

Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing – Councillor Muhammed Butt

To be covered within the “Annual report on the State of the Borough” statement.

Contact: Cllr.Muhammed.Butt@brent.gov.uk

Deputy Leader and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources – Councillor Mili Patel

Top news since my last report:

- **Budget update:** The formal process for the 2024-25 budget has now begun, with our service and Cabinet Leads currently in consultation with our Finance Director and wider Finance team before the proposals go to public consultation early next year. After £210m worth of cuts from our core spending budget since 2010, this year's budget will be the most difficult yet. We will be working incredibly hard to safeguard the frontline services our residents rely on while upholding fiscal responsibility with the public purse.
- **Property Strategy:** The draft Property Strategy was presented to our Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee back in February and was passed by the Cabinet earlier this month. As we work hard to use every penny we have, driving more income generation through existing assets becomes an even more crucial part of this role.
- **Shared IT Services:** We are delighted that Brent has achieved all of its Service Level Agreement targets in our shared IT services scheme with Lewisham and Southwark councils, and the LGA. Following a remodelling and restructure of parts of the service, we have built additional capability and put in additional controls for asset management to better respond to IT issues, large-scale IT incidents, and the uptime of the systems we are responsible for. This work has been particularly crucial in light of the CrowdStrike and Microsoft outage earlier this year, with an emphasis on safeguarding our security systems and digital networks.

Other news:

- **Elections:** Our Elections team and the wider Democratic Services department carried out a phenomenal job for the General Election and additional by-election in Queens Park ward on the 4th of July 2024, coming straight off the back of the Greater London Assembly and Mayoral elections in May. We are delighted to welcome Councillor Lesley Smith to Brent Council following her victory in Queens Park; to return Barry Gardiner MP and Dawn Butler MP to their seats in the House of Commons; and to welcome Georgia Gould MP to the newly created seat of Queen's Park and Maida Vale.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action – Councillor Jake Rubin

Top news since my last report:

- **Camden & Brent Business Climate Challenge** (CBBCC) allocates up to 40 Brent businesses with £6,000 worth of support each to help them understand where energy is being used and how this can be reduced to achieve cost and carbon savings of at least 10%. Expressions of Interest to the programme have now closed and we are engaging with the **85 businesses who registered** an interest to move onto the programme.
- **An Outcome Based Review on unemployment, economic inactivity and opportunities** was carried out in Stonebridge. This involved an in-depth piece of research and analysis on why unemployment and economic inactivity remains high in Stonebridge. We will now be taking the review forward and taking steps to support residents into gainful employment, providing opportunities for learning key skills and ways in which support for families can help to boost prospects for Stonebridge's residents. I will be in touch with Stonebridge ward councillors to discuss the review and the impact of the next steps.
- **Climate Action: Roots of Brent - Youth Climate Film Project** (ran 6-20 August). The aim was to showcase local community climate projects across Brent via the medium of film; and to train up to 20 young people in how to make a short film, conduct interviews and present to camera, and how to edit footage. The young people who participated will be invited to be our future Youth Climate Ambassadors. Film to be premiered at the Climate Showcase event in the Civic Centre (December).

Other news:

- **New Development:** Harlesden Hairdressing Academy – we have acquired a unit at 16 Craven Park Road to establish a hairdressing academy for local residents to train with a view to starting their own business.
- **The Employment and Skills team** has commissioned a specialised employment service focused on the Somali economically inactive population. This service will be delivered by Step Up Hub for a year thanks to GLA (People and Skills) funding.
- **New strategic director in post:** A new strategic director for Strategic Procurement and Capacity Building is now in post. The team will be looking at ways in which we can expand our community wealth building agenda, achieve maximum value for money, and work to build and support our voluntary and community sector in the borough.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools – Councillor Gwen Grahl

Top news since my last report:

- **Expansion of Early Years Entitlements – Brent Council supporting providers.** We are continuing to support our Early Years providers to ensure enough places are available for families following an expansion of eligibility for working parents of 2, 3- and 4-year-olds. The DfE have estimated an additional 85,000 places will be required nationally to meet their aims, however the sector in Brent is in a good place to meet demand. Support is being offered to coordinate provision and provide information to eligible families. Wraparound support is also being offered at many educational settings, with breakfast clubs soon due to become available in every school as per the Labour Government's Children's Wellbeing Bill. We have a resilient and diverse Early Year sector in Brent, and a generous package of support for our community of providers from the Council.
- **Care-Experienced as a Protected Characteristic - levelling the playing field for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.** Corporate Parenting Committee included a workshop with care-experienced young people to discuss making it a protected characteristic within the borough of Brent. This is a policy that has already been adopted by over 80 other local authorities and intends to place care-experienced young people at the heart of local authority policy making. The initiative will be led and shaped by our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Care-experienced young people spoke of the stigma they have faced for their experiences as well as their aspirations for greater recognition of their resilience, and enhanced support for those with experience of care. Careful and collaborative work will continue to take place with these young people to ensure that the policy is meaningful and reflective of their needs.

