LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET
Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 27 July 2026 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor Grahl (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Amadi, Dixon, Johnson, Kelcher, Knight and Rubin.

Also present: Councillors Perrin

1. **Apologies for Absence**

   Apologies for absence were received from Jehan Weerasinghe (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) with Gerry Ansell (Director of Inclusive Regeneration and Climate Resilience) attending as his representative, and Pameel Crowther-Newman (Head of Litigation and Dispute Resolution) with Biancia Robinson (Principal Lawyer, Constitution Governance and Finance) attending as her representative.

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 Tuesday 22 June 2026 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 to 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. **Financial Outturn Report 2025-26**

   Councillor Grahl (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Finance and Resources presenting the 2025-26 financial outturn for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the capital programme.

In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl began by highlighting, as part of her new Finance & Resources portfolio, the significant challenges Brent Council and other local authorities were facing in relation to unprecedented funding pressures, high inflation, rising demand for essential services, in particular Adult Social Care, and the ongoing housing crisis affecting residents.

In outlining the 2025-26 year-end position, she confirmed that the Council ended the previous financial year with a general fund overspend of £18.3m which had been met from reserves specifically set aside to manage financial pressures, a Dedicated Schools Grant deficit recorded at £6.6m, and a break-even HRA position. She advised that this came during another demanding year in which the Council had been required to deliver £20.4m of cuts whilst protecting essential services and responding to increasing demand, which she felt reinforced the need for stronger financial control, better forecasting and the full delivery of agreed savings and mitigations.

Whilst recognising the funding pressures the local authority was facing, Councillor Grahl also felt it important to acknowledge where progress had been made and listed several areas of improvement that should be commended, including historic debt falling by £23.7m, which was the first overall reduction in five years, Council Tax Collection improving to 91.6%, and Business Rates Collection increasing to 94.1%. She attributed those improvements to additional capacity that had been put into those services, earlier recovery action, better use of data and more targeted engagement with residents.

In welcoming these improvements, Councillor Grahl also recognised the ongoing nature of challenges faced by many residents with the Council having invested £1.5m into a Hardship Fund that had supported more than 13,000 households facing genuine financial difficulty. She highlighted that the Council continued to invest in Brent’s future, with more than £200m invested through the capital programme in housing, regeneration, roads, parks, public buildings, additional SEND places and the completion of 543 new Council homes.

Having detailed the progress made over the previous financial year, Councillor Grahl again emphasised the seriousness of the underlying pressures, with the biggest overspends concentrated in services the Council had legal and moral responsibilities to provide. Housing Needs and Support had recorded a large overspend last financial year, with nearly 8,000 homelessness applications which represented an increase of 40% compared with the previous March. Adult Social Care had also recorded an overspend with more older people requiring increasingly complex care requirements, and the cost of homecare, residential care and nursing placements continuing to increase significantly. She advised that these were not discretionary pressures that the Council could ignore, but the consequences of an ageing population, an unaffordable London housing market, rising private rents and a care market where costs continued to outstrip available funding.

In detailing the pressures being faced, Councillor Grahl asserted that the Council would continue to take responsibility for areas within its control through strengthened forecasting, challenging unnecessary expenditure, collecting income owed to the Council and holding services accountable for delivering within their budgets. She pointed out, however, that Councils could not resolve the national housing crisis, reform the care market or repair the SEND funding system alone, and therefore welcomed the Government's commitment to multi-year financial settlements and stronger recognition of need and advocated for that commitment to now be followed by sustainable funding for homelessness, Adult Social Care and SEND, concluding that Cabinet needed to be disciplined in protecting the services which Brent residents depended on.

In recognising the challenges being faced whilst also commending the improvements and prudent financial management of the overspend, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the financial outturn for 2025-26.

8. Quarter 1 Financial Forecast 2026-27

Councillor Grahl (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Finance and Resources presenting the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the Capital Programme as at Quarter 1, 2026-27.

In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl began by advising members that whilst recognising the nature of pressures identified, there were also signs that the approach taken over recent months was making a difference. Although highlighting that the General Fund was forecasting a £9.5m overspend, which was not where the Council wanted to be, it was felt important to for members to understand that the pressure was concentrated almost entirely on pressures relating to homelessness and temporary accommodation with all other services forecasting a balanced budget at the time of reporting.

