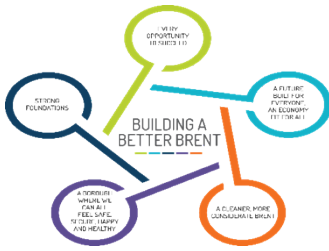


## Appendix 1



### **Service Provision on Estates in Brent**

An Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Report

**Chair, Councillor Janice Long**

**Housing Scrutiny Committee - April 2019**

**Task Group Membership:**



Councillor Janice Long (**Chair**)



Councillor Abdi Aden,



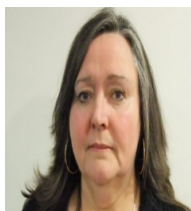
Councillor Shafique Choudhary,



Councillor Wilhelmina Mitchell Murray,



Councillor Thomas Stephens,



Karin Jaeger (co-opted member)

**The Task Group was set up by Brent Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee on 29 November 2018.**

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## 1. The Chair's Foreword

Brent Council takes pride in all the services we provide for residents. Those delivered on Brent's housing estates are particularly important to the people who live there and to ensuring a good quality of life in vibrant, sustainable neighbourhoods our people can be glad to call home. Their delivery is more complicated with a mixed economy – residents have to deal with a range of agencies and, in particular with the Registered Providers managing each estate. Getting it right is less straightforward but even more important.

This is why we have prepared this report. We have focussed on three sites – Chalkhill, Stonebridge and Church End/Roundwood – our three earliest regeneration areas. Each is managed by a different provider Hyde (Stonebridge), Metropolitan (Chalkhill) and Catalyst (Church End/Roundwood). In each housing management has to be integrated with that of the public realm, with services like grounds maintenance, waste and street cleaning, parking and highways.

We have found that the sheer number and range of people involved in service delivery can make it confusing to residents to know who to raise any issues with. Too often they receive a variable level of service.

We believe there are things that can be done across the council to improve the quality and accessibility of services. This report makes a number of recommendations. We look forward to seeing how these are delivered.

I would like to thank all those who gave their time to meet with me and the other members of the Task Group and the valuable insights they gave. I would like to give my personal thanks to the members of the Task Group – Councillors Aden, Choudhary, Mitchell-Murray, and Stephens and our co-opted member Karin Jaeger for all their hard work on this important subject.

**Cllr Janice Long – Chair**

## 2. Recommendations

**The Scrutiny Task Group makes the following recommendations to Brent Council's Cabinet:**

### **Recommendation One: Consistency - Brent Standard**

The council should establish a Brent Standard so that residents know the level and quality of service they can expect from Registered Providers and Brent Housing and the council's contractors in terms of the services featured in this report. The Brent Standard to be supported by a Residents' Charter setting out how service requests can be made and detailing response times for all key services delivered. This will help ensure that Registered Providers are accountable to and subject to scrutiny from residents. Residents should be able to report on how well their landlord is fulfilling the commitments. The results should be available to the public.

### **Recommendation Two: Information**

Provide accessible information (signposting to what services are delivered and by whom) to residents including an estate profile for each estate building on the approaches taken by Hackney and Lewisham. Examples of these can be seen at

<https://hackney.gov.uk/article/3866/Estate-services>

<https://www.lewishamhomes.org.uk/your-home/your-estate/>

### **Recommendation Three: Waste Management and External Cleaning**

In renewing contracts for waste services on estates, the council should ensure that the needs of residents on estates are central. Services should be tailored so that they address the particular needs of people living in flats including a focus on increasing recycling. Ways of raising awareness of the benefits of recycling should be further explored. The approach to external cleaning on estates needs to be reviewed and improvements made.

### **Recommendation Four: Complaints and Service Requests**

Registered Providers should provide complaint and service request data to the council on a monthly basis for discussion. This is particularly important where the complaints relate to services that the council or its contractor delivers. These should be reviewed alongside the complaints information for council-owned estates so that trends, hotspots and areas for attention can be identified and addressed. These should be reported regularly to the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Recommendation Five: Transparency of Service Charges**

The transparency of service charges needs to be reviewed. Tenants and leaseholders must be clear about what they are paying for and the potential impacts of any increase in service charges.

