

Brent's Improvement and Efficiency Action Plan 2010-2014



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Leader's foreword

A year ago my Administration set out how it would work with our staff to improve the council in our Improvement and Efficiency Strategy. That document was a call to action to both improve and continue to deliver excellent services for our residents in difficult economic times.

The action plan contained in this document is a critical next step in this process. It lays the foundation for exactly how we propose to deliver improved, more efficient services in the future.

It has been a turbulent year and it is certain there will be challenges ahead for the public sector. My Administration will not allow an ill-prepared council to jeopardise services to residents. This is why we have charged staff with creating an innovative, customer focused organisation which is ready for the future. I am confident that every member of staff will take up this challenge.

My elected colleagues and I remain committed to leading this programme of action to secure vital services for residents, to provide value for money and to create a vibrant, stable borough, regardless of the economic situation nationally.



Cllr Paul Lorber
Leader, Brent Council



“ This is why we have charged staff with creating an innovative, customer focused organisation which is ready for the future.”

Cllr Paul Lorber, Leader, Brent Council

Chief Executive's introduction

This bold and ambitious action plan sets out the next steps in Brent Council's four year Improvement and Efficiency Strategy. The need for radical change is clear and has been widely recognised within the organisation. Becoming a more efficient, effective and streamlined authority is now an absolute imperative.

This action plan will undoubtedly stretch the whole organisation – members, managers and staff. It will require us to 'think outside of the box' and to embrace some very significant changes in the way we work. While change is never easy it is now unavoidable if we are to protect frontline jobs and vital services to the people of Brent.

The financial constraints facing local government are already acute and likely to become more challenging in the months and years ahead. We have no choice but to face the facts and adjust to this new reality. My strong preference is for us to become more efficient and effective in the way we do business rather than imposing year-on-year cuts in our service budgets and staffing levels.

By 2014 we may well have become a slimmer organisation but we will also have become a more business-like and modern local authority with radically improved ways of working and a new civic centre offering much-improved facilities for staff and customers alike. This action plan provides a road map for the journey that lies ahead.

I see this plan as an intelligent and planned response by the council to the turbulent and unpredictable financial climate in which we now find ourselves. While I know that change can be unsettling for many people, I think we can cushion the impact on staff and residents alike by adapting to change in a measured and planned way.

The various changes outlined in this plan will therefore be introduced in an open and co-ordinated way and in full consultation with staff and other important stakeholders.



Gareth Daniel
Chief Executive, Brent Council



"I see this plan as an intelligent and planned response by the council to the turbulent and unpredictable financial climate in which we now find ourselves."

Gareth Daniel, Chief Executive, Brent Council

Part 1 – Context and principles

The political and financial context

The world is changing and Brent Council needs to change with it. We know for certain that the council will be under extreme financial pressure in future years and it is our job as council officers to manage our way through the inevitable challenges. If we are to continue the progress that has been made in recent years, we will need active managers and staff who each help to shape the organisation's destiny. By 2014 we will be a very different authority with a new civic centre and widespread adoption of new ways of working. Brent will be an exciting and rewarding place in which to work with strong leadership, motivated staff and a local community that recognises the real progress that has been made.

Public borrowing is likely to hit £200 billion in 2009/10 with public debt reaching nearly 79 per cent of gross domestic product. To eliminate this national budget deficit, both tax increases and a real public spending cut of at least two per cent will be required for the next five years. Current government plans assume a three year freeze after 2011 but, with pressures on central government budgets from falling tax revenues and increases in social security payments, it is likely that reductions in other areas of expenditure could reach five per cent or more.

The consequences of the national financial context upon us as a provider of local public services are profound and long-term. The local impact of the recession has already seen the reduction of income to the council from fees and interest payments as well as significant increases in demand for services from our most vulnerable residents and communities.

The national formula for grant distribution classifies Brent as a 'floor' authority making it only eligible for the lowest percentage increase in resources. It is likely that Brent will remain a floor authority for the calculation of formula grant for at least the period of the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) up to 2014. Therefore our financial forecasts and planning for the next four years are based on the assumption of a zero per cent increase in the level of central government funding being available to the council.

At the same time as these reductions in public resources are unavoidable, the service pressures on all local authorities are continuing to rise. Within Brent, our diverse population is growing and some areas already experience high levels of economic deprivation and social exclusion. Government legislation has placed additional duties and responsibilities upon local authorities, many of which are not funded to an appropriate level. The widespread raising of customer expectations regarding the quality and availability of public services is reflected in a general decline in satisfaction levels.

While this financial context will place severe pressures on us as an organisation, it is not an excuse to reduce our ambitions for the borough or our service standards. During this economic downturn, many of our most vulnerable residents will become dependant upon council services for sustaining their quality of life. Elected members are committed to delivering their ambitious plans for Brent and responding positively to the needs and aspirations of local people. This includes making the most efficient and effective use of our resources and continuing to improve performance across a broad range of public services. Delivering value for money from existing resources and minimal increases in council tax levels will be a key political objective over the coming four years and one on which we will be judged by both central government and local residents.

In the light of these financial and political factors, forecasts for the likely scale of the efficiency savings the council will be required to deliver are a minimum of £53.7 million by the end of the financial year 2013/14.

The table following provides a graphic illustration of how these efficiency savings will look over the next few years.

Table 1 – The need for savings 2010 - 2014

	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m
Annual saving	14.1	13.1	13.0	13.5
Cumulative saving	14.1	27.2	40.2	53.7

These savings targets are the minimum required to achieve a balanced budget and could well be increased if central government funding is reduced further. The level of cost reduction required means activity will need to be delivered in a planned and integrated way. Any desirable growth in priority services will need to be funded by efficiency savings above this level to create headroom to redirect resources.

The scale of the strategic financial challenge produced by this combination of national and local factors is unprecedented. It will not be successfully addressed by relying on incremental or short-term savings packages, use of one-off monies or a retreat to silo-based models of service provision. We need to re-think fundamentally the way in which we structure and deliver many of our functions focusing on the elimination of duplication, fragmentation and waste. Members are committed to preserving the quality of frontline services and taking radical and difficult decisions when necessary to achieve these aims within the framework set out in our agreed Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

Our budget strategy is one that is strategic and long-term. It will focus on an integrated One Council approach to creating a shared, streamlined business infrastructure for the council, implementing customer focused service models and making maximum use of ICT to aid both service delivery and customer access.

While our savings targets are profiled across the four years of the strategy and are linked to the individual projects and strands set out within this action plan, this should clearly not limit our ability to take action earlier or at a local level to secure better value for money. Efficiency savings made in the early years of the action plan will provide a much greater, long-term benefit and all managers should be actively seeking more cost effective ways of delivering their service on a daily basis.

