

	Cabinet 7 April 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services (with effect from 1 April 25 transferred to Corporate Director Service Reform & Strategy)
	Lead Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Councillor Mili Patel)
New approach to marking and celebrating community cohesion and inclusion events	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix A: Minimum Community Cohesion and Inclusion events offer Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	Cabinet: Arts and Festivals Strategy and Programme report, June 2011: see Issue - items at meetings - Arts and Festivals Strategy and Programme (brent.gov.uk)
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the council's new approach to community cohesion and inclusion events. The paper shares the overarching, guiding approach and the specific components that shape how the council will mark and celebrate community cohesion and inclusion events moving forward. In summary, this paper proposes that the council adopts an 'Enabler Approach' to community cohesion and inclusion events that is characterised by six components.

- 1.2. Ultimately, the approach seeks to establish greater clarity and consistency for all stakeholders involved in these events – officers, Members, partners and residents. Additionally, this approach will enable the council to better focus its resources on quality rather than quantity, manage expectations around its capacity to deliver community cohesion and inclusion events and outline how it can support partners and residents to organise events that matter to them.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

Cabinet are recommended to:

- 2.1. Endorse the new community cohesion and inclusion events approach which will replace the existing approach agreed in 2011. This comprises of the components outlined in paragraph 3.2.5 – 3.2.15.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword: New approach to marking and celebrating community cohesion and inclusion events

- 3.1.1. Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, a place where different cultures, faiths, and traditions come together to create a vibrant and inclusive community. Our diversity is our strength, and it is vital that we continue to celebrate and foster cohesion among all residents, from a breadth of backgrounds.
- 3.1.2. Last agreed in 2011, this report sets out Brent's new and refreshed approach to how the Council will mark and support community cohesion and inclusion events, reflecting a changed contextual landscape in that time and the need to deliver as effectively and efficiently as we can. Recognising the need for clarity, consistency, and sustainability, we are introducing an 'Enabler Approach' – a fairer and more targeted methodology that focuses on empowering our communities, supporting grassroots initiatives, and ensuring that council resources are used effectively to deliver meaningful, high-quality events throughout the year.
- 3.1.3. This new approach builds on extensive engagement with residents, partners, and stakeholders, including faith and community groups and staff networks, and looking outward to the existing work of other London boroughs. By building on previous learning and investing in strategic grant funding for local groups, we are ensuring that community voices remain at the heart of how we celebrate the rich cultural fabric of Brent.
- 3.1.4. The Council aims to create a solid framework that enables communities to take the lead in celebrating their heritage, culture, and identity, while ensuring that the Council plays a supportive and strategic role in delivery. This report sets out a new way of working; strengthening relationships, fostering understanding, and reinforcing Brent's identity as a borough that embraces and champions diversity.

- 3.1.5 This report and proposed approach around marking and celebrating community cohesion and inclusion events contributes specifically to the Borough Plan strategic priority: Thriving Communities, including our focus on enabling communities and celebrating Brent's diversity. The proposed approach seeks to establish greater clarity and consistency for the council and our communities, in addition to adopting an 'Enabler Approach' that is centred around community power and empowering and supporting our communities to mark and celebrate community cohesion and inclusion events that matter to them.

3.2 Background

Context

- 3.2.1. In August 2023, the council initiated a review of its approach to community cohesion and inclusion events. Community cohesion and inclusion events are those centred around culture, identity, religion and faith. The core challenges around the current approach are clarity and consistency – we lack a clearly defined approach that reflects the demography, needs and expectations of our residents, communities, Members and staff. Our current approach often causes confusion for those stakeholders, and we feel its right to establish a new approach that empowers our communities, provides a quality offer for our communities and works with our communities and partners.
- 3.2.2. The council's current approach was agreed by Cabinet in 2011. Key components of this approach included ceasing the delivery of most events, particularly those that are faith-based, and focussing on delivering a single 'catch all' event that is organised with local communities. In recent years the council has not been following this approach: we have been delivering some faith-based events and have not been organising an annual 'catch all' event. That said, the council feels the current approach is outdated and that it is right that we establish change to reflect how much the global, national and local context has changed since 2011. Additionally, the council's current financial context and available resource (staff and finance) makes it challenging to meet the demand that our stakeholders have articulated around the council's recent approach and offer – namely, we have been unable to deliver the quantity of events that are being requested.
- 3.2.3. Using this context, the review aimed to achieve the following outcomes:
- Establish what community cohesion and inclusion events the organisation commits to marking and celebrating annually based on demand, appetite and resource. This includes, understanding how the existing council capacity can deliver quality over quantity.
 - Establish a definition of what constitutes the council 'supporting' community cohesion and inclusion events that are led by our partners and communities.
 - Establish a clear distinction around council events (internal) and those for the community (external).
- 3.2.4. The review and approach have drawn upon insights gathered from:

- Staff directly involved in organising or supporting community cohesion and inclusion events via a survey and follow-up conversations, this includes all staff networks.
- Brent Multi Faith Forum.
- 10 London boroughs: Barnet, Camden, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster.
- The Corporate EDI Board.

