



MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Wednesday 2 September
2026 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A.Patel (Chair) and Councillors I.Ahmed, Anderson, Blackman, Burn, Chowdhury, Georgiou, Mitchell, Ryan and Want.

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Councillor A Patel (as Chair) welcomed members of the Scrutiny Committee to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dar during the meeting. Further details regarding the absence were provided under the Any Other Business item.

2. Declarations of interests

Councillor Georgiou declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 7: Call-In: Individual Cabinet Member Decision to vary the contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia as he was one of the Councillors who had signed the call-in request.

In addition, Councillor Mitchell declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 9: Value for Money in Procurement and Contracts, on the basis that she was employed by Deloitte, which had on a number of occasions been subcontracted by Brent Council.

3. Deputations (if any)

No deputations were received at the meeting.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 27 July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising raised at the meeting.

6. Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Report

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance, which presented the 2026/27 work programme for the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair began by noting that an additional agenda item had been included for the 2 September 2026 meeting to consider the call-in of the decision by Councillor Promise Knight (Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm) to approve a contract variation relating to the Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service provided by Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Limited, in accordance with Paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution. All changes were highlighted in red within Appendix A.

Having reviewed the work programme report, it was **RESOLVED** to note the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

7. **Call-in: Individual Cabinet Member Decision to vary the contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia**

In opening the item, the Chair advised that the meeting had been arranged, in accordance with Standing Order 14, to consider a call-in submitted by six members of the Council relating to a decision taken by Councillor Promise Knight (Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm) on 6 August 2026 regarding the following item:

- (a) Individual Cabinet Member Decision to vary the contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia

In considering the call-in, the Chair reminded the Committee that the line of questioning must remain specifically within the remit of the call-in and that issues raised on anything wider would not be valid and ruled out for consideration.

Having clarified the basis of the call-in, the Chair then proceeded to invite Councillor Lorber to outline the reasons for the call-in as representative of the members who had supported its submission.

In presenting the call-in, Councillor Lorber highlighted the following key issues as the basis for which the decision had been called-in:

- In representing the members who had called in the decision, Councillor Lorber began by outlining a number of concerns relating to street cleaning services. It was noted that he had received a significant number of reports and complaints from residents expressing concern regarding the cleanliness of local streets and shopping areas. Having been a resident of Brent since 1969, he stated that he shared the view of local residents that the borough's streets were in a poorer condition than in the past. It was felt that any opportunity to invest additional resources in improving street cleanliness should be fully and properly considered.

- Councillor Lorber expressed his dissatisfaction that no consultation had been undertaken with councillors prior to the decision being made by the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport and Public Realm. It was noted that the matter had not been considered by Cabinet and that the decision had instead been taken by the lead member alone.
- In referring to the existing contract Councillor Lorber advised that local streets were required to be maintained to a Grade A standard and should not fall below a Grade B standard. It was noted that where standards fell below the required level, the contractor should be required to undertake further cleaning works. The view was expressed that litter picking alone did not achieve a Grade A standard of cleanliness and that the proposed variation would result in an increased emphasis on litter picking rather than more effective street sweeping operations.
- Councillor Lorber also advised that the contract required the cleaning of litter bins located on the borough's high streets. However, it was felt that this element of the contract was not being delivered and that, notwithstanding the contractual requirement for the cleaning of the affected streets, the required standards were not being achieved in practice. As a result, concern that consideration was being given to a variation of the contract before ensuring that the existing contractual requirements were being fully implemented, adequately supervised and properly enforced. In his view, action should first be taken to ensure that all contractual obligations were being fulfilled and that the required standards of street cleanliness were consistently achieved.
- In summing up, Councillor Lorber maintained that all street cleaning issues should be considered as part of a comprehensive review of the service. It was stated that the review should focus on improving the cleanliness of the borough's streets, working collaboratively with residents and addressing all factors relevant to the delivery of clean and well-maintained streets across the Borough of Brent. Members in considering the call-in were, therefore, urged to refer the matter back to the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm to reconsider the decisions made.

The Chair thanked Councillor Lorber for summarising the reasons for the call-in and invited Members to ask any questions they had in relation to the information presented:

- As an initial query, the Chair sought clarification on whether the issues raised stemmed from shortcomings within the existing contract or from a failure to deliver the required service standards. In response, Councillor Lorber advised that, where rubbish had not been specifically reported, the contractor would not remove them as no instruction had been issued. It was suggested that a revised approach could require workers to remove all visible waste encountered during scheduled cleaning activities rather than only waste specifically identified and reported. It was felt there were gaps within the contract, some of which related to contractual requirements not being properly fulfilled and others which reflected weaknesses in the specification itself. It was considered that any proposed contract variation should be used as an opportunity to review and address those issues.

