



**Full Council
19 November 2012**

Report from the Executive

Wards Affected:
ALL

**The First reading of the 2013-2014 Budget
Priorities for the Administration**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Administration's priorities for the financial year 2013/14 and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Borough Plan 'Brent Our Future 2010-14' and the concurrent report of the Deputy Director of Finance. The former will be revised for April 2013.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Council is recommended to consider the broad budgetary priorities set out in this report alongside the Deputy Director of Finance's paper and debate them as set out in Standing Orders 25A and 44.

3.0 The Context

- 3.1 When last year's report was put before Council we said that it was written at a very bleak juncture in the economic cycle. The report described both the increased stress on residents and the simultaneous downgrading of the Council's ability to defend residents as a result of unprecedented cuts in grant.
- 3.2 Since we wrote this last year the situation has considerably worsened. The double dip recession, the increasing prevalence of worklessness, inflation and real income decline has impacted hugely on our residents. When this is coupled with the benefit changes the government is now introducing, those on the lowest incomes are put under even more pressure. In the meantime the Council's financial prospects and its ability to address these issues are further put under pressure by the fact that government action will not, as originally forecast eliminate the

budget deficit in one Parliament but rather extend a further round of drastic cuts in Public Expenditure up to 2020.

- 3.3 The Council therefore has a twin challenge. First to reorder its priorities to further provide individuals and communities with support in the face of these problems and secondly to make more cuts in expenditure whilst avoiding what the Local Government Association term the 'Graph of Doom'. This Graph of Doom concept is a projection that if both cuts to public expenditure and demand for services remain on the same trend then by 2020 Local Government will end up only delivering waste and high end social care services.
- 3.4 To achieve these two goals we are therefore proposing a package of proposals to address some of the immediate issues facing people. At the same time we are beginning a fundamental review of all the Council's services. We must divert people from high end provision by supporting as many people as possible to live independent, fulfilling lives. It is only by fundamentally recasting what we do that we can serve the needs of local people.

4.0 The Priorities

- 4.1 The first priority must remain protecting the integrity of the Budget and making the savings. The One Council Programme is and will remain the primary vehicle for delivering both savings and service transformation. The One Council Programme is still on course to deliver £80m by the end of the spending review period and in the light of further pressures Members need to consider further areas for projects to be developed. However, as fundamental change is the only way to achieve genuine savings, longer 'lead in times' will be necessary to reflect the growing complexity of cross council, and complexity of cross-partnership, change and early indications from Members of avenues to follow will be vital.
- 4.2 The key priority is to switch priority and attention towards those activities that will give our community resilience in these difficult times. We have set for ourselves three key and critical policy outcomes for the next three years.
1. To promote fairness,
 2. To strengthen our community and
 3. To support growth in the local economy.

These will be built into our review of the Council's Borough Plan, 'Brent Our Future' 2010-14, which will be published in April 2013.

- 4.3 Last year we announced that we would bring forward a package of measures designed to address the issues of employment and employability in the Borough. We are pleased to say that we have

made great progress in the last year and a tailored employment support service (known as Navigators) has been launched. We are also well on the way to recalibrating the activity of BACES so that its priorities are more closely linked to employment and the jobs market. We are now actively in discussion with our voluntary and community sector employment providers to further enhance our offer and reach.

- 4.4 We are still making progress on our goal of greater integration in commissioning health and social care with our NHS colleagues and will be taking forward with them a more seamless and focussed approach as the Clinical Commissioning Group develops following its 'authorisation' success. We have agreed and are implementing a new Model of Public Health services into the borough which will embed more comprehensively Public health activity into what the Council and its partners do rather than having it as a disconnected service outside of the mainstream.
- 4.5 As part of our drive to greater preventative services we have initiated a suite of projects entitled 'Working with Families'. This is designed to apply holistic support to families through targeted key workers, keep children out of care, align and develop our 'early help' offer so that families get support before their situation becomes critical, realign our support services such as Youth Offending and Youth Service to allow more targeted support and establish a new 'front door' with our Partners; the Police, Probation, and the NHS, so that there is a genuinely joint approach to providing support, sharing knowledge and avoiding duplication.

5.0 New Initiatives

- 5.1 Since May this year we have undertaken a thorough analysis and review of what further interventions we can make to support our residents and will continue to do this through our review of the Borough Plan. We set out a brief resume of new key activities we will be undertaking over the next twelve months. These will be the subject of reports to the Executive as we roll forward:-
- a) We will become a Living Wage Borough. We believe that it is a fundamental moral principle that people should be paid enough to more than simply exist. We will with other Public and private sector organisations become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation. In doing this we commit to extending the living wage principles which we already adhere to with our own staff to all those contracts outside of Social Care, and also to a dialogue with the Living Wage Foundation and other Councils to find an affordable way to extend our living wage offer to all contracts. Fair pay is essential to address our three key tenets of fairness, supporting community and the local economy.

- b) We believe that the price tariffs charged by the energy industry are nothing short of a national scandal and put hard working local people under even greater pressure. We will bring forward plans to create an energy cooperative which can bulk purchase energy and supply to residents at the lowest possible prices.
- c) The amount of private sector housing and the numbers of our residents in this accommodation has risen exponentially over the last few years. Given the stress under which people find themselves we must take steps to ensure that the quality of accommodation is maintained and that the management of these properties is properly undertaken. We will be bringing forward proposals to address these issues in the next few months.
- d) We will bring forward a suite of initiatives which constitute a 'new deal' for our relationship with local businesses. Local enterprises represent the future prosperity of our Borough and we need to develop an enhanced partnership with them. We have a package of measures which will be coming forward to the Executive.
- e) We will enhance our work with the new CVS to strengthen the Voluntary Sector and with them bring forward a package of measures to strengthen and enhance the sector and through better bidding, bring more money for the Sector into Brent.
- f) With our partners in the advice agencies we are developing a set of measures to enhance financial resilience, coping with personal debt and bear down on loan sharks.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 As an Administration, we are proud of our achievements, grounded in the reality of our financial situation but determined to bring progressive support to our residents. We were elected to serve in bad times as well as good, and through innovation and hard work we can still make a positive difference to the lives of our residents.

Councillor Muhammed Butt
Leader of the Council