



Questions from the Opposition and Other Non-Cabinet Members

Full Council – 10 November 2025

1. Question from Councillor S.Butt to Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools)

Can the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools tell us more about the £4 million investment in youth facilities, and how young people themselves helped shape the projects being funded?

Response:

The Council's £4 million investment in youth organisations across Brent is rooted in a commitment to co-production with young people. From the beginning, we have ensured that young people are not just consulted but are central to decision-making.

As part of the SCIL grant, we brought together a diverse panel of young people including those with lived experience from youth justice, care leavers, Brent Youth Parliament, Early Help, and the voluntary sector. These young people played a key role in shortlisting and scoring applications, hearing presentations from organisations, and were core at shaping the final selection of the five projects that will receive funding.

This collaborative approach will continue throughout the delivery phase. We will work closely with the funded voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to ensure that young people remain actively involved in shaping how these upgraded spaces are designed, used, and sustained. We are encouraging all organisations to embed youth voice in their governance, planning, and delivery as part of the grant making process. To support this, we will signpost organisations to the Young Brent Foundation and other partners for help with capacity building, funding, and youth engagement best practice.

We also recognise that upgraded buildings alone are not enough. Young people have told us that their priorities include access to mental health support, employment and skills opportunities, and safe spaces to address youth crime and safety. These priorities are embedded in Brent's Youth Strategy, and we are working with VCS partners to ensure their programmes reflect and respond to these needs. Importantly, young people also have a seat at the Brent Youth Strategy Delivery Group, ensuring they have a direct voice in overseeing the implementation of the wider strategy.

We want to continue hearing directly from young people, to know their opinions for how they want to stay involved in shaping and evaluating these projects. This is an ongoing partnership, and we are committed to making sure that youth voice remains at the heart of it.

The government's Best Start in Life strategy sets out an ambition that local partners must organise and work together to achieve better outcomes for children in the short and long term. This includes family services and the wider early years sector, as well as the expansion of childcare entitlements for children from working families, which has been successfully rolled out in Brent.

We are still awaiting details of the funding allocations for both early years entitlements and the Best Start family services elements. It is anticipated that these announcements will be made later this term.

In the meantime, an overarching Brent early years strategy is being developed to deliver a universal and targeted framework of support from pre-birth to age five, which is crucial for reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for children and families. This local multi-agency strategy will also provide the framework for meeting the statutory targets set for Brent in the Best Start for Life strategy, which are measured through the new Local Government Outcomes framework. An action plan will be published in March 2026, setting out how these targets will be achieved.

2. Question from Councillor Hylton to Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (Cabinet Member for Housing)

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing advise how the renewal of Brent's borough-wide HMO Licensing Scheme will improve living standards for renters and strengthen protection against rogue landlords?

Can she also advise how is the Council preparing for the Government's forthcoming Renters' Reform Bill, to make sure local tenants benefit fully from these long-overdue national changes?

Response:

In respect of HMOs - Properties occupied by multiple households (HMOs) are often higher risk, with greater challenges around safety and management. Our borough-wide HMO Licensing Scheme helps us raise standards and ensure that every property meets clear, consistent requirements. It creates a level playing field for landlords, while giving the Council the powers we need to act decisively where standards fall short.

Under our previous Additional Licensing Scheme, which expired in January 2025, over 3,000 properties were licensed, alongside more than 3,800 larger HMOs under the Mandatory Scheme. That means over 6,000 homes were actively regulated, giving us direct contact with thousands of tenants and landlords, and enabling targeted support and enforcement where it was needed most.

We've also strengthened engagement with tenants through our annual Renters' Fairs, the most recent of which was held last month, and received over 80% positive feedback. Likewise, our yearly landlord forums continue to promote good practice and collaboration across the private rented sector.

Looking ahead, the new Additional Licensing Scheme, coming into force on 2nd February 2026, together with the new Renters' Rights Bill, will deliver even stronger protections for renters and fairer rules for responsible landlords. We've invested in staff training and robust operational systems to ensure we're ready for implementation from day one. These measures will help us drive up standards across Brent, tackle rogue landlords, and make sure that every resident has a safe and decent home.

