing 31.08.2025	Forecast Borrowing at 31.03.2026	Forecast Borrowing at 31.03.2026	Compliance with limits
	%	%	£m	%	£m	%	
Under 12 months	40	0	92.80	9.88%	66.21	8.01%	Yes
12 months & within 24 months	40	0	48.70	5.19%	39.71	4.81%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	40	0	65.20	6.94%	59.43	7.19%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	60	0	275.10	29.30%	136.05	16.46%	Yes
10 years and within 20 years	75	0	41.50	4.42%	109.31	13.23%	Yes
20 years and within 30 years	75	0	150.70	16.05%	150.69	18.24%	Yes
30 years and within 40 years	75	0	159.90	17.03%	159.91	19.35%	Yes
Over 40 years	75	0	105.00	11.18%	105.00	12.71%	Yes
<b>Total</b>			<b>938.90</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>826.31</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

### (g) Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

This is an indicator of affordability and highlights the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs, net of investment income.

Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream at Q2 2025/26	Limit	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Financing Costs (Interest & MRP) (£m)	35	33.0	37.6	36.0	36.6	35.2
Net Revenue Stream (£m)	431.4	431.4	431.4	448.7	465.8	483.8
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	8.11%	7.65%	8.72%	8.02%	7.86%	7.28%

Financing costs can be further broken down as follows.

Capital Financing Costs at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
Total Gross External Debt Interest	51.5	57.5	59.9	60.1	59.6
Total Interest Payable & Expenses	53.3	58.7	61	61.3	60.8
Total Interest Receivable	-29.9	-32	-35.9	-37.4	-38
Net Interest	23.4	26.7	25.1	23.9	22.8
MRP (Excluding PFI)	9.6	10.9	10.9	12.7	12.4
<b>Total Interest &amp; MRP</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>35.2</b>
Revenue Contributions to Capital Programme	8.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
<b>Total Capital Financing Costs</b>	<b>41.6</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>38.7</b>

### (h) Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums invested over 364 Days

The purpose of this limit is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise because of the Council having to seek early repayment of the sums invested.

Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums invested over 364 Days at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2025/26
	Approved	Actual
Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums Invested Over 364 Days	50.0	0.0

### (i) Security

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit Risk Indicator at Q2 2025/26	2025/26	2025/26
	Approved	Actual
Portfolio average credit rating	A	A+

### (j) Liquidity

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity Risk Indicator at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2025/26
	Approved	Actual
Total cash available within 3 months	20.0	49.9

### (k) Investment Forecast

This indicator demonstrates the Council's investment exposure broken down by category for Treasury and non-treasury investments. Non-Treasury investments are directed under the Council's Investment Strategy 2025/26, whilst treasury investments are managed under the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26.

<b>Total Investment Exposure Indicator at Q2 2025/26 (£m)</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>
	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>
Treasury management cash investments	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Service investments	323.4	322.2	321.0	319.7	318.3
Commercial investments: Property	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>343.4</b>	<b>342.2</b>	<b>341.0</b>	<b>339.7</b>	<b>338.3</b>
Commitments to lend	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total Exposure</b>	<b>393.4</b>	<b>392.2</b>	<b>391.0</b>	<b>339.7</b>	<b>338.3</b>

Service investments are further broken down in the table below.

<b>Loans &amp; Investments for service purposes: Category of borrower at Q2 2025/26 (£m)</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>
	<b>Approved Limit</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Estimated</b>
I4B Subsidiary Loans	500.0	222.4	222.4	222.4	222.4	222.4
I4B Subsidiary Equity		36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4
FWH Subsidiary Loans		33.4	32.9	32.5	32.0	31.5
Local Businesses	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Schools, Academies and Colleges	55.0	17.4	17.1	16.8	16.5	16.2
West London Waste Authority	20.0	13.9	13.5	13.0	12.4	11.8
Local Charities	10.0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Associations	50.0	0	0	0	0	0
Local Residents	5.0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>650.0</b>	<b>323.4</b>	<b>322.2</b>	<b>321.0</b>	<b>319.7</b>	<b>318.3</b>

### (l) Investment Funding

This indicator demonstrates the amount of exposure to borrowing because of investments made for service purposes. These investments are the loans to the Council's subsidiaries i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd.

Investments Funded by Borrowing at Q2 2025/26 (£m)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
I4B Loans	222.4	222.4	222.4	222.4	222.4	222.4
I4B Equity	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4
First Wave Housing (FWH)	33.4	32.9	32.5	32.5	32.0	31.5
<b>Total Service investments</b>	<b>292.1</b>	<b>291.7</b>	<b>291.2</b>	<b>291.2</b>	<b>290.8</b>	<b>290.3</b>
<b>Total Funded by Borrowing</b>	<b>292.1</b>	<b>291.7</b>	<b>291.2</b>	<b>291.2</b>	<b>290.8</b>	<b>290.3</b>

### (m) Investment Rate of Return


This indicator demonstrates the rate of return obtained from the different investment categories.

Investments net rate of return at Q2 2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Limit	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
Treasury management investments	3.94%	3.94%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%
Service investments	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%

### (n) Other Investment Indicators

Other investment indicators	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
External Debt (Loans)	1,220.0	1,311.6	1,321.0	1,313.4	1,289.1
Net Service Expenditure	431.4	448.7	465.8	483.8	483.8
Debt to net service expenditure ratio	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7

This page is intentionally left blank

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power (Councillor Jake Rubin)</b>
<b>Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Brent</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>	Tessa Awe Project Lead Officer, Service Reform & Strategy <a href="mailto:Tessa.Awe@brent.gov.uk">Tessa.Awe@brent.gov.uk</a>  Rhodri Rowlands Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy <a href="mailto:Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk">Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates on work to develop and support the VCSE sector in Brent. The report provides information on the sector, current VCSE and community grant funding and capacity building support.
- 1.2 The Committee is also provided with the initial findings from the recent VCSE Shaping the Future Summit and subsequent steps and initiatives that are planned to further develop and support the sector in line with our shared vision – “a thriving, resilient VCSE sector that has the resources, skills and confidence to deliver better outcomes for local communities – supporting individuals, grassroots groups and organisations to build skills, realise goals, and drive aspirations in their neighbourhoods”.

- 1.3 It also summarises how the Council is responding to the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Review recommendations in respect of reviewing and strengthening relationships and support for the VCSE sector.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

That Committee:

- 2.1 Note and comment on the contents of this paper.

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

- 3.1 Partnership with the VCSE sector is embedded within Brent's 2023–2027 Borough Plan *Moving Brent Forward Together*. The Plan emphasises collaboration with residents, partner organisations and voluntary groups to deliver better outcomes and ensure no one is left behind.
- 3.2 The VCSE contributes directly to key borough priorities such as tackling poverty, improving health and wellbeing, and fostering safer and stronger communities. Community organisations provide essential services — from welfare advice to health outreach and youth development — that complement statutory provision and strengthen neighbourhood resilience.
- 3.3 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recommended that Brent refresh its relationships (such as the development of a Compact) with the VCSE and strengthen engagement with grassroots organisations. This report outlines the steps already underway to positively address those recommendations through the adoption of new shared partnership vision and emerging action plan, co-developed and supported by a cross-sector Steering Group.

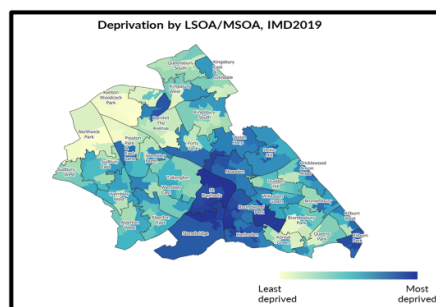
## **4.0 The VCSE Sector in Brent**

### Overview

- 4.1 Brent's VCSE sector is large, diverse and vital to the borough's social and economic fabric. There are currently estimated to be over 1,100 active VCSE organisations, supported by around 12,500 volunteers and 2,700 employees.
- 4.2 The picture below summarises key data on the VCSE sector. The data is derived from various sources including the Charity Commission and 360Giving.



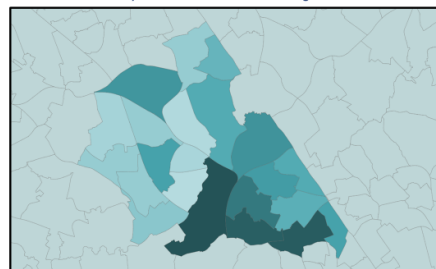
- 1,120 recorded VCSEs in Brent.
- An estimated 2,700 employees, 12,500+ volunteers, and 4,000 trustees.
- In 2023–24, Brent-based VCSE organisations had a combined income of nearly £412 million and spent £370 million,
- £167 million received in grant funding from a diverse mix of major funders
- Strong correlation between Brent's areas of higher deprivation and presence of VCSEs



Category	Income range	VCSEs (n)
Very low / no income	£0-£10k	284
Small	£10k-£100k	229
Medium	£100-£1m	186
Large	£1m-£10m	52
Major	£10m-£100m	3
Super Major	£100m+	1
<b>Total*</b>	<b>£0-£10k</b>	<b>755</b>

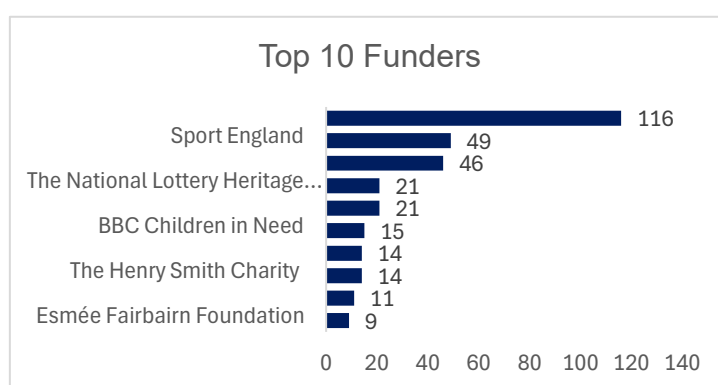
Number of Brent VCSE organisations by £ income  
 \*Total discounts VCSE organisations with unknown income

Number of VCSEs by ward - darker areas reflect higher numbers of VCSEs



4.3 The sector's combined income in 2023–24 was estimated to be approximately £412 million, with £167 million received from grant funding. Between 2020-2024 estimated funding to the VCSE sector in Brent shows that:

- A total of £538.3M funding has been received by Brent organisations, with 21% (£115.4M) from Grantmaking organisations and Lottery Distributors
- The highest number of grants were received from The National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England, and John Lyon's Charity.
- Funding from government and non-government funders has seen opposite trends from 2020 to 2024 - grants from non-government sources seeing an upward trends



## 5.0 Overview of Council Grant Funding

5.1 The Council recognises the VCSE as a key delivery partner and crucial to the delivery of priorities and improved outcomes for residents. The Council provides a wide range of grant funding initiatives that support the VCSE in various ways

including to deliver services, capacity building and structured collaboration with and alongside the Council.

