

Appendix A

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (RPRSC) Scrutiny Tracker 2023-24

These tables are to track the progress of scrutiny recommendations to Cabinet, suggestions for improvement, and information requests made by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, with details provided by the relevant lead departments. It is a standing item on the Committee's agendas, so that the Committee can keep track of the recommendations, suggestions for improvement and information requests it has made, alongside the related decisions made and implementation status. The tracker lists the recommendations, suggestions for improvement and information requests made by the Committee throughout a municipal year and any recommendations not fully implemented from previous years.

The tracker documents the scrutiny recommendations made to Cabinet, the dates when they were made, the decision maker who can make each decision in respect of the recommendations, the date the decision was made and the actual decision taken. The executive decision taken may be the same as the scrutiny recommendation (e.g. the recommendation was "agreed") or it may be a different decision, which should be clarified here. The tracker also asks if the respective executive decisions have been implemented and this should be updated accordingly throughout the year.

Scrutiny Task Group report recommendations should be included here but referenced collectively (e.g. the name of the scrutiny inquiry and date of the agreement of the scrutiny report and recommendations by the scrutiny committee, along with the respective dates when the decision maker(s) considered and responded to the report and recommendations. The Committee should generally review the implementation of scrutiny task group report recommendations separately with stand-alone agenda items at relevant junctures – e.g. the Executive Response to a scrutiny report and after six months or a year, or upon expected implementation of the agreed recommendation of report. The "Expected Implementation Date" should provide an indication of a suitable time for review.

Key:

Date of scrutiny committee meeting - For each table, the date of the scrutiny committee meeting when the recommendation was made is provided in the subtitle header.

Subject – this is the item title on the Committee's agenda; the subject being considered.

Scrutiny Recommendation – This is the text of the scrutiny recommendation as it appears on the minutes – **in bold**.

Decision Maker – the decision maker for the recommendation, (**in bold**), e.g. the Cabinet (for Council executive decisions), Full Council (for Council policy and budgetary decisions), or an NHS executive body for recommendations to the NHS. In brackets, (date), the date on which the Executive Response was made.

Executive Response – The response of the decision maker (e.g. Cabinet decision) for the recommendation. This should be the executive decision as recorded in the minutes. The Executive Response should provide details of what, if anything, the executive will do in response to the scrutiny recommendation. Ideally, the Executive Response will include a decision to either agree/reject/or amend the scrutiny recommendation and where the scrutiny recommendation is rejected, provide an explanation of why. In brackets, provide the date of Cabinet/executive meeting that considered the scrutiny recommendation and made the decision.

Department – the Council directorate (and/or external agencies) that are responsible for implementation of the agreed executive decision/response. Also provided, for reference only, the relevant Cabinet Member and Corporate Director.

Implementation Status – This is the progress of any implementation of the agreed Executive Response against key milestones. This may cross reference to any specific actions and deadlines that may be provided in the Executive Response. This should be as specific and quantifiable as possible. This should also provide, as far as possible, any evidenced outcomes or improvements resulting from implementation.

Review Date - This is the expected date when the agreed Executive Response should be fully implemented and when the scrutiny committee may usefully review the implementation and any evidenced outcomes (e.g. service improvements). (Note: this is the implementation of the agreed Executive Response, which may not be the same as the scrutiny recommendation).

Recommendations to Cabinet from RPRSC

Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Member, Lead Officer, and Department	Executive Response	Review date
<p>24 Jan 2023 – Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings 2023/24</p>	<p>Improving Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an evidence base/rationale section in the EIA for each proposal where it has been deemed that there are no potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics (e.g. how the Council arrived at such decisions) and; • Undertake a cumulative equality impact assessment of the budget decisions since 2018 to understand fully the medium and long-term impacts of its financial decisions. It is recommended a cumulative EqIA is completed during financial year 2023/24 and is included in the final budget report 2024/25. 	<p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Shama Tatler - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Updated response received on 12/01/24:</p> <p>The request for a cumulative equality assessment since 2018 will require significant officer resource. Having re-assessed the resource and capacity of the Equalities Team currently and wider service, delivering this recommendation will not be possible now or in the near future.</p> <p>Delivering this recommendation would require the team to de-prioritise key and statutory activity, such as the development of new EDI Strategy. Additionally, given the budgetary restraints and challenges, it is not possible to secure additional resource to complete this work.</p> <p>The Committee has received a summary report setting out the cumulative financial impact of cuts since 2018 and this can be made available again.</p> <p>As always, every budget proposal will feature an individual equalities impact assessment, as well as a summarising statement for the entire budget report.</p> <p>Initial response received on 27/10/23:</p> <p>We welcome the suggestion for improving the EIA Template to capture their evidence where no impact is declared.</p>	<p>24/01/24</p>

