



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**
14 April 2021

**Report from the Assistant Chief
Executive**

Building a Better Brent – Borough Plan 2021-2022

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress on the Borough Plan 2020/21, the Borough Plan 2021/22 and the council's policy framework. It also provides a high-level update on the key supporting strategies and plans, specifically the Poverty Commission, the Equality Strategy, the Black Community Action Plan (BCAP) and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations for Scrutiny

The Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the policy framework of the council, particularly the Borough Plan and the key underpinning strategies – the Poverty Commission delivery plan, the Equality Strategy, the Black Community Action Plan (BCAP) and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.
- 2.2 Note the progress made in delivering the Borough Plan priorities during 2020/21.
- 2.3 Note the update on the main supporting strategies and plans, specifically the Poverty Commission, the Equality Strategy, the BCAP and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

3.0 Detail

The council's policy framework

- 3.1 Part 3 of the Brent Constitution (as at February 2021) lists the core plans and strategies that constitute the council's policy framework. The Cabinet is responsible for formulating or preparing the plans listed below and then submitting them to the Full Council for consideration and adoption or approval.
 - Borough Plan
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
 - Development Plan documents
 - Youth Justice Plan
 - A plan or strategy for the control of the authority's borrowing investments or capital expenditure or for determining the authority's minimum revenue provisions
 - Licensing Authority Policy Statement
 - Corporate Plan
 - Any other plan or strategy (whether statutory or non-statutory) which the authority determines should be approved or adopted by the authority and not the Cabinet.

The Borough Plan

- 3.2 **Building a Better Brent (2021-2022)**, the council's refocused Borough Plan was adopted by Full Council in February 2021. This Plan updates the five priority areas and sets out actions to realise them, refocused in the light of the changing context since the original plan was agreed.
- 3.3 Although the vision remains the same, the changed context means it has new resonances. The ways the council delivers it will have to change. Over the next year the council will address the immediate and longer-term impacts of a global pandemic and the other pressing challenges affecting a range of service and policy areas, including the climate emergency and tackling the causes and consequences of homelessness. It will be a year that will set the stage for recovery in the borough – and for action to ensure a better, fairer and greener future for all its people.

3.4 The Borough Plan has five overarching strategic themes with desired outcomes and actions that will run for the duration of plan. The priorities are:

- **Every opportunity to succeed** – working in partnership to support children and young people, educational attainment, employment support and skills provision, training and youth opportunities.
- **A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all** – regenerating the borough to grow the local economy and provide the jobs, homes and transport that people need, employment and training support, tackling homelessness.
- **A cleaner, more considerate Brent** – tackling the climate emergency and keeping our environment clean and pleasant.
- **A Borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy** – safer and healthier communities, reducing health inequalities, opportunities to enjoy Brent’s unique cultural heritage, support for vulnerable children and adults to be as independent as possible.
- **Strong Foundations** – ensuring the council and its partners are equipped to secure the best possible outcomes for local people within a context of diminishing resource, tailored engagement.

3.5 To assist in the delivery of these priorities, specific actions have been developed for each and are detailed in the Borough Plan.

3.6 The successful delivery of the Borough Plan not only depends on the plans and strategies listed in the Constitution, but also on the delivery of further corporate and departmental strategies. These strategies are reviewed regularly (in line with processes defined within them), and are subject to enquiry by the Resources and Public Realm and Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees. A list of these strategies are detailed below:

- Affordable Workspace Strategy
- A Physical Activity Strategy for Brent 2016 - 2021
- Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025
- Brent Borough Plan 2021-2022
- Brent Covid-19 Transport Recovery Plan (**draft**)
- Brent Digital Strategy 2019-2023
- Brent Museum and Archives Strategy
- Cemeteries Strategy 2013
- Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030
- Community Safety Strategy 2018-2021
- Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2023
- Cycle Strategy 2016-2021
- Enforcement Policy 2019
- Equality Strategy 2019-2023
- Ethical Debt Recovery Policy - 2021
- Financial Inclusion Strategy 2015 (**being reviewed**)
- Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Food Growing and Allotments Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-2017 (**being reviewed**)
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
- Housing Strategy 2009-2014 (**being reviewed**)

- Inclusive Growth Strategy 2019-2040
- Meanwhile Use Strategy
- Parking Policy 2020
- Procurement Strategy 2020-2023
- School Place Planning Strategy 2019-2023
- Shared Ownership Sales and Marketing Policy
- Shared Technology Roadmap 2021-2026
- Social Value and Ethical Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2018-2021
- Sport and Active Recreation Facilities Strategy 2008-2021
- Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policy 2020-2024
- Transport Strategy 2015-2025
- Volunteering Strategy 2019-2023
- Walking Strategy 2017-2022
- Workforce Strategy 2017-2020 **(being reviewed)**

Successes in 2020/21

- 3.7 The Borough Plan report presented to Cabinet in February 2021 included the achievements to date of the 2019-2023 Borough Plan. A brief summary of these are included here:

Every opportunity to succeed

- The gap in attainment between British boys of Black Caribbean heritage and all other pupils has significantly narrowed
- Over 3,000 residents were supported through our adult education college Brent Start, with an achievement rate of 93.7%
- Brent Works has supported over 100 residents into apprenticeships, and 150 young people into six month work experience placements with employers as part of phase one of the Government's 'Kickstart' programme

A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all

- A new local plan setting out our plans for future development in Brent is being produced
- An Affordable Workspace strategy has been agreed, and a Meanwhile Use strategy to support diversity of High Streets is being progressed
- Support has been given to businesses via advice and webinars
- In 2019-2020, we saw a net gain of 2,433 new homes. Some 954 affordable homes are being delivered, with 309 new social housing properties to meet housing need
- Supporting businesses with adhering to the Covid requirements and safe re-opening when allowed, and town centres had physical distancing measures put in place
- Our 'Small Business Saturday' awards and 'Shop Local' campaign supported our local businesses

A cleaner, more considerate Brent

- The Brent Climate Assembly met in December 2019, and a draft Brent Climate Emergency Strategy was issued for public consultation

- 1,033 trees have been planted, energy-saving streetlights have been installed and together with the new Civic Centre these helped the council to cut its carbon emissions by 63.7%
- 19 community clean up action days were held across our neighbourhoods, supporting 150 volunteer litter pickers, who removed over 120 tonnes of waste

A borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy

- The 'Bright Futures' ex-offender project was delivered and exceeded engagement targets
- We tackled anti-social behaviour and violent crime, including by extending the public space protection order to tackle street drinking
- We increased support for those at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse
- Violent crime reduced by 7% compared to the previous year, and between January 2019 and December 2020 there has been a 25% reduction in reported knife crime offences, and a 33% reduction in serious youth violence
- Our service-user led substance misuse service established "park pods" to provide socially distanced peer support
- Health visiting responded to lockdown and pressures on the NHS by moving to a risk based model of contacts, including establishing a seven day helpline for parents. Over 98% of all new mothers were contacted in the first 14 days after birth
- The London Borough of Culture programme was successfully delivered. Activities included an online exhibition titled Windrush 2020, 8 online films called Brent Then and Now and 22 heritage engagements.

Strong Foundations

- A new model of collaborative working with the voluntary and community sector was implemented
- The hub model was adapted during the pandemic to provide welfare phone support and to act as the main food aid referral pathway. There have been over 10,000 visits to our hubs. 74% of community hub customers are more confident using online services
- Over £16 million has been given in grant funding to local communities
- A new social value and ethical procurement policy has been agreed and is being implemented
- We have made significant progress in delivering our digital strategy, including increasing access to fast broadband and improving our online customer portal

3.8 The performance framework in 2020/21 included a number of key performance indicators to track the delivery and impact of the priority actions. The quarter 2 and 3 performance reports are on the agenda of the committee today.

The key underpinning strategies and plans

3.9 Tackling inequity, poverty and the climate emergency are vital to success in addressing the five priority areas outlined in the Borough Plan. Recent events have proved beyond doubt that these have to be priorities for action by the council and partners. The Poverty Commission delivery plan, the Equality

Strategy, the Black Community Action Plan (BCAP) and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy support the Borough Plan and sit within the overall framework as the main supporting strategies. The emerging Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy will also be a key supporting strategy.

3.10 A brief overview of these key supporting strategies and plans is outlined below:

Poverty Commission

Tackling poverty is a vital step to success across all of the Borough Plan priorities as made clear by the [Brent Independent Poverty Commission's recommendations](#). The Commission carried out a comprehensive review of why so many in Brent live in poverty and what this means to peoples' everyday lives, drawing on the first hand "lived experience" of poverty – and of the often life-changing potential of the actions taken to address it. The Commission explained the cumulative impact of rocketing housing costs, precarious employment and a welfare system which all too often puts process before people. Delivery plans endorsed by Full Council on 23 November 2020 and approved by Cabinet on 7 December 2020 (based on the recommendations of the Commission's report) covering housing, economy and jobs, financial inclusion and welfare are being implemented. These cover a wide range of cross-cutting activity. Further detail on the Poverty Commission delivery plan is provided as a separate agenda item at this Committee.

Equality Strategy

The [Equality Strategy 2019-2023](#) was approved in December 2019 and sets out the council's commitment to embedding effective equality and diversity practice in everything that it does – as a locality leader, as a provider and commissioner of services, and as an employer. This vision is articulated via four equality objectives: understanding and removing barriers to equality experienced in Brent; providing accessible information and services; tackling hate, harassment and victimisation; and leading the way in encouraging diversity to flourish in Brent. Delivery of these objectives is supported by an annual equality strategy action plan.