### **Recommendation Six: Parking**

The roll out of parking restrictions on estates (where the roads are adopted) needs to be revisited and progress agreed.

### **Recommendation Seven: Roads and Pavements**

The condition of roads and pavements on estates needs to be reviewed and actions put in place to improve their condition. Roads and pavements on new build should be designed up to an adoptable standard. Respective responsibility for management and maintenance needs to be made more transparent.

### **Recommendation Eight: Grounds maintenance design**

Working with service providers the council should review planting and landscape design and ensure that any future developments encourage grounds maintenance delivery rather than hinder it. In particular, new planting should be low maintenance. It should not act as a litter trap. Consideration should be given on how it looks throughout the seasons and over the years.

## **3. Methodology**

This was an evidence-based review. The Task Group held a series of evidence gathering sessions. These included a series of meetings with senior officers from the council's Housing and Environment departments including the Operational Director of Housing, Head of Parking and Street Lighting, Public Realm Performance Manager, Head of Neighbourhood Management and the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform also attended a Task Group meeting. In addition, discussions took place with the Registered Providers – Hyde, Catalyst and Metropolitan and the Operations Director for the cleaning contractor – Wettons. A full list of participants in the Task Group's evidence gathering can be found in appendix two of this report. The evidence gathering was combined with extensive research.

The scope and terms of reference were agreed on Thursday 29 November 2018. Members of the Task Group took part in five meetings corresponding to the terms of reference in the original scoping paper. Broadly, the themes for each of the meetings were:

- **Meeting One** – 11 December – Regional and Local Context
- **Meeting Two** – 8 January – Waste Management, Street Lighting and Parking
- **Meeting Three** – 12 February – Neighbourhood Management, Cleaning and Customer Services
- **Meeting Four** – 5 March – Strategic Overview – Cabinet Member Housing and Welfare Reform, review of evidence and formulation of key recommendations
- **Meeting Five** – 2 April - Draft report and recommendations discussion

In addition, site visits were undertaken to Chalkhill, Stonebridge and Church End/Roundwood Estates to “reality check” service delivery as well as to speak to representatives from the Registered Providers – Catalyst (Roundwood/Church End), Hyde (Stonebridge) and Metropolitan (Chalkhill).

Recommendations for the Cabinet were developed according to existing legislation for local authority scrutiny, which means that a local authority executive is not compelled to act on a recommendation; however, it must respond to any recommendations made by an overview and scrutiny review within **two months**.

## 4. Brent’s Context and the Council

The London Borough of Brent is the sixth largest borough in the capital in terms of population with an estimated 332,100 residents. The population has grown significantly, and it is one of the most multi-cultural areas in the country with many different languages spoken in the borough. Brent is characterised by large estates of regenerated former council housing with estates like South Kilburn, Stonebridge, and Chalkhill, alongside neighbourhoods with high rates of owner occupation which have experienced significant gentrification.

Brent has approximately 117,000 dwellings. Of these 8,000 are managed by the council on social/affordable rents and 3,500 on leaseholds. A further 20,221 are managed by Registered Providers. Some 55 Registered Providers (RPs) have stock in the borough, with 12 holding the largest proportion of stock. Since 1993 RP-managed stock has increased by 108%, an increase above the London average. **(Source: Brent Responsible Growth Strategy. Housing Theme)**

The major housing regeneration schemes of Stonebridge, Church End, Chalkhill, South Kilburn (on-going) and Barham Park have seen the management of over 9,000 council units transferred to Housing Associations (Registered Providers).

Since the 1980s the split of rental accommodation in the borough has therefore shifted considerably, with a growth in HA units followed by a resurgence in private renting, with a gradually larger proportion of properties in the private rental sector over time.

In recent years, private-sector led redevelopment, particularly at Wembley Park, has led to new high-rise housing. The borough’s largest town centres are in Harlesden, Willesden, Kilburn, Kingsbury, Neasden, and Wembley. While there has been investment and improvement of the town centres they have also experienced decline. The borough has approximately 1,000 acres of open space; the largest include Fryent Country Park, and Gladstone Park in Dollis Hill.

