

	Full Council 14 September 2026
	Report from Corporate Director of Finance & Resources
Resources and Public Realm Committee Chair's Update	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix A: Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026/27
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To present Full Council with progress updates on the activities of the Resources and Public Realm Committee since the last Full Council meeting held on 6 July 2026.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the update from the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The work of the Committee contributes to the delivery of all of the strategic priorities set out in the Borough Plan 2023-2027. It seeks to ensure Council decision-making remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved policies and services.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 Brent Council has two scrutiny committees; the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. The Council is also a member of the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC).
- 3.2.2 A scrutiny committee can look at anything which affects the borough or its inhabitants, subject to its remit.
- 3.2.3 Brent Council Standing Orders allow for the chairs of the scrutiny committees to report to ordinary Council meetings on the activities of their committees¹.

The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

- 3.2.4 The remit of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee is set out in the Council Constitution under the Terms of Reference for scrutiny committees². The remit of the Committee includes:

Corporate policy, partnerships and resources; Budget; Customer services; Commercial services; Planning policy; Environmental policy; Public realm; Employment and skills; IT; Recycling; Regeneration; Transport and highways; Community safety; Property; Emergency planning and business continuity.

- 3.2.5 The Committee is also the Council's "crime and disorder committee" for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006 and as such may review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of the crime and disorder functions by the responsible authorities (as defined by section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) who make up the Safer Brent Partnership, in order to make reports or recommendations to Full Council.
- 3.2.6 Since the last update to Full Council on 6 July 2026 the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has met two times (29 July 2026 and 2 September 2026).

¹ Brent Council Constitution, Part 2, paragraph 36.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s123308/Part%202%20April%202022%20Procedural%20Rules.pdf>

² Brent Council Constitution Part 4.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s123310/Part%204%20May%202022%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20.pdf>

29 July 2026

- 3.2.7 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee met for its first public meeting of the new municipal year, with the items considered as follows:

Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026/27

- 3.2.8 The Committee Work Programme for 2026/27 was formally agreed by members (please see Appendix A). The programme itself is intended to be a flexible, living document that can adapt and change according to the needs of a committee. It will therefore be regularly reviewed throughout the municipal year by the Committee and updated accordingly where necessary. In practice, this means planned agenda items could be subject to change.

Highways Maintenance:

- 3.2.9 The Committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm and received a report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration on the performance, effectiveness and future sustainability of the Council's highways maintenance service. Members considered a number of issues arising from the review, including levels of resident satisfaction with the condition of the highway network, particularly given the significant investment already being made in highways maintenance. The Committee examined factors contributing to the disconnect between investment levels and residents' perceptions of highway condition and considered whether existing resources were sufficient to maintain highway assets to the standard expected by residents and to address the maintenance backlog. In this context, Members explored opportunities to maximise available resources, including partnership arrangements with organisations that utilise the highway network, and the extent to which greater use could be made of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) funding, where feasible, to support highway improvements and address maintenance pressures.
- 3.2.10 In considering how improved outcomes could be delivered, the review also examined the Council's contractual arrangements for highways maintenance, including the respective roles of O'Hara Bros Surfacing Ltd and GW Highways Ltd in delivering reactive and planned maintenance. Discussion focused on whether the current contractual arrangements were delivering the expected outcomes for residents, the performance of contractors in meeting contractual requirements, and opportunities to improve service delivery within existing specifications. Members also considered whether alternative service delivery models, including insourcing, could support improved service outcomes, strengthen accountability and resilience, and provide a more effective approach to maintaining the borough's highway network over the longer term, including reducing the risk of highway defects and associated compensation claims.
- 3.2.11 In light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations and suggestions for improvement:

Recommendations to Cabinet Member

- To review the extent to which Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding is being used to support highways maintenance and improvement works and identify any further opportunities to maximise its contribution towards addressing the maintenance backlog.
- To engage with Transport for London (TfL) to explore funding opportunities and partnership arrangements to support the maintenance and improvement of bus lanes, helping to reduce pressures on the Council's highways maintenance budget.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Develop a quarterly highways (inclusive of footways and carriageways) dashboard, with information presented at ward level where practicable. This should provide an accessible overview of network condition, including annual condition survey data, investment levels, planned and reactive maintenance activity, and key performance indicators.
- Develop and implement a communications and engagement programme to improve public understanding of pothole management and highways maintenance. This should include, but not be limited to:
 - Explaining the root causes of potholes, the factors that accelerate their deterioration, and why pothole formation remains a significant highways maintenance challenge.
 - Improving public understanding of the wider challenges associated with maintaining the highways network, including funding constraints and the factors that influence maintenance priorities.
 - Providing information on the investment being made in pothole repairs and highways maintenance, and the outcomes being achieved.
 - Promoting the channels available for residents to report potholes and other highway defects.
 - Providing greater transparency on how reported defects are assessed, prioritised and repaired.
 - Exploring opportunities to keep residents informed of progress and outcomes where they have reported a pothole or other highway defect.

Budget In -Year Monitoring Update:

3.2.12 The Committee then heard from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and received a report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources providing an update on Brent's overall financial position, including the Quarter 1 forecast for 2026/27 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Among the issues considered were the significant budget challenges facing the Council, particularly rising homelessness and temporary accommodation costs, which continue to place significant strain on Council resources. Members explored the factors driving these pressures, the Council's approach to homelessness prevention and early intervention, and potential measures to reduce reliance on costly temporary accommodation.

Against the backdrop of these ongoing financial challenges, the review examined whether the demand and cost pressures associated with homelessness and temporary accommodation had been adequately reflected in the budget, particularly given the projected £9.5m Q1 overspend within Residents and Housing Services. Members considered the reasons why these pressures had emerged at such an early stage in the financial year and the extent to which they could have been anticipated through the budget-setting process.

3.2.13 This led to a broader discussion about the robustness of financial planning and forecasting arrangements across high-pressure service areas, including Adult Social Care, where Members noted that financial pressures had often emerged later in the year despite no overspend being forecast at Q1. The Committee considered the robustness of financial planning and forecasting within Adult Social Care and heard that additional growth funding had been incorporated into the 2026/27 budget. It was also noted that care placement costs remained the principal financial risk, with budgets, demand trends and spending pressures subject to review through regular monthly monitoring meetings.

3.2.14 Members also considered the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and increasing demand for (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities) SEND services as a significant medium-term financial risk, noting that increasing demand and the rising cost of specialist provision continue to drive growth in High Needs expenditure and DSG deficits both locally and nationally. Whilst welcoming the extension of the DSG statutory override until March 2028 and the Government's commitment to fund 90% of historic DSG and SEND deficits accrued up to 2025/26, concern was expressed about the continued growth in DSG balances and the absence of longer-term funding certainty. Consideration was given to the Council's approach to managing these risks and the potential implications beyond the period covered by current Government commitments.

3.2.15 In assessing the Council's overall financial resilience, the Committee also reviewed delivery of the savings programme approved as part of the 2026/27 budget at Full Council in February 2026. Members noted the commitment made by Cabinet to report progress on both thematic and service-specific savings proposals and received updates from each directorate on progress against the approved savings programme. The Committee explored how savings were being delivered in practice, including progress against planned savings targets, the initiatives undertaken to date, any variances from expected delivery, and the key risks, challenges and dependencies that could affect achievement of the savings programme. Members noted that future financial monitoring reports would include detailed updates on both thematic and service-specific savings, broken down by directorate, enabling the Committee to maintain oversight of delivery, performance against savings targets and emerging risks.

Revitalising High streets and Town Centres:

3.2.16 The Committee then heard from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning and received a report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration on the Council's work to support and revitalise Brent's high

streets and town centres. The discussion focused on the effectiveness of existing initiatives and the development of the emerging High Streets Strategy. Among the key themes explored was how the Strategy could respond to challenges facing town centres and ensure that the benefits of investment are shared across the borough.

3.2.17 Members examined a range of issues that the emerging High Streets Strategy may need to address, including concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and its impact on perceptions of safety, footfall and the vitality of town centres across the borough. The Committee considered how these challenges could be addressed alongside wider place-making and regeneration objectives to support vibrant, attractive and well-used town centres.

3.2.18 Discussion also considered how the Strategy could ensure that the benefits of investment were shared more equitably across Brent, including supporting communities with more limited access to established town centres and high streets. Future investment, improved connectivity and regeneration activity were noted in terms of how they could be directed to maximise benefits for residents and businesses across the borough.

