



## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

### **MINUTES OF THE CABINET**

**Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 19 January 2026 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor M Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Benea, Donnelly-Jackson, Grahl, Nerva and Rubin.

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Resident Support & Culture) and Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement).

The Leader also took the opportunity to welcome Councillor Moeen to Cabinet in her newly appointed role as Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Cohesion.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made during the meeting.

#### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 8 December 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

#### **4. Matters Arising (if any)**

None identified.

#### **5. Petitions (if any)**

There were no petitions presented at the meeting.

#### **6. Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)**

There were no items referred from either the Community Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees.

#### **7. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Progress Review report**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced a report from the Chief Executive updating members on the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) and outcome of the progress review visit undertaken by the peer review team in November 2025.

In introducing the report, Councillor Butt began by thanking the CPC Team for returning to Brent and for the openness and challenge provided as part of the Progress Review, along with the Council Management Team and Cabinet for their engagement in the process. Whilst acknowledging the constructive nature of the feedback provided, the scale of the task and challenges faced in being able to deliver (at pace) the Council's aspirations for longer-term transformation were also recognised in noting the summary of progress achieved so far and readiness for the next stage of action.

Reference was also made to the challenge identified in relation to the silo culture and ongoing work in seeking to breakdown fragmented ways of working to ensure the necessary corporate approach, focussed around shared ownership and a culture of accountability for outcomes and delivery.

The CPC teams encouragement to sharpen the Council's grip on change and to develop a shared vision for Brent's future was welcomed as both timely and necessary. Whilst the challenges identified were not felt to be insurmountable, the need to ensure a continued focus on delivery and transparency was also recognised in terms of the ambition and ongoing journey to build a better Brent and continue driving prosperity and creating opportunities for every community across the borough.

The outcome of the review and ongoing progress identified by the CPC was also welcomed by Kim Wright (as Chief Executive) who also highlighted the shared commitment and focus by officers on delivery of the actions and recommendations with the CPC Action Plan in order to develop the organisation and continue delivering the best outcomes for residents.

In considering the report, Cabinet welcomed what was felt be the constructive feedback from the Review Team along with the level of progress identified and further opportunities highlighted around the ongoing process of change and transformation as well as financial management and planning. Whilst recognising the need to focus on delivery moving forward at pace and scale, the opportunity was taken to highlight (as examples of the collaborative and joined up nature of work being undertaken) the major restructure in Children's Social Care aligned to wider social care reform and in seeking to address the needs of children and young people arising from the current pressures in relation to housing and temporary accommodation as well as development of the Carers Strategy with the Adult's and Children's transformation programmes now embedded within the Embrace Change Portfolio.

Members were also keen to recognise the reflective nature of the process in highlighting ongoing opportunities and areas for improvement such as the progress being made in response to the Council's self-referral to the Social Housing Regulator and work being undertaken to address the associated compliance issues alongside development of the Housing Management Improvement Plan, acceleration of stock condition survey programme and work to rebuild the asset register. The establishment of the new independently chaired Housing Management Advisory Board was also highlighted as an example of the focus in developing additional challenge and oversight alongside the work to improve tenant satisfaction with additional progress highlighted in relation to the initiatives rolled out to address the pressures in relation to temporary accommodation, including the

B&B elimination plan. Other initiatives highlighted included the focus on Supported Exempt Accommodation and agreement to broaden the EDI focus across disadvantaged groups beyond the nine protected characteristics following the recent adoption of the socio-economic duty and care experience as recognised protected characteristics. In addition, reference was also made to the positive progress identified in relation to the efforts being made to strengthen the corporate procurement function following establishment of the Procurement Improvement Programme and development of the new Procurement Strategy and Social Value Policy as the foundation for delivering further cross cutting efficiencies with a clear financial impact.

In once again welcoming the open and constructive nature of the challenge provided and opportunities identified to encourage further improvement in what was recognised as the Council's continuous journey in seeking to deliver the shared ambition and vision for Brent's future against such challenging financial conditions Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To note the feedback and next steps emerging from the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review.
- (2) To note Appendix B of the report setting out the updated Brent Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

## 8. **Q3 Financial Forecast 2025-26**

Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources detailing the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and the Capital Programme as at Quarter 3 2025-26.