### Community Grant Funding

5.2 The following section summarises key 2024/25 (unless otherwise stated) VCSE and community grant funding initiatives:

- **Neighbourhood CIL Grants** – £1.5 million across five Brent Connects areas. £8m for projects across the borough being delivered by the Council – Investing in Brent Programme approved for delivery in 2025/26.
- **Love Where You Live** – £66,000 awarded to 130 local projects. New partnership with Wembley Stadium Foundation (WSF) in 2025 brings new £420k investment in community grants for benefit of Brent - £100k awarded to 35 local projects in September 2025
- **Brent Health Matters** – £433,000 awarded to 46 projects tackling health inequalities.
- **Together Towards Net Zero** – £254,000 across four rounds supporting environmental action.
- **Community Chest Fund** – £45,000 awarded to seven grassroots groups in 2025.
- **Edward Harvist**- From 2023 awarded £367,756.07 to 76 organisations.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Grant** - £30,000 available and is being launched in 2025

5.3 Other grant funding examples include:

- **Holiday Activities & Food Programme** - £1m allocated to Brent in 2023-2024. Allocations based on the number of children eligible for benefits-related free school meals in each local authority area.
- **Brent Resident Support Fund**: £5,562,444.56 with 4,075 grant applications approved. This funding aims to assist Brent residents facing financial hardship by providing support for essentials such as food, energy, water, and other household necessities.
- **Homes for Ukraine** - £350,000 awarded to 5 organisations providing support in areas such as mental health, housing, e-visa and employment
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** - £140,000 awarded to 2 organisations for employment support and disabilities employment support focusing on SEND
- **London Crime Prevention Fund** - £500,00 (3 yrs) for Exploitation & Vulnerability Panels, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, Brent Triage, Perpetrator Domestic Abuse Programme, Knife Crime Awareness Programme
- **Youth Justice** - £2m awarded to 5 VCSE capital projects

### Grant Monitoring

- 5.4 Monitoring of grants demonstrates measurable local benefits, including improved wellbeing, increased volunteering, support for communities most in need and stronger local partnerships. Each of these grant programmes includes monitoring of outputs. For example, NCIL projects must report on local engagement (e.g. number of residents benefiting) and often require community volunteers, ensuring a multiplier effect. Monitoring is set out from the inception of the grant.
- 5.5 However, grants are often monitored differently, with some departments having their own approach. For example, to support effective monitoring and evaluation, the Together Towards Net Zero team requests relevant documentation prior to issuing the grant. All recipients are bound by the terms of the grant funding agreement, which specifies permissible use of funds and includes applicable clawback provisions. As the grant is disbursed in full as a one-off upfront payment, monitoring can be particularly challenging with newly formed groups or organisations. Consequently, they often receive limited or poor-quality monitoring information.
- 5.6 Monitoring can often be an arduous task for small organisations and requires significant officer time. Once the programmes are launched and grant assessments completed, there isn't sufficient capacity for effective monitoring for the number of successful projects and grant rounds. Organisations also require capacity building support to ensure that they are capturing relevant data.
- 5.7 It is essential given these challenges that the Council adopts a proportionate approach to grant funding monitoring in future. As such, consideration of monitoring processes is included in the current community grants review.

### Community Grants Review

- 5.8 A community grants review is underway. This review entails a deep dive into the processes of council grant-making with the aim of understanding all processes and making it more efficient where required. The overall aim is to develop options for future funding that streamlines processes, easier accessibility for local VCSE organisations and residents, a unified approach across departments and simpler monitoring for both organisations and officers.
- 5.9 We also aim to ensure that grant rounds do not overlap, application processes are simplified, especially for residents, and grassroots VCSE payments are made on time, use a single platform to be able to monitor grants effectively, collect project and demographics data and ensure there are no duplication of funding and efforts across departments. More efficiency with grant-making may also contribute to financial savings.
- 5.10 The outputs from this review will also contribute to the Council's long-term strategic response to VCSE funding and capacity building challenges. This is

anticipated to be an evolving, proactive and positive response to better ensure grant funding continues to support the long-term health and sustainability of VCSE organisations in Brent and in doing so, they can continue to meet the needs of Brent residents and communities. The review has been welcomed by VCSE's.

- 5.11 The grants review will be completed by the end of November 2025, with initial recommendations and future direction for consideration by the Council's Corporate Management Team in December 2025.

## **6.0 VCSE Capacity Building Support**

- 6.1 CVS Brent currently delivers capacity building services in the borough. While some capacity building support is provided elsewhere, the main support and Council funded provision is via CVS. Since 2023 they have supported - 253 organisations in 2023/24, 313 in 2024/25 and in the current year to date (2025/26) they have supported 166 organisations.
- 6.2 The current capacity building contract ends in April 2026. One of the key priorities in over the next 6 months is to establish a robust and forward-looking capacity building offer that better responds to the challenges and issues facing the sector.
- 6.3 The Shaping the Future of Brent's VCSE Summit provided a wide range of input from close to 100 VCSE representatives. We will also conduct further engagement and review recommendations from CVS Brent's ongoing internal review to help shape an offer that is fit for purpose to ensure we are meeting the needs of the sector. We anticipate a more bespoke offer will be in place in 2026/27.

## **7.0 A Vision for the VCSE in Brent – What We Are Working Towards**

### Shared vision

- 7.1 The Council, working with VCSE partners via a cross-sector Steering Group has developed a shared vision to underpin our commitments to supporting the sector in Brent:

*“A thriving VCSE sector that has the resources, skills and confidence to deliver better outcomes for local communities – supporting individuals, grassroots groups and organisations to build skills, realise goals, and drive aspirations in their neighbourhoods is a key priority for Brent”*

- 7.2 This vision recognizes both existing strengths and challenges. Brent's VCSE already has successful initiatives (e.g. joint health outreach projects, volunteer-led libraries, multicultural festivals, shared community gardens) demonstrating the sector's innovation. At the same time, feedback has identified gaps in communication, uneven capacity among neighbourhood groups, and the need for more inclusive decision-making.

- 7.3 Our vision therefore includes concrete steps to build trust and capacity: for example, by co-creating a new Partnership Compact with VCSE input and by enhancing infrastructure support. It also prioritizes engagement with Brent's diverse communities – ensuring that new and under-served groups (e.g. recent migrant communities, small faith-based charities) are connected into the sector and supported. In summary, the vision is a thriving VCSE sector fully integrated into Brent's community leadership, driving improvement in areas like public health, skills development and social cohesion.

#### Responding to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

- 7.4 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge made the following recommendation:  
In response to this and underpinned by our shared vision, the Council has set four broad objectives or milestones that is guiding our work. They are set out below alongside a brief overview of progress against each:

**7.5 Milestone 1:** *Co-create a refreshed Compact / Partnership Strategy (Participation & Partnerships) with the VCSE and partners to align shared priorities, values, and foster collaborative working and capacity building.*

- 7.5.1 *Progress:* The Shaping the Future of Brent's VCSE event marked wider engagement with the sector to endorse our shared vision ("Compact"). The next steps will include the action plan and a programme of communications to support delivery. In addition, engagement has been ongoing with the sector over the past two years via events, workshops, focus groups, grants, commissioned services, boards and steering groups. We are also reviewing how to strengthen our offer to the sector to ensure they have the necessary support and tools to deliver effectively and sustainably.

**7.6 Milestone 2:** *Review and recommission, in partnership with the VCSE, a social infrastructure capacity-building offer.*

- 7.6.1 *Progress:* CVS Brent currently delivers capacity building services in the borough. They held the VCIS (Voluntary Community Infrastructure Support) contract for 2 years from April 2023 and the current contract ends in April 2026. CVS Brent have commissioned an external review to inform their future development as an organisation and we anticipate this feeding into the future commissioned offer. As a council will analyse information gathered from the sector at the recent Shaping the Future of Brent's VCSE event, conduct further engagement and review recommendations from CVS Brent's internal review to help shape an offer that is fit for purpose to ensure we are meeting the needs of the sector. We anticipate a more bespoke offer will be in place in 2026/27. We are also looking widely to external best practice and examples of provision elsewhere to inform our offer; this will continue into the next year.

**7.7 Milestone 3:** *Use the Commissioning Community of Practice (CoP) and other programmes (e.g. Radical Place Leadership, Adult Social Care transformation) to develop new approaches to shared challenges.*

- 7.7.1 *Progress:* Brent Council has established a cross-cutting Commissioning CoP which meets monthly with participation from policy leads (e.g. Housing, Public

Health, ASC), finance, and VCSE representatives. This forum is piloting co-commissioning models on issues like youth mental health and community safety. We anticipate the CoP also working to support the future capacity building offer and future review of VCSE provided commissioned services. The CoP is also working closely alongside other initiatives such as Radical Place Leadership.

**7.8 Milestone 4:** *Explore opportunities to develop, grow, and attract new social infrastructure & investment in the borough.*

**7.8.1 Progress:** The Council is actively seeking ways to bring additional resources and capacity to Brent. We have recently secured £750,000 from Arts Council England (ACE) for the “Creative People and Places (CPP) National Portfolio Programme 2026-29”. A new partnership was secured with Wembley Stadium Foundation (WSF) in May 2025 which has generated additional £450k community grant funding. Brent Giving – a new social infrastructure has been established, launching this year and brings new capacity and grant making expertise to the borough. In parallel to this work, the Council is also developing a new approach to social value and this aims to optimise the contributions, investment and resources businesses and other investors can commit to Brent.

**Shaping the Future of the VCSE**

**7.9** A cross-sector **VCSE Steering Group** (formed in 2025, co-chaired by council and sector representatives) is guiding this work and ensuring the co-development and delivery in all we do.

**7.10** The Cross-Sector (includes VCSE, NHS, Housing Association, Business, Council) Steering Group is brought together and supported by Brent Council, but it is important to be clear that this is not a council-led initiative. The Council’s role is to help make things happen by providing support, creating space for collaboration, and enabling the sector to lead the way.

**7.11** The Group is working together to:

- Develop a shared vision for how the council and VCSE sector work together and identify collective commitments and actions that will help to deliver it
- Co-design a new support offer based on what the sector actually needs
- Explore and create new approaches to Social Value, that work better for Brent including for example, a Social Value Charter that organisations across Brent can sign up to.

**7.12** In September 2025, Brent hosted an event with almost 100 delegates in attendance, including community group leaders (from all wards and backgrounds), faith leaders, young people’s groups, and officers from key partner agencies (NHS, Housing Associations, local Businesses etc.). The event was co-designed and coordinated through the Steering Group

**7.13** The objectives of the event were to:

- understand the needs and aspirations of the VCSE sector,
- recognise the sector's unique strengths and impact,
- shape a shared vision for more effective collaboration and partnership and
- identify opportunities and priorities to support the sector.



7.14 The World café format consisted of plenary discussions and breakout workshops on key thematic areas (e.g. leadership & advocacy, partnership & collaboration, volunteering, community development, funding and resources). These were all identified and agreed as being relevant and of importance to Brent via the steering group. They also reflect sector best practice set out by NAVCA – National Association for Voluntary and Community Action.

#### Key findings and emerging areas of recommendation

7.15 The table below summarises the initial findings and identifies emerging recommendations. The cross-sector steering group will review and further develop an initial action plan in response in November 2025. This will then be tested and further developed with wider VCSE representatives to ensure ownership and additional actions are captured.

**Partnership & Collaboration:**

- Explore potential for joint bids for external resources bringing the Council and sector together
- Information on the sector is known needs to be more widely and practically shared to encourage and support collaboration
- Brent's business community need to be engaged as civil society partners, if not through the local tax system (s106; CIL) or by extracting greater/more meaningful social value in public procurement
- Learning from other Local Authorities (Camden; Hackney; Southwark)

**Community Development:**

- More neighbourhood-focused Council working
- Devolution of decision making and resources to local communities
- Skills development among (young) community leaders/workers; future Cllrs; build on Young Mayor
- Garnering more intelligence and information from communities/grant applications etc to inform LBB's strategic commissioning/service design
- Larger organisations to lead/resource thematic working/groups and help build capacity of smaller community organisations

**Funding & Resources:**

- Genuine partnership funding between funders and among delivery consortia (large helping small and creating economies of scale/shared back offices)
- Matching funders with projects – Match My Project including targeting developer/business funding
- Designing grant funds which are realistic and proportionate in expectations
- Willingness of the Council to divest assets/ resources to the sector which it can use to leverage additional investment/grants
- Support for new starters and smaller grass-roots organisations, which lack capacity to secure funding

**Volunteering:**

- Provide/commission baseline training for volunteers where this is not cost-effective for individual VCSEs
- Develop a Volunteering Strategy and a Council hub model with policy updates and resources to support Brent volunteers
- Make more use of employee time for volunteering
- Knit volunteering better into skills and employment pathways locally - support volunteers into paid work

**Leadership & Advocacy**

- Leadership development of young people in Brent – securing future capacity and potential
- More Thematic Networks/Forums – bring people together around common interests / services / skills
- Better evidence base and intelligence on the sector (mapping)
- Coaching, mentoring, job-sharing which exchange skills and knowledge and build mutual understanding and trust
- Shared long-term vision and purpose for the VCSE sector
- Long-term investment fund potential – with capacity building built in alongside community grants

### The way forward and next steps

7.16 Post summit, the key next steps are summarised below:

- Co-develop a 'developing the VCSE action plan' in response to the VCSE summit with endorsement by the sector and partners: by January 2026
- Develop supporting communications plan to support delivery
- Complete Community Grants Review: by December 2026
- Establish future Community Grant Making Model and manage transition to new arrangements: January 2026-January 2027
- Implement Community Grant Review recommendations to streamline and optimise administration processes and secure best value use of resources: by April 2026
- Co-develop and produce new VCSE capacity building requirements, service specifications: by April 2026
- Tender for new VCSE capacity building offer: by December 2026
- Review future VCSE contracts / commissioning opportunities

## **8.0 Developing and Working with the VCSE in Brent (Examples of Support and Initiatives)**

8.1 This section summarises some of the other initiatives and examples of support that the Council is collaborating with the VCSE on. This is not intended to be an exhaustive review, rather to summarise examples in addition to the work already set out in this report.



