



Questions from the Opposition and Other Non-Cabinet Members

Full Council – 11 July 2022

1. Question from Councillor Long to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action.

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action set out the criteria for painting yellow lines, parking bays and zebra crossings?

Some lines are worn, zebra crossings dangerous and parking breaches unenforceable.

Response:

The condition of road markings are assessed during planned and reactive inspections. For road markings our investigation level for reactive repair is 30% or more missing, faded or worn over a 1m length. Most local roads get inspected annually and road markings can change greatly over this period for various reasons. We welcome Customer reports of faded markings and will prioritise stop lines, pedestrian crossings, mini roundabouts etc. for refreshing as they are considered safety criteria. There is a £50,000 annual road marking refresh programme delivered as part of our Planned Maintenance work and we will use real time video surveys to prioritise locations with the greater densities of worn markings. This maximises the efficiency of the return in improving the asset.

The Parking Service also has a £100,000 budget which is set aside for maintaining line markings and signage in controlled parking zones, parking bays and waiting loading (yellow line) restrictions. Locations are prioritised at controlled locations where there are significant complaints or concerns raised from Civil Enforcement Officers and work is programmed where line markings are faded and prioritised where we are unable to effectively enforce restrictions.

New waiting and loading restrictions are provided using funding available from Transport for London (TfL) and s106 developer funds for implementing schemes and for a short sections programme. Changes require statutory consultation and are implemented where parking issues are causing road safety concerns, or obstructing the movement of traffic which can also have a negative impact on bus journey times. There is usually an allocation of £80,000 from TfL funding for short sections of waiting and loading restrictions each year. We currently have an allocation of £25,000 for the short sections programme and we are awaiting confirmation of further funding that will be made available for this financial year as TfL continue negotiations with the Department for Transport (DfT) on a longer term capital investment for London.

2. Question from Councillor Mitchell to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action.

As the Active Travel champion supporting our Cabinet, I very much welcome the installation of CCTV cameras to reinforce Brent's twenty-six school streets and the renegotiation of the bike hangar contract to reduce the cost to residents of bike storage.

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action please provide details on how the Council will carry out community and school engagement on the importance of healthy and safe streets alongside the installation of CCTV, to ensure that families are engaged and motivated to support the school streets initiative?

Response:

We are planning to start installation of CCTV cameras for School Streets in September 2022. We will take this opportunity to relaunch the School Streets initiative and remind parents and carers of the benefits that to the school environment including improved safety, air quality and health and wellbeing of the pupils attending the school.

A communications plan is being developed for activities and key messages for the relaunch and introduction of CCTV cameras. Schools will be provided with information to pass on to parents to encourage them to walk or cycle to school and these schools will also be given priority for cycle training lessons. Parents and carers that drive will also be informed of the restriction and penalties for entering a school street during the hours of operation.

To raise awareness we plan to install banners/signs near the schools and new signs will include the winning logo from our recent schools competition.

Letters will be sent to local residents to inform them of the introduction of CCTV cameras together with a list of exemptions and details on how to apply for a permit.

Information will be made available on our website and also on the schools portal.

All schools are encouraged to develop a school travel plan which aims to reduce car use and encourage more sustainable travel. Schools with travel plans regular send messages to parents and carers and arrange events and assemblies promoting walking and cycling to school. Schools are required to submit an annual travel survey as part of their travel plan, which enables us to monitor progress. More information about the TFL school travel plan initiative STARS can be found here: [TfL STARS - Getting young London moving](#)

3. Question from Councillor Choudry to Councillor Nerva, Cabinet Member for Public Health & Adult Social Care.

Brent is a diverse and multi-cultural borough - home to hundreds of cultures, languages, traditions and nationalities. The pandemic exposed the health inequalities present in our communities particularly the black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and it is more pertinent now than ever before that our focus and emphasis is tackling health inequalities through localised strategies.

Could the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care outline what steps the council is taking to tackle health inequalities and how it will be working with multi-faith organisations, charities, businesses, organisations, residents' associations and other members of the community to address these concerns?