The action plan for 2021-22 was approved by Cabinet on 8 February 2021. The plan details how the council will: continue to improve the accessibility of its services by tackling digital exclusion and enhancing the in-person offer; invest in and support our diverse workforce through the provision of a range of development opportunities; and review and strengthen our equality and diversity practice across the organisation, with a focus on a robust equality and diversity training offer. The action plan links to key areas of work including the Black Community Action Plan, the Independent Poverty Commission recommendations, and work to tackle health inequalities. This work is driven by priority steering groups and is supported by a suite of performance measures that will be reported regularly throughout 2021/22.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

In July 2019, Full Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to an overarching aim to 'do all reasonable in the council's gift to aim for carbon neutrality by 2030'. The council's [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy \(2021-2030\)](#), which has been developed through close engagement with local residents, sets out key themes and objectives.

The consultation period on the draft Strategy ended on 15 January, with responses recorded on the online consultation portal, as well as a number of bespoke workshops/roundtables with community groups. The feedback has been reviewed and used to shape the strategy.

The final version of the strategy was brought back to Cabinet in April. Officers are currently focusing on the implementation of the project delivery of the 23 key actions within the strategy's 2021-22 delivery plan. Activity has included a recently launched the Brent Environmental Network to help drive the council's aims for carbon neutrality. The network now has approximately 330 members, comprising of individuals and members from key sectors (business, VCS organisations, schools etc.).

Black Community Action Plan (BCAP)

The [Black Community Action Plan \(BCAP\)](#) aims to reduce the inequalities experienced by Black communities in Brent, and was agreed at Full Council in July 2020. The plan is community led, and is being delivered by the council and community working in partnership. The nine themes in the plan are:

1. Early intervention: children, young people and families
2. Enabling and strengthening community leadership through capacity building
3. Developing community spaces – run and managed by local communities
4. Supporting the black community and voluntary sector - grant funding to voluntary sector organisations and procurement
5. Support for employment and enterprise
6. Accountability
7. Homes and homelessness
8. Tackling health inequalities
9. Embedding equality and diversity within the council workforce

Following ongoing feedback and the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review in January, recommendations have been embedded into the BCAP. Additionally, the timescales against actions have been reviewed and amended to reflect a 10-year commitment to the plan. A year one delivery plan has been developed for 2021/22 which outlines a focus on the following:

Children, young people and families

Activity Includes:

- Mentoring for young black children in schools

- Support supplementary schools to develop and strengthen their offer
- Developing or strengthening opportunities for young black people to act as leaders

Building sustainable community leadership

Activity Includes:

- Developing a leadership development programme to equip community leaders and representatives with the knowledge and skills to influence local decision-making
- This will include an element between senior council officers and community leaders

Supporting Black-led businesses, voluntary & community sector

Activity Includes:

- Building a Black business network to enable tailored engagement
- Making contracts, grants and funding more accessible
- Building the capacity of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations

To support the delivery of the above priorities, the thematic steering groups structure will remain but rationalised to three core groups, which will be reviewed to ensure they continue to remain effective in supporting the delivery of the overall action plan.

Performance framework

3.11 The Borough Plan priorities and actions set the council's performance management framework. The 2021/22 framework is being finalised with a number of principles in mind:

- There is a clear golden thread from the Borough Plan to front line delivery - progress on activity is monitored using key performance indicators that are reflected within the main supporting strategies and plans, other key council strategies as outlined in this report and service plans
- The framework captures the cross cutting and matrix nature of the Borough Plan and the main supporting strategies/plans. This will allow us to bring into sharper focus our progress against our plans and strategies and will be reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis
- Corporate performance reports will ensure that council leadership is assured of delivery across the Borough Plan and the key strategies/plans, with proportionate and meaningful performance measures, including the use of 'journey' indicators to demonstrate progression to long-term aims. We want to enable more benchmarking.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 Brent is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion; the council is determined to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights and it is our policy to treat everyone fairly and with respect. We aim to ensure that all our current and future residents, staff and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services, and fair and equal opportunities.

6.2 This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes and that our policies are fully compliant with the duties placed on us as a public sector body by the Equality Act 2010. Our Equality Analyses (EAs) ensure that we follow through on our commitment to equality and they provide a method for clearly demonstrating the necessary legal compliance.

6.3 The Equality Act 2010 replaced the pre-existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The legislation covers the exercise of public functions, employment and work, goods and services, premises, associations, transport and education. The act prohibits victimisation and harassment, and all of the following forms of discrimination: direct; indirect; by association; by perception; or discrimination arising from disability. When considering the Public Sector Equality Duty pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

6.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.

6.5 Delivery of the Borough Plan 2021/22 will support the council to continue to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. Equality Impact Assessments will be completed as required as projects are progressed. The work of the Borough Plan will result in a positive impact across the protected characteristics, as well as for residents experiencing other social deprivations. Service areas have the responsibility for managing the delivery and performance of their services. Therefore, the service area would also need to consider if a variation in performance could lead to equality implications at a service level.

7.0 Any Other Implications

7.1 There are no other implications.

8.0 Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

8.1 Not applicable.

Report sign off:

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Assistant Chief Executive