

# Brent Conservative Group

## Amendments to the Proposed Labour Budget 2026/27

*Investing in our Towns and Communities for a cleaner, greener,  
safer, fairer, and healthier Brent*



### INTRODUCTION

Brent Conservative Councillors continue to challenge the  
administration's financial decisions.

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# Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027

## 1. Introduction

The Brent Conservative Group serves as the principal opposition on Brent Council, providing statutory scrutiny of budget proposals. We aim to ensure that all financial decisions uphold transparency, accountability, and value for money. This report outlines our proposed amendments for 2026/27, offering a legally balanced alternative to Labour's draft budget while protecting essential services.

While we share the strategic objective of supporting Brent's development into a high-quality borough in which to live and work, we are unable to endorse the Labour administration's proposed Budget for the forthcoming financial year. Our concerns relate to the underlying financial assumptions, the robustness of the savings proposals, and the cumulative impact on residents.

In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Conservative Group has once again worked closely with the Council's Section 151 Officer and Finance Officers to develop a set of amendments that deliver a legally balanced alternative budget. These amendments demonstrate that, through disciplined financial management, improved efficiency, and strengthened accountability, it is possible to reduce the financial burden on residents while maintaining — and in some cases enhancing — service quality.

The savings proposals presented by Council officers reflect their operational understanding of departmental structures, cost drivers, and service delivery models. Officers are uniquely positioned to identify efficiencies that can be achieved without compromising statutory obligations or frontline provision. Furthermore, the responsibility for implementing any agreed savings rests with the same officers who propose them, ensuring a clear line of accountability and compliance with the Council's financial governance framework.

## 2. Brent Council Financial Overview

The Brent Conservative Group's position is grounded not in political rhetoric but in financial analysis. The Council's current trajectory is unsustainable, and the Administration's Draft Budget for 2026/27 does not adequately address the scale of the fiscal risk. Brent Council now holds the highest level of council tax arrears in London, with £85.3 million outstanding at the latest reporting point.

The Council's reserves position is deteriorating at a rate that presents material risk. The projected overspend of £12.5 million in 2025/26 will reduce unallocated reserves to £7.5 million. The current rate of drawdown is not sustainable and the current rate reserves will be fully depleted by 2027/28. This profile is incompatible with the principles of financial resilience set out by CIPFA and significantly increases the likelihood of a Section 114 notice.

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### Key Financial Indicators:

Indicator	2024/25 Actual (£m)	2025/26 Forecast (£m)	2026/27 Proposed (£m)
Total Revenue	387.0	431.4	499.3
Reserves	20.3	20.3	22.5
Council Tax Requirement	162.1	178.4	190.6
Council Tax Arrears	85.3	81.3	77.4
Business Rates Income	114.1	125.1	132.4

### 3. Debt Recovery & Council Tax Arrears

Brent’s council tax arrears are the highest in London, totalling £85.3m at the end of 2024/25.

#### Key operational indicators show further deterioration:

- Enforcement agent (bailiff) returns rates have fallen to 16.8%.
- 26.4% of the tax base is currently flagged as “vulnerable,” resulting in £26 million of debt being excluded from enforcement activity.

This position demonstrates systemic weaknesses in the Council’s collection strategy and undermines the financial stability of the authority.

Internal audit recently has revealed serious failings in how the Council manages Council Tax. Discounts and exemptions are being handed out without proper checks, policies are unclear, and basic safeguards are missing. At the same time, reminder and summons notices are often delayed or not issued at all — meaning debts go uncollected while residents who pay on time are left carrying the burden.

This is not just poor administration. Its money lost to the Council at the very moment frontline services are being cut. Weak controls mean fraud risk, unfairness, and more pressure on honest taxpayers.

We demand stronger checks, timely debt recovery, and transparent reporting. Residents deserve a Council that collects fairly and spends wisely — not one that lets revenue slip away while cutting libraries, youth services, and community safety.

#### The Catalogue of Shame over the year by Labour run Brent Council.

Here are just some of the disasters they have delivered:

- Council tax up 41% since 2014 – one of the biggest increases in London, with a brutal 4.99% hike this year alone while services crumble.
- £26.6 million blown on agency staff in 2024/25 –because Labour still can’t recruit or retain permanent workers.