- Views were sought by members regarding the specific aspects of the proposed variation to which the members who had called in the decision objected. In response, Councillor Lorber advised that concerns remained regarding cleanliness standards, the condition of bins and the cleanliness of pavements within shopping areas. It was stated that the existing contract was not achieving the required standards and referred to one of the proposals to provide 5 additional litter pickers within each Brent Connect area to support town centre and high street cleaning. Concern was expressed that additional litter picking alone would not address the underlying issues. Councillor Lorber opined that greater emphasis should instead be placed on sweeping operations, cleansing of litter bins and periodic jet washing of pavements. It was also noted that mechanical sweepers were unable to access all areas of the high street environment and that some locations required manual cleaning by workers.
- In response to a further question seeking clarification on whether his concerns related to the effectiveness of the proposed measures or to broader service priorities, Councillor Lorber advised that he did not believe certain elements of the contract variation would achieve the intended outcomes. It was stated that where high streets were failing to meet the existing cleanliness standards required under the contract, the primary response should be to require the contractor to fulfil its current obligations rather than provide additional funding through a contract variation. It was also suggested that any review undertaken should consider closer working between street cleansing services and other functions, including planning, licensing and enforcement.
- Following a point of order regarding the scope of the call in, a revised question was put to Councillor Lorber by members seeking to establish whether, before additional expenditure was committed, a review of service delivery under the existing contract should first be undertaken. In response, Councillor Lorber agreed and stated that, if a contract variation was considered necessary, it would be appropriate to examine the underlying issues and determine whether the current contract was adequately meeting the needs of local residents. It was further added that any additional expenditure should be directed towards measures that would deliver meaningful improvements.
- Members observed that delaying the proposed contract variation could postpone the introduction of additional resources intended to improve street cleanliness, whilst a separate review of the contract could still be undertaken. In response, Councillor Lorber advised that it was important for the proposed investment of £1.54 million to be directed towards measures that would provide the greatest benefit in improving street cleanliness. It was further noted that, exclusive of VAT, the value of the proposed measures would be lower than £1.54 million and that the unspent sum could potentially be invested in additional services.

As no further issues were raised, the Chair thanked Councillor Lorber for responding to the Committee's queries and then proceeded to invite Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) to respond to the issues raised within the call-in.

In responding to the call-in and explaining the basis of the decision made by the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm, Councillor Muhammed Butt felt it was important to begin by highlighting that the Council's objective was to secure cleaner streets, estates and town centres and to improve environmental quality across the borough. It was stated that the need for improvements was not in dispute, with the key consideration being how those improvements should be delivered. It was noted that the proposed expenditure of £1.54 million had been requested in order to increase investment in cleaning services, including additional mechanical sweeping, litter picking resources and night-time cleaning operations. Councillor Butt noted that the Council was responding directly to concerns consistently raised by residents through correspondence, ward engagement, reports submitted through FixMyStreet and issues observed by councillors during visits to their local areas. Councillor Butt emphasised that the proposal did not involve the procurement of a new contract but instead represented an operational variation to the existing arrangements, designed to direct investment towards areas identified as requiring improvement. It was further mentioned that mechanical sweepers had already been trialled within Brent and had demonstrated improvements in the cleanliness of residential roads and side streets. The importance of additional litter picking in improving the condition and appearance of town centres and high streets and in supporting civic pride amongst local communities was also stressed. It was additionally noted that mechanisms were already in place to record and monitor issues affecting unregistered land, with town centre managers maintaining records and monitoring identified concerns.

Having thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for the initial response on the call-in the Chair then invited comments from the Committee with the following points covered:

- The Chair observed that there appeared to be a significant disconnect between residents' perceptions of street cleanliness and the reported successful performance of the contract. Clarification was therefore sought as to why this discrepancy existed. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) advised that the Council had been operating within a challenging financial environment since 2023. It was noted that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) required the Council to identify savings of between £30 million and £50 million over the next 4 years. Within that context, it was explained that the current contract represented the best arrangement that the Council had been able to secure. It was noted that the KPIs demonstrated that Veolia was meeting its contractual requirements and that, should members consider additional measures necessary, consideration could be given to how performance information was presented and monitored. It was emphasised that the proposal sought to address concerns that had been consistently raised by residents and councillors. It was explained that a number of initiatives had already been trialled and that the intention was to test whether these approaches could be successfully applied across the borough. The importance

of acting promptly was stressed, with it being noted that residents continued to raise concerns regarding waste collection, street cleansing, jet washing and weekend services. The proposals therefore sought to provide greater confidence that the Council and its contractor were responding to these concerns and delivering the best possible outcomes.

- The Chair subsequently queried whether there had been a shift away from a predominantly intelligence-led approach towards a more scheduled approach to service delivery. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) acknowledged the value of intelligence-led reporting and noted that resident reports continued to play an important role in helping the Council identify and address local issues. However, it was advised that introducing scheduled activities, including weekend cleansing and night-time cleansing operations, would strengthen the Council's ability to improve local street conditions. It was added that feedback from residents, businesses and town centres would continue to provide valuable intelligence and help assess whether the measures were delivering the intended outcomes. It was reiterated that the proposals had been developed in response to issues raised by residents, councillors and reporting mechanisms, such as Fix My Street, and were intended to proactively address those concerns.
- A Member noted that many residents in Roundwood and Church End shared the concerns expressed regarding visible street cleanliness. It was stressed that residents wanted to feel that their local area was being cared for and that visible improvements remained important. The Member took the opportunity to commend a local resident, Khalil, for voluntarily collecting litter on the Church Road Estate. Whilst recognising the value of such community contributions, the Member stressed the importance of stronger enforcement measures and promoting a greater sense of pride in place. It was suggested that further consideration should be given to how residents could be encouraged to recognise that littering was unacceptable.
- The Member followed up by asking how the effectiveness of the additional resources would be measured over the following 12 months in order to enable effective scrutiny of whether residents were experiencing a visible improvement in local environmental conditions. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that street cleanliness could be measured through an established grading system that was already used on a regular basis. It was explained that this would enable the Council to assess whether cleanliness scores improved as a result of the additional investment. It was further noted that, given members' interest in the visible impact of the proposals, it would also be important to work closely with ward councillors to gather feedback regarding local conditions and any day-to-day improvements observed within communities.
- The Chair then questioned with interest whether evidence relating to KPIs had been presented to the Lead Member or Cabinet when the original decision had been taken and whether a clear record existed of the information that had been considered. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that the