Response:

COVID highlighted pre-existing health inequalities, particularly with regard to the worse outcomes experienced by residents of Black and South Asian heritage but also by those in more deprived communities and those with disabilities, pre-existing health conditions and learning disabilities. In response the Council and the NHS have developed Brent Health Matters (BHM), working to co-produce solutions with local communities.

Significant investment has been made in BHM: £750k has been secured in grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) / Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), we have secured over £1m of additional investment from the NHS, and the Council has invested £500k from the public health grant.

Brent Health Matters combines a new model of health service delivery with extensive community engagement. The Community Co-ordinators employed by the Council and their networks of Community Champions are working with GPs and other health professionals to take health promotion and health care to the communities most impacted by health inequalities. A regular programme of outreach events is in place which includes places of workshop, housing estates, high streets and factories.

The initial focus of this work was mental wellbeing and COVID vaccination. Since November, the focus has widened to include diabetes with twelve Diabetes Events being held reaching 1408 residents, of whom 1169 have received their health check in a community setting.

This work is supported by a cadre of Health Educators commissioned by the Council from the local third sector.

The programme has also provided over £500k in two rounds of grants to small community organisations for innovative and local action to address health inequalities.

Central to the effectiveness of our work to address health inequalities has been engagement with community leaders including ward councillors, with the voluntary and community sector and with faith organisations. These community organisations are essential to ensuring that the BHM offer can be effectively targeted and delivered

The work and early learning from Brent Health Matters was key in developing the new community led Brent Health and Wellbeing Strategy that was approved earlier this year. It is expected that the Brent Integrated Care Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board will consider further learning, not least, specific examples about how levelling up NHS spend in Brent will reduce health inequalities and improve wellbeing.

4. Question from Councillor Mistry to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action.

In view of concerns previously raised about the quality and monitoring of repairs and upgrades to footways and highways (particularly in Kingsbury) can the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action please:

- Advise whether the Contractors involved in these works provide a guarantee
- Advise whether any claims have been made by the Council against the contractors (including in relation to the quality of work on the cycle lanes on both sides of Kingsbury Road) and if so how many?
- Provide an assurance that Brent Council has not had to pay anything towards rectifying these any repairs or replacement work required.
- Provide an assurance about the action being taken by the Council to prevent and address damage being caused to footways by the use of heavy goods vehicles by businesses whilst loading and unloading outside of their premises; and

Advise of the reasons why what appear to be perfectly good footways in Preston Road, Wembley High Road, Kingsbury Road and other locations are being replaced when the money spent on this could be used to repair other more seriously damaged pavements?

Response:

A study was carried out by independent consultants into the footway and cycle lane surfaces in Kingsbury High Road. Faulty batches of “green” paving slabs and need for expansion joints to allow for thermal movement was the cause of early defects forming and not the fault of workmanship by the contractor.

Meetings were subsequently held with the material supplier, contractor and officers to discuss replacement of the substandard paving slabs at no cost to the council. The defective slabs have been replaced and expansion/contraction joints introduced to the footway structure to allow for thermal movement. Sections of the cycle lane surface that bowed under stress from the footway have also been replaced.

With regards to goods vehicles mounting the footway to load and unload, officers will deploy a range of education, enforcement and engineered measures to address the specific issue. Our Town Centre and Neighbourhood Managers work with local business to encourage their supply chain vehicles to park considerately when loading and unloading. At locations where consistent vehicle overrun occurs we will increase enforcement patrols and also, if suitable, consider the installation of physical measures to prevent vehicles mounting the

footway. An example of this are the white cubes that have been installed along Kingsbury High Road.

Preston Road was included in the Footway Investment Programme as one of our secondary shopping areas that required planned maintenance. When identifying locations for planned maintenance our primary consideration is condition, however we will also take account of other factors such as usage, past reactive repairs, road classification, member nominations etc. that can move locations up the final priority list.

With regards to footway upgrades to Wembley High Road and Kingsbury Road, being town centres these are considered exemplar schemes to help these high streets prosper and evolve to ensure that they benefit from increased footfall and continue to provide the range of services that will be required from local communities in the future. They are intended to be transformational and not simply a means to repair existing footway defects. Feedback received from local communities indicates a general satisfaction with the works and support for the 'transformational' designs and materials used.