In presenting the report, Councillor Mili Patel, highlighted that despite the considerable efforts being made to manage the budget, the operating environment and wider economic and social context faced by the Council remained challenging with the latest forecast position reflecting the scale of the financial challenge and difficult context in which decisions continued to be taken. In recognising the tough financial conditions faced by many councils across the country, the specific challenges arising from the sustained pressure needing to be managed in terms of rising demand, high inflation, elevated interest rates and increasing complexity in delivery of Brent's statutory services were highlighted with it reported the General Fund was now forecasting an overspend of £12.5m. In terms of the most significant pressures, members were advised these continued to be focussed around housing and temporary accommodation, Adult Social Care, and Children and Young People's Services with temporary accommodation costs continuing to rise as demand increased, and housing supply remained constrained and Adult Social Care and Children's Services experiencing higher than anticipated volumes and complexity alongside significant increases in placement and care package costs, with and the operating environment as a result continuing to remain volatile.

Despite the challenging financial conditions outlined it was, however, also felt important to recognise the Council's continued financial resilience, careful management and collective discipline, with spending controls remaining in place

and further strengthened during the year accompanied by the introduction of enhanced assurance, vacancy management and tighter controls on non-essential spend, which had helped to stabilise the in-year position and avoid more severe outcomes, at a time when a growing number of councils nationally were requiring exceptional financial support.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges identified, members were also reminded that the Council continued to seek opportunities to support the development of services. As an example, reference was made to the £326m for new regeneration and infrastructure projects designed to improve outcomes for residents alongside the addition of almost 900 new homes to the Council's portfolio, helping to reduce the reliance on expensive temporary accommodation whilst also delivering safe and secure housing for families. Members were also reminded of the £1.5m secured through the Pride in Place Impact Fund that would support the Council in continuing to make tangible improvements to the borough's high streets and public spaces, showing residents that despite the challenges identified investment in the priorities being identified in relation to neighbourhood, cleaner streets, safer parks and thriving town centres could still be delivered on the basis of strong financial discipline remaining the foundation for ongoing progress.

Overall, it was felt the financially sustainable approach outlined demonstrated the seriousness in which the Council took its responsibilities in seeking to address immediate pressures whilst also planning for the future, with the Government's new multi-year funding settlement and updated deprivation measures (which it was highlighted would better reflect housing costs in the borough) also positively welcomed in enabling the Council to continue supporting the most vulnerable whilst also seeking to innovate, collaborate and continue investing in the long-term future of Brent.

In considering the forecast position, Members acknowledged the significant level of financial challenge faced by the Council given the scale and depth of the pressures identified whilst also expressing support for the efforts being made to uphold Brent's core values in seeking to prioritise the most vulnerable and invest in local communities and to continue lobbying for the necessary reform of local government finance in order to provide a fair allocation of resources reflecting need across the borough. Recognising the real and material nature of the most significant pressures identified in relation to Children and Young People (CYP) services, Adult Social Care and Housing & Temporary Accommodation members felt it important to highlight the mitigations and robust budget management measures which had been identified in response. As part of this reference was made (in relation to CYP) to the work being undertaken to deliver the in-house residential children's care home, additional spend controls and cost avoidance measures as well as opportunities identified within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to deliver wider reform of the child welfare system and continuation of the High Needs DSG Block statutory override in seeking to manage the ongoing pressures in relation to the growth in Education, Health and Care Plans.