Veolia contract was not regarded as a poorly performing contract and that there had been no concerns regarding compliance with the KPIs or the delivery of the contract specification. It was explained that the additional resources were intended to address gaps within the existing specification and deliver wider improvements to the street scene. This included services on housing estates and areas of unregistered land which were not currently covered by the existing contract. It was further advised that the Council had sought the contractor's professional advice on initiatives that would provide the most immediate and visible improvements to the public realm.

- Clarification was sought by members regarding the total cost to the Council of the proposed measures set out within the committee report. In response, Rashmi Agarwal (Head of Service Development and Contract Performance) advised that the costs set out within the committee report were inclusive of VAT. It was explained that the £1.54 million presented in the report therefore included VAT and that the amount payable to Veolia for the projects would be £1.54 million minus the 20% VAT element. Following up, members questioned why this distinction had not been made clearer within the report. In responding, Rashmi Agarwal noted that the committee report did state that the figures were inclusive of VAT. However, it was acknowledged that the position could have been expressed more clearly and that it could have been made more explicit that the actual payment value would be £1.54 million minus the 20% VAT element.
- Views were sought from Councillor Muhammed Butt on whether he was satisfied with the current condition of Brent's streets. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) advised that there was always scope for improvement and explained that the proposals under consideration were intended to address identified gaps in service provision. It was noted that these included issues relating to housing estates, unregistered land, weekend cleansing, litter collection on side streets and concerns regarding fly tipping.
- Examples were requested on where trials had taken place and evidence was sought regarding the effectiveness of the measures proposed for additional investment. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) advised that a number of initiatives had already been trialled across Brent, including the use of mechanical sweepers, night time cleansing operations, weekend response crews, community skips and estate cleansing activities. Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) further added that several of the initiatives had been trialled during the previous financial year. It was reported that night-time waste clearance had delivered visible improvements in town centres and had brought about positive feedback from residents. It was also advised that plans were in place to use mechanical sweepers more extensively within residential streets that currently received less frequent cleansing services. Particular focus had been placed on areas such as Roundwood, where interventions were already being undertaken. It was explained that the proposals were intended to deliver noticeable improvements to local streets over a limited period using a limited level of funding. Whilst a broader review of

how streets were cleaned across the borough was supported, it was considered that such a review would be more appropriately undertaken as part of preparations for the next contract, when wider stakeholder engagement and more fundamental changes could be considered.

- Members then sought clarification regarding unregistered land and queried whether the Council maintained a record of such land within the borough. In response, Jehan Weerasinghe (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) advised that the Council had access to Land Registry information which enabled gaps in ownership records to be identified and assessed. It was explained that unregistered land had not been included within the scope of the existing contract introduced in 2023 and represented one of the gaps now being addressed. It was added that the treatment of unregistered land would form part of wider contract review discussions with members.
- The Chair subsequently questioned what arrangements had previously been in place for dealing with waste and cleanliness issues on unregistered land. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that the Council had historically resisted requests to clear unregistered land, as it was neither resourced nor under a statutory duty to undertake that work. However, it had become increasingly apparent that neglected areas of unregistered land were having a detrimental impact on the overall street scene. It was explained that there would need to be a selective approach on a case-by-case basis rather than cleanse unregistered land. It was additionally noted that decisions regarding any works would be agreed with Veolia and based on an assessment of appropriateness and value.
- Queries were raised on whether a break clause existed within the contract and whether consideration should be given to reviewing the contract and associated KPIs before the scheduled review period. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that the contract contained provision for either extension or termination after year 8. It was explained that a contract of this scale would typically require more than 3 years of preparation prior to re-tendering. As a result, the Council would effectively begin preparing for future contract decisions during the following year. It was further advised that, as with the development of the current contract, political groups would be involved in shaping future specifications and arrangements to ensure the most effective outcomes were secured.
- In a supplementary question, members noted that the contract spanned 8 years and asked what formal review opportunities existed within the contract and when members could expect to become involved in discussions regarding future arrangements. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that the contract was due either to be re-tendered or brought to an end in 2031. Given the scale and complexity of the arrangement, preparatory work would ordinarily commence around 3 years prior, meaning that a substantive review could be expected to begin in 2028. It was added that by 2027 the Council would be entering a significant period of consideration regarding the future of the contract, including whether it should be extended, amended or re-tendered,

and there was no reason why preparatory work could not begin during the course of next year.