Other news:

- The Children's Residential Centre is currently on track and set to be delivered by 2025.
- The Dedicated Schools Grant is due to break even at the end of the 2023-24 school year, despite ongoing school funding challenges. There are ongoing pressures on the High Needs Block, with the number of EHCP applications still rising.
- The Household Support Fund will be continuing to support children with meal vouchers in the summer holidays. This will be for those on free school meals as well as under 5's from eligible families and will support some of the most vulnerable children in our borough.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

Contact: Cllr.Gwen.Grahl@brent.gov.uk

Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing – Councillor Neil Nerva

Top news since my last report:

- **CQC Report:** Following our recent Adult Social Care assessment, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have rated our services as “Requires Improvement”. While this is a disappointing result, it is worth noting the details of the report itself on the Council’s website. It is also worth noting that the margin between our score and a 'good' rating was just 1%. We maintain our concerns that the rating does not fully reflect the progress we have made in recent years, although it does document several areas of achievement.

Other news:

- **Food Strategy:** Progress is being made internally on Brent’s Food Strategy, following a meeting with officers in recent weeks, with more news to follow.
- **The Public Health team** have been working hard to give Brent residents access to Anya, an app which will be available later this year. It aims to establish a pathway for all pregnant people in Brent to receive equal access and support in breastfeeding. The focus will be to promote and encourage breastfeeding for at least 6 months, as recommended by UNICEF. Premium access will also be extended to the infant feeding workforce including healthcare professionals such as midwives and health visitors. Some of the Anya app features include access to AI technology providing 24/7 advice, a forum for parents to learn and share experience, and LatchAid 3D tool which shows parents what to look for when breastfeeding.
- **National Drink and Drug conference:** The National Drink and Drug Conference took place in Birmingham on 11 July 2024 and Brent was well represented by B3 Service Users with 21 members making their way to the event to showcase all the progress being made. There was a huge interest in their presentation with many questions about how to get similar services off the ground in other parts of the country. B3 have also been working with our service provider to produce a community event in September as part of Brent’s contribution to National Recovery Month.
- **Pocket guide to sexual health services in Brent:** The Public Health team have developed a wonderful pocket-sized community leaflet outlining the Sexual and Reproductive Health services in Brent, which will also be translated into the top spoken languages in Brent.
- **DSC Girls Club:** London-based charity, Disabled Sports Coach (DSC) has partnered with Nike to open a movement club for disabled girls, launching the pilot for the project in Brent. This aims to empower disabled girls and young women through sport, as well as being a place to socialise, make friends, and connect with the community. Sessions run on Mondays from 4.30-6pm at Kingsbury High School, NW9 9AT.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Growth – Councillor Shama Tatler

Top news since my last report:

- **The Greater London Authority have awarded £3.1m** Civic Partnership Programme grant funding for improvements to Neasden Town Centre. The Neasden Town Centre Action Plan proposes to invest the funding in green spaces, realign and improve crossings at the eastern road junction, and refresh the high street to include a community training kitchen.
- **Draft Staples Corner Growth Area Masterplan & Design Code Supplementary Planning Document** was approved by Cabinet 28/5/24 for public consultation which launched 4/6/24 and closed 16/7/24.

Other news:

- **Brent Investment Prospectus launched:** Our 10-point pledge for potential partners sets out our vision, values and commitment to ensuring we are open for business. If you can support our ambitions, then we would be delighted to welcome your views on how we can work together to accelerate great growth in Brent. URL: <https://capitalwestlondon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Brent-Investment-Prospectus-2024.pdf>
- **Planning Committee 10 July 24:** Permission was granted for a London Square development at 370 High Road in Willesden (Roundwood Ward) comprising 301 homes, around 2,000 sqm of industrial space, a small supermarket, a gym and a café. 48 of the homes will be at London Affordable Rents, with 25 of those being family sized 3-bedroom homes. The planning committee also secured a financial contribution of £6 million towards the provision of Affordable Housing.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement – Councillor Krupa Sheth

Top news since my last report:

- **Contamination campaign:** Contamination ‘monsters in recycling’ launched on 18 July, with a feature in the Brent magazine, JCD boards across the borough, social media and printed communications. The campaign aims to highlight key ‘monsters’ that continuously contaminate recycling which leads to whole loads of recycling being rejected and incinerated as refuse instead.
- **Green and Healthy School Streets:** Following our successful application for GLA funding and securing £0.61m the following schemes to widen pavements, provide trees, rain gardens and planting on routes to schools have been completed: Hawkshead Road (Leopold Primary), Dollis Hill Ave (Our Lady of Grace Infants), and Oakington Manor Drive (OM Primary).
- **Lime** has been notified that it must remove its dockless e-bikes from Brent by 31 October 24 if it continues to ignore Brent Council's safety concerns and suggestions for improvements to the scheme. Brent has partnered with Lime since 2019 and currently hosts 750 e-bikes in the borough as part of its commitment to promoting sustainable and active travel and reducing pollution.