3.2.19 Attention was also given to how the Strategy could contribute to the Council's wider objectives around education, skills, apprenticeships and business development, recognising the role that thriving high streets and town centres can play in supporting economic opportunity and broader social outcomes.

3.2.20 Recognising the importance in ensuring that the Strategy reflected local priorities and supports these wider outcomes, the Committee also discussed the role of engagement and co-design in its future development. Members highlighted the importance of involving residents, community organisations and businesses, recognising the valuable insight they can provide into local challenges, priorities and opportunities. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of businesses in helping to identify the conditions and support required to sustain and grow local enterprise, ensuring that future proposals are informed by those operating within Brent's town centres and high streets.

3.2.21 In light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member:

- Develop and implement a coordinated, cross-council approach to the High Streets Strategy, ensuring effective alignment across relevant services and strong partnership working with key external stakeholders, including the Metropolitan Police, TfL, Trading Standards, local businesses and neighbouring boroughs, where appropriate.
- Use the High Streets Strategy as a vehicle for achieving Brent's wider economic, social and community objectives through innovative and joined-up approaches that maximise the contribution of high streets and town centres to education, skills, employment, business growth, community wellbeing and addressing homelessness.

- Embed the High Streets Strategy within Brent's wider planning, regeneration and economic development framework, including the Brent Local Plan, and establish a clear long-term vision for the vitality, viability, resilience and transformation of high streets and town centres, informing planning, regeneration and investment decisions.
- Ensure the High Streets Strategy is informed by robust evidence and meaningful, inclusive engagement with residents, businesses, community organisations and other stakeholders, including seldom-heard groups, so that its priorities and proposed interventions reflect local needs, aspirations and lived experience.
- Strengthen the role of local businesses and representative organisations in shaping and delivering the High Streets Strategy, creating effective mechanisms for collaboration, advocacy and collective action to support sustainable economic growth across Brent's high streets and town centres.
- Set out a coordinated approach within the High Streets Strategy to tackling persistent vacancies and under-utilised premises, aligning planning, economic development, business support and enforcement functions, and identifying how the Council's powers, resources and partnerships can support their productive reuse. This should promote a diverse and sustainable mix of businesses, community organisations and social enterprises, including through the flexible repurposing of vacant premises for affordable workspace, community and cultural uses, youth provision, training and employment initiatives, and other uses that support local regeneration priorities where appropriate.
- Adopt a place-based approach through the High Streets Strategy, using robust local data and intelligence, including occupancy and vacancy rates, business mix, and opportunities for business attraction and growth, to identify the distinct needs and opportunities of Brent's high streets and town centres and inform priorities, investment and interventions.
- Ensure the High Streets Strategy is supported by clear governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms and a robust delivery plan, with measurable, centre-specific objectives and performance indicators to track progress and outcomes. This should include indicators relating to vacancy rates, footfall, business growth and survival, investment, employment, community safety, cleanliness, public realm quality and resident and business satisfaction.
- Develop a sustainable long-term funding and resourcing approach for the High Streets Strategy that maximises the use of existing Council resources and funding streams, including CIL, leverages external funding and partnerships, and reduces reliance on short-term funding to support the long-term transformation of Brent's high streets and town centres.
- Consider the role of parking in supporting the vitality, accessibility, connectivity and attractiveness of Brent's high streets and town centres,

including an assessment of the merits and impacts of piloting free short-stay parking and other favourable parking approaches on footfall, business growth and visitor access, while balancing environmental and sustainability objectives.

- Present the draft High Streets Strategy to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee prior to Cabinet approval, accompanied by a clear explanation of how evidence, stakeholder engagement and consultation findings have shaped its vision, priorities and delivery approach.

2 September 2026

3.2.22 The following items were considered at the September meeting of the Committee:

Call-in: Cabinet member decision to vary contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection & Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Ltd:

3.2.23 The Committee heard from the Leader of the Council and received a report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration regarding the decision of the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm, taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve a 12-month variation to the Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Services Contract with Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Ltd. This item was considered following a call-in request submitted by six non-Cabinet Members in accordance with Standing Order 14. The call-in challenged the approval of additional expenditure and services before a full review of the existing contract had been undertaken, citing concerns regarding service performance, contract delivery, consultation and the need for further scrutiny before additional investment was approved.

