



## Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday 3 July 2018 at 6.00 pm**

Boardrooms 3, 4 & 5 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers  
Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Kelcher (Chair)  
Kansagra (Vice-Chair)  
S Butt  
Gbajumo  
Gill  
Kabir  
Mashari  
Nerva

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Abdi, Ethapemi, Hassan, Johnson, Kennelly, Long and  
Stephens

Councillors:

Colwill, Maurice

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020 8937 1355; [bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk](mailto:bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk)

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

## **Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:**

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest\*\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

### **\*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

### **\*\*Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).

(b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
<b>1 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members</b>	
<b>2 Declarations of interests</b>	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, the nature and existence of any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.	
<b>3 Deputations (if any)</b>	
To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.	
<b>4 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	1 - 8
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.	
<b>5 Matters arising (if any)</b>	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
<b>6 Chair's Report</b>	9 - 18
This report includes notes from the Chair of the committee on workplanning and the agenda for the July meeting, recent training undertaken by members, and a recent urgent executive decision. It also proposes a number of recommendations for the committee's consideration.	
<b>7 Brent Priorities 2019 onwards</b>	19 - 22
This report reviews the context for, and plans for the development of, the successor to the Brent Borough Plan 2015-2019.	

**8 Assets and Property Overview & Strategy Brief (2019-2023) 'Making property assets work for Brent'** 23 - 28

With the current asset strategy running from 2016 to 2019, this paper is intended to give Overview and Scrutiny Committee an outline of the scale of property assets (excluding Housing Revenue Account properties) and a brief outline of the main focus areas for the new property strategy being developed for 2020 onwards. The contents are provided for information, feedback and discussion to help guide and support the development of the new strategy. The final strategy is due to be developed and delivered during 2019.

**9 2017-18 Annual Scrutiny Report** 29 - 52

This report summarises the work of the three scrutiny committees during the 2017-2018 municipal year.

**10 Affordable Housing in New Developments Task Group - Update and Terms of Reference** 53 - 56

This report provides an update on the task group examining affordable housing in new developments.

**11 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

**Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 5 September 2018**



- Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.



Brent

## MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 26 March 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair) and Councillors Aden, Colacicco, Crane, Ezeajughi, Mashari and Long

Also Present: Councillors Miller and Tatler

### 1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillors Stopp and McLennan (Deputy Leader). Councillor Long was present as a substitute member of the committee in place of Councillor Stopp.

### 2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

None.

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

There were no matters arising.

### 6. **Order of Business**

That the order of business be amended as set out below.

### 7. **Supporting Business Growth in Brent**

The Chair advised that the committee had requested an update from the Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills on both the actions taken to respond to the recommendations set out in the April 2017 Task Group Report on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME), and the wider programme of activity developed across the Council to support the business growth and enterprise agenda.

Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) drew the committee's attention to the update report and highlighted that members

had received a first look at the Brent Business Portal. Comments and questions from the committee were welcomed.

The Chair questioned the response taken to the task group recommendation regarding the appointment of a business champion for SME. Councillor Tatler explained that the view had been taken that the Business Board had the expertise and resourcing to fulfil the role of champion for SME to a greater degree than a single officer of the council. The Chair advised that for any future update reports it would be helpful to provide an explanation of the reasons for alternative courses of action being taken, where these diverged significantly from the recommendations made.

The committee sought further information on the transparency of the Business Board and queries were raised regarding the integration of the Board with the council and the availability of the minutes of the Board's meetings for members to view. The committee questioned how the council could further develop their employment support offer and proposed that members be apprised of the resources available to enable them to better signpost residents.

Councillor Tatler advised that currently the Business Board was in its infancy but would be led by the businesses represented. Members' comments regarding Board minutes and transparency would be discussed with the Board. Responding to members' queries regarding employment support, Councillor Tatler spoke on the opportunities provided by supporting smaller supply chains to meet bigger contracts and advised that a regional job show event would be held in Wembley in October. The West London Alliance would be represented at the job show along with the business sector. Matthew Dibben (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) thanked the committee for the feedback provided, highlighted the support for residents provided via the Harlesden Hub and Brent Works and welcomed any support from members in engaging members of the community.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills explore with the Brent Business Board measures to promote transparency of practice and integration with the council, including making minutes of meetings available to Members and Officers.
- ii) That the Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise write to Members to outline the support and opportunities available to Brent residents seeking employment.

## 8. **Annual Safer Brent Partnership Report 2017/18**

As Chair of the Safer Brent Partnership, Carolyn Downs (Chief Executive, Brent Council) introduced the Annual Safer Brent Partnership report for 2017/2018 to the committee, explaining that the report provided a review of performance for the past year. The Partnership was a statutory community safety partnership, required under Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act conferred a legal responsibility on the agencies in the partnership to consider the impact on crime and disorder of everything that they do, and to jointly create a strategy to reduce

crime, disorder, substance misuse and reoffending in Brent. The responsible authorities that were required to take part in the Safer Brent Partnership included the council, the Metropolitan Police, the London Fire Brigade, the National Probation Service, the Community Rehabilitation Company and the NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group. In addition, the community and voluntary sector was represented in the partnership, alongside Victim support and the Chairs of the Adult's and Children's Safeguarding Boards. Members' attention was drawn to section 2.1 of the annual, which provided an overview of performance against the Partnership's priorities for 2017/18.

Carolyn Downs introduced Acting Detective Superintendent Owain Richards (Deputy Borough Commander) to the committee, noting the revised structure of the Metropolitan Police that was shortly due to be implemented. Under the new structure a Basic Command Unit (BCU) led by one Borough Commander would cover the boroughs of Brent, Harrow and Barnet. Owain Richards was representing that BCU and would help to address members queries on the annual report. Davina Smith (Community Safety Manager) and Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities) were also present to address members' queries.

The Chair thanked Carolyn Downs for her introduction and welcomed Owain Richards, Davina Smith and Councillor Miller to the meeting.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee queried the impact of reduced resources on community policing and sought particular comment intelligence gathering and relationships with key communities. It was noted that street grooming did not appear in the report, despite a growing national awareness that this issue had been greatly underestimated, and it was queried what Brent was doing to address this issue. Further assurance was sought that street grooming was not taking place on an organised and significant scale in Brent and it was queried what online policing presence there was for Brent in addressing child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Questions were raised regarding the displacement of criminal activity in circumstances where groups of individuals congregating in public places were asked to disperse by police and cross-borough working. Members further queried whether particular measures were being taken in preparation for the Euro 2020 tournament to address prostitution, as had been the case for the 2012 London Olympics, and details were sought on whether intelligence was actively gathered on where brothels were being established.

With reference to the table at section 2.1 of the annual report, members noted that the first priority regarding gangs stated that data was not currently available and sought further details of what was outstanding and why. Reflecting on the data provided, a member queried whether there was any evidence that Brent's gang population was ageing. Members commented on the impressive results achieved via the Offender Management Programme, particularly in relation to gangs and queried whether learning from this initiative was being applied by other authorities. Questions were raised regarding measures to design-out crime (for example by increasing street lighting in certain areas) and on the use of CCTV. Clarity was also sought on the point at which activity was deemed anti-social. Members sought further information regarding the public health response to substance misuse and the consideration given to the social and economic factors affecting offending.

Clarity was sought regarding the accessibility of the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service.

Responding to the queries raised, Owain Richards advised that he did not believe that the current level of police resources had impacted operational effectiveness and emphasised that the deployment of resources was intelligence led. A challenge for policing in Brent however, was local need verses pan-London need, as Brent provided officers to support significant challenges in other boroughs. With regard to community policing, this was seen as the bedrock of the Metropolitan Police and the number of officers would not change. Owain Richards outlined Operation Makesafe to the committee which had been developed in partnership with London's boroughs to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community, such as hotel groups, taxi companies and licensed premises. Councillor Miller advised that the predictive modelling matrix developed by the council would allow the early identification of those at risk of being sexually exploited. Councillor Miller further commented that taxi licensing for London, which was undertaken by TfL on behalf of the Mayor of London, needed greater safeguards in place and ongoing communication with the Mayor of London was needed on this issue. Carolyn Downs advised that the committee could be assured that the Brent's safeguarding framework was secure and robust. CSE was an issue taken very seriously and the Brent Children's Safeguarding Board had taken specific responsibility for leading on this issue. The Partnership was not aware of CSE on a large and organised scale in Brent but it was known that there was a significant relationship between gangs and CSE. Addressing members' queries on the online police presence, Owain Richards advised that the Metropolitan Police worked alongside the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command and the National Crime Agency, as well as voluntary organisations.

Owain Richards explained that randomised controlled studies had evidenced that hot spot patrolling was effective and that the Sergeants in charge of each of the three Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) in Brent were tasked with considering issues of displacement. The deployment of SNT resources was reviewed biweekly with the council's Community Safety Manager, Davina Smith. Councillor Miller advised that Members could support targeted deployment by helping to promote reporting of anti-social or criminal activity by members of the public and highlighted the role of the Partnership Tasking Team and the use of Criminal Behaviour Orders in successfully reducing anti-social activity. Carolyn Downs advised that the council was working toward improvements in joint working with other boroughs, particularly in relation to Safer Brent Partnership priorities, and the new Borough Commander for Brent, Harrow and Barnet had indicated to the three boroughs where he felt greater joint working was required.

Councillor Miller outlined the council's approach to prostitution in Brent and highlighted that the main priority of the work undertaken was the safety of the women involved. The council's approach to brothels was therefore complaint led and related to anti-social behaviour concerns, as it was recognised that aggressive brothel closure could simply lead to an increase in street prostitution. Davina Smith emphasised that the council ran a range of programmes to help sex workers exit prostitution and noted that often they had multiple issues, including substance abuse, for which support was needed.

Addressing a query on police response times, Owain Richards advised that the Metropolitan Police's target was to respond to 90 per cent of emergency calls within 15 minutes and non-emergency calls within one hour. Response times have been a concern for Brent for a number of years and for the last reporting period 82 per cent of emergency calls were responded to within the target period. The committee heard that nationally, police forces were moving towards a new call response model called TRHIVE. The model - Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement - was used to assess the appropriate initial police response to an emergency call. The Metropolitan Police was investing in various measures to improve response time, including in resolving calls over the telephone where appropriate, providing appointment cards and additional training.