Conversely, failure to deliver the profiled savings within the financial year or budget overspends that occur within the year will have a profoundly negative impact on the

financial well being of the council and will inevitably increase the level of overall savings required over the period up to 2014. It is the responsibility of all Brent managers to ensure sound stewardship of the council's resources as well as participating in the strategic transformation necessary to secure the long-term financial standing of the council.

The need for efficiency and improvement

Local government faces a dual challenge over the next four years as we try to reconcile the twin demands of serious financial constraint with rising customer expectations, and the need to continue our, improvement journey. The full impact of the recession and its effect on public finances will become much clearer after the General Election when a new CSR will spell out the requirements of the new government. But we cannot wait till then to plan our response – we are producing this plan now so that Brent Council is better able to navigate its way through the new demands that will inevitably be placed on local government as a whole in 2010 and beyond.

For council officers our task over the next four years is clear. We must effectively deliver the balanced budgets that we are legally obliged to prepare. In practice this could mean we need to manage real term reductions of ten per cent or more in council spending over the life of this plan. Our current £50 million savings projection equates to a real term reduction of about seven per cent but this should very much be seen as a minimum figure which is likely to rise once the detailed spending plans of the new government are announced. In any event, we need to target substantially more than £50 million savings if we are to create the headroom we will need to accommodate new service needs, a growing population and rising costs.

At the same time, we cannot and must not use the admittedly difficult financial climate as an excuse for

abandoning the pursuit of service improvement and service excellence. Brent Council has come a long way over the last decade but we know that there are still many areas where we need to improve our practice and secure better performance outcomes. Over the life of this plan, we therefore expect all of Brent's key performance indicators to move into the upper two quartiles and for us to have no key performance indicators in the lower two quartiles. The financial situation simply reinforces the case for thinking more radically about the way we deliver services and being open to new ways of managing the council's business. Whilst undoubtedly a challenge, we believe that this is a prospect that should excite and motivate Brent managers and staff.

Let us also not forget that by 2013 Brent Council will have vacated at least 12 of its current administrative buildings and re-located around two-thirds of its non-schools workforce into a purpose built civic centre in the heart of the Wembley regeneration area. This is of course a massive project in itself but it is also one which affords us the opportunity to make once-in-a-lifetime changes in the way we work as an organisation. In particular it enables us to consider very different ways of working which will help us to squeeze out waste, duplication and inefficiency on a large scale but without any significant detriment to front line service delivery. Our goal must be to make Brent truly a 'One Council' operation where continuous service improvement goes hand-in-hand with tight control of diminishing budgets.

Why we need a four year plan

The scale of the financial challenge facing local government will require sustained action by all councils if they are to stay within their budgets. There is always a range of ways in which we might respond to this challenge. At one extreme, we could adopt a series of disconnected short term measures and hope that, when aggregated, they deliver the substantial savings that we know will be required. Equally, we could allocate savings targets to individual departments and let them just get on with delivering the necessary reductions in the traditional way. Or we could focus exclusively on next year's budget and keep our fingers crossed that, with that sorted, all will be well in the medium term. All of these responses are possible but none of them would produce the planned and ambitious transformational change that is the key to securing both efficiency and improvement.

The period between 2010-14 will in all probability overlap with the 'normal' four year term of the next government at national level. It will also coincide with the four year electoral cycle in London with borough elections taking place in May 2010 followed by further elections in May 2014. With a new national government in place, we know there will be a new three year CSR which will cover the period 2011-14. There is also a very strong likelihood of some dramatic early announcements by the new government even before the CSR process has run its course. For all these reasons, it makes good sense to plan for the full four year period between 2010 and 2014 whilst ensuring that we maximise 'quick wins' over the next 12-18 months and move forward all of our most strategically significant change programmes where design and delivery complexity means extended lead-in times before the full benefits can be realised.

Our approach over the next four years is based on a determination that changes will be introduced in a planned, intelligent and rational way which realistically recognise the scale and complexity of the change programme on which we have already embarked. We also need to ensure that we bring all of our people with us and that we take rapid steps to strengthen the council's existing programme and project management capacity where we know we have some current limitations. All the evidence suggests that this more measured and planned approach will work best for us - it is simply not possible to make major transformational changes over short time scales and expect them to take firm root. With this plan, we effectively set out a road map that will take us from where we are now to where we need to be in 2014.

As with any plan, we will need to be flexible and be prepared to make further changes as and when circumstances dictate. As projects are delivered, new projects can replace them. Where targets face obstacles or experience slippage, decisive action will need to be taken to get back on course. And as our own internal capacity increases we will be able to 'raise the bar' so that new ambitions are set and achieved. However, nobody should expect this or any other plan to set out in minute detail what needs to be done and by whom. That is the role of project development and project management and is a role where all our managers will need to give a strong personal lead. This plan sets the broad framework for our improvement and efficiency programme but it is not and cannot be a substitute for managerial initiative and creative local action to achieve our high level goals.

Our approach to managing change

The introduction of large scale change is never straightforward and it will inevitably cause some personal and professional anxieties for many staff. To a degree this is probably unavoidable. However it is still important that we seek to minimise uncertainty and give our managers and staff the confidence that our programme is deliverable without inflicting serious harm on council services or the career prospects of our workforce. Brent Council has been on an improvement trajectory for many years now and it is vital that this positive momentum is maintained notwithstanding the very real financial challenges that we face.

The five key features of our approach to change will be:

- 1. Strong and interventionist leadership** – the delivery of this ambitious programme will require strong leadership from elected members, from the Corporate Management Team (CMT), from departmental management teams (DMTs) and from line managers at every level within the organisation. This means a willingness to acknowledge uncomfortable realities and to take decisive action whenever and wherever necessary. Difficult choices must not be ducked and firm action must be taken to deal with obstruction or under-performance.
- 2. Effective programme and project management** – we will need to enhance our programme and project management capacity, and include proposals later in this plan for doing precisely that. While we undoubtedly have many skilled and motivated staff in Brent, project management skills are unevenly distributed. In addition, the sheer number and complexity of projects to be delivered will itself increase the need for experienced and well-trained managers from both inside and outside the organisation.
- 3. Evidence based decision-making** – the development of this change programme will be shaped by a respect for facts, the rational and intelligent assessment of issues and options and an open-minded approach to learning from best practice elsewhere. All change produces vested interests keen to defend their territory and privileges so we must be ready and willing to acknowledge and confront this reality. Our project

governance arrangements will ensure that progress is monitored effectively and issues are analysed objectively.