Of particular concern is the already high and increasing number of incidents of inconsiderately parked and abandoned e-bikes reported to the council daily and the often slow response time by Lime to remove these.

The council has written to Lime proposing several changes to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the scheme in Brent, while also meeting its wider transport and environmental objectives of creating healthier, more resilient and more welcoming streets and neighbourhoods.

These requests included:

- The introduction of dedicated e-bike parking bays: This would ensure e-bikes are parked safely in dedicated, cordoned-off areas which attract a high number of journeys and with high footfall, such as stations, town centres, employment areas and other visitor attractions. A ‘no parking zone’ would be introduced in all other areas of the borough with any e-bikes left in this zone removed by Lime in an agreed timeframe. This would also support a new London-wide e-mobility contract being developed by Transport for London, London Councils and boroughs to make the usage of e-bikes and e-scooters safer and more consistent across the capital. Planned to launch in 2026, a central element of the scheme is a requirement to provide dedicated, controlled parking for rental e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Dedicated in-borough resources to manage day-to-day operations: Dedicated local resources would help ensure that any e-bikes reported to be inconsiderately parked or abandoned be removed swiftly, which is not currently the case. Brent has also requested that Lime increases penalties for users who fail to leave their e-bikes in the correct location from the current fine which is set at £10 and which the council does not feel provides an adequate deterrent.

- A commitment from Lime to give back to the local community: In line with the council's commitment to all its partnerships adding value to the local community, the council asked Lime to consider providing local training and employment opportunities and community engagement events as part of its activities in the borough. This would include a Brent Resident Forum where users and non-users can meet with the council and Lime to share their views on how the scheme is working locally and any improvements.

Other news:

- **Food hygiene Inspection Programme:** Good progress has been made on tackling the backlog of overdue food hygiene inspections as well as carrying out inspections due this year. The food team have reduced the overdue risk category 'D' inspections from 492 at the beginning of March to 246 (50%) and 'E' from 449 to 289 (36%). The team is on target to complete all food hygiene inspections by 31 March 2025.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Resident Support and Culture – Councillor Fleur Donnelly-Jackson

Top news since my last report:

- **Becoming Brent:** is a series of related events, each exploring the impact of the British Empire in Brent, Britain's colonial past and the harsh realities and ugliness of racism. Wembley Park and the world-famous Wembley Stadium were built to host the British Empire Exhibition and welcomed 27 million visitors during 1924 and 1925.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Stadium a new hard-hitting project has been awarded £250,000 funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Exhibition was designed to showcase Britain's dominance and success as a major power. We must acknowledge that much of this economic prosperity and success is built on the exploitation of peoples across Africa, the Caribbean, Ireland, and Asia. The British Empire encoded class and racial hierarchies still often experienced in Britain's diverse communities today.

Residents will get the opportunity to review the materials and take part in a series of workshops, resulting in a creative community-led exhibition, an art installation and walking tours to illustrate local people's thoughts and feelings about the past and how it resonates today.

The grant will go towards digitising the collections held by Brent Museum and Archives making it easier for current and future generations to explore the texts, videos, images, and other materials that paint a bittersweet picture of how Brent has developed over the past hundred years.

Other news:

- The Deputy Leader and I shadowed the Housing Benefits, Housing Repairs, and Housing Needs phone enquiry lines in the contact centre – it was incredibly insightful to hear how officers handle the range of enquiries, adapting sensitively to when callers have vulnerabilities.
- Demand within the Contact Service Centre increased to 6180 in July 2024, compared to 5853 in June 2024.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships – Councillor Harbi Farah

Top news since my last report:

- Brent Council hosted a partner reassurance meeting following the recent violent disorder, extreme far right initiated protests over the summer period.
- **Community Grants:** We are in the final stage of approving the outstanding Community Grant financial agreement, with some payments being issued shortly.

The Funders Fair will be held at the Civic Centre on 25 September between 4-8pm and the Edward Harvist grant will be launched late autumn.

- Grant agreement has been signed by Brent Council's Community Safety and Prevention Team to deliver the £200,000, 2-year funding Robbery Project, which will commence later this year.

Other news:

- **Prevent Projects:** Following the far-right protest and disorder targeting a mosque in Southport and street-based riots in Hartlepool and London, the Council worked with the Prevent team and the police to assess community tensions and mitigate any risks.
- Prevent e-Learning training has now been made mandatory for all new Council employees. However, the face-to-face training and workshop will continue for frontline staff, including social care and housing professionals, to promote a greater understanding of Prevent.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact by the email address below.

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