- Members were keen to seek details about the implications of delaying implementation of the proposals for approximately 3 months in order to allow a more detailed review of contract performance, identified gaps and the proposed initiatives. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) stated that delaying implementation would likely result in existing standards continuing without the improvements that the interventions were intended to deliver. Whilst it was acknowledged that there was an opportunity to consider additional initiatives through the remaining funding that had not yet been allocated, it was considered that this should not prevent the immediate implementation of the measures already proposed. It was concluded that delaying the proposals would simply result in local streets remaining in their current condition for a longer period.
- A Member reminded the Committee that concerns regarding the performance of Veolia had previously been raised through scrutiny. It was noted that, in 2022, information had been requested regarding sub contractual mechanisms used to address localised underperformance and that the response received in 2023 had only contained partial year data in relation to contractor fines. The Member reiterated that contract performance had been subject to previous scrutiny and remained an area that warranted ongoing consideration.
- In referring to the concerns raised by residents, previous scrutiny discussions and performance information relating to the Veolia contract, the Chair sought clarification regarding how this information was collated, analysed and used to inform decisions on service improvements and future contract arrangements. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that previous scrutiny discussions had consistently demonstrated that Veolia was a responsive, reliable and trusted contractor that generally met the contractual KPIs. It was acknowledged that limitations existed within the contract specification and that these had been recognised when the contract was procured in 2023, following the need to reduce costs in response to financial constraints. It was further highlighted that one of the most significant weaknesses within the existing specification related to weekend cleansing. It was advised that limited weekend cleaning often resulted in cleansing teams having to undertake substantial catch-up work on Mondays, continuing through Tuesday and Wednesday due to the amount of waste and street cleanliness issues building up in Brent over weekends. Whilst cleanliness standards generally improved later in the week, the pattern regularly repeated itself over subsequent weekends. It was considered that the proposed interventions would help address this gap and improve overall street conditions. It was stressed that this issue related to limitations within the specification rather than any failure on the part of the contractor to meet its obligations.
- Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) added that information was gathered through a variety of sources, including residents, councillors, Fix

My Street reports and complaints performance reports which were considered at Cabinet meetings.

- The Committee was keen to support conducting a broader review involving councillors and members to identify more efficient ways of addressing shortcomings within the contract and to explore additional service gaps. In response, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that £3 million had been allocated to support improvements to the public realm. Of this amount, approximately £1.2 million had been identified through discussions with Veolia as funding that could be used to address specific gaps within the existing contract and deliver immediate improvements to street cleanliness. It was also advised that additional funding had been allocated to grounds maintenance services to support improvements within parks and open spaces. It was further mentioned that a proportion of the overall funding allocation remained available for allocation. Committee input was therefore welcomed regarding additional initiatives that could be supported through the remaining budget. However, it was emphasised that such discussions should not delay or compromise the implementation of the measures already proposed. It was further stressed that this current approach would not prevent a wider and more fundamental review of the contract from taking place.
- Members questioned whether, in future, ward members could be consulted whenever discussions took place regarding contract variations or similar proposals. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) reiterated that the variation of the contract had been brought forward to address recognised service gaps and respond to issues consistently raised by residents and councillors. It was advised that the measures would also help produce data that would assist future decision making as the Council moved towards consideration of arrangements beyond 2031. It was confirmed that members would be engaged in discussions regarding the remaining unallocated funding and that, as part of future planning for the contract, all members would have the opportunity to contribute regardless of political affiliation.
- As a final query, members questioned whether the funding remained available beyond the current 12-month period and whether implementation could be deferred to a later date, such as January 2027, without losing access to the funding. In response, the meeting heard that the priority should be ensuring that funding was spent wisely rather than quickly. It was advised that a persuasive case could be made for spreading expenditure over a longer period if doing so would maximise value and improve outcomes for street cleanliness.

With no further issues raised, and having had regard to the advice of the Head of Litigation and Dispute Resolution, the Committee noted that Option 3 of the proposed recommendations, namely referring the matter to Full Council on the grounds that the decision may be contrary to the Council's Budget or Policy Framework, was not applicable in the circumstances. This was because the contract was not considered contrary to the budget, given that paragraph 6.1.3 of the Full Council Budget 2026 had allocated £3 million for this type of work. In addition, the contract was not considered contrary to the Policy Framework, as Part 3, Table 3 of the Constitution set out the

matters that constituted the Policy Framework and the contract did not fall within any of those categories.

Having considered the grounds for the call-in, the response given, and legal advice provided at the meeting in outlining the basis for the decision which had been taken by the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm, the Committee (in summing up and considering the options available under the call-process), indicated they were minded to confirm rather than refer back the original individual Cabinet Member decision in relation to varying the contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia.

It was therefore RESOLVED by majority vote to confirm as a final outcome of the call-in the original decision made by the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm on 6 August 2026 in relation to approving the variation of the contract for Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Winter Maintenance Service with Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Limited to undertake additional works at the cost of £1,540,000 for a period of 12 months as detailed within the Individual Cabinet Member Decision report on which the decision was based. It was noted that this decision would therefore take immediate effect following the meeting.

Voting on the above decision was as follows: 6 in favour of confirming the original decision made and 4 in favour of referring the matter back to the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm for reconsideration.