### Radical Place Leadership

- 8.2 The Radical Place Leadership programme is all about rethinking how we work and deliver services for residents in a way that starts to break down siloes across the Council, partners and further beyond into local communities, working more collaboratively alongside residents to shape our services.
- 8.3 As part of this, we have established a new, neighbourhood-focussed team for the Harlesden Connects footprint. This team is made up of colleagues from across the Council (e.g. ASC, Housing, Employment), as well as colleagues from the NHS and VCSE partners (e.g. Crisis, Sufra). The team spends 1 day per week together and has so far been through a training and onboarding process, while visiting local community settings, Brent Council services and VCSE partners to understand what is currently on offer, as well as the wants and needs of the local community.
- 8.4 As part of this team, we have dedicated preventative resource that is full-time in the neighbourhood footprint (2x Social Prescribers, 1x Preventative caseworker), who will be our dedicated relational resource, working alongside residents who may be at risk of homelessness, financial hardship or whose children may not be ready to start education. The wider team will 'huddle' around these lead workers 1x per week to discuss how they can best support the residents we are working with.

### Community Power

- 8.5 *Community Convening:* We have partnered with Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum (Lead), Jason Roberts Foundation and Sport at the Heart, who will become our 'Community Convenors'. Within this role, they will be tasked with coordinating the voluntary sector in Harlesden, identifying opportunities for closer collaboration between groups and gaps in service provision.
- 8.6 *Participatory Grant Making:* We have partnered with an organisation called Brent Giving, who will be running a participatory grant making pilot in Harlesden, Stonebridge and South Kilburn. They have recruited a panel of 15 residents who will be welcoming bids from local community groups and VCSEs to deliver services related to poverty reduction. As well as building local capacity and upskilling residents to support grant making, the programme will directly support local projects.

### Social Value

- 8.7 The Council is updating its Social Value Policy and approach. This draws on feedback from VCSE to adopt an approach that better prioritises locally led needs and projects and secures long-term legacy impact for Brent residents and communities.
- 8.8 As part of this, the Council is partnering with Match My Project. This digital platform connects suppliers with local community initiatives so that social value commitments deliver tangible benefits for Brent's people and places.

### Market Rent Reduction Pilots and Social Value

- 8.9 Three selected new lettings (Harmony Kitchen, Brent Civic Centre, Roy Smith House and Picture Palace), through which Brent Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations seeking to rent Brent Council premises may be eligible for reduced rent rates reflecting the value their use of the premises will bring to the local community.
- 8.10 The framework outlines an approach for reduced market rent for new lettings only, through which Brent Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations wishing to rent Brent Council premises may be eligible for reduced rent rates reflecting the value their use of the premises will bring to the local community.
- 8.11 One of the aims of the framework is to aid capacity building of local VCS organisations that may not currently be able to afford full market rent. Organisation's applying for a market rent reduction will be required to complete a Community Value Statement response. The questions in the statement have been developed in line with the Principles of the Property Strategy and are designed to ascertain the community value of the proposed use of the premises.

### New partnerships

- 8.12 *Brent Giving*: a newly constituted group of committed organisations, charities, businesses and individuals who have a vision of a connected Brent that is working towards ending poverty and inequality across the Borough. Their aim is to build and nurture an ecosystem between community groups, institutions and businesses who care about Brent and its people. Through combining resources (money, time, people and ideas) to support our communities, they aim to build a better borough for everyone – linking in with our borough plan priorities. Grants of £5,000 and £10,000 are available for residents, groups and organisations to deliver services to reduce poverty in Harlesden, Stonebridge and South Kilburn
- 8.13 *Wembley Stadium Foundation (WSF)*: new partnership enacted in May 2025 that means benefit to Brent residents and communities of an additional £450k investment in grant funding – delivered via Love Where You Live.

### Enhanced Engagement

- 8.14 The Council has stepped up engagement efforts. A dedicated *VCSE Engagement Officer* now sits in the Partnerships Team, liaising daily with community leaders. A monthly e-newsletter ("Brent VCSE Connect") was launched in 2024 and has over 800 subscribers, sharing funding opportunities and council updates. We also created the **Brent VCSE Network** on an online forum platform, where organisations can pose questions and collaborate between meetings. Additionally, council officers now regularly attend VCSE

cluster meetings across the borough (e.g. faith leader forums, youth coalitions) to gather frontline feedback.

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

- 9.1 Extensive stakeholder engagement has been undertaken through the *Shaping the Future of Brent's VCSE* event (September 2025), ongoing Steering Group meetings, thematic workshops, and local cluster forums. Further engagement will be done with the Lead Cabinet member, ward members and VCSE groups until an implementation plan is finalised and a full offer for the VCSE is completed. Regular feedback and input is provided through the Lead Member Climate Change and Community Power. Feedback gathered directly informed the priorities, actions, and next steps outlined in this report.

## **10.0 Financial Considerations**

- 10.1 To detail any relevant financial and budgetary implications/comments relating to the proposals within the report.

## **11.0 Legal Considerations**

- 11.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any subsequent commissioning, grant agreements, or property-related arrangements will be subject to compliance with the Council's Constitution, Contract Standing Orders, and relevant legislation.

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

- 12.1 The proposals align with the Public Sector Equality Duty by promoting fair access, inclusivity, and capacity-building among Brent's diverse VCSE organisations. Many initiatives specifically target under-represented groups, including smaller grassroots and faith-based organisations, ensuring equitable participation across all communities.

## **13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 13.1 The developing Brent's VCSE and supporting action plan will support Brent's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy through initiatives such as the *Together Towards Net Zero* grant fund and community greening projects. VCSE organisations are key partners in promoting sustainable behaviours and local environmental action.

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

- 14.1 The Market Rent Reduction Pilot supports VCSE organisations to access affordable premises, strengthening their ability to deliver services locally. There are no additional HR implications arising directly from this report.

## **15.0 Communication Considerations**

- 15.1 A communication plan will accompany the next phase of the VCSE Implementation Plan. Updates will be shared through CVS Brent's *VCSE Connect* newsletter, Council website, and regular partner briefings to ensure transparency and engagement across the sector.

**Report sign off:**

***Rachel Crossley***

Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power (Councillor Jake Rubin)</b>
<b>Social Value: Draft Policy and Whole-Council Approach</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>	One: Appendix A – Draft Social Value Policy
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<a href="#">Social Value Toolkit for Cooperative Councils - Cooperative Councils Innovation Network</a>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Rhodri Rowlands Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy <a href="mailto:Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk">Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk</a>  Agnieszka Spruds Strategy Lead – Policy, Communications, Insight & Innovation <a href="mailto:Agnieszka.Spruds@brent.gov.uk">Agnieszka.Spruds@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the case for a new approach to social value, rooted in national policy developments and Brent's local priorities. It proposes a shift from a narrow, procurement-only focus to a whole-council, place-based model that embeds social value in everything we do.
- 1.2 The report also responds to feedback from the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (February 2025), Procurement Peer Review (April 2025) and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, which highlighted the need for a more consistent, strategic and outcomes-focused approach to social value across the Council.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the proposed direction for social value, testing whether it reflects the right level of ambition and alignment with Brent's priorities.
- 2.2 Provide feedback on the draft Social Value Policy, particularly the emerging priorities and guiding principles, to inform its final version.

### **3.0 Detail**

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

- 3.1.1 Social value has always been at the heart of how we work in Brent – making sure that every pound we spend delivers something more for our residents, communities and local economy. Over the past few years, we've made real progress embedding this principle across the council's work. But the world has moved on, and so must we.
- 3.1.2 This refreshed approach builds on what we've learned and responds to new opportunities under the Procurement Act 2023, as well as the feedback from the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee earlier this year. It moves us towards a more flexible, outcomes-focused model that reflects the diversity of our communities and the different ways value can be created locally.
- 3.1.3 The new framework will make social value more practical and proportionate, while keeping people and place at the centre of how we measure success. It combines the rigour of recognised national frameworks with a collaborative, co-operative approach that works for Brent.
- 3.1.4 We're also strengthening the foundations that make this possible – from the Match My Project platform and the Social Progress Index to new guidance, training and a forthcoming Social Value Charter that we'll co-create with partners. These tools will help us make social value something everyone in Brent can deliver and benefit from.
- 3.1.5 Thank you to all officers, partners, and community organisations who've helped shape this work so far. Together, we're building a stronger, fairer and more connected borough – one where social value isn't just an outcome of what we do, but the way we do it.
- 3.1.6 This policy supports delivery of the **Brent Borough Plan 2023-27** by embedding social value as a driver of inclusive growth, health equity, environmental sustainability, and stronger community participation. It provides a practical framework for turning the Borough Plan's ambitions into measurable outcomes and ensuring that every pound spent by the Council contributes to local prosperity, wellbeing, and resilience.

- 3.1.7 The Council undertook a LGA **Corporate Peer Challenge** held in January 2025, with the following recommendation / key feedback around procurement and commissioning, highlighting the need for a stronger focus on social value:

*“Commissioning, procurement and contract management are key areas for development. The peer team identified a cautious approach, with low appetite for risk and limited innovation in procurement practices. To address these challenges, there is a need to foster greater professional curiosity and innovation within procurement and commissioning, ensuring that the council takes a more strategic, market-aware and forward-thinking approach. There remains a significant opportunity for the council to secure greater levels of social value and drive efficiencies through commissioning [and contract management] – an increasingly important factor given the council’s growing financial pressures.”*

- 3.1.8 The proposed Social Value Policy responds directly to the feedback and recommendations made by the **Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee** (February 2025), which highlighted the need for a more consistent, strategic and outcomes-focused approach to social value. The Committee highlighted the importance of embedding social value beyond procurement, strengthening governance and measurement, and aligning the Council’s work with wider community wealth building ambitions.
- 3.1.9 The work also responds directly to the findings of the recent **Procurement Peer Review** (April 2025), which highlighted the need for a refreshed Social Value Policy aligned with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council’s wider Embrace Change Portfolio. The review recommended adopting a more flexible, tiered, and locally focused approach to social value, clarifying roles and responsibilities for delivery, and ensuring that benefits are designed in away that genuinely supports the borough rather than increasing supplier costs. The new policy reflects these recommendations and strengthens the link between procurement, contract management, and community wealth building.

## 3.2 Background

### What is social value?

- 3.2.1 Social value means the wider social, economic, and environmental outcomes we achieve through the way we work, spend, and collaborate (for example by supporting local jobs, community organisations, or environmental improvements) beyond the core purpose of a service or contract.

### Current approach to social value and drivers for change

- 3.2.2 The current approach is based on the 2020 Social Value and Ethical Procurement Policy. Social value is applied as a standard 10% weighting in all procurements over £100k, with suppliers required to select a minimum of three KPIs from at least three categories. This universal model has ensured consistency but has also led to a “one size fits all” approach that limits flexibility across different contract types and values. The Procurement Peer Review

found that while the policy was considered strong at the time, it is now out of date and not fully aligned with the Procurement Act 2023 or new national best practice. It also identified several areas where a more flexible and proportionate approach would add value, including clearer roles for delivery, better alignment with contract value, and stronger links to community outcomes.

3.2.3 Research and engagement with social value experts across London (through the Social Value Network) and nationally, including practitioners from Birmingham and Manchester, as well as respected organisations such as the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), have identified several key drivers for change:

- Social value should extend beyond procurement teams to every service area.
- “One size fits all” approaches fail to reflect local needs; Brent’s approach should be data-driven and community-informed.
- Smaller suppliers, voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations and local businesses must be supported to contribute meaningfully without excessive bureaucracy.
- Counting activities (such as training sessions or jobs created) is less important than measuring how they improve lives and neighbourhoods.

In response, Brent’s new policy proposes adopting a wider definition of social value:

“Transforming communities and creating positive lasting impact for Brent’s people and places through the way we work, spend, lead and collaborate – above and beyond the core purpose of a service or contract.”

### **Leading approaches to social value across the UK**

3.2.4 Across local government, two main approaches have shaped how councils deliver and measure social value: the National TOMs framework (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) and the Cooperative Councils’ Innovation Network (CCIN) collaborative model.

3.2.5 The National TOMs framework developed by the Social Value Portal with support from the Local Government Association, provides a consistent national structure for planning and reporting social value. It includes:

- Five overarching themes (e.g. jobs, social, environmental)
- A menu of outcomes and measures, each with proxy financial values to help quantify benefits
- Comparability across contracts and suppliers which enables councils to benchmark performance

This structure has helped many councils build a clear evidence base and demonstrate accountability. However, it can also feel too rigid or “one size fits all” applying the same measures to very different services or local priorities.