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- £4 million lost in one year on mismanagement of Supported Exempt Accommodation – money haemorrhaged to rogue landlords while vulnerable residents were left in squalor. Labour let it happen.
- Temporary accommodation bill exploding past £50 million a year – because Labour’s “prevention” strategies have utterly failed and families are trapped in limbo for years.
- Potholes, fly-tipping, and broken streetlights everywhere – despite Labour hiking parking charges and fines year after year.
- Serious failings in social housing safety – Regulator slams Labour for closing fire risk cases without fixes, leaving tenants in danger; self-referral for dodgy data on damp, mould, and repairs that could have cost lives.
- Abandoning vulnerable kids – Ombudsman blasts council for failing a boy with special needs, leaving him out of school for months after exclusion; no support, no transport – just Labour bureaucracy.
- Letting drug dealers take over flats – Two years of ignored pleas from a vulnerable woman whose home became a crack den; Labour's "assessments" were a joke, leaving her hospitalised and terrified.
- Misleading residents on housing boasts – Leaflets bragging about 500+ affordable homes built? FOI reveals just 434 due to "delays" – Labour's classic overpromise and underdeliver.

**And now, after all that waste and incompetence, they have the nerve to present this £10.35 million package of misery:**

- Raiding grants from tiny charities (the same ones picking up the pieces from Labour’s failing services)
- Turning our parks into pay-to-play zones
- Betting everything on AI and robots that have already flopped everywhere else
- Quietly deleting the staff who keep the council running

### Arrears Analysis:

Category	Amount (£m)	% of Total Arrears
Vulnerable Households	26.0	27.3%
Non-Vulnerable Households	69.4	72.7%
Enforcement Agent Success Rate	16.8%	-

### Revenue Integrity Plan Proposed Measures:

- Mandatory Direct Debit: £2.4m savings
- Full Cost Recovery on Summons/Orders: £2.6m
- Vulnerability Verification: unlock £22m debt for enforcement

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- Enhanced Enforcement Framework: 60% collection target
- Asset Realisation: charging orders, bankruptcy, long-term empty property premiums
- Clean Hands Policy: payroll deductions for arrears, disclosure for councillors/staff

### 4. Analysis of Labour’s Draft Budget

#### Key Critiques:

- £10.38m savings package via grant cuts, fees, and digital automation
- Blanket 1% efficiency cuts risk service degradation
- Agency reductions and procurement changes threaten frontline service delivery
- Hidden costs to residents through parks commercialization and lane rental

**Table: Labour Draft Proposed Savings**

Category	Proposed Saving (£m)
Commissioning & Procurement	3.06
Digital Programme	1.43
Efficiency	3.20
Workforce	0.40
Income Maximisation	0.50
Resident Experience	0.65
Service-Specific	1.14
Total	10.38

### 5. Conservative Group Amended Budget Proposals

The conservative group is proposing a 3.99% increase in Council Tax, 1% less than Labour’s proposal. This isn’t radical — it’s responsible. By harnessing genuine efficiencies like agency reductions and procurement tweaks (without the risky grant raids), we can fund it sustainably. Unlike Labour’s gloom-fest of rising charges and uncertain digital dreams, our plan boosts local spending, eases family budgets, and holds the line against inflation. It’s time to reject Labour’s cycle of decline and vote for Conservative optimism: lower taxes, better value, and a Brent that works for everyone.

Brent residents are once again facing a grim future under this Labour-run council, with their latest budget proposals painting a picture of endless cuts, hidden charges, and a total failure to tackle the root causes of financial waste. The documents expose a desperate scramble to save £10.35 million through salami-slicing efficiencies, sneaky new fees on everything from roadworks to parks, and pie-in-the-sky bets on unproven AI and digital gimmicks that rarely deliver real cash.

As the Conservative opposition, we’re appalled but not surprised. Labour’s track record is one of overspending, inefficiency, and hiking council tax year after year — remember their 4.99% increase just this year? Now they’re proposing more of the same: squeezing grants from community groups, commercialising our precious parks into pay-to-play zones, and slapping charges on utilities that will

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inevitably get passed onto residents.