- 4. An inclusive and open change process** – no part of the organisation will be untouched by this change programme and everyone's contribution will be actively and enthusiastically welcomed. Our approach must be inclusive, non-hierarchical and team-based with high levels of mutuality and openness at all stages of the change process. Council staff have huge reservoirs of talent and knowledge and we will need to draw heavily on these over the next four years.
- 5. A planned and people-focused approach** – delivering important public services is a labour intensive activity which impacts on people in every section of society. As our change programme rolls forward, we must remain in touch at all times with our core business values including respect for diversity and valuing and empowering our staff. Where hard choices need to be made, we will aim to do so in a measured and humane way that minimises any consequential hardship to service users and staff alike.

While many people will have some lingering concerns about this change programme it is important that nobody forgets that some sort of change is inescapable over the next four years. The status quo is simply not an option nor can we just close our eyes to the financial facts. Brent Council is certainly not alone in contemplating large scale change and major re-design of some key services. Many councils and other public bodies are engaged in similar thinking and the scale of savings target that we have set ourselves is not out of line with the targets now being set by other local authorities all over the country. Others may hark back to our traditional 'salami slicing' approach to making budget reductions but that approach is explicitly rejected in this plan as being ineffective and inadequate to the scale of the challenge facing us.

What we have agreed so far

The Improvement and Efficiency Strategy launched in 2008 outlined three themes which defined the strategic framework to drive service improvement while creating a more efficient use of our resources.

These are:

■ **One Council**

Creating a council that looks, feels and acts like one single cohesive organisation with clearly articulated goals and objectives. The One Council theme focuses on developing the organisational infrastructure that supports high performance covering finance, ICT, HR, business planning, contract management, procurement, corporate standards and communication. It is a means of squeezing out avoidable costs, reducing bureaucracy and inconsistency and simplifying our business processes

■ **Raising performance and maximising efficiency**

This focuses on raising performance standards across all areas of council activity through the fundamental re-evaluation of our current service delivery models, a transformational approach to driving up performance working with partners both internally and externally and a robust application of performance management. It is expected that all parts of the authority apply this approach through their service planning and development activities with the aim that all of our performance indicators are within the top two quartiles of national performance and that we deliver year on year efficiency savings

■ **Delivering major projects**

We have an increasing number of major capital projects taking place across the borough including the construction of a new civic centre. These major projects are critical to the future quality of life and prosperity of the borough and are central to the realisation of the Administration's priorities. They also afford the opportunity to create significant efficiencies in the way the council delivers local services and works with its partners to provide a high quality integrated customer experience.

Since the agreement of these three themes detailed research, analysis and consultation with staff and members has been undertaken. This work identified eight strands of activity where there is most scope to realise efficiency savings and achieve improvements in performance through simplification, standardisation and sharing of functions.

These three themes and the eight strands have been used to structure and prioritise the individual projects within the Improvement and Efficiency Action Plan and each project is aligned to one of the eight savings strands.

1. **Service transformation and reviews** – we agreed in our strategy that we would implement a rolling programme of service reviews with an aim of making services more efficient and customer facing and delivering savings. We set out that every council service would be reviewed over the life of the strategy. This still remains our aim but these reviews will either be as identified individual reviews or take place within the framework of a wider service transformation/One Council approach. So far we have begun and supported nine such reviews all at different stages of development or delivery. However the thrust of this action plan reflects what we have learned over the last year and we now understand that to get the traction necessary to deliver this strategy more efficiently and swiftly we need a wider and more thoroughgoing programme approach to that delivery.

2. **Civic centre/property management** – this takes advantage of the opportunities provided by the new civic centre to adopt new and more efficient ways of working and reducing the total number of sites and buildings from which services are delivered. Progress has already been made but there is considerable scope for more rationalisation. Our aim is to deliver both capital receipts and revenue savings.

3. **Better procurement, commissioning and contract management** – the council spends millions of pounds every year buying goods and services from the private sector and other providers. We have initiated a review of all our large contracts to ensure they are rigorously evaluated. When new contracts are let we are seeking to achieve savings and a higher quality of specification. There are many opportunities to do this in the current market. The council is also working with other local authorities and partnerships such as the West London Alliance to maximise purchasing power, procure in innovative ways (e.g. e-auctions) and provide services jointly to generate efficiencies.

4. **Delivering the One Council proposals** – nine task groups were set up at the end of last year and have all now reported to the CMT and made more than 150 recommendations for reducing

unnecessary variation and duplication and for developing more effective council-wide systems and procedures. The delivery of the key recommendations of these reviews will be a central element of this plan.

5. **New and more flexible ways of working** – all organisations are seeking ways to be more efficient and flexible. Getting things right first time, avoiding unnecessary customer contact, making more and better use of IT and eliminating bureaucracy. Office space needs to be used more intensively and flexible working and remote working made easier. Already examples of good practice exist in the council, such as ITU’s new operation in Brent House and expanding these examples will support further efficiencies.
6. **Stopping lower priority activities** – in any large organisation, some activities will be lower priority or add less value than others. We need to be robust in seeking out and identifying any such processes and activities and offering options to the Executive to bring them to a close or reduce activity.
7. **Increased income generation** – although the council has developed a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to income generation we will need to be much more commercially-minded and realistic in future and to also ‘sweat our assets’ through better promotion and marketing. At the

same time we need to be mindful of the needs of our more vulnerable citizens and seek to consider charging within a flexible framework.

8. **Independent review of structure and staffing** – the council has recently commissioned an independent review of its structure and staffing. Its main aim was to assess the deployment of resources across council functions and to review layers of bureaucracy and managers’ spans of responsibility and compare these across a range of other public and private sector organisations. This has highlighted areas where there is potential for the sharing and rationalisation of functions or processes.