The new community cohesion and inclusion events approach

3.2.5. Using the insights gathered, the council has established a new approach that achieves the review's desired outcomes. The approach consists of the following components:

1. The council adopts an overarching 'Enabler Approach' to community cohesion and inclusion events.

3.2.6 In practice this means the council commits to leading a smaller number of high-quality community cohesion and inclusion events and focuses on empowering and supporting communities to lead the events that matter to them. This approach will best allow the organisation to reflect and balance: available resource, Brent's diversity and expectation of residents, staff and Members.

3.2.7 Embedding an 'Enabler Approach' relies on two key elements, both centred around funding. Paragraph 3.2.8 outlines our commitment to £30k per year grant funding, for three years (spanning 2025/26 – 2027/28). Additionally, we will allocate £20k per year, for three years, to contribute towards other opportunities to collaborate with local partners to deliver community cohesion and inclusion events.

2. 'Tiers' of support (see Table 1) that define the support the council offers partners and the community for community cohesion and inclusion events.

3.2.8 We believe that providing funding is essential to empower our communities to organise events that matter to them, it's also essential to truly establish an 'Enabler Approach'. That is why we will top up Love Where You Live and adapt the existing criteria to ensure communities and organisations – representing the nine protected characteristics, various disadvantaged groups (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers) and beyond - can access funding to support their events. Details will be established in due course and the first year of this funding will be a test and learn phase to enable us to adapt accordingly, but core components include:

- Increase Love Where You Live by £30k a year, for three years and this funding will be dedicated to fund community-led community cohesion and inclusion events. The funding will be distributed throughout a given year, with more than one cycle.
- The maximum award will be £1000 per event. However, a larger award, capped at £5000, will be granted for events that are organised collaboratively by multiple organisations e.g. A forum could coordinate

multiple organisations to co-organise an event. This approach seeks to incentivise collaboration while, coupled with the funding cycles, ensuring the funding pot spans throughout the year.

3.2.9 The council has established a support offer for community cohesion and inclusion events which seeks to ensure greater clarity and consistency. The five tiers interrelate, and multiple tiers can be applied to a single event or occasion.

Table 1 – Tiers of support	
Tier	Support offer
1	Organising an event – leading or outsourcing the organising of an event for the community or co-organising an event with the community or partners
2	Providing funding through grants - grant funding or awarding funding to partners, organisations and communities to organise an event.
3	Promotion: large comms - promoting the event or anything that the community has organised for an event through our various means. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's communications channels e.g. Brent magazine, Brent newsletter, Brent website [to be determined based on quality of the content and/or scale of the event], social media channels, internal comms (Viva engage)
4	Promotion: small comms - amplifying the event or community contributions to an event through our various means. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's communications channels – this could include tactics such as sharing community-generated social media posts or e-flyers, e-newsletter item, internal comms (i.e. Viva Engage) • Add to Brent events page
5	Providing a space - allowing the use of council assets or space to hold community organised events. Examples of council assets or space include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Centre room hire (e.g. the Drum) • Libraries room hire • Parks and open spaces • Street parties, fete and play streets

3. A minimum community cohesion and inclusion events offer (see Appendix A).

3.2.10 This offer outlines the events the organisation commits to organising every year. This is not an extensive list of all the community cohesion and inclusion events that the council may organise every year – for example the Mayor's Office delivers a series of civic events that contribute to community cohesion and inclusion - this is just the list of events the council guarantees it will organise

every year through the specific lens of equity, diversity and inclusion. The list aims to:

- Establish clarity around the events that will be organised, in addition to what residents and communities can expect from the council.
- Establish a minimum offer that focuses on a smaller number of high quality events.
- Shares the guaranteed events, including the rationale around why they have been selected and other events that have been both considered and removed from the existing offer. The rationale focuses on evidence and historic approaches i.e. the size of Brent's different communities and previous attendance rates; the internal events reflect corporate priorities, as outlined in the EDI Strategy 2024 -2028 and Anti-Racism Action Plan and, overall, the list seeks to distribute events across the year.

3.2.11 The events included in the minimum offer are:

- Holocaust Memorial Day – January
- Race Equality Week (internal only) – February
- Refugee Week - June
- Disability Pride Month - July
- National Inclusion Week (internal only) – September
- Black History Month – October
- Islamophobia Awareness Month – November

3.2.12 In practice, those external facing occasions will comprise of at least one large high quality event. There may be supplementary activity for these occasions, but this will need to be led through wider council and/or community resource. For example, during Black History Month the council may deliver a flagship event that is supplemented by smaller events or sessions that have been delivered by our Libraries and a community event(s) that has been funded through Love Where You Live (as referenced in paragraph 3.2.8).

