



Questions from the Opposition and Other Non-Cabinet Members

Full Council – 22 November 2021

- 1. Question from Councillor Matt Kelcher to Councillor Shama Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning & Councillor Promise Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement**

What steps are Brent Council taking to prevent the proliferation of adult gaming centres in our high-streets?

Response:

We as a council do not welcome Adult Gaming Centres in Brent as we believe they target vulnerable and deprived neighborhoods and will do all within our power to minimise their numbers.

The Gambling Act 2005 is permissive legislation in nature. As a result, the Act requires that authorities must usually permit the use of premises for gambling and there is significantly less control over the number of Adult Gaming Centres (AGC's) when compared to the means of controlling establishments under the alcohol licensing regime. The authority issues premises licences and applies specific conditions in order to mitigate the impacts of AGC's.

The Licensing and Planning functions of the council work in partnership to seek to control the proliferation of AGC's. In summary, AGCs can obtain a premises licence from the licensing authority but they cannot operate an AGC establishment unless they are granted planning permission.

Brent was one of the first local planning authorities to take forward a policy setting limits on AGCs, when it adopted its Development Management Plan in 2016. Changes in our High Streets and to online gambling means that many traditional betting shops are being converted to AGC's and detracting from the quality and diversity of our key retail parades as well as targeting some of the most deprived areas in the borough.

Planning Policy DMP3 limits adult gaming centres to no more than 3% of the town centre frontage, based on length of designated town centre frontage. Outside of town centres the limit is no more than 1 unit or 10% of the neighbourhood parade frontage.

In the past five years, Brent has used this policy effectively to control the number of AGC's in our high streets and town centres. In the past 5 years, 7 applications

for AGC's have been determined, with one being granted permission by Brent but 6 refused. Of these refusals, 2 were subsequently allowed on appeal.

Government has recently undertaken consultation on refreshing gambling legislation, citing the need to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future and the digital age. As part of this consultation process, the council made strong representations regarding the need to better control the number of AGC's by adopting an approach whereby need / demand for an AGC must be established in a similar way to the requirement for alcohol licensing. This would provide the council with a more robust means to control the number of AGC's that are active within the borough. New legislation is expected to be laid before Parliament soon and it is to be hoped that this significant change is adopted.

2. Question from Councillor Robert Johnson to Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources:

Will the Deputy Leader provide a breakdown of the annualized social value commitments (financial and otherwise) extracted through the recent Procurement Strategy – and comment on how Brent uses its purchasing power to support the response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency?

Response:

Within the Procurement Strategy there is a level of detail that sets out the Social Value commitments made through our procurements.

Page 13 sets out the financial commitments made against each of the Councils priorities.

1. Strong foundations £657,205.13
2. Every opportunity to succeed £947,394.00
3. A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all £597,176.59
4. A cleaner, more considerate Brent £162,286.28
5. A borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy £108,048.92

Total commitment among 21 received files £2,472,110.92

The breakdown above confirms that our suppliers are delivering social value across the priorities in the borough plan. The suppliers have set out the financial value they are willing to pass back to the council if they do not deliver the Social Value committed as part of the contract which equates to £2.4m of Social Value looking to be delivered through our procurements since June 2020 to March 2021.

This is then further broken by showing the commitments and financial commitments under each priority.

Page 15. Strong Foundations:

- 1.1 Training and Development around digital skills for residents and businesses £65,960.00
- 1.2 Initiatives to involve disengaged and under-represented groups £94,487.00
- 1.3 Providing specialist training for Residents Associations and Voluntary Sector groups £750.00
- 1.4 Encouraging participation, collaboration and co-design: Engaging and encouraging user and employee involvement in service design and delivery £51,046
- 1.5 Engaging residents to support key initiatives in their local community £51,051
- 1.6 Working alongside residents and organisations in parts of Brent that are particularly disadvantaged, with a view of improving outcomes £393,910.00

Page 16. Every Opportunity to Succeed:

- 2.1 Providing CV clinics and mock interview events (Providing events (either drop-in or pre-booked) at either council venues (Libraries etc.) or other sites) £16,250.00
- 2.2 Employment support and skills provision, including significantly increasing the take-up of apprenticeships £813,525.00
- 2.3 Ensure that residents can access affordable training and learning opportunities, so that they can secure and remain in employment and enhance their careers 9,600.00
- 2.4 Ensuring businesses in the supply chain encourage improved gender pay balance £41,800.00
- 2.5 Ensuring businesses in the supply chain encourage increased representation of people with disabilities and mental health conditions in the workforce £1,119.00
- 2.6 Ensuring businesses in the supply chain encourage increased Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation in the workforce £65,100.00

Page 18. A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all.

- 3.1 Local investment from Contactors £56,408.00
- 3.2 Contribute a number of hours to local businesses, voluntary and community organisations for: business support, financial advice, legal advice, HR advice £208,490.59
- 3.3 Encouraging a diverse base of suppliers: Promoting supplier diversity including the participation of SME's, Third sector organisations and local suppliers in general £125,915.00
- 3.4 Maximising opportunities for Brent organisations to participate in the council's supply chains and encouraging suppliers to make a social contribution to the local area of Brent £181,073.00
- 3.5 Promote and support travel that will reduce the burden on our roads and keep traffic moving £18,050.00
- 3.6 Service delivery models that would help ease the burden on our roads – particularly during peak travel times – such as better coordination and reductions in deliveries and vehicle movements £7,240.00

Page 20. A cleaner more considerate Brent.

- 4.1 Encouraging people to contribute to clean air in Brent by using alternatives to cars for those journeys where it makes sense, by prioritising more walking and cycling routes, promoting sustainable means of transport and the health benefits of being more active £54,750.00
- 4.2 Contributing toward increasing the number of trees and biodiverse, bee-friendly and sustainable planting on our streets, in our public spaces, and our award-winning parks £80,300.00
- 4.3 Promote, encourage and actively work to change behaviours around recycling and making sustainable choices £12,500.00
- 4.4 Helping with community clear-up days gardening and food growing projects £42,886.28

- 4.5 Promoting greater environmental sustainability: Minimising waste and pollution, supporting carbon reduction initiatives, reduction of waste to landfill. £23,600.00

Page 22. A borough we can all feel safe, secure happy and healthy

- 5.1 Engaging residents to identify and supporting key initiatives in their local community £2,000.00
- 5.2 Working alongside residents and organisations in parts of Brent that are particularly disadvantaged, with a view of improving outcomes £19,320.00
- 5.3 Reduce isolation for older people – coordinate and run a befriending service £67,752.00
- 5.4 Supporting local culture and heritage including events sponsorship £46,669.92
- 5.5 Get children and young people to be more active and reduce their sugar intake, in partnership with schools, the NHS, and the community £17,450.00
- 5.6 Supporting adults to take up physical activity, including making use of improved facilities on offer in the borough, such as our leisure centres and and the Gladstone Park tennis courts £15,750.00
- 5.7 Work with communities and voluntary sector to help tackle anti-social behaviour and serious youth violence. £3,350.00

In terms on how Brent uses its purchasing power to support the response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency there are various processes to ensure we are supporting the climate and ecological emergency:

1. Social Value. As highlighted above through our procurements we are addressing how suppliers will support our priority of “A Cleaner more considerate Brent”.
2. We need to ensure our suppliers are aligned to our Sustainability agenda. We therefore through our procurements ensure we ask each supplier if they comply to ISO 14001: 2015 - environmental management systems or equivalent.
3. One of the key actions in the council’s Climate and Ecological Emergency 2021-22 Delivery Plan was to create and implement a new Procurement Sustainability Policy that underpins our overarching Procurement Strategy as a Council. This document went live earlier this year and means that since launching, businesses will need to show how they are tackling climate change and working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030 when bidding for Brent Council contracts under this new policy framework.