In terms of Adult Social Care, reference was made to the wider national context in relation to the funding, cost and increasing demand and complexity in the delivery of care packages and placements, with members noting the wider recognition of these challenges by the government as part of the ring fence included within the current local government financial settlement and work being undertaken locally to

manage the current pressures identified whilst also seeking to focus the assessment process on ensuring those requiring care and support could continue to live as independently as possible on the basis of the most cost effective model available, including the use of Supported and Home based care provision. In supporting the need for national reform of the care system and work of the Casey Review, members also recognised the role which the increase in National Insurance, inflation and demographics had created in terms of driving up costs of social care packages and placements being delivered through external providers, although pride was expressed for the Council's stance (in terms of the wider benefits identified) in supporting payment of the London Living Wage by providers. The opportunity was also taken to highlight the accountability and quality assurance work being undertaken to track mitigations and action to manage and minimise the pressures identified along with the focus on recruitment and retention of staff and partnership work being undertaken with the NHS and Voluntary Sector to manage finances and delivery of social care services across the sector.

In addition, members noted the significant pressures continuing to be experienced in relation to Housing Needs and Support. Whilst the Council was expecting to add a further 892 new properties to its housing portfolio during 2025-26 and 2026-27 and continued to implement a number of proactive interventions aimed at increasing supply and identifying alternative arrangements for clients currently in the most expensive type of placements (including the supply of new temporary accommodation units and private rented sector acquisition programme through i4B) to assist in mitigating the budgetary challenges identified, it was acknowledged that the sustained level of demand still continued to significantly exceed supply. In supporting the targeted programme of work outlined, members also highlighted the work being undertaken to address the financial pressures identified in relation to Supported Exempt Accommodation (which it was noted reflected a wider national challenge), ongoing lobbying in relation to a change in Local Housing Allowance provision as well as to monitor the impact of the Renters Right Act on the private rented sector with members highlighting their broader support for the legislation in relation to the wider protections provided for tenants.

Given the significant pressures and challenges identified, members also felt it important to recognise the range of proactive measures being taken to transform and protect the delivery of services for residents. Support was also expressed for the innovation and transformation being sought in service delivery acknowledging the work being undertaken across the Council to deliver cost avoidance measures and mitigate against the risks, whilst continuing to effectively deliver services in such challenging circumstances.

In acknowledging the challenges identified in seeking to manage demand and address the pressures identified, members highlighted their commitment to continue the work with Corporate Directors in relation to the monitoring and management of budgets in each service area and to take the difficult decisions required in order to deliver and safeguard the council's reputation for financial, stability, sustainability and to avoid the need in seeking exceptional financial hardship support

Having welcomed the multi-year financial settlement implemented by the government as a means of providing greater certainty in being able to plan for

future years and noted the update provided within the report and ongoing focus on delivery, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising, as detailed within the report.
- (2) To note the savings delivery tracker, as detailed within Appendix A of the report.
- (3) To note the prudential indicators for treasury management as detailed within Appendix B of the report.
- (4) To approve the virements, as detailed in section 9.19 of the report.
- (5) To approve the amendments to the capital budget as set out in paragraphs 12.2 -12.4 of the report.
- (6) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration to allocate the Pride in Place Impact Fund budget to specific projects in line with the thematic areas linked to the Borough Plan, as set out in paragraph 12.3 of the report.

## **9. Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2025-26**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) presented a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources updating on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the financial year 2025-26, which included the Council's investment and borrowing activities and strategy.

In introducing the report, members were advised that as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to financial transparency, the report included an update on the Council's Treasury Management activities for the 2025-26 financial year including the Council's borrowing and investment decisions, details on the Council's borrowing requirement, cash investment balances and compliance with the Prudential Indicators enabling Brent to meet its financial obligations.

Members were reminded that as part of the approach outlined in terms of managing Treasury Management activity to support the Council's overall financial position it was only possible to borrow for capital investment and not to fund operational day-to-day expenditure with the Borrowing Requirement reflecting the Council's capital ambitions for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. As a result of the Council's careful financial stewardship and compliance with Prudential Indicators, the Council had continued its ongoing approach towards the repayment of loans and investment in the Council's capital programme, where possible, with the Council's borrowing strategy recognised as continuing to address the key issue of affordability and sustainability to deliver on infrastructure projects for residents without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

Members welcomed the report and prudent approach outlined in terms of the Council's Treasury Management activity to support delivery of the Council's wider

ambitions and priorities given the challenging economic context under which the Treasury Management Strategy was having to be delivered.