That can make it harder to capture the full value of more community-led or place-based activity.

3.2.6 The CCIN model promotes a collaborative, people-centred approach to social value. It looks how councils work with communities, local business, and partners to create long-term impact. This approach focuses on:

- Co-design with communities and partners and shared ownership
- Place-based impact where activity is tailored to local circumstances, focusing on what matters most to residents
- Relationships and recognising the social benefits that come from trust, participation and local ownership.

This approach works best for complex or community-led activity, where co-design with local residents can make social value commitments more relevant, sustainable, and rooted in place. It can however be harder to evidence or compare between projects.

### 3.3 Proposed Approach for Brent

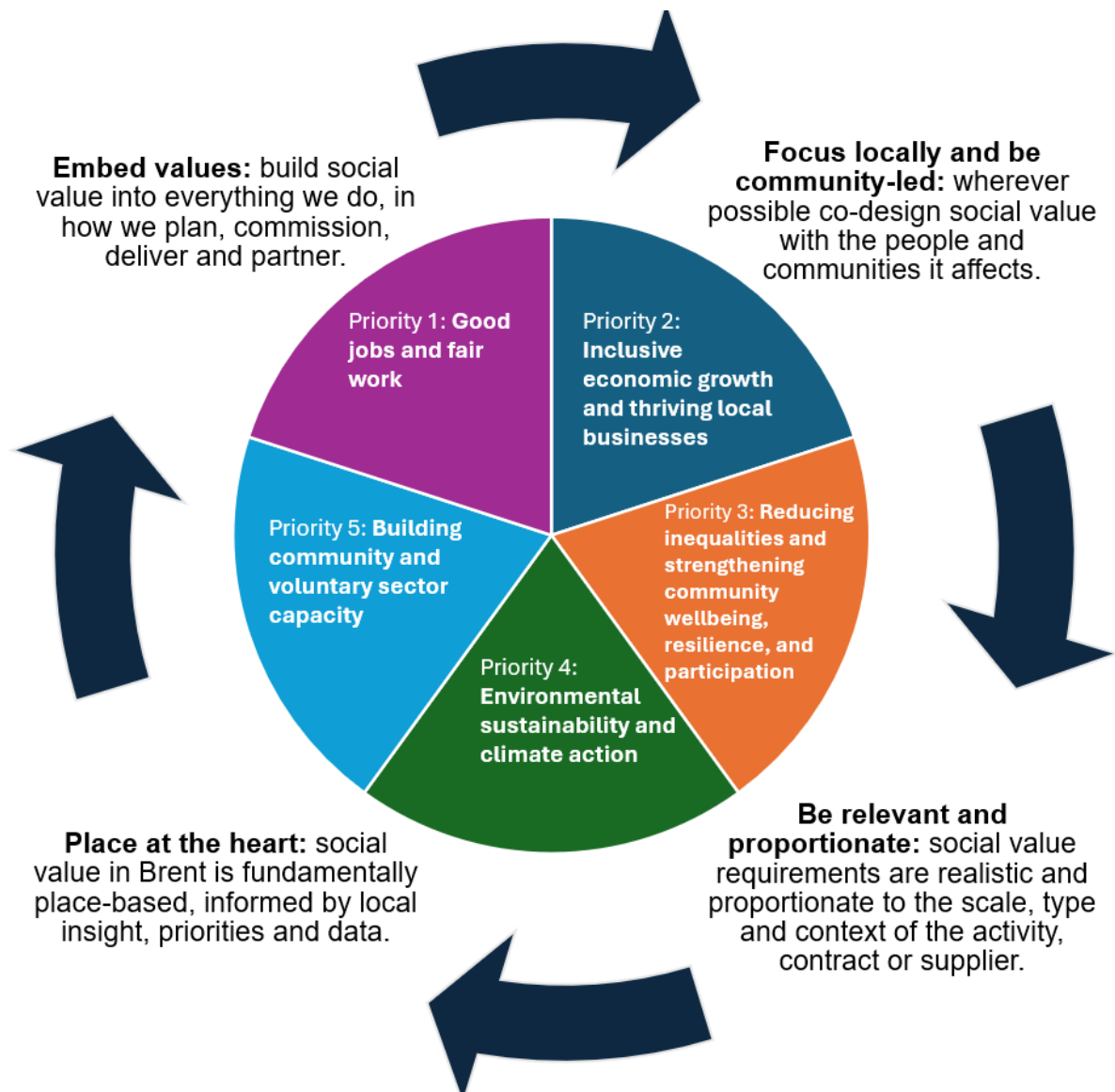
3.3.1 The proposed model combines CCIN principles (collaboration, inclusivity, community co-design) with the TOMs-style framework adapted for Brent. The model embeds social value as a core way of working rather than an add-on to procurement. It is supported by new tools and clear principles to guide officers, partners and suppliers.

#### 3.3.2 Key features

Area	Current position	Proposed change
Focus	Procurement-led	Whole-council, place-based
Scope	Supplier obligation only	Council-wide, including in-house services and partnerships
Measurement	Quantitative	Balanced approach using both metrics and qualitative outcomes
Engagement	Transactional with suppliers	Co-designed with communities and VCSEs where appropriate
Accessibility	Limited SME/VCSE participation	Tiered, proportionate expectations

#### 3.3.3 Priorities and Guiding Principles

This new approach is underpinned by a set of priorities and principles which have been tested through early engagement and so far feel broadly right reflecting both Brent's local priorities and wider best practice emerging across local government.



#### 3.3.4 Proposed approach in practice: **Delivery of social value in South Kilburn through the Single Delivery Partner appointment**

3.3.5 The appointment of a Single Delivery Partner to deliver the comprehensive redevelopment of the remaining sites at South Kilburn, including the delivery of over 1,600 homes across a 10–15 year period, presents a significant opportunity to embed social value at scale. This partnership offers the potential to deliver a coherent, long-term programme of initiatives rooted in the needs, aspirations and priorities of the South Kilburn community, creating lasting and transformational impact for local people.

3.3.6 In line with Brent's principle of embedding social value into everything we do, social value in South Kilburn will not be treated as a standalone deliverable but as a cross-cutting requirement across all aspects of the programme, from placemaking and meanwhile uses to estate management, stewardship and the response to the climate emergency. While the overall programme contributes to a wide range of outcomes, the South Kilburn Social Value Framework

focuses particularly on people-centred, place-based measures such as income, employment, education, health and wellbeing, and community safety.

3.3.7 The success of the South Kilburn regeneration will ultimately be measured by the legacy it leaves for both place and people. Social value will be achieved when the community that emerges from the regeneration is empowered, resilient and able to address local challenges through its own skills, knowledge and networks.

3.3.8 The learning from South Kilburn will be invaluable in refining Brent's overall approach to social value. It provides a live opportunity to test the new principles in practice, understand what works at scale and in partnership with communities, and apply those insights to strengthen implementation across other programmes and projects.

### **Supporting tools to embed social value delivery across the Council and with partners**

3.3.9 Several tools and resources are being implemented to embed the effective implementation of the Brent's new approach, once it has been endorsed:

<b>Tool/ Resource</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Match My Project platform</b>	Connects suppliers with local community initiatives so that social value commitments deliver tangible benefits for Brent's people and places.	<b>Operational</b> – currently in testing phase with selected projects.
<b>Social Progress Index</b>	Uses local data to identify and target the areas of greatest need and opportunity.	<b>Developed</b> and in use.
<b>Social Value Guidance</b>	Practical toolkit to be co-produced with officers, suppliers and community partners, ensuring a consistent and proportionate framework across the Council.	<b>Planned</b> – to be developed following endorsement.
<b>Training and support offer</b>	A series of bite-size lunch and learn sessions and practical resources to build understanding and confidence among staff, suppliers and VCSEs in applying the new model.	<b>Planned</b> – to be designed following endorsement.
<b>FREEPAY</b>	A product that helps local SMEs receive early payments at no cost to them, supporting vital cash flow within the local economy.	<b>Planned</b> – we've agreed with Oxygen Finance to support and introduce the product.
<b>Cross-sector Social Value Charter</b>	A borough-wide statement of shared commitment to social value, cocreated through the Social Value Summit.	<b>Planned</b> – development of the Summit to begin with cross-sector steering group in October 2025.

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

- 4.1 The development of the new Social Value approach builds on previous engagement and feedback from members and stakeholders. In February 2025, Scrutiny considered and supported the direction of travel towards a more flexible social value approach. The draft approach was also shared with the procurement consultant who led the Peer Review, to test alignment with its recommendations and emerging national best practice.

Stakeholder	Purpose of engagement	Status/Timing	Key points/desired outcomes
<b>Officers across the Council</b> (including Procurement, Legal, and Regeneration)	To share drafty policy for comment and endorsement, and to identify any room for improvement.	<b>Ongoing</b> Summer/Autumn 2025	To implement feedback received.
<b>Commissioning Community of Practice</b>	To ensure proposed priorities are aligned with those identified by commissioning officers.	<b>Complete</b>	Officers helped shape proposed priorities.
<b>Directorate Procurement Groups</b>	To act as Social Value Champions and support implementation within their service areas.	<b>Initiated</b> Draft shared in Autumn 2025, online sessions scheduled for 30 October.	Group will help embed social value across services.
<b>Cross-sector steering group</b>	To be reconvened to codesign and deliver a cross-sector Social Value Summit.	<b>Initiated</b> Group reconvening October 2025	Will guide development of the Social Value Charter and strengthen partnership working across sectors.
<b>Corporate Management Team</b>	To provide senior oversight and ensure corporate alignment.	October 2025	Draft approach and enables considered; feedback to be reflected in the final version.
<b>Workshop at the Base</b>	Open consultation workshop inviting key officers from relevant services with wider participation encouraged across the Council.	November 2025	
<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	To test and challenge the proposed approach and priorities.	November 2025	Broad support for a more flexible approach to social value.

<b>CVS Brent and VCSE Organisations</b>	To identify barriers to VCSE participation in procurement and seek feedback	November-January
<b>Elected Members and Cabinet</b>	To seek feedback and input and raise awareness of the new approach and gather local insight on community priorities.	November-February
<b>Senior Management Group</b>	To embed understanding of the new approach and identify opportunities to apply it within service planning and delivery.	January
<b>Brent's SMEs</b>	To identify barriers to SMEs participation in procurement.	Post-endorsement
<b>Social Value Summit</b>	Cross-sector event to inform the development of the Social Value Charter and strengthen shared ownership of Brent's social value priorities.	TBC 2026

## 5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The proposed approach to social value does not create direct financial implications at this stage. Implementation will be supported through existing resources within the Procurement and Community Wealth Building teams. Over time, stronger monitoring and targeting of social value outcomes are expected to generate greater local benefit from the Council's spend and support more effective use of resources.
- 5.2 Any future proposals with direct financial implications, such as the commissioning of new digital tools or additional training activity, will be subject to separate business case approval.

## 6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The approach has been developed in line with the Procurement Act 2023 and the emerging National Procurement Policy Statement, ensuring compliance with the legal framework governing public procurement.
- 6.2 Legal Services have reviewed the draft policy to confirm that it remains consistent with the Council's statutory duties and internal governance requirements. Further advice will be sought as the supporting guidance is developed to ensure ongoing compliance.

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

- 7.1 The proposed approach strengthens the Council's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion by embedding these guiding principles in procurement and commissioning practice. It encourages suppliers to create opportunities for Brent residents who face barriers to employment or participation and supports

a diverse local supply chain, including small businesses and VCSE organisations.

- 7.2 The approach also contributes to reducing health and socio-economic inequalities through locally targeted initiatives aimed at high need areas, informed by the Social Progress Index.

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

- 8.1 Environmental sustainability and climate action forms one of the core priority themes within the proposed model. Suppliers will be encouraged to demonstrate measurable contributions to the Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy (2021-2030) and associated Climate Programmes. This could include, but not be limited to, carbon reduction initiatives, waste and resource minimisation and promotion of circular economy principles, sustainable travel initiatives and infrastructure, enhancements to biodiversity and green spaces, infrastructure and initiatives to support climate adaptation and resilience.
- 8.2 The revised approach will also promote local delivery with the intention of minimising the environmental impact of contracted services across the whole supply chain.