			<p>The request for a cumulative equality assessment spanning the last 5 years will require a significant officer resource that is not available in the current iteration of the Equalities team.</p> <p>We will keep this recommendation under review, should resource or capacity within the wider team become available to support the request.</p> <p>In light of the constrained resources and publicised spending controls, we would ask that the Committee reconsider a more flexible timeframe and welcome any other ongoing suggestions to improve Equality Impact Assessments in any way we can.</p> <p>As always each proposal will include an individual Equality Impact Assessment.</p>	
	<p>Review Areas of Focus for Town Centre Management Function:</p> <p>The Task Group recommend reviewing the areas of focus for the town centre management function, whereby resource can be balanced against need; and work duplication prevented.</p>	<p>Cllr Muhammed Butt – Leader of the Council</p> <p>Cllr Shama Tatler - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Updated response received on 12/01/24:</p> <p>The reduction in Town Centre Manager positions from four to 2.6 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) roles means the focus is now on five priority town centres.</p> <p>The emphasis is on bolstering the capabilities of business associations such as the Little India Traders and Wembley Traders Association, the newly established one in Church End, and in Kilburn the community improvement district initiative. This involves empowering them to raise and manage funds, organize events, and take charge of various initiatives. This capacity support is balanced with day to day support and project delivery</p>	<p>24/01/24</p>

			<p>e.g. shutter artwork, mural on Brondesbury railway bridge, and in Church End the implementation of the Youth Hub.</p> <p>Businesses in the priority town centres can also access the business support initiatives for the whole of Brent, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing free membership to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) for micro-businesses• Facilitating access to the Rebel Business School for start-ups for support.• Collaborating with businesses to meet the Mayor of London's "Good Work Standard."• Initiatives also encompass shop-local marketing campaigns, <p>Green audits, and grants aimed at assisting micro-businesses in reducing their emissions.</p> <p>Initial response received on 27/10/23:</p> <p>A review of which town centres are supported with reduced resources is ongoing.</p>	
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<p>7 Nov 2023 – Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Report</p>	<p>Continue to lobby central government to establish a locally controlled business rates system in order for local authorities to influence policy around the setting of Business Rates and to generate additional income.</p>	<p>Cllr Shama Tatler - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform</p> <p>Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Response received on 12/01/24:</p> <p>We continue to work hand in glove with London Councils, the LGA, CIPFA and other interested parties, to support any work that either constructively engages with the government, or that undertakes lobbying work on our behalf. Our lobbying work is always stronger as part of one collective group, than speaking out as one council.</p> <p>Sadly, it is unlikely that there will be any fundamental reforms to Local Government Finance prior to a General Election.</p> <p>At the last fiscal event before Christmas, the government said:</p> <p>“At the 2023 to 2024 Settlement, we heard calls from the sector for stability. Now is not the time for fundamental reform, for instance implementing the Review of Relative Needs and Resources or a reset of accumulated business rates growth. This continues to be the government’s position.”</p> <p>London Councils helps coordinate the APPG for London and engages with Parliamentarians to help amplify the voice of London. We have attached below the latest summary of London Councils lobbying position on Local Government Funding Reform:</p> <p><i>Beyond next year, London Councils believes the entire system of local government funding</i></p>	<p>24/01/24</p>
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			<p><i>needs to be reformed to ensure the ongoing sustainability of local services.</i></p> <p><i>Neither council tax nor business rates are fit for purpose. Social care continues to be propped up by a growing number of annual grants; the business rates retention scheme has not been reviewed since 2013; and, most importantly, core funding formulae are a decade old and no longer reflect need. The 2024-25 settlement will be the sixth annual funding settlement in a row, which inhibits strategic planning and investment in prevention.</i></p> <p><i>A reformed local government funding system - reflective of up-to-date measures of need, with medium term (largely un-ringfenced) funding allocations, and a fair incentive to grow business rates - would be a first step to enabling London boroughs to provide early preventative support that not only makes a huge difference to people's lives but, crucially, saves the wider public purse.</i></p> <p><i>More fundamentally, London boroughs operate in a highly centralised funding system compared with international peers. London Councils has long called for greater financial self-sufficiency for the sector. Devolving decision-making and spending powers closer to communities is the only way to deal with the huge challenges London is facing.</i></p> <p><i>We welcome the devolution trailblazers in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands and believe London and other areas should benefit from 100% business rates retention for</i></p>	
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			<p><i>10 years be able to have single “departmental style” multi-year settlements.</i></p> <p><i>Cities, and urban areas more broadly, are well placed to take advantage of smaller specific taxes that will directly support local economic growth. Three such examples are a tourism levy, the Apprenticeship Levy and Vehicle Excise Duty which we believe, if devolved to London government, would deliver additional economic benefit for the wider country as well as London.</i></p> <p><i>In the long term, we believe all councils should have access to a broader range of freedoms, flexibilities, and revenue raising powers, rather than being exposed to the flaws of anyone, centrally determined, tax. Towns, cities and local councils that are more responsible for their own destiny and more accountable for their own success, would design better taxes and provide better services.</i></p> <p><i>We believe all councils should have full control over (suitably reformed) business rates and council tax, and would also support the assignment of a proportion of national taxes, such as income tax and VAT.</i></p>	
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Suggestions for improvement from RPRSC to Council departments/partners

