

Brent Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan - January 2026 update



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KEY: Timeline Short term within 3 months/ ongoing work Medium term within 6 months Long term a year or over			Action status Action status of each milestone ■ Completed ■ Underway ■ Overdue ■ Planned (subject to the timeline)		>> Continued onto the next page.
Recommendation	Key Milestones and Detail		Owner	Timeline	Action Status
1. Medium Term Financial Strategy The council should develop a longer-term MTFS that is fully aligned with its corporate priorities and change and transformation programme. It is important that this is owned across the organisation. The peer team agrees with the immediate need to establish a five-year MTFS, it is essential to integrate the financial benefits of the planned change and transformation programme into this strategy.	Milestone 1. Milestone 1: Future budget process to be launched in April 2025 across the council.		Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Short term	Completed
	Milestone 2. First iteration of refreshed MTFS reported to Cabinet in July 2025. The Council's refreshed longer term MTFS will be informed by the council's local ambitions and strategies as well as the planned reforms of Local Government Finance due in the Spring/Summer of 2025.		Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Short term	Completed
	We are introducing OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) within the Change Programmes and as part of this process we plan to: Review all savings proposals to ensure the financial impact of change programmes are reflected or captured as Key Results, including expected efficiencies. Align programme Objectives with financial goals such as cost reduction, income generation etc. We will also map savings proposals against change programmes to track and manage interdependencies and ensure finance leads sit on the change programme boards to oversee financial decisions. Progress of outcome delivery and financial impacts will be reported to the CLT Portfolio Board.		Evette McDonald	Medium term	Underway
2. Breaking down Silos The council is aware of the need to break down silos. The change and transformation programme rightly targets this issue, but the scale of the transition required should not be underestimated. Collaborative behaviours with a genuine sense of curiosity need to be modelled by the CLT, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and all managers. To effectively break down silos, the council needs to foster greater strategic collaboration across all departments, sharing the knowledge and expertise held within the organisation. Officers need to adopt more of a corporate mindset recognising that challenges in specific directorates are shared, council-wide responsibilities.	Milestone 1. Ensuring that managers are leading efforts to break down silos and foster a more collaborative environment across services. Key steps in this process include: SLT and SMG sessions. Staff engagement around change programme and new values. Cross-council work on strategic change portfolio initiatives. Ensuring that managers attend training to embed our new values, followed up by assessing impact on collaborative working. We are resetting the Change Portfolio to include Council wide transformation programmes, with cross cutting enablers. We will also encourage joint ownership and collaboration by Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) sitting on the same governance board enabling cross-functional decision making and shared accountability. >>		Musrat Zaman	Medium/ Long term	Underway

Recommendation	Key Milestones and Detail	Owner	Timeline	Action Status
2. Breaking down Silos (cont.)	Milestone 2. Develop a toolkit for SMG to hold and support conversation about change and directly work with teams to develop discussion and ideas. Feedback will be captured on what the organisation could do differently to improve the way we work and identify areas to make savings.	Evette McDonald	Medium term	Completed
3. Change and Transformation Programme Recognise the urgency of advancing the change and transformation programme and develop evidence-based business cases that deliver the spending reductions required by the MTFS. To achieve this, the council should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Quickly define and set the name, scope and contents of the change and transformation programme, and consistently communicate this across the organisation. Bolster communications supporting staff to understand, engage with and embrace the transformation journey. b. Develop SMART delivery plans for each element of the programme. Support these plans through the use of the programme management office (PMO) governance to oversee and co-ordinate their delivery. c. Accelerate the pace of delivery of the change and transformation programme by ensuring that it is owned and led by SLT with the required grip to ensure delivery d. Establish the programme as a cross-council initiative, corporately owned by all directors, to foster collective accountability. e. Focus the organisational development programme on building the capabilities and behaviours required to deliver the change and transformation programme at pace and scale. f. Ensure the change and transformation programme is fully integrated with the council's digital transformation agenda and the operating model for customer services. 	Milestone 1. The 'Change Programme' will be re-scoped in line with the specific suggestions within the recommendation, using the new Council value of "Embrace Change" as the portfolio name and increasing the breadth of the programmes contained into the portfolio.	Evette McDonald	Short term	Completed
	Milestone 2. The portfolio governance will also be refreshed to have programme boards reporting to CLT as the Portfolio Board. We will ensure the governance reflects new objectives, reduces bureaucracy, and ensures the right information flows to CLT at the right time.	Evette McDonald	Short/ Medium term	Completed
	As part of the refreshed portfolio, we will position OD as a cross-cutting enabler to ensure all programmes and transformation initiatives are supported by the necessary skills, culture, and structures for sustainable change.	Musrat Zaman	Medium term	Underway
	Milestone 3. Having digital and data as enablers to the portfolio will ensure that every programme is driven by technology, automation, and insights that support decision-making and better understanding of customer needs.	Evette McDonald/ Madeleine Leathley	Long term	Underway
	Milestone 4. Ensure Change Champions to have a stronger voice across the organisation, going forwards a representative will have a place on the internal SRO Board and Change Board.	Evette McDonald	Medium/ Long term	Completed
	Milestone 5. Establish greater accountability across the Senior Leadership Team by providing training for programme Sponsors and Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), helping to clarify roles and responsibilities	Evette McDonald	Long term	Underway