In recognising that housing remained the biggest challenge to the Council's budget position, Councillor Grahl detailed the significantly high cost of private rents and scarcity of affordable homes as factors leading more families to turn to the Council for support. Whilst an additional £8m of funding had been allocated to Housing Need for the reporting year, demand had continued to rise. Councillor Grahl affirmed that Brent could not resolve London's housing crisis alone, but could build homes, reduce reliance on the most expensive temporary accommodation, regulate the quality of private accommodation through the licencing scheme and help families into secure housing. As such, 406 new social homes were expected to become available, and she advised that the Council had already moved 89 households out of some of the costliest temporary accommodation, using new Council homes to help residents in greatest need. She confirmed that this gave families greater stability whilst also saving the Council money.

In outlining other areas of work that would help to reduce pressures on the Council's finances, Councillor Grahl highlighted The Gardens Children's Home which would help to support more young people in Brent rather than relying on expensive external placements, as well as the delivery of more than £320m of capital investment in homes, schools, SEND provision, regeneration and local infrastructure. There were £10.4m of agreed savings to deliver, and she confirmed that this year's approach would not focus on asking services to make isolated cuts, but to work together with departments to improve productivity, use technology more effectively and identify new income, which she highlighted in her view was a more sustainable way of operating.

In addition, the opportunity was also taken to remind members of the longer-term risk associated with the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) with Councillor Grahl welcoming the approach adopted by the Government in terms of the commitment to support 90% of eligible High Needs Deficits and as a sign that the need for reform had been recognised.

In concluding her remarks, Councillor Grahl recognised that there was more to do and the Council needed to maintain a firm grip on spending throughout the year but affirmed that the Council was not standing still and simply managing decline, but building homes, investing in Brent and changing the way the organisation worked with Cabinet asked to note the forecast and endorse the actions being taken.

The Leader thanked Councillor Grahl for her introduction and invited Minesh Patel (Corporate Director Finance and Resources) to supplement her comments. In support of the issues highlighted, Minesh Patel reinforced the comments around the DSG, which he advised remained one of the most significant areas of uncertainty. The Council had submitted its plan to show how it was managing the DSG High Needs Block last month and the Government had announced they would look to reduce 90% of those cumulative deficits, however there was still a strong likelihood of overspend of the High Needs Block in 2026-27, therefore the Council was pushing to understand the support that would be provided from the Government until those funding reforms were implemented.

In considering the report and acknowledging the significant pressures within Housing Need and Temporary Accommodation, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to mitigate the issues arising.

(2) To note the prudential indicators for treasury management in Appendix A of the accompanying report.

(3) To approve the virements set out in section 5.13 of the accompanying report.

9. Medium Term Financial Outlook

Councillor Grahl (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Finance and Resources presenting the overall financial position facing the Council and highlighting the significant risks, issues and uncertainties with regards to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), as well as setting out the Council's proposed budget setting strategy for 2027-28.

In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl advised that the report looked beyond the immediate pressures and set out the choices facing Brent up to 2031-32, with Brent starting from what she believed was a position of relative strength, having remained financially stable at a time when a growing number of Councils required exceptional support or government intervention. She also emphasised the impact of the multi-year funding settlement which had been offered for the first time in many years. In addition, the Fair Funding Review and reset of Business Rates had delivered a fairer share of resources for Brent, with greater recognition of deprivation and the demands on Councils to deliver services, which she expressed was a welcome change of direction providing more certainty and a foundation on which to plan.

Whilst welcoming the changes to funding from central Government, Councillor Grahl cautioned that there was still significant challenge for the Council, with a current estimated budget gap of £5m in 2027-28, rising by a further £15m the following year, and a cumulative gap of around £50m across the period 2031-32. She highlighted that this was made up largely of the additional costs of maintaining the services the Council already provided as inflation, demographic change and increasingly complex needs drove demand. Since 2010, she highlighted that Brent had already agreed £248m of savings, almost half its current net revenue budget, and was delivering a further £10.4m in the current financial year, leaving little scope to seek further reductions in the same way and areas moving forward.