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

- 9.1 There are no direct human resources or property implications arising from this report. Staff training needs will be met within existing resources.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 A communications plan will be developed following endorsement to promote the new Social Value approach internally and externally. This will include clear messaging for staff, suppliers and partners, supported by bite-size learning sessions and guidance materials.
- 10.2 Public communication will focus on highlighting how social value commitments are delivering benefits for Brent's residents and communities.

### **Related document for reference:**

[February 2025 – Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth Building and Social Value](#)

#### **Report sign off:**

**Rachel Crossley**  
Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy

# DRAFT Social Value Policy

## Contents

1. Purpose and vision.....	2
2. Our definition of Social Value.....	2
3. Local and national policy context.....	3
4. Scope of the policy.....	3
5. Our Social Value approach .....	3
6. Guiding Principles .....	5
7. Brent's Social Value priorities .....	6
Delivering and measuring social value .....	7
8. Roles and responsibilities.....	7
9. Compliance and accountability .....	8
10. Support and enablers .....	8

## 1. Purpose and vision

In Brent our vision is to help everyone here live their best lives. Moving Forward Together is the overarching borough plan for Brent and sets out the shared priorities and ambitions that guide everything we do towards improving the lives of those who live in the borough and leaving no one behind.

Social value is an important way in which the Council, working closely with partners, businesses, and communities, can achieve our aims for the borough. It is a mechanism through which we can ensure that every pound spent and every decision made delivers wider community benefit.

This policy reflects our commitment to putting residents first in all we do and to generate social value that not only creates positive and measurable benefits but also delivers lasting impact for everyone in Brent. It sets out Brent Council's commitment to embedding social value across all areas of our work. Our aim is to shift from a narrow, procurement-only focus to a whole-council, place-based approach that delivers meaningful outcomes for our residents and communities.

## 2. Our definition of Social Value

In Brent, social value is about transforming communities and creating positive lasting impact for Brent's people and places through the way we work, spend, lead and collaborate – above and beyond the core purpose of a service or contract. These benefits are outcome-based and focused on real change rather than just numbers; what matters is how they improve people's lives. They may include, but are not limited to, creating jobs and training opportunities, supporting local businesses and community organisations, and improving our environment. They can be delivered through procurement, employment practices, grants, investments, or other council and borough-wide processes.

Social value is about using our resources (financial, physical, and relational<sup>1</sup>) to create positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes beyond the core function of a service or contract. It aligns with Brent's Borough Plan, Community Wealth Building and Radical Place Leadership ambitions, and its role as a local anchor institution.

Equally, this policy recognises and celebrates the social value already being delivered by local voluntary, community, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and care providers through the work they do every day. These organisations often deliver deep and sustained community impact, rooted in local relationships and trust. Our aim is to better acknowledge, support, and measure this existing value, and to ensure our policies and processes enable rather than

---

<sup>1</sup> Relational resources are the networks, partnerships, and connections we build with people and organisations.



disadvantage smaller organisations that contribute so significantly to Brent's social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.

### 3. Local and national policy context

The National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS), released alongside the Procurement Act 2023 in February 2025, makes social value a core priority in public procurement.

### 4. Scope of the policy

This policy aims to maximise the positive impact of social value in Brent by:

- Specifying the Council's social value requirements and priorities
- Guiding suppliers, partners, and officers on our social value approaches and ambitions
- Describing how the Council will deliver and measure social value outcomes

This policy applies to:

- The Council's commissioning of goods, services, and works
- The Council's own operations, including our in-house services and employment practices
- The Council's wider work and influence with partners locally and nationally

### 5. Our Social Value approach

Our approach is to embed social value as a way of working across the Council. We have overarching priorities and guiding principles (outlined in this policy) that are adapted into bespoke models. This enables us to respond to the different social value needs and opportunities that are present in different services.

Brent Council is a major anchor institution in the borough; we employ over XX staff and work with over XX diverse suppliers. We collaborate with our partners, anchor institutions, several major developers, and the third sector to maximise the creation of social value across Brent. There are five main ways we do this:

- **Collaboration:** We align our approaches to regional Local Authorities and partners and share good practice in forums such as Social Value Network or Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network
- **Brokerage:** We use our position to broker cross-sector partnerships that connect social value opportunities into the right places. We use tools like Match My Project to connect suppliers with community-led initiatives, and the Social Progress Index to identify local priorities, ensuring that social value is delivered where it's needed most

- **Purpose-driven tendering:** We maintain an active awareness of local suppliers and markets and monitor the diversity of our supply chains. We strive to make our tendering processes as accessible as possible, particularly to small-medium enterprises and voluntary sector organisations
- **Inclusive economy:** We drive initiatives that aim to build an inclusive and social economy in Brent, and we work with partners to support local social economy organisations. This includes our work under the *Developing the VCSE Sector*, *Strategic Commissioning*, and *Community Wealth Building* strands of the *Capacity and Capability Building Programme*
- **Guidance:** We provide toolkits, support, and training to staff, suppliers, and the voluntary sector. This includes specific training and support to Council commissioners and contract managers

### How we apply this approach in practice

This approach will be applied through a flexible delivery model. Requirements will be targeted, relevant and proportionate, reflecting both the nature and the value of the contract. Guidance will be available to help officers select the most appropriate method in each context. In practice this means:

- Using TOMs<sup>2</sup>-style, quantifiable outputs where appropriate (e.g. large infrastructure projects)
- Using co-designed, collaborative approaches<sup>3</sup> for complex, place-based and relational work
- Applying tiered expectations based on contract value:

Contract value	Social value requirement
Under £215k	No formal SV weighting required, but inherent or existing social value (e.g. through local VCSEs, SMEs or community-based delivery) should be recognised and can inform evaluation where relevant.
£215k-£1m	Basic SV contribution in 1–2 priority areas
£1m-£5m	Clear SV commitments with agreed KPIs
Over £5m	Strategic SV across multiple outcomes, min. 3 KPIs

While not all contracts will carry a formal social value weighting, Brent Council recognises the inherent value created by smaller, local and community-based

<sup>2</sup> The [Social Value TOM](#) (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) System is a widely adopted framework for recording and reporting Social Value. The system (note: framework rather than system. Maybe mention that core TOMs are available on an open source basis, whereas the Portal has to be paid for) is structured around key Themes, within each are specific Outcomes that describe the targeted change or benefit an organisation wants to create through its activities and initiatives. The Measures then represent the quantifiable actions it takes.

<sup>3</sup> [Social Value Toolkit - Cooperative Councils Innovation Network](#)

organisations and will take this into account in commissioning and evaluation processes.

## 6. Guiding Principles

These guiding principles underpin everything we do to create social value in Brent. They reflect our commitment to work in partnership with communities, to embed our values across all activities, and to make our approach proportionate and meaningful in every context.

### Embed values

- Social value must be built into everything we do – from early design and commissioning to delivery and evaluation.
- It should be a shared responsibility across the Council and our partners, guided by senior leadership and built into day-to-day decisions.
- Our definition of value includes social, economic, and environmental wellbeing – and reflects our commitment to equality, inclusion, and sustainability.
- Wherever possible, social value should be co-designed with those it affects, ensuring that initiatives are not ‘added on’ but integral to service design and delivery.

### Focus locally and be community-led

- Our approach is place-based and rooted in Brent’s communities.
- We prioritise initiatives that make a tangible difference to Brent’s people and neighbourhoods, recognising the strengths and assets already within our borough.
- Wherever possible, social value activities should be co-designed with communities and local voluntary sector partners, ensuring that residents shape priorities and delivery.
- We expect suppliers and partners to strengthen local ecosystems – supporting Brent-based SMEs, social enterprises, and VCSE organisations to thrive.

### Be relevant and proportionate

- Social value should be ambitious but realistic.
- Expectations should be proportionate to the scale, type, and context of the activity or contract.
- Impact is maximised when actions are well targeted, relevant to local needs, and achievable within the available timeframe and resources.
- We encourage collaboration between suppliers, community partners and Council teams to avoid duplication and focus collective effort where it will have most effect.

## Place at the heart

- Social value in Brent is fundamentally place-based.
- We seek outcomes that strengthen our borough as a whole – improving wellbeing, building community power, and creating inclusive local growth.
- We will use local data, including the Social Progress Index, to inform priorities and monitor impact at neighbourhood level.
- Wherever possible, we will design approaches that bring people together, foster belonging, and ensure every part of Brent benefits from social value activity.

## 7. Brent's Social Value priorities

Moving Forward Together (Brent's Borough Plan) sets out five strategic goals for the borough. In support of these goals, this policy identifies the following priority themes which provide the context for the areas in which Brent wishes to focus social value. These themes are shown below with examples of the sorts of activities and outputs the policy seeks to secure under each theme:



## Core priorities

- Priority 1: Good jobs and fair work
- Priority 2: Inclusive economic growth and thriving local businesses
- Priority 3: Reducing inequalities and strengthening community wellbeing, resilience, and participation
- Priority 4: Environmental sustainability and climate action
- Priority 5: Building community and voluntary sector capacity

## Guidance and updates

Brent's priorities will be set out in a live guidance document, updated regularly to reflect the most current strategic objectives, community aspirations, and policy context. This ensures colleagues always work with the most up-to-date priorities.

## Delivering and measuring social value

We will take a flexible and proportionate approach to measuring social value, reflecting the different types of work we deliver. What matters most is that we can clearly demonstrate the difference our activity makes for Brent's people and places.

- For larger or more transactional contracts, we may use structured tools such as Brent-tailored TOMs to support consistency and benchmarking.
- For complex, place-based or community-led work, we will focus on collaborative and qualitative measures that capture lived experience and longer-term outcomes.

All social value commitments will be defined early and built into contracts so that expectations are clear from the start. Progress will be tracked through a mix of quantitative indicators and community feedback.

Each year, the Council will publish an Annual Social Value Impact Report summarising performance, learning and examples of good practice. This will inform continuous improvement and help shape future priorities.

Supporting guidance will be updated as needed to reflect new data, learning or legislation.

## 8. Roles and responsibilities

Overall responsibility for embedding and delivering social value sits with Brent Council's Corporate Management Team and Cabinet, supported by the Senior Responsible Owner for Social Value. Strategic oversight will be provided through the Council's performance and governance structures, including regular reporting to the Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAB), relevant committees, and senior leadership forums.

Detailed operational responsibilities and procedures will be set out separately in the Social Value Guidance, which will provide officers with practical support for implementation, monitoring and reporting.

## 9. Compliance and accountability

If a supplier is unable to meet their contractual social value obligations, this should be treated as a contract failure in the same way as any other. The first step would be a remedial plan, and if the issue continues it should be escalated through the defined contract governance structure.

## 10. Support and enablers

Effective delivery of this policy will be supported by:

- Staff training and role-specific guidance
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities for social value within the council and in contract management
- Supplier support and pre-market engagement to help suppliers, especially local SMEs and VCSEs, understand Brent's priorities and requirements.
- Tools and resources, including:
  - Brent TOMs framework
  - [Social Progress Index](#)
  - Match My Project platform
  - Social Value Guidance document

### Social Value Guidance

A detailed Social Value Guidance will be co-produced with officers, suppliers, and community representatives to support the delivery of this policy.

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Cabinet Climate Change and Community Power (Councillor Jake Rubin)</b>
<b>Procurement Improvement Programme and Emerging Procurement Strategy</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>	Rhodri Rowlands Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy <a href="mailto:Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk">Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the developments following the Procurement Peer Review and the established Procurement Improvement Programme, emerging Procurement Strategy and opportunities arising from adopting a new definition of “local” suppliers and engagement of Brent businesses.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

That Committee:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and progress on the Procurement Improvement Programme
- 2.2 Consider and comment on the emerging approach for a new Procurement Strategy.
- 2.3 Consider and comment on the options for defining ‘local’

### **3. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

- 3.1 The areas in this report closely align with the Council's commitment to create long lasting positive change to local areas, for the benefit of local communities and align with the Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 priorities of 'Thriving Communities', 'A Healthier Brent' and 'Prosperity and Stability in Brent' in particular such as promoting high quality and secure employment for our residents.
- 3.2 Effective strategic procurement plays an important role in delivering against strategic priorities and objectives. Responsible procurement in particular can ensure that the Council delivers added social value and impact through it's third party spend with tangible and measurable benefits for Brent.
- 3.3 The Council commissioned a review of Procurement in the context of significant external changes such as the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023, the Council's Embrace Change Portfolio and in response to audit findings, including those set out in Grant Thornton's Audit Finding's Report dated February 2025.
- 3.4 The areas in this report also particularly align with the Capacity and Capability workstream of our Embrace Change Portfolio, supporting community wealth ambitions to collectively and effectively support residents in their communities by ensuring good value for money for the council and high-quality services for residents.

