

Green Group Budget Amendments 2026-2027

INTRODUCTION

This Green Group set of budget amendments is not a fully comprehensive view of investment opportunities, cost saving measures or income generation opportunities. Rather, it intends to set core principles for financial prioritisation and a direction of travel based on Green Party values of social and environmental justice.

Our priorities for investment fall within three areas:

1. **Aligning with the energy transition away from fossil fuels** and ensuring long-term energy resilience
2. **Ensuring housing equity for all Brent's residents** including enhanced scrutiny of housing policies and operations and landlord licensing arrangements
3. **Protecting and investing in Brent's Green Spaces**, including parks, protected areas of natural interest and pocket parks and other green spaces

Brent Council, as with all local authorities, remains in a local government funding crisis, despite the new Labour government's funding settlement. There are therefore only hard decisions to be made in terms of cost savings, and it is not within the scope of our budget amendments to scrutinise the spending within service delivery. The Green Party is calling for a radical overhaul of the funding of local government as the present system, including council tax, is regressive and unsustainable.

However, we have proposed cost savings as they relate to internal processes such as removing costs associated with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor role, reducing the number of cabinet members, a reduction in costly engagement initiatives with a low ROI and the number of council meetings.

It is also our position that there are a number of under-utilised avenues for income generation and maximising the council's assets, some, but not all of which have been costed up as part of these budget amendments. These include expanding CPZs and increasing parking revenue through a mix of increasing the base rate and introducing a variable parking rate which takes into account vehicle size, weight and emissions type, further investment in debt collection initiatives, and ensuring maximum ROI of Brent-owned properties, whilst recognising the social value they add to Brent as well as financial value. Where further exploration is required, we have budgeted for feasibility studies for these initiatives.

These budget amendments propose a modest use of SCIL funding at £2.4m, which will part-fund travel initiatives to enhance active travel and traffic calming measures. As noted by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, there is an opportunity to deploy CIL funding more widely to support infrastructure and to offset financial pressures on services, while ensuring the residents that benefit are those most impacted by development across the borough.

PRIORITIES

1. Energy transition and resilience

Rising energy costs and a stated objective to reduce the borough's carbon emissions towards our Net Zero 2030 goal are dual imperatives to ensure the Council invests in retrofit and energy generation measures.

These budget amendments would target this investment at Council owned properties, social housing where energy costs represent a significant cost pressure, and community owned and local energy generation measures, retaining investment in Brent and supporting a community wealth building agenda.

These measures would improve financial resilience over the long term through reducing exposure to volatile energy tariffs and could have a significant impact on reducing ongoing costs for large council owned assets such as leisure centres.

PROPOSALS

1. **Social Housing Retrofit Feasibility Study.** To invest in a feasibility study to expand initiatives to retrofit social housing, using either Warmer Homes Social Fund, the Carbon Offset Fund, or Strategic CIL. There are new funding models to explore if sufficient political will and officer capacity enabled it to be prioritised. **Cost for feasibility study: £15,000 one-off**
2. **Council Properties Retrofit Programme.** To invest in the improvement of council buildings, starting with those with the highest energy costs to maximise ROI. **Cost: £500,000**
3. **Community-owned energy generation schemes.** We would work with UK Power Networks, Brent Pure Energy, and others to invest into the establishment and expansion of community-owned energy generation schemes in Brent, ensuring direct income generation for Brent residents, nurseries and schools. **Cost: £200,000 one-off**
4. **Energy generation initiatives within regeneration feasibility study.** We would conduct a feasibility study to look at the potential for more aggressively installing solar panels or heat networks as part of regeneration activities, including through partnerships and changing requirements for developers. **Cost: £15,000 one-off.**

We would also explore the feasibility of transferring the council's electricity supply to verifiably renewable energy sources.

2. Housing Equity

Insecure, poor quality, costly housing is one of the most significant issues of injustice in Brent today. The costs associated with temporary housing are one of the most significant cost pressures upon the council.

Our budget amendments therefore propose ensuring greater scrutiny of housing and additional investment to enhance landlord licensing, monitoring and enforcement action against unregulated landlords.

PROPOSALS

- 1. Housing Scrutiny Committee.** To invest in an additional scrutiny committee focusing entirely on housing. This could cover temporary accommodation, standards in housing, the number of affordable housing being built, and landlord licensing. **Cost: £95,000 (including on costs)**
- 2. Housing Enforcement Officers.** To invest in two additional housing enforcement officers, whose roles could involve landlord licensing, enforcement action on unlicensed HMOs, monitoring compliance of licenced landlords and setting up a bond programme for landlords from which fines can be taken for fly tipping and other failings. If a focus of this role was on preventing fly tipping caused by HMO turnover, then there may be savings generated from reduced waste collection. **Cost: £160,000 (including on costs).**
- 3. Protecting and Investing in Brent's Natural Environment and Neighbourhoods**

Brent residents are privileged to have a wealth of green spaces within the borough, including one site of special scientific interest. In the context of nature depletion and a biodiversity crisis, it is incumbent upon Brent Council to protect green spaces more effectively, enhance their biodiversity, and provide access to residents to engage with the natural world.