As such, she felt the next phase in the Council's strategy must be different and focused on redesigning services rather than shrinking them further. This meant investing in prevention, making better use of technology, improving productivity, strengthening commissioning and generating more income, whilst fostering stronger culture and leadership to work as one Council rather than protecting individual departmental budgets and operating in silos.

In moving forward with that approach, Councillor Grahl highlighted that the pressures faced were concentrated in areas where the Council had little control, with individuals living longer and requiring more complex care, specialist children's placements adding significant pressures on costs, demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) growing and placing sustained pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and the immediate risk presented by the demand in homelessness, where the cost of temporary accommodation had increased far more quickly than private rents and Brent's net homelessness expenditure had risen by 85% in a single year.

In addressing the pressures, she confirmed that the Council would continue to use every lever available to continue to support residents whilst managing its financial situation. In the previous year, 67% of homelessness approaches were successfully prevented or relieved, and the Council's wholly owned housing company, i4B, generated annual savings of more than £6m by providing affordable homes to homeless families. The Gardens Children's Home would also provide local care at a lower cost than many private placements, and new prevention funding would help support families earlier. Whilst the Council took action where it could, she emphasised that it could not repair the housing market, reform the national care system, or resolve the SEND crisis alone, and called for further reform with proper funding.

Reflecting on Brent's future, Councillor Grahl acknowledged that financial responsibility could not mean lowering the Council's ambitions for Brent. She highlighted that the revised capital programme provided more than £1.25bn over five years to provide affordable housing, regenerate South Kilburn, make improvements to highways, deliver additional SEND places, provide CCTV, deliver family facilities, and complete essential repairs to homes and public buildings. The Pride in Place Programme would also deliver up to £40m for projects focused on

Harlesden and St Raphael's Estate over the next 10 years, with residents involved in deciding how that money would be used. She added that building homes, improving places and unlocking development created jobs and generated additional Council Tax, Business Rates and Community Infrastructure Levy income, contributing to a robust financial strategy.

In concluding her remarks, Councillor Grahl acknowledged that the multi-year settlement had given the Council a window to prepare properly, and committed to use that to rebuild resilience, develop a two-year budget plan, and align finances with the next Council Plan with greater funding certainty, a clearer picture of the risks, and time to make strategic choices. On this basis, Cabinet was therefore asked to note the outlook, agree the budget-setting and consultation process, approve the proposed capital adjustments and note the position of the Housing Revenue Account and Dedicated Schools Grant.

In recognising the challenges and endorsing the way forward, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the contents of the report and the potential financial impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

(2) To agree the budget setting process for 2027-28, including the approach to consultation and scrutiny, as set out in section six of the accompanying report.

(3) To note and agree the proposed 2025-26 capital budget carry forwards and capital virements for 2026-27, as set out in section seven of the accompanying report.

(4) To note the financial position with regards to the Housing Revenue Account, as set out in section eight of the accompanying report; and

(5) To note the financial position with regards to the Schools and Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section nine of the accompanying report.

10. Bridge Park Complex Regeneration Proposals

Councillor Matt Kelcher (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration seeking endorsement of the recommendations for the Bridge Park Complex Regeneration, as detailed in section 2 of the accompanying report.

In presenting the report, Councillor Kelcher began by expressing his pride at being able to bring the proposals to Cabinet, which he felt brought the Council closer to its ambitions around Bridge Park and the wider Hillside Corridor. He advised that the proposals brought closed-off, underused buildings needing significant regeneration back into positive use with benefits including housing, employment opportunities with the new hotel, and the new leisure centre which would contribute to a wider commitment to make Brent a Borough of Play. He highlighted that, currently, only 12% of Brent residents on low income could walk to a swimming pool, and when the work was complete on the new leisure centre that figure would increase to 80%, bringing swimming closer to home for those struggling to access the activity which he felt delivered on the Council’s commitment to equity and providing opportunities for all residents.

Having acknowledged the benefits of the scheme to the local community, Councillor Kelcher also recognised the historic importance of the site within Black British history, assuring members that this had been a sensitive project as it had moved forward, and he would ensure that the history of the site was respected and that residents remained at the heart of the regeneration.