8. Parking Provision & Policy Review

In the interests of time, the Chair proceeded directly to questions and comments from the Committee regarding the Parking Provision and Policy Review report, with the following main comments and issues discussed:

- In referring to the ongoing development and review of parking policy, members sought clarification regarding what further action would be taken to address concerns relating to inconsistent parking enforcement, including reports that Civil Enforcement Officers were reluctant to issue penalty notices where there was a perception that fines would not be paid. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) advised that a range of measures had been introduced to improve enforcement response times. These included increased deployment of mobile enforcement units using e-bicycles and e-scooters, enabling officers to attend reported issues more quickly, often within 20 minutes. In relation to concerns regarding inconsistent enforcement, it was explained that Civil Enforcement Officers would issue penalty notices where appropriate and would not have knowledge of whether a penalty charge would ultimately be paid. Members were encouraged to report any examples where comments of that nature had been made so that they could be investigated. The importance of ensuring that enforcement was undertaken fairly and consistently was emphasised and it was advised that appropriate action would be taken with the contractor against the Civil Enforcement Officer where any failings were identified. It was further advised that enforcement resources were routinely targeted towards known hotspot locations. It was additionally mentioned that there was ongoing work to explore the use of technology to

improve enforcement, including scanning technology that could assist in identifying permit holders and illegally parked vehicles. This would allow resources to be deployed more effectively to locations where enforcement action was most needed. The meeting also heard that efforts were being made to increase the frequency of patrols across the borough, with the aim of encouraging greater compliance and reducing the likelihood of motorists taking risks in relation to parking restrictions.

- Clarification was sought on how the emerging Parking Strategy would be aligned with the wider kerbside management approach and what data would be collected and used to inform future policy development. In response, Jehan Weerasinghe (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) advised that an officer-led group had been established to ensure that strategies and frameworks were appropriately aligned with other relevant policies. Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) added that the previous kerbside management scrutiny review would provide a valuable foundation for the development of future parking policies and proposals. Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) further advised that the parking review would take account of a range of existing strategies, including the long-term Transport Strategy and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. It was explained that consideration would be given to competing demands for kerbside space and the need to ensure that it was used fairly and in a manner that reflected local needs. It was also advised that extensive benchmarking would be undertaken to examine approaches adopted elsewhere in London. In relation to data collection, it was stated that information from the Council's parking systems would be analysed, including permit types and vehicle registration data, in order to support future decision making and encourage cleaner forms of transport. Members were also informed that a new map-based traffic order system was due to be introduced in autumn 2026, which would be public-facing and provide information on parking restrictions and electric vehicle charging points. It was anticipated that the system would also assist in monitoring and assessing kerbside usage.
- Noting concerns raised by businesses including concerns around the affordability of parking and the challenges faced by business owners who were required to park some distance from their stores, the Chair sought clarification on whether the Council would be open to considering measures such as free parking on high streets and business parking permits in order to support local businesses. In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) advised that more than 56,000 residents already lived within Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and paid for parking permits. Concern was expressed that allowing unrestricted free parking elsewhere could be viewed as inequitable to those residents. It was further noted that more than 50% of Brent residents did not own a vehicle and that any move towards greater free parking would have financial implications, potentially affecting the Council's ability to fund the Freedom Pass scheme and Highways initiatives. It was advised that any reduction in parking income would require alternative funding sources to be identified.

- In acknowledging the response received, the Chair highlighted the economic pressures facing local high streets and reiterated concerns raised by businesses regarding accessibility. Assurance was sought that these concerns, including the potential introduction of business permits and other support measures, would be considered as part of the parking policy review. In responding, Chris Whyte (Director Public Realm) advised that the purpose of the parking review was to ensure that all relevant issues were open for discussion and consultation. It was confirmed that matters such as business permits and parking provision to support local businesses would form part of the review process and would be considered alongside feedback before any decisions were made.
- The Chair subsequently referred to locations across the borough where significant numbers of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) had been issued and queried whether detailed analysis was undertaken to identify any issues relating to signage, road markings or the communication of parking restrictions. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) advised that enforcement data was monitored closely. Referring specifically to School Streets, it was confirmed that all signage complied with statutory requirements and that additional advance warning signs were installed where appropriate. It was advised that engagement work was undertaken with schools, parents and carers to increase awareness of restrictions and reduce the number of breaches. Weekly monitoring of enforcement activity was carried out and appeal outcomes were reviewed on a regular basis to identify any areas where improvements might be required.
- In highlighting that approximately 73,000 PCNs had reportedly been issued in relation to School Streets during the past year and whilst acknowledging that signage may comply with statutory requirements, members contended that the high volume of PCNs issued suggested that many motorists were failing to observe the restrictions. Concerns were expressed that this could undermine the objective of protecting children and give rise to perceptions that revenue generation was being prioritised over road safety. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) disputed the suggestion that School Street enforcement was intended to generate income. It was advised that compliance levels were monitored closely and that compliance generally improved over time as awareness increased. It was further explained that the borough now operated more than 31 School Streets and that the overall number of PCNs had increased partly because additional School Streets had been introduced in response to strong support from schools, parents and carers. It was reiterated that all signage complied with statutory requirements and that extensive communication and engagement activity was undertaken before restrictions came into force. However, it was acknowledged that reductions in non-compliance did not always occur as quickly as anticipated and that some motorists continued to enter restricted areas despite the signage and awareness raising efforts.
- Members noted that the report indicated that 93% of parking transactions had been undertaken using cashless methods by 2024, compared with 71% in 2018, and that the Council was therefore considering reducing the number of

operational pay and display machines. Whilst recognising the rationale for this approach, clarification was sought regarding how the needs of the remaining 7% of users, including older residents, disabled residents and those experiencing digital exclusion, would be considered. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) advised that the increasing use of cashless payment methods reflected wider changes in customer behaviour. It was noted that the Council continued to operate a number of pay and display machines, many of which were coin operated and therefore vulnerable to maintenance issues and blockages. It was further mentioned that more modern alternatives were available, including contactless payment machines, and that a range of options would be considered as part of the review. It was explained that options could include retaining a number of high use machines, replacing cash payments with contactless payments, or introducing alternative payment arrangements such as pay points located in local shops. It was stressed that all options would be carefully considered to ensure that an appropriate level of service continued to be provided.

