

Brent Connects Forums

The consultative forums described below are part of the Brent Connects programme. They have no formal decision making structure and have no decision-making powers. They are however a central part of the council's approach to consultation and engagement. Five forums cover specific geographic areas and a further five cover service users or specific interest groups. Representations and recommendations may be made by these forums to a committee or sub-committee of the council or to the executive or to officers. The chairs of the Brent Connects forums shall be appointed by full council.

BRENT CONNECTS AREA CONSULTATIVE FORUMS

- 1 The Council is committed to involving the community through effective consultation and two-way communication.
- 2 The Council recognises that meaningful participation can only take place:
 - in an environment where people are better informed about local services;
 - where community spirit is fostered so that people care enough to want to take part, and are encouraged to do so; and
 - where council decisions can be seen to reflect the views and concerns of local residents.
- 3 Area consultative forums provide an important opportunity for members of the public to access, participate in and influence the council's decision-making process and those of the Council's partner organisations. Consultation, participation and community engagement have become increasingly important for all organisations and are at the heart of central government policy to improve and modernise local services.

Consultative forums are central to Brent Council's response to these issues.

- 4 Five area consultative forums were set up in 1997 to give local people a say about the issues which matter to them. These forums are public events, meeting four times per year. At each meeting local people are able to ask questions and comment on services provided by both the Council and partner agencies in Brent.
- 5 Chaired by a local councillor and assisted by a lead manager, each area forum meeting is open to the public, and is always held during a weekday evening in an accessible venue central to the community.
- 6 Agendas are determined prior to each forum meeting. Local people, the forum chair and lead manager, other local councillors, partner organisations and council officers are all invited to participate in the agenda setting process. The agenda setting process is coordinated by officers from the Council's consultation team and the draft agenda is published on the Council's internet pages.
- 7 At each meeting local people have the chance to listen to and question the Council and partner agencies such as the police and health authority about services they provide. There is also a 'soapbox slot' for residents to express their views and concerns on an issue of their choice. The five area consultative forums are listed below and each is made up of the electoral wards as shown:

Brent Connects Harlesden	Brent Connects Kilburn	Brent Connects Kingsbury & Kenton	Brent Connects Willesden	Brent Connects Wembley
Harlesden Stonebridge Kensal Green	Brondesbury Park Kilburn Mapesbury Queen's Park	Barnhill Fryent Kenton Queensbury	Dollis Hill Dudden Hill Welsh Harp Willessden Green	Alperton Northwick Park Preston Sudbury Tokyngton Wembley Central

- 8 The ward boundaries delineate the area covered by that particular forum although residents may choose to attend a forum other than that in which they live.
- 9 The area consultative forums will be supported by officers from the council's consultation team, the forum lead manager and officers from other council service areas as appropriate.

Functions of Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums

- 10 (a) To consider and comment on Brent Council services, policies and practices, and those of its partners in the Brent area, and to influence practices and policies which determine the provision of council services by submitting reports on views expressed and issues raised at forum meetings to the appropriate lead officer, the Cabinet or a member of the cabinet and/or the relevant Scrutiny Committee or other council committees, or full council.
- (b) To provide information to the community about the services, policies and the practices of Brent Council and other partner organisations in Brent.
- (c) To seek out the opinions and views of the community with regard to needs and aspirations for the area, sharing council draft reports and budget plans as appropriate and relay them to council decision making bodies.
- (d) To develop and support partnership and inter-organisational discussion, consultation and participation between the statutory and voluntary sectors and business, in relation to local issues.
- (e) To consider and participate in arrangements for public consultation regarding council services and policies which directly or indirectly affect the area, and/or those requiring 'local consultation'.
- (f) To consider all matters of relevance and/or interest to residents of the area including any related to the activities of other organisations. Area consultative forums shall not however discuss individual or personal cases relating to the authority's regulatory functions, planning, licensing etc., with the exception of major developments, significant planning applications, environmental improvements and traffic management issues.

- (g) To request the attendance of members of the executive, other members, council officers and representatives of other partner organisations to listen to residents' concerns and/or report on matters of local interest.
- (h) Notwithstanding the above, the Brent Connects area consultative forums are consultative only and have no formal decision making powers within the Council's formal decision making processes.

Structure and Membership Brent Connects of area consultative forums

11 Each Brent Connects area consultative forum:

- (a) shall meet at least four times per year. Notwithstanding, a forum may meet more than four times per year, subject to identifying suitable funding, as appropriate.
- (b) will be chaired by a councillor appointed by the Council and supported by a councillor in the role of vice-chair, also appointed by the Council.
- (c) has an appointed lead manager. Lead managers are council officers appointed as 'community champions' because of their close professional and personal links with the forum area they serve.
- (d) will be open to attendance by residents, councillors and council officers, local businesses and traders, representatives of community groups and associations, voluntary and other public and statutory/partner organisations, and other relevant outside agencies.

Talkback - AREA HOUSING BOARD FORUM

Area Housing Board Forum Structure

12 The Council's Area Housing Board Forum, *Talkback*, has been established with the aims and roles set out below.

Areas covered

13 The boundaries of the Council's Area Housing Board Forum, *Talkback*, will be those of the landlord service area.

Aims of the Forum

- 14
- (a) To involve customers in the provision of housing services.
 - (b) To monitor the performance of housing management and contractors of the housing management service and other parts of the housing services.
 - (c) To develop new ideas and methods for solving Council housing problems.
 - (d) To influence practices and policies that determines the provision of housing services.
 - (e) To influence practices and policies that determine the provision of housing services.

- (f) To advise the housing management service on local priorities for the provision of housing services and the allocation of resources.
- (g) To advise the housing management service in the development of an area strategy/business strategy.
- (h) To liaise with other groups and organisations.

Membership of the Forum

- 15 Membership of the Council's Area Housing Board Forum, *Talkback*, will be open to all residents in tenant and leasehold properties that are managed on behalf of the Council by the housing management service.
- 16 There will be no voting rights for any attendees at the Council's Area Housing Board Forum.
- 17 Members of the Council will be eligible to attend meetings of the Area Housing Board Forum.

Meetings of the Forum

- 18 (a) Meetings of the Council's Area Housing Board Forum, *Talkback*, will be open to the public and to the press, and at the discretion of the person facilitating/co-ordinating/chairing the meetings, any person may speak.
- (b) The Council's Area Housing Board Forum shall meet at least four times a year and once in every quarter and the meetings will be held on a rotational basis in the following geographical areas: Wembley; East Brent (formerly North Kilburn); South Kilburn; and Harlesden, Brentfield and St Raphaels.
- (c) There will be no formal chair or quorum requirements or restrictions.
- (d) In June each year, one representative from each registered tenants' and residents' association may be put forward to join a forum organising team to seek advise on the composition of agendas, the format of the Council's Area Housing Board Forum meetings and shaping outcomes from sessions of the Forum. This Forum organising team will meet at least eight times a year.
- (e) Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with any rules agreed in respect of the conduct of those meetings.

BRENT CONNECTS SERVICE USER FORA

- 19 The Council has established the following Service User Fora with the aims and roles set out below:
 - Brent Connects Disability Forum
 - Brent Connects Private Sector Housing Forum
 - Brent Connects Pensioners Forum
 - Brent Connects Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum
 - Brent Connects Equality Forum

Brent Connects - Disability Forum

- 20
- (a) To provide the focal point for disabled people and mental health service users, their carers, advocates, service providers, advisors, officers, Council members and representatives from voluntary organisations and community groups to meet together on a quarterly basis to exchange views and to learn from each others experiences.
 - (b) To consider all aspects of the Council's policies as they relate to the needs of disabled people and mental health service users and their carers living in Brent.
 - (c) To influence members to make the best and most efficient use of resources available in the borough for disabled people and mental health service users within the framework of Best Value.
 - (d) To ensure that the Council is aware of current and forthcoming legislation and the demands and expectations of disabled people and mental health service users who live and/or work within the borough.
 - (e) To be a formal point of consultation for the Council on services provided for disabled people and mental health service users.
 - (f) To encourage and identify opportunities for the Council to work in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups on issues relating to disabled people and mental health service users.
 - (g) To be empowered to make formal representations through the Council's decision-making structure on matters relating to disabled people and mental health service users.
 - (h) To ensure suggestions and recommendations agreed are incorporated as part of the Council's annual service planning process.
 - (i) Where necessary, the Forum to request reports from officers on matters relating to disability and mental health services.
 - (j) To identify and manage differences between disabled people, their carers and other agencies.
 - (k) The Council will be encouraged to utilise the forum to keep disabled people and mental health service users informed of current and forthcoming policies, practices and procedures that may affect them.
 - (l) To acknowledge and campaign for equal access to service provision for those people who have disability and mental health support needs.

Brent Connects - Private Sector Housing Forum

- 21
- To raise and/or respond to issues and concerns and to make representations and recommendations to the Cabinet and relevant Council Committees or Sub-Committees (including Scrutiny Committees) concerning:

- (a) the development of policies and procedures in consultation with users which promote and support the availability of good quality owner occupied in rented accommodation in the private sector;
- (b) topics of general interest on private sector housing;
- (c) performance of services offered to elderly and disabled people; and
- (d) any other matters affecting residents and stakeholders involved in the provision of residential accommodation in the private sector in the borough.

Brent Connects - Pensioners Forum

- 22
- (a) To ensure that the Council is aware of the policies and aspirations of older people within the borough.
 - (b) To consider at a draft stage all aspects of Council policy as it relates to the needs of older people.
 - (c) To encourage the Council to make the best and most efficient use of resources available in the borough for older people and to publicise them to the residents of Brent.
 - (d) To be a formal point of consultation for the Council on services provided for older people.
 - (e) To encourage and identify opportunities for the Council to work in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups on issues relating to older people.
 - (f) To raise and/or respond to issues and concerns and to make representations and recommendations to the Cabinet and relevant Council committees or sub-committees (including Scrutiny Committees) concerning matters relating to older people.

Brent Connects Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum

- 23
- (a) To provide a vehicle for effective voluntary sector input into Council policy development and to promote more active partnership working between the Council and the local voluntary sector.
 - (b) To oversee the ongoing development, implementation and review of Brent Council's Voluntary Sector Strategy.
 - (c) To maintain a strategic overview of voluntary and statutory service provision in Brent, including the identification of gaps and overlaps in service provision.
 - (d) To consider Council policy and practice as it relates to voluntary sector issues.
 - (e) To provide advice to the Council on possible areas of grant funding priority and consider how these reflect the Council's overall strategic aims and objectives.
 - (f) To consider and promote mechanisms thorough which the voluntary sector can become more effectively involved in regeneration within Brent.

Brent Connects - Equality Forum

- 24
- (a) To focus on partnership working and building resilience within Brent's underrepresented and vulnerable communities, with the aim of reducing inequality.
 - (b) To actively support the progress, achievement and development of initiatives to ensure that residents have equal access to services, resources and amenities.
 - (c) To help the authority to develop strategies that contribute to reducing inequality across the borough and across all 9 protected characteristics.
 - (d) To empower communities with knowledge and confidence to build capacity and reduce inequality.
 - (e) To focus on partnership working and knowledge sharing with underrepresented communities and vulnerable groups, with the aim of building resilience reducing inequality.
 - (f) Is open to any member of the public.
 - (g) Will meet quarterly – meeting dates to be set annually as part of the Brent Council's Committee calendar.
 - (h) Will be chaired by an elected Brent Council member appointed annually by full council.
 - (i) The Equality Forum will be supported by officers from the Council's Diversity Team.
 - (j) The Diversity Team will publicise and develop contacts to encourage participation from officers, members, the community and Brent's voluntary and Private sectors.
 - (k) Officers to engage across the community to try to ensure representation across all 9 characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010