Brent Council is organised into five departments: Chief Executive’s, Children and Young People; Community Wellbeing; Regeneration and Environmental Services and Resources. Housing sits within the Community Wellbeing Department and is led by the Strategic Director. Political leadership is provided by the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform.

While the borough's population has grown, the council's core funding from central government has fallen by 63% in real terms since 2010. Departmental expenditure has declined, non-statutory services and the workforce have reduced.

The Budget 2019/2020 has now been agreed, confirming continued contraction of revenue expenditure for the local authority. The overall day-to-day expenditure across all departments, also known as the General Fund, will fall from £242.2million in 2018/2019 to £238.6million in 2019/20.

## 5. Background

This topic has been chosen because of the importance of ensuring a seamless service is delivered for those who live in the borough regardless of tenure or management. Feedback from residents shows that the public realm and how it is delivered is a high priority for those who live in Brent. As a universal service, it is what residents experience on a daily basis. Services on housing estates are delivered by a range of organisations delivering on behalf of the council and Registered Providers and/or their contractors. This Task Group has engaged with these key organisations.

An ambitious and co-ordinated approach is important for residents on all Brent housing estates to ensure that the services delivered meet the needs of users. This is of particular importance where various public realm activity takes place often in high housing density areas. Effective public realm delivery is a key cornerstone for future changes and long term investments.

There are a number of key stakeholders for this area of work - council departments (proposing public realm improvements and whose decisions have an impact on the public realm), Registered Providers, other public sector bodies and the private sector.

Key public realm principles include the need to ensure that the public realm is designed and delivered:

- In a coordinated, rational way, de-cluttered to ensure an inclusive environment
- With management and maintenance in mind;
- To stand the test of time;
- To promote a sense of ownership, respect, responsibility and community;

Services on council estates are delivered by key council contractors as follows:

- Waste Management – Veolia
- Grounds Maintenance – Veolia
- Parking – Wing Parking
- Estate Cleaning – Wettons
- Street Lighting – Bouygues (that fall within the remit of the council's parking and lighting service)

## 6. Regional Context

This work is set within the regional context of the London Housing Strategy, the Mayor's Environment Strategy and the London Plan.

The **London Housing Strategy** sets out the Mayor's plans to tackle the capital's housing crisis and his vision to provide all Londoners with a good quality home they can afford. The strategy was formally adopted in August 2018.

This strategy has five key areas:

- building more homes for Londoners
- delivering genuinely affordable homes
- high-quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods
- a fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders
- tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers

The Mayor published his **first integrated Environment strategy** in May 2018. In it he outlined the importance of public realm aspects in improving the quality of life for those who live, work and visit the area.

***“The state of London’s environment affects everyone who lives in and visits the city”. (Executive Summary – May 2018)***

Although the Mayor's powers to get involved in public realm on estates are limited, the principles that he referred to in his strategy are important. The strategy sets out a vision to 2050. It is focused on supporting good health and quality of life and on making the city a better place to live, work and do business.

The aims for 2050 are focused on – climate change (London will be a zero carbon city by 2050, with energy efficient buildings, clean transport and clean energy) waste (London will be a zero waste city. By 2026 no biodegradable or recyclable waste will be sent to landfill and by 2030 65 per cent of London's municipal waste will be recycled) and adapting to climate change (London and Londoners will be resilient to severe weather and longer-term climate change impacts. This will include flooding, heat risk and drought).

The outcomes outlined are:

- Greener
- Cleaner
- Ready for the Future

These are all important features of effective public realm delivery on housing estates.

**The London Plan** is the statutory Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London prepared by the Mayor of London (“the Mayor”) under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (as amended) and associated regulations.

The London Plan sets out the Mayor's general policies for the development and use of land in Greater London and deals with the spatial development aspects of his

other strategies. When published in its final form the Plan will comprise part of the statutory development plan for Greater London.

The current 2016 Plan (The London Plan consolidated with alterations since 2011) is still the adopted Development Plan, but the draft London Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions.