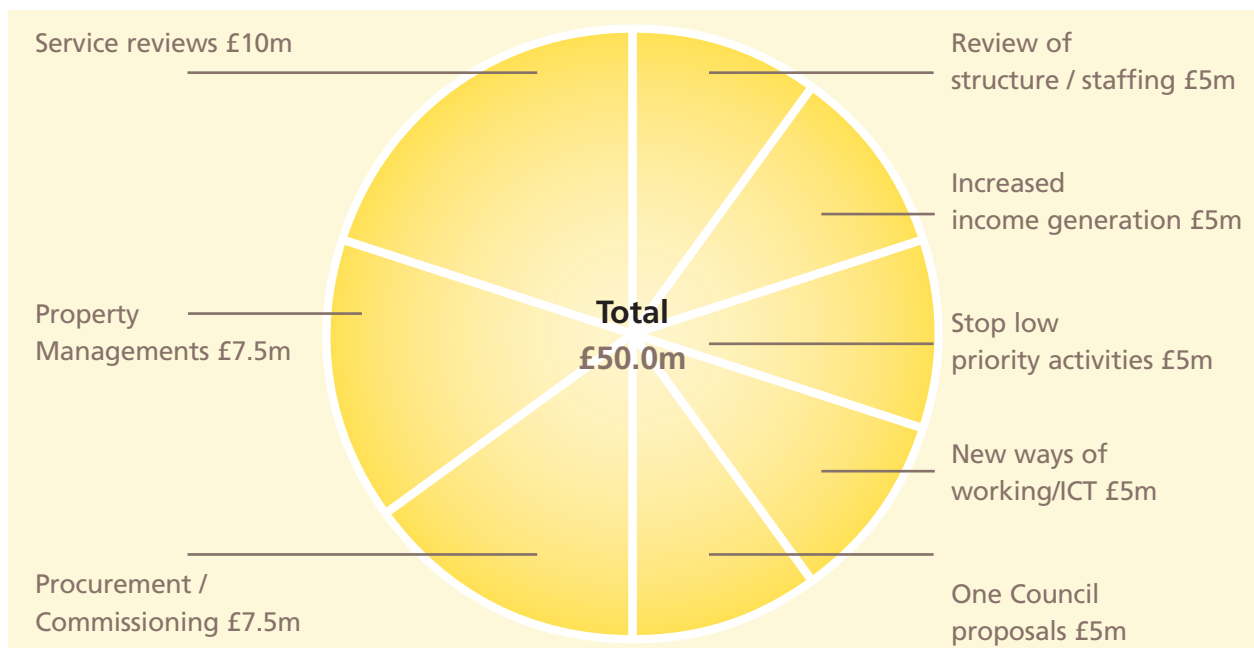
Minimum savings targets have been set against each of these eight efficiency strands as set out below.

The importance of the One Council approach

Underpinning this plan is our determination to look, feel and act as One Council giving our customers a seamless service and working together across the piece to deliver the best possible outcomes.

Earlier this year, we established a new Business Transformation Department bringing HR, the People Centre, ICT, Customer Services and the Civic Centre project together and recruiting a new director post to lead it.

Table 2 – Total four year savings target of a minimum of £50 million (2010-14)



Other actions to date:

- We committed to expanding the civic centre team and have now appointed an experienced programme director.
- We set up nine time-limited cross-council task groups which have all reported to CMT.
- Financial management streamlining is agreed and in delivery.
- ICT new ways of working is being designed and will start to be delivered in 2010.
- A new strategic property function is in design and will go live in 2010.
- Communication review – project will completed during the financial year 2010/11.
- Service Planning – revised arrangements introduced.
- HR/People becomes New Ways of Working and Workforce Planning.
- Procurement and contracts – project to be completed financial year 2010/2011.
- Customer contact – in design and in delivery 2010 onwards.
- Major capital projects – individual projects in design and delivery – paper to CMT to finalise governance arrangements in autumn 2009.

It should not be overlooked in our actions to raise performance, increase efficiencies and find savings that we are first and foremost a public service organisation. One of the reasons why people work for the council is that they have a passion for delivering the best possible public services to local people. This is a key driver for our action plan. We have not embarked on a crude savings programme but rather on a rational portfolio of projects which will make the council deliver better value for money and deliver better outcomes.

Outcomes from the structure and staffing review

The staffing and structure review undertaken for us by PricewaterhouseCoopers has provided us with a critical body of evidence to take action. PwC confirmed what we already know, we have a large pool of hugely talented and dedicated staff. However they were amazed we were such a good council 'in spite of' our structure and distorted balance of staff resources between service delivery and service support.

The key messages are that we have too few staff (29 per cent) engaged in front-line service delivery and too many (40 per cent) engaged in enabling delivery. This means Brent is atypical when compared to other councils and local neighbours where a 46 per cent front-line and 29 per cent enabling ratio is more normal (see table 3). We have extremely narrow management to staff ratios, typically one manager to just over two staff where industry best practice averages one to five or more. No fewer than 30 per cent of our non-schools workforce are classed as managers.

There are a number of reasons for this distortion. The local government wide issue of having a job evaluation system which rewards 'management' rather than skills and experience is one, but perhaps the most profound Brent-wide issue is the residue of devolution which has created widespread and unnecessary variation and duplication.

The PwC report has been considered and discussed by CMT in August and September 2009. We have broadly accepted the analysis and conclusions and recognise both the strengths and weaknesses which make up a true reflection of Brent. We are agreed that we need to simplify, standardise and share to avoid waste and to drive out duplication and inefficiency.

We are determined to increase the proportion of staff in direct service delivery roles and reduce the proportion who support these. Brent Council will need to be a smaller but more efficient organisation by 2014.

We aim to reduce the staff complement by ten per cent over four years which translates into about 300 full-time equivalent posts. We will start by deleting 50 management posts by 2010 with further reductions to follow in 2011.

This is all about rebalancing the organisation not about taking posts out for their own sake. Ours is a rational approach not a set of a disparate cuts. With current turnover at 16 per cent and widespread use of agency staff we believe we can achieve this rebalancing without recourse to large scale compulsory redundancies. Indeed, with the package of support we are intending to put in place we may have a smaller workforce but it will be one with greater skills and a more satisfying work experience.

We will over time broaden and standardise management spans but this will be based on the needs of the organisation, not on a small minded, process driven approach.