Meeting date and agenda item	Suggestions for improvement	Council Department/External Partner	Response / Status
6 Sept 2023– Community Engagement Framework	As far as possible, review Council documents (including the new Community Engagement Framework) for jargon and update accordingly.	Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration	<p>Updated response received on 15/01/24:</p> <p>The Community Engagement Framework will consist of a section for public use and a section for use by council officers and partners, and the language for each section will be tailored to suit the audience. One of the principles of the draft version of the Framework sets out that we will “communicate in clear, jargon-free language to ensure understanding by all”.</p> <p>We have not yet set a date for the launch of the Framework while we review the content and go through the approval stages.</p> <p>Initial response received on 26/10/23:</p> <p>A review of the framework document will be undertaken to remove jargon from the Community Engagement Framework content will be undertaken prior to approval and launch.</p> <p>We will explore the feasibility of reviewing all documents but will ensure future refreshed or new documents are free from jargon.</p>
6 Sept 2023– Planning Enforcement	To avoid unnecessary back and forth dialogue between officers and residents, improve communications around the standard of evidence required to proceed with planning breach complaints. This should include public education, and improvements to the planning enforcement webpage including the reporting mechanism.	Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration	<p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>Yes we will look into this, and report back to the Committee by February 2024. However the evidence required will depend on the nature of the particular case that is under investigation. We can standardise it as much as we can – our existing acknowledgment letter goes some way in addressing this issue. An example copy is attached as Document 1.</p>
	Review the effectiveness of the Planning Enforcement Investigation Guide to better manage residents’ expectations of the planning enforcement process (e.g. providing	Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration	<p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>Yes we will look into this, and report back to the Committee by February 2024. An example of the guide is also included in the attachment in Document 1.</p>

	<p>clarity on planning enforcement timescales).</p> <p>Undertake an audit to determine the wards with the highest amount of planning breach complaints, and the wards with the highest amount of enforcement activity. This intelligence should be used to develop a targeted strategy to prevent planning breaches e.g. targeted planning education and/or communications campaigns etc. The Audit should also categorise the types of breaches receiving enforcement notices.</p>	<p>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration</p>	<p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>We will look to do this but are currently waiting for our new software to be introduced. Currently scheduled for April 2024.</p>																						
<p>7 Nov 2023 – Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Report</p>	<p>Explore new ways to increase collection rates for Business Rates, learning lessons from other local authorities.</p>	<p>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services</p>	<p>Response received on 10/01/24:</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Council's supplier of the Business Rates Service, Capita, is engaged with many local authorities for the billing, collection, and enforcement of business rates. In London this includes Westminster, Lambeth, Bexley, Barnet in addition to Brent, but also encompasses district and borough councils across England.</p> <p>By bringing synergies across business rates services, Capita look to deliver best practice and custom processes across each service. While each service will have its own challenges to collection, much can be shared to ensure best practice, particularly around reporting and analysis of debt.</p> <p>Further work carried out by Capita post the COVID-19 pandemic, identified differences in collection rates between councils and type of property/business.</p> <p>Prior to COVID-19, collection rates for Brent were typically in the upper 90%.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1111 1257 2029 1294"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2022/23</th> <th>2021/22</th> <th>2020/21</th> <th>2019/20</th> <th>2018/19</th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2016/17</th> <th>2015/16</th> <th>2014/15</th> <th>2013/14</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Collection Rate</td> <td>93.00%</td> <td>91.25%</td> <td>87.25%</td> <td>98.23%</td> <td>99.07%</td> <td>98.57%</td> <td>98.74%</td> <td>98.32%</td> <td>98.11%</td> <td>97.50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>From March 2020, significant changes were made to business rate liabilities as well as the suspension of formal recovery action during and post the pandemic.</p>		2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	Collection Rate	93.00%	91.25%	87.25%	98.23%	99.07%	98.57%	98.74%	98.32%	98.11%	97.50%
	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14															
Collection Rate	93.00%	91.25%	87.25%	98.23%	99.07%	98.57%	98.74%	98.32%	98.11%	97.50%															