Davina Smith clarified that the reference to unavailable data in the table at section 2.1 of the annual report, referred to the priority to increase the number of high harm gang members engaging with intervention programs to exit gang and criminal activity. The data was not currently available as this was usually produced slightly later on in the year. However, as of the current date, the offender management programme had helped to reduce gang and related reoffending by 49.99 per cent. Councillor Miller confirmed that the average age of Brent's gang nominals was slightly older than other boroughs but explained that this was due to a few older members, rather than an older cohort overall. Owain Richards highlighted that the Home Office had been evaluating good practice in responding to gangs and youth violence and had visited Brent as part of this process. Davina Smith added that the initial feedback on this visit had been very good and highlighted that Brent Council, together with the London Borough of Lewisham, had been successful in securing £3.2million funding to deliver a pan-London response around gangs. Carolyn Downs further informed members that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, had observed a meeting regarding casework on gang members and knife crime and had spoken positively about the work taking place in Brent.

During the discussion on designing out crime, Owain Richards confirmed that trained officers provided specialist advice to the council on designing out crime for new developments and areas of regeneration. Carolyn Downs advised that CCTV did not reduce the level of crime but did help police identify and prosecute those responsible. Turning to the question of when actions could be deemed anti-social behaviour, Councillor Miller highlighted that though there were a number of factors to consider, the repetition or persistence of an issue was a key indicator. The council had recently been reviewing the community safety pages on the website to provide greater information to members of the public about how to report issues and on what would happen after a report had been made.

Carolyn Downs emphasised that Brent had a significant drug and alcohol misuse programme but noted that unfortunately, funding was not available to undertake early preventative work. Davina Smith clarified that the IDVA service based at Northwick Park was in addition to the existing IDVA service which provided via GPs and other primary healthcare settings. It was emphasised that the breadth of the IDVA offer was more substantial than in other boroughs.

During members' discussion, officers confirmed that the following information requested by members would be provided to the committee outside of the meeting: trends regarding levels of prostitution in the borough, against resource input; data on the number of Brent police officers deployed/seconded outside of the borough;

information on the geographical accessibility to the Independent IDVA Services; and, tables showing response times to emergency and non-emergency calls.

The Chair thanked presenting officers and members for their contribution to the discussion.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the 2018/19 Annual Report of the Safer Brent Partnership include information on the work undertaken to:
  - a. address online child sexual exploitation; and,
  - b. design-out crime.
- ii) That the Head of Community Protection in consultation with the Metropolitan Police produce a guide for Members on the reporting processes for crimes and anti-social behaviour, to enable Members to better assist Brent residents.
- iii) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Lead Member for Stronger Communities engage the London Mayor's Office in dialogue regarding taxi licensing in London and the sufficiency of safeguarding considerations particularly relating to Child Sexual Exploitation in this process.
- iv) That the results of the Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) being undertaken in 2018 be presented to the relevant scrutiny committees and the proposal that a joint meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the OBR on gangs be noted.

## 9. Engagement and Consultation Review

The committee received a presentation from Genevieve George (Partnership and Engagement Manager) on the community engagement review. It was emphasised that the review, currently underway, would be a thorough, root and branch review, supporting the development of a new vision for community engagement and achieving improved outcomes through stronger resident engagement and a focus on two way dialogue. This new vision would, in turn, be reflected in an expanded provision, responding to feedback on existing engagement channels and drawing on the council's Digital Strategy to maximise online modes of engagement. The new vision would also reflect an enhanced alignment with the stronger communities agenda, working the voluntary sector to support community cohesion.

Genevieve George introduced the committee to the role of the Partnerships and Engagement team and provided a detailed overview of the current provision and resources for engaging and consulting with residents. The committee heard that the review was currently moving into Phase 2, which, following the feedback from Phase 1 would encompass the development of an action plan to expand the review. Sharing the highlights from Phase 1 of the review, Genevieve George advised that the outcomes had included the need to avoid duplication, the development of an online tool kit, better use of social media, increasing the number of residents shaping services and enabling residents to be involved to achieve improved outcomes. It

was envisaged that consultation on the Phase 2 action plan would be undertaken during May to July and, following that a report would be submitted to Cabinet later in the year, presenting a new Strategy for consideration and approval.

The Chair thanked Genevie George for her presentation and expressed that disappointment that the Lead Member was unable to attend the meeting to take part in the discussion.

Members expressed enthusiasm for a collaborative approach to engagement, in contrast to traditional consultation models and questioned how residents would be encouraged to participate in this approach. Members subsequently queried whether any external organisations with expertise in consultation would be engaged as part of the review. Further queries were raised regarding existing stakeholder management practice and how this interacted with the consultation strategy. The committee sought further detail about the funds available to support residents to engage with the council and community activities. It was queried how the council's presence on social media was monitored. Queries were raised about how the council could encourage new people to attend meetings such as Brent Connects and how the invitation distribution lists for such meetings were managed. Further details were sought about the model used for the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum.

In response to the queries raised Genevie George spoke on the benefits of a pre-consultation stage which followed a design process and allowed residents and stakeholders to discuss views and ideas without the constraints of an existing vision or set of ideas. This was a more vigorous and inclusive approach to consultation and had been utilised as part of a recent review of voluntary sector needs. Another important part of effective consultation was, however, being honest and transparent about the resources available. Genevie George further explained that Brent was in a fortunate position with regard to grant funds for residents and highlighted the success of the Love where you live campaign which provided small grants of £500 for local projects. There were a number of other funds accessible to residents and details of these could be circulated to members.

With regard to the community engagement review, Genevie George explained that an objective view would be sought from other organisations such as the Consultation Institute which had a good reputation for working with residents as well as other stakeholders and partners. The council's stakeholder engagement practice was being revisited as part of the review to ensure a joined up approach with partners. Responding to the query regarding social media, Peter Gadsdon (Director, Performance, Policy and Partnerships) advised that the Communications team monitored most channels where the council might be discussed and there was software in place that would also identify this.

Addressing queries on Brent Connects and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum, Genevie George advised that it was important to look at what people wanted to achieve from the meetings and how residents could assume a greater role. It would be important to get more organisations involved and a number of ideas were being explored. However, it would be pre-emptive to highlight any one idea over another before the review had been completed. It was confirmed that invitations for Brent Connect events were sent preferably by email but also by post where no email address was provided. The Brent Connects distribution lists had expanded in recent years and these were refreshed every quarter. The Voluntary Sector Forum was

being considered as part of the review and there was a desire for it to have a greater focus on actions. It was currently chaired by a member from the voluntary sector and the agenda was largely comprised of items from CVS Brent. The most recent meeting of this forum had been very well attended.

Members of the committee thanked Genevieve George for the work being undertaken by her team and advised that members were eager to support the council in its efforts to promote meaningful engagement.

RESOLVED: That the Partnerships and Engagement Manager provide a briefing note on the work being undertaken to review the engagement strategy, along with the supporting action plan for circulation to the committee.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

M KELCHER  
Chair

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 3 July 2018
	<b>Report from the Director of Performance, Policy &amp; Partnerships</b>
<b>Chair's Report</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	1
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Peter Gadsdon Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships <a href="mailto:peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk">peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk</a>  Mark Cairns Policy & Scrutiny Manager <a href="mailto:mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk">mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This attached paper includes notes from the Chair of the committee on workplanning and the agenda for the July meeting, recent training undertaken by members, and a recent urgent executive decision. It also proposes a number of recommendations for the committee's consideration.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee is asked to consider the recommendations made by the Chair in his report at appendix 1.

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The paper sets out that the committee has considered topics for its work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year, and is currently consulting officers for their comments, including on appropriate timing and sequencing of these items. It also looks towards opportunities for members of the committee to

undertake small-scale reviews, with the input of services, and site visits for the coming year.

- 3.2 The paper also summarises the reasons for two items on this meeting's agenda, and why the committee has requested them. It further details the Chair's discussions with officers regarding a recent urgent executive decision of which he was notified, relating to funding of the planned Olympic Way improvements in light of the potential sale of Wembley Stadium to a private company or individual, including issues he raised and responses to his questions. Beyond the improvements themselves, the chair proposes recommendations relating to action the council may take if the stadium is sold, and how Community Infrastructure Levy funding is allocated in general. The committee may wish to consider these recommendations and whether or not to adopt them.
- 3.3 The paper finally comments on the value of recent training, and the benefit of site visits, referring back to a visit undertaken in a previous municipal year to Brent's civic amenities site. The Chair proposes another recommendation for deterring landlords and private tenants from dumping mattresses on the street, again for the committee's consideration.

#### **4.0 Legal implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 There are financial implications resulting from this paper. The financial implications of any recommendations in the paper, if adopted by the committee, would require analysis analysis prior to implementation.

#### **6.0 Equality implications**

- 6.1 There are no equality implications.

#### Appendix 1 – Chair's Report

**Report sign off:**

**PETER GADSDON**

Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships.

# Chair's Report – July 3 2018

**by Cllr Matt Kelcher**

**Chair, Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee**

## **a) Introduction**

A very warm welcome to everyone to a new year for the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. During this period: Brent will to adapt to a new local government funding system as the block grant is replaced by business rates retention; we will come together as one community to celebrate our year as the Borough of Culture, and the council will begin to renegotiate several of our major contracts.

When it comes to these issues - and many, many others - the committee will continue to add value and insight to the council's policy making process and act as a critical friend to the cabinet.

The committee has already come together to choose the issues we would like to investigate in 2018/19, and the draft work programme which emerged from this meeting is extremely interesting and challenging. During discussions, members kept in mind what residents would think about topics being prioritised.

The committee's full work programme will be agreed at its next meeting on 5 September, once it has decided upon the most appropriate order in which to take the reports. However, discussions amongst the committee members indicate that its three major task group investigations this year are likely to be on affordable housing in new developments, the council budget and knife and violent crime in Brent. Backbenchers from outside the committee will, as usual, be invited to get involved in this work.