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4. Addressing the temporary accommodation crisis Addressing the temporary accommodation crisis requires whole-organisational ownership and a collective response to tackle both the immediate pressures and the underlying systemic issues. The council should review all the levers it has to impact positively on this crisis. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Developing a dedicated Temporary Accommodation Improvement Plan reporting into a structured governance framework to co-ordinate actions across the council. b) Looking outwardly, as this is not a pressure unique to Brent, and working in collaboration with partners including other local councils. c) Build on initiatives that have already started e.g. 'Find a place you can afford.' d) Explore creative opportunities presented by the council's new build and acquisitions programme. 	Milestone 1: Preventing Homelessness Project (including Temporary Accommodation Improvement) added to the Housing Transformation Programme, under the Embrace Change Portfolio. The Director of Housing Needs and Support is the SRO reporting into the SRO Delivery Board and Change Portfolio Board.	Laurence Coaker	Short term	Completed
	Milestone 2: Continue working with pan-London and sub-regional groups - as well as local and internal groups, such as the Brent Homelessness Forum - to tackle homelessness through collaboration and learning.	Laurence Coaker	Short term	Underway
	Milestone 3: Continue reviewing the Find A Place You Can Afford campaign to adapt to new opportunities and needs. We will also continue to encourage and give frontline officers the space to suggest new initiatives and ways of working within their teams.	Rob Mansfield	Medium term	Completed
	Milestone 4: Opportunities will continue to be explored through a project group to ensure that a proportion of new build properties and properties acquired through I4B are primarily being used to end the homeless duty, as well as having flexibility to be used as Temporary Accommodation for families with particular needs.	Laurence Coaker	Short term	Overdue
5. Reserves Given the depletion of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves, a medium-term programmer of restoring the balances to sustainable levels must be a priority. This should include internal communications outlining the reserves position and include explanation of what the ringfence requirements are of the council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and capital reserves. The council should also explore strategic approaches to utilising these CIL and capital reserves to deliver a net-positive impact on the council's revenue account position.	Milestone 1. The plan to rebuild reserves will be taken forward as part of the 2026/27 - 2028/29 budget setting process and refreshed MTF. The future budget launch in April 2025 will include 'financial sustainability' as a key requirement.	Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Long term	Underway
	The review of CIL governance and strategic use will highlight the process to identify opportunities of how these funds can have a net positive impact to our revenue position.	Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Long term	Underway