Their so-called "efficiencies" could easily translate into frontline cuts, with risks of reduced service quality, delays in social care, and even job losses hidden behind vague "TBC" staffing impacts. And let's not forget the environmental hypocrisy — pushing AI that's powered by energy-guzzling data centres while preaching about climate action.

Enough is enough. We demand that the council redirects a slice of these £10.35 million in cuts to deliver a lower increase in Brent's council tax for 2026/27, putting money back in residents' pockets where it belongs. Based on the council's own figures:

### 6.1 Council Tax Reduction Proposal

- 1% lower increase to council tax for 2026/27 than the 4.99% proposed
- Band D reduced from £1,642.77 to £1,708.29
- Estimated revenue impact: -£1.8m

### 6.2 Savings & Efficiency Measures

Proposal	Base Saving (£m)	Conservative Enhancement (£m)	Total (£m)
Commissioning & Procurement	3.06	+1.8	4.86
Efficiency	3.20	+1.6	4.80
Workforce	0.40	+0.2	0.60
Income Maximisation	0.50	+0.5	1.00
Digital Programme	1.43	+0.5	1.93
Resident Experience Channel Shift	0.65	0	0.65
Service Specific	1.14	0	1.14
<b>Total Additional Savings</b>	<b>10.38</b>	<b>+4.6</b>	<b>14.98</b>

### 6.3 Resident Services & Support

- Maintain Adult Social Care & Children Services budgets
- Increase oversight and efficiency in care placements
- Refurbishment of parks & playgrounds funded from unspent Public Health reserves

### 6.4 High Streets, Parking & Business Rates

- 1-hour free parking borough-wide: £1.4m loss of income.
- Removal of landlord incentives: £1.2m saving

## **Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027**

### **6.5 Digital Transformation & AI Strategy**

Artificial Intelligence tools are increasingly being deployed across Brent Council services through individual pilot projects, often without a consistent strategic framework, standardised benefits tracking, or robust ethical oversight.

The absence of a unified Council-wide approach has already led to risks of duplicated effort, inconsistent standards, potential bias in decision-making, and reduced public confidence in how automated systems are used. Many residents remain unaware of when and how AI is used to make or influence decisions that affect them, and current oversight arrangements lack clear accountability and enforcement powers.

Brent Conservative group believes that Brent must use AI responsibly, transparently, and equitably to improve services and deliver better value for money, while maintaining public trust and meeting the highest ethical standards. We would direct the Council to develop and publish a comprehensive Council-wide AI Strategy by no later than 31 July 2026.

AI-enabled automation will reduce average staff time spent on repetitive administrative tasks in at least five high-volume processes (e.g. housing benefit changes, planning pre-applications, adult social care financial assessments) by a minimum of 30% from 2025/26 baselines.

It will increase the proportion of residents completing key transactions (e.g. council tax, benefits, parking permits, school admissions) digitally without needing officer intervention from current levels to 75% by 2029/30.

With effect from 1 April 2026, a central AI Governance Framework led by a named Senior Responsible Owner (at Director level or above) and supported by a cross-directorate AI Delivery Board. Transform the existing AI Ethics Board into an AI Ethics & Assurance Panel with independent external membership (minimum 40%) and formal powers to recommend rejection or significant amendment of any proposed AI system on ethical, legal, or equality grounds, and to publish an annual public report.

- Council-wide AI strategy to be developed by 31 July 2026
- AI to reduce staff time on repetitive tasks by 30%
- Increase digital transactions to 75% by 2029/30
- Establish AI Governance Framework & Ethics Panel with independent oversight

### **6.6 Housing, Adult Social Care & Children Services**

In April 2025, serious failures were identified in the True Compliance system, resulting in up to 12,500 fire safety actions being wrongly recorded as completed without evidence. That subsequent investigations revealed systemic weaknesses in asbestos management, water safety, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and stock condition data.

The Regulator of Social Housing issued a C3 grading on 28 May 2025, confirming serious failings requiring significant improvement. The independent forensic audit (August 2025) validated these concerns, highlighting inadequate assurance, poor governance, and data integrity issues.

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The conservative group strongly believes that Brent residents were left without confidence in the safety of their homes. That the failures undermine trust in the Council's ability to meet its obligations under the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023.