- Concerns were highlighted regarding delivery drivers occupying parking bays intended for visitors to local high streets and asked what further enforcement powers were available to the Council to address the issue and whether this matter would form part of the wider Parking Strategy review. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) advised that delivery vehicles were permitted to use pay and display bays for loading and unloading purposes for up to 20 minutes. It was explained that the key issue was ensuring that sufficient loading and unloading places were available within town centres and commercial areas. It was advised that, as part of highway improvement schemes, the Council routinely reviewed whether additional loading bays were required and considered opportunities to convert existing spaces where shortages were identified. Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) further added that the Council regularly engaged with food delivery companies to ensure that appropriate controls were put in place regarding where delivery drivers could park. It was advised that the companies were aware of concerns relating to the impact of delivery drivers on local communities and residents.
- Further questions were raised regarding whether the parking policy review would consider differentiated parking charges based on vehicle emissions, weight and size. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) confirmed that all these factors would be considered as part of the review. It was explained that some local authorities had already begun introducing differential charges based on vehicle weight. While vehicle size could be more difficult to measure consistently, vehicle weight was readily available through existing recorded data. It was confirmed that benchmarking and best practice would form part of the review process before any proposals were developed.
- Members further requested that the parking policy review consider the potential impact of autonomous vehicles on future kerbside management and parking provision. In response, Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking)

advised that autonomous vehicle trials were already taking place in London. Confirmation was provided that consideration would be given to how autonomous vehicles might affect parking policy and kerbside management arrangements in future.

- Turning to the use of Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) in determining parking provision for new residential developments, the Chair expressed concerns that wider parking implications arising from large scale housing schemes, including the impact of visitors travelling by car, were not always fully considered. Clarification was sought on whether the parking review would take these issues into account and whether SCIL funding could be considered for parking improvements associated with major developments. In response, Jehan Weerasinghe (Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration) advised that parking standards associated with new developments were governed by the London Plan and that the Council was required to ensure that its planning policies remained consistent with those requirements. It was noted that a review of the Local Plan was underway and that consultation had already commenced. It was explained that parking provision within new developments remained subject to the policy framework established through the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) added that consideration should also be given to Brent's diverse communities and family structures when assessing parking needs and highlighted the importance of ensuring that parking arrangements should not inadvertently discourage family and friends visiting residents attending events and gatherings. Sandy Fazekas (Head of Healthy Streets and Parking) further advised that, where car free developments were approved, it was common for the Council to secure section 106 funding to support the introduction and operation of CPZs around those developments. This helped to manage parking pressures and prevent residents of car free schemes from obtaining parking permits. It was also explained that the design of CPZs typically included a combination of shared use parking bays or pay-by-phone bays to accommodate visitor parking, local shoppers and access to nearby amenities.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Parking Strategy report. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following Cabinet recommendations, and information requests identified were **AGREED**:

Recommendations to Cabinet Member

- 1) Develop, as part of the Parking Policy Review, a coordinated approach to addressing issues arising from food delivery and courier riders, as well as dockless hire bikes, including inappropriate parking, obstruction and wider public realm nuisance, through consideration of designated parking arrangements, engagement with operators and users, and alignment with wider transport, community safety and public realm policies.

- 2) Explore, as part of the Parking Policy Review, opportunities to further enhance the visibility, clarity and effectiveness of School Streets signage and supporting measures beyond statutory requirements, improving driver awareness and reducing inadvertent non-compliance.
- 3) Explore, as part of the Parking Policy Review, opportunities to strengthen the role of vehicle emissions, size and weight in future parking charges and permit arrangements, in support of the Council's environmental, transport and public realm objectives.
- 4) Explore, as part of the Parking Policy Review, how parking and permit arrangements can best support residents and businesses in town centres and local high streets, balancing access needs through appropriate resident and business permit provision whilst supporting thriving local economies.
- 5) Assess, as part of the Parking Policy Review, the potential long-term implications of autonomous vehicle technology for parking demand, kerbside activity and the allocation of road space, ensuring future parking policies remain adaptable to emerging transport trends.

Information Requests

- 1) Provide an assessment of any emerging trends relating to autonomous vehicles and their potential implications for parking demand, kerbside management and future parking policy, highlighting any significant developments for the Committee's attention.
- 2) Provide ward-level data on the availability and usage of RingGo and pay-and-display parking payment methods across the borough over the last two years, including information on measures to ensure that there are no barriers for digitally excluded residents and available data on customer enquiries, complaints or reported difficulties relating to digital-only parking payment systems and planned improvements.

Please note, whilst the Cabinet recommendations and information requests agreed as an outcome of each item were based on discussions and issues identified during the meeting, the final requests have been refined following the meeting to improve clarity and readability, while remaining consistent with the Committee's discussions and intended outcomes.

