



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SELECT COMMITTEE Tuesday, 27 July 2010 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Van Kalwala (Chair), Councillor Brown (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Ashraf, Hossain, McLennan, HB Patel and Sheth

Also Present: Councillor Harrison

Apologies were received from: Councillors Beckman and Chohan

1. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were none.

2. **Deputations**

None.

3. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2010 be agreed as an accurate record.

4. **Matters Arising**

Performance and Finance Review 2009/10 – Quarter 3

In answer to a question regarding the lack of in borough foster placements, it was reported that there had been a fundamental review of the fostering service and more Brent foster carers were beginning to come forward.

5. **An introduction to the Local Strategic Partnership and Partnership Working in Brent.**

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director, Policy) explained the importance of overview and scrutiny looking at the performance of the Council's partners and understanding the role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and its delivery mechanisms. She stated that the Council was required by law to have a local strategic partnership although Brent had created an informal structure prior to it becoming law. With the aid of a presentation circulated at the meeting, Cathy Tyson explained the functions

of the LSP and its structure. It was explained that included within the thematic partnerships were the statutory partnerships covering crime and children and that the employer partnership had previously been a freestanding body which had been incorporated into the LSP. Cathy Tyson outlined what the LSP meant for Brent and pointed out the critical role the partnership had in the current economic climate of responding to cuts in public sector funding and addressing the Total Place agenda. She explained why it was important for the Council to work with its partners and the role overview and scrutiny had in this. The law was weak with regards to what the response should be from partner authorities but there were ways of working through the LSP to achieve outcomes.

In answer to questions from members around the role of the LSP in responding to government announcements concerning health and crime, it was explained that it was currently a very fast moving climate but that discussions on the implications of the proposed changes to health provision were already underway. Also, from the announcement that day regarding crime and policing, there would be consideration of how the reduction in police resources could be counter balanced by other proposals coming through. Members were informed that the Metropolitan Police remained committed to high visibility policing and the Council would be engaged in how this was sustained with less resources. Members were re-assured that the Council would not be covering any gaps caused by reduced numbers of police but the Acting Head of Community Safety would be reporting on a review of police community support officers.

It was explained that the funding of the LSP was met by partner agencies with individual projects being supported either through main stream funding or performance reward grant, the latter of which had now been withdrawn. Despite the cut in performance reward grant the LSP would continue its work but with less resources to call upon.

6. Performance Management & how to interpret performance data

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director, Policy) prepared members of the select committee for consideration of the performance information supplied under the following item on the agenda. She explained that every quarter information on the budget and performance was put before the Corporate Management Team before going to the Executive and then before the Performance and Finance Select Committee. The information drew from a national set of performance indicators which had recently reduced in number. Some of this information related to key local issues and other parts related to the Local Area Agreement and shared partnership indicators.

This information was presented under the heading 'vital signs' and was presented by means of an exception report which identified high risk areas and presented broader performance data. In answer to a question regarding the inclusion of data from partner agencies it was explained that all data collection operated to the same quarterly timeframe although some partners' data collection was slower than the Councils and so the timeframes presented were sometimes out of line. Other data was presented on a regional basis and that which affected Brent had to be extracted.

7. Performance and Finance Review

Members considered the report circulated, which summarised the Council's spending, activity and performance in quarter 4 up to the end of March 2010. The Director of Policy and Regeneration, Phil Newby, added that the overall position of the Council was not where it wanted to be. It had maintained a position of mediocrity and aspired to raise performance through the One Council programme. At the present time too many of the vital signs were labelled with the red triangle.

In response to questions, it was explained that the indicator for the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting showed a drop against the target following an initial increase after the scheme was made compulsory. It was now time to reinforce the message about recycling. The review underway of how to meet the target for graffiti removal would consider if things could be done better with the resources available. Mick Bowden (Deputy Director of Finance and Corporate Resources) explained that the impact of personalisation of adult social care moved people away from residential support taking with them a budget and the challenge for the Council was how to continue providing care for those still in need of such support with the reduced resources available. He added that in many ways the same position applied to schools opting to become academies where resources were drawn away to individual schools but broader support services still needed to be provided for the schools left.

In noting a fall in parking related income, members asked what the reasons for this were. Mick Bowden replied that the end of the year saw an upturn in the figure so the budget needed to be monitored to see if the fall was just a short term occurrence or whether it was the start of a trend.

The Chair asked what the introduction of a cap on the payment of Housing Benefit would have on the borough. It was explained that there were approximately 2000 properties in the borough potentially above the cap which consisted mostly of the higher number bedroom houses and translated into a value of around £9M. The question would be how people could respond to this and the consequent impact on the Council if it led to increased homelessness.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Council's spending, activity and performance in the financial year 2009/10 be noted;
- (ii) that the message to all directors requesting them to address underlying spending pressures in 2010/11 so that spend is kept within budget, underperformance tackled and measures taken in consultation where appropriate with Lead Members to achieve this, be noted;
- (iii) that the 2010/11 virements referred to in paragraph 5.11 of the report and detailed in appendix G be noted.

8. Performance and Finance Select Committee Work Programme

Members were advised to identify items that either the select committee or other overview and scrutiny committees might want to look at. Items raised included school places, the impact on remaining schools of those moving to academy status and the work of the crime prevention strategy group, including how the targets

could be met. It was suggested that this could link with the item identified in the report on tackling anti social behaviour and how some of the Government proposals around this might impact on Brent.

RESOLVED:

that an item on anti social behaviour be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the select committee or its equivalent replacement.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 19 October 2010 but that proposals to revise the overview and scrutiny structure would be submitted to Council on 13 September 2010.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Z VAN KALWALA
Chair