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<p>6. Financial processes and organisational grip</p> <p>The council should prioritise enhancing its financial processes to secure income, improve productivity and drive efficiencies. Key areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improving debt recovery effectiveness. b. Increasing council tax collection rates. c. Optimising procurement and commissioning practices. d. Consistent approach to business case development to support the delivery of change and ensuring that the change and transformation programme quickly identifies savings proposals of sufficient assurance to incorporate in the MTFS. e. Conducting detailed unit cost analysis and benchmarking to identify cost-saving opportunities. <p>To effectively address the financial gap, the council should also invest in improving financial awareness, literacy and ownership across the organisation, ensuring both members and officers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge and reducing the overreliance on the finance function.</p>	<p>Milestone 1: A new business case was approved in January 2025 to invest in debt recovery and improve collection rates. The progress of this investment and impact on collection rates will be reported to Cabinet in future budget reports.</p>	Rav Jassar	Long term	Underway
	<p>Milestone 2: Develop and implement an improvement plan in response to an Independent Procurement Review – this includes optimising processes, structures and targeted savings initiatives.</p>	Rhodri Rowlands/ Melissa Sage	Medium/ Long term	Completed
	<p>Milestone 3: A consistent approach to business case development will be addressed as part of the 2026/27-2028/29 budget setting process. All savings and growth proposals will be subject to a business case process. Introduce gateway process for business cases to ensure projects are thoroughly evaluated, risks are mitigated, and investments are aligned with council priorities (and those that are not, stopped). This process will also be integrated into the change portfolio for savings proposals to be incorporated into the MTFS.</p>	Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Long term	Underway
	<p>Milestone 4: Budget Challenge meetings are due to commence in April 2025 in the lead up the 2026/27 - 2028/29 budget setting process. As part of this process an assessment on financial literacy will be undertaken to ensure that appropriate training and tools can be deployed to support officers in managing and owning their budgets.</p>	Minesh Patel/ Rav Jassar	Medium term	Underway

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7. VCS Consider a refresh of the Compact with the VCS and health to strengthen collaboration and align priorities. A co-developed engagement strategy, building on the enthusiasm for the Radical Place Leadership approach, would provide a robust framework for fostering deeper partnerships. Additionally, the council should continue its efforts to engage with the full breadth of the VCS sector in Brent.	Milestone 1: Co-create a refreshed Compact / Partnership Strategy (Participation & Partnerships) with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and partners to align shared priorities, values, foster collaborative working and capacity building.	Rhodri Rowlands/ Agnieszka Spruds/ Veronica Christopher	Short term	Underway
	Milestone 2: Review and recommission, in partnership with VCS, a social infrastructure capacity building offer.	Rhodri Rowlands/ Veronica Christopher	Medium term	Underway
	Milestone 3: Use Commissioning Community of Practice to extend participation across VCS to develop new approaches to shared challenges.	Rhodri Rowlands	Medium/ Long term	Underway
	Milestone 4: Explore the opportunities to develop, grow, attract new social infrastructure in the borough.	Rhodri Rowlands/ Daniel Shurlock	Short/ Medium term	Underway
8. Shared vision for the future of Brent Work with partners across the public sector, VCS and private sector to co-create a shared, medium-to long-term vision for Brent that goes beyond the council's immediate priorities. This vision should reflect a collective ambition for the borough, setting shared priorities and intended outcomes for both Brent residents and Brent as a place.	Milestone 1: Continue developing provisional vision/brand/Brent identity through existing Radical Place Leadership and Public Affairs activity. This includes recruiting a Strategic Change Comms lead to work with residents, partners, and Brent staff to communicate vision for Change Portfolio.	Rhodri Rowlands/ Dan Shurlock/ Will Holt/Evette McDonald	Medium/ Long term	Underway
	Milestone 2: Develop a new Borough Plan We agree that establishing a shared vision for Brent is a positive next step and aligns with organisational focus around Radical Place Leadership – we must work collaboratively with our partners and communities to establish localised support that will enable residents to live their best lives. The current Borough Plan spans 2023-27 so we will seek to adopt a shared vision approach once we initiate the process to establish new strategic ambitions. We will also use the development of the new Borough Plan as an opportunity to establish a new narrative, identity and USP. To deliver this will explore bringing in external expertise to develop and co-produce this with partners.	Tom Pickup/ Rob Mansfield	Long term	Underway
	Milestone 3: Establish a strategic culture approach Brent Culture Service has engaged a specialist consultant to map the existing assets of Brent's cultural and creative landscape in order to better understand Brent's existing and potential audiences and identify baseline data sets. This would help to then understand Brent's creative and visitor economy and inform the future strategic planning.	Colin Chester	Long term	Underway