9. Value for Money in Procurement and Contracts

In the interests of time, the Chair proceeded directly to questions and comments from the Committee regarding the Value for Money in Procurement and Contracts report, with the following main comments and issues discussed:

- As an initial query, the Chair sought clarification regarding the duration of the Procurement Improvement Programme, the achievements delivered since its commencement and whether any efficiencies, savings or additional value had

been demonstrated as a result of the work undertaken. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) advised that the Procurement Improvement Programme had commenced in May/June 2025 and had originally been established as a 24-month programme. However, it had subsequently been decided to conclude the programme and transition the remaining development priorities into usual business activity over the following 12 months. It was explained that one of the main recommendations arising from the procurement review that came before the programme had been the need to strengthen procurement capacity and expertise. It was reported that all vacancies within the Procurement Team had now been filled, following a prolonged period during which vacancy levels had exceeded 50% and reliance had been placed on agency staff. The successful recruitment of permanent staff, including a permanent Head of Procurement, had improved capacity, stability and expertise within the service, and no newly recruited staff had subsequently left the organisation. The meeting heard that a further area of focus had involved strengthening relationships between the corporate procurement function and service areas in order to support more effective procurement planning and improve contract management arrangements across the Council. It was advised that progress had also been achieved through the Council's partnership with Oxygen Finance. Increased supplier participation had contributed to income generation, with income returned to the Council increasing to around £200,000 during the first year. It was added that additional benefits had been realised within areas such as Adult Social Care and printing contracts, where increased capacity had enabled greater support to be provided to services.

- The Chair subsequently questioned whether the Procurement Improvement Programme had delivered improvements in relation to supplier engagement. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) highlighted that the first 12 months had largely focused on recruitment, service capacity and establishing frameworks, tools and resources. It was noted that progress had also been made in updating the Council's Procurement Strategy and strengthening contract management arrangements. Alongside these improvements, work had commenced to increase engagement with local suppliers and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) through collaboration with Economic Development teams. The Committee were informed that an early market engagement event had recently been held which had been well attended and had provided an opportunity to establish relationships, and outline requirements at an early stage.
- The Chair sought details regarding the number of contracts managed by the Council, to which Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) confirmed that approximately 2,500 contracts had been identified across the organisation.
- The Chair proposed that the Procurement Team consider making greater use of social media and other digital communication channels to promote procurement opportunities to local businesses. This would include raising awareness of how businesses could register their interest, offer services and access opportunities to bid for Council contracts. It was requested that an

update on progress and outcomes be reported back to the Committee within 3 to 6 months. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) advised that this work had already commenced. He highlighted recent improvements to procurement websites and ongoing efforts to encourage local businesses to register as potential suppliers. It was emphasised that proactive engagement with local businesses formed a key element of the Procurement Strategy and that increased staffing capacity had strengthened the Council's ability to undertake this work. It was also advised that the Council remained committed to working with larger suppliers to encourage local employment opportunities and strengthen local supply chains.

At this stage of the meeting, the Committee agreed to apply the guillotine procedure under Standing Order 62(c) in order to extend the meeting by 30 minutes and allow sufficient time for consideration of the item and the remaining business on the agenda.

- Considering the quarterly reporting arrangements for platinum contracts, members queried whether the information received resulted in changes to the management of those contracts. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) advised that a revised approach to managing platinum contracts had recently been introduced in order to strengthen oversight, assurance, consistency and visibility of reporting. It was explained that the Procurement Team worked with service-based contract managers to undertake reviews of platinum contracts every 6 months, using reporting templates. It was further mentioned that the reports were reviewed by the Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board, which provided scrutiny before reports were escalated to the Council's Assurance Board. It was confirmed that where underperformance or opportunities for improvement were identified, action would be monitored as part of the contract management approach. It was further advised that a risk-based and proportionate approach to contract management was being developed across the organisation, recognising that different contract types required different levels of oversight. The Council's contract management arrangements remained devolved, with responsibility sitting primarily within service areas, whilst the corporate procurement function provided guidance, tools, templates and support to help contract managers monitor supplier performance effectively. Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) additionally noted that a Contract Management Forum acting as a Community of Practice had been established to enable contract managers from across services to share experiences, learn from one another and promote a consistent approach to contract management. Further events were planned to strengthen learning and embed good practice across the organisation.
- Further clarification was sought regarding the Council's approach to environmental sustainability and the circular economy within procurement. In response, Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) advised that sustainability formed a component of every procurement exercise, with 5% allocated to sustainability considerations. It was noted that a separate policy governed this area and that the policy would be reviewed and refreshed in the coming months. It was explained that principles around the circular economy sat within the

Social Value Statement. It was stated that sustainability criteria could be weighted more heavily where appropriate to the nature of a particular procurement. It was confirmed that, as a minimum, contracts valued at over £100,000 included a 5% sustainability weighting. In relation to environmental considerations, Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) advised that procurement exercises regularly included questions regarding matters such as vehicle emissions, use of electric vehicles and recycling arrangements, where relevant to the service being procured. It was explained that sustainability requirements were developed in conjunction with service areas to ensure that the criteria reflected the specific nature and needs of each procurement.

- Members proposed a recommendation that case studies be provided to the Committee, demonstrating examples of collaborative working between departments, including the development and delivery of projects supported through funding opportunities. The Committee noted that case studies could be shared with the Committee, following the meeting.
- In response to a recommendation from the Chair that the contract database currently under development be shared with the Committee, including details relating to contracts awarded to Brent local suppliers, associated social value commitments, monitoring arrangements and a breakdown by Directorate, Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) advised that the Procurement Improvement Review had identified the need for a contract database. It was explained that contract information had previously been held across a number of Excel spreadsheets and that a new database had now been commissioned, with data from the various spreadsheets currently being uploaded. Additional fields had been incorporated to enable contracts to be filtered by Brent local suppliers and by social value commitments requiring monitoring. It was advised that the completed dashboard would provide information relating to approximately 2,500 contracts and would also include a breakdown by Directorate. The Committee noted that this information would be shared once available.