Additionally, much of the administration processes were centred on the payment of multiple government grant schemes to support businesses during unprecedented economic times caused by the pandemic. Resumption of formal recovery through court action and application for liability orders resumed slowly but with a significant increase in arrear to be collected, in addition to any current year liabilities. Whilst collection rates have begun to improve, resulting in a collection rate of 93% in 2022/23 any return to the heights of pre-pandemic levels are likely to remain difficult to achieve for some years yet.

All collection and enforcement options available to billing authorities are limited within regulation. Any potential improvements are therefore restricted.

2022/23 Year

Whilst there has been a significant improvement in collection from the low of the first full COVID-19 year (2020/21), this remains below previous years. However, neighbouring boroughs similarly suffered significant reduction in collection rate compared to pre-covid levels.

	2022/23 QRC4 Reported	Pre COVID-19 (2019/20)	Diff
Brent	93.00%	98.23%	-5.23%
Ealing	94.82%	96.63%	-1.81%
Harrow	91.94%	96.67%	-4.73%
Barnet	93.74%	95.95%	-2.21%
Camden	96.47%	99.00%	-2.53%
Westminster	95.54%	97.58%	-2.04%
Hammersmith and Fulham	93.27%	96.69%	-3.42%

Although Brent has seen the largest reduction, there are other factors which need to be considered when trying to draw conclusions between reported collection of other authorities.

Further work undertaken by Capita identified that the majority of the collection issues (i.e. non-payment) experienced in 2022/23 were in relation to businesses

within property types typically not included in additional government support during post the coronavirus pandemic. While many businesses within the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors did (and continue to) receive support with reliefs, many other businesses received little or no further financial allowances. The following table shows the split of charges for the 2022/23 year in borough by property description. Whilst there will be large variances between any empty and occupied premises (typically empty being more difficult to collect) the split of property types in borough will affect the overall collection rate and make performance comparisons between other authorities difficult.

	% of Debit	% Collected
ADVERTISING RIGHTS	0.34%	98.25%
VEHICLE REPAIR WORKSHOP, PETROL STATIONS	2.26%	94.71%
HOTEL, BED & BREAKFAST	2.52%	96.94%
PUBLIC HOUSES, WINEBARS, CLUBS	1.13%	87.43%
MARKETS	0.02%	100.00%
OFFICES	9.23%	85.47%
CAR PARKS, SPACES	0.90%	93.72%
RESTAURANTS, CAFES	2.23%	77.00%
SHOPS, SHOWROOMS ETC	25.64%	89.27%
WAREHOUSE	32.36%	93.18%
COMMERCIAL-UNCLASSIFIED	0.87%	89.25%
SCHOOLS	1.64%	93.68%
MUSEUM, GALLERY, LIBRARY ETC	0.26%	100.00%
DAY NURSERY	0.45%	81.06%
SCHOOLS (PRIVATE)	0.38%	100.00%
UNIVERSITIES	0.12%	100.00%
EDUCATION	0.02%	100.00%
UTILITIES	0.11%	100.00%