### **4.0 Background**

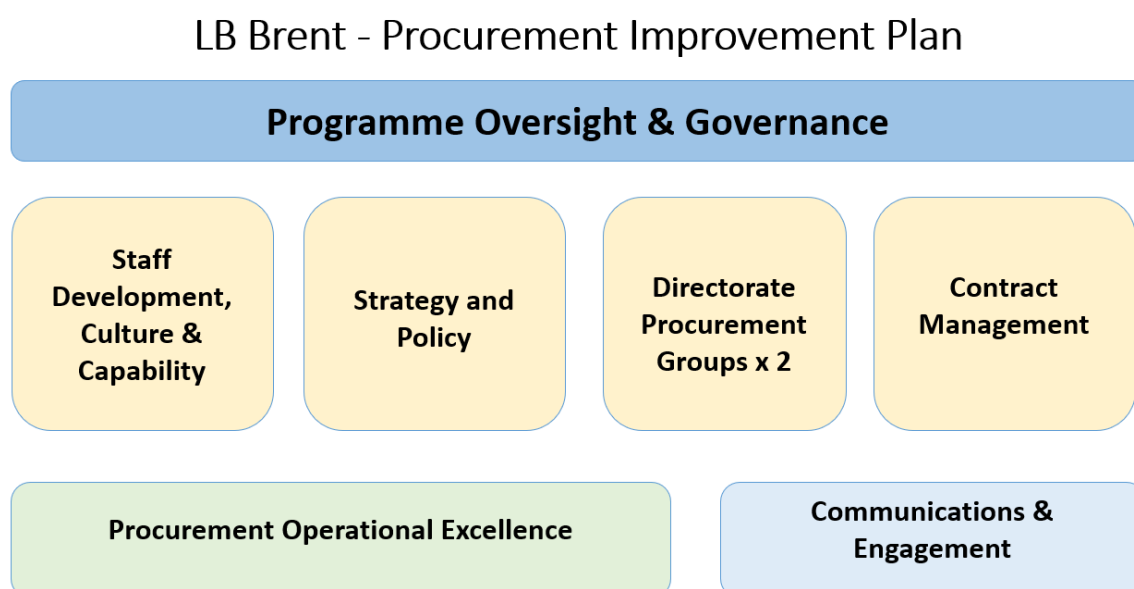
#### **Peer review and Procurement Improvement Plan (PIP)**

- 4.1 In early 2025, the Council, working with the Local Government Association (LGA), commissioned an independent peer review of Procurement. The review drew out areas of strength and good practice and areas for improvement and development.
- 4.2 The review scope covered the following themes:
  - Procurement Processes
  - Governance and Approvals processes
  - Contract Management
  - Engagement and Communications
  - Use of data, information and knowledge sources
  - Procurement Strategy and Policies
  - Team, culture and staff development
  - Collaboration with others
- 4.3 The final review report and recommendations were issued in April 2025 and approved in full by CMT in May 2025. A key recommendation was to establish a Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP) to drive recommendations and changes. The PIP brings together, and acts as the single programme through



which delivery of all service enhancements and recommendations in the context of Procurement are being delivered.

- 4.4 The PIP has several core workstreams covering the following themes with a cross-cutting focus for communication and engagement of all key stakeholders who are impacted. Figure 1 below outlines the series of workstreams in the improvement programme.



**Figure 1: Brent's Procurement Improvement Programme structure**

- 4.5 The scale of the PIP and the level of change and transformation it will deliver means improvements will be phased to be delivered over a 18-24 month period.
- 4.6 The governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery of the PIP include the following:
- The sponsoring Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) officer is the Director of Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building and Engagement.
  - A new Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAB) has been established. The CPCMAB will provide a scrutiny, challenge and assurance role in relation to commissioning, procurement and contract management, including delivery of the PIP. The CPCMAB operates in 2 parts – an officer only meeting and a member-officer meeting chaired by the Lead Member and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Community Power.
  - Regular progress updates through Lead Member Briefings.
  - A project group and workstream delivery groups reporting to CPCMAB.
  - Dedicated Project Management capacity has been secured
  - Fortnightly progress review and updates through the Lead Member – Climate Change and Community Power Briefings
- 4.7 Good progress has been made at pace since endorsement of the PIP:

- **Governance:** The new Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAAB) has been established and has met several times since May 2025.
- **Governance and Engagement:** Project delivery briefs and plans setting out key objectives, outputs and activities have been drafted, reviewed and agreed with the membership of each PIP workstream, and will form the basis of the detailed PIP programme plan.
- **Engagement:** Cross-council officer representation for each workstream is complete and follows engagement with all Directorate Leadership Teams to secure cross-council support for the PIP.
- **Culture and Capability:** New recruitment strategies have been developed to address long standing capacity challenges in the Procurement Service, and prioritised and targeted recruitment campaigns have been launched.
- **Culture and Capability:** A draft training and development offer for procurement and contract management has been developed.
- **Governance and Compliance:** A draft RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) protocol that clarifies roles and responsibilities across the procurement cycle has been developed and is being reviewed extensively by Officers.
- **Strategy and Policy:** A draft Social Value Policy and new Procurement Strategy approach are in progress.

4.8 This report is focussed on two of the recommendations from the Procurement peer review relating to the Strategy and Policy workstream:

1. A new Council Procurement Strategy aligned to the Council's priorities, the changed external environment and prevailing good practices should be drafted.
2. To review the definition of "local supplier" for Brent and how this should be adopted.

### **Emerging Procurement Strategy**

4.9 Brent's current Procurement Strategy consists of five pillars: community wealth building, sustainability, circular economy, social value and ethical procurement, and active procurement, and covered the period 2020 – 2023.

4.10 A new Strategy needs to be developed aligned to our Borough Plan priorities, informed by peer review and audit findings, and leveraging opportunities from the changing national policy landscape. In addition, the Strategy will draw on the findings and recommendations from the current review of community wealth building practices in Brent that is being carried out by Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). This is due to report in November.

### *National Context*

### **Procurement Act 2023 (PA23)**

- 4.11 Public Sector Procurement is at a point of significant change with the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) and accompanying Procurement Regulations 2024, which came into force in February 2025. This is the first major reform of the rules since the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) in 2015 and represents a major shift to enhancing efficiency, flexibility and transparency across the procurement lifecycle.
- 4.12 The Act provides supportive mechanisms that will help facilitate transformative shifts in our procurement approach that will realise greater overall benefits for Brent. Early development of a new approach for our Procurement Strategy has aimed to reflect the benefits to ensure that our future procurement approach can make the most of these. Key opportunities are summarised in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Opportunities from the new Procurement Act 2023.

### National Procurement Strategy 2022 (NPS) and National Procurement Policy Statement 2025 (NPPS)

- 4.13 The National Procurement Strategy 2022 also sets out local government's ambitions and priorities, focusing on three core themes: showing leadership, behaving commercially and achieving community benefits
- 4.14 Alongside the Procurement Act and Regulations, the government also issued the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) in February 2025. This is a statutory statement, setting out and communicating the wider policy objectives of the UK government. Contracting authorities are required to have regard to the NPPS and are expected to utilise it as a strategic guide. The NPPS identifies three key priorities:
- Driving **economic growth** and strengthening supply chains by giving SMEs and VCSEs a fair chance at public contracts, creating high quality jobs and championing innovation.
  - Delivering **social and economic value** that supports the Government's missions including by working in partnership across organisational boundaries.

- Ensuring the right **commercial capability** and standards are in place to procure and manage contracts effectively and to collaborate with other contracting authorities to **deliver best value**.

## Emerging new Brent Procurement Strategy

- 4.15 Supporting the priorities of our Borough Plan is central to development of this Strategy, as well as alignment with the Council's wider Transformation agenda and Embrace Change portfolio, and the significantly changed national policy landscape.
- 4.16 Emerging priorities reflect national goals of the National Procurement Strategy (NPS) 2022, and adopt the three priorities of the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) 2025, in a way that reflects Brent's local context and strategic goals. This approach is one that many other Councils have sought to take in updating their Procurement Strategies.
- 4.17 Our overall vision is that Procurement services help to achieve council priorities by driving value for money and cost savings, optimising spend and creating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. The emerging priorities set out a vision for how we will use procurement to deliver value for Brent through a focus on place, people and commercial capability to enable a fairer, more equal Brent.
- 4.18 The proposed Strategy is underpinned by an overarching principle of responsible procurement that seeks to ensure responsible, sustainable and ethical procurement practices are built into all stages of procurement processes, and three core priority themes that will guide actions. This is outlined in Figure 3 and below.

The proposed Strategy is based on three priorities, underpinned by a guiding principle of responsible procurement to ensure fairness and integrity in our procurement:

### Underpinning principle - Responsible procurement:

Seek to ensure our procurement is responsible, sustainable and ethical, and where possible, embeds the following throughout the procurement lifecycle, in contracts and through supply chain expectations:

- Climate goals and sustainable procurement practices
- Ethical procurement practices.
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

*Borough Plan: A Cleaner, Greener Future*

### Priority 1: Community Wealth Building

- Increase spend with local\* SMEs and VCSEs.
- Increase support for local\* SMEs and VCSEs to access contracts and opportunities.
- Increase local employment, skills and learning opportunities.
- Work with suppliers to ensure they are committed to providing high quality, good jobs and fair pay.

*Borough Plan: Prosperity and Stability in Brent  
NPPS: Driving economic growth*

### Priority 2: Community Power

- Work in partnership and collaboration with contractors to strengthen local communities and tackle inequality in Brent.
- Leverage and target social value opportunities to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents, through a place-based approach.
- Use local intelligence to target opportunities.

*Borough Plan: Thriving Communities – Enabling our Communities  
NPPS: Delivering social and economic value  
NPS: Achieving community benefits*

### Priority 3: Commercial capability, leadership and innovation

- Strengthen commercial capability.
- Uphold good contract management.
- Foster a culture of leadership, innovation and continuous improvement across procurement and teams involved in the procurement cycle.
- Prioritise workforce learning and development, nurturing and developing skills and talent.

*NPPS: Commercial capability*

## Figure 3: Emerging principle and priorities of new Procurement Strategy

- 4.19 The underpinning principle of responsible procurement will seek to ensure that, where possible, considerations of the following are embedded throughout the procurement lifecycle:

- Climate goals and sustainable procurement practices
- Ethical procurement practices
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

4.20 The emerging three core priority themes of the strategy support national goals by adapting the priorities of the National Procurement Policy Statement 2025 and closely align with our local context and strategic goals. The priorities focus on place and the economy, people and social value, and internal commercial capability, leadership and innovation.

*Priority 1: Community Wealth Building*

- Increase spend with local SME's and VCSE'S.
- Increase support for local SME's and VCSE's to access contracts and opportunities.
- Increase local employment, skills and learning opportunities.
- Work with suppliers to ensure they are committed to providing high quality, good jobs and fair pay
- Employment rights and high quality jobs:

*Priority 2: Community Power*

- Work in partnership and collaboration with contractors to strengthen local communities and tackle inequality in Brent.
- Leverage and target social value opportunities to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents, through a place-based approach.
- Use local intelligence to target opportunities.
- Adoption of range of service delivery models including in-sourcing

*Priority 3: Commercial capability, leadership and innovation*

- Strengthen commercial capability.
- Uphold good contract management.
- Foster a culture of leadership, innovation and continuous improvement across procurement and teams involved in the procurement cycle.
- Prioritise workforce learning and development, nurturing and developing skills and talent
- Capacity and capability building and training for local suppliers

*Next steps*

4.21 In reviewing the report, the Committee is asked to consider:

1. Does the proposed direction of travel feel right for Brent?
2. Are there any elements that should be strengthened, added or removed?
3. Consider and comment on the whether exploring a threshold on certain higher value contracts to ensure that the business we are engaging with pay the London living wage and recognises Trade Unions.

- 4.22 The Strategy plans are currently being reviewed by various groups internally to feedback on and endorse the direction of travel. This includes engagement through the Procurement Improvement Programme steering group and Strategy and Policy workstream, the Commissioning, Procurement, Contract Management and Assurance Board and senior management, engagement with service leads through Departmental Procurement Groups, wider opportunity for all staff feedback through workshops, and formal consultation as required. Table 1 below outlines the engagement plan.