Having noted the assurance provided that the Council had fully complied with the Prudential Indicators set by the Council in February 2025 and thanked officers for their support in delivery of the Council's Treasury Management strategy, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the overall financial performance as detailed within the 2025-26 Mid-Year Treasury report and approve its referral on to Full Council in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice.

#### 10. **Proposal for Buckinghamshire Pension Fund to join London CIV**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) presented a report from the Corporate Director Finance & Resources seeking the Council's approval, as a shareholder of the London Collective Investment Vehicle (LCIV) to the admission of a new Partner Fund (Buckinghamshire) as a member of the London Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) CIV Ltd.

In introducing the report, Councillor Mili Patel began by advising members of the wider context to the proposal in terms of the Government's Fit for the Future reforms aimed at strengthening governance and achieving the full pooling of LGPS Fund assets by March 2026 enabling local authority pension schemes to operate more efficiently, reduce costs and act as significant, long-term institutional investors, supporting UK businesses, jobs and economic growth while delivering secure pensions for scheme members.

In noting that the proposal had been subject to the appropriate scrutiny and received unanimous 'in principle' support from all existing London Partner Funds, members were assured of the Council's ongoing commitment to ensure that London CIV remained a strong, stable, and well-governed pool that continued to meet regulatory expectations while maintaining the interests of its existing partners.

Recognising the national direction of travel and importance in ensuring the LCIV remained a strong and stable investment pool, Cabinet **RESOLVED**, having noted the information contained within the exempt appendices to the report:

- (1) To approve the admission of the Buckinghamshire Pension Fund to join the London CIV.
- (2) To approve the amendments outlined to the Shareholder Agreement and Articles of Association as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report (classified as containing exempt information).
- (3) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources (s151 officer) or their nominee on the operational elements to enable the admission.

#### 11. **Brent Digital Roadmap 2026-28**

Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Community Action) introduced a report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform & Strategy,

setting out (within the context of Brent's current four-year digital strategy to April 2026, pressing financial challenges and the rapid pace of technological change) a two-year digital roadmap developed to meet the Council's ambitions for use of digital to enable transformation and support the delivery of savings from 2026-28. The report also detailed the required investment to ensure the Council could continue to enable its Embrace Change Portfolio vision and deliver 2026-27 cross-cutting digital and resident experience savings (along with previously agreed business case savings) as well as to develop a pipeline of further digitally enabled savings for 2027-28 and beyond.

In presenting the report, Councillor Rubin began by outlining what he felt to be the clear and ambitious plan set out within the Digital Roadmap 2026-28, which he pointed out had been designed to build on the Council's strong track record and recent achievements whilst setting out how the Council's digital offer would continue to support residents, staff, and also deliver savings over the long term.

In highlighting the achievements delivered through digital transformation over the previous four year period, reference was made to the way in which the Council had modernised its technology, improved access to services and reduced pressure on the contact centre whilst also being able to deliver more than £10m in savings and efficiencies recognising that the changes outlined has also enabled staff to spend more time supporting residents and provided easier access to services. As an additional benefit, members were also advised that since 2021 under the existing Strategy, the Council had been able to provide 4,500 digital devices with over 1,700 laptops going to schools, foster carers and care leavers in Brent, alongside SIM cards and broadband support where needed.

In seeking to build on these achievements as a means of delivering further improvements and efficiencies, members noted the development of the roadmap on an invest-to-save basis involving targeted upfront investment designed to support the delivery of nearly £6m worth of savings over the two year period, while also building a strong pipeline of further savings over future years.

Recognising the way in which the roadmap had also been designed with residents at its core, the opportunity was also taken to outline its role in supporting initiatives that would deliver quicker resolution of queries, ensure AI was used in a safe and ethical way whilst also fostering a greater understanding of community needs and maximising the impact of social value contributions with not processes as the focus of the digital transformation process. In concluding, as an example of support, reference was made to the work identified around development of a Brent app designed to deliver a single digital front door for residents, making it quicker and simpler to access services, track requests and get support, while ensuring face-to-face and phone services remained available for those who needed them.