			INDUSTRIAL, WORKSHOPS, FACTORIES	6.59%	89.43%
			INDUSTRIAL (VARIOUS)	0.67%	100.00%
			INDUSTRIAL (VARIOUS)	1.49%	98.68%
			LEISURE CENTRE, COMMUNITY HALL	0.62%	87.07%
			SPORTS, FITNESS CENTRE	3.05%	100.00%
			SPORTS GROUND	0.09%	93.48%
			THEATRE, CINEMA	0.34%	100.00%
			LEISURE - UNCLASSIFIED	0.54%	95.15%
			CREMATORIUM,	0.04%	100.00%
			HOSPITAL, HEALTH CENTRE, SURGERY	4.20%	99.12%
			COUNCIL OFFICES	0.08%	100.00%
			POLICE STATION	0.68%	100.00%
			HOSTEL	0.26%	23.19%
			FIRE STATION	0.15%	100.00%
			COMMUNICATION STATION, PHONE KIOSK	0.64%	99.92%
			SERVICE - VARIOUS	0.05%	100.00%
			BUS STATION, MOORING	0.00%	100.00%
			TRANSPORT - UNCLASSIFIED	0.02%	82.04%
		<p>A number of highlights from the above are that despite support (up to 50% relief in-year) rate liabilities for shops, restaurants and hospitality businesses were all below the overall 93% collection rate. Further support for 2023/24 and 2024/25 at 75% may have further helped such businesses after this, but any empty premises (due to business failure) would be subject to a full rate bill.</p> <p>Factories and offices, representing 6.59% and 9.23% of the collectable debit, would have received no post-COVID-19 support are behind the overall collection rate with less than 90% collected overall.</p> <p>Although representing a small part of the collectable (0.45%), Day Nurseries which received no support in-year only reached 81.06%, highlighting problems</p>			

within the sector as a whole, something experienced across all authorities when examined by Capita.

Also in Brent warehousing representing a third of the debt was unsupported and remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

2023/24 year to date

A summary of the current monthly collection (to December 2023) is detailed below:

	2023/24	2022/23	Change
April	8.39%	8.55%	-0.16%
May	16.79%	16.74%	0.05%
June	25.93%	25.64%	0.29%
July	36.22%	33.54%	2.68%
August	46.78%	44.02%	2.76%
September	54.66%	53.43%	1.23%
October	63.51%	60.81%	2.70%
November	71.11%	68.20%	2.91%
December	79.60%	77.76%	1.84%
January		86.55%	
February		89.60%	
March		93.00%	

Current year collection has exceeded 2022/23 monthly on month since May. On commencement of the year, Capita provided an estimate of 93.96% for end of year collection. This would represent a 0.96% increase on 2022/23. Currently collection is 0.35% above the original profile. There is currently no reason to expect that the original estimate of c.94% will not be achieved or exceeded although late changes to the valuation list (or liability changes) may impact the final position depending on timings of notification.

			<p><u>The role of the London Revenues Group (LRG)</u></p> <p>Two sub-groups of the above bring together relevant experts in both “business rates” and “revenue collection” (business rates and council tax) matters on a regular basis. These are well attended both in-person and virtually via web and best practice and experience is shared across all of London.</p> <p>Financial information is also compiled for the Society of London Treasurers use, giving early insight and monthly collection comparisons. Typically, collection data is only available nationally on publication of the compiled QRC4 statistics towards the end of the first quarter following year end (i.e. June/July).</p> <p>The Council and Capita maintain a presence within the main LRG, sub-groups as well as the executive board and look to ensure that a collaborative approach is maintained along with other contractors and local authorities alike.</p> <p><u>Next steps</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capita will continue to provide forecasts and carry out in-year monitoring of collection and provide both monthly and mid-month statistics. • Continued collaborative engagement of both the Council and Capita at LRG and sub-groups which will include an examination of collections rates and best practice discussions. • Outstanding in-year debtors are monitored via bespoke scripts and early identification of payment issues picked up to seek alternative contact/resolution. • A full analysis of the end of year collection position will be undertaken post 1 April 2024, once again looking at collection rates across property types, empty/occupied premises and by postcode (and ward, if suitable look-up data available) area. Capita have advised they will be happy to undertake further engagement with Brent’s in-house economic teams for discussions around specific issues identified during their analysis. • We will look to improve communication and engagement between the Capita operational team and the Brent in-house inspection team to provide a closer working relationship and swifter notice of changes within the borough.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We await further advice following recent consultation on rates avoidance tactics on empty premises which have continued to increase due to both the increase in empty properties and the significant financial burden of such charges on landlords. <p><u>Conclusions</u></p> <p>It is evident from the analysis carried out by Capita that Brent has had specific issues with certain types of business/property post the coronavirus pandemic which have not received financial support. There also is evidence of lowered collection rates in the hospitality sector, even with the enhanced support suggesting financial stress within the sectors.</p> <p>The types of property in a local authority area will vary significantly which makes it difficult to conduct direct comparisons between even neighbouring authorities. It is evident that there remain collection issues post-pandemic across London as a whole and that any return to former levels will rely on matters such as government policy/support as well as changes resulting from revaluation (now due every 3 years from 2023).</p>
	<p>Liaise with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to explore whether further census data could be provided to the Council on the specific properties in the borough identified as 'unoccupied dwellings'.</p>	<p>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services</p>	<p>Response received on 10/01/24:</p> <p>The 2021 Census provides an estimate of the number of unoccupied homes in Brent as at March 2021 (7.4% of dwellings - 9,425 in number). This data is not available for specific dwellings but has been published down to MSOA/LSOA level by the ONS. This information has been analysed by the Council's Data & Insight team. A summary paper is available on request.</p> <p>The census figure is more than three times higher than the administrative count of empty homes sourced from the Council Tax Base. The census took place when lockdown restrictions were still in place and the pandemic timing is known to have impacted on the census count, with some residents being temporarily away (e.g. some private renters). The ONS acknowledges that this would have had a significant impact on the number of unoccupied homes at that time, providing an atypical count.</p>