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9. Community and Tenant Engagement Refresh the council's approach to community engagement by conducting a comprehensive review of all existing engagement methods. This review should ensure that all approaches are aligned and complement each other. There is also a need to embed the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy to enhance tenant involvement in shaping the service. The new Housing Management Advisory Board will have an important role in scrutinising the implementation of this. This strategy should consider areas for improving the service culture and responsiveness to tenants.	Milestone 1: Undertake a rapid review, consolidation and alignment of the council's existing engagement methods.	Rhodri Rowlands/ Veronica Christopher	Long term	Underway
	Milestone 2: Launch an Engagement Network and develop a focused work programme, alignment of resource and supporting good practice toolkits.	Veronica Christopher	Long term	Underway
	Milestone 3: Co-develop, design and deliver a series of engagement pathfinders that test out new approaches that increase resident voice and influence. This includes proposing and testing the feasibility of alternative approaches to the Brent Connects forum.	Veronica Christopher/ Agnieszka Spruds	Medium/ Long term	Underway
	In line with linked work to build VCS capacity, explore new social infrastructure approaches and models that offer potential to attract additional funding, develop greater capacity and resilience across VCS and more effectively work with and alongside Council and partners on shared priorities, for example around Place Leadership work.	Rhodri Rowlands	Medium/ Long term	Underway
	From a housing perspective, this includes a focus on tenant engagement and innovating through Brent's new Housing Management Advisory Board.	Tom Cattermole/ Spencer Randolph	Long term	Underway
	Milestone 4: Relocate the Strategic Housing Partnerships and Engagement Service into the Housing Services Department so that engagement is better aligned to Housing engagement priorities and the requirements/expectations of the Regulator for Social Housing.	Tom Cattermole/ Spencer Randolph	Short term	Completed

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10. Housing allocations and waiting list Review and update the council's Housing Allocations Policy and undertake a re-registration exercise for households on the waiting list to obtain an accurate, up-to-date picture of housing needs across Brent.	Milestone 1: Review current Allocations Scheme to identify updates required, including Statutory consultation with key stakeholders before the publication and implementation of the new Allocation Scheme including re-registration exercise for households on the housing register.	Tom Cattermole/ Laurence Coaker	Medium term	Overdue
11. Adults and Children's Services Seize the opportunity for service transformation within both Adults and Children's services, leveraging the current position of below average overspends.	Milestone 1: Key Adults and Children's transformation programmes to be incorporated into the refreshed scope of the Change Portfolio (see rec 3).	Evette McDonald	Short term	Completed
	Milestone 2: Use medium term financial strategy work to develop business cases for wider transformation where financial pressures still exist, with a focus on prevention, integration across health and social care and demand management. Adult Social Care and Children, Families and Young People Departments have transformation programmes in place with project plans tracked through Directorate governance structures. Going forward, these will also be part of the Embrace Change Portfolio to ensure greater ownership and visibility at a Corporate Leadership level through the CLT Change Board. As part of the next budget process, referenced in recommendation 1, the council will look at opportunities to go further or faster in the transformation of adult social care and children, families and young people, including looking at where taking a test and learn approach within integrated neighbourhood teams can help identify the most effective preventative approaches, exploring further integration with health partners, using a community development approach with the VCS, as well as considering how best to deploy digital solutions to support residents more effectively and automate process where appropriate.	Claudia Brown/ Palvinder Kudhail	Long term	Underway
12. EDI Refresh the council's EDI priorities to ensure that activity is aligned with cultural competency/ appropriateness and improving outcomes for residents. Ensure that there is a broader focus on EDI across all underrepresented groups. The council should also reset its relationship with the staff networks to maximise their contribution in shaping organisational strategy and outcomes. The CLT should play more of an active role in sponsoring and supporting these networks, demonstrating a genuine commitment to enhancing their visibility and influence.	Milestone 1: Relaunch the staff networks including a reinvigorated role for CMT to sponsor and support the networks.	Musrat Zaman/Angela Chaudhry	Short term	Completed
	We will also provide directorates with comprehensive EDI insights through detailed narratives highlighting key data and specific areas where disparities exist between the directorate and the wider organisation. These tailored reports will help CLT understand their unique EDI landscape and provide opportunities for them to raise awareness of EDI matters both as sponsors and as leaders of their directorate. >>	Musrat Zaman/Angela Chaudhry	Short term	Underway