4.23

**Table 1: Summary engagement plan**

Activity	Indicative timeline
Input from Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and review of Community Wealth Building for Brent	October-November
Officer engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal teams including Procurement and Climate</li> <li>Departmental Procurement Groups</li> <li>Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board,</li> <li>Procurement Improvement Programme governance channels,</li> <li>Senior Management Group</li> <li>CMT</li> </ul>	October - November
Member and Cabinet engagement	November – Scrutiny February - Cabinet
Supplier and business engagement	November – January
Third sector engagement	November - January

- 4.24 As we continue to refine our new Procurement Strategy with view of implementation from May 2025, and implement the actions arising from the Procurement Review, we will refresh the mechanisms we use to measure and report on performance. In particular, we want to better understand the impact of activity on key themes. For example, how we measure and report on the use of local suppliers and businesses, and how we might measure the impact on the local economy of progressive procurement and the work on CWB. Procurement KPI's are currently being reviewed.
- 4.25 We plan to reestablish a form of Annual Report covering the impact of procurement, as well as relevant Community Wealth Building and social value activity.

## **Definition of “local” and engagement with Brent suppliers**

### *The challenge*

- 4.26 The nature of local authority boundaries, especially in London, means that businesses operate in the geographies that best meet the needs of their clients/customers. Similarly, their employees may live within, adjacent to or some distance from the council where they are based. Where their staff spend their money or pay council tax is only passingly related to where it is earned.
- 4.27 Local authorities meet the challenges of supporting local businesses in a variety of ways. Where Local Enterprise Partnerships exist, for example focused around major conurbations, then a naturally defined cohort may exist. In London where relatively small populations of suppliers exist in neighbouring councils, each with relatively small differences in character, then constraining engagement to only one council reduces scale of the potential benefits and the return on effort.
- 4.28 A further challenge is that many local supplier, particularly micro and smaller businesses are often entirely unsuited to become direct suppliers to a local authority – despite their aspirations. Even the simplest of procurement processes – required by law – coupled with the council’s policy requirements place a considerable burden of cost and time on small businesses which they often lack the skills or resource to undertake. Even a medium sized enterprise will be selective on where it deploys its bidding capability.
- 4.29 There is also significant additional cost to the council from managing a much larger pool of smaller suppliers including the administration of all the contracts, purchase orders and invoices required. This in a time of constrained budget.
- 4.30 However, as detailed below, there are some viable approaches that could be adopted.

### *Definition of “local”*

- 4.31 The following table outlines some of the definitions that Brent could adopt, along with the implications. The Committee is asked to comment on and provide feedback on these options.

**Table 2: Options for definitions of “local” that Brent could adopt**

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
1	Organisations strictly within the boundaries of Brent	The organisations that pay business rates to LBB and use local services. Their employees are often residents within LBB. Easy to define purely on geography. Provides a focussed cohort to work with.	Relatively small group of organisations Limited return on effort.

2	Organisations within the 7 Councils in the West London Alliance i.e. Barnet, Brent, Ealing, H&F, Harrow, Hillingdon & Hounslow.	Group of LAs with an existing governance and ongoing collaboration and joint commissioning of contracts.	Brent is towards the eastern fringe of this group and some suppliers may not consider Brent as “local”. Risk it could be too big a community.
3	Organisations within Brent and most councils directly bordering Brent. i.e. Barnet, Harrow, Ealing, H&F, Camden.	Proximities mean locations are more manageable for delivery/supply of services. With the addition of other LAs roughly approximates to the health region.	No natural allegiance of these councils at this time
4	Within a defined number of miles from the centre of or the boundary of Brent.	Approach is more focussed on LBB as the “central” location.	Is it clearly definable or too arbitrary.

- 4.32 Whichever location is used should be caveated that when searching solely by post code may give false information if an organisation’s address is a head office or invoicing address. One solution is to base the location on where workforce is based locally – i.e. their office or depot. This is information that contract managers should be aware of but may not be formally recorded.

#### *Engagement with Brent suppliers*

- 4.33 In late 2024/early 2025 a company called Brandiun was engaged to undertake some supplier readiness work. This was UKSPF funded and delivered in partnership with the Economic Development Team. They held 36 x 1.5 hour one to one sessions with Brent based SMEs and their programme report was issued in May 2025.
- 4.34 Some themes that emerge from their report and from ad hoc, informal contact with local suppliers are:
- a) They would benefit from a “space” to meet and connect with peers and other businesses
  - b) Welcomed potential of regular spaces / briefings on particular topics or new opportunities.
  - c) Most SMEs are inexperienced in bidding to the public sector
  - d) They fear a low ROI from not winning bids and that bid lots are “too big”.
  - e) The needs of varying sizes of “SMEs” are vastly different and it would be erroneous to adopt a one size fits all approach. For example, early-stage micro businesses (1-5 staff, c£200k revenue) have very different needs from emerging SMEs (15-50 staff, >£1m revenue) which differ from established SMEs (60+ staff, >£5m revenue).
- 4.35 While it has yet to be established if there were any sustainable benefits that have arisen from Brandiun’s project, they made a series of recommendations.



Some of these recommendations, plus examples of good practices in other council and the implementation of council and member priorities inform the following suggested approaches for PCG to consider.

#### *Summary Recommendations to improve engagement with local businesses*

1. It is intended to publish externally an annual procurement plan and update it quarterly. In addition, a summary of this will be issued to Members for them to share it with suppliers local to them, or at least regularly be signposted to the information. An annual procurement report will also be published
2. Consider the scope for the development of a rolling programme of online briefings about how to do business with Brent.
3. Consider a “Buy Local” priority in the development of the new council Procurement Strategy and the Social Value Policy.
4. Where appropriate require large, first tier suppliers to support/engage with local organisations as part of their supply chain, or as part of their Social Value commitments.
5. As part of the culture development within Procurement and rolled out through directorate procurement groups, prioritise spending with local suppliers – for example with smaller contract “lots”, and more market engagement and preparation.
6. Develop a plan for “Meet the Buyer” events ahead of large council and other external public sector organisations, including participation from the council’s first tier suppliers.

#### Measuring and Reporting on Impact

- 4.36 It is important that we measure, understand and report on the impact of procurement activity. This is necessary to ensure we know what works, what difference is being made for residents, the extent to which we are realising value for money and how effective and efficient Brent’s procurement is.
- 4.37 As we refine our new Procurement Strategy and implement the actions arising from the Procurement Review, we will refresh the mechanisms we use to measure and report on performance. In particular, we want to better understand the impact of activity on key themes. For example, how we measure and report on the use of local suppliers and businesses, and how we might measure the impact on the local economy of progressive procurement and the work on CWB.
- 4.38 We plan to reestablish a form of Annual Report covering the impact of procurement, as well as relevant Community Wealth Building and social value activity.

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

- 5.1 The development of the emerging Procurement Strategy approach builds on previous engagement and feedback from members and stakeholders. The proposals have also been shared with the procurement consultant who led the

Peer Review, to test alignment with its recommendations and emerging national best practice. The Lead Cabinet Member Climate Change and Community Power has been engaged and inputted on the draft proposals. Section 4.23 summarises the additional engagement that will take place.

## **6.0 Financial Considerations**

- 6.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme and the development of the Council's refreshed Procurement Strategy supports the Council's delivery of savings and securing best value from third party spend. Resourcing implications will be kept under review.

## **7.0 Legal Considerations**

- 7.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme and the development of the Council's refreshed Procurement Strategy support's the Council's compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and Best Value obligations.

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

- 8.1 The proposed approach strengthens the Council's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion by embedding these guiding principles in procurement and commissioning practice. It encourages suppliers to create opportunities for Brent residents who face barriers to employment or participation and supports a diverse local supply chain, including small businesses and VCSE organisations.
- 8.2 The approach also contributes to reducing health and socio-economic inequalities through locally targeted initiatives aimed at high need areas, informed by the Social Progress Index.

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

- 9.1 Environmental sustainability and climate action will be supported by the Procurement Strategy and is also a key priority themes within the supporting Social Value Policy draft approach. Suppliers will be encouraged to demonstrate measurable contributions to the Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy (2021-2030) and associated Climate Programmes. This could include, but not be limited to, carbon reduction initiatives, waste and resource minimisation and promotion of circular economy principles, sustainable travel initiatives and infrastructure, enhancements to biodiversity and green spaces, infrastructure and initiatives to support climate adaptation and resilience.
- 9.2 The revised approach will also promote local delivery with the intention of minimising the environmental impact of contracted services across the whole supply chain.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 A communications plan will be developed following endorsement of the final Procurement Strategy to promote the new approach internally and externally. This will include clear messaging for staff, suppliers and partners, supported by bite-size learning sessions and guidance materials. It will also closely align with the communications for social value.
- 10.2 Public communication will focus on highlighting how social value commitments are delivering benefits for Brent's residents and communities.

Related documents for reference:


[February 2025 – Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth Building and Social Value](#)

**Report sign off:**

***Rachel Crossley***

Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy

This page is intentionally left blank

	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 4 November 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 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.
- 3.2.2 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.
- 3.2.3 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.
- 3.2.4 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

This page is intentionally left blank



## Appendix A

### Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (RPRSC) Recommendations Tracker 2025/26

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

#### Recommendations to Cabinet

Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Member, Lead Officer/s, and Department	Executive Response	Review date
28 Jan 2025 – <b>Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings (2025/26)</b>	Review the current approach for allocating and spending Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) that ensures better alignment with borough needs, a more balanced distribution of funds across borough plan priorities, and that facilitates creative investment into budgetary high-priority areas (e.g. key departmental budgetary pressure/ risk areas) as far as legally permissible.	Cabinet  Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Council accepts this recommendation and has already begun work to strengthen the link between the SCIL programme, the Borough Plan, and Brent's wider capital strategy. As shown in the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy Funding for Public Realm Infrastructure (Cabinet, July 2025) and Neighbourhood CIL Allocations Report (Cabinet, September 2025), over £19 million is being invested in local priorities such as highways, parks, CCTV, and green spaces — ensuring visible improvements in every Brent Connects area.</p> <p>The Council will also continue to highlight the constraints imposed by current CIL</p>	04/11/2025

			regulations, which restrict spending to the mitigation of development impacts. Brent has made the case nationally — including through the Autumn Budget Representation 2025 and our joint correspondence to the Minister for Housing and Planning — for a more flexible framework that allows councils to deploy SCIL creatively in support of key pressures such as housing, community safety, and local environmental improvements.	
	Continue to advocate for local government finance reform that provides local authorities greater autonomy in generating, allocating, and spending their resources, including the flexible use of funds such as SCIL.	Cabinet  Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Council strongly supports this recommendation and has been leading national advocacy for reform. In August 2024, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration wrote to the Minister for Housing and Planning, supported by Georgia Gould MP, calling for greater local flexibility in the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The letter argued that councils are best placed to decide how to invest locally — including for urgent priorities such as waste enforcement, community safety, and neighbourhood improvement — and that broadening CIL's definition of infrastructure would unlock funds currently held in reserve.</p> <p>Brent will continue to work with London Councils and our local MPs to push for wider fiscal devolution. This includes the introduction of a visitor levy, reform of developer contributions, and multi-year settlements that provide long-term stability.</p>	04/11/2025

			The aim is to give local government the financial autonomy to deliver on national missions — from housing and transport to climate action and local pride in place.	
	Undertake an urgent review of the Council's procurement and commissioning processes to enhance its capacity to meet strategic objectives, maximise value for money, and, most importantly, ensure that the needs and perspectives of residents and service users are at the heart of service design. This should include a thorough exploration of 'participatory community wealth-building' practices, such as the use of community-led panels in defining commissioning and procurement priorities, determining service specifications, shaping community-led social value priorities, assessing tenders, and monitoring service performance, social value, economic and wider social impact.	Cabinet  Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Council accepts this recommendation. A comprehensive review of procurement and commissioning processes is already underway as part of Brent's Community Wealth Building and Social Value Transformation Programme, delivered in partnership with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) – the UK's leading organisation for community wealth-building.</p> <p>This work will assess how procurement, commissioning, land, assets, and employment strategies can collectively build wealth within Brent's communities, keeping more of the Council's £1 billion-plus annual spend circulating locally. It will identify how existing practices can go further to support local SMEs, social enterprises, and the voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>A Procurement Improvement Programme has been established to address key recommendations from the review and ensure operational arrangement are optimised to support activities that deliver best value and outcomes for residents.</p> <p>The forthcoming Social Value Policy (2026) will embed a whole-council, place-based</p>	04/11/2025

