



Scrutiny Committee  
30 April 2015

**Report from Operational Director  
Community Services**

For Information

**Sustainability**

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report provides Scrutiny Members with a summary of the work undertaken across key service areas to address the issue of sustainability.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 To note the progress that is being made with respect to these areas of work.

**3.0 Detail**

Sustainability is a key factor in the development and provision of all our services, particularly those universal services that are customer facing and which have an impact on the look, feel and condition of our public spaces. The council no longer has a single co-ordinating team or strategy with respect to sustainability. Work to achieve a more sustainable Brent sits largely with separate service areas who manage their own operations to achieve greener outcomes. This report will consider five key areas:

- Transport and Travel
- Air Quality
- In-house Carbon Management
- Street Lighting and Parking
- Public Realm and Waste
- Parks and Biodiversity

**Transport and Travel**

3.1 The council promotes a variety of sustainable transport initiatives to support all transport users in making smarter travel choices. The use of car clubs in Brent has increased over the past few years and regular meetings are held with the two car club operators in Brent (Zipcar and City Car) to discuss opportunities to further increase the use. The council has electric vehicle charging points in the borough and is considering joining the Source London

contract which will benefit electric vehicle drivers across London as all charging points will be compatible.

- 3.2 The council encourages everyone living, working or studying in Brent to try cycling. We offer free cycle training to schools, groups and individuals and have funding to install cycle parking on streets and on residential estates. We also organise Safe Urban Driving courses, cyclist awareness training for HGV drivers.
- 3.3 The council's current active travel project incorporates many activities to inspire more people to participate in cycling and walking activities, these include cycling events for community and faith groups, a feasibility study for a cycle hub and/or cycle hire scheme, promotional materials and signs for walking routes.
- 3.4 The council supports schools and businesses with their travel plans and encourages them all to promote sustainable travel to and from work/school and for business travel. WestTrans provide support with the monitoring of work place travel plans and a toolkit is currently being developed as part of the active travel project to signpost businesses to assistance and the services that are available to promote sustainable travel. In addition, personal travel planning training will be made available for those businesses with the highest potential for modal shift.
- 3.5 School travel plan support is provided by the Safety and Travel Planning Team and is assessed using Transport for London's (TfL's) STARS accreditation scheme. All schools are encouraged to develop a travel plan and to participate in the related activities including WoW (walk to school once a week), cycle training and park and stride.
- 3.6 The council supports the use of public transport (bus and rail) throughout the borough by lobbying TfL and other operators for service and infrastructure improvements, both in response to complaints by residents and proactively to support regeneration across the borough.

### **Air Quality**

- 3.7 Brent has levels of air pollution that are occasionally in breach of National Air Quality Standards<sup>1</sup>. The pollutants of concern are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and P<sub>2.5</sub>). Many parts of the UK do not meet the National Air Quality Standard set for NO<sub>2</sub>, some do not meet this for PM<sub>10</sub>.
  - 3.8 Both pollutants primarily come from products of combustion such as burning of fuel for energy and to power vehicles. Vehicle exhausts, boilers and power plants are significant contributors to local pollutant emissions.
  - 3.9 Because particulate matter is very fine it can travel great distances, so there will be sources outside of Brent that have an impact on the air we breathe. Particulate Matter is also a production of friction, and comes from tyres, brake linings and waste transfer sites.
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- 3.10 We measure PM10 and PM 2.5, 24 hours a day with monitoring stations in Harlesden, Stonebridge, and Neasden. We also have a network of 27 diffusion tubes measuring levels of NO2 across the borough.
- 3.11 The Environmental Act 2005 requires local authorities to declare Air Quality Management Area(s) (AQMA) for any part of the borough in which it appears that air quality standards are not being met.
- 3.12 Brent first declared AQMAs in 2001 for the pollutants nitrogen dioxide and particulates. The AQMA areas were extended in 2006 and now broadly encompass about two-thirds of the borough - everywhere except areas in the north of the borough that are not near a major road and a small area in the far eastern fringes of the borough, including part of Northwick Park and Sudbury wards.
- 3.13 Recent monitoring shows NO2 continues to exceed the standard and AQMA designation is still required.
- 3.14 The Air Quality Action Plan is the council's public account of the state of air quality in the borough and a five year plan for improvement - or at least to stop further deterioration. The existing plan is currently being reviewed and proposals for an updated plan will be presented to Cabinet in Autumn 2015.
- 3.15 Since the last Air Quality Action Plan scientific understanding of air quality has significantly improved. We now better understand the impact on health of NO2 and particulate matter, and also better understand the types of places and activities that expose people to pollution.
- 3.16 These changes in scientific understanding are helping us to develop a revised Air Quality Action Plan that will not just try to reduce emissions of pollutants, but also help people and communities to understand how they can reduce the risk of exposure to protect their health. Diesel exhaust has become a particular concern and in 2012 was classified as a known carcinogen. The new Air Quality Action Plan is also likely to have a greater focus on seeking to drive down the use of diesel as a fuel for vehicles.