The need for departmental ownership and engagement

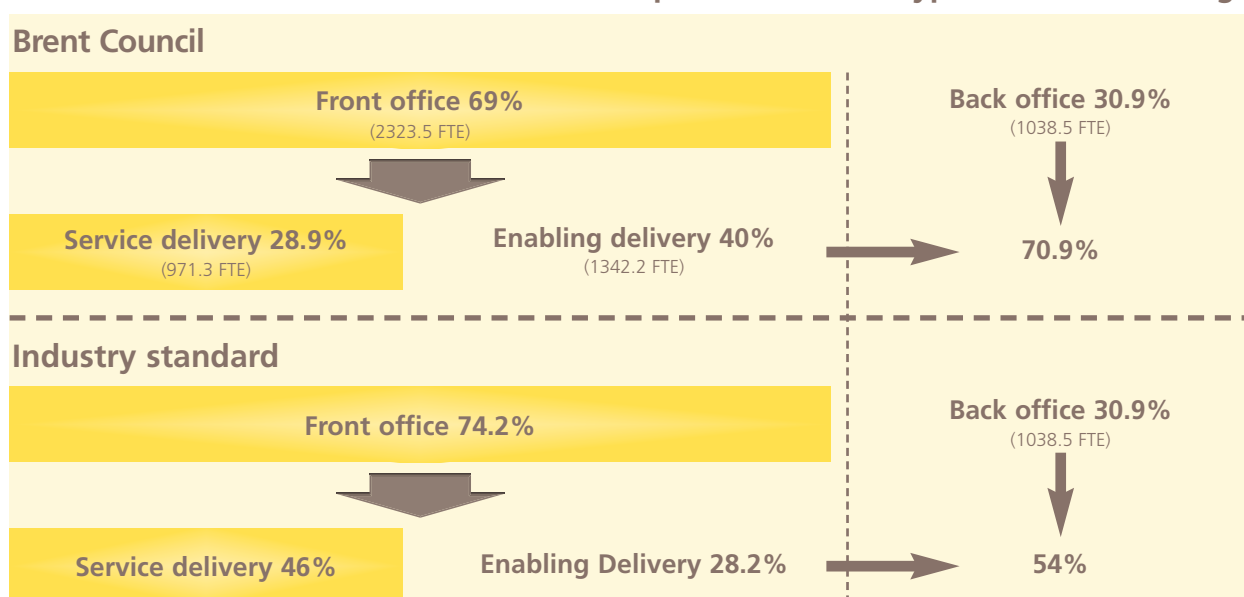
Any plan can only be as good as the people charged with implementing it and this plan is no exception. While strong leadership must be a key feature of our overall approach, it is equally important that we secure strong buy-in to this programme from staff at every level. The development of this plan has naturally involved ongoing discussion with our political leadership and within CMT. Both groups are united in their determination to make this plan happen and will be intolerant of attempts to thwart or de-rail it in any way. It will also be taken forward within a strong governance framework. But within these parameters, it is not just desirable but essential that we get across-the-board support from all managers and staff for the changes that need to be made.

The existence of an over-arching plan is helpful in that it provides a clear framework of expectations and deliverables against which future performance can be judged. But it is only the start of the change process and it will need to be supplemented by a lot of hard work, ingenuity and perseverance by staff in individual teams and service areas. Whilst the council's political and officer leadership can set the broad objectives and provide some practical support to help make things happen, the bulk of the work around implementation will rightly be undertaken by local managers and staff working to this wider One Council agenda. A particular duty rests with CMT members and their DMTs to ensure active support and widespread understanding of the plan and the reasons behind it.

We will therefore work hard over the next four years to ensure that everyone understands the reasons for the plan and the urgency of putting it into practice. Alongside we will adopt and implement a council-wide communications strategy and senior managers will be highly visible around the organisation arguing the case for change. We will use every available technique to spread the word and to ensure that staff in every workplace know about the plan and how they can contribute to it. This will be a two-way process in which all staff will be encouraged to ask questions, to seek clarification where needed or to suggest alternative approaches to achieving the plan's goals. All experience suggests that the more people understand the importance of a plan, the greater the likelihood of it being effectively implemented.

Some people may be worried that this plan is too top-down or has centralising undertones. This is emphatically not the case. This plan has evolved from many discussions at a senior level within the council and every department and service has been involved in this process. Our new governance arrangements will certainly hold project champions and deliverers to account but this is in no sense an exercise to cement central control of the organisation. Indeed such an approach would be unhelpful and counter-productive since it would alienate many of the key people in departments upon whom successful delivery critically depends. The time when a debate about devolution versus centralisation would serve a useful purpose has long since passed and it now needs to be consigned to the dustbin of history where it properly belongs.

Table 3 – Overview of Brent's structure compared to a more typical London borough



Source - PWC Staffing and Structure Review Aug 2009

Part 2 – Action Plan 2010 - 2014

An ambitious change programme

The action plan is a programme of projects designed to re-configure the way in which the council provides services to the public while achieving substantial efficiencies in the business processes that enable effective frontline service delivery. The programme contains a set of initiatives which will make the One Council principles into a daily reality; that will remodel key statutory services to meet the expectations of service users; and will deliver sustainable regeneration and improvement in the quality of life experienced by all residents of Brent.

The action plan is an ambitious change programme that will reach every part of the authority and transform the daily working practices of all staff. The individual projects range from simplification and standardisation of our business processes and creating a better customer contact service, to major capital investment projects and initiatives to improve performance in key service areas.

The action plan incorporates the findings and recommendations from the nine One Council task group reports, the independent structure and staffing review and comparative analysis of performance and costs in the public sector. It is focused specifically on projects that will deliver improvements in both customer experience and performance while achieving a more efficient use of our resources. All of the projects are vital to realising both our corporate objectives and financial aims.

However there are inevitably some individual initiatives that are more strategically important to the authority as a whole, are more complex to manage and implement or have the capacity to deliver a larger scale of efficiency savings earlier in the life time of the plan. Therefore each project has been classified according to a simple gold, silver, bronze categorisation to identify the implementation priority across the four years of the plan.

The Action Plan 2010-14

In the following pages we set out the key projects which will be divided as part of implementing our four year action plan. Each project will have a project champion at CMT/DMT level, a detailed project plan and identification deliverables and milestones. As the programme develops new projects will be added to ensure our minimum savings target is achieved.

“The action plan is an ambitious change programme that will reach every part of the authority and transform the daily working practices of all staff.”

Gold projects

These are projects which:

- are strategically important to the authority as a whole
- have high political or reputational implications
- have the potential to generate substantial savings in the short to medium term
- require substantial high level cross-council involvement
- impact significantly on several key partners or contractors
- entail considerable design and/or delivery complexity which is likely to require external support
- where failure to deliver would seriously compromise the basic integrity of the overall programme.

Silver projects

These are projects which:

- are strategically important to one or more department
- have some significant political or reputational implications
- have the potential to generate substantial savings in the medium to longer term
- require active co-operation between staff in one or more departments

- impact significantly on one or more partners or contractors
- entail some design and/or delivery complexity which may require occasional external support
- where failure to deliver would have some adverse impacts on key elements of the overall programme.

Bronze projects

These are projects which:

- are strategically important to one or more service or function
- have limited political or reputational implications
- have the potential to generate more modest but still useful savings over the four years of the plan
- require active co-operation between staff in one or more services or functions
- impact principally on the internal operations of the authority
- entail limited design and/or delivery complexity which can mainly be managed from within internal resources
- where failure to deliver would have adverse but limited impacts on the overall programme. A particular duty rests with CMT members and their DMTs to ensure active support and widespread understanding of the plan and the reasons behind it.