			<p>approach to social value – moving beyond procurement to ensure that every pound spent delivers wider social, economic, and environmental benefits. This includes co-designing priorities with residents and VCSE partners, expanding local supply chains, and using tools such as Match My Project and the Social Progress Index to target impact where it is most needed.</p> <p>This will strengthen alignment with the Borough Plan and the new Procurement Act 2023, ensuring that procurement and commissioning deliver maximum value for residents and tangible community impact across the five pillars of community wealth-building: employment, procurement spend, land and property, ownership, and finance.</p>	
	Strategically prioritise and enhance investment in debt recovery efforts to improve collection rates, specifically targeting those who are avoiding paying.	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p>	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>Work is underway to strengthen debt management capacity, with a focus on consistency, fairness, and digital innovation. Enhanced data analytics and new communication tools are being introduced to improve debt profiling, increase customer contacts and reduce arrears, while maintaining a clear commitment to supporting residents in financial hardship. The aim is to increase overall collection rates while ensuring that recovery processes are proportionate and sensitive to individual circumstances.</p>	04/11/2025

	Prioritise rebuilding strong financial reserves, particularly the general reserves and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves, as a core component of its short and medium-term financial planning, while enhancing spending controls to reduce costs.	Cabinet  Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy includes a plan to rebuild reserves over the next three years, in line with CIPFA guidance and the external auditor's recommendations. Spending controls have been strengthened across all departments, and the ongoing corporate cost-reduction programme aims to protect reserves while maintaining essential frontline services.</p>	04/11/2025
	Establish a robust monitoring process to ensure effective implementation of accepted Task Group recommendations.	Cabinet  Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 10/02/25:</b></p> <p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 08/10/25:</b></p> <p>Cabinet will maintain active oversight of all accepted Scrutiny recommendations through Lead Member Briefings and CMT ownership. Cabinet Members and senior officers will continue to engage directly with the R&amp;PR Scrutiny Committee, providing progress updates and evidence of delivery when requested.</p>	04/11/2025

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

Meeting date and agenda item	Suggestion for improvement	Council Department/External Partner	Response / Status
25 Feb 2025 - <b>Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth-Building, and Social Value</b>	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.	Amira Nassr – Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance, Finance & Resources	<p><b>Response received on 11/06/2025:</b></p> <p>This will be revisited in April 2026 once the procurement and social value policies have been formally adopted.</p>
23 April 2025 – <b>Build Quality in Brent</b>	Conduct a survey to identify which council-owned buildings may fall within the scope of the Building Safety Act 2022 and/or the Defective Premises Act 1972 in relation to relevant defects, and assess whether there is potential for legal recourse.	Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 07/07/25:</b></p> <p>Officers have identified two projects (Housing and Education) that may fall within the scope of the Building Safety Act 2022 and/or the Defective Premises Act 1972. Work is being undertaken to assess if/where they may be potential for legal recourse.</p> <p>A further update will be provided by 9 January 2026.</p>
	Undertake a sampling review to assess design changes from the planning stage through to practical completion, and determine whether these changes have impacted build quality.	Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 07/07/25:</b></p> <p>Officers propose to undertake a sampling of three projects, one from each the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> </ul> <p>A further update will be provided by 9 January 2026.</p>

2 September 2025 – <b>Brent Local Plan Review</b>	Include land value mapping in the evidence base supporting the upcoming Local Plan.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>Geographical variances in land value across the borough will be considered within any new viability assessment necessary to support the Local Plan's review.</p>
	Set targets for Local Plan priorities that are realistic, achievable, and clearly deliverable to support effective implementation and buy-in.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>Chapter 7, p566 of <a href="#">The Local Plan</a> contains monitoring metrics for policies, and we can explore these through the Local Plan review. The tests of soundness will ensure realism and deliverability of policies and test whether targets are achievable. The Local Plan review can raise the question of how effective current policies are, if they need to be changed or removed if new policies or monitoring metrics need to be developed to better understand how the plan is performing. We can also amend the monitoring section of the Local Plan if necessary. Delivery will also require buy-in and partnership working to ensure that Local Plan objectives are achieved.</p>
	Strengthen consultation and engagement with local neighbourhood groups throughout the Local Plan development process, drawing on lessons from previous efforts to ensure their input meaningfully informs the revised plan and supports ongoing, transparent dialogue. Enhance outreach with underrepresented groups throughout the upcoming Local Plan development process, applying lessons learned from prior communications and engagement efforts.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>We work to strengthen consultation and engagement. Any such engagement will have to be proportionate, taking account of time and resources available. The Brent Local Plan won the Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) Award for Excellence in Plan Making in 2024, which including for its level of engagement with hard-to-reach groups. The effectiveness of public engagement with the Local Plan process will also be assessed by the Planning Inspectorate against our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which we are also intending to review.</p> <p>We intend to produce a consultation strategy for the Local Plan Review, working with the communications team and those embedded in communities to reach as broad a spectrum of the community as possible. This will be shared with relevant councillors overseeing the Local Plan review in the Brent councillor Local Plan Working Group and Policy Coordination Group.</p> <p>All representations to the Local Plan will be considered and where justified, amendments made. We will balance respondent views with one another, the conclusions of the evidence base, relevant regulations, national policy, London Plan policy and guidance.</p>

			We will demonstrate, through the Regulation 22 (Consultation) Statement how we have done this.
		Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>Please refer to answer above.</p> <p>One of the likely aims of the engagement strategy will be to seek to understand the level of success of previous consultations across the Council in reaching underrepresented groups, so we know which ones to put extra focus on. The engagement strategy will likely consider a wide range of methods and processes aimed at achieving a response rate that is at least proportional to different groups in the context of Brent's population. This may include digital outreach, flyers and posters to draw attention to the draft plan consultation. We will pay attention to what questions we are asking and how we are asking them so that consultations are accessible. Online and in person engagement events at appropriate times and locations will be considered carefully.</p> <p>In addition, Brent will apply its Equity Diversity and Inclusion policy in setting out a consultation and engagement strategy for the Local Plan, to ensure that hard to reach groups are identified and appropriate methods are used to engage with them. Officers will collaborate across Council departments and with partners to see that the Local Plan reaches all communities in the local population.</p>
	Ensure that the Committee is regularly updated on delegated decisions made by Cabinet members and corporate directors throughout the Local Plan development process.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>It is expected that the Local Plan Review will remain on the Action Plan for this committee and will be prompted for updates ahead of each meeting.</p>
	Ensure that councillors, via the Brent Local Plan Working Group, are actively involved in reviewing the findings of viability assessments, financial modelling, and policy options throughout the Local Plan review and the	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>The viability assessment is a technical document forming part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. Its findings will be shared with the members of the Local Plan Group, who will also be engaged in decisions about appropriate responses to the viability assessment findings through the development of policies.</p>



	development of the updated Local Plan.		Whilst the exact format of how we will discuss policy options has not been determined, these may well be in the form of thematic workshops for members, focusing on the more strategic areas of the Local Plan.
	Explore, through the Local Plan review, opportunities to strengthen policy mechanisms that ensure all parts of Brent, not only designated Growth Areas, benefit equitably from development.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Local Plan will provide a clear framework for the distribution of development in the borough and what development will need to achieve for it to be regarded as acceptable. Growth areas will be the focus of most change, albeit likely that suburban intensification in other areas will be required to assist in meeting housing need. We will seek views from councillors, other council departments, the wider community and representative groups on matters that development should better address. There are some policies in the Local Plan that do seek to provide social benefits to people not directly impacted by the development. These include, for example, policies that require construction apprenticeships for Brent residents or a requirement for proposals for commercial premises to prioritise apprenticeships and appointment of Brent residents, once they are completed.</p> <p>However, there are legal tests regarding what development can reasonably be required to deliver to make it acceptable. Similar restrictions also apply to funds that development may generate to address its infrastructure impacts. These must be related to the <i>additional</i> burden development may put on local infrastructure and cannot be used to address existing deficiencies for the population. There are cross cutting and borough wide policy areas, such and climate change and transport, where it will be important to take a strategic view.</p>
	Explore innovative approaches through the Local Plan review to further strengthen the delivery of genuine affordable housing, climate resilience, sustainability, social infrastructure (such as community facilities), and green spaces across Brent, while addressing issues such as gambling overconcentration and other uses associated with social harm.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>We will look at creative and innovative approaches where possible to tackle some of these challenging issues. Town centres, for instance, will need a boost to counteract some of the negative influences on them. Some of this may require linking in with other initiatives such as climate, heritage and funding opportunities, which the Local Plan Review will have an interface with as the spatial and land use framework.</p>

	Consider strategies within the Local Plan review to support a balanced mix of green spaces across all areas of the borough, meeting community needs equitably.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>The Local Plan review will be subject to an evidence base that considers the existing extent and quality of open spaces, comparing them to national and London standards. It will provide clarity on what sites need to provide within their development boundaries, and what additional provision and enhancements will need to take place across the borough. Climate resilience objectives may have an influence on matters such as shading, species and ground conditions.</p>
	Enhance developer requirements through the Local Plan review process by introducing higher standards for sustainability, climate adaptation and resilience, and build quality.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>Climate conditions have not improved in recent years and zero carbon (as referred to in the current Local Plan) / carbon neutrality targets are ever more challenging to meet. This means that adaptation and resilience measures are essential. Building design and planning of external space will require more attention to be able to deal with climate extremes and meet the objectives of the 2025 Climate Adaptation and Resilience plan in particular (e.g. relating to drought, floods and heat). We will work with all partners to enhance standards in the Local Plan Review.</p>
	Leverage the Local Plan review process to limit the use of the carbon offset fund to a last resort for developers.	Gerry Ansell – Director, Inclusive Regeneration & Climate Resilience, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<p><b>Response received on 27/10/25:</b></p> <p>On principle, the Local Plan will prioritise on site or local carbon savings projects for proposals, asking for contributions to the offset fund only where on site or local solutions have been exhausted. A review of the extent to which Brent can introduce its own locally set carbon-offsetting price rather than the GLA London-wide £95 per tonne figure, has started. If it is viable to introduce a higher charging rate, this will be taken through the relevant Council decision making processes before being issued for consultation, either in late 2025 or early 2026. This is likely to be subject to reconsideration during the Local Plan review process, once an understanding of all the policy impacts on development viability is understood.</p>

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

Meeting date and agenda item	Information request	Council Department/External Partner	Response / 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.	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><b>Updated response received on 14/02/25:</b></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><del>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.</del></p> <p><b>Updated response received on 05/09/25:</b></p> <p>This item has had to be rescheduled on the Forward Plan and is now expected to be picked up in October 2025.</p>
	Provide a breakdown of the expected costs associated with enhancing energy performance and retrofitting the i4B/First Wave Housing stock.	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><b>Updated response received on 14/02/25:</b></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><del>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.</del></p> <p><b>Updated response received on 05/09/25:</b></p> <p>This item has had to be rescheduled on the Forward Plan and is now expected to be picked up in October 2025.</p>
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>Awaiting response.</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>Awaiting response.</i>
25 Feb 2025 – <b>Emerging Employment</b>	Provide an update on the Roy Smith House initiative after its reopening, measuring its effectiveness in addressing the challenges outlined in the	Sadie East – Director, Communications, Insight & Innovation, Service Reform & Strategy	<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</p>

<b>Strategy 2025-2030</b>	Stonebridge Outcome Based Review (OBR) and reviewing the outcomes of the council's Market Rent Reduction Framework.		<p>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> <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.</p> <p><b>Updated response received on 13/08/25:</b></p> <p>Discussions with the highest scoring bidder are ongoing with a view to agree heads of terms by the end of September 2025. A Procurement exercise for a contractor for fit-out works to the space was carried out between February and March 2025. During this process officers identified a pre-existing engineering issue on site, which delayed progress in the contract award until satisfactory resolution of this issue. Officers are now in a position to award the works contract, which once commenced is expected to last a minimum of 12-weeks.</p> <p>A further update to be provided.</p>
-------------------------------	---	--	--

	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	<b>Response received on 14/04/25:</b>  We have asked the college for a response and await a return on this data.
23 April 2025 – <b>Build Quality in Brent</b>	Share examples that demonstrate how feedback on build quality issues has led to tangible improvements in design and processes, helping to enhance build quality in subsequent projects or schemes.	Tanveer Ghani – Director, Property & Assets, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration	<b>Response received on 07/07/25:</b>  Officers will collate examples from different schemes where we have either self-delivered or acquired from the open market and share with RPRSC to demonstrate how feedback / lessons learned have been incorporated into future projects/schemes.  A further update will be provided by 9 January 2026.