## **b) Reforms**

In the last three years, scrutiny has seen a great number of reforms which have made Brent's scrutiny function more impactful and more member-led.

Most obvious is the fact Brent now has three scrutiny committees rather than a single committee structure. This allows more backbenchers to be involved in the process, allows each committee to develop specialist knowledge, and allows scrutiny to cover more issues.

In addition, the committees have developed an approach to setting a work programme whereby officers, councillors and others propose ideas for committee members to consider. Requests for committee reports are also sent in a standardised form which sets out members' expectations of the information included, so that these are met.

In the coming year, this committee will include a Chair's Report to be included the start of each agenda pack of our committee meetings, summarising the committee's broader work and additional ideas and recommendations that it has developed.

Such a report can also give scope for more rapporteur work by members of the committee. Rapporteurships are smaller reports produced by a single member of the committee to investigate specific issues over a limited period of time. If agreed by the committee, one example would be an investigation into the effectiveness of adopting a default 20mph speed limit in the borough. The findings of this report and others produced on this basis would be informed by the input of council officers involved in the relevant services, and included in the Chair's Report ahead of a formal meeting. Any recommendations would then have to be agreed upon by the committee before being sent up to the cabinet.

Similarly, the committee has indicated its intention to carry out more reality checking visits during the upcoming year. These visits help committee members to develop a more thorough understanding of the issues they will be questioning cabinet members and directors on at its public meetings. They also allow members to see how council policies are implemented on the ground by the officers directly responsible. The committee has held visits of this kind previously, for example, a visit to the Abbey Road civic amenities site before considering an item on household recycling, and a focus group with Brent's Trading Standards team before an item on this service. .

Finally, in 2018/19 and beyond, the committee is keen to ensure it follows up on its recommendations. For recommendations which emerge through task groups, members review progress towards implementation against a RAG rated table as part of a progress report. However, members may wish to ensure that a formal response is given to the committee by cabinet to other recommendations the committee makes, where appropriate.

### **c) This meeting's agenda**

Towards the end of last year the committee agreed to deploy a task group to looking at how viability assessments are used in developments in Brent. The belief was that these are often used by developers as a reason to restrict the amount of affordable housing in new developments. The committee wanted to examine how other local authorities work with these assessments and what more Brent could do to ensure any new development contains a significant amount of affordable housing.

A previous member of the committee, Cllr Crane, chaired this task group, but with purdah and the election cycle it was not completed. During this work it became apparent that viability assessments, whilst important, are certainly not the only reason why affordable housing levels may not be as high as the council would like in new developments, and that other issues should also be investigated. Furthermore, following the 2018 council AGM, Cllr Crane is no longer a member of this committee.

At its July meeting the committee will therefore consider expanding the project under a new chair. It is proposed that Cllr Nerva chair a new task group with a wider remit to look at the key question of *how can Brent guarantee there is more affordable housing in each of our new developments?* Cllr Johnson from the Housing Scrutiny Committee is proposed to act as vice chair to ensure that the investigation cuts across departments and links to the council's wider housing strategy.

If formally approved, Cllrs Nerva and Johnson can begin their work and report back to the committee later in 2018.

The first substantive report on this meeting's agenda is a look at the Borough Plan. This important document sets out how the council will deliver its policies and how the manifesto pledges of the administration will be achieved. The Plan is currently in development meaning that the committee has an excellent opportunity to pre-scrutinise it and influence the process by which it is put together.

The second substantive item is on the council's property strategy. In the last municipal year, the committee expressed an interest in finding out more about the council's property portfolio and how it is using its assets. Members were presented with a list of council properties which stimulated debate and agreed that they would look at this issue in a more strategic

fashion at a future meeting, given the fact that the council is due to produce a new property strategy for 2019.

This report is the result of this decision and should again give members an excellent opportunity for pre-scrutiny work in an important council area. In the past the committee has frequently taken an interest in the work the council can do to support local small businesses to survive and thrive and so the report will give some information on how Brent can use its properties to help create workspace for these businesses.

The final item is the annual report for the committee, which will give newer members a good idea of the work the committee completed in the last municipal year.

#### **d) Urgent decision**

On Friday 11 May I received official notification from Brent Council's Governance Manager of an urgent decision which had been added to the agenda for Cabinet on 21 May 2018.

The decision related to *'the re-examination of the funding decision for Olympic Way Improvements and follow[ed] the announcement of the potential sale of Wembley Stadium to a private company/individual.'*

As this decision involved a significant investment in a location with iconic importance for the people of Brent, I requested a meeting with the relevant Operational Director so I could ask questions and find out further information about the report. This meeting took place, where I was supported by the relevant scrutiny officer, on Tuesday 15 May.

#### **Changed circumstances**

It was very important to understand why this decision had been categorised as urgent and could not be taken within the usual time framework. The underlying reason for this is the potentially imminent sale of Wembley Stadium to Shahid Khan. When owned by the FA the stadium was considered a community asset as it was owned by a not-for-profit trust.

Previous cabinet reports which referred to an investment in the site referred to the stadium as a public asset. If, following a sale, this is no longer the case then it seems that the idea should be re-looked at.

If the cabinet were to proceed with the investment then this decision did need to be taken urgently for the following reasons:

- Quintain have already begun design work in respect of “Zone C” of Olympic Way, including the reorientation of the NW04 building, and are ready to begin detailed work for the proposed steps;
- Due to the regularity of stadium events it is not possible to build the steps in situ and they must be pre-cast offsite;
- There is a very limited window to fit the steps (December 2019) and it is considered vital to have a trial event before Euro 2020 with the completed steps in place;
- An order/contract for the steps needs to be in place by September 2018 and to be in the position to do so, detailed design work for the steps must begin by June 2018 and Quintain therefore require funding confirmation by the end of May 2018.

For these reasons, the decision needed to be taken on an urgent basis. However, on behalf of the committee I asked the Cabinet Member and Director to consider some of the wider issues that members feel should be considered if the stadium becomes a private asset. For example, at our Committee meeting on 21 February 2018, members expressed concern that the stadium was first opened, its rateable value has been twice reduced on appeal. This may, in part, be due the fact that it was owned by a not-for-profit trust, and were these circumstances to change there could be a strong case that the private owners should pay the full amount.

### **Return on investment**

If the cabinet decide to proceed with the development of the pedway then a significant investment of £17.8m of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money could be made. To be clear, the final total investment is likely to be much lower than this amount (and under the current report could not be higher) due to the agreement with Quintain, but investments of this magnitude should only be made after very careful consideration. The current CIL pot stands at £34m and so a large proportion will be dedicated to this project whatever the eventual outcome.

The Resources and Public Realm Committee has previously expressed its belief that any capital investment by the council should ensure that future income is generated or future revenue spending is decreased. This was one of the key principles include in our 2018 Budget Scrutiny Panel Report.

I was keen to understand how far the proposed pedway investment would match these principles. It seems clear that the council expects a clear new income stream to follow completion of the project, primarily from rents and use of the new public square (to be split with Quintain).

Furthermore, the removal of the pedway will provide space for new businesses to open along Olympic Way. The Resources and Public Realm Committee has done a significant amount of work on how Brent can take advantage of business rates retention by encouraging more businesses to open and thrive in our borough. It therefore would be inconsistent for the committee to take a position against a project which delivers more high-value business space.

Overall, the full development of the area around Wembley Stadium is expected to generate around £100m of CIL money in the coming years. If an investment is made now to improve this zone along Olympic Way and contributes to this overall benefit, then this is broadly beneficial.

### **Spreading the benefits**

Finally, it is important to ensure Strategic CIL money is spent in a way that benefits the whole of Brent.

This of course already happens and the Kiln (previously Tricycle) Theatre in Kilburn was the first project to receive funds from the Strategic CIL pot. However, when such a significant investment is being made in Wembley it is vital that this will be balanced out by future awards.

### **Conclusion**

Following discussions with the Operational Director, the report proceeded to Cabinet for a decision on 21 May. In addition, the committee may wish to make the following recommendations:

- **If the sale of Wembley Stadium goes ahead, the London Borough of Brent should write to the Valuation Office at the point the stadium passes into private hands to ask that its business rates valuation is reconsidered. If the stadium is to be used purely to generate private profit the full amount possible should be returned to the taxpayers of London (through the London business rates pilot pool).**

- **That the cabinet always give due consideration of geographical spread when allocated Strategic CIL monies to projects in future.**

## **e) Training and development**

On 24 May the council organised internal training for all scrutiny members and substitutes with Tim Young, an LGIU associate. This was a very helpful session which, among many other useful points, reminded members that only a small part of scrutiny actually happens in formal committee meetings. Understanding exactly how services are delivered often means getting out of the civic centre, and finding best practice means speaking to people from outside of Brent.

As an example of the committee getting out of the Civic Centre, members learned on a previous scrutiny site visit that Brent's civic amenities site receives around 600 mattresses a week, many of them dumped illegally. The committee previously discussed the idea of tagging mattresses with a unique marker, like smart water, so that any mattress dumped can be traced back to its owner. It was believed that this would act as a powerful deterrent to people dumping their old mattresses on the street.

At the time members decided that this was impractical as unless other boroughs cooperated there would be no way to trace a mattress dumped in Brent but purchased anywhere else.

However, the large number of Brent properties which are privately rented and in multiple occupancy could fuel the dumping of mattresses and other household items as tenants frequently move in and out. To combat some of the problems associated with this trend the council already requires landlords in several areas to have a licence and commit to installing safety features as a result. Therefore, the council could explore asking landlords to tag their mattresses as part of the process of acquiring a licence. This could also be duplicated for properties where the council is landlord. This would not mean that every mattress in Brent is tagged, particularly in properties which are owner occupied. However, it may create a significant deterrent for a large number of landlords and households who may think about dumping their mattress on the street.