	Undertake a communications and engagement campaign to encourage owners to rent vacant properties to the Council to address the shortage in temporary accommodation supply.	Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services	<p>Response received on 10/01/24:</p> <p>Engagement started in January 2024 will signpost property owners to council's offer for empty homes, which has three options: i) get support to refurbish then lease to the Council, ii) lease to the Council, or iii) sell to the Council so that they are brought back into use.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wording for letters approved on 4.01.24. 2. The review of the 2,000 empty homes and 600 probate exempt properties commences on 5.01.24 with a status check on the properties. 3. Letters will be dispatched week commencing 22.01.24. 4. Fortnightly monitoring will take place between 22.01.24 and 31.03.24 with responses tracked. 5. Contacts to a designated mailbox will be monitored and forwarded to the relevant council team to take forward for the relevant options as above for refurb, rent or buy. This will include notifying the newly set up weekly meeting (following the December workshop) that discusses progression of any purchasing opportunities on the horizon.
7 Nov 2023 – Complaints Annual Report 2022/23	Moving forward publish a user-friendly summary version of the Complaints Annual Report to accompany the full version.	Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance	<p>Response received on 05/12/2023:</p> <p>The first page of the annual complaints report provides a simple easy to read summary. We have tried to strike a balance on a comprehensively detailed report but one that is also simple and easy to digest.</p>
	Publicise and promote service improvements made as a result of upheld complaints.	Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance	<p>Response received on 05/12/2023:</p> <p>The Complaints team will consider adding an additional web page to the Council's website to promote learning from complaints and we will also aim to feedback learning in the annual complaints report as well as communications/interactions with our residents.</p>

	Improve the publicity and accessibility of the complaints procedure. For example, promoting the complaints procedure more regularly in 'Your Brent', and adding the customer service telephone number to the 'How to make a complaint' section of the Council website.	Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance	Response received on 05/12/2023: The switchboard contact number has been added to the Complaints Page of the Council's website. Banners have also been added to Housing Management officer's email signatures to promote the complaints procedure. The Housing Management service will also be adding information on their noticeboards to raise awareness of the complaints procedure and how to raise a service request. I have enquired with the Comms team to see if we can add something into the Your Brent magazine.
	Liaise with other local authorities for learnings to reduce the amount of ASC cases being referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGCSO).	Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance	Response received on 05/12/2023: The annual complaints report – appendix 2a, provided a comprehensive section on learning from complaints within ASC. The Complaints and Casework Manager is a member of the London Complaints Managers Group, where managers share best practice, learning and ask for advice and support on specific cases. According to the LGCSO's Adult Social Care Review 2022-23, Brent Council fair average compared to other London Councils.