This new Procurement Sustainability Policy therefore seeks to utilise Brent’s huge purchasing power by requiring potential new suppliers to demonstrate how they tackle the climate crisis through, in particular: reducing carbon emissions; reducing waste; minimising the use of resources; promoting the circular economy; improving air quality; and enhancing green spaces and biodiversity. All applicable tenders will now

include a sustainability assessment to identify how they will reduce Brent's environmental impact and support sustainability commitments, which will form part of legally binding contracts awarded to successful bidders. We are also working with colleagues across West London on a unifying approach to sustainable procurement in the sub-region to expand our collective influence even further and encourage evermore businesses to adopt more sustainably operating practices.

It also worth noting that Ashden, Friends of the Earth, and Carbon Disclosure Project have previously created a document of '31 Climate Actions for Councils' which aimed to put together an evidence-based list of the most effective actions that councils can take on tackling the climate emergency. This document highlights that implementing a Procurement Sustainability Policy is one of the most impactful action that any council can take in terms of reducing tonnes of carbon in the local authority supply chain, and Brent is therefore reflecting the significance of this through the swift creation and implementation of our new policy.

Improving environmental sustainability throughout our supply chain is an essential component of our commitment to reduce our environmental impact. Some of the Sustainability KPI's and Outcomes will be captured in the Social Value capture template under the priority "A more cleaner considerate Brent". Where there are specific KPI's / Outcomes that fall outside of this, these will be included in subsequent Annual Procurement Strategy reports.

4. All our construction programmes in building new affordable homes are being built in line with guidelines to have the least amount of impact on the environment.

3. Question from Councillor Trupti Sangani to Councillor Tom Stephens, Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills:

Brent is a borough that has high aspirations for all children and young people with special, educational needs or disabilities (SEND). With the number of children with SEND expected to increase, what work is underway to expand SEND school places and provision across the borough?

Response:

The School Place Planning Strategy Refresh, agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, evidences the growing demand for places to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and how this will be met. The new SEND Strategy (2021-25) that was launched this autumn also sets out the Council's ambition to ensure high aspirations are achieved for children through the creation of additional school places and has been developed following close engagement with families who have children with SEND, through the Brent Parent Carer Forum.

A SEND Capital Programme should be finalised in the coming months to meet this increased demand and will be delivered through a number of work-streams, including the construction of a new build SEND School, expansion of existing special schools, further Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) based in mainstream schools as well as the development of a new post-16 skills centre .

The programme is expected to deliver 427 SEND places locally - an increase of almost 50% on current local available spaces. This will reduce the need to send children to schools out of borough, helping to meet families' demands for good-quality SEND provision within Brent. The projects within the programme are expected to be completed by 2024.

4. Question from Councillor Michael Maurice to Councillor Shama Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning:

Preston Library has been the subject of two planning applications, both of which were identical and both subject to legal challenge. Though the Planning Committee were made aware of the initial objections and the objectors legal concerns regarding these applications, planning permission was granted. Brent Council demands that residents obey the rules and regulations regarding both planning and other matters, coming down hard on those who fall foul of them.

Taking into account:

- The two legal challenges on the granting of planning consent for the development of Preston Library; and
- That I now understand work on the development has commenced even though not all the pre-commencement conditions have been fully met; and
- The moral and legal issues I consider arise from the application which the objectors deemed to be illegal from the start and that the Planning Committee was made aware of objectors views on both applications and still granted planning consent.

Can I ask the Lead Member to explain the basis on which the Council has acted in allowing the development at Preston Library to proceed?

Response:

The two legal challenges to the granting of planning permission were unsuccessful, being dismissed by the High Court thus confirming the validity of the granting of consent. Consent was originally granted following a comprehensive consideration of the relevant matters by Planning Committee. The work has not commenced ahead of discharge of pre commencement conditions. Some essential site investigations did take place but are not classified as a 'start on site'. Hoarding has however been erected in order to protect the site when works do commence.

The development reflects the Councils commitment to making best use of its existing assets to provide better facilities and more affordable housing for Brent's communities.