Table 4 – Project Categories

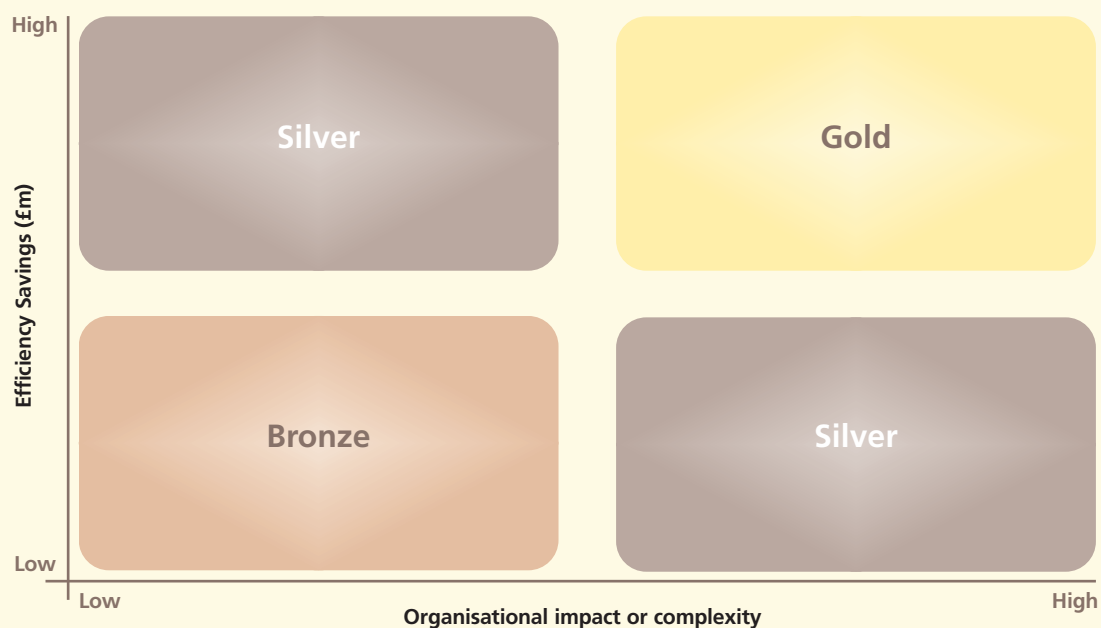


Table 5 – Gold, silver and bronze projects

High	Efficiency savings (£m)		Low
<p>Improvement & efficiency in schools</p> <p>Revenue & benefits service review</p> <p>Income maximisation</p>	<p>Delivering our LAA priorities</p> <p>New ways of working</p> <p>Website development</p>	<p>Major regeneration projects</p> <p>Delivering the neighbourhood agenda</p>	<p>Brent transport services review</p> <p>Energy supply review</p> <p>Internal charging review</p> <p>Recruitment and retention programme</p> <p>Carbon management programme</p> <p>ICT transformation</p>
<p>Civic centre programme delivery</p> <p>Structure & staffing review implementation</p> <p>Financial management streamlining</p> <p>Strategic procurement review</p>	<p>Re-shaping customer contact</p> <p>Adult social care transformation</p> <p>Strategic property review</p> <p>Brent business support function</p>	<p>Children's services transformation</p> <p>Remuneration performance</p> <p>BSF / school expansion</p>	<p>SEN / Children with disabilities service reviews</p> <p>Communication review</p> <p>Review of lower priority activities</p> <p>Child protection service review</p> <p>Waste & recycling service review</p> <p>Services to young people service review</p> <p>Enhanced performance & programme management</p>
			<p>Low</p>
			<p>High</p>
<p>Organisational impact or complexity</p>			

Table 6 – Key projects

Key - red/amber/green rating ● Priority for transformation support ● Management in place ● Safe	Key - Project timeframe ■ Go live ■ In delivery ■ Completed	Key - I&E strategy themes OC One Council I&E Improvement and efficiency MP Major projects
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Criteria used to identify 'Current status red/amber/green rating'		
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Benefits and costs are robust and achievable ■ Incremental benefits understood and optimised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aligned with Brent KPIs
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aligned with design principles ■ Project design agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Proposed operational process agreed
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrated delivery plan in place ■ Appropriate resources in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance in place
Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Customer impact acceptable ■ Staff buy in is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change management buy in
Accountability & Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Benefit owner(s) agreed ■ Budget owner agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relevant departments have bought into delivery plan

Project name	Project champion	Project timeframes				Savings target	I&E strategy themes
		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014		
Gold projects							
Civic centre project delivery	Chief Executive	●	■	■	■	Part of Civic Centre Business Case	MP
Structure and staffing review implementation	Chief Executive	●	■	■		£8.5m	I&E
Brent business support function	Dir. of Business Transformation	●	■	■	■	£1.6m	I&E
Remuneration & performance	Dir. of Business Transformation	●	■	■		£5m	I&E
BSF/Academies/PCP/ School expansion	Dir. of Children & Families	●	■	■	■	£0	MP
Children's services transformation	Dir. of Children & Families	●	■	■	■	£1.4m	I&E
Re-shaping customer contact/ Accessing brent customers/ Eligibility criteria/ Customer self-assessment	Dir. of Environment & Culture	●	■	■	■	£3.2m	OC I&E
Financial management streamlining	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources	●	■	■		£1.5m	OC
Strategic property review	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources	●	■	■	■	£4m	OC
Adult social care transformation	Dir. of Housing & Community Care	●	■	■	■	£1.4m	I&E
Strategic procurement review	Borough Solicitor	●	■			£7.5m - £15m	OC

Project name	Project champion	Project timeframes				Savings target	I&E strategy themes
		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014		
Silver projects							
Income generation/maximisation	Borough Solicitor					£5m	
New ways of working (ICT, HR and flexible working)	Dir. of Business Transformation					£2.5m	I&E
Improvement & efficiency in schools	Dir. of Children & Families					£5m	I&E
Service review - Child protection	Dir. of Children & Families					£0	I&E
Service review - SEN and Children with disabilities	Dir. of Children & Families					£0.25m	I&E
Service Review - Services to young people	Dir. of Children & Families					£0.2m	I&E
Communication review	Dir. of Communication & Diversity					£0.1m	OC
Website development	Dir. of Communication & Diversity						OC
Review of lower priority activities	Dir. of Environment & Culture					£5m	I&E
Waste and recycling/Veolia contract review	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration					£0.5m Waste £0.7m Street Cleaning	I&E
Service review - Revenue & benefits	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources					£0.4m	I&E
Delivering our LAA priorities	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration						I&E
Delivering the neighbourhood agenda	Dir. of Policy Regeneration						I&E
Enhanced Performance/ Management information, programme/Project management	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration						I&E
Major regeneration projects	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration						MP