### **Carbon Management**

- 3.17 The Council's Carbon Management Programme aims to reduce CO2 emissions from the operational estate (excluding schools, housing and commercial properties) by 15 per cent over a 4 year period from 2014/5 to 2017/8.
- 3.18 In 2013/4, half of these emissions came from buildings, just under half (44 per cent) from street lighting with a further 6 per cent from transport (pool vehicles and mileage claims). The annual energy spend relating to this scope is £3.5 million with a further £317,000 on CRC carbon tax.
- 3.19 Progress is good and when the proposed project to fit LED technology to Brent's street lights is delivered by 2018, it is likely that the council will exceed the target. The majority of the savings will come from the disposal of sites vacated by the consolidation of staff into the Civic Centre. Further financial and environmental savings could be secured through work to optimise the operation of the Civic Centre which is currently estimated to account for 17

per cent of CO2 from the programme scope ( 38 per cent of the CO2 from the buildings scope). Improvement here is necessary if the council intends to seek BREEAM in Use accreditation.

### **Street Lighting and Parking**

- 3.20 On 14th April 2015, the Cabinet endorsed the replacement of the borough's existing street lamps with modern Light Emitting Diode (LED) luminaires. The decision also agreed investment in a Central Management System (CMS), seeking to 'future proof' the LED investment.
- 3.21 Aside from the long-term savings in energy costs, a significant reduction in carbon emissions also forms a key part of the business case. The project would make a one-third contribution of at least 5% towards the Council's overall target of a 15% reduction in carbon emissions before March 2018. It is hoped that the additional investment in CMS technology will enable an even more ambitious target to be set.
- 3.22 The report also proposes that the council develop a new lighting strategy, specifically facilitated by the deployment of CMS technology, which seeks further energy and carbon savings whilst meeting the long-term lighting needs of the changing borough.
- 3.23 On 11th August 2014, the Council introduced a revised schedule of residents' parking permit charges. These have been designed to 'nudge' residents towards lower emission vehicles. Vehicles whose emissions fall into the lowest band qualify for free permits. Permit costs rise steadily in proportion to carbon emissions, peaking at £218 p.a. for vehicles producing the highest level of emissions. In addition, the costs of permits for second and third vehicles are more expensive in each band than the cost of a permit for a single vehicle.

### **Public Realm and Waste**

- 3.24 Through Public Realm Contract, we are committed to achieving five key objectives with respect to sustainability:
1. To record data that establishes the carbon footprint of our public realm services.
  2. To procure our public realm services in a way that gives proper consideration to sustainability and environmental impact.
  3. To ensure our vehicle movements are organised as efficiently as possible to minimise fuel use and CO2 emissions.
  4. To reduce carbon emissions from our grounds maintenance operations by better organising our grass mowing rounds to reduce fuel use and emissions.
  5. To consider new and innovative equipment through the life of the Public Realm that improves sustainability. All means of reducing fuel consumption and using cleaner fuels in vehicles will be considered.
- 3.25 Effective and sustainable waste management is the key to improving our public realm. In 2011 the government published its Review of Waste Policy in England. This outlined the need for better waste management and resource efficiency across local authority areas. The emphasis of the review was on

councils facilitating voluntary behaviour change so that more environmentally sustainable behaviour is an easy lifestyle choice for everyone.