In concluding his remarks, Councillor Kelcher identified the proposal as an exciting opportunity across leisure, physical activity, housing, and employment, which turned an underused and unattractive building into something he hoped the Council and residents could be proud of, whilst respecting the unique history and heritage of the site.

In supplementing the introduction, Councillor Liz Dixon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health) highlighted that the proposals had very strong alignment to the Council’s active wellbeing priorities, providing an accessible place for families in the summer holidays, particularly the much needed water space.

Members thanked Councillor Kelcher and officers for bringing the proposals forward, which they felt at their core focused on the health and wellbeing of the communities who used Bridge Park. Recognising the substantial health inequalities in Brent in comparison to London and North West London, Cabinet was pleased that the project prioritised building civic infrastructure and saw this as part of a broader context linked to wider ambitions relating to the provision of free swimming for under 18s and a proposed ambition to eventually build a lido in the borough. Members echoed the sentiment that this was an opportunity to strengthen culture and wellbeing in Brent to create a vibrant neighbourhood where residents of all ages could live, connect and thrive and provide stronger social connections and a new sense of tribe and belonging.

Members also acknowledged the employment and skills opportunities that would be unlocked with these proposals, including new provision for Brent Start, as well as the substantial number of homes that would be delivered on the site. In support of the overall approach outlined and recognising the community support for taking the scheme forward, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the current position on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) decision and awarding of the Certificate of Immunity for Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre and Technology House.

(2) To acknowledge the wider Bridge Park masterplan and the planning strategy for the site and agree for the Council to submit their elements of the planning application which would include the provision as set out in paragraphs 3.2.6 – 3.2.11 of the accompanying report.

(3) To agree the revised facility mix for the new leisure centre and the scheme delivery phasing proposals for the council-led development, with the leisure centre forming Phase 1 and the Adult Education and Community Building

forming Phase 2, as set out in paragraphs 3.2.12 – 3.2.27 of the accompanying report.

(4) To note the creation of a Community Engagement Group to refine the design and facility mix for Phase 2 of the Council's development.

(5) To approve the use of a call-off procedure under the SCAPE Construction Framework for the contracts for Phase 1 of the Bridge Park Regeneration Programme on the basis of the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.2.39 of the accompanying report.

(6) To delegate authority to award the pre-construction services and main works contracts to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning.

(7) To approve a revised total capital budget of £53.50m to deliver Phase 1 of the Bridge Park regeneration noting that the capital budget for Phase 2 (Adult Education and Community Building) would follow in a separate paper in due course.

(8) To agree the use of up to £39.00m of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy funding for Phase 1 of the Bridge Park regeneration programme.

(9) To note that the Conditional Land Sale Agreement (CLSA) was contingent upon planning and financial condition and delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning to finalise and complete the CLSA and enter into the final transfer agreement and any other ancillary documents that may be required.

(10) Subject to planning approval, to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration to agree to appropriate the lands under section 122 Local Government Act 1972 and thereafter, engage the powers conferred by section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to override easements and other rights.

11. Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024-25

Councillor Matt Kelcher (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration presenting the Council's sixth Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), prepared in line with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations (amended 2019).

Before introducing the report, Councillor Kelcher asked members to note a correction to paragraph 3.4.3 of the report, correcting the tenure type of the 294 affordable housing units to '172 London Affordable Rent, 91 Intermediate, 31 Social Rent'. In correcting the paper, he confirmed that the overall total of 294 affordable homes secured through Section 106 Agreements was unchanged and this was a correction to the tenure description only.

Moving on to present the report, Councillor Kelcher began by taking the opportunity to highlight the way in which developments funded through the generation or use of

CIL could provide tangible community benefit to local residents, with the example provided across his ward in Harlesden on the use of CIL to bring the Picture Palace back into use alongside other investments for a new community centre, expanded youth offer at Roundwood Youth Centre, a Hair Academy and the refurbishment of the historic library. He advised that the Statement highlighted the scale of investment, with more than £150m of CIL allocated to current and pipeline projects across the borough over the reporting period. In outlining the impact, he reminded members that major infrastructure projects took many years to plan, fund and deliver, with funding held until the right project was available to residents in the long term.