Bronze projects

e-Government / ICT Transformation	Dir. of Business Transformation						I&E
Recruitment and retention programme/Workforce planning	Dir. of Business Transformation					£0.5m	I&E
Carbon management programme	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources						I&E
Internal charging review	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources					Part of Finance Review	OC
Review of energy supply & costs	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources					£0.3m	I&E
Review of Brent transport services (ASC transformation programme)	Dir. of Housing & Community Care					£0.5m allowed for by Children/Adults	I&E

Table 7 – Alignment to eight efficiency strands

Project name	Project champion	Eight strands							
		Service transformation/ reviews	Civic Centre/ improved property management	Better commissioning & contract management	Delivering the One Council proposals	New and more flexible ways of working	Stopping lower priority activities	Increased income generation	Independent review of structure and staffing
Gold projects									
Civic centre project delivery	Chief Executive	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Structure and staffing review implementation	Chief Executive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Brent business support function	Dir. of Business Transformation					✓			✓
Remuneration & performance	Dir. of Business Transformation			✓					
BSF/Academies/PCP/ School expansion	Dir. of Children & Families	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Children’s services transformation	Dir. of Children & Families								
Re-shaping customer contact/ Accessing brent customers/ Eligibility criteria/ Customer self-assessment	Dir. of Environment & Culture	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial management streamlining	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources	✓				✓			
Strategic property review	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Adult social care transformation	Dir. of Housing & Community Care	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Strategic procurement review	Borough Solicitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

“ All the projects are vital to realising both our corporate objectives and financial aims.”

Project name	Project champion	Eight strands							
		Service transformation/ reviews	Civic Centre/ improved property management	Better commissioning & contract management	Delivering the One Council proposals	New and more flexible ways of working	Stopping lower priority activities	Increased income generation	Independent review of structure and staffing
Silver projects									
Income generation/maximisation	Borough Solicitor	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
I&E New ways of working (ICT, HR and flexible working)	Dir. of Business Transformation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Improvement & efficiency in schools	Dir. of Children & Families	✓	✓		✓				
Service review - Child protection	Dir. of Children & Families	✓							
Service review - SEN and Children with disabilities	Dir. of Children & Families	✓		✓					✓
Service Review - Services to young people	Dir. of Children & Families	✓		✓			✓		✓
Communication review	Dir. of Communication & Diversity								
Website development	Dir. of Communication & Diversity	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Review of lower priority activities	Dir. of Environment & Culture	✓			✓		✓		
Waste and recycling/Veolia contract review	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration	✓		✓					
Service review-Revenue & benefits	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Delivering our LAA priorities	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration	✓							
Delivering the neighbourhood agenda	Dir. of Policy Regeneration	✓							
Enhanced Performance/ Management information, programme/Project management	Dir. of Polic & Regeneration	✓		✓	✓				
Major regeneration projects	Dir. of Policy & Regeneration		✓	✓	✓			✓	

Bronze projects

e-Government / ICT transformation	Dir. of Business Transformation		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Recruitment and retention programme/Workforce planning	Dir. of Business Transformation		✓		✓	✓			✓
Carbon management programme	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources		✓	✓					
Internal charging review	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources				✓				
Review of energy supply & costs	Dir. of Finance & Corporate Resources		✓	✓				✓	
Review of Brent transport services (ASC transformation programme)	Dir. of Housing & Community Care			✓					

Resources to deliver the programme

An organisational change programme of such a comprehensive and complex nature has to have the right skills, resources and capacity to be implemented successfully. This action plan has a dedicated, cross-council officer resource to enable practical delivery of the individual initiatives, while the overall action plan is effectively programme managed to deliver the target outcomes and benefits within the required timeframe. We need to invest in high quality programme and project management and develop our internal skills in benefits realisation and implementation to deliver the level of change required across the organisation.

We will be putting in place a One Council Support Team staffed from predominately internal secondees. We will identify key staff in each service area to form the team who will provide project management support to their improvement and efficiency projects. Many staff are already working on the implementation of projects along-side their day jobs. We want to ensure that they are given the necessary capacity to work full-time on these critical change initiatives to really accelerate delivery. The vast majority of the team will remain located within their existing service. These officers will remain functionally responsible to their service areas but operating within a portfolio management structure with a corporately located portfolio manager for each of the three themes. Funding will be available for the back filling of posts.

These project managers will be assisted by a pool of business analysts to provide additional implementation capacity. These officers will be available to work along-side service areas on a rotational basis dependant on the needs of individual projects and the overall programme.

While it may initially be necessary to use some specialist external programme management support to establish the structure this will be with the aim of developing the skills and capabilities of our existing staff. All funding necessary to establish the required support team will be contained within existing resources and the current BEST team will be incorporated to the new structure.

This approach and structure is designed to effectively use the service specific knowledge and skills of our existing staff; provide flexible additional capacity as and when it is needed by projects; and enable robust programme management, monitoring and governance of the overall action plan.

We will be investing in high quality project and programme management training for all staff involved in the delivery of change initiatives. The overall approach is designed to create greater opportunities for able and ambitious staff at all levels and from all backgrounds to advance their careers in Brent. This is a genuine opportunity for us to build a high calibre team of experienced project managers, dedicated to making change happen and improving services to Brent residents.

Governance arrangements for the programme

The Improvement and Efficiency Action Plan is a complex programme of inter-related projects and its successful delivery will only be achieved if it is underpinned by effective governance arrangements and committed council-wide support. Good governance at both strategic and operational levels will be essential to maintaining direction of travel, effective programme and project management, and timely realisation of the desired service and financial benefits. Without managerial commitment to these roles, accountabilities and decision making arrangements, the programme will risk loss of focus, momentum and failure to deliver the necessary level of change required across the whole organisation.

The governance regime for the action plan has been defined to ensure the right level of political, strategic and operational focus is provided across the portfolio of projects while supporting effective project delivery. These arrangements will enable both assessment of overall progress against the strategic organisational objectives and a strong focus on project management and delivery (see table 9).

