



Questions from the Opposition and Other Non-Cabinet Members

Full Council – 14 September 2026

1. Question from Councillor Donnelly-Jackson to Councillor Liz Dixon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health)

Better, the UK's largest public swimming operator, recorded its busiest-ever summer for lidos and outdoor swimming in 2025, with 542,998 visits between June and August, up 30% from 416,847 over the same period in 2024. There is clear and growing public demand for outdoor swimming that existing provision is not meeting. Across the country, communities are organising, fundraising and campaigning for new and restored lidos, demonstrating an appetite for safe, accessible outdoor swimming that goes well beyond nostalgia.

There is also an important public health and water-safety case for widening access to swimming. Recent data suggests that children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in England are 3.5 times more likely to drown than their white counterparts.

Brent has a proud history of outdoor swimming, with public lidos once serving communities at Gladstone Park, Vale Farm, Harlesden and Kingsbury among others.

With warmer summers, growing demand for outdoor swimming and the significant physical and mental health benefits of swimming, could the Cabinet Member consider commissioning a feasibility study into creating a new public lido or "People's Pool" in Brent?

As we develop our ambition to make Brent a borough of play, such a study could look at latent demand, potential locations, costs, operating models and opportunities for external or partnership funding.

Response:

Thank you to Councillor Donnelly-Jackson for raising this important and timely question.

Yes. I am pleased to confirm that the Council will take this work forward. The administration made a clear manifesto commitment to launch a feasibility study for a new lido and we will now begin turning that commitment into a deliverable programme of work. This forms part of our wider ambition to make Brent the borough of play and to create a fairer, healthier borough.

Brent has a rich history of public outdoor swimming. [Gladstone Park's swimming pool opened in 1903](#), followed by [King Edward VII Recreation Ground in 1911](#), [Vale Farm Lido in 1932](#), [Harlesden Lido in 1935](#) and [Kingsbury Lido in 1939](#). These were important public places where generations of Brent residents came together to swim, play and spend time with family and friends.

That history gives us a strong foundation, but our ambition is firmly focused on our future. Outdoor swimming is growing in popularity, London is experiencing hotter summers and residents need safe and affordable places to swim and cool down. As the question notes, Better recorded 542,998 visits to some lidos and outdoor swimming facilities between June and August 2025, an increase of 30% on the previous year.

There is also a clear public health and water-safety case. [Royal Life Saving Society \(RLSS\) UK reports](#) that almost three in ten Year 6 children nationally cannot confidently swim 25m or perform safe self-rescue, with a substantial attainment gap between children from the least and most deprived communities. The unequal drowning risk experienced by children from some ethnic minority communities is particularly relevant in a diverse borough such as Brent.

A future lido must therefore be more than a summer attraction. It should support affordable swimming, learning, water confidence, self-rescue, play, physical activity and social connection. It must also be accessible to the communities currently least likely to benefit from swimming provision.

The Council is already acting to widen access to swimming. We have [expanded free school-holiday swimming](#) for children and young people across Vale Farm, Willesden and Moberly sports centres. We will build on this further during 2027 as we progress the administration's wider commitments on access to swimming.

Our strategic work has also included a Facilities Planning Model (FPM), which identified an indicative borough-wide shortfall of around 650m² of pool water space by 2041. While the model focuses on conventional swimming pools, it provides further evidence of the need to plan strategically for Brent's long-term swimming provision.

We are already responding, the new Bridge Park Leisure Centre will include a 25-metre, six-lane pool and a dedicated learner pool, alongside wider fitness, wellbeing and community facilities.

The lido feasibility study will therefore be developed through our wider Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) work and be reflected in our infrastructure strategies. This will ensure that the proposition is grounded in evidence and connected to our plans for leisure centres, parks, public health, play and community infrastructure.

The study will consider demand, potential locations, capital and operating costs, different delivery and operating models, and opportunities for external and partnership funding.

We also want to consider what may be achievable before a permanent lido could be delivered. Alongside the longer-term feasibility study, officers will explore whether safe and affordable temporary or pilot outdoor-swimming provision could be introduced sooner at a suitable location.