Recommendation	Key Milestones and Detail	Owner	Timeline	Action Status
12. EDI (cont.)	<p>Milestone 2: Extend the council's leadership and drive around anti-racism across the borough and public sector.</p> <p>Across the borough there is activity underway that will help drive the anti-racism agenda, this includes:</p> <p>a. Becoming Brent – an 18+ month initiative aimed at understanding and documenting the impact of the British Empire on Brent, picking up themes of decolonisation and multiculturalism.</p>	Tom Pickup/ Sarah Milner-Barry/ Angela Chaudhry/ Colin Chester	Short/ Long term	Underway
	<p>b. Brent Schools' Race Equality Programme – a programme in collaboration with Leeds Beckett University that aims to embed anti-racist policies in schools, increase attainment among underperforming ethnic groups, and reduce exclusions.</p>	Louise Ishani	Long term	Underway
	<p>c. Anti-racism training will be delivered to the whole workforce.</p>	Angela Chaudhry	Long term	Underway
	<p>We are also in the process of refreshing our Black Community Action Plan (BCAP) which seeks to tackle the persistent disproportionality experienced by the Black community. This will be a significant next step in the council's broader anti-racism journey.</p> <p>Beyond this we will explore how we can establish a more structured approach to demonstrating leadership around anti-racism, while ensuring our approach across all protected characteristics is equitable (as aligned with milestone 4).</p>	Kibibi Octave	Long term	Underway
	<p>Milestone 3: Tailor policies and engagement to reflect the strengths and challenges of different communities, avoiding a one-size-fits-all model.</p>	Tom Pickup/ Sarah Milner-Barry/ Angela Chaudhry	Medium/ Long term	Underway
	<p>We will continue to engage with specific communities through existing forums, such as the Disability Forum, Pensioners Forum, Brent Youth Parliament, Brent Multi Faith Forum and Brent Care Journeys 2.0. But we want to use the insights from such forums and better equip services to understand our communities, particularly those that are new and emerging. To support this, we will develop 'community cards' that will capture data and insights around different communities that can be used to help tailor policies and engagement. Progress around this milestone will also link to our Radical Place Leadership activity which seeks to embed a more localised council delivery approach that is tailored to different communities and localities. >></p>	Sonya Kalyniak/ Veronica Christopher	Medium term	Underway

Recommendation	Key Milestones and Detail	Owner	Timeline	Action Status
12. EDI (cont.)	<p>Milestone 4: Apply the council's approach and progress around anti-racism to promoting equity across all protected characteristics.</p> <p>We are proud of our progress around anti-racism; although there is more to do, we recognise the framework and developments made around this can be applied to other protected groups. We are deep diving into respective characteristics, with a current focus around disability, to understand the evidence and insights around the challenges and disproportionality they experience. This will ensure that we identify and examine trends and gaps and address them accordingly. The EDI Board will also examine progress and activity across departments to understand what is underway and explore any challenges or gaps.</p>	Tom Pickup/ Sarah Milner-Barry/ Angela Chaudhry	Long term	Underway
	<p>We are also looking at disadvantaged groups beyond the nine protected characteristics. The council have recently adopted care experience as a recognised protected characteristic and exploring the adoption of the socio-economic duty. Both will be embedded within our practice, service delivery and in our Equality Impact Assessments as part of our upcoming refreshed approach.</p>	Tom Pickup/ Sarah Milner-Barry	Long term	Underway
	<p>We are also in the process of reviewing our approach to community cohesion and inclusion events i.e. how we mark and celebrate occasions centred around culture, identity, religion and faith. The new approach will focus on empowering our diverse communities, supporting them to mark and celebrate the occasions that matter to them.</p>	Tom Pickup	Medium term	Underway