In respect of the forthcoming Renters Reform Bill - the Renters' Rights Bill, which received Royal Assent this month, marks a once-in-a-generation reform of the private rented sector, bringing greater security for tenants, stronger powers against unfair evictions, and a fairer balance between renters and landlords.

We are already preparing for its implementation, expected between April and June 2026. Dedicated projects are underway across both our Private Housing Services and Housing Needs teams to make sure Brent residents benefit fully from these long-overdue changes.

Our teams are engaging closely in pan-London and subregional forums, sharing learning, and identifying opportunities to improve the quality of private rented housing, strengthen renters' rights, and prevent homelessness. We are also working closely

with the DWP and our Housing Benefits teams to anticipate changes in income, affordability pressures, and Universal Credit delays, ensuring we can support residents through the transition.

As someone who rents privately myself, and who represents a ward where 1 in 3 households rent privately, I know first-hand how much difference a safe, secure home can make. Ensuring every person has the foundation to build a better life is at the heart of why I am a politician.

The Renters' Rights Bill represents a national turning point, and here in Brent, we'll make sure that it delivers real change for the thousands of renters who call this borough home.

3. Question from Councillor Choudry to Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council)

Can the Leader outline how the Council will use the £1.5 million 'Pride in Place Impact Fund' announced earlier this year to deliver visible improvements in our high streets and public spaces, helping to instil local pride today

Response:

The Government's recent allocation of £1.5 million "Pride in Place Impact Fund" capital funding to Brent is welcome. It will build on the major £26.9 million upgrade we are already delivering across the borough – improving streets, parks, youth centres and public spaces. From smoother roads and greener parks to thriving youth clubs and safer high streets, residents will see and feel visible improvements in every part of Brent.

We are clear that pride begins in the high street - in the everyday places where people shop, meet and spend time. The look, feel and function of our streets set the tone for how residents and visitors experience Brent. That is why we are considering how best to target this funding towards visible improvements that strengthen the character, safety or vibrancy of our high streets and our wider borough. In doing so, we want to ensure every pound of this finite funding helps to build civic pride in the places people visit and value most.

The £1.5 million Pride in Place Impact Fund is capital only but can be used flexibly until March 2027 to support our locally identified priorities for public areas and high street enhancements (see: Pride in Place Impact Fund: prospectus – GOV.UK). Given the scale of investment already underway this year, we will take the opportunity over the coming months to consider how this new funding can best complement and amplify our existing plans. This includes exploring opportunities to leverage additional external funding to stretch every pound further for our communities.

I will provide further updates on progress in due course. By continuing to invest in a Better, Bolder Brent, we are putting pride into every corner of this borough — creating cleaner, greener, safer neighbourhoods that everyone can be proud to call home.

4. Question from Councillor Jayanti Patel to Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property):

Residents in Queensbury Ward have raised deep frustration at the long-standing breach of planning conditions tied to the 2011 development of Callier House on Burnt Oak Broadway involving the planting of 11 trees along Burnt Oak Broadway (planning application E/23/0486).

As part of the planning permission granted at that time, the developer was required to plant 11 trees along the pavement between the former Mecca Bingo Hall and Cohen Court. This was not a decorative suggestion, it was a legally binding condition of the planning approval intended to ensure that the Broadway retained its tree-lined character and that the development contributed positively to the local environment.

Despite this, the condition still remains unfulfilled with the trees never planted.

Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property therefore advise:

- (1) Why was a building control certificate issued for Calliers House despite the clear and continuing breach of planning conditions?
- (2) What specific enforcement steps will now be taken to ensure compliance, including whether a formal Breach of Condition Notice will be served with a 28-day deadline?
- (3) Will the Council commit that, should the developer fail to act within that period, it will commission the planting of the 11 trees directly and recover the full costs from Peabody without further delay?
- (4) More broadly, what steps will the Council take to ensure that this kind of failure does not happen again — that planning conditions are properly monitored, enforced, and verified before certificates are issued.