In considering the report, members welcomed the approach outlined not only in terms of the design of the roadmap as an invest to save programme seeking to deliver further savings improvements and efficiencies, but also in terms of its focus in continuing to address the challenges and divide in relation to digital exclusion, skills and accessibility and also reflecting Brent's status as an age friendly borough. Members were also keen to commend the proactive approach outlined in terms of the way the roadmap sought to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and accessibility considerations across the digital programme and as part of the digital



design principles ensuring all new resident facing platforms were able to meet these requirements.

In recognising the resident focussed nature of the strategy and way in which it also sought to support the modernisation and transformation of service delivery, whilst also delivering real financial benefits, members were keen to thank all those involved for their work in developing the roadmap. Highlighting the ongoing focus in Brent seeking to lead the way in the rapidly evolving age of technological advancement whilst also seeking to address digital inclusion and ensure the necessary controls were in place to manage the expanding use of AI and other digital innovations, Cabinet **RESOLVED**

- (1) To approve the Brent Council Digital Roadmap 2026-28, as detailed within the report.
- (2) To approve a capital budget of £4,435,455 in 2026/27 (in addition to the budget of £817,554 for 2026/27 approved by Cabinet in 2021) and of £4,313,408 in 2027/28. This budget to be funded by prudential borrowing.

## **12. Phase II Capital Investment Programme for School Place Sufficiency for Children and Young People with SEND**

Councillor Benea (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) and Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Employment) jointly introduced a report from the Corporate Directors of Children, Young People & Community Development and Neighbourhoods and Regeneration detailing proposals to deliver additional SEND places within the borough designed to reduce the financial cost of SEND provision as well as provide more local specialist provision for Brent based young people with SEND and support the management of expenditure on the Council's Special Needs Transport budget, in accordance with strategic priorities set out in the School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28 (second refresh).

Speaking first in presenting the report, Councillor Benea began by reflecting on the important contribution the SEND Phase II Capital Investment Programme would have in ensuring that every child in Brent was able to access the education they needed, as close to home as possible. Referring to the success in delivery of the first phase of the programme, members were advised this had enabled Brent to deliver 382 new SEND places since 2022, including the recently opened Wembley Manor School, which she had been proud to attend the opening of the previous week. Having visited the school, Councillor Benea felt this highlighted the difference made to the lives of the pupils and their families now able to benefit from the additional provision, with the school having been carefully designed and built around the needs of its pupils enabling them to build confidence and independence outside of mainstream schooling. At the same time the impact on the families of those pupils was also highlighted, in terms of the assurance provided that their child would be receiving the care needed closer to home alongside the required support as they developed into adulthood and with the second phase of capital investment, also designed to continue that vital work and give children in Brent the best start in life.

In terms of the proposed capital spending, members were reminded this had only been possible due to the government's £3bn national investment in specialised local provision, designed to provide a clear plan and address what was felt to have been the limited approach adopted by the previous government in terms of the education system for children and young people with SEND. Focussing on the Phase Two Investment Programme, it was pointed out this had been based on the use £10.6m from the Government's High Needs Capital Grant with the aim of creating 212 additional specialist places and in seeking to reduce reliance on costly out-of-borough placements in an effort to save the Council over £4m annually as well as £1.3m annually in terms of the cost of SEN transport provision. Members were pleased to note that the programme outlined included reference to the Strathcona Road site with the proposals aimed at securing the site's future whilst providing 50 new SEND school places in a way that would not only continue the commitment to enhance local SEND provision but would also make use of an otherwise dormant site.

Having thanked Councillor Benea for her initial introduction Councillor Grahl continued by advising how delighted she had been to also attend the opening of Wembley Manor School highlighting the importance of the provision being offered as a state-of-the-art specialist school for children with autism and its specific design to support neuro diverse children. All those involved in delivery of the project at such pace were thanked for their efforts, given the highly valued nature of the facility by both pupils and their families in view of the outstanding experience being delivered.