We will learn from successful schemes elsewhere across the country, while developing an approach that reflects Brent's communities and our own history. Residents, community organisations and groups interested in reviving Brent's lido heritage will have opportunities to contribute as the work develops.

I have asked the Active Wellbeing service to lead the scope and delivery plan for the feasibility study, working with colleagues across the Council and with external partners. The first stage will establish the evidence, governance, resources and commissioning route needed to move the study forward.

This is how we will turn the administration's manifesto commitment into tangible action: establishing the case, identifying deliverable options, building the right partnerships and creating a clear basis for future decisions and investment. Our aim is to establish how Brent can once again provide a public outdoor swimming facility that is safe, inclusive, affordable and sustainable for future generations.

2. Question from Trevor Blackman to Councillor Jake Rubin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Employment & Climate Action)

The Government's Youth Guarantee represents a major opportunity to ensure that every young person has a route into education, training or work, backed by £2.5 billion of investment to tackle youth unemployment.

This includes expanded Youth Hubs, a new £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant for employers who recruit eligible 18-to-24-year-olds, and a Jobs Guarantee expected to provide more than 90,000 young people with fully funded paid employment over the next three years.

On this basis:

- (a) Would the Cabinet Member set out what work Brent is undertaking to ensure that the Youth Guarantee is fully rolled out in our borough, that local employers are encouraged to participate, and that Brent's young people benefit from the opportunities and funding now available?
- (b) Will the Council also develop a Brent Youth Opportunity Guarantee of its own, bringing together schools, colleges, employers, Brent Works, youth services and community organisations to create a clearer pathway from education into meaningful work experience, apprenticeships, training, mentoring and sustained employment?
- (c) In particular, how can we ensure that young people who face the greatest barriers, including those with SEND, care-experienced young people, those at risk of becoming NEET and those without established professional networks, are at the front of the queue for these new opportunities?

Response:

- (a) The Council welcomes the Government's Youth Guarantee and the opportunities it presents for Brent's young people. Supporting residents into good work is a key priority within our emerging Employment and Skills Strategy, which places a strong emphasis on improving outcomes for young people and those facing barriers to employment. We will be introducing our strategy, which sets out the Council's ambition to support residents into more and better jobs, over the coming weeks.

We are working closely with Jobcentre Plus, the West London Alliance, education providers and employers to maximise the opportunities arising from the Government's Youth Jobs Guarantee. This includes promoting the new Youth Jobs Grant to local employers and engaging with the Department for Work and Pensions as it progresses the selection of delivery partners for the national rollout.

No providers have yet been appointed, but the Council, through the Employment and Opportunities Service, retains an active interest following a collaborative bid with West London neighbours. We expect announcements on successful bids

imminently and will keep Members informed as the delivery landscape becomes clearer.

We will also continue to use Brent Works and our employer relationships to encourage local businesses to create opportunities for young people and make the most of the funding available.

- (b) We are keen to develop a Brent Youth Opportunity Offer, bringing together and strengthening the range of work already taking place across the Council and with our partners. This will provide a clearer, more joined-up offer for young people, while identifying where existing provision can be enhanced.

We will work with Cllr Blackman, Members, officers and partners including schools, colleges, training providers, employers, Brent Works, youth services and community organisations to develop this offer. Subject to consultation with officers and available resources through the Council's budget-setting process, we will also explore where additional activity could strengthen it.

This work will be supported by the Youth Employment and Progression Taskforce, which we are establishing with Young Brent Foundation. The Taskforce will help us:

- Strengthen transitions from education into employment and training.
- Increase access to work experience, apprenticeships and industry placements.
- Improve employer engagement and create more opportunities.
- Align local provision with national initiatives such as the Youth Jobs Guarantee.
- Identify gaps in support and develop solutions collaboratively.
- Improve progression into sustained and higher-quality employment.
- Provide partnership oversight, performance monitoring and accountability.

We are also exploring how a targeted Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) could incentivise and support young people who are at risk of becoming NEET or are already NEET, as well as those considering vocational and further education routes. This could help young people remain engaged in education and training and support stronger progression into employment.