Information requests from RPRSC to Council departments/partners

Meeting date and agenda item	Information requests	Council Department/External Partner	Responses / Status
19 July 2023– Shared Service Performance & Cyber Security	Provide further detail on how the Council is ensuring third party suppliers are adhering to Brent's cyber security strategy and requirements. This should be inclusive of the findings from the third-party supplier survey currently underway.	Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources	Updated response received on 15/01/24: A data gathering and analysis for 3rd party supplier assurance is underway. This activity includes all suppliers receiving a Data Protection Impact assessment to review and complete. Information Governance then evaluates the response in collaboration with Shared Technology Services to assess and agree cyber resilience. As part of phase 1 of this programme we have prioritised 44 of the tier 1 and 2 applications that are hosted outside of Brent Network and/or are a hybrid solution. The reason for this is that any applications hosted by us (around 83 applications) is covered by Brent's cyber security framework and measures. Out of the 44 suppliers a detailed assessment has been completed for 20.

			<p>There were no risks identified for them and a few of the suppliers require the processing agreement to be reviewed by legal. This is now underway.</p> <p>We have also contacted 63 tier 3 suppliers to complete the assessment framework. This activity is due to be concluded by Jan/Feb and a final report with the outcome and next steps will be shared by March 24.”</p> <p>Initial response received on 24/08/23: We have developed a third party assurance framework and security board who will oversee deployment and actions coming out of the framework, an assessment report will be shared with the Committee in six months’ time.</p>
6 Sept 2023– Planning Enforcement	Provide a breakdown of: 1. Planning breach complaints by ward and; 2. Types of breaches that have received enforcement notices by ward	Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration	<p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>Need to await for new software to be installed. This is scheduled for April 2024.</p>
	Provide planning enforcement timescales.	Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration	<p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>We will need to review this and find away of recording it on our new database. We shall aim to close cases within 8 weeks if no evidence of breach. If evidence of breach, direction will be made on where we are going with the case.</p> <p>A site visit if one is required, is to take place within one month.</p>
7 Nov 2023 – Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Report	Provide a list of empty properties in the borough (broken down by ward).	Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services	<p>Response received on 15/01/24:</p> <p>Spreadsheet circulated to Committee via email.</p>
	Provide a summary on the strategy to address Brent’s housing subsidy loss. This summary should include context e.g. details on the	Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services	<p>Response received on 16/01/24:</p> <p>The Corporate Director, Resident Services, established a Temporary Accommodation Supply and Spend programme Chaired by the Director of Customer Access.</p>

calculations of how subsidy loss works.

The programme has 3 workstreams each focussing on:

- Affordability of TA
- New and Alternative Supply of TA
- Addressing voids and system improvements.

The purpose of the project is to reduce the cost of TA / Housing Benefit (HB) subsidy spend and increase supply of more cost-effective TA.

This programme reports monthly to the Corporate Budget Assurance Panel chaired by the Chief Executive.

The latest subsidy loss (for Temporary Accommodation) is 39.47%.

Week	Expenditure (£)	Subsidy (£)	Loss (£)	Caseload movement	Loss in %
wk16	7,700,798	5,274,481	2,426,317	1,375	31.51%
wk20	9,892,557	6,575,074	3,317,483	1,443	33.54%
wk24	12,452,774	7,882,869	4,569,905	1,522	36.70%
wk28	15,005,510	9,092,845	5,912,665	1,582	39.40%
wk32	17,245,130	10,416,791	6,828,339	1,633	39.60%
wk36	19,309,631	11,647,719	7,661,912	1,665	39.68%
wk40	21,372,000	12,913,722	8,458,278	1,740	39.58%

Key actions to date have been to reduce the number of TA placements in the most expensive properties generating the highest HB subsidy loss. The group has engaged with registered providers and developers about the possibility of acquiring blocks or homes and convert to TA. A review of voids in South Kilburn has taken place with a view to possible TA placements. Furthermore, engagement with void property owners and probate properties across the borough with a view to sourcing new temporary accommodation properties.

<p>7 Nov 2023 – Complaints Annual Report 2022/23</p>	<p>Provide breakdown on compensation paid out during the period of 2020- 2023 (broken down by issue type and department).</p>	<p>Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance</p>	<p>Response received on 05/12/23:</p> <p>Due to having two different systems during the period requested and the data spreading across various financial years, a comparison was provided to the Committee via email for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.</p>
	<p>Out of the 56% of stage 2 housing department complaints upheld, provide further detail on how many of these complaints were not upheld at stage 1.</p>	<p>Debra Norman – Corporate Director, Governance</p>	<p>Response received on 05/12/23:</p> <p>There were 103 stage 2 complaints investigated for the Housing department which had an outcome recorded as upheld or partly upheld. Of these, 44 were recorded as not upheld at stage 1, this provides a rate of 43%.</p>