The Conservative group will establish an independent Building Safety Oversight Panel, chaired externally, to monitor compliance improvements and report quarterly to Full Council. We will Commit to 100% stock condition surveys by March 2028, with annual progress reports to tenants and councillors.

We will Review senior management accountability, ensuring lessons are learned and responsibility is clear. We will ensure that Brent Council moves beyond reactive measures and embeds a culture of transparency, accountability, and resident safety. The failures identified under Brent Labour are systemic, and only through independent oversight, clear accountability, and genuine engagement with residents can confidence be restored.

- Independent Building Safety Oversight Panel
- 100% stock condition surveys by March 2028
- Improve unpaid carer support and preventative interventions

### **6.7 Neighbourhood & Regeneration**

It is a well-known fact that Brent is one of the London boroughs where there is an enormous increase in fly-tipping. Labour's budget proposal puts further financial burden on hard working Brent residents by increasing the charge for bulky waste collection from £40 to £55. This will mean more fly-tipping and extra cost to council tax rate payers.

The Conservative proposes a smarter and wider use of technology using re-deployable low-cost fly-tipping CCTV cameras, which don't require new physical infrastructure, wiring or lighting to be put in place (which comes at great cost, and results in a very overt camera placement). The cameras are presently used only on a rotational basis at known fly-tipping locations to catch unsuspecting offenders.

#### **Potholes and broken pavements**

Many of the Borough's roads are not in a fit and proper state due to years of neglect. We want to invest in them to help reduce potholes, improve safety and help make sure that our roads are fit for the future. Residents deserve better, safer roads and footways.

The Autumn 2024 Budget announced nearly £1.6 billion in capital funding for local highways maintenance in England for the financial year 2025 to 2026. This includes £500 million of additional funding when compared to funding levels for 2024 to 2025. Highways maintenance allocations for Brent 2025/2026 is £759,000.

In the Labour draft budget, the allocation for Reactive Maintenance covers all highway assets including lines, signs, street furniture, footways and carriageways and is merely £0.8m. The Conservative Group proposes to increase this to £1.65 million.

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## Street Works

The Conservative Group wants utility companies to be handed heavy fines for carrying out sub-standard road repairs where they fail to meet strict standards ensuring their work meets rigorous Brent Council criteria. Residents and motorists should have a reasonable

- Smarter use of mobile CCTV to tackle fly-tipping: increase from 10 to 25 cameras
- Increase Reactive Maintenance budget from £0.8m to £1.65m
- Implement fines for sub-standard utility street works

## 6.8 Finance & Resources

### Brent's Payroll Failures: Weak Controls, Unauthorised Payments, Missing Records

Internal Audit has recently revealed serious failings in Brent's pay policies. Payments have been made outside agreed rates, some without authorisation, and many without proper records. Outdated systems and weak oversight mean public money is being spent without accountability.

This is reckless mismanagement. While services are cut and residents face rising bills, the Council cannot even manage its own payroll properly. We demand stronger controls, modern systems, and full accountability.

Residents deserve a Council that spends wisely and fairly. We will keep pressing for transparency and action — Brent must do better.

### Property, Plant & Equipment (PPE) – Systemic Failures

Valuation errors: Incorrect reports, duplicate entries, and incomplete asset records.

Garage valuations: Independent valuer assessed garages at £11.3m vs £4.8m in draft accounts → £6.5m misstatement.

Depreciation concerns: In-year movements excluded from calculations, risking further misstatements.

Debtor and creditor listings were repeatedly revised, delaying sample selection.

Audit resources stretched due to duplication of work and poor-quality submissions.

Risks & Consequences - Financial risk: Material misstatements in PPE and leases undermine confidence in reported balances. Governance risk: Repeated statutory breaches erode trust in the Authority's ability to manage finances. Audit risk: Additional resources required, audit paused multiple times, completion delayed beyond September 2025. Resident impact: Transparency compromised, with errors in asset valuations and disclosures masking the true financial position.

This budget exposes deep-rooted weaknesses in controls within Property Services. Repeated statutory failures show a pattern of mismanagement. PPE valuations remain unreliable, with errors in the millions of pounds. Residents deserve accurate, timely accounts — not repeated delays,

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errors, and excuses.