- 3.26 Supporting the process of maximising sustainability in the delivery of waste services is a cornerstone the recent legislative revision of the Waste Framework Directive 2011. This requires all waste collectors to undertake an analysis of their services in relation to the collection of four key materials; paper, glass, plastic and metal. Analysis is required to identify if these materials are being processed in accordance with the waste hierarchy and are producing materials which are of the highest quality and quantity for end re-processors. We have undertaken our own assessment and an evaluation of our compliance and that will support the waste collection activities set out in Public Realm Contract. These will be revised whenever these services are changed. It is the aim of this authority to process materials as near to the top of the waste hierarchy as possible, which means ensuring that prevention of waste is prioritised, followed by a commitment to reuse and then recycle as much household waste as possible.
- 3.27 Our Household Waste Collection Strategy changed the focus of our waste management to rethinking our attitudes towards waste and emphasising the importance of creating less waste. We are working towards ensuring that as a community we embrace the concept of One Planet Living so that the damaging impacts of waste management on climate change are minimised. It also clearly describes how successful waste management in Brent can only be achieved through shared responsibility, partnership working and an absolute commitment to achieving better compliance with respect to the national waste hierarchy.
- 3.28 The purpose of the waste hierarchy is to establish the best possible solution for the management of waste. The prevention of waste is the most effective method. Responsibility for this mainly rests with those who manufacture goods, particularly in creating less packaging for products in the first instance. However a responsibility firmly sits with consumers to purchase fewer products, to also look at the packaging that covers the items that they buy and to make better-informed purchasing choices generally.
- 3.29 The majority of materials that are collected sustainably within Brent fall within the third band of the waste hierarchy, i.e. in the 'recycling' category.
- 3.30 Two of the four main Public Realm Contract targets relate directly to improved sustainability:
1. **Residual Waste tonnages**  
The Contract has annual residual waste disposal targets. If the Contractor doesn't achieve the reductions in tonnes of residual waste they will pay the full disposal costs for every tonne above their target. If the contractor beats their target, Brent will share any saving. This incentivises the contractor to implement the interventions that are needed to divert waste from landfill.
  2. **Carbon Emission Reduction**  
A deduction of £15 will be made for each tonne of carbon emitted above the contract target. If they exceed their targets, the contractor will receive an incentive payment.

## **Parks and Biodiversity**

- 3.30 There are many parks in Brent and more than 1,000 acres of public open space including Fryent Country Park. We design, build, and maintain all the parks and their features and consult on nature conservation.
- 3.31 It is generally accepted that good quality parks and open spaces are important for enhancing the quality of urban life. Quality green spaces have been shown to support the local economy, enhance physical and mental health, benefit children and young people, reduce crime and fear of crime, support social cohesion, aid movement between spaces, and protect biodiversity and the environment (ODPM, 2005).
- 3.32 The Sustainable Communities Strategy for Brent and our Corporate Strategy both identify the parks in the borough as vital assets contributing to the health, wellbeing and overall quality of life of people living, working or studying in the borough. As part of the Council's vision for Brent as green place", our Corporate Strategy seeks to:
- Maintain the quality of parks and open spaces and upgrade the current range of facilities available within them, and
  - Develop a programme of green activities such as tree planting, developing pocket parks" and other open spaces to improve access to open space for residents
- 3.33 Green spaces are known to improve local biodiversity. They are vitally important in helping us adapt to climate change through the planting and conservation of trees that provide shade from the sun. Proper consideration must be given to the type of planting and of our maintenance regimes so that we conserve water and provide floodplains. We seek to use methods that increase areas of meadows and wild flowers and use machinery with reduced carbon emissions. We will also prioritise the composting of our park waste.
- 3.34 The three cemeteries in Brent and both our burial grounds are recognised by the GLA as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Sensitive grounds maintenance work is undertaken in the care of our cemeteries. We are committed to employing greener grounds maintenance practices in our parks and our cemeteries. This includes minimising the use of herbicides/pesticides, recycling topsoil and old memorials, composting green waste and actively managing plant life and wildlife to maximise biodiversity.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The main financial benefits arise from reduced energy costs with respect to street lighting improvements and also from the commitment from Veolia through the Public Realm contract to reduce the volume and cost of waste disposal to landfill.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications

**6.0 Diversity Implications**

6.1 There are no specific diversity implications

**7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

7.1 There are no staffing implications.

**Contact Officers**

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