Response:

The developer was required, as part of their planning consent, to plant 11 new trees within the street in front of the development. However, this was not possible due to the presence of underground services beneath the footway. As a result, while the physical planting could not take place in that specific location, the development remains in compliance with its planning obligations.

Over recent months, both the Planning Enforcement Team and the Development Management Team have been in active discussions with the building owners, Peabody and Byond Homes. I'm pleased to confirm that the owners have agreed to make a financial contribution to the Council to cover the cost of planting these trees. Although it is not feasible to plant them directly outside the building, the trees will instead be planted elsewhere in the local area, ensuring that the community still benefits from the greening and environmental improvements originally intended. In short, the funding for these trees has been secured, and the Council is ensuring that this commitment is honoured.

It's also important to note that the Building Regulations process is entirely separate from the planning process. Building Control authorities do not have legal powers to withhold a Completion Certificate for non-compliance with planning conditions, and the issuing of such a certificate does not prevent the Council from taking further action where planning issues arise.

While the Council does not have the resources to routinely monitor compliance with every planning condition, it remains committed to upholding high standards across the borough. Any potential breaches of planning control are investigated in line with our Planning Enforcement Policy, and we continue to take proportionate and transparent action to secure compliance where necessary.

5. Question from Councillor Lorber to Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement):

Residents across Brent continue to experience significant disruption due to poorly coordinated road works taking place in the borough.

In areas such as Alperton (around the tall building zone), the Abbey Estate, Willesden Green ward (particularly close to the High Road) and across Northwick Park - to name but a few, unplanned and overlapping works are causing traffic congestion, noise, and accessibility issues for local people and businesses. The Council must do more to mitigate the impact of road works.

Can the Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement explain what steps the Council is taking to improve the coordination of road works and advise:

- (a) What, if any work is being done to ensure that utility and water companies properly reinstate roads after completing their scheduled works?
- (b) What action is being taken to ensure that Council-led upgrade projects are planned so as to align with other utility works to minimise repeated disruption for local people?
- (c) What measures will be put in place to monitor and enforce compliance so that Brent residents are not continually inconvenienced by poor planning and lack of coordination?

Response:

The Council's NRSWA (New Roads & Street Works Act) and Network team meet regularly with the various utility contractors, and our own contractors, to coordinate planned works to minimise disruption to the public highway network. For utility works classified as "emergency work", this is more difficult. We are not made aware of the works until they have commenced on site. The contractor will attend and commence excavation to identify the issue, notifying Highways Management two hours after works commence. At this stage they are unlikely to have any further information and so cannot confirm a timescale for the work. We will issue a retrospective permit based on the information at the time. This will be reviewed once the contractor has a better understanding of the actual problem. For emergency work we will react and seek to ensure the traffic management is effective and open dialogue with the contractor to ensure the works are executed in the quickest time possible. As we are reacting to the issue there will inevitable be delays in getting real time information out to the public.

In response to your questions:

- (a) The reinstatement of the Highway is covered by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and s71 of the Act introduces the Statutory Code of Practice that has been published by the Department of Transport called the 'Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways'. This is followed by all Utility Companies. Once a Utility Company closes their Permit it automatically creates two inspections to visit the location throughout their two-year guarantee period.

The first inspection is classed as a 'B' Inspection and creates an Inspection within the first 6 months of the end of the works. The next Inspection is a 'C' Inspections and happens before their two-year Guarantee period ends. However, our NRSWA Inspectors can visit any site at any time outside these two created inspections and fail the site, if required.

- (b) We have quarterly meetings with all utility companies to discuss upcoming projects and ongoing works to minimise clashes with our own works. Every Thursday a report is sent out to Councillors and certain Brent Officers listing all upcoming works, both Utility and our own works, for the next 12 months.
- (c) We assess every Permit to work that comes into us. We check for any conflicts within the vicinity with other road works that are ongoing or are planned to start eminently to reduce disruption to all road users. However, we cannot plan for Emergency Works that the utility companies must do. A Utility company can start work immediately under an Emergency Permit and they must inform us up to 2 hrs of starting the work, or if it's over a weekend then by 10am on the following Monday morning.