



Questions from the Opposition and Other Non-Cabinet Members

Full Council – 19 September 2024

1. Question from Councillor Long to Councillor Nerva (Cabinet Member for Community Health & Wellbeing)

Following the recent assessment of Brent's Adult Social Care services by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will the Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing set out how the service will accelerate its improvement journey for the benefit of Brent residents; and outline how the council will work with its partners and commissioned services to drive forward positive changes?

Response:

The Council is committed to accelerating its improvement journey, focusing on several key areas. These include enhancing customer service by strengthening partnerships with the community, improving the capacity for advocacy and support, and increasing accessibility for residents who may need services or provide informal care. Brent will also expand its use of digital tools and assistive technology and roll out a new "Front Door Model" to better serve residents at the local level. These new service models will be co-produced with residents.

Collaboration with partners and the voluntary sector remains central to driving positive change. The Council is also prioritising workforce development to increase recruitment and retention, particularly in safeguarding and specialist care. A governance structure is in place to oversee the improvement plan, which will be presented to myself and other key stakeholders later this year, with timelines and key milestones clearly outlined. Through this plan, the Council will work with partners to ensure Brent's Adult Social Care services continue to evolve for the benefit of residents.

2. Question from Councillor Hylton to Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action):

Following on from the success of the recent Wembley Jobs Fair could the Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action provide an update on the outcomes and the emerging plans for future events?

Response:

The recent Wembley Jobs Fair was a great success, delivering good outcomes and paving the way for future events. Key outcomes include:

- 214 job offers made, with 155 verified job starts across various sectors.
- Awaiting outcomes from partners such as DWP, Slenky, Veolia, NHS Trusts, Howarth Homes (sponsor), Pladis (sponsor), and Countryside (sponsor). There is an expectation to surpass previous job outcomes as further data comes in.
- Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 92% of respondents rating the event as good to outstanding. Suggestions for future fairs included the addition of more sectors like admin, sales, and tech. Over 4,600 responses were received.
- Employer feedback was also encouraging, with 150 employers providing their views via JOT forms. Of those, 72 responded to a thought-of-the-day survey, all expressing satisfaction and indicating a willingness to participate in future events.

Importantly, the event was fully funded by sponsorship, incurring no cost to the council.

Looking ahead, plans for the next Wembley Jobs Fair are already in motion, with sponsorship funding secured. A final options paper is being prepared, but the next event is anticipated for July 2025 at Wembley Stadium. Plans are to expand the number of sectors represented and increase the number of stallholders while capping attendance at 8,000 for health and safety reasons and to ensure optimal customer experience.

In addition, Brent Works have a number of other events scheduled, including:

- 16th October – SEND Branching Out
- 17th October – Stonebridge "Back to Work" event for parents and carers
- National Apprenticeship Week
- National Careers Week
- International Women's Day
- Various locally planned events
- DWP-led events

3. Question from Councillor Mahmood to Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement)

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement set out how many fixed-penalty notices have been delivered since the inception of the “Don’t Mess with Brent” campaign and the introduction of higher fines and additional enforcement officers?

Response:

A total of 1,900 fixed penalty notices for waste offences have been issued since 28 May 2024 to date. Please note the 28 May is the date that the additional enforcement officers started issuing fines in the borough. The higher fees were introduced in June.

4. Question from Councillor J.Patel to Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement):

Brent was dubbed the fly-tipping capital of England last year over the sheer amount of mess being dumped on its streets. Brent saw the highest number of total incidents in the country, with 34,830 reports of fly-tipping.

The Council is able to issue fines of up to £1,000 but in 2023-24, fly-tipping cost local taxpayers more than £1.5m, which could have been spent on important frontline services.

Fixed Penalty Notices are being issued for fly tipping and the dumping or rubbish traced back to properties across London with £1m awarded to help more councils combat fly-tipping and grants provided for 26 local authorities to target fly-tipping hotspots by the previous Conservative Government. Some councils have also started using artificial intelligence (AI) to help tackle fly-tipping for a new trial. These new cameras have been installed in fly-tipping hotspots, where they will recognise suspected cases of fly-tipping and record the registration plates of offending vehicles. Currently, the council installs fly-tip cameras at an average cost of £35k.

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement therefore advise:

- (1) Why Brent can not use mobile cameras that can be placed in several locations as a cheaper option? How much does it cost to install a mobile hotspot camera that can be monitored by council officers, resident campaigners and doesn't need to be centrally monitored?
- (2) How many prosecutions have there been since the launch of the 'Don't Mess with Brent campaign'?
- (3) How much money has been raised from prosecutions?

Response:

- (1) The Environmental Enforcement Team have been using a range of monitoring cameras to capture fly-tipping offences for 5-6 years. It costs approximately 7k a year to operate these cameras, including installation and maintenance.
- (2) No cases have been heard at court for waste offences for the same period above. (Please note that it can take up to 6 to 12 months for a case to be heard at court)
- (3) Following on from the response under (2), no money has been raised from prosecutions for waste offences for the period above.

5. Question from Councillor Lorber to Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing):

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing explain why a Council with a major housing crisis would purchase a house with two flats in Sudbury for £500,000 and then keep it empty for around 12 months?

Does the Cabinet Member for Housing agree that it is a scandal and a tragedy for two homeless families that could have been provided with a home there?

Response:

Housing Management have been dealing with these properties since June 2023. The properties were in a very dilapidated condition with a significant rat infestation which took several weeks to resolve in the first instance. In addition, there have been significant delays caused by discrepancies in the way in which the addresses were registered with both the Royal Mail and the utility suppliers and this led to further delays in the utility suppliers doing their relevant test to allow for the installation of both gas and electricity meters.

Whilst new gas meter have now been installed the Council are still waiting for the individual and communal electric meters to be fitted. At present, the utility supplier is unable to give an appointment date, however the team are chasing every few days.