## 7. The Task Group

In its work the Task Group sought to gain an understanding of the barriers and solutions to service provision on Registered Provider managed housing estates. It is clear that there is no one solution but a number of opportunities to make recommendations that would improve the services delivered and ensure a good standard of service to residents regardless of landlord or tenure. We have reached conclusions about approaches the council should take and we have grouped our key findings under eight themes, as follows:

- 1. Consistency – Brent Standard**
- 2. Information**
- 3. Waste Management and External Cleaning**
- 4. Complaints and Service Requests**
- 5. Transparency of service charges**
- 6. Parking**
- 7. Roads and Pavements**
- 8. Grounds maintenance design**

In total we have made eight key recommendations, but our findings in fact highlight a broader range of approaches the council should consider. The council may wish to take some time in considering what success would look like in 20 years given the range of developments across the borough, particularly for residents who live on estates, given that these are likely to be managed by a range of landlords.

Currently, there are 55 Registered Providers operational in the borough. Their relationship with the council is based on collaboration rather than regulation. Where more than one Registered Provider is operational on an estate there will be different landlords with different approaches. In these cases, join-up is really important. Task Group members recognise the challenge of balancing the needs of residents with the delivery of the most affordable housing. This is further complicated by the fact that residents on estates will live in homes with different tenures – social/affordable rent, shared ownership, leasehold and private rent. All should enjoy a similar standard of service.

The Task Group reviewed the key housing meetings that take place. To note are the Housing Strategy and Delivery Board organised by the council and bringing together the local authority and Registered Providers discusses and agrees housing strategy and delivery on a quarterly basis. At a local level, the South Kilburn Regeneration meeting meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the management of the Estate. The forum purpose is:

- Placemaking
- Engaging in the community
- Grounds maintenance
- Maintenance and Cleaning contracts
- Refuse
- Unadopted roads

## 8. Task Group Key Findings

### **Standards of Service**

The standards of service identified by the Task Group across the 3 case study areas varied considerably. Housing management is provided by different Registered Providers - Hyde (Stonebridge), Metropolitan (Chalkhill) and Catalyst (Roundwood/Church End). Public Realm services such as waste management, grounds maintenance, parking and cleaning are delivered by a variety of providers contracted and managed by the Council. This can lead to confusion, a lack of effective performance monitoring and management resulting in the needs of residents going unmet. Whilst Registered Providers strive to deliver a good service for residents this is not consistent across the board.

### **Recommendation One: Brent Standard**

The council should establish a Brent Standard so that residents know the level and quality of service they can expect from Registered Providers and Brent Housing and the council's contractors in terms of the services featured in this report. The Brent Standard to be supported by a Residents' Charter setting out how service requests can be made and detailing response times for all key services delivered. This will help ensure that Registered Providers are accountable to and subject to scrutiny from residents. Residents should be able to report on how well their landlord is fulfilling the commitments. The results should be available to the public.

### **Information for Residents**

The Task Group found that given the number of people and agencies involved in service delivery it can sometimes become confusing for residents about who they need to go to if they have issues/concerns. Although there are engagement processes in place for residents such as Hydewide Residents Voice (Stonebridge) and Hydewide Residents Eye – (an inspection group who scrutinise and make recommendations for service improvement through 4 service inspections a year), block champions, targeted communication with contractors and estate newsletters, there is still an opportunity to improve this further.

The Task Group found that residents don't always have the information they need for the services that are delivered on their estates. There is a range of reasons for this including lack of clarity about who delivers which services, lack of signposting and lack of engagement between residents and the providers of services. On some

estates, residents raise queries on services with the Registered Provider when in fact it should be the council and vice versa.

### **Recommendation Two: Information**

Provide accessible information (signposting to what services are delivered and by whom) to residents including an estate profile for each estate building on the approaches taken by Hackney and Lewisham. Examples of these can be seen at

<https://hackney.gov.uk/article/3866/Estate-services>

<https://www.lewishamhomes.org.uk/your-home/your-estate/>

### **Waste Management and External Cleaning**

Waste Management is of particular importance to public health and quality of life on estates. Veolia is the main council contractor providing waste management services, including refuse collection and recycling. Aside from ground floor properties, the majority of bins on estates are communal. Residents often assume that the RP is responsible for all maintenance issues, which is not the case. There also appears to be conflicting views on who cleans the communal bins including food waste bins.