We call for: Immediate independent review of PPE valuation processes. Clear accountability for missed statutory deadlines. Strengthened financial governance to prevent recurrence. Transparent communication with residents on the true financial position.

- Strengthen payroll controls & update systems
- Independent review of PPE valuations & asset management
- Transparent financial reporting to restore public confidence

### 6.9 Public Realm & Safety Measures

The Conservative Group believe the Council needs to do more to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour across the borough to keep our streets safe by installing mobile CCTV cameras in crime hotspots across the borough.

We note that Sadiq Khan has once again increased his Precept and yet knife crime and violent attacks, especially on women, have increased. Under Sadiq Khan's London, we see Robbery up 49%, Sexual Offences up 53% and Thefts up 21%.

Keeping us safe is London Mayor Sadiq Khan's responsibility. Our message to him is to 'wake up' and show political leadership over soaring crime in London once known as one of the world's safest cities. Sir Khan needs to stop blaming everyone else. Help make Brent a safer borough.

#### Increase in Knife Crime Incidents

Unfortunately, knife-related incidents have escalated across Brent in comparison to previous reporting periods. As a Council, we need to do much more to understand what is driving the increase, address this issue and reduce offences in the borough. Local Police in conjunction with Brent Council's Communities and Safer Neighbourhoods should conduct more targeted knife crime awareness sessions with schools and parents in the new fiscal year.

#### Increase in drug dealing Incidents

The Conservative group believes that when a community begins to be neglected, it undoubtedly attracts more anti-social behaviours. There has been an increase in drug dealing and knife incidents in Brent, and the Metropolitan Police needs to do more to take action to address the issue. The Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy needs to include more frequent on-street enforcement in hotspot areas. The Metropolitan Police and council need to conduct more joint operations to reduce drug dealing in areas like Queensbury Station Parade and Harlesden.

- Double mobile CCTV coverage for litter & fly-tipping
- Improve resurfacing budgets and schedule
- Channel shift to digital without excluding vulnerable residents

## Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council’s Budget 2026/2027

### 7. Risk Assessment & Financial Resilience

- Risks: Public opposition, reputational challenge, legal scrutiny
- Mitigation: Exemptions for vulnerable households, phased implementation, strong officer accountability

### 8. Summary of Financial Impact

#### The Conservative Group’s Funding Proposal 2025/26

Conservative Group - Alternative budget proposals	Impact on 2026/27 budget £m
60 Minutes free parking on high streets (loss of income)	1.4
Removal of landlord incentives (saving)	-1.2
Reduce 2 lead members (saving)	-0.45
Clampdown on Brent Magazine (saving)	-0.25
Double the revenue budget for resurfacing Roads and Pavements	1.65
Refurbished parks and playgrounds (funded from Public Health reserves)	1
Utilise unspent Public Health reserves for parks and playground refurbishment	-1
Double mobile CCTV Cameras to tackle Flytipping and Litter	0.05
Increase Council Tax by 3.99% (loss of income)	1.8
Total	0

#### Choosing thriving shops over empty bays.

60 Minutes free parking isn’t a loss — it’s an investment in our high streets, our small businesses, and our residents. Every free hour puts money back into local pockets, strengthens community trade, and makes our high streets fairer for families. Free parking = stronger Brent.

#### Remove Landlords Incentives

We want ending handouts to landlords and investing in homes instead. Every pound saved from landlord incentives is a pound we can spend on community services. This isn’t about cuts — it’s about fairness. No more paying landlords twice while residents lose out. We’re shifting from landlord subsidies to resident dignity. Brent has been identified as one of the councils making large incentive payments, with a single payment of £10,700 in 2024/25.

#### Services That Can Be Sensibly Amalgamated

We want the current cabinet structure to reduce to 5.

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**Regeneration, Planning & Property** - These are already merged with Brent. It makes sense because of regeneration projects, planning permissions, and council-owned property management are interdependent.

**Customer Experience, Resident Support & Culture** - Combining frontline resident services with cultural engagement avoid duplication in communications, outreach, and community events.

**Public Realm & Enforcement** - Street cleaning, waste, parks, and enforcement (littering, fly-tipping, parking) overlap. A single portfolio ensures joined up management of public spaces.