Responding to the recommendation from the Chair, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council and deputising for Cabinet Member for Cleaner Streets, Transport & Public Realm) highlighted that the Council's Open Data Portal provided quarterly information on council expenditure over £500. It was stated that only information relating to individuals involved in fostering and adoption arrangements was redacted. It was further confirmed that information on how to access the Council's Open Data Portal would be provided to the Committee, following the meeting.

- In considering a question regarding the management of bribery and corruption risks during procurement and contract management processes, Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy) advised that mandatory training on bribery, fraud and corruption formed part of the Council's induction process. It was explained that risks and conflicts of interest relating to providers were actively managed and that appropriate safeguards were embedded within moderation processes involving the relevant teams. Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) added that, from a procurement perspective, all

members of the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS), representing approximately 75% of the team, undertook an annual ethical procurement assessment, which exceeded the standard training requirements applicable across the Council.

- In response to a question regarding the monitoring of social value commitments within major contracts and the consideration to require suppliers to report consistently on the outcomes for Brent residents, Brent businesses, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) advised that the Council had recently updated its social value guidance and was working with a network of social value champions possessing specialist knowledge within their respective service areas, including employment and skills, climate change and sustainability. It was stated that the Council was committed to strengthening the monitoring of social value delivery and was embedding this approach within strategic contract reports, contract management requirements and Procurement Strategy. It was further advised that a Social Value Annual report would be developed in 2026/27, which would include supplier case studies and data relating to expenditure, support for the local economy and engagement with SMEs. As an example of social value outcomes, the work of Citizens Advice Bureau was highlighted, which had trained 72 local volunteers during the previous year. Of those volunteers, 65% had progressed into permanent employment. It was also noted that the organisation provided a number of apprenticeships, with more than 70% taken up by Brent residents.
- As a final query, members sought details regarding the assessment of insourcing opportunities. In responding, Melissa Sage (Head of Procurement) advised that consideration of whether a service could be insourced formed part of the business case developed jointly with service areas prior to the commencement of any tendering exercise. It was explained that, once the tendering process had commenced, the procurement approach could not be altered. There was no standard insourcing evaluation framework applied across all contracts as the extent of the assessment undertaken depended on the nature of the service being considered.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the Value for Money in Procurement and Contracts report. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, the following suggestions for improvement and information requests identified were **AGREED**:

Suggestions for Improvement

- 1) Strengthen communications and engagement around forthcoming procurement opportunities, including the development of shareable content and resources that can be used by Council services and local councillors to raise awareness among local businesses of opportunities to become Council suppliers.

Information Requests

- 1) Provide a series of case studies demonstrating how the Council has responded to the LGA corporate peer review's emphasis on curiosity and innovation through its procurement activity, including examples of initiatives supported or enabled through the Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP).
- 2) Provide an overview of the data structure within the new contract management system, including the categories, tabs, data fields and reporting information that will be captured, to enable the Committee to understand the scope of data collection and identify whether any additional information would support effective contract oversight and scrutiny.

Please note, whilst the suggestions for improvement and information requests agreed as an outcome of each item were based on discussions and issues identified during the meeting, the final requests have been refined following the meeting to improve clarity and readability, while remaining consistent with the Committee's discussions and intended outcomes.

10. Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker

In the interests of time, the Chair proceeded directly to questions and comments from the Committee regarding the Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker report, with the following main comments and issues discussed:

- The Chair referred to a longstanding request from the Committee for information relating to the Council's commissioned services, including the number of commissioned services, the income generated through those arrangements and the relationship between that income and the delivery of thematic savings. Concern was expressed that, despite previous requests, the information had not yet been provided in the agreed format. Clarification was therefore sought regarding the reasons for the delay, when the information would be available and whether a commitment could be given to provide the information in the format originally requested. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement) advised that the requested data was not available in the format sought by the Committee and emphasised the need to work more closely with the Chair and Committee regarding future requests. A continued commitment to providing the information requested was expressed. Focusing on the primary outstanding request relating to income generating contracts, particularly concessionary contracts, it was advised that work was underway through category managers and the Council's new contract management system to capture the relevant information. Whilst the financial information remained a work in progress, it was confirmed that an initial overview of the Council's concessionary contracts could be provided.
- The Chair sought further clarification regarding how thematic savings proposals had been developed and agreed if the underlying financial information relating to contract values was not yet readily available. In response, Rhodri Rowlands (Director of Strategic Commissioning Capacity Building and Engagement)

explained that procurement officers worked with service areas to identify contracts where opportunities existed either to reduce costs or review specifications in order to find efficiencies. It was added that the introduction of the new contract management platform would provide a more comprehensive and strategic overview of the Council's procurement pipeline, including details of contract renewal dates and upcoming procurement activity. This would enable a more targeted and proactive approach to identifying opportunities for cost avoidance, efficiencies and savings.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions in relation to the Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker report.

The Committee agreed to note the progress of the previous recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and information requests of the Committee.

11. Any other urgent business

The opportunity was taken by a member of the Committee to raise a matter on behalf of Councillor Dar. It was stated that his absence from the meeting had arisen as a result of a genuine and inadvertent communication failure and that he had not, in any way, been neglecting his duties.

The meeting closed at 9.33 pm.

COUNCILLOR ANUP PATEL
Chair