This would require further exploration by officers. However, the committee may wish to recommend that:

**The Cabinet introduce an additional requirement for private landlords under licence to tag all mattresses in their property in a manner that is not easy to overcome (for example smart water instead of a physical material tag) and widely publicises this new rule to act as a deterrent against mattress dumping in Brent.**

## **f) Recommendations**

To confirm, the recommendations made in this report for the committee's agreement are as follows:

- **If the sale of Wembley Stadium goes ahead, the London Borough of Brent should write to the Valuation Office at the point the stadium passes into private hands to ask that its business rates valuation is reconsidered. If the stadium is to be used purely to generate private profit the full amount possible should be returned to the taxpayers of London (through the London business rates pilot pool).**
- **That the cabinet always give due consideration of geographical spread when allocated Strategic CIL monies to projects in future.**
- **The Cabinet introduce an additional requirement for private landlords under licence to tag all mattresses in their property in a manner that is not easy to overcome (for example smart water instead of a physical material tag) and widely publicises this new rule to act as a deterrent against mattress dumping in Brent.**

If the committee agrees, these recommendations will be sent up to cabinet for a formal response.

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 3 July 2018
	<b>Report from the Director of Performance, Policy &amp; Partnerships</b>
<b>Brent Priorities 2019 onwards</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Peter Gadsdon Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships <a href="mailto:peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk">peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk</a>  Mark Cairns Policy & Scrutiny Manager <a href="mailto:mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk">mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report reviews the context for, and plans for the development of, the successor to the Brent Borough Plan 2015-2019.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee asked to note and comment on the content of this report.

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Brent's existing Borough Plan was agreed by Council in March 2015. This set out a vision and the priorities for the borough, along with specific outcomes for the period from April 2015 to January 2019, with three overarching priorities of Better Lives, Better Place, and Better Locally. This was endorsed by the Cabinet and Partners for Brent.

3.2 However, following the development of the Borough Plan, the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review brought significant further budget reductions, meaning that the council had to reduce its overall budget by a further £45m by 2019, to take account of a drastic reduction in Revenue Support Grant and increased reliance on business rates and council tax. The CSR also brought significant policy changes around welfare reform and housing. At the same time, the borough's population growth was (and is) projected to continue, with increasing demand on school places, housing, social care and skills and jobs, and the need for increased investment in our roads and pavements.

3.3 The council therefore decided to focus its efforts on a smaller number of priorities to make a significant difference. This led in 2016 to the development of the vision for "Brent 2020", with five key priorities:

**Employment and skills** – in order to respond to the increase in the working age population and lift people out of poverty and welfare dependency.

**Regeneration** – physical, social and environmental - to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the borough.

**Business and housing related growth** – to maximise the tax base to support the delivery of core services.

**Demand Management** – to manage down the pressure on needs led budgets such as children's social care, adult social care and homelessness.

**Raising income through our assets** – to support the delivery of core services.

3.4 A programme has been in place since then which has been delivering and continues to deliver significant change in these areas. This committee and others has scrutinised various elements of this programme since it commenced.

3.5 With a newly-elected administration, the council is now looking further to the future, with a new set of priorities. These have been adopted from the Labour manifesto, and are as follows:

- Every opportunity to succeed – covering work with schools, early years services and support for pupils' mental health;
- A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all – including access to employment and apprenticeships, childcare, help for those on low incomes, improving town centres, improving online connectivity, supporting the local economy and social value, housing and homelessness, managing regeneration, and improving roads and transport;
- A cleaner, more considerate Brent – working to improve air quality, reduce emissions, tackle flytipping, minimise waste and increase recycling, and maintain parks and open spaces;

- A borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy – involving tackling violence, abuse and harassment, supporting looked-after children and those on the margins, encouraging and enabling volunteering, care for vulnerable adults, safer and stronger communities, promoting and celebrating culture, and community and democratic engagement; and
- Strong foundations – ie working more efficiently and generating more income from our assets, developing services which respond to the needs of our most vulnerable residents, and better identifying those at risk to provide better outcomes and avoid the need for costly interventions.

3.5 Work is currently underway to develop commitments for each of these priorities. Cabinet members are liaising with Strategic Directors, taking into account the continuing need to improve employment and skills, regenerate the borough, secure growth, manage demand, and raise income.

3.6 A draft Borough Plan will be submitted to Cabinet in October, and then subject to public consultation alongside the draft budget proposals. This is likely to include opportunities for residents to provide their views online, as well as meetings of Brent Connects, and other suitable channels which will be outlined to Cabinet. Following consultation, the finalised plan will be agreed with the budget at full Council in February 2019.

## **5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

6.1 Commitments under the new Borough Plan will need to consider savings requirements for the period from 2019/20 to 2022/23.

## **7.0 Equality implications**

7.1 Equality analysis and the potential impact of particular measures should inform the development of, and decisions, on practical activities to implement the commitments. This will include identifying any unintended consequences and mitigating them as far as possible.

## **8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

8.1 Along with consideration of this report by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, the draft Borough Plan will be subject to public consultation in advance of finally being agreed at full Council, as detailed above.

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

9.1 No direct implications.

**Report sign off:**

**PETER GADSDON**

Director of Performance, Policy &  
Partnerships.

 <p><b>Brent</b></p>	<p><b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 3 July 2018</p>
	<p><b>Report from the Strategic Director Resources</b></p>
<p><b>Assets and Property Overview &amp; Strategy Brief (2019-2023) 'Making property assets work for Brent'</b></p>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Oliver Judges Interim Director of Assets and Property <a href="mailto:oliver.judges@brent.gov.uk">oliver.judges@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 With the current asset strategy running from 2016 to 2019, this paper is intended to give Overview and Scrutiny Committee an outline of the scale of property assets (excluding Housing Revenue Account properties) and a brief outline of the main focus areas for the new property strategy being developed for 2020 onwards.
- 1.2 The contents are provided for information, feedback and discussion to help guide and support the development of the new strategy.
- 1.3 The final strategy is due to be developed and delivered during 2019.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 This report is for information and discussion.

### 3. Detail

#### 3.1 Property and Assets Background

3.1.1 The Property and Assets team (Property) forms part of the Resources Directorate and manages the Corporate property requirements of the Council (e.g. offices such as the Civic Centre) and other non-Council housing assets. The facilities management team have responsibility for day to day operational management of the main corporate buildings including maintenance, cleaning and contract management and assist other Services in facilities management delivery at other smaller operational buildings.

Property is currently set up into the following sections:

- Commercial Property
- Acquisitions and Disposals
- Capital Projects
- Facilities Management
- Knowledge and Strategy
- Health and Safety
- Civil Contingencies

Property also supports services including housing and regeneration in the acquisition and disposal of property, including, for example, the residential acquisitions programme for I4B; leasehold buy backs and CPO work in South Kilburn; delivery of non-education capital schemes; and other professional property advice.

3.1.2 As the above would suggest Property is, in the main, 'client facing', working for internal departments to support delivery of their wider objectives. The new strategy will reinforce this position as an internal service provider, and focus on ensuring the right people and skills are in place to provide the support and advice that internal clients require to meet corporate objectives, and actively manage the core property portfolio.

#### 3.2 The Current Portfolio:

240 properties (including 48 school properties) are currently managed by the property team with a total asset value of c.£498m. This includes:

- Land
- Leisure
- Industrial
- Car Parks
- Retail
- Offices

3.2.1 The portfolio can be split into 3 key areas:

1. Corporate – Offices and other buildings used for the delivery of services;
2. Commercial – Held for income and an investment return;

3. Buildings Occupied by Groups Providing Social Value– let to community groups, charities etc.

There is also a still significant schools portfolio, although increasingly such buildings have moved away from Council direct control.

3.2.2

The table below outlines the number of properties in each category, their value and the income generated in rents from each area. Two additional categories are shown which are sites currently managed by property as part of a programme for internal clients such as regeneration (e.g. sites awaiting development or regeneration).

Property Type	No of Assets	Value	Income (pa)
Operational	48	£165m	£841k
Commercial Assets	34	£8.6m	£553k
Occupied by groups delivering social value	40	£15m	£181k
Education Assets	48	£280m	-
Regeneration/Opportunity Sites	34	£25m	£119k
Non HRA Residential	7	£3.9m	£5k
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>£498m</b>	<b>£1.7m</b>

3.2.3

82% of income (£1.4m) is generated from the Operational and Commercial property portfolios. The Operational portfolio generates rents from co-locations of other services or businesses based within key corporate offices for example the civic centre.

3.2.4

The Commercial portfolio currently delivers 33% (£553k) of property income delivering a yield of c.6.4%.

3.3 Focus for the Future – Strategy 2020 -2024:

3.3.1 With savings or new sources of income needed in the future it is essential that the property portfolio provides best value to the organisation and goes a step further to innovate and to deliver new value creating projects and income streams.

3.3.2 To do this the strategy will be divided into key ‘Themes’ which will focus teams on clear outcomes and goals for each portfolio area. The Themes will also clearly state the ambition to deliver the best service to internal clients, active asset management and identification/delivery of new opportunities.

3.3.3 The main themes will focus on:

- Efficient **utilisation** of offices and corporate property
- **Cost reduction** in the running of property (including energy efficiency programmes);

- **Increase Income** (rents) through the commercial portfolio and potential opportunities (this includes increases in income from the Corporate portfolio where possible);
- **Effective Delivery** of Capital Projects (reducing timescales to delivering the required outcomes);
- **Value** Creation through active asset management and seeking new opportunities;
- **Service Offer** - Clear outline of service support for internal clients delivering key projects and services for Brent and the community;

3.3.4 To ensure Brent gets the best from its assets (socially and financially) each portfolio will have clear aims and goals that relate to the strategic themes.

- Commercial – income generating assets
  - Delivering income for the Council to support delivery of services where they are needed;
  - Clear yield requirements/ returns for commercial property and benchmarking;
  - Active asset management to dispose of underperforming properties and deliver clear acquisition strategies to support corporate objectives;
  - Clear targets and best management of key dates.
- Corporate – operational buildings
  - Efficient management of property facilities ensuring they are maintained and managed for the long term;
  - Clear and effective cost management of the portfolio;
  - Utilisation maintained at high levels giving a balance between efficiency and a suitable working environment;
  - Appropriate buildings in the right places enabling services to support the communities they serve effectively and co-locating with partners where possible (reducing costs and improving holistic service delivery);
- Community – groups delivering social value
  - Clearly define community buildings within the portfolio, support with appropriate agreements and work with key internal client services to define and support possible future need (social value);

#### 3.4 Vacant Land and Buildings:

3.4.1 Currently Property holds 36 properties that are vacant (including 11 Bridge Park starter units and redevelopment projects).