**Safer Communities, Jobs & Skills** - Crime prevention, community safety, and employment support often targets the same vulnerable groups. Merging them avoids fragmented interventions.

**Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure** - Health promotion, social care, and leisure services all contribute to wellbeing Integration reduces duplication in preventative programmes.

### **Clampdown on Brent Magazine**

Brent Council currently publishes Your Brent magazine quarterly, distributing it to over 135,000 households. The magazine is intended to provide residents with updates on council services, local events, and community news. Concerns we raise is Cost: Printing and distribution costs run into hundreds of thousands of pounds annually. Despite statutory guidance, the magazine has been accused of containing party-political messaging. Environmental impact: Large-scale printing contributes to unnecessary paper waste and carbon emissions. Digital shift: Most residents now access information online, making print distribution less effective.

### **Increase budget for resurfacing Roads and Pavement**

Brent's roads and pavements are deteriorating, with potholes, uneven surfaces, and trip hazards reported across multiple wards. Current resurfacing budgets are insufficient, resulting in short-term patch repairs rather than long-term solutions. That poor road and pavement conditions disproportionately affect older residents, disabled people, parents with prams, and cyclists.

We believe this is undermining Brent's commitments to accessibility, safety, and equity. Safe, accessible streets are a fundamental right, not a discretionary luxury. Proactive resurfacing reduces long-term costs by preventing repeated reactive repairs and insurance claims and transparency and accountability in infrastructure investment are essential to resident trust.

The Cabinet Member refers to initiatives aimed at enhancing street cleanliness and improving safety on high streets. Yet weeds remain unsprayed on our roads and pavements, and shoplifting continues to undermine local safety.

### **Refurbished parks and playgrounds (loss of income)**

We believe Brent has failed its Responsibility. Brent Council has repeatedly relied on short-term patchwork fixes for roads, pavements, parks, and playgrounds rather than committing to full refurbishment and long-term investment. This approach wastes public money, as the same problems resurface year after year, leaving residents feeling ignored and unsafe.

Residents are told that "investment is coming" or that "budgets are being managed responsibly," yet

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the reality on the ground is potholes, crumbling pavements, and playgrounds patched with temporary repairs. The council's rhetoric of "savings" masks what are in fact cuts to frontline services and infrastructure.

Vulnerable groups — older people, disabled residents, parents with prams, and children — bear the brunt of unsafe streets and neglected play spaces. Brent's failure to act undermines community pride, accessibility, and safety, eroding trust in local government.

Residents deserve transparency: clear schedules of works, published budgets, and honest reporting on delays. The council must stop hiding behind austerity narratives and start delivering lasting solutions, not sticking plasters.

### **Mobile CCTV Camera to tackle Flytipping and Litter**

We have been told; Brent has 10 Mobile CCTV Camera. We believe for effective enforcement there should be 25. For years, Brent residents have raised the alarm about fly-tipping and litter blighting our streets. Families, businesses, and volunteers have cleaned up mess after mess while the council dragged its feet.

Persistent fly-tipping and litter across Brent, despite repeated resident complaints and volunteer clean-ups. Current deployment of mobile CCTV cameras is limited, reactive, and insufficient to deter offenders or reassure residents. Residents have consistently demanded proactive enforcement, transparency, and investment in frontline services to protect public spaces.

Additional Cameras will make sure Clean, safe streets are a basic right, not a privilege. Surveillance technology will be matched with enforcement, transparent reporting, and community-led prevention. Failure to act decisively undermines public trust and burdens residents with the consequences of council inaction.

The Conservative Group wants the council leadership accountable for years of neglect, ensuring residents' voices shape future enforcement and environmental

## **9. Appendices**

- Appendix A: Detailed Savings Tables
  - Appendix B: Revenue Integrity Plan Calculations
  - Appendix C: Council Tax Arrears Breakdown
  - Appendix D: Multi Year Council Tax Impact
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## Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027

### Appendix A – Detailed Budget Savings and Revenue Proposals (2025/26)

Proposal	Base Saving (£m)	Conservative Enhancement (£m)	Total (£m)
Commissioning & Procurement	3.06	+1.8	4.86
Efficiency	3.20	+1.6	4.80
Workforce	0.40	+0.2	0.60
Income Maximisation	0.50	+0.5	1.00
Digital Programme	1.43	+0.5	1.93
Resident Experience Channel Shift	0.65	0	0.65
Service Specific	1.14	0	1.14
Total Additional Savings	10.38	+4.6	14.98

