



## **Item 7.1: Questions from Members of the Public**

### **Full Council – 21 November 2022**

#### **1. Question from N. Rogers to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action**

I am proud to be a part of Brent and think it is an all inclusive, forward thinking London borough, and I'd like to think we put climate considerations at the heart of governance. However, this awareness needs to include every aspect of council activities, including the provision of food.

Other London Boroughs, for example Lewisham & Enfield, have committed to serve only plant-based food at their meetings and events, or not to serve meat. Outside of London, Oxfordshire, Cambridge City, Faversham and Hythe councils have made similar commitments and I'd like Brent to do the same. This is the logical, and necessary next step after having declared a climate emergency. It will help normalise plant-based eating, which according to an Oxford University study is the single most effective thing an individual can do to reduce their environmental impact.

We are currently in a cost-of-living crisis. Meat and dairy products are almost always the most expensive part of a meal - whole food plant-based meals are considerably cheaper. By doing the right thing for the planet, and promoting eating for good health, the council can also save money by serving more plant-based foods. The multiple crises we are currently facing make it even more important to feed grain directly to humans, not to farmed animals. We can and must move away from meat and dairy, towards climate-friendly eating, and I believe councils can lead the way with this.

There have been substantial evidence-based recommendations calling for a move away from meat and dairy. The National Food Strategy, led by Henry Dimbleby last year, recommended a reduction in meat and dairy of 30% within ten years. A new report by the Boston Consulting Group, one of the world's biggest consultancy firms, states that investment in plant-based alternatives to meat is by far the biggest green investment that can be made.

I would like to see our council be part of the solution, not continue to spend money on meat and dairy, which we know to be part of the problem.

Given the climate emergency and Brent Borough Council's stated aim to reduce their emissions, will the Council therefore consider committing to serving fully plant-based food at any future catered meetings and events including the Mayors

Ceremony, as other councils have done, and introducing more plant-based food in schools where possible? This will be a positive and forward-thinking step, bringing its food policy into line with other climate-aware policies.

**Response:**

The council is committed to tackling the climate and ecological emergency and we continue to make strides on this issue through the implementation of our Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (“the strategy”) and associated delivery plans. The first theme of the strategy focuses on Consumption, Resources and Waste, which reflects the issue being ranked as the number one priority of the Brent Climate Assembly and sets the objective of reducing the borough’s consumption emissions by two thirds from a 2019 baseline by 2030.

If humans are to be successful in our efforts to prevent the worst effects of climate change, then every single one of us has an integral role to play – whether at home, school or work. Sustainability should be at the forefront of our everyday lives. The Strategy acknowledges that eating less meat and reducing food waste is a significant factor of this. Last year we developed a community cookbook on planet-saving recipes from local residents [From Brent to Bowl](#) held a webinar specifically on [Food and its impact!](#) During our ‘A beginners guide to the climate emergency’ webinar series last year.

The council does not, and has not, served food at any of its meetings for a number of years, with the exception of the food being provided following the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and appointment of a new Mayor of the Borough. The food provision at the AGM is at the discretion of the Mayor each year.

With regards to Brent’s community schools, schools procure their meals provisions directly and independent of the council. The council has provided information and encouragement to schools to consider introducing plant-based food in schools as part of the ‘whole school’ approach to environmental sustainability. This has been promoted through a number of communication channels, including through the Head teachers bulletin and the Brent Schools Climate Champions Network, in particular. There are a number of Brent schools who have introduced such an approach, including introducing ‘meat-free’ days into their weekly catering calendar.

2. **Question from J. Audrey to Councillor Knight, Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security**

You want to build additional homes as infill development at Windmill Court. Why are you forcing this excessive option in direct opposition to and to the detriment of existing residents?

Why are you not making any improvements or doing anything for the existing residents of Windmill Court?

Carrying out infill development whilst doing nothing for the existing residents or building is breaking the promises made by councillors and the Council. How can you justify the neglect?

How can you justify the negative impact on existing and future residents?

How is it acceptable to remove sunlight from every room in my home & to reduce my kitchen window light down to 0.4 and in winter to 0.0 ?

Other residents are also badly affected by loss of light in every room of their homes as well as the loss of outlook along with a total lack of privacy given we are being overlooked from head to toe within our own homes.

How can you justify excessive development that will have an adverse and overbearing effect that will create an unduly oppressive living environment for existing and future residents?

**Response:**

**You want to build additional homes as infill development at Windmill Court. Why are you forcing this excessive option in direct opposition to and to the detriment of existing residents?**

**How can you justify excessive development that will have an adverse and overbearing effect that will create an unduly oppressive living environment for existing and future residents?**

The Council has brought these proposals forward in response to the chronic shortage of genuinely affordable housing in Brent. There are 24,000 households on the waiting list, over **1,700** families currently living in temporary accommodation and a further **240** families in priority need for a transfer because of issues such as overcrowding. Every home we develop is an opportunity for a family to have the security of a permanent home that meets their needs.

Whilst building council homes is a priority for us, so is ensuring that any new council development also works for people who already live in the area. That's why we have engaged with residents living on Windmill Court early on, to hear their views and create proposals that balance the needs of existing residents with those that do not have a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

We appreciate the concerns voiced about the development proposal at Windmill Court and acknowledge that the building close to existing homes will have some impact on existing residents. The Council is working hard to mitigate the impact of new homes being built where reasonable.

**Why are you not making any improvements or doing anything for the existing residents of Windmill Court?**

**Carrying out infill development whilst doing nothing for the existing residents or building is breaking the promises made by councillors and the Council. How can you justify the neglect?**

The New Council Homes development at Windmill Court will deliver improvements for existing residents, this includes security improvements such as boundary fencing and CCTV, which we know are a priority for residents as well as landscaping to improve the communal green space.

Alongside the development of these new homes, it was recognised the need to improve standards for existing residents.

The Council will be spending approximately £40m over the next three years on its tower block refurbishment programme of which approximately £14m will be spent on Windmill Court, and we are already consulting with residents on this.

The proposed specification is comprehensive and includes repairs to the building fabric; new energy efficient cladding; new windows; roofing; upgraded heating; upgraded mechanical and electrical services; internal refurbishment of the dwellings; and refurbishment of the internal communal areas.

**How is it acceptable to remove sunlight from every room in my home & to reduce my kitchen window light down to 0.4 and in winter to 0.0?**

**Other residents are also badly affected by loss of light in every room of their homes as well as the loss of outlook along with a total lack of privacy given we are being overlooked from head to toe within our own homes.**

As part of the development process and planning application, a detailed assessment of the impact the proposed development at Windmill Court will have to existing residents light was carried out. This assessment ensures that the proposed development is in line with local, regional and national planning policy, which is clear about not permitting any new development that will cause an unacceptable loss of daylight or sun light amenity to the surrounding properties.

The findings of the assessment compiled in the report concluded that the vast majority of the neighbouring habitable windows and rooms will retain good levels of daylight and that the development is consistent with the British Research Establishment guidance and relevant planning policy in terms of daylight and sunlight.

This will be reviewed and considered as part of the planning application submitted for Windmill Court.

**How can you justify the negative impact on existing and future residents?**

Our commitment is to balance the building of new affordable family homes with improvements that will benefit existing residents whilst mitigating potential impact this will have on them. Whilst we understand and appreciate the concerns voiced, we are confident that the development project team will implement the necessary measures to minimise any disruptions or inconvenience to achieve a positive outcome for all.

**3. Question from S. Culhane Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Planning**

The Transport Consultant's document submitted as part of the full Planning Application for the Windmill Court proposed infill development contains swept path analysis showing how vehicles can access and negotiate the site layout.

This analysis does not include high-reach fire appliances, and the main tower is over 40m high. Did anybody in the Planning Department ask why?

Did anybody in the Planning Department ask or direct the Transport Consultants to conduct such an analysis ?

**Response:**

It should be noted that the fire service does not use very large vehicles as a starting point for firefighting, there are many other ways that they approach a fire, working mainly from the inside. A very tall appliance would only be used in the case of very significant failure of the other fire safety measures, and it would not be a requirement of Building Regulations (which is the main regulatory framework for considering fire safety measures, rather than planning).

The assessment of vehicular access for fire safety has been made based on the likely vehicles that would attend a fire at the site.



## Item 7.2: Questions from Brent Youth Parliament

### Full Council – 21 November 2022

#### 1. Question from Brent Youth Parliament to Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Brent Youth Parliament's (BYP) new campaign is 'Education for Life'. In the UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark ballot, young people in Brent voted for education as the most important issue.

Based on this mandate, BYP is now campaigning to improve how life skills are taught in schools in Brent to help young people prepare for life after education. For our campaign, we would like to ask Brent Council:

- How would you support local businesses to work with schools in Brent to help develop an 'Education for life' curriculum?
- Does the council have any funding to provide extra resources and staff capacity for schools to help them teach life skills and financial education?
- What other support can the Council provide for BYP in this campaign and to involve young people in decision-making in local education matters

#### Response:

- ***How would you support local businesses to work with schools in Brent to help develop an 'Education for life' curriculum?***

There are voluntary sector organisations that support extra curricula activities in schools to develop life skills and some are in partnership with local businesses. They tend to be based around projects that develop life skills, such as listening, leadership, team work, creativity, presentation and problem solving and technical skills. For example, a project designing an App for a charity, school or business would enable young people to understand how organisations function, applying perspective and skills of young people to a business challenges to find solutions, whilst at the same time young people develop financial literacy, digital skills, problem solving skills and so forth.

The Council will consider how information about such organisations could be shared with schools.

The Council will also look to use its suppliers, as part of the social value requirement linked to contract awards, to work with local schools on relevant life skills.

- ***Does the council have any funding to provide extra resources and staff capacity for schools to help them teach life skills and financial education?***

The Council does not have any funding to provide extra staff capacity in schools to help them teach life skills and financial education. Funding for the delivery of the curriculum is delegated to schools and school leaders decide how this funding is spent. They base their decisions on delivering their statutory requirements - such as the national curriculum and keeping children and young people safe - and also the areas of focus/improvement that they have identified as priorities in their schools. The national curriculum document states that "all schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice". Details of individual school curriculums is available on their websites.

There are external organisations that run life skills and financial education programmes for young people, such as Barclay's moneywise programme [LifeSkills | Barclays](#) and [Drugs, Alcohol and Resilience Training – through the Life Skills Education Charity](#) that schools can choose to access to enhance their curriculum offer. Some of these, however, would be at a cost to schools.

Again the Council will consider how information about such programmes could be shared with schools.

- ***What other support can the Council provide for BYP in this campaign and to involve young people in decision-making in local education***

Brent Youth Parliament already has a seat at the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee where local education arrangements are considered and scrutinised.

Individual schools may have school councils where pupils can be involved in decision-making within schools.

As well as encouraging active involvement in school councils the Council could help young people to understand how schools are led and how decisions are made that directly impact the pupils attending. For example, the Governor Support Team could provide BYP with an overview of school governance. School Governing Boards are responsible for:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, whilst ensuring the curriculum is well taught; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school, ensuring budgets are effectively and efficiently spent.

The Council could also work with BYP to consider how information about life skills development opportunities outside of education settings could be made available to young people as part of their campaign.