In welcoming the ambitious nature which it felt Phase Two of the Investment Programme represented, members were reminded of the impact this would have in being able to maintain the high standards and provision delivered to date through the further 212 specialist places being created which would combine not only Additional Resourced Provision (APR) within mainstream school settings but also the development of new specialist sites, including (as had already been highlighted) use of the Strathcona Road site.

Recognising the impact which the support being provided would have on those children with SEND and their families in terms of them being able to flourish and through access to local high quality education (recognising that 98% of Brent's schools were currently rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and the excellent community of educational staff across the borough) Councillor Grahl ended by highlighting her commitment to delivery of the programme in seeking to continue the achievements under Phase One of the programme.

In welcoming and expressing support for the proposals and approach outlined within Phase Two of the programme, members were also keen to highlight the wider benefits associated with being able to offer those children with SEND access to suitable local provision not only in terms of delivering the most inclusive and best possible education for young people across the borough as they transitioned through the education system but also in terms of supporting their families, supporting the development of safer and more cohesive communities and managing the costs associated with more expensive out of borough placements.

In once again thanking all those involved for their efforts in developing and delivery of the programme to date recognising the value of the support being provided and

in seeking to meet current and projected demand for specialist school provision Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed SEND Phase II Capital Programme using £10.6m from the High Needs Capital Grant Allocation provided by the Department for Education as detailed in paragraph 3.2.2 (Option 2) of the report in order to complete the identified works within the programme.

13. **Brent Council's School Admission Arrangements and Schemes of Co-ordination 2027/2028**

Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Employment) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development outlining the proposed admission arrangements for Brent Community schools and Schemes of Coordination for 2027-28 (as set out within Appendices 1 & 2 of the report) which required determination and approval by the Admission Authority, in accordance with statutory requirements and timescales.

In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl advised members that the key aim within the proposed admission arrangements and schemes of co-ordination remained to ensure that every child in Brent had the opportunity to access high-quality education as a means of establishing the foundation for their future success and wellbeing. In recognising the financial challenges being experienced by many schools in relation to falling pupil numbers and increased demand for SEND provision the establishment of effective admission arrangements was therefore recognised as more than an administrative requirement, with the need for a clear, stable and transparent process regarded as key in ensuring places continued to be allocated in a fair way enabling the needs of young people and their families to be prioritised and addressed.

Officers and schools were thanked for their support to ensure that the approach established enabled children from all backgrounds across the borough to have access to local schools with members advised the arrangements outlined remained consistent with previous years, subject to minor drafting changes and an adjustment in relation to an increase in the Published Admission Number at Anson Primary School from 52 to 56 places on order to support the school's sustainability. In addition, members were advised that as part of the continued approach towards fairness and transparency the scheme also included additional clarity around the resolution of parental disputes.

In welcoming the transparent nature of the arrangements, given the importance and impact of the school admission process on families and young people, members commended what they felt to be the thorough and fair nature of the proposals outlined along with delivery of the commitment made to avoid the need for school closure in seeking to forward plan and manage demand for school places, across Brent compared to the approach across other parts of London.

In support of the fair and transparent nature of the approach outlined, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To agree ("determine") the proposed admission arrangements for Brent community schools and schemes of co-ordination for all maintained schools

and academies in Brent for the 2027/2028 academic year as detailed within Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

- (2) To note the scheme of co-ordination in place for the 2027-2028 offer year for co-ordinated applications to start school in years Reception, 3, 7 and 10.
- (3) To note that the determined admission arrangements for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 will be updated in April 2026 to change the name of Malorees Infant School to Malorees Primary School following the amalgamation of the Malorees Infant and Junior schools.

#### **14. South Kilburn District Heat Network - Tender Outcome & Financial Model Report**

Councillor Rubin (Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Community Action) introduced a report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods & Regeneration seeking approval to enter preferred bidder stage for the design, build, operate and maintain (DBOM) contract for the South Kilburn District Heat Network ("the SKDHN") Main Contractor preferred bidder on the basis of the procurement process undertaken and required financial modelling.