The strategy will include a programme to identify all vacant land and buildings ensuring there is a clear plan and strategy in place for each to bring them back into

3.4.2 use as quickly as possible, redevelop or to dispose of them where appropriate.

**3.5 How Brent can use its properties to generate workspace and office space for local SMEs.**

3.5.1 A paper was delivered to the Scrutiny Committee by Regeneration and Environment on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018 'Supporting Business Growth in Brent' and outlined the following:

*'The council has supported and secured funding for the establishment of the Granville Enterprise Hub, led and managed by the South Kilburn Trust. Additionally, low cost employment space has been secured in Wembley Park and Alperton – now managed workspace and makerspace.'*

3.5.2 The Property team has and will continue to support services, in this case Regeneration and Environment, to deliver their key aims and objectives through the delivery of projects and ensuring that opportunities in the portfolio are highlighted.

**3.6 Timescales:**

3.6.1 The New Strategy will be launched in late 2019 and cover the period from 2020-2024.

**3.7 Summary:**

3.7.1 The strategy will focus on delivering the best value for Brent by making property assets work and deliver.

3.7.2 The strategy will focus on key areas around savings/income; utilisation; Project delivery; Service to internal clients; and innovative and active asset management.

**4. Financial Implications**

4.1 There are no specific legal implications arising out of the contents of this report and any projects costs that arise out of the strategy will be considered separately.

**5. Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising out of the contents of this report

**6. Equality Implications**

6.1 N/A

**7. Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 As this paper is a brief for discussion no consultation with Ward members has taken place

***Report sign off:***

**ALTHEA LODERICK**  
Strategic Director, Resources

	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 3 July 2018
	<b>Report from the Director of Performance, Policy &amp; Partnerships</b>
<b>2017-18 Annual Scrutiny Report</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	1
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Peter Gadsdon Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships <a href="mailto:peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk">peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk</a>  Mark Cairns Policy & Scrutiny Manager <a href="mailto:mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk">mark.cairns@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report summarises the work of the three scrutiny committees during the 2017-2018 municipal year.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee is asked to agree the contents of the report at appendix 1.

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The report is split into sections for each of the three scrutiny committees, and provides an overview of the items discussed. The report also summarises the various task group work that the scrutiny committees have undertaken throughout the year, and other relevant activities such as site visits, and engagement with the public and its wider networks.

#### **4.0 Legal implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **5.0 Financial implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications.

#### **6.0 Equality implications**

6.1 There are no equality implications.

#### **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 Beyond committee members themselves, ward members have been included in the membership of task groups, as have other external co-optees where appropriate (as identified in the report).

#### **8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

8.1 No direct implications.

Appendix 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

**Report sign off:**

**PETER GADSDON**

Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships.



# **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18**

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## Introduction



The challenge for scrutiny is to focus on what really matters. That can be difficult in a borough like Brent with so many challenges. As this annual report shows, at times what we discuss can be uncomfortable such as when we heard that Brent is among the worst in England for childhood obesity and children's oral health. But there have also been many good developments such as the continued improvement of schools or progress in children's social care.

Some policy issues need to be looked at in greater depth than a committee report can allow so last year we set up a task and finish group to look at home care commissioning, which is a vital service. It's also important to keep on top of certain issues such as safeguarding; it was informative to receive the annual reports of the borough's safeguarding boards as we will do again in the future.

### **Cllr Ketan Sheth, Chair of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**



I was pleased to chair the Housing Scrutiny Committee for 2017/18 given the importance of this area of work, for those who live, work and travel to the borough. It was the Committee's first year and it successfully scrutinised a range of important areas. It was the year where the transfer of Brent Housing Partnership took place and this influenced the work programme. As this report shows, our work focused on areas ranging from the rent reduction on the Lynton Close Travellers site to homelessness where the Committee had presentations on the single person trial for the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Find Your Home

Programme. Three Registered Providers also presented to the Committee and gave an insight into their approach.

For the past year Housing has been influenced by the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and the impact will dominate for some time. With national inquiries taking place the Housing Scrutiny Committee did not want to duplicate investigations by national bodies. We set up a Task and Finish group to look at in great depth fire safety in low rise buildings. I am keen to see this year, how the recommendations have been implemented. We have been proactive in getting out and taking to residents and communities and we undertook a site visit to the Travellers site in Lynton Close during the year.

A council tenant and leaseholder were co-opted onto the Committee. They have made a positive contribution to the Committee and their experience will be used even more next year.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed and taken part.

### **Cllr Janice Long, Chair Housing Scrutiny Committee**



2017/18 was another very productive year for the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee as we sought to add value by looking at some of the key strategic issues affecting the council and the people of Brent.

We certainly did not shirk the big issues and used our task group time to examine complex issues like the prevalence of food banks in the borough and the impact of the London business rates pilot pool on council finances. It is in looking at major strategic problems such as this that scrutiny really comes into its own.

Towards the end of the year we undertook reality checking visits to enhance our understanding of the issues ahead of the formal committee meetings. These included a visit to Brent's civic amenities site and a focus group with trading standards officers. These really helped and we will certainly continue with this approach in the coming year.

**Cllr Matt Kelcher, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee**

# Part One: Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

## 1. Work programme 2017/18

The 2017/18 work programme spanned a range of policy areas under its remit including adult social care, children's services, education, health, and public health. The work programme was largely agreed at the start of the municipal year to allow members to map out and plan their activities but with enough capacity for new issues. The work programme included holding Cabinet members to account at committee as well as policy development by task groups which developed their recommendations.

### 1.1. Health

Scrutiny of health services was a highly important area of work for the committee. In particular, the committee took a close look at **extended access to GP services** at a special meeting, at which Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) presented a report. The CCG was proposing to change the GP extended access service in 2018, and the proposals were presented by the Chief Operating Officer and other officers. Members of the committee made four recommendations after scrutinising the proposals, including three recommendations highlighting the transition arrangements for unregistered patients, disability access, and communications. In addition, one recommendation was made to NHS England by members around the issue of patients and online booking for the extended access service to GPs. The committee also looked at the wider area of **Primary Care Transformation** by Brent CCG earlier in the year.

Another health issue has been **female genital mutilation (FGM)**. Officers from Brent Clinical Commissioning Group presented a report which outlined the CCG's work on identifying cases of FGM in the borough. Work around FGM had been ongoing for a long period of time and in addition to mandatory reporting, Brent CCG said it had been trying to eradicate the practice by working with partners across the health economy, the police, and the voluntary sector. In relation to support for women who had undergone FGM, it was noted that a range of practitioners provided services to victims and a number of local hospitals had specialised clinics which had good reputation. When a referral was made, all concerns were taken into account and mental and physical assessments were carried out so clinicians could determine the individual's health needs.

In terms of the wider health economy there was a discussion about the **Sustainability and Transformation Plan** in 2017 and a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing. Members were told about the actions which had been undertaken. Six areas had been identified to be included in the Brent Health and Care Plan, which is a local version of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan. They include: new care models, joining up older people's services, better outcomes for people with mental health issues, transforming care and developing Central Middlesex Hospital.

Committee also heard from one of the NHS trusts. North West London Healthcare NHS Trust gave a report on scores for **Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE)** at local hospitals including Central Middlesex and Northwick Park Hospital. The scores, which are part of a national system, concentrated on the

care environment and did not look at staff behaviours or clinical care provision. Scoring is based entirely on the observations made at the actual time of the assessment. The full PLACE scores for the hospitals in the trust were published with the committee papers.

## 1.2. Public Health

The work of public health, which sits within the local authority, is often entwined with health. An example of this is **children's oral health**. A discussion took place at committee to which public health and officers from Public Health England and NHS England contributed. Members were told that Brent children had some of the worst oral health outcomes in England with dental extractions remaining the top cause of elective hospital admissions in children. There had been some improvement, but levels of tooth decay, which is almost entirely preventable, remained very high. Members heard that National Health Service England (NHSE) had awarded a new five-year Community Dental services contract to Whittington Health from 1 April 2017, with funding for oral health promotion staff remaining with NHSE. Brent was the first borough that fully recognised that oral health promotion resource sat within the contract. Failures of prevention had contributed to high levels of decay but it was felt that the contract would enable the delivery of an integrated service by several health partners.

At a separate meeting, the committee was given a verbal update about the prevalence of **tuberculosis** in the borough. Members heard that despite the fact that Brent's rates of TB infection per 100, 000 people were declining, they remained above the average for England and the rates used by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to identify areas of high prevalence. In terms of absolute numbers, there were approximately 200 cases registered a year in Brent. A clinical Director at Brent Clinical Commissioning Group explained that a special screening service had been run since May 2016 in collaboration with Brent CCG and Harrow CCG. It was part of a national programme and it focused on patients aged 16 to 35 who had arrived in the UK and had lived in a high-risk country.

Another important issue faced by health and public health is **childhood obesity**. In 2018 the committee discussed a report presented by the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and the Director of Public Health. Members heard that there has been a worsening of childhood obesity in Brent since 2014/15, which is above London and England averages. The most worrying trend is the proportion of obese children in year 6 which has risen since 2013 and is higher than the London and England averages. The recent data shows that one in three of Brent's children are obese by the time they leave primary school. On the basis of the discussion and the evidence presented, the committee suggested that childhood obesity is considered as a task group during 2018/19 to enable members to look at the problem in far greater depth.

Brent Council also takes part in the **North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)** which looks at the impact of Shaping a Healthier Future and other cross-borough aspects of health policy. Cllr Ketan Sheth is Brent's representative on the JHOSC, which is made up of seven London boroughs, again for 2018/19.