5. Question from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Planning.

Five years on from the Grenfell Tower disaster, which highlighted to many the safety issues associated with tall buildings, developers with issues in their existing stock (including in Brent) continue to be let off the hook. With building regulations still nowhere near clear enough, what assurances can the Cabinet Members for Regeneration & Planning, give to residents that:

- Tall buildings are safe for local people?
- Tall buildings are suitable as family homes, particularly for young children?
- About the number of families (including how many) Brent currently place in flats above the 5th floor?
- In view of the 2019 UCL (University College London) study into the energy efficiency of such buildings that allowing so many buildings, higher than 6 storeys, is not making the Climate Emergency in Brent much worse?

Response:

Safety of Tall buildings

The Building Safety Act 2022 contains a series of reforms to building safety and is the most substantial legislative response to the Grenfell Tower fire of 2017.

A Building Safety Regulator (BSR) has been established within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Their role relates to buildings with 7 or more storeys or that are 18 metres high and have at least two residential units, or are hospitals or care homes. These are known as higher risk buildings (HRB).

The BSR is likely to rely on council building control services (and fire and rescue services) to deliver the building control regulations for HRBs, which is expected to involve multi-disciplinary teams.

The BSR has three main functions:

- (1) To implement a new regulatory regime for higher-risk buildings, and to be the building control authority for these buildings.** This includes building work on existing HRBs and enforcing the regime in terms of their occupation, as well as new HRBs. The BSR looks at all aspects of the Building Regulations not just fire related provisions. The BSR uses a multi-disciplinary team, which is likely to include local authority building control teams. There are three gateway points where details must be approved before progressing to the next stage:

- *planning gateway* (in place since August 2021); the planning application must demonstrate that fire safety requirements have been considered and incorporated into the construction proposals;

- *construction* – pre construction, the regulator must approve the design as compliant with the building regulations;
- *completion* – at pre-occupation stage, a completion certificate will only be issued by the BSR once they are satisfied that the work is compliant with the building regulations.

Only once Gateway three has been passed (either for partial or full completion) can the new building be registered with the Building Safety Regulator for occupation. The BSR will then be responsible for carrying out checks to ensure that the people responsible for managing HRB's are managing Building Safety risks, complying with their duties and keeping residents safe through the Building Assessment Certificate process.

- (2) **To oversee the safety and performance of all buildings.** This involves collecting data on the performance of local authority building control services, and external approved inspectors.
- (3) **To support the competence of those working in the built environment industry, and to manage the register of accredited building inspectors.** This involves establishing an industry led competence committee and establishing competence requirements for building control professionals (who need to be in place when the system becomes operational). Brent Building Control will ensure it complies with the requirements.

The BSR will be responsible for holding local authorities and building inspectors to account, with the power to suspend or remove inspectors from the register where necessary.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 became law in April 2021. It introduced changes to fire safety law for buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises in England and Wales. The aim of the Fire Safety Act is to clarify who is responsible for managing and reducing fire risks in different parts of multi occupied residential buildings. It has introduced new fire safety obligations to some leaseholders, building owners and managers for the building structure, external wall, common parts and doors between domestic premises and common parts.

Suitability of Tall buildings as family homes

Fire safety requirements are for all people and types of household not just families with young children. The above sets out details on the changes that are being implemented.

Number of families Brent currently place in flats above the 5th floor

According to our household records there are 179 children across 108 households living on the fifth floor or above. These 108 households sit across 31 blocks.

Energy efficiency of buildings and impact on Climate Emergency in Brent

Both the London Plan and Brent Local Plan have been the subject of Sustainability Appraisals and in themselves include a range of policies to ensure that development including tall buildings respond to climate change and environmental efficiency requirements. Brent Policies for example include minimising greenhouse gas emissions, energy infrastructure, urban greening and sustainable drainage. Tall buildings allow for an effective use of land in highly accessible locations and have advantages of minimising car travel and support infrastructure being delivered in a sustainable way such as waste management and energy.