- (c) A key principle of this work will be ensuring that those facing the greatest barriers are not left behind. This includes young people with SEND, care-experienced young people, those at risk of becoming NEET, young people undertaking vocational training, and those without established professional networks.

Through targeted outreach, tailored support and stronger partnership working, we will seek to ensure these young people are prioritised for opportunities and receive the support they need to succeed.

The Taskforce will also help identify gaps in provision and improve connections to employers, mentoring, work experience and apprenticeships, with a focus on progression into sustained and higher-quality employment.

Ultimately, our ambition is for every young person in Brent to have a clear route into education, training or good work, with additional support for those who face the greatest barriers.

3. Question from Councillor Jayanti Patel to Councillor Promise Knight (Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm)

For each of the last three financial years, can the Cabinet Member confirm:

1. How many occasions Brent Council has identified highway works carried out by its contractors as defective or below the required standard, and how many times have contractors subsequently been required to return and rectify those works at their own cost under contractual warranty or defect provisions?
2. What financial deductions, penalties or other contractual sanctions have been imposed on highways contractors as a result of defective or substandard work, including the total value in each year?
3. How many defective highway reinstatements undertaken by utility companies have been identified by the Council, how many have subsequently been rectified, and what total amount has been recovered or charged to utility companies as a result?
4. What proportion of completed highway works are currently subject to post-completion inspection or quality assurance checks?
5. Does the Council maintain a central record of repeat defects, remedial works and financial penalties by individual contractors, and if so, will this information be made publicly available to enable councillors and residents to assess contractor performance and value for money?

Response:

- 1. How many occasions Brent Council has identified highway works carried out by its contractors as defective or below the required standard, and how many times have contractors subsequently been required to return and rectify those works at their own cost under contractual warranty or defect provisions**

The Council monitors the quality of highway works through a combination of inspections, quality assurance processes and contract management activities. Where works are found to be defective, incomplete, not carried out to the required standard, failing prematurely, or not undertaken in accordance with the agreed scope of works, contractors are required to return and undertake the necessary remedial works at their own expense.

The number of recorded occasions where completed highway works required the contractor to return and undertake remedial works during the last three financial years was as follows:

Financial Year	Reactive Maintenance Defects	Planned Maintenance Improvement Defects	Total
2023/24	119	0	119
2024/25	15	0	15
2025/26 (to date)	7	6	13
Total	141	6	147

All of the above defects were rectified by the relevant contractor at its own expense in accordance with its contractual obligations and at no additional cost to the Council. 2023/24 was the first year of the contract.

It should be noted that defects identified and corrected during the construction process before completion and acceptance of the works are not included within these figures, as they are dealt with as part of normal site supervision and quality control procedures.

2. What financial deductions, penalties or other contractual sanctions have been imposed on highways contractors as a result of defective or substandard work, including the total value in each year

During the last three financial years, the Council has not imposed any specific financial penalties or deductions on its principal highways maintenance contractors solely in relation to defective workmanship.

Where defects or quality issues have been identified, contractors have undertaken the necessary remedial works at their own expense in accordance with their contractual obligations. Where appropriate, payment for repairs is withheld until remedial works are completed to the satisfaction of officers. As defects identified by the Council were accepted by the contractor and rectified within the required timescales, no additional financial sanctions were applied.

3. How many defective highway reinstatements undertaken by utility companies have been identified by the Council, how many have subsequently been rectified, and what total amount has been recovered or charged to utility companies as a result?

NRSWA Officers will conduct a sample number of Category B inspections for completed works. This is carried out within 6 months of the interim or permanent reinstatement. The charge for Cat B inspections is £50. The relevant utility is notified of the inspection fail and required to programme and complete correction works. Follow Up inspections to monitor repair work and ensure the defect has been fully rectified is charged at £120 per visit.

The table below shows data for the number of Cat B inspections and failures requiring Follow Up inspections. All correction works are at the utility contractor's expense.