**Total Proposed Savings:** £10.38m → £14.98m with Conservative amendments

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## Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027

### Appendix B – Revenue Integrity Plan (£m)

Measure	Expected Impact 2026/27 (£m)	Notes
Mandatory Direct Debit	2.40	Reduces default rates, admin efficiency
Full Cost Recovery	2.60	Align summons/charges with actual processing costs
Vulnerability Verification	22.00	Unlocks frozen arrears while protecting genuine hardship
Enhanced Enforcement Framework	5.00	Target collection rate 60%
Asset Realisation Measures	3.00	Charging orders, bankruptcy, empty property premiums
Clean Hands Policy	0.70	Compliance requirement for councillors/staff

**Total Positive Variance: £42.7m**

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## Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027

### Appendix C – Council Tax Arrears Comparison (2025/26 projected)

<b>Borough</b>	<b>Collection Rate (%)</b>	<b>Arrears (£m)</b>
Kensington & Chelsea	97.4	12.1
Westminster	96.8	14.5
Barnet	96.1	9.2
London Average	94.5	35.6
Brent	91.2	92.2
Newham	88.1	62.0
Croydon	89.6	71.3

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## Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027

### Appendix D – Multi-Year Council Tax Revenue Impact (£m)

Year	Labour Proposal	Conservative Proposal	Difference
2025/26	178.4	178.4	0
2026/27	187.5	185.7	-1.8
2027/28	195.0	192.5	-2.5
2028/29	203.0	200.0	-3.0
2029/30	211.0	208.0	-3.0

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**Prepared by:**

Cllr Suresh Kansagra, Leader – Brent Conservative Group

## **Brent Conservatives Amendments to the Council's Budget 2026/2027**

### **10. Advice from the Corporate & Director of Finance & Resources**

Senior finance support has been provided to assist the Conservative Group to formulate an alternative budget that reflects their policy priorities.

The alternative budget proposed by the Conservative Group would be a legal, balanced budget for 2026/27, although it is recognised that this carries financial risk. The potential implications for 2027/28 and beyond have not been considered as part of these proposals.

Please note, the financial considerations set out below are wholly based on the proposals set out in section 8 of this report. Sections 1-7 of this report include figures and references that have not been fully verified and do not form part of the budget proposals for 2026/27.

As per section 8 of this report, these proposals introduce £2.7m of new spending commitments (investment in roads, pavements and potholes, public health services and mobile CCTV cameras), £1.9m of new savings (removing landlord incentives, removing two Cabinet members and discontinuing the Brent magazine) and £1.8m of revenue foregone from increasing council tax by 3.99% (1% below the maximum amount allowable) and one hour free parking on high streets. This is balanced by recognising additional funding that has been provided as a result of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review.

On the proposal to remove landlord incentives, the budget is used to support the securing of tenancies to prevent homelessness and therefore stop people going into temporary accommodation in the first instance. Consequently, reducing this budget may result in higher temporary accommodation costs if alternative housing cannot be secured. Therefore, this proposal carries risk with regards to additional spend elsewhere in the Council's budget and may require use of reserves to contain additional spend on temporary accommodation.

It is proposed to increase Council Tax by 3.99% in 2026/27. Given the current administration is proposing to increase Council Tax by the maximum amount allowed by the Government of 4.99%, this proposal would create a budget gap of £1.8m in 2026/27. Council tax is one of the few income sources a council directly controls. By not increasing it to the permitted level the council's baseline funding for all future years becomes permanently lower and limits future revenue capacity. Each year a council under utilises the permitted limit, it never recoups that lost income. This creates a compounding effect that widens the funding gap relative to councils that used the maximum flexibility. Over 5–10 years, the difference becomes substantial. After 5 years, the gap would grow to £2.5m and after 10 years, £3.5m, with a total cumulative loss of funding by 2036/27 of £28.4m.

Overall, these proposals add risk to the 2026/27 budget, but they are not unlawful.

**Minesh Patel**  
**Corporate Director of Finance & Resources**