In presenting the report, Councillor Rubin began by highlighting the important milestone the proposal was felt to represent in the delivery of the South Kilburn Regeneration Programme, involving the provision of a council-owned and operated heat network that would provide affordable, reliable and low-carbon heat to residents across the South Kilburn estate. Whilst committed to tackling the climate emergency, the need to ensure this was undertaken in a way that was fair and affordable had also been recognised with members advised this had been embedded as core principle at the heart of this scheme being presented for consideration.

In support of this approach, members noted the network had been developed on the basis of proven, modern technology and designed to meet high standards, with strong protections in place to ensure reliability and continuity of supply and in a way that would be able to deliver real reassurance on cost at a time when it was recognised household budgets remained under pressure. As a result, it was expected that 99% of homes included within the network would have the same or lower energy bills once connected, which it was felt demonstrated an important point in the move to greener, low-carbon heating being delivered without asking people to pay more.

As further assurance, members were advised that the council would retain control over heat tariffs, keeping them fair, transparent and properly regulated, so residents remained protected during the transition. In addition, it was confirmed that access to the Energy Ombudsman along with clear performance standards would also be built into the contract ensuring the provision of a reliable, good-quality service that offered value for money as opposed to hidden costs. Alongside the protections built in for residents, the opportunity was also taken to remind members of the significant environmental benefits that would be delivered through the network, with around 980 tonnes of carbon emissions saved every year which it was felt also highlighted the ability to reduce carbon and tackle climate change in a way that was

fair, practical and equitable for working people, while supporting the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

In commending the scheme, members felt it demonstrated the Council's clear commitment towards tackling the climate emergency and investment in key local infrastructure, including the use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy and s106 funding in a way that would be able to deliver affordable low carbon heat for residents in buildings and developments across the network. Support was also expressed for the way in which the scheme had been developed to provide the necessary protections for those more vulnerable residents and in recognising the ongoing impact on households arising from the cost-of-living crisis, with members further assured by the additional security provided as a result of the council retaining control of the scheme and heat tariffs.

In recognising the leadership being provided by the Council in the development and delivery of such complex infrastructure projects and wider initiatives in relation to tackling the climate emergency and the move towards net zero, members were keen to thank all those involved in the development of the scheme recognising the diligent approach and high level of challenge at each stage in the process. Given the assurances provided and what was recognised to be the high-quality, resilient and affordable nature of the scheme which had been designed not only to reflect best practice but as a key measure in the long-term success of South Kilburn's regeneration Cabinet **RESOLVED**, having noted the information contained within the exempt appendix to the report:

- (1) To approve the selection of Vital Energi Utilities Limited as the South Kilburn District Heat Network (SKDHN) Main Contractor preferred bidder for the contract value of £37,768,947 following the completion of the Design, Build, Operate and Maintain (DBOM) contractor procurement process set out in the report.
- (2) To approve an increase in the total capital budget for the SKDHN of £36,000,000. The funding for the budget is set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report and includes £12,000,000 of external borrowing.
- (3) To note that there will be a preferred bidder stage as set out in paragraph 3.2.31 of the report following satisfactory completion of the standstill period.
- (4) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration in consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Action and Community Power to finalise the contract and to award the contract to the SKDHN Main Contractor preferred bidder as required by Contract Standing Order 88 following satisfactory completion of the preferred bidder stage.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, in consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Action and Community Power, for approval of agreements with off-takers for bulk (building-level) and retail (consumer-level) heat supplied by the SKDHN in perpetuity.
- (6) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, in consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Action and

Community Power, to change the allocation of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy and Carbon Offset Fund according to available balances.

**15. Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

**16. Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

Following on from the update provided within the Q3 Financial Forecast, Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) took the opportunity prior to the meeting ending to remind residents that consultation on the Council's budget proposals for 2026-27 remained open until 30 January 2026.

It was hoped as many residents, business and local partners as possible would participate in the consultation to ensure their views were shared on the local priorities identified in relation to investment, savings and future operation of the Council in advance of the final budget proposals being presented to Cabinet in February 2026 and then referred on to Council for formal approval.

The meeting ended at 10.55 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT  
Chair