3.2.24 Members explored a range of issues, including current contract performance, delivery against key performance indicators and the reasons for the perceived disparity between reported performance outcomes and residents' experiences of service quality. The Committee also considered the rationale for approving the contract variation prior to a wider review of the contract, the appropriate timing and scope of any such review, the extent of consultation undertaken with residents and Members, and whether further engagement could help inform future service improvements. In addition, discussion focused on the benefits expected from the additional £1.54m investment, whether the proposed variations were necessary to address identified service gaps or could be achieved through enhanced management of existing resources, and the implications of delaying the decision pending further consideration.

3.2.25 Having assessed the merits of the call-in request and the information presented during the meeting, the Committee resolved to confirm the original decision of the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm to approve the contract variation. The decision therefore took immediate effect following the conclusion of the meeting.

Parking Provision and Policy Review:

- 3.2.26 The Committee then turned its attention to current parking provision, management and policy across the borough, hearing from the Leader of the Council and receiving a report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, including an overview of the forthcoming Parking Policy Review. Among the issues considered, Members explored how the review would align with the Council's wider ambitions and priorities, particularly those relating to active travel, climate resilience and the effective management of kerbside space across the borough, including the extent to which a coordinated approach would be taken across related policy areas.
- 3.2.27 Attention was given to the evidence base that would underpin the Parking Policy Review, including the data used to assess current parking management and enforcement arrangements, identify opportunities for improvement and inform future policy decisions.
- 3.2.28 In considering the issues that the Parking Policy Review may need to address, Members explored how parking arrangements could support thriving town centres and high streets, balance the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, accommodate servicing and delivery requirements, and help manage traffic movement and congestion. Further areas of debate included the role of differential parking charges in supporting policy objectives, the extent to which vehicle emissions, size and weight should be reflected in future parking policy, and how parking provision should respond to future growth and development across the borough.
- 3.2.29 In light of the discussion, the Committee made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet Member arising from its consideration of the item. The detailed wording of these recommendations is being finalised following the meeting and will be included in the update report to Full Council on 16 November 2026.

Value for Money in Procurement & Contracts:

- 3.2.30 The Committee then turned its attention to value for money in procurement and contracts, hearing from the Leader of the Council and receiving a report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy. Among the issues considered, Members explored the outcomes of the Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP), including the extent to which it had delivered measurable savings, efficiencies and wider benefits, and the evidence available to demonstrate its impact. Attention was also given to the challenges the programme was designed to address, alongside future priorities and the role of partnership working in sustaining improvement.
- 3.2.31 In considering the wider outcomes the programme is intended to support, Members explored how the Council's procurement activity could maximise benefits for local businesses. Discussion covered engagement with local suppliers, the extent to which contracts were being awarded to organisations based outside the borough, and the measures that could strengthen the local

economic impact of Council spending, including the role of councillors in supporting business engagement. Members also considered how wider social value and environmental commitments secured through the procurement process are delivered in practice, including the arrangements in place to monitor and hold suppliers to account for delivering social value commitments made during the tender process, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of clear performance data and measurable outcomes. Focus was also given to how environmental sustainability is embedded within procurement activity and how suppliers are held to account for delivering these commitments through the procurement and contract management process.

3.2.32 Contract management and assurance arrangements across the Council also formed part of the discussion, including the role of the Procurement team in providing corporate oversight of contracts, identifying and managing procurement risks, supporting improvement where performance concerns are identified, and ensuring effective mechanisms are in place to address underperformance and support service managers in fulfilling their contract management responsibilities.

3.2.33 In light of the discussion, the Committee made a number of suggestions for improvement to the directorate arising from its consideration of the item. The detailed wording of these suggestions is being finalised following the meeting and will be included in the update report to Full Council on 16 November 2026.

Next meeting: 20 October 2026

3.2.34 The next meeting of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee will be held on 20 October 2026. As it currently stands, members will review the following items:

- Budget 2026/27: In-Year Monitoring Update (Q2)
- Council Tax Collection and Recovery
- Climate Resilience and Infrastructure (with a focus on Flooding Risk Management)

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Members of the Committee continue to be fully engaged in the development and delivery of the scrutiny work programme.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no financial considerations for the purposes of this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 There are no legal considerations for the purposes of this report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no EDI considerations for the purposes of this report.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no climate change and environmental considerations for the purposes of this report.

9.0 Communication Considerations

9.1 There are no communication considerations for the purposes of this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director, Finance & Resources