In summing up, Councillor Kelcher advised that he was proud that the current administration had been robust in addressing the housing crisis through delivering development, expressing that Cabinet had always been clear that where development was done responsibly and delivered infrastructure needed by communities it would be supported.

In considering the report, Cabinet was pleased that the detailed paper demonstrated that the Council took its infrastructure funding obligations seriously and was transparent in its record of CIL investment. Members commended what was identified as Brent's strong performance in the collection of CIL receipts, recognising the effort required to ensure the funds came forward to the Council in a timely manner and in a way that could support the ongoing delivery of community benefits and infrastructure, with members citing the work which had commenced across Neasden as a further example of the positive impact that could be achieved as a result.

Having considered the statement and thanked officers for the work undertaken in collecting CIL to ensure the best outcomes and benefits from development for the whole of Brent, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report and approve the Brent Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024-26 for publication on the Council's website.

12. **West London Waste Plan Regulation 19 Consultation**

Councillor Promise Knight (Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration presenting the new draft West London Waste Plan which it was noted would form part of the Local Development Plan and would be used for determining planning applications for waste development within Brent and across West London. and had been prepared jointly across the relevant six West London Authorities.

In presenting the report, Councillor Knight advised that the report called on Cabinet to approve the Plan to begin the final phase of consultation on the long-term strategic planning document that would ensure the six West London authorities had capacity to deal with the waste generated and took into consideration population increases and other changes which might impact waste in the medium term.

In detailing development of the Plan, Councillor Knight welcomed the collaboration with the other boroughs involved given the need to provide authorities with the necessary decision-making powers to determine the future of waste sites. The aim of the West London authorities was to reach a stage where the Plan could be submitted for approval to the Secretary of State by year-end with thanks expressed to all involved for the substantial amount of work that had been put into developing the Plan.

Having noted the benefits of having a long-term framework to ensure the right infrastructure was in place for waste and recycling, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

(1) To approve the publication of the proposed submission version of the West London Waste Plan ('Regulation 19') and associated evidence base documents for consultation and consultation arrangements outlined in the accompanying report.

(2) To delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Development Services (in consultation with the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) to make minor modifications to the Proposed Submission version of the West London Waste Plan and accompanying documents prior to public consultation, including inserting any outstanding process or background elements, making presentational, typographical and accuracy amendments and finalising evidence base documents (in conjunction with other participating authorities).

(3) To agree that the West London Waste Plan in its current form was 'sound' and therefore to recommend the Plan as such to Full Council in November and recommend that Full Council in turn authorise submission of the Plan and associated documents to the Secretary of State for examination, subject to the conclusion of the Regulation 19 consultation process and any suggested amendments to the Plan in response.

13. **Authority to Undertake a Trial of a Cross-Pavement Charging Solution for Electric Vehicles on the Public Highway**

Councillor Promise Knight (Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration seeking Cabinet approval to a limited trial of cross-pavement charging solutions for electric vehicles on the public highway.

In presenting the report, Councillor Knight began by stating that the proposal took a practical step towards supporting residents who wanted to make the switch to electric vehicles. She noted that one of the biggest barriers to making that switch was the cost and convenience of electric vehicle charging, for example where residents did not have a driveway, which was particularly the case in Brent where many residents relied on on-street parking.

In detailing the purpose of the trial, Councillor Knight advised that it looked to understand whether on-street charging could work safely and effectively to the benefit of residents, and if the evidence showed that the solution was safe, practical and good value then the Council should be prepared to take it forward in more areas. Brent had already expanded its public charging network, and this trial provided another opportunity to see whether other approaches could benefit residents who did not have access to charging, which Councillor Knight felt reflected the type of evidence-based, practical approach that residents should expect from the Council.

In considering the report, Cabinet were supportive of the trial being taken forward, with members advising of the demand identified by residents wanting to make that switch but finding the transition difficult due to lack of driveways. In addition, members were keen to commend the trial as a means of seeking to adapt to the climate crisis with the Council keen to embrace new ideas and solutions in an open and innovative way in order to remain at the forefront of emerging opportunities.