Cat B	Inspections completed	Inspections Failed
Data for 2024-2025	1111	121
Data for 2025-2026	869	31

NRSWA Officers will also conduct a sample number of Category C inspections. These are carried out within the three months preceding the end of the guarantee period, which is normally 2 years. The failure process as applied for Cat B defects also applies for Cat C defects.

Cat C	Inspections completed	Inspections Failed
Data for 2024-2025	866	25
Data for 2025-2026	621	17

The figures below relate to statutory inspection and follow-up inspection charges levied under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. Where reinstatements fail inspection, the utility company is responsible for carrying out any remedial works at its own expense. The Council does not undertake these remedial works and therefore does not separately recover the cost of the corrective works.

The total amount of inspection and follow-up inspection charges invoiced to utility companies was £53,580 in 2024/25 and £41,180 in 2025/26.

4. What proportion of completed highway works are currently subject to post-completion inspection or quality assurance checks?

All planned highway maintenance, carriageway resurfacing and capital improvement schemes are subject to post-completion inspection and quality assurance processes before final acceptance by the Council.

Given the high volume of reactive maintenance works undertaken across the borough, it is not practical to physically inspect every individual repair. Contractors are required to provide completion records and photographic evidence for all reactive maintenance works, which are reviewed by Council officers.

Approximately 50% of reactive maintenance repairs are subject to a desktop audit of the photographic completion records. Where photographic evidence is considered insufficient, where concerns are identified during the audit process, or where complaints or enquiries indicate that works may be defective, further site inspections may be undertaken and remedial works required where appropriate.

This risk-based approach enables resources to be targeted towards locations where there is evidence that further investigation may be necessary whilst maintaining oversight of completed highway works across the network.

5. Does the Council maintain a central record of repeat defects, remedial works and financial penalties by individual contractors, and if so, will this information be made publicly available to enable Councillors and residents to assess contractor performance and value for money?

The Council maintains records of highway inspections, defects and maintenance activities through its asset management systems, including Symology.

Whilst the history of a particular location can be reviewed, the Council does not maintain a specific register of "repeat defects" by contractor and the system does not contain a dedicated repeat-defect recording function.

The presence of multiple defects at the same location does not necessarily indicate defective workmanship or contractor failure. Defects may arise for a variety of reasons including utility works, third-party damage, traffic loading, environmental conditions, or the deterioration of surrounding highway assets over time.

Information relating to highway inspections, maintenance activities and contractor performance is recorded and monitored through the Council's asset management and Street Works management systems, including Symology and Aurora.

Requests for recorded information are considered in accordance with the relevant information access legislation.

4. Question from Councillor Barbara Want to Councillor Matt Kelcher (Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Planning)

Can the Cabinet Member set out what actions Brent Council has taken, is taking or will take to address fears by Brent residents about the potential release of toxic dust and airborne contaminants during the proposed redevelopment of the former Kensal Gas Works site at Ladbroke Grove in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), just over the border from Brent?

The site is known to contain arsenic, cyanide, benzene, toluene and asbestos and expert opinion suggests disturbed contaminants released into the air can travel up to 4 miles from the site. More than 100 lorries a day will transport waste away along Brent roads and past Brent homes. The works will last up to 15 years. Residents are understandably anxious about the public-health implications.

In light of this, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether Brent Council will:

- (1) Approach RBKC to establish a cross-borough air-quality monitoring and oversight group for the duration of the excavation works.
- (2) Ensure this group includes Brent officers, Brent residents and independent environmental or public-health experts.
- (3) Work with RBKC to agree a shared monitoring framework, including real-time air-quality monitoring at multiple Brent locations, transparent publication of data and incident reports, and clear thresholds for escalation and joint response.
- (4) Create a clear route for Brent residents to raise concerns, ensuring issues are logged, investigated and addressed through the cross-borough structure rather than redirected to the developer.

Response:

The potential impacts of contamination and air quality were considered by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) as part of its assessment of the application. These matters were addressed in the Planning Committee reports and discussed at the committee meeting itself. The concerns raised in relation to contamination and air quality were thoroughly assessed, and the relevant technical consultees concluded that there were no significant risks associated with either issue.