The current waste contract spans 2014-2023 but has an option for extension for up to 7 years. The contract does not have recycling targets with a focus more on reducing waste. It provides for a flat rate payment for waste collection with any additional costs being met by the contractor. It does not include provision to clean bins. Recycling bins are old and their location could be more accessible. The same contractor is responsible for street cleaning. The top three issues that get raised by residents across the 3 case study estates are – missed collections, fly-tipping and the state of the bins (in particular rats and vermin).

All three areas have adopted streets which should be maintained by Brent / Veolia. However, the standards of cleaning by the Chalkhill new build are poor. This is evidenced by the build-up of leaf mould and litter in the kerbs and planted areas. The Task Group found that the side of Chalkhill Road containing the “scientist estate” is swept but the side containing the Metropolitan blocks is not swept. The RP has asked its own contractors to undertake this work due to the lack of progress from the council’s contractor.

The Waste Contract Board meets on a monthly basis and includes representatives from housing, neighbourhood management and the contractor. Neighbourhood Mangers also sit in on “new build” proposals.

The waste management contract will soon be under review and it will be important that the issues faced by residents on estates are central in this review.

### **Recommendation Three: Waste Management and External Cleaning**

In renewing contracts for waste services on estates, the council should ensure that the needs of residents on estates are central. Services should be tailored so that they address the particular needs of people living in flats including a focus on increasing recycling. Ways of raising awareness of the benefits of recycling should

be further explored. The approach to external cleaning on estates needs to be reviewed and improvements made.

### **Complaints and Service Requests**

Registered Providers operate their own individual complaints and service request systems. The Task Group reviewed the complaints and service requests received and these were focused mainly on housing repairs. The council operates its own complaints and service requests process. However, the Task Group found that complaints information was not regularly shared between the council and the Registered Providers. In addition, performance monitoring of complaints across all estates including hotspot areas was not undertaken in a consistent way.

### **Recommendation Four: Complaints and Service Requests**

Registered Providers should provide complaint and service request data to the council on a monthly basis for discussion. This is particularly important where the complaints relate to services that the council or its contractor delivers. These should be reviewed alongside the complaints information for council-owned estates so that trends, hotspots and areas for attention can be identified and addressed. These should be reported regularly to the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Transparency of Service Charges**

The Task Group reviewed service charges across all three sites. These vary considerably from site to site. Typically, the leaseholders and tenants at estate/block level can receive the following service charges:

- Gardening & Grounds Maintenance
- External Cleaning
- Communal utilities
- Internal cleaning
- Building repairs and maintenance
- Statutory testing and servicing

The apportionment of the service charges that each individual leaseholder will receive depends on the method set out for this in the lease, meaning the cost will vary from block to block. The Task Group were made aware of two examples Maple Grove and Belvedere Way where the “right to buy” approach appears to have caused service charges to be borne by the remaining tenants and apparently resulting in high service charges. Consideration needs to be given to how service charges are deployed in situations such as these.

The Task Group noted that the service charges needed greater transparency as well as the inclusion of optional services and how much these would cost.

### **Recommendation Five: Transparency of Service Charges**

The transparency of service charges needs to be reviewed. Tenants and leaseholders must be clear about what they are paying for and the potential impacts of any increase in service charges.

## **Parking**

A feature of all three sites that the Task Group identified was that, apart from event day parking on Chalkhill, there were no parking controls on the estates. However, there are clearly parking pressures. There is little visible spare capacity during the day and parking pressures increase in the evening and night. This has resulted in double parking and parking on pavements/kerb buildouts. Bollards have been installed to control parking at corners and on kerb buildouts but there are few enforceable double yellow lines. There has been double parking in the Catalyst new build area which has blocked access by emergency vehicle.

