



## **MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Wednesday 3 May 2017 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair) and Councillors Choudhary, Ezeajughi, Maurice (Substitute for Councillor Davidson) and McLeish (Substitute for Councillor Aden).

Also Present: Councillors Miller and Tatler

Apologies were received from: Councillors Aden, Davidson, Mashari and Stopp

#### **1. Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2. Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations.

#### **3. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 March 2017 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4. Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report and Update on Community Safety**

The committee had before them the Annual Report for 2016-2017 of the Safer Brent Partnership, a statutory community safety partnership established in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The report detailed the activities of the Partnership undertaken in support of the jointly created Safer Brent Partnership Strategy aimed at reducing crime, disorder, substance misuse and reoffending in Brent. The Partnership comprised the London Borough of Brent, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company and NHS Brent Clinical Commission Group. The committee also received an update report on community safety from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment which provided details of Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Crime and the Fear of Crime in Brent.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Michael Gallagher (Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police), Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities), Karina Wane (Head of Community Protection) and Amar Dave (Strategic Director of

Regeneration and Environment). Members were informed that Karina Wane was attending in place of Carolyn Downs (Chief Executive of Brent Council) who due to an error had not been invited to attend the meeting.

In the ensuing discussion the committee questioned the work being undertaken to combat anti-Semitism and raised concerns regarding incidents of intimidating behaviour associated with religious sectarianism in Brent's Islamic communities. Referring to the statistics provided regarding hate crime in Brent, members sought further detail regarding the groups affected and questioned why there had been an increase in hate crime related to religion. Members queried the procedure for information sharing with local councillors following the occurrence of a major crime in their wards. In view of the rising figures associated with anti-social behaviour and gang activity in Brent, the committee requested an overview of the work being undertaken to tackle such issues, including drug dealing and prostitution, and highlighted a number of hotspots of illegal activity in the borough. Members questioned what initiatives were pursued with the borough's schools, particularly around issues of domestic violence and violence against women and girls.

In response, Councillor Miller explained that hate crime statistics were closely monitored, emphasised the importance of education in tackling this type of crime and outlined the Council's work with the Brent Interfaith Forum. The Borough Commander also praised the work of the Brent Interfaith Forum and highlighted the importance of monitoring data regarding the fear of crime, as it was recognised that this too had a significant impact on quality of life. The local police response to anti-Semitism included increased patrols on High Holy Days. A strong working relationship was also maintained with the Community Safety Trust, a charity which aimed to protect the Jewish Community from anti-Semitism and other threats. Different communities had different needs and the Borough Commander had visited and addressed worshipers at each of the mosques in Brent around a variety of issues, including concerns relating to the public mood around Britain's exit from the European Union. Whilst it was acknowledged that tensions could exist between different Islamic groups, broadly, community cohesion in Brent was considered to be very good. Karina Wane informed members of a community multi agency forum which had been established to help support victims of hate crime in the community.

The Borough Commander outlined the partnership mechanism for sharing information following a serious crime and explained that the Chief Executive and Lead Member for Stronger Communities would always be notified. Wider information sharing was subject to the need to protect on-going investigations and would be at the discretion of the senior investigating officer. Councillor Miller added that as much information as possible would be shared with ward councillors.

The Borough Commander advised that research had been commissioned with the University College London to explore the reasons for the level of knife crime in London. The early results of this indicated that increasing urbanisation was a key factor. London was a growing city and was experiencing an upsurge in its young population; a trend reflected in Brent's population. As the perpetrators and victims of knife crime were largely under the age of twenty-five, a correlation could be drawn between a larger young population and a higher level of knife crime. The Borough Commander commended the good working relationship that had been developed with Brent's communities most affected by knife crime, such as Harlesden and praised the input of the MP for the area and schools, particularly

Newman Catholic College. Karina Wane espoused the value of information sharing with partner agencies and advised that suspects of knife crime would be offered the same interventions as victims as there was often cross over between the two. Brent was currently developing a predictive modelling matrix to support preventative work with those most at risk of being exploited or engaging in crime and was the first authority in the country to do so. A Stronger Communities Strategy was being developed in collaboration with Brent's communities, with community activity at its centre.