In addition, keeping Brent's streets clean supports community pride, public health and the quality of life of residents. Brent's own messaging notes that fly-tipping and littering "wastes over £1.5m" each year on clean-up alone. This is money that could be better spent on prevention.

There is an opportunity within our road network to engage more proactively with the health, climate, and social benefits of promoting active travel and traffic calming. These could be part-funded by increasing CPZs and making changes to existing parking pricing to recognise the size, emissions type, and weight of vehicles. These changes represent a political choice that can be made to prioritise health, the climate emergency, social equity (40% of Brent residents are not car owners) and social value and follow approaches taken elsewhere in the UK and in London. They could be explored in tandem with exploring alternative uses to the kerbside to maximise benefit to residents.

These amendments take a prevention-first approach to waste management and cleaner streets, offer traffic proposals that promote traffic calming and active travel, and invest in the protection and restoration of the natural environment.

PROPOSALS

Waste and cleaner streets

- **Free bulky waste entitlement** (up to 5 free collections per household per year, phased). Brent currently charges £55 per bulky collection (up to five items). We would phase in the entitlement (starting with a universal minimum, then scaling in hotspot areas), funded by reduced fly-tip clean-up costs (baseline >£1.5m/year) and, if needed, rationalising community skips (which already allow residents to drop off up to five bulky items free). **Cost: £120,000**
- **Neighbourhood clean streets model** (street cleaning + neighbourhood community managers). To restore more frequent visible cleaning (including junction approaches) and formally pair locally assigned street cleaning teams with neighbourhood managers to identify patterns, hotspots and repeat locations, speeding up fly-tip clearance and small repairs and reducing repeat costs. **Cost: £750,000**
- **Abbey Road recycling access for pedestrians and cyclists.** Improve walk-in/cycle-in usability through operational changes and clearer wayfinding so residents without cars can use the site more easily. **Cost: £100,000**
- **Repair cafés scaled to a regular boroughwide programme** (48 events/year). A rolling monthly programme delivered with partners and community venues, building skills and reducing waste.
- **Waste Reduction Pilot Programme + Waste Reduction & Recycling Officer.** Target low-recycling areas and communal bin sites (better signage/storage, engagement with managing agents/caretakers/landlords, multilingual education including parent forums in primary schools). **Cost: £233,000**

Travel and transport

- **Parking pricing reform** (permits + hourly charges). Aim to increase the revenue across all parking charges by 25% (permits, on-street pay-to-park and council car parks) by increasing base rate and introducing a “Clean Air & Space” modifier so the price varies by engine emissions, vehicle weight and vehicle size/length, with clear bands, protections for Blue Badge/adapted vehicles, and revenues reinvested in safer streets and sustainable transport. **Cost of Feasibility study: £7,500/Income: £2,410,750** (exact formula to be designed as part of feasibility study)
- **Active travel and traffic calming investment.** £3m p.a. for 5 years for green neighbourhoods, cycle storage, safe routes, school streets and expanded 20mph/traffic calming.
- **Expand CPZ coverage.** Extend CPZs by ~25% where supported by local consultation, with a published estimate of net income and a commitment to reinvest surpluses in transport measures (including concessionary travel support, subject to legal constraints). This would result in 11 additional CPZs being created in the borough. **Income: £1.2m**

Green spaces and biodiversity (including young people)

- **Trees and biodiversity in public spaces** (with flood prevention co-benefits). To include street trees, pocket parks, rain-gardens/SuDS and biodiversity improvements, prioritising heat and flood-risk hotspots. **Cost: £500,000**
- **Green Spaces Development & Protection Officer.** One dedicated officer to protect and enhance key assets (including sites of nature conservation importance such as the Welsh Harp), including enforcement, and to coordinate external funding bids and community stewardship. **Cost: £80,000**
- **Parks investment and a youth nature programme.** Improve core standards (horticulture, litter, bins, basic maintenance) and create structured volunteering/apprenticeship opportunities for young people through parks and nature projects. **Cost: £500,000**

4. Investment into income generation opportunities

It is our position that there are a number of opportunities for the Council to maximise income generation, in some cases these align with recommendations made by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

However, we recognise that in order to achieve income generation, an initial investment needs to be made, outlined below. **It has not been possible to generate the ROI as part of these budget amendments, but it is likely to be significant.**