The RPs have introduced parking controls on their own land, mainly car parks. But the council-maintained streets on estates have no parking controls. The Catalyst (Church End/Roundwood) new build are next to the CPZs for Harlesden, Stonebridge has extra flats and pressures from Harlesden station, Chalkhill is near Wembley Park station. Much of the parking at the new build properties in Chalkhill is at 90 degrees to the pavement. This often leads to vehicles overhanging the pavement, which in turn restricts the width of the pavement for pedestrians. Often this angle of parking is dictated by the design of the landscaping. The Task Group found that the quality of the road / car park is often poor on estates / flats managed by both the council and RPs. Pavements are often damaged by vehicle encroachment.

In the future electric charging points may have to be installed on these estates. There needs to be some form of parking control so they can be accessed by the local residents and information provided as to the number of parking places that are required.

### **Recommendation Six: Parking**

The roll out of parking restrictions on estates (where the roads are adopted) needs to be revisited and progress agreed.

## **Roads and Pavements**

The condition of roads and pavements in some of estates visited by the Task Group was poor, for example Church End traditional. Boundary issues in terms of who maintains and manages the roads and pavements were also raised with the Task Group.

### **Recommendation Seven: Roads and Pavements**

The condition of roads and pavements on estates needs to be reviewed and actions put in place to improve their condition. Roads and pavements on new build should be designed up to an adoptable standard. Respective responsibility for management and maintenance needs to be made more transparent.

## **Grounds maintenance design**

The design of grounds planting and landscaping that need maintaining needs to be reviewed. The Task Group found that some layouts lend themselves to difficulties in terms of maintenance as well as attracting dumping of bulky waste and fly-tipping.

Residents had also raised complaints about vermin. Over time some planted areas appear unkempt because of the type of planting.

**Recommendation Eight: Grounds maintenance design**

Working with service providers the council should review planting and landscape design and ensure that any future developments encourage grounds maintenance delivery rather than hinder it. In particular, new planting should be low maintenance. It should not act as a litter trap. Consideration should be given on how it looks throughout the seasons and over the years.

## APPENDIX A - TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Janice Long
<b>Members</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Councillor Abdifatah Aden</li><li>2. Councillor Shafique Choudhary</li><li>3. Councillor Wilhelmina Mitchell Murray</li><li>4. Councillor Thomas Stephens</li><li>5. Karin Jaeger (co-optee)</li></ol>

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer who supported the work of the Task Group was Jackie Barry-Purssell

## APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANTS

The views expressed in this report are those of the Task Group. However, during their investigations the group met with or consulted all of the following and the Task Group is extremely grateful to all the participants for their valuable input, insight and challenge.

<p><b>Brent Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Eleanor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform</li> <li>• Brent - Operational Director of Housing – Hakeem Osinaike</li> <li>• Brent - Head of Parking and Street Lighting – Gavin Moore</li> <li>• Brent - Public Realm Performance Manager – Ilana Shaw</li> <li>• Brent – Head of Neighbourhood Management – Simon Finney</li> <li>• Brent – Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods – Troy Francis</li> <li>• Wettons - Operations Director - Clive Robinson –</li> </ul> <p><b>Registered Providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (Chalkhill) - Durrant Morris – Housing Services Manager</li> <li>• Catalyst Housing Ltd (Church End/Roundwood) - Kemy George – Neighbourhood Experience Manager</li> <li>• Hyde (Stonebridge) - Benjamin Bankole Bello - Head of Housing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sharing Good Practice – Other Councils</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hackney Council</li> <li>• Lewisham Council</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX C – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- a) Understand the regional policy for service provision on housing estates including public realm activity.
- b) Understand the current customer facing and public realm activity on estates from the perspective of those who deliver the services.
- c) Understand how tenure mix has worked/changed.
- d) Gain an overview of leaseholder and tenant service charges.
- e) Review how parking pressures have changed including bicycle storage demand and provision of electric charging points.
- f) Gain an understanding of waste management provision.
- g) Evaluate the contracts in operation.
- h) Review any changes proposed.
- i) Highlight and learn from case studies of good practice.
- j) Review the co-ordination, planning and co-operation between different agencies and organisations.
- k) Develop recommendations for the council's Cabinet which are focused on the improvement of service provision on estates by the council and its partners.