Table 8 – Our improvement journey

Outcomes	December 2009 milestones	March 2014
Success recognised		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awarded Council of the Year
Responsive public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21st of 32 London boroughs on PwC benchmark 84% overall / general satisfaction with local area (Residents Attitude Survey - MORI) 64% satisfaction with how the council runs things (Residents Attitude Survey - MORI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of PI's in top two quartiles No PI's in the lowest quartile 90% overall / general satisfaction with local area 80% satisfaction with how the council runs things Top quartile of 32 London boroughs on PwC benchmark
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of complaints resolved at Stage 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of complaints resolved at Stage 1
Effective financial control and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of expenditure on delivery of services versus supporting delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of expenditure on delivery of services versus supporting delivery Single view of financial information and resource prioritisation across Brent 0% monthly deviation from completeness / accuracy of corporate level information
Cost of operations reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent total FTE of 3200 Quick wins and remediation in place to deliver expenditure in line with budget i.e. zero overspend spills into 2010/11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent FTE total of 2900 Capability to deliver annual saving of £53.7m on 2009/10 base implemented or on track
Effective decision support information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent outline asset inventory held Priority MI needed for change identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent Council and partner agencies have ready and shared access to the corporate performance, financial and operational data/information they need to most effectively deliver services or make decisions
Effective processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key example re-shaped end-to-end processes in place within Brent Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% of non-confirming end-to-end processes across Brent and Partners
Internal integration (within Brent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity on priority areas for integration internally to facilitate change within Brent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of staff would agree that all Brent agencies operate in an integrated way 90% of Brent customers get clarification or resolution on first contact with Brent agencies
Joined up access & premises (with others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint audit with partners to assess potential to consolidate physical access points and other channels (web, phone) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single front door, web and phone access for all local agency services in Brent
Joined up provision (with others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency of resource allocation and priorities between Brent and partner agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated provision with NHS and Police Support functions working together Single management priorities Integrated business plan and KPIs
Brent leaders and staff embracing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT and top 150 managers are aligned on reasons for and direction / approach to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84% overall / general satisfaction with local All staff understand their role to lead beneficial change as part of day to day
Appropriate spans of control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average 1:3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84% overall / general satisfaction with local Average 1:6
Appropriate staff capability and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline assessment of current versus future capability requirements for Brent 70% of staff have received a performance appraisal and have performance history at corporately agreed standard 70% of staff with an agreed development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84% overall / general satisfaction with local Staff are capable to deliver a new model of working and Brent is able to attract the best people in government 84% overall / general satisfaction with local 100%staff covered by organisational resource planning and regularly performance assessed 84% overall / general satisfaction with local 100%staff have a development plan that directly links to improved delivery of outcomes 84% overall / general satisfaction with local Performance management allows the council to ensure that consistently poor performance results in consistent and appropriate support, mediation or exit

The four key groups which will form the governance regime for the action plan are:

- **Policy Co-ordination Group**
The regular meeting of the Executive and CMT will receive a quarterly up-date on the implementation of the action plan. This meeting will focus on the alignment of the outcomes to the political and strategic objectives of the Administration and overall performance in achieving service transformation and delivering the necessary efficiency savings.
- **Corporate Management Team (CMT)**
CMT will be responsible for defining the overall direction of the programme setting the priorities and resource allocation. They will lead on corporate communications, amendments to the plan or savings targets and the overall monitoring of programme delivery. They will receive a monthly update on the implementation of the action plan.
- **Improvement and Efficiency Board**
The remit of the board will be reshaped to provide a stronger focus on benefits realisation from the portfolio of projects. They will validate and approve individual projects against the strategy's objectives and savings targets. The board will have a specific responsibility to ensure that the individual projects are on track to achieve their savings targets. They will play a key role in risk management and resolution or escalation of issues where necessary.
- **Delivery Board**
The One Council Support Team will convene a weekly Delivery Board focusing on practical project

implementation, resolution of issues and monitoring of implementation. They will be responsible for the production of progress reports and alignment of actions to agreed outcomes.

The responsibilities and roles of the groups within the governance regime are set out in tables 9 and 10.

What Brent Council will look like in 2014

Quite simply by 2014 the council rather than striving for excellence will be improving upon excellence. All our services when compared with the other 32 London councils will be in the top two quartiles and we will be delivering consistently top quality services tailored to the needs of our residents. We will do this without recourse to deprivation as an excuse for under achieving.

What is set out in table 8, our improvement journey is a set of outcomes by which we can measure our impact in the borough and the 'enablers', targets and processes that are essential if we are to achieve momentum and change how we operate. Over the next year the direction of travel will be firmed up, its key measures of performance agreed and annual milestones established. What it will do is point the way to a council different in nature, 'One Council' in actuality rather than rhetoric, whose shape, structure and processes are streamlined and efficient and which will be the first amongst equals in an integrated delivery of services with our partners. In short we will be a model council.

Table 9 – Governance regime for the programme

Agenda	Body	Frequency	Lead
Focus on strategic direction and overall performance of the programme	Policy Co-ordination Group	Quarterly	Leader of The Council
Sets overall direction, priorities and resource allocation	Corporate Management Team	Monthly	CMT
Reviews performance of project portfolios, benefits and targets and communicates with stakeholders	Improvement & Efficiency Board	Bi-Monthly	Director of Policy and Regeneration
Focus on delivery of agreed projects	One Council Support Team – Delivery Board	Weekly	Programme Manager

Table 9 (continued) – Governance deliverables

Outputs	Agenda	Purpose	Inputs	Decisions
Corporate Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on agreeing direction and how it translates to 6 month implementation stages and overall resource allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision / Direction of Travel Outcome chains Political commitments Escalated issues and risks from Benefits Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve transformation plan and any changes Confirmation that Transition States are met and programme can move to next stage Approve overall change / communication plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation plan, including immediate / next implementation stages Agreed change / comm. plan and cascade message Approve / revise targets Agreed actions to resolve major issues and risks
Improvement & Efficiency Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive up benefit delivery performance of immediate transition state and planning of next Validate and approve portfolio of projects to be taken forward Resolve issues as appropriate Communicate performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next implementation stage target Benefits / cost savings profile Communication / change plan Delivery update Consolidated project list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm that portfolio will deliver benefits / targets Agree changes to projects that impact Immediate transition state Approval of project portfolio for subsequent transition state Resolution actions for issues and risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit plans for current and next implementation stages Prioritised project list List of issues and actions to be escalated to Direction Board Core cascade messages Partner benefits and delivery performance report
Delivery Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain focus on delivery of current projects' outputs Resolve issues quickly and effectively and escalate where necessary Approve changes to existing projects within agreed parameters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project / portfolio Managers report Issues that can't be resolved within projects Validated solution design / project brief Change requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm project briefs and plans in line with current transition state Agree changes to projects within delegated authority Resolution actions for issues and risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery update including performance summary Consolidated list of planned initiatives for approval List of issues and actions to be escalated to Benefits Board Partner delivery performance report

Table 10 - One Council support team



Let us know your views and get involved

We welcome your views and comments on the actions set out within this document. We would particularly like to hear your ideas on how we can improve our performance, make the council more efficient and provide better services to the people of Brent. If you would like to comment on the Improvement and Efficiency Action Plan or have a suggestion for a project please send your views to:

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Notes



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