RBKC's Planning Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to a number of conditions, including a requirement for air quality monitoring. Where air quality monitoring is required for development proposals, it is normally undertaken close to the development site, as these locations are most likely to experience dust and other construction-related impacts. Monitoring is not normally required along transport routes to and from the site, as locations further from the development are less likely to be affected.

Planning permission was also granted subject to a condition requiring the contractor to join the Considerate Constructors Scheme. The scheme requires contractors to

provide contact details for local residents, enabling any concerns or complaints arising during the construction period to be raised directly with them.

5. Question from Councillor Najib Warsame to Councillor Jake Rubin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Employment & Climate Action) & Councillor Liz Dixon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health):

The fatal stabbing of 17-year-old David Wynter at Brent Civic Centre in Wembley on 25 August is an unprecedented tragedy for the communities we represent, and for all of us as residents in Brent. Our thoughts and prayers are with David's family and we commend the council and police services for their swift and thorough response to these events.

This is the second fatal stabbing of a young person in Brent this year. In light of these tragedies will the Cabinet Member:

- (1) commit to reviewing the Youth Justice strategy, currently due to end in 2028, including its monitoring mechanisms to ensure the council's responsibilities are being upheld and accept that meaningful youth violence prevention requires a comprehensive, not siloed, strategy to the wider social and economic conditions that produce this horrendous violence.
- (2) accept that meaningful prevention requires that young people have access to youth services, trusted adults, community spaces and constructive social outlets that are both affordable and readily available?
- (3) commit to identifying specific gaps in affordable youth provision and using NCIL/SCIL funding where available?

Response:

The murder of David Wynter is a tragedy and all of our thoughts are with his family and friends as they grieve his loss.

The police investigation remains ongoing and at this stage it is not possible to draw firm conclusions around what led to this terrible event. Formal safeguarding processes have been established and partners will work closely to analyse the information that emerges and how this will support our wider partnership learning as a result.

- (1) The Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028 was agreed at Cabinet on 13 October 2025 and an annual review was carried out in June 2026, overseen by the multi-agency Youth Justice Partnership Board. There is a stronger focus on prevention activity including alignment of interventions as part of the families first partnership programme. It is accepted that a broad partnership approach is needed to tackle the causes of serious youth violence.
- (2) It is correct to say that meaningful prevention requires that young people have access to youth services in the way described. Brent Council's budget has been cut drastically since 2010 meaning that many services that were once provided directly by the council are now provided by partners and voluntary organisations. Despite this our ambition for Brent's young people, including in preventing acts of serious violence, remains as strong as ever. The Brent Youth Strategy was launched in 2025 (approved by Cabinet in March 2025). Driven and informed by

the views of young people, the strategy focuses on what is most important to young people in their local community with priorities being: (1) Being heard and taking part (2) Reaching goals and enjoying yourself (3) Feeling good (4) Staying safe. The delivery plan, working closely with local partners including schools and youth organisations co-ordinated by the Young Brent Foundation, sets out how the priorities are being delivered. The Brent Youth Strategy Delivery Group includes young people who are activity monitoring progress with the strategy outcomes. The Council is supporting Young Brent Foundation to bid for additional funding from the Mayor's investment fund.

- (3) An example of how the Council supports local youth organisations is the recent £4.5m SCIL capital investment into local youth facilities, including the new Youth Anchor at Church End which is due to open in the autumn. In total 5 organisations were approved for this funding. The Council will continue to encourage youth organisations to bid for NCIL and other funding opportunities, working in partnership to support the strategic aims of the Youth Strategy.
- (4) In addition, Brent's new Community Safety Strategy for 2027-2030 is currently out for public consultation. The strategy will help shape how the Council and its partners work together to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and violence, and to support safer communities across the borough. We welcome feedback from residents, community groups and stakeholders, and in light of recent events would particularly encourage people to share their views and experiences. All feedback received through the consultation will be carefully considered as the strategy is finalised. Residents can take part via the consultation at [Brent Community Safety Strategy Consultation](#).