1. **Council Tax Collection.** As noted by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, Brent has the largest amount of council tax arrears in London, at £92.2m last year. Effective debt collection is critical as it undermines the council's immediate cash flow, as well as its long-term stability. Efforts to hasten collection must be advanced, while recognising a need to distinguish between those unwilling to pay, and those unable to pay, underpinned by a strong ethical framework. **Cost: £80,000 (including on costs) for one additional debt collection officer.**
2. **Property Management.** As noted by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, there is a need to enhance efforts to map and manage council owned buildings more effectively, including community centres, and to develop a plan of action that integrates social value as well as financial value. This plan would also include realistic recognition of any investment required to bring properties up to a high standard of repair, and to ensure long-term value for communities and for the council. There are also a number of underutilised properties, for example cafes within parks, or buildings that could be turned into cafes or other initiatives, where opportunity may exist to generate additional income from partnership with local businesses or sponsorship opportunities. **Cost: £80,000 (including on costs) for a dedicated income generation and property management officer.**

In line with Green Party Policy, we would also explore amending the Pay Ratio to 10:1 for Council Staff so the highest salaries are not more than 10 times the amount of lowest earning staff – increasing some salaries and reducing others. There are multiple ways of structuring this and it may result in income generation, or could be cost neutral.

5. Cost Savings

We would seek to cut costs as follows:

- **Whip SRA.** The whip position is not required within a Green budget. **Saving: £5,000**
- **Mayor's SRA and support costs.** The Mayoral position remains an important ceremonial role but has become too costly in a cost-of-living crisis. The fundraising generation does not equal the cost of the role. We would therefore remove the SRA, vehicle and driver costs associated with the role. **Saving: £110,000**
- **Deputy Mayor SRA and support costs.** We apply the same principles as the Mayor position. **Saving: £4,000**
- **Reduction of Cabinet Members.** Reduction of Cabinet Members to 8, more in line with the London average, and the reduction of support costs. **Saving: £45,000**
- **Removal of Brent Magazine.** The removal of Brent Magazine reflects low engagement, and its inability to communicate with speakers of other languages. Instead more tailored, regular communications will reach a wider range of residents with specific messages e.g. community skips which are poorly communicated currently. **Saving: £250,000**
- **Removal of Brent Connects.** The removal of Brent Connects would release funds to be used elsewhere, in recognition that the ROI for investment to residents engaged is low. **Saving: £10,000**

6. Summary of Proposals and Sources of Funding

The table below sets out a summary of the proposals and the sources of funding

Spending Commitments		
Priority Area	Proposal	Cost
Energy Transition and Resilience	Social Housing Retrofit	£15,000
Energy Transition and Resilience	Council Properties Retrofit	£500,000
Energy Transition and Resilience	Investment in community owned energy schemes	£200,000
Energy Transition and Resilience	Investment in energy generation in new builds e.g. leisure centres/solar panels to reduce energy costs	£15,000
Housing Equity	One additional scrutiny committee, focused on housing.	£95,000
Housing Equity	Two additional housing enforcement officers	£160,000
Waste	5 free bulky waste collections per household	£120,000
Waste	Access to Abbey Road recycling	£100,000
Waste	Street cleaning plus neighbourhood community managers	£750,000
Waste	Waste Reduction Pilot Programme	£233,000
Travel/transport	Variable parking	£7,500
Travel/transport	Active Travel and Traffic Calming Investment	£3,000,000
Green Spaces	Trees	£500,000
Green Spaces	Green Spaces Development and Protection	£80,000
Green Spaces	Parks Investment	£500,000
Other	Council property management	£80,000
Other	Council Tax Collection	£80,000
Total		£6,435,500

Funding Sources	Income
Savings (Brent Magazine, Members support)	£424,000
SCIL to part fund Active Travel	£2,400,750
Additional Income from increased parking fees and CPZ (part year effect)	£3,610,750
Total	£6,435,500

7. Advice from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources

Senior finance support has been provided to assist the Green Group to in developing an alternative budget that reflects their policy priorities.

The alternative budget proposed by the Green Group would constitute a legal and balanced budget for 2026/27, however the potential implications for 2027/28 and future years have not been considered as part of these proposals.

Overall, these proposals introduce £6.4m of new spending commitments, funded by £0.4m of additional savings, £2.4m of Strategic CIL and £3.6m of additional income.

The proposals on increased parking fees and expand CPZs, while legally permissible, can only be implemented for traffic management purposes, such as reducing congestion or improving road safety, and not to generate surplus revenue for unrelated purposes, such as to support general council budgets. A part year effect has been reflected in the budget to account for implementation timelines.

Furthermore, any use of SCIL requires significant legal due diligence to ensure any expenditure is compliant with grant conditions, such as ensuring any new transport proposals are within and between growth areas in Brent. The budget also reflects a risk arising from the use of SCIL funding that is earmarked for future pipeline projects. If the SCIL forecasts do not materialise as anticipated, the Council may need to cease plans for future pipeline schemes or find alternative funding sources which may include borrowing.

Overall, the budget can be considered balanced and lawful. This is subject to appropriate due diligence on the proposed use of SCIL and confirmation that the parking income proposals comply with road traffic legislation.

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