### 1.3. Adult Social Care

One important area of adult social care is services for people with learning disabilities. The committee looked at the **life chances of adults with learning disabilities** in the borough. The report addressed how the local authority and its partners in health services are helping to improve outcomes across social care, health, education and employment for adults with learning disabilities. Members were told that the borough had performed well in relation to annual health checks with 90% of residents with a learning disability registered with a GP surgery and receiving a health check. This exceeded the national target of 64%. However, an area which required improvement was the number of people with learning disabilities in employment. Although employment rates in Brent had improved over the last year, these remained lower than the London average. Overall, the number of people with learning disabilities was increasing and their needs were becoming more complex. In terms of housing, the New Accommodation for Independent Living (NAIL) project had been successful so far, with a wide range of units provided. They had a capacity ranging from 6 to over 90 units.

### 1.4. Safeguarding

Members again scrutinised the annual reports of the borough's two statutory safeguarding boards to review progress in this area of multiagency partnership work. The annual report of the **Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board** was presented by the Independent Chair who highlighted the quantity and the quality of safeguarding. On quantity, he said that performance data received from various partners was contributing to safeguarding in Brent. In terms of quality, the way the Board had carried out its audit of partners' safeguarding self-assessments (the "Section 11 Audit") had changed – employees of organisations which sat on the Board were required to complete a questionnaire which measured their level of knowledge of safeguarding and allowed their managers to identify areas of concern where action had to be taken. Members questioned the results of the Section 11 Audit. A member of the committee also enquired about the level of confidence that children at risk were protected. The Independent Chair said that he was confident about safeguarding based on the work carried out by the Brent Family Front Door (BFFD) which processed all referrals and had good relationships with key partners such as the police, housing and health providers.

Committee also heard the report of the **Brent Safeguarding Adults' Board**. The report was presented by the Independent Chair who said that in 2016-2017 the council's Safeguarding Adults Team (SAT) had received 1,712 concerns compared to 1,678 referrals made in 2015-2016. In addition, 628 concerns had been investigated and completed as Section 42 enquiries. The committee heard that there had been a protocol to work effectively with adults who self-neglected. In addition, the Board would turn its attention to standards in care homes because more safeguarding adult reviews had been commissioned at national level although no specific problems had been identified in Brent. Measures had been taken to increase the engagement of user groups and they had been allowed to address the Board. However, progress had been slower than expected and there had not been representation from a service user group. The chair emphasised that resourcing of the board had to be examined in detail and engagement of various partners had to be monitored in future.

## 1.5. Children's Services

The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee looked at a range of children's services over 2017/18, including services in children's social care. One of the reports the members scrutinised was the Written Statement of Action and progress following the local area inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission of **special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)** in Brent. A report was presented to committee members about the strengths and weaknesses identified and the action which is being taken. The report on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Statement of Action was jointly presented by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People at Brent Council and the Chief Operating Officer of Brent CCG.

There was also a report on the **Care Leavers Local Offer** and the implications of upcoming legislative changes. The purpose of the report was to provide information to the Scrutiny Committee about the effectiveness of current services for care leavers and the implications of recent legislative changes introduced by the Children and Social Work Act. One of the key changes from the Act will be that the duty and responsibility to all care leavers was extended to the age of 25, regardless of their education and employment status.

The committee scrutinised the **Annual School Standards and Achievement report 2016-2017**, showing there has been significant improvement in the proportion of good and outstanding provision. Finally, the committee returned to look at the implementation of **Signs of Safety** in children's social care. This was first looked at by a members' overview and scrutiny task group in 2016, and there had been a recommendation in the report to review implementation after a year.

## 2. Task and Finish Groups

Time-limited task groups made up of a small group of councillors – and sometimes co-opted members – were set up during 2016/17 to look at a number of areas in detail by the committee. Each of the task groups developed recommendations from their work.

### 2.1. Home Care Commissioning

A task group on **home care commissioning**, which was chaired by Councillor Ketan Sheth, was set up by the committee and reported to Cabinet on 9 April 2018. The task group had a focus on four areas: resources, health and wellbeing outcomes, partnerships and relationships, and the quality of home care. Members of the task group engaged with a number of stakeholders as part of their review. The task group developed three recommendations:

- A) The London Living Wage is introduced incrementally as part of new commissioning model so that home care workers working for providers commissioned by Brent Council are paid the London Living Wage rate by 2021.

B) A minimum standard of training is incorporated in the new commissioning model which gives staff in Brent sufficient development opportunities to encourage home care as a career within the social care sector.

C) A home care partnership forum should be set up as part of a new commissioning model to discuss issues of strategic importance to stakeholders involved in domiciliary care services in Brent.

The task group was given background information about the Home Care and Reablement Review as well as data and insight gathered by officers who had met with different stakeholders. This information was based on meetings and surveys with the home care agencies, the workforce and people who use home care and their families. The task group also looked at the Adult Social Care Local Account, and Brent Council's Complaints Report 2016/17. It also organised its own questionnaire for providers, distributed at a meeting to which all providers had been invited. The focus of the task group's work was on understanding and reviewing the policy issues, what the data and insight was saying about the problems from the perspectives of different stakeholders and developing recommendations on the basis of the evidence which they gathered.

The committee will request an update on home care commissioning in 2018/19.

### **3. Engagement**

As part of the 2017/18 Work Programme members committed to engagement with residents in the borough as part of the committee's work. In October as part of European Local Democracy Week, Cllr Sheth ran a **scrutiny café** to allow members of the public to suggest areas which the committee should be looking at. Members of the public put forward ideas, particularly around health issues, which could be looked at.

Cllr Sheth also attended a meeting of **Brent Youth Parliament (BYP)** in November and gave a presentation about the work of the committee focusing on young people's issues, and how BYP members can be involved. He highlighted forthcoming items at committee which will affect young people's lives – these included services for care leavers and school standards. A former member of BYP had been involved in last year's members' task group on child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and Cllr Sheth said that he was keen that young people should be involved in the work of the committee. It should be noted that BYP has observer status on the committee and members of the executive regularly attend and contribute to the reports and discussion at committee. BYP contributions have been particularly welcome and effective and the committee will look forward to working with them again 2018/19 as well.

Members of the committee have continued to develop their work by working with the **Centre for Public Scrutiny**. Councillor Sheth attended a special conference organised by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on 27 June 2017, which was on the theme of health scrutiny and accountability. He was also at a special event organised for councillors and health service professionals to discuss overview and scrutiny. Cllr Sheth also presented to a meeting of elected members at the **Institute of Local Government (INLOGOV)** at the University of Birmingham on 30 June about

the work of the committee and its approach to overview and scrutiny in the local authority. The committee is keen to work with the CfPS and the institute again in the next year.

Overall, in 2018/19 the committee will be committed to doing more to increase engagement in overview and scrutiny by the local community, and ensuring that more voices can be heard when important issues affecting residents and the community are discussed.

As members of the public are increasingly using **social media**, the committee is continuing to promote its work using social media such as Twitter. By using the local authority's Twitter handle @Brent\_Council the forthcoming meetings and agendas for each committee have been promoted and it allows residents to find out what will be discussed. Again, the committee will be doing more with social media in the next year and sees it as another platform through which it can increase its engagement with the local community and enable more people to contribute to and find out about overview and scrutiny.

## Part Two: Housing Scrutiny Committee

### 4. Work programme 2017/8

Like the other scrutiny committees, the Housing Scrutiny Committee held a dedicated session at the beginning of the municipal year to plan its work for 2017/18. The area of Fire Safety featured heavily at the Scrutiny Committee, and members were also keen to hear from representatives of registered providers in the borough. Other themes included transition and transformation of housing services, the appointment of co-opted members, performance, engagement, and complaints handling.

There were 6 Scrutiny Committee meetings during the year spanning July 2017 to March 2018. There was also a Task Group focused on Fire Safety.

In July 2017, the Committee focused on **Fire Safety** measures. Officers provided an update on planned activity and the measures that were being taken in relation to assessing potential risks, providing assurances and responding to wider public interest. The report was noted by Members. The scope of the Task Group was discussed and it was noted that work with the Housing Service during the development of the work programme was important and that new expenditure plans on Fire Safety would be provided to the Group.

The Committee also received an update on the **transition to the Council of the housing management function and the Housing Operations Transformation programme**. Transition covered governance arrangements, contracts and staffing. It was noted that a broader transformation would run parallel with the transition focusing on full optimisation of processes and technologies, resident engagement and tailoring the new service to their needs. A restructure was likely to start in January 2018 with full implementation of all changes by June 2018. Discussion centred on issues related to contracts, staffing, resident engagement, budget, performance and service management. Points were raised about the multiple contracts across the borough and the need to ensure that effective engagement with residents takes place. Land ownership and “un-adopted land” was discussed and in particular the challenges that this poses in terms of contracts. The Committee paid particular attention to the new staffing arrangements as part of the Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) transformation.

In September, the Committee heard updates on the costs of the March 2017 fire safety assessments and the availability of funds from the original £10m received from the installation of mobile phone masts. It was also given an update on the outcomes from a meeting of a forum of Housing Associations and Registered Providers to discuss various fire risk issues.

A report was presented on **BHP performance, resident engagement and stock**. Areas noted include improved performance on rent collection, as well as improvements in four critical areas – call handling in the contact centre, repairs, rents and health and safety. It was noted that a resident engagement strategy would be developed and further engagement options explored. In addition an equality impact assessment would be undertaken for vulnerable residents living at BHP properties. Discussion also took place about the variance in grounds maintenance in different estates. The Committee heard that estate inspector resources had been redirected to fire safety but that there was scope for re-instating inspection and the timescales were

yet to be determined. The Committee heard that asbestos compliance practices were also being reviewed. Members were briefed that the overall voids system was due to be agreed and reviewed by December 2017.

The Committee received a report on the **implementation of actions previously recommended by the Local Government Ombudsman** in relation to a complaint relating to domestic violence, as well as the further recommendations by the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on this issue made in November 2016. Activities taken forward by BHP and housing needs officers included training (delivered by Shelter) on tackling domestic violence, a mystery shopping exercise across six participating boroughs which would test how officers were dealing with cases of domestic abuse and would set a benchmark against which to measure improvements. Finally, officers stated that an Outcome Based Review had been launched, which highlighted some areas for improvement specific to housing that would be taken forward.