In commending the approach and noting the funding received from the Department of Transport for up to 60 charging options across the borough, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

(1) To approve the Council undertaking a trial of electric vehicle pavement channels to enable the Council to gauge the suitability of the technology and to establish suitable criteria / processes for possible wider deployment across Brent.

(2) To approve the budget for the project, including all relevant costs, as set out in the report.

14. **Housing Damp and Mould Policy**

Councillor Robert Johnson (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Residents and Housing Services which presented Brent’s new Damp and Mould Policy, including the Council’s approach to combatting the prevalence of damp and mould in Council homes, the consultation and engagement findings, the commitments captured within the policy and progress made to enact those commitments, and how the Council would deliver and monitor the strategy’s progress and impact.

In presenting the report, Councillor Johnson emphasised the serious impact damp and mould could have on residents’ wellbeing and quality of life, particularly for young children, older adults and those with pre-existing conditions. The Damp and Mould Policy presented the Council’s commitment to take a proactive, resident focused, zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould instances and ensured the Council was fully aligned to the requirements of Awaab’s Law and reflected emerging best practice across the housing sector. In commending the policy, Councillor Johnson confirmed that the commitments placed strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention, effective communication and prioritising support to the most vulnerable residents, and established clear service standards, including response times for residents, providing greater assurance and accountability.

Further outlining the policy, Councillor Johnson affirmed that the Council recognised that inequalities could arise from poor housing conditions and therefore the policy committed to adopting a risk-based approach that targeted support where it was most needed, alongside robust monitoring arrangements with performance reporting to continually improve outcomes reflecting the level of cases being identified.

In summing up, Councillor Johnson confirmed that the policy focused on building trust with residents, listening to their concerns, responding swiftly to issues, and ensuring everyone living in a Brent Council home could do so with confidence and dignity.

In considering the report and policy, Cabinet commended the approach adopted in seeking to tackle issues of damp and mould, recognising the welcome impact of Awaab's Law in placing legal obligations on landlords to address those issues robustly. In support of the policy, members were keen to recognise the way in which the Council had sought to respond to the legislation in seeking to reinforce the commitment towards raising standards for Brent residents. Members particularly noted the commitment to improved customer service and swift responses to reflect the standards residents should expect from the Council and emphasised the significant public health consequences that could arise from damp and mould. It was also welcomed that the policy made clear that the Council would not apportion blame or unfairly attribute damp and mould to residents' lifestyles and instead focused on providing safe, decent and sustainable homes.

Having commended the approach towards addressing damp and mould in a timely manner to ensure residents could live good quality lives in decent accommodation, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse Brent's new Damp and Mould Policy.

15. **Corporate Performance Q4 2025/26 Performance Summary**

Councillor Gwen Grahl (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) introduced a report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy presenting an end of year summary of Brent Council's performance across the Borough Plan for 2025-26.

In presenting the summary, Councillor Grahl began by acknowledging that, whilst areas for improvement remained, progress continued to be made in terms of the improvements in performance identified and number of indicators meeting their target particularly in relation to the services used and relied on residents on a daily basis.

Further detailing the improved performance, Councillor Grahl confirmed that data showed that the Cleaner, Greener Future priority ended the year with no red indicators. Road repairs were completed on time, fly-tipping clearance and enforcement was strong, recycling rates remained above target and household waste continued to fall. Longer-term progress was also being made with increased bike hangars and School Streets, improvements to Council homes and a 71.9% reduction in emissions from the Council's own estate and operations since 2010.

Other areas of improvement were detailed, including libraries which had welcomed more than 1.2m visits and issued 900,000 books and downloads; the reach of grants and resident forums / community programmes; the performance of Community Hubs; nearly 4,000 health checks delivered across more than 790 community health events by Brent Health Matters alongside new birth visits and reablement performing strongly which she highlighted reflected prevention in practice, bringing support into communities and building trust to avoid crisis. For children and young people, Family Wellbeing Centres continued to reach families across the borough, Brent Youth Parliament had exceeded expectations with education, employment and training outcomes for looked after children and care leavers having also improved. Whilst recognising the progress made, Councillor

Grahl acknowledged that there were areas requiring further focus with the Council aware of the issues to be addressed and open about the improvements required.