4 Religious and faith events will not be included in the council's minimum community cohesion and inclusion events offer

3.2.13 This does not mean the council will not lead external facing religious or faith events as they play an important role in our services that have an educational function, such as Libraries, Culture and Heritage; however, in the interest of equity we do not have the resource to guarantee a fair cross-section of religious and faith events can be organised.

5. Our staff networks will no longer independently organise external facing events, they must work with a service when organising any external facing events.

3.2.14 The primary role of staff networks is to support different cohorts within the workforce, not the community; therefore, this role should be applied to the events they organise. That said, our staff networks are still expert advisers which is why they can, and will, still be involved in organising external facing events when working with a service.

6. The council will only light up the Civic Centre in exceptional circumstances, such as national or global catastrophes or celebrations.

3.2.15 The flag raising and lighting up the Civic Centre protocols have been updated. The Flag Protocol now specifies that the Mayor's Office commits to five annual flag raisings: LGBT History Month or Pride, Commonwealth Day, St Patrick's Day, Emergency Services Day and Armistice/Remembrance Day. In relation to the Lighting Protocol, all requests are reviewed and approved by the Chief Executive.

Socialising the new community cohesion and inclusion events approach

3.2.16 One of the drivers for establishing a new approach is the lack of consistency and clarity around the current approach. Therefore, socialising the new approach is essential. The process will include:

- Developing and sharing internal guidance to ensure teams and Members are familiar with the new approach, able to apply it consistently and able to share it with community groups and organisations.
- Uploading and sharing the new approach on our website, including the updates to Love Where You Live to incorporate the new community cohesion and inclusion funding.
- Targeted communications to community groups and organisations with a specific interest in community cohesion and inclusion events to ensure they're aware of the changes, particularly around the new grant funding.

Next steps

3.2.17 The council will continue to refine specific components of the approach and launch by July 2025. Components that need further refinement include updating the criteria of Love Where You Live to ensure it can support the new approach and makes a positive impact for our communities and consolidating the socialisation plan to ensure stakeholders are clear and prepared for the new approach.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 To inform this approach, engagement has been undertaken with the following groups:

- Staff via survey target at specific teams, networks and groups. Respondents included: Policy, Partnerships and Scrutiny; Libraries; Member Services; Community Engagement; Regeneration; Cultural Diversity Network; LGBTQ+ Network; Brent Safety Advisory Group.
- Brent Multi Faith Forum.
- Colleagues in other London boroughs, including: Barnet, Camden, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster.

- Lead Members.
- Corporate EDI Board.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The planned expenditure of £150k is expected to be funded from existing grants funding.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The grant will need to comply with the constitution, including around delegation awards. Components around grant delegation's state:

1. (i) the relevant Director is satisfied that no adverse capital finance or other negative implications would arise, unless written consent of the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources is obtained.
2. (ii) no grant shall be made by officers if it amounts to more than £25k per annum except in the case of Neighbourhood Infrastructure Level grants which may be made by the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration up to the value of £100k.
3. (iii) no grant shall be withdrawn or reduced by officers if the receiving body has received a grant from the Council for each of the last five years for the same purpose unless such withdrawal is due to the fact that the body no longer meets the relevant grant criteria or conditions of grant.
4. (iv) the grant criteria has been approved by the Cabinet, other appropriate body, the relevant Corporate Director or other person with appropriate authority.
5. (v) no grant shall be made by officers from the council's Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund except with the prior approval of the Cabinet.
6. Provided that where the grant or other financial assistance involves the distribution of funds received from a third party the grant or other financial assistance complies with the conditions under which the funds have been received by the Council.
7. Provided that submission of bids for additional resources from government and other bodies shall be to consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion events advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relationships within our different communities and residents. It promotes our ambitions for Brent to become a borough that is truly inclusive; where people of all cultures and backgrounds are represented, celebrated and most importantly feel that they belong.

7.3 Although the overall impact of this proposal is positive, an EIA has been completed to highlight potential impacts of using the new approach which marks a change in current service delivery. The positive impacts are achieved as communities will be clearer around the council's role and specific commitments around community cohesion and inclusion events and because the new community cohesion and inclusion events funding will empower communities to celebrate and commemorate key events that matter to them.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 As incorporated within the report.

10. Communication Considerations

10.1 A communications plan will be delivered ahead of implementing the new approach to update and guide key stakeholders, partners and communities.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

(as Corporate Director of Partnerships, Housing and Residents Services with effect from 1 April 25 transferred to Corporate Director Service Reform & Strategy)