Councillor Miller acknowledged that there had been a slight increase in the level of violent crime but explained that this was not necessarily gang related and included traffic and alcohol related incidents. There was therefore many different aspects to addressing this trend including place-based licensing and police controls to tackle hotspots of criminal activity and close collaborative working across the Safer Brent Partnership. The Borough Commander emphasised the importance of working with a community to support intelligence led enforcement of issues such as drug dealing. Members heard that officers were working closely with women working as prostitutes to assist them out of the work. Whilst prostitution did pose a public nuisance and public health issue, the real challenges related to human trafficking, welfare and safeguarding issues. Karina Wane added that the council had a service to help people exit sex working which had been in operation for the last four years and had been commissioned for a further two years. In the last twelve months it had supported thirty-nine people, leading to approximately twenty-six people ceasing the work.

Councillor Miller outlined work relating to violence against women and girls, including such issues as domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, female genital mutilation and honour based violence. This work focused on prevention, protection and prosecution and key aspects of this included raising public awareness and seeking to change behaviour. Councillor Miller detailed a project working with perpetrators of domestic violence to tackle offender behaviour. Outreach work was undertaken with community partners such as GPs but this could be further extended into schools. Karina Wane added that a range of education projects had been previously supported for priority schools focusing on domestic violence and agreed that it would be beneficial to undertake additional outreach work with schools.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Cabinet be recommended to support increased outreach work with the borough's schools as part of the existing Anti-Domestic Violence Strategy, in order to take a preventative approach to potential future offending and assist in the early identification of pupils experiencing issues of domestic violence at home;
- ii) That an update report regarding i) be provided to the committee at a future meeting.

## **6. Task group report on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

The Chair informed the committee that the Chair of the Task Group had been unable to attend the meeting and welcomed James Curtis (Scrutiny and Policy

Officer) to the meeting to introduce the report. James Curtis advised that the task group had been established to examine how the council could grow and enhance the power of small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in the borough.

Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) welcomed the report and the focus on SME in the borough. Members heard that SMEs increasingly represented a key source of employment and the Council had an important role in supporting businesses and helping to create environments in which they could flourish in the borough. The recommendations of the task group were thorough and would be taken forward. With regard to the recommendation regarding business champions, it was considered that the best advocate would be the Brent Business Board.

At the invitation of the Chair, Matthew Dibben (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) provided a brief response to the recommendations set out in the task group report. The committee heard that the focus on the sub-region of West London was important and the council worked closely with the West London Alliance and West London Business. Work was currently underway to develop an enterprise pathway for Brent Start, the council's adult education service. The council was also working with the Brent Business board and Brent Start and Further Education providers to ensure that education providers were responsive to the skills requirements of the employment market and to avoid duplication in the offer between FE providers and Brent Start. The College of Northwest London was currently offering manufacturing qualifications and higher level and degree level apprentices but there were still gaps in certain sectors such as engineering. The council could play a role in ensuring that there was affordable work space available for rent in the borough to support business incubation.

The committee discussed the recommendations of the task group and subsequently raised a number of queries which included seeking further information about the West London Brand, exploring the role of governors in supporting entrepreneurial pathways in schools and how Brent could attract industry to the borough given the expenses associated with being located in London. Members also questioned the level of feedback from Brent Works (a free service provided by the council to assist residents in finding employment and apprenticeship opportunities) and the role of the Chamber of Commerce in Brent. During its discussion, the committee emphasised the importance of the availability of start-up and small scale funding for businesses as well as the accessibility of working space on a flexible or ad-hoc basis.

Responding to the committee's queries, Councillor Tatler advised that the West London economic activity was the biggest in London, after the City of London and the West London Brand sought to support inwards investment, education and skills in the region. This was a growing initiative and businesses could buy into associated support mechanisms offered by West London Business. Work could be done to support governing bodies to consider how their school curriculums could foster entrepreneurial initiative in young people and this was perhaps best targeted at primary schools initially. Matthew Dibben advised that Brent Works had brokered approximately three hundred jobs over the last two years. Brent Works also signposted residents to other providers such as Brent Start to enable access to other stepping stones into work and statistics on this could be shared with the committee following the meeting. West London Business acted as the chamber of

commerce for all of West London and the North London Chamber of Commerce was based in Harrow; the Council worked with both of these. It was acknowledged that access to finance for SMEs was vital and the council played an important role in both signposting to and providing sources of investment. SMEs could be supported to access less traditional forms of investment such as crowd funding and a business case for developing support services around this was being explored by the council.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet be recommended to endorse the four recommendations of the Task Group as set out in the Task Group Report on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Brent.

**7. Update on the committee's work programme 2016-17**

The committee noted the update report on the committee's work programme for 2016/17.

**8. Any other urgent business**

None.

**9. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was subject to confirmation at the Annual Council meeting on 17 May 2017.

The meeting closed at 9pm

M KELCHER  
Chair