A report was presented by officers on the **rent and management of the Travellers Site** at Lynton Close. The report set out progress that had been made against four key areas - financial inclusion, overcrowding, fire safety and anti-social behaviour and the next steps to be taken. In the discussion which followed Members had an opportunity to scrutinise some of the site's financial issues. It was agreed that a report would be prepared by officers for Cabinet in relation to rent charges. Other areas discussed included the management of the site, overcrowding, size of the site, fire safety, health and safety and progress in these areas.

In November, the Committee received a report on **Leaseholder Services**. Members were given an overview of the engagement processes in place for both tenants and leaseholders as well as payment plan options for leaseholders. The discussion that followed centred on resident engagement, commissioning works and payment options.

**Housing complaints** were discussed and improvements noted with officers stating that the overall number of complaints had been gradually decreasing. Discussion took place about the handling of Members' complaints and the increase in private housing service complaints with officers noting that contract management was an area that needed further improvement. The Committee also discussed the issue of payment of major works bills and ways of raising better awareness about the different options available to residents. Officers explained that various payment options were available, with the notices used to give a clear indication of the works planned and an estimation of the costs. Members heard that the Council had a legal responsibility to charge actual costs of works and where challenges to estimates arose these would be put through the Council's property services team for further investigation.

**In January 2018**, the Committee received a report on the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Rent Setting**. The report set out the proposals for 2018/19 rent and service charges, provided an overview of the Council's capital investment spend for housing as well as outlining the proposed mitigation strategy prior to full roll out of Universal Credit (UC) scheduled for November 2018. Members were reassured that Housing Management services has a strategy in place, to review and manage potential increase in arrears. The service was also putting in place a range of mitigation activities to ensure agility of rent collection system and to support residents.

Members heard that there was a commitment from the Council to review the mobile home pitches' rent at the Lynton Close travellers' site as well as modernise the site. Further discussion focused on the Capital Programme and the amount allocated for aids and adaptations.

The Committee was joined by representatives from **Metropolitan Housing**, one of the borough's Registered Providers. The level and quality of services delivered to local residents was outlined, and Members sought further details on a range of issues including repairs services, housing performance, communication with residents and councillors, ground maintenance issues and the Universal Credit roll out preparation. Further clarification was sought about future plans for surveying the condition of its housing stock. It was agreed that further information on "Right to Buy" would be circulated to Members. Finally, in the context of resident engagement, Members heard that Metropolitan Housing was taking an active role in reviewing performance, contractors and shaping activities and improvements based on residents' needs.

The Committee received a **progress update on a previous task group report on Brent's Housing Associations**. Members discussed a number of areas including, future service charges in respect of "right to buy", service charge payment options, housing association forums and fixed-term tenancies. The report provided a detailed update against a range of recommendations, demonstrating continuing commitment to a more productive and proactive approach and transforming the relationship with Housing Associations in order to achieve the aims as set out in the Housing Strategy - such as increasing supply of affordable housing, improving the standard of social housing and developing resident engagement. Members heard that most actions from the report had been completed or were no longer required.

The Committee heard a verbal update on a new **scaffolding protocol** applicable Borough-wide. Officers stressed the importance of the need to provide a value for money service to residents and that no scaffolding is erected unless the consultation process had been completed. It was noted that a fixed sum was payable by the council and so no additional payments would be made for scaffolding kept longer than instructed by the Council. Officers assured Members that scaffolding would not be erected without first communicating with residents. Members also learned that plans were in place to resolve the ongoing parking issues, with the intention being to use Traffic Management Orders to help improve the situation in general.

In February the Committee welcomed representatives from **Genesis Housing**, another Registered Provider in the borough with more than 6000 properties. Discussions included the forthcoming merger with Notting Hill Housing, with plans in place to appoint a local contact officer and to improve engagement with residents, for example, undertaking site inspection visits that residents were invited to join.

A discussion followed about the conversion of social tenancies to affordable rents. The Committee was advised that the overall turnaround of converted tenancies was relatively low, and were based on a combination of factors including the housing association's ability to build, grants attached to the property, grants available from central government and the revenue required to be raised. Members were also given an update on Genesis' leasing scheme, and discussed performance, property maintenance, community funds and fire safety arrangements.

Members also received a report focused on the **Find Your Home Programme**, initiated following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2017, which had helped over 3000 people. Members welcomed the scheme but also noted that private rented sector accommodation was not a long-term solution but a short-term intervention.

Officers gave an update on the Council's **Housing Development Plans** and infill programme. They explained that housing demand in Brent was in line with the overall London trend and that the plans, which were part of the Council's Housing Strategy, were aimed at responding to the service needs. Members emphasised the importance to consult with residents on any incentives available from contractors as well as looking at overall price and quality of the service provided.

In March Members welcomed **Catalyst Housing**, focusing on customer satisfaction, investment and improvement works. Engagement with both residents and councillors was discussed and in particular how this could be improved. There was also discussion on fire safety, in particular smoke alarms, and information sharing with residents about maintenance. Catalyst confirmed that there was a fire evacuation strategy in place for each building.

Members received a report on the **Homelessness Prevention Programme**, providing information about the key changes and implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which was due to take effect from 3rd April 2018 as well as an overview of the role and performance of the Council's Single Homeless Prevention Scheme (SHPS), including lessons learned to date. Members learned that there would be a new statutory duty for public bodies to make referrals to the Council of families under threat of becoming homeless in order to prevent this at an early stage. Members enquired about the financial implications of the Act, with officers explaining that Brent was well placed in preparation for the new Act but financial predictions were difficult as spending and demand had not yet started.

A discussion then took place on the **Landlord Licensing Scheme** introduced in January 2015. Officers set out the impact of the scheme on private rented sector tenants since its introduction. Discussions also took place about licensing fees, the impact on landlords and tenants and tackling fly-tipping.

Members lastly received a report on **Customer Service Performance** and the significant improvements in relation to the performance of the Housing Contact Centre that had been made since October 2017. At the time of the meeting, an action plan was being developed to progress improvements in areas such as call handling. Amongst the key points in the plan was the need to review the waiting times and align it more closely with the service standard.

## **5. Task and Finish Groups**

One time-limited task group was set up during 2018/19 to look at **the fire safety of low-rise domestic properties in Brent**. The Task Group reviewed types of fire incidences, cause of death, fire safety measures and fire safety awareness campaigns in Brent with a specific focus on low-rise properties (up to nine storeys). It reported to Cabinet in January 2018 with a number of recommendations that covered the following areas:

- Fire safety measures for Brent Council owned properties, social housing delivered by Registered Providers (RP); details of respective communications strategy;
- Building regulations applicable for owner-occupied and PRS properties;
- Emergency vehicle access for social housing estates with a focus on parking enforcement;
- Brent Council and RP housing allocations policy based on residents ability to respond to fire and other emergency incidences;
- Available facilities (e.g. bicycle shed) for residents to store large items (e.g. bicycles and buggy's) and clear items (e.g. white goods, furniture) in common areas.

## **6. Visits and engagement**

The Housing Scrutiny Committee believes that visiting sites and speaking with service users where possible, provides a real first hand insight when scrutinising these services. The Housing Scrutiny Committee made a visit to the Travellers Site at Lynton Close, in advance of considering a report on this topic at its meeting in September.

As part of European Local Democracy Week Cllr Long held a scrutiny café in Willesden Library. Issues raised include the lack of publicity in libraries, repairs, the complaints process at Network Housing and the slow progress on an infill development.

## **7. Wider Scrutiny Networks**

Members of the Committee have been involved with scrutiny networks and organisations outside Brent. One of the most important of these has been the London Scrutiny Network, which is made up of representatives of Scrutiny Committees from a number of London boroughs. The Chair of the Committee attended a number of these meetings during 2017/18. The Committee has also built links with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Chair attended its national conference in December 2017.

## Part Three: Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

### 8. Work programme 2016/17

The process of agreeing the annual work programme for the Resources and Public Realm Committee included a workshop organised for Scrutiny Members, Lead Members and Strategic Directors, where all were invited to pitch ideas for scrutiny for the forthcoming year. These ideas were then judged against criteria developed to reflect the principles of effective scrutiny.

A relevant, focused and strategic annual work programme was agreed at the committee's first meeting and was kept under constant review. The 2017/18 work programme covered a wide range of policy areas within the committee's remit, spanning corporate resources, regeneration and environment, transport, community safety and the performance, policy and partnerships department. It also extended beyond the council to include submissions from the Department from Work and Pensions and the Metropolitan Police.

#### 8.1. Regeneration and Environment

The Lead Members for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills, and for Environment, presented a **follow up review on Brent high street initiatives**, which provided a performance analysis of the newly recruited town centre managers, the digital high streets project and the in-house uniformed litter patrol service. There were questions from Members on Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the roles of the Town Centre Managers, performance indicators and the potential for expansion of the roles to other areas. Regarding the uniformed litter patrol service, matters discussed included what actions could be taken to improve the timeliness of payments for fixed penalty notices and the responsibility for educating residents on appropriate waste disposal.

The committee considered the revised **Tree Management Policy** for the borough, and members questioned whether the council targeted the planting of new trees to areas most affected by poor air quality. Queries were raised regarding sources of funding, and whether the council had explored approaches successfully utilised by other boroughs. There were also a questions on tree maintenance in Brent and discussion of the lack of resources available for planting of trees on any significant scale.

The committee made a comprehensive series of recommendations for amendments to the policy, including the inclusion of a section on air quality and in particular the importance of street trees in mitigating the impact of air pollution.

Members reviewed of **recycling rates in Brent**, with the Lead Member for Environment highlighting the challenge to the council in sustainably maintaining recycling rates against an increasing proportion of flats in the borough. Members sought clarity on trends in Bulky Waste requests and the use of the Abbey Road Brent Reuse and Recycling Centre site since the Bulky Waste charge was introduced. Members also queried why the council was not being bolder in its recycling targets and asked what strategy was in place to address the issue of recycling in flats. There was also discussion on whether Brent was able to increase charges for Trade Waste and on how to better educate Brent's residents regarding the free of charge services,

to address illegal dumping. The committee asked that the Lead Member ensure that the promotion of the council's Recycling App is maximised.

Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities), The committee received a report **reviewing Trading Standards' role and priority areas**, as the budget for TS had reduced significantly in recent years, whilst demand had continued to increase. In questioning and discussion, the committee placed great emphasis on potential for invest-to-save opportunities for the service and the need for a commitment to protecting Brent's vulnerable residents. Specific questions were also asked regarding the service's scope to take enforcement action against ticket touts and whether it worked with the voluntary sector to raise awareness around fraud and scams, with the proliferation of online scams being noted, and questions asked on how the Trading Standards had evolved to respond to this trend. Discussing the rising number of acid attack incidents across the country, members questioned how the TS worked with Brent traders regarding the sale of chemicals used in such assaults.

The District Operations Manager for the Department for Work and Pensions presented a report on **employment and employability in Brent**, outlining the proposals to close the Willesden and Kilburn Job Centres and merge them with existing sites in Wembley and Harlesden. The committee questioned the purpose of the closures and sought to understand if cost or service redesign was the dominant factor. The committee also queried how accessible the online consultation process had been for vulnerable groups accessing services at the affected job centres. Members sought clarity regarding the scrutiny mechanisms in place for the DWP and questioned whether the DWP would be open to more local scrutiny and information sharing with Brent Council. The Chair of the Task Group on Food Banks sought commitment from the DWP to exploring and progressing the recommendations of the task group report.

Members also considered a report on **Wembley regeneration**, which provided an overarching view of the work and development being undertaken in Wembley. They asked questions on Quintain's business model for its Wembley Park development; the replacing of the pedestrian way (pedway) between Wembley Park underground station and Wembley Stadium; the community benefits being delivered by the Wembley Park regeneration; and the extent that the new developments met the Council's planning guidance.

Progress made against the recommendations of the Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task Group was reported, with thirteen actions categorised as green, ten as amber and one as red. Members commented on the lack of clarity around CIL and questions were raised regarding the possible uses and restrictions of S106 and CIL spending. It was also queried how the recommendations of the report accorded with the Council's planning objectives, and there was discussion about whether it was possible to use CIL to pay for building affordable housing.

A similar update was received on the **recommendations from the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group**. The Deputy Leader explained that in preparation for the anticipated devolution of business rates, London's local authorities were considering pooling business rates to provide a level of financial stability across the region. The committee questioned how the council addressed attempts by business owners to avoid paying business rates by dividing businesses into separate parts; and further queries were raised regarding the increased use of Wembley Stadium and how this affected the Stadium's business rates. The committee also questioned whether

Planning Policy would change to reinforce a desired mix of residential and business use in developments and highlighted that more could be done to enhance local partnerships.

The Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills presented an update report to the Committee on the **South Kilburn Regeneration Programme, Carlton & Granville Centres Site**, further to the committee considering the project in response to a call-in of Cabinet decisions taken on 15 November 2016.

The committee was pleased to note that stakeholders had been involved in the drafting and finalising of the brief for appointment of design teams and praised the consistent level of consultation throughout. Members subsequently discussed steps to boost public attendance at future consultation events and queried what lessons had been learned from the approach to consultation used.

## **8.2. Resources**

The committee received a **strategic overview of the council's funding**, setting out the main sources of local government funding and providing an illustration of the year on year reduction of local government core funding. In discussion Members raised questions on the Council's response to budgetary uncertainty. Clarity was sought on figures quoted and the challenges ahead, including the work being undertaken to identify ways to bridge the funding gap for 2019/20.

A report on **Community Access and Vulnerable People** detailed the key factors used to determine if a resident was considered vulnerable and provided an update on the former Community Access Strategy. The committee acknowledged that vulnerability could appear in many forms, but emphasised the importance of ensuring that the council was able measure its performance in supporting its most vulnerable residents. Members suggested a working group or task group be established to determine a way to define this cohort, drawing on outside expertise such as that provided by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The council's Property service provided a **general introduction to the council's property and assets** for the committee, who questioned whether these were being maximised for the council's civic enterprise agenda, including being used as advertising space and how they were being used to meet the council's strategic objectives.

Members further queried whether the council had a strategy for identifying sites from within its own portfolio that would be suitable for development over the next few years. Clarification was sought regarding the financial arrangements with academy schools on council owned land. There was some concern that the council was not able to use its existing property portfolio in an innovative manner to address issues of urgent need in the borough; and the committee expressed its desire to pre-scrutinise the planned revision of the Council's Assets Strategy prior to its submission to Cabinet for approval.

## **8.3. Performance Policy and Partnerships**

**The Complaints Annual Report 2016 – 2017** was provided to the committee, covering performance in Brent Council and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) for the period April 2016 to March 2017, including high level data for the previous two years

for comparison. The headlines of the report were discussed, including volume of complaints, the nature of and reasons for complaints.

Members welcomed the report but commented that it would be improved by the addition of comparative data for other authorities. The committee questioned the cost of complaints for the council, querying the size of the complaints team and the number of officer hours spent. Acknowledging the impact of central government's policy of austerity on local government services, the committee queried whether timescales for departmental responses had been adjusted to accommodate reduced resources and if so, whether this was communicated to Brent's residents.

The committee received a presentation on the outcomes and learning from the Council's first **Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs)** and the progress of three new OBRs. The first OBRs had been carried out in 2016 and had focussed on Housing for Vulnerable People, Employment Support, and Welfare Reform and Regeneration. The new OBRs focussed on Domestic Abuse, Edge of Care and Gangs.

There was discussion on how the OBRs were selected, how decisions were made about who should be consulted, and how and by whom the interface with people was managed. With regard to the Domestic Abuse OBR, the committee strongly emphasised the importance of early intervention. Discussing the OBR on gangs, the committee queried whether gang activity had increased in Brent, how the council currently worked to tackle this issue and how the outcomes of the OBRs would be monitored to assess their effectiveness.

Members discussed the **Digital Strategy and the customer experience**, receiving an overview of the Digital Strategy, approved by Cabinet in June 2017 and outlined the proposed Channel Strategy currently in development. In the subsequent discussion members questioned whether the council had undertaken appropriate research and queried whether the website could be accessed in different languages. Questions were also raised regarding response times with regard to emails and how to manage public expectations.

Members expressed support for the Harlesden Community Hub model but noted that issues had been raised regarding uniformity and quality of service due to the range of different partners contributing to its delivery. It was subsequently queried whether this issue was being monitored and addressed. Members also asked about contingencies should the council's IT infrastructure fail and queried what the council could do to expand the provision of high-speed broadband in the borough.

The committee received the **Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report and update on Community Safety**, welcoming the Deputy Borough Commander from the Metropolitan Police and the Chief Executive and chair of the Safer Brent Partnership, as well as the Lead Member for Stronger Communities and other key council officers. It questioned whether a reduction in resources was impacting any performance in the report and also whether any reduction in community policing was having an impact on intelligence gathering. Questions were also asked about street grooming and what was being done to ensure this was not occurring in Brent; as well as approaches to tackling prostitution gang activity, drug use and the notion of designing out crime in the public realm.

## **9. Task and Finish Groups**

### **9.1. Food Banks and Poverty Task Group Report**

A task group was convened to look at this area due to the significant rise in food bank usage nationally and lack of a detailed picture of food bank usage across Brent. Members were also concerned with the human impact food poverty is having on local communities and wanted to understand the scale and drivers of food poverty and food insecurity.

The task group was made up of members of the committee and other councillors, as well as expert advisors from relevant bodies including West London Business and the Child Poverty Action Group. It was also advised by the Trussell Trust. Concern was focused on vulnerable residents such as the elderly, disabled and children, for example the impact of hunger on children and young people's education. The task group also explored why individuals need to use food banks, and ways to tackle stigma associated with this. This included the impact of welfare reform changes from central government, unemployment, rising costs of living and low pay. There also exists a varying degree of regulation, safe guarding and data collection across different providers.

The task group considered that the impact of welfare changes such as Universal Credit could be far reaching, and that it was vital that the council and other local public sector partners put in place organisational arrangements that enable Brent to mitigate the impact Universal Credit as far in advance as possible. It made 36 individual recommendations, grouped into six discovery themes, which were reported to Cabinet. These themes were:

- Why people use food banks (triggers to financial crisis)
- Policy development
- Working in partnership – public, private and voluntary sector
- The user experience (Including the referral processes)
- Future models for food banks and community kitchens in Brent
- General and best practice.

### **9.2. Budget 2017/18 Scrutiny Panel Report**

This year's budget scrutiny task group was formed at the halfway point of a two-year budget. As a result, it undertook budget scrutiny in a slightly different way than in previous years. This included focusing on specific policies where it had concerns, rather than reviewing all spending plans (which last year's task group had already examined), as part of its legal duty to scrutinise the budget. Alongside this, the task group also looked at the impact of the plan to pool business rates across the London boroughs.

The task group was comprised of members from the three scrutiny committees and chaired by the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee. It met three times, including a session attended by the Leader and Deputy Leader, to discuss the proposed pilot for pooled business rates in London. Relevant members of the Cabinet and senior officers also attended to inform discussions of the progress against savings

proposals from the existing budget. It was further advised by experts from London Councils, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The task group has made 12 individual recommendations, which were reported to Cabinet and Council as part of the consideration and passing of the budget.

## **10. Visits and engagement**

The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee believes that visiting sites and speaking with service users where possible, provides a real first-hand insight when scrutinising these services.

The Resources and Public Realm committee made a few visits in 2017/18.

- Harlesden High Street (review of high street initiatives)
- Abbey Road, Brent Reuse and Recycling Centre (review of recycling rates)
- New development site in Wembley (Wembley regeneration)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Brent Council**

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Contacts**

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 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Resources &amp; Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 3 July 2018
	<b>Report from the Director of Performance Policy &amp; Partnerships</b>
<b>Affordable Housing in New Developments Task Group – Update and Terms of Reference</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	1
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Patrick Doherty Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer <a href="mailto:patrick.doherty@brent.gov.uk">patrick.doherty@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the task group examining affordable housing in new developments.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee is recommended to endorse the revised Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 for the “Affordable Housing in New Developments Task Group” (formerly the “Viability Assessments Task Group”).