In summing up, Councillor Grahl felt that the report presented a Council that continued to deliver and perform despite the significant financial pressures identified as well as being an organisation that continued to learn, adapt and focus on results. She signalled that the upcoming Council Plan provided an opportunity to build on the progress made, break down silos and ensure resources were concentrated on areas that mattered most to residents.

Cabinet endorsed the 2025-26 performance report, commending the performance against Cleaner, Greener Future targets which reflected strong and sustained delivery across core environmental services and continued progress on long-term climate and active travel ambitions. They also welcomed the preventative strategy towards health and wellbeing which was supported by the Brent Health Matters programme.

In recognising the progress made and acknowledging the areas of focus going forward around housing indicators and Adult Social Care assessment timeliness and responsiveness, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse the 2025-26 performance reporting set out in section 3 of the report.

16. **S75 Shared Funding Agreement between West and North London Integrated Care Board and Brent Council primarily related to the Better Care Fund**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy informing Cabinet of the proposal to enter a partnership arrangement, under Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006, in respect of the delivery of the approved Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan with West and North London Integrated Commissioning Board (WNL ICB) for 2026-27.

In presenting the report, Councillor Butt began by highlighting that, whilst the report was focused on the governance arrangements of the BCF, it also highlighted how the system would work together, using the pooled budget of £57m, to deliver the best outcomes for residents and tackle health inequalities, drive forward prevention, strengthen neighbourhood working initiatives, reduce hospital admissions and ensure care was organised around the needs of residents rather than organisational boundaries. The importance of ensuring pathways were in place for residents when they were discharged from services was emphasised, ensuring there was an integrated approach to deliver the outcomes that the Council hoped for residents.

In noting the governance arrangements for the BCF going forward and commending the joint working approach towards delivering integrated care services, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

(1) To approve the proposal to enter a new partnership arrangement under Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 with the West and North London Integrated Care Board for the delivery of the approved Better Care Fund Plan for 2026-27, with a total pooled budget value of £57,025,104.00, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the accompanying report.

(2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, to extend the agreement referred to in (1) by such period, or periods, as were considered appropriate, up to a maximum of 4 years with such extensions to conclude by 31 March 2031.

(3) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Corporate Director Finance and Resources, to make annual financial contributions to the Better Care Fund budget for subsequent financial years, provided there is no substantial change to the Agreement.

17. **West London Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme**

Concillor Jake Rubin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Employment and Climate Action) introduced a report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development seeking approval for the Council to enter into a new, updated Collaboration Agreement in respect of the West London Regional Fostering Recruitment Hub along with Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Council's.

In introducing the report, Councillor Rubin expressed his view that one of the most important areas of the Council's work was to provide care and support to its looked after children, of which there were just under 300 in Brent. He advised that the paper responded to some of the challenges in recruiting and retaining foster carers, the main challenge being that the independent sector was, at times, better resourced to market themselves and provide higher payment to foster carers.

In detailing the rationale for the proposal, Councillor Rubin affirmed Brent's aim to provide foster carers in-house wherever possible, in order to provide greater oversight and establish a better connection to the borough and community amongst foster carers. The new agreement would give a greater role to the West London Fostering Hub, which Brent was already part of with 8 other boroughs, in relation to the recruitment of and, on occasion, the approval of foster carers, with a more end-to-end process in terms of the assessment and training of new carers. He added that the agreement aligned with the Department for Education's ambition for regional fostering hubs and therefore asked Cabinet to approve the new and updated agreement and associated recommendations outlined in the report.

Cabinet thanked Councillor Rubin and officers for the report and took the opportunity to place on record their appreciation for Brent's foster carers, who they felt delivered an excellent service on behalf of young people in the borough. The Government's ambitions in tackling the challenges faced in recruiting foster carers was also welcomed with it recognised that housing, or a lack of available room, remained one of the main contributing factors impacting on the number of individuals and families coming forward to foster.

In once again thanking foster carers for their contribution to Brent, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To enter into a new and updated Collaboration Agreement in respect of the West London Regional Fostering and Recruitment Hub.

(2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development, in consultation with the Corporate Director Finance and Resources, to finalise the terms of the Collaboration Agreement.

18. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

19. **Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 11.12 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair