



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8 December 2009 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Jones (Chair), Councillor Castle (Vice Chair) and Councillors Clues, Motley (alternate for Councillor Leaman) and H B Patel.

Also Present: Councillors Colwill (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) and Powney.

Apologies were received from: Councillors Leaman, Mistry and Thomas

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

None declared.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 13th October 2009**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th October 2009 be received and approved as accurate record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Motley as present at the meeting as an alternate for Councillor Leaman.

3. **Matters Arising (if any)**

Cricklewood Library Children's Centre Project and Archive Move

The Chair repeated her request that clarification be provided concerning the covenant on Cricklewood Library. Councillor Castle queried whether this issue could be discussed at Area Consultative Forums. Members noted that Legal Services would respond to these requests.

4. **Review of Representation of Political Groups on Committees**

Members received a report on a review of representation of political groups on committees and noted that the Council had agreed to reduce the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee from eight to seven members. The Committee then agreed to Councillor Motley's suggestion that the membership of the Forward Plan Select Committee, Health Select Committee and Performance and Finance Select Committee be reduced from eight to seven members, with the Labour Group

members for or each of these committees reduced from three to two Members accordingly.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the report on Review of Representation of Political Groups on Committees be noted;
- (ii) that the Council's decision to reduce the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Overview Scrutiny Committee from eight to seven members be noted;
- (iii) that the membership of the Forward Plan Select Committee, Health Select Committee and Performance and Finance Select Committee be reduced from eight to seven members; and
- (iv) that the Labour Group representation on the Forward Plan Select Committee, Health Select Committee and Performance and Finance Select Committee be reduced from three to two members.

5. Appointments to Sub-Committees (if any)

RESOLVED:-

that the changes to the membership of the Forward Plan Select Committee, Health Select Committee and Performance and Finance Select Committee be confirmed by the Labour Group Whip.

6. Tubbs Road Councillor Call for Action

Councillor Powney addressed the Committee on the matter, stating that he felt the response detailed in the briefing note from Transportation Unit lacked positive proposals. He suggested that there be further consideration of the suggestions made at the site visit on 24th November 2009, in particular preventing right turns out of Furness Road into Harlesden High Street and left turns out of Tubbs Road into Old Oak Lane. Councillor Powney also felt that the briefing note's assertion that the various measures proposed would result in unacceptable journey times for the residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road was unproven and he asked that residents be consulted on this. With regard to the officer's observation in the briefing note that the suggested measures would impact adversely on other parts of the road network, including Harlesden Town Centre, Councillor Powney asserted that many roads were already heavily used and large volumes of traffic were to be expected.

With the agreement of the Chair, Beatrice Barleon addressed the Committee. Beatrice Barleon expressed her disappointment that no specific solutions had been suggested and she responded to the comments made in the briefing note. She agreed with the findings of the traffic surveys carried out in July 2009 that the volume of traffic, as opposed to speeding, was the main concern and this had also been observed during the site visit. In her view, Beatrice Barleon felt that the introduction of road humps in September 2001, subsequently replaced by 85 millimetre high sinusoidal speed humps in December 2007 were unnecessary and

had not helped ease traffic flow. Furthermore, proposals to introduce pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction of Station Road and Tubbs Road would exacerbate congestion. The assertion that the measures suggested by residents would result in undesirable actions by drivers in other parts of the road network, such as executing 'u' turns to avoid banned turns, she felt had been exaggerated and in view of the fact that these were busy roads, such actions would be difficult and in any case could be addressed through increased enforcement. Beatrice Barleon also disagreed with the suggestion that it would impact adversely on Harlesden Town Centre. Members heard that residents' views had not been sought with regard to the measures leading to unacceptable journey times for residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road. Beatrice Barleon added that residents wanted reduced access to Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road and in her view residents would be prepared to expect extended journey times along Harlesden High Road as a result of this.

Andrew Davies (Policy and Regeneration Officer, Policy and Regeneration Unit) added that at the site visit a number of vehicles had been observed turning right from Furness Road into Harlesden High Street then left into Tubbs Road which suggested Tubbs Road was being used as a cut through towards the A40. It had also been observed that some vehicles including lorries experienced problems passing along the narrowed section of Tubbs Road where only vehicles under 6 feet 6 inches width could pass.

Tim Jackson (Head of Transportation) referred to the briefing note summarising officers' responses to the councillor call-for-action and comments resulting from the site visit. In addition to the comments in the briefing note, Tim Jackson stated that officers had been aware of traffic problems in the area for some time, however he felt that the response had been pragmatic in view of the various implications of undertaking the measures that had been suggested. Members heard that the police emergency services would have concerns about banning turns in and out of Tubbs Road and whether these could be effectively enforced. Transport for London (TfL) could oppose any measures that would impact upon Harlesden High Road, particularly as it would affect bus routes. Various solutions had been considered, however there were concerns that banning right turns at the end of Furness Road could impact upon Rucklidge Avenue and Wrottesley Road. Tim Jackson advised that the proposed pedestrian facilities at the junction of Station Road and Tubbs Road were for green man lights to improve pedestrian safety, however funding for this measure was yet to be approved. He acknowledged that residents had not yet been consulted with regard to turning bans impacting upon journey times in Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road, however he advised that this was because there were no specific measures to consult upon. Tim Jackson felt that signage was adequate, although this could be reviewed and he suggested that sometimes congestion was exacerbated by drivers relying solely on satellite navigation systems and there was a possibility that satnav companies could be informed of the restrictions on Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road.

Tim Jackson informed Members that the Harlesden Town Centre Area Based Scheme was in the early stages of formulation with a view to submit a bid under the TfL's 'Streets for People' funding pot. The intention of the scheme was to improve the quality of the public realm in Harlesden and it could possibly include issues concerning parking and traffic. However, the Committee was advised that there were no proposals at present for Tubbs Road or Nightingale Road under this

scheme, although it was still at the scoping stage and suggestions from Members were welcomed.

During discussion, Councillor Castle in acknowledging that consultation with residents was undertaken as part of the process when considering consultation proposals for Controlled Parking Zones, felt that the same consultation process should apply in this case, particularly as a number of representations had been made by residents. He suggested that a detailed consultation on possible solutions be undertaken with all residents of the affected areas, including an opportunity for residents to add their own views. Councillor Motley felt that there was a need for a review of signage, especially at the top end of Tubbs Road where signs could be hard to identify. With regard to the traffic lights at the junction of Tubbs Road and Station Road, he suggested that these be re-phased to include an extended green light period. Councillor Motley agreed that the suggestion of banning right hand turns from Furness Road onto Harlesden High Road could be of some merit and in addition to satnav companies being informed of the width restriction in Tubbs Road, that Google maps and other web mapping organisations also be advised of this.

Councillor H B Patel sought clarification concerning the possibility of re-classifying Tubbs Road. The Chair acknowledged that TfL representatives had declined the invitation to attend this meeting and hoped that they would be able to meet with Kensal Green ward members in future to discuss this issue. She felt that further consultation and consideration of measures to address the residents' concerns was necessary.

In reply to the issues raised, Tim Jackson stated that it was unusual for a residential road such as Tubbs Road to be classified as an 'A' road, however any attempts to de-classify the road would require a submission to the Department for Transport who would consult TfL. Members heard that TfL was unlikely to support the de-classification because of the possible impact upon bus routes, whilst financial implications also needed to be considered as de-classification would transfer road maintenance responsibilities from TfL to the Council. Tim Jackson also advised that de-classification of Tubbs Road would not influence road use as most drivers used this road daily and therefore there would be no significant benefit to residents.

The Committee then agreed to the Chair's suggested recommendations to the Highways Committee concerning consultation, signage, traffic lights re-phasing, satellite navigation and internet mapping organisations, prevention of certain road turns and with regard to Harlesden Town Centre's 'Streets for People' scheme.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Highways Committee be requested to agree the following recommendations:-
 - (a) that Transportation Unit officers consult residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road and local councillors to find out what traffic calming solutions would be acceptable to them in order to reduce the volume of traffic using both streets;

- (b) that road signs in the area be reviewed so it is clear to drivers that Tubbs Road has width restrictions and should not be accessed by vehicles wider than 6ft 6inches and additional signs to this effect be erected at the junction of Tubbs Road and High Street Harlesden and Tubbs Road and Old Oak Lane if necessary;
- (c) that road signs be erected on High Street Harlesden that clearly directs traffic to the A40 via the Harlesden one-way system (A404 and A4000) and that signs be erected on Furness Road that direct traffic to the A40 via Scrubs Lane (A219);
- (d) that the traffic lights at the western end of Tubbs Road be re-phased so that traffic does not build up beyond the width restrictors in Tubbs Road to ease traffic congestion in the street;
- (e) that satellite navigation companies and internet mapping organisations be contacted by officers in the Transportation Unit to see if the narrow, residential nature of Tubbs Road can be shown clearly on their maps, and that it is not depicted as a major through route, as is currently the case.
- (f) that officers consider the feasibility of:-
 - preventing rights turns out of Furness Road into High Street Harlesden, which drivers appear to be using as a route to Tubbs Road to cut through to the A40. Instead traffic should be directed to the A40 via Scrubs Lane.
 - preventing left turns out of Tubbs Road into Old Oak Lane, again to reduce the number of cars using Tubbs Road by stopping the direct cut through towards the A40; and
- (ii) that in noting that the Harlesden Town Centre's "Streets for People" scheme is being prepared, that the Highways Committee be requested to consider within the scheme's scope the traffic management issues for local roads, including Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road.

7. Update on the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2010 - 2015

Linda Martin (Head of Service Development and Commissioning, Housing and Community Care) introduced the report which summarised progress to date on the Voluntary and Community Sector strategy. She explained that there had been an agreement over what areas the Voluntary and Community Strategy would cover, a broad understanding of how these areas would be addressed and what groups would look at specific areas. The draft strategy had also been approved by the Project Board and work would continue on developing the strategy in January 2010. A 12 week consultation period would commence and a survey was to be sent to all stakeholders to seek further input and engagement. Future events would be held to allow respondents to discuss the findings of the survey and there would be further consultation on the draft strategy in the spring of 2010. Members noted that it was intended to launch the finalised strategy in the summer of 2010.

Jacqueline Carr (Brent Citizens Advice Bureau) was invited to address the Committee. Jacqueline Carr stated that the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) had not been involved in development of the strategy up to this point and she highlighted the need for greater communication and for more engagement. Members noted that CAB had learnt about the Council's Main Grant Programme the previous week and Jacqueline Carr added that CAB would be interested in running a scheme under this programme in future. She commented that the Funders Fair event had been a useful exercise.

Keith Lunn (Oxford Kilburn Youth Trust) welcomed the move to three year grants under the Main Grant Programme which he felt offered significant benefits to participants, including providing greater stability. He also felt that the Council was engaging more with voluntary sector organisations through a number of different service areas and through various means. However, Keith Lunn commented that one of the difficulties was the Council knowing what voluntary organisations there were in the various areas of the Borough and what knowledge voluntary organisations had of what areas the Council was involved in. He stressed the importance of spreading information widely and he felt a long term objective would be for the Council to be able to filter information to all voluntary sector organisations in the Borough. The use of electronic information and through locality-based work and a cascading information system was suggested as a way forwards to achieve this, whilst the Voluntary Sector Unit could also be provided with the funds to help circulate and cascade information.

During discussion by Members, Councillor Clues expressed concern that CAB had not been involved in the strategy to date and not been aware of the Main Grant Programme until recently. He sought clarification with regard to Brent Association for Voluntary Action (BrAVA) role and its relationship with voluntary organisations. He felt that the strategy could benefit by taking an Area Consultative Forum (ACF) approach to reach out to the relevant local organisations, particularly those in more deprived areas of the borough. Councillor Clues added that good use could be made of the ACFs' databases to identify relevant organisations. Councillor Castle commented that Brent Police and NHS Brent already made use of the ACFs' database. He welcomed attendance at ACFs from the Council's Voluntary Sector Unit and commented that there was not presently a co-ordinated approach to recording the numerous voluntary groups in the borough. Councillor H B Patel suggested that those who attended ACF meetings tended to because of a specific issue relevant to them was on the agenda.

The Chair stressed the need for the various organisations views to be taken on board during the development of the strategy, including those from the voluntary sector. She felt that capacity training was a particular issue and enquired whether specific training was to be organised. Confirmation of the deadline to apply for grants under the Main Grant Programme and how grant tracking was performing was sought. With regard to the area forums suggestion from Councillor Clues, the Chair added that ward councillors could help identify what local organisations could be involved in the strategy consultation and make use of the ACFs database which could also be shared with other areas of the Council. The Chair stressed the need for the strategy to address communication issues. She also sought confirmation as to when the next update on the strategy would be presented to the Committee.

In response to the issues raised, Linda Martin acknowledged that capacity building was an issue for organisations and NHS Brent was running workshops on this topic with a view to enabling voluntary sector organisations to run community health help sessions. She confirmed that the deadline for applications for funding from the Main Grants Programme was 30 November 2009 and approximately 60 organisations had been funded through this programme since it had began. In addition, a voluntary sector day had take place in 2009 to provide information and advice on obtaining funding through this programme and another such day was planned for 2010. BrAVA were presently responsible for distributing information to voluntary organisations with regard to the Main Grant Programme and the strategy and information also appeared on the Council's and Brent Resource and Information Network's (BRAIN) websites. Linda Martin advised that the Main Grant Programme was theme based and linked to key Council objectives. The themes changed each year and priority was given to those organisations who had applied to run schemes that tied in with these themes and the grants were for a three year duration. Linda Martin commented a number of high quality bids had been received in the first year since the change of criteria to the Main Grant Programme that the first year of applications and that 22 organisations had been successful. Monitoring was undertaken to ensure that the funding provided was being spent in the right area and grant tracking had generally been effective, although it was important that the various service areas of the Council involved were inputting the correct data and appropriate training was required. The Committee noted that there would be future changes to the Main Grants Programme criteria and that BrAVA would need to apply for funding to continue in its role as the local voluntary sector umbrella organisation and that other organisations may also be interested in applying.

Linda Martin continued that that the draft strategy survey took a sector-based approach, whilst voluntary sector representatives had been appointed to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Strategic Forum. She acknowledged that contact with the relevant representative might not always be in place and ways of improving communication were being looked at. With regard to suggestions to utilise ACF databases, Linda Martin stated that this could be considered further, although a sector-based approach was presently taken because funding was theme-based. It was also proposed that some meetings of the Voluntary Sector Service User Consultative Forum take place during the day and each meeting to be theme based. It was acknowledged that there was an active voluntary sector community in Brent and, although not all were necessarily involved with the Council, their contribution to to the community was welcomed.

Members noted that the date of the next update was yet to be confirmed. The Committee then agreed to the Chair's suggestion that ways of improving communication with voluntary and community sector organisations be considered, such as the Voluntary Sector Unit utilising the ACFs' databases to contact relevant organisations.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Update on the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2010-2015 be noted; and

- (ii) that the Executive be requested to agree that the Council consider ways of improving communications with voluntary and community sector organisations, such as the Voluntary Sector Unit utilising the Area Consultative Forums' databases to contact relevant organisations.

8. Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2008/09

Councillor Colwill (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) introduced the report which included details of the outcome of the Commission for Social Care Inspection on Independence, Wellbeing and Choice and the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. The Council was taking a leading role amongst its partners in ensuring safeguarding of adults and Brent NHS and Brent Mencap were amongst other organisations involved. Funding was equally split between the Council and NHS Brent and awareness training on this issue had been provided to Members.

Keith Skerman (Interim Assistant Director of Community Care, Housing and Community Care) then addressed the Committee. He explained that the Adult Safeguarding Committee had been replaced by the Safeguarding Adults Board last year which would focus more on supporting people in care. The Commission for Social Care Inspection had raised concerns with regard to quality assurance and the need to ensure thorough auditing. An action plan had been produced as a result of the Inspection's conclusions and a quality assurance framework was in place, including expanding the Safeguarding Adults Team to include a senior practitioner and support officer for mental capacity/deprivation of liberty safeguards which would bring excellence and expertise to the Team. The Committee noted that there had been a 20% increase in referrals in 2008/09 from the previous year, although the increase was lower than that recorded from the year before and the majority of referrals related to alleged abuse in a client's own home.

During discussion by Members, Councillor H B Patel sought further details as to the situations which led to safeguarding referrals and whether action was taken by those who had committed the abuse. With regard to direct payments, he enquired what monitoring took place of those who had been chosen to provide the service. He also sought reasons for the low attendance of training in 2008/09. Councillor Clues commented that the increased monitoring of victims seemed to be working effectively.

The Chair commented that there still seemed to be an issue concerning attendance of Safeguarding Adults Board and its' sub-group meetings. She sought views regarding the impact of the move to more direct payments and opportunities for respite services available for carers. In noting the relatively large proportion of unsubstantiated cases, she enquired whether monitoring of such cases would cease or whether attempts would be made to seek more evidence.

In reply to the issues raised, Councillor Colwill advised that court action could be taken where there had been evidence of financial abuse. He cited a case of an adult who had regained the ability to talk after securing direct payments with the help of Brent Mencap to be able to live on their own and select their own choice of care. Councillor Colwill informed the Committee that safeguarding training was free to all councillors and that it offered useful guidance.

Anne O'Neil (Brent Mencap) was invited to respond to some of the issues raised. Anne O'Neil advised that Brent MENCAP carried out checks when people went onto direct payments and to date there was not much evidence to suggest there being many victims of fraud. A list of approved agencies was available to clients who were considering direct payments and Brent MENCAP could verify whether a potential provider had been Criminal Records Bureau checked. In addition, a Care Manager would review and monitor each case. Members heard that research had suggested that a person's safety was actually greater when they were not in an institution.

Sarah McDermott (Safeguarding Adults Co-ordinator, Adult Social Care) advised Members that an away day was planned in February 2010 and that representation on the Safeguarding Adults Board and its sub-groups would be reviewed. The Committee heard that the main reasons for safeguarding referrals were physical violence, lack of communication and financial abuse, such as unlawful access to bank accounts. If abuse had been caused by carers, they could be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Abuse by family members could result in safeguarding of the victim's money or action taken to ensure court protection. Monitoring of victims involved liaison with all agencies involved with everyone working to appropriate and prompt action. With regard to unsubstantiated cases, no further action would be taken where there was no evidence of any wrongdoing, however where there was possible evidence the case would continue to be investigated and further evidence sought.

Keith Skerman added that electronic and telecare monitoring also took place to complement conventional forms of monitoring. It was recognised that there was a need to provide respite for family members involved in care in view of the stress that could be experienced. He acknowledged that there could be more respite services available to carers generally, and NHS Brent and the Council were working on a Carers Strategy. Staff were to receive more training to assess the implications for the families involved and it was noted that day centres also offered respite services. With regard to training, Keith Skerman advised that attendance could not be enforced, however a charge for non-attendance could be considered to encourage more attendance. It was noted that approximately 50% of organisations involved had attended training sessions to date.

The Chair requested that a breakdown of the various situations involving unsubstantiated cases be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:-

that the Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2008/09 be noted.

9. Climate Change Final Task Group Report

Councillor H B Patel the Chair of the task group introduced the report and informed Members of the task group's purpose of reviewing the Council's Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan. The projects were reviewed under the following themes:-

- Energy efficiency in Council office buildings

- Contribution of IT Unit
- Energy management in school buildings
- Planning
- Raising awareness of climate change and sustainability amongst Brent residents

Councillor H B Patel then referred to the recommendations of the task group as set out in the report.

Councillor Clues spoke of the need to engage schools, and children in particular, in helping to achieve the objectives of the Carbon Management Strategy. He commented that rather than focusing on training on climate change champions, that it would be more effective to have an 'Environmental Implications' section on Council reports.

The Chair enquired how providing more parking spaces at the Civic Centre would tie in with the Green Travel Plan. Details were also sought regarding the Sustainability Forum.

In reply, Councillor H B Patel commented that school buildings were responsible for 27% of carbon emissions in the Borough and was increasing, which could be attributable to schools' longer opening hours. He felt that increasing parking spaces at the Civic Centre to 179 was within the Carbon Management Strategy, especially in view that use of electric cars may increase in the future. In addition, competitors who could host events as well as the Council could be handed an advantage if parking spaces at the Civic Centre were not increased. He advised that the Sustainability Forum met quarterly.

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director – Policy, Policy and Regeneration) added that the Sustainability Forum was part of the LSP structure and composed a broad range of community groups focusing on six different projects. She stated that the intention of climate change champions was to raise awareness of environmental issues, although she acknowledged that this did not address practical implications. Cathy Tyson advised that each service area was required to show how it would reduce carbon emissions in the strategy.

The Chair thanked task group members for the work that had been undertaken. She concurred with Councillor Clues suggestion regarding report and Members agreed that any formal reports to Members should include an 'Environmental Implications' section where relevant.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Climate Change Final Task Group report be noted;
- (ii) that the Climate Change Final Task Group recommendations be agreed and to include an additional recommendation that an 'Environmental Implications' section be included on all formal reports to Members where relevant; and
- (iii) that the report be passed to Executive for approval.

10. Proposals to Enhance Local Democracy - Motion Referred From Council

Members discussed the motion that had been referred to the Committee by Council. Councillor Motley emphasised the need for more representation for non-Executive members and to engage the public more in local democracy matters. The Chair concurred that there should be a focus on engaging the public more widely.

Members then agreed to the Chair's suggestion that a task group be formed to consider the matter further, of which the scope was to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, with the task group to commence work in the municipal year 2010/11.

RESOLVED:-

that a task group be formed to consider proposals to enhance local democracy, the scope of which is to be considered at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th February 2010 and the task group to commence work in the municipal year 2010/11.

11. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Andrew Davies (Policy Officer, Policy and Regeneration Officer) advised Members of an opportunity to attend half day training workshop for councillors on scrutiny transformation of services in adult social care at the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Town Hall on Friday, 8th January 2010, organised by the London Borough of Ealing.

The Chair commented that answers were still being sought to questions on the Town Centre Regeneration Task Group. Members agreed to the Chair's request that a task group be formed to review alleygating schemes, with the scope to be considered at the next meeting and the task group to begin work in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Work Programme be noted; and
- (ii) that a task group on Reviewing Alleygating Schemes be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, the scope of which is to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee on 9th February 2010 and to commence work in the municipal year 2010/11.

12. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, 9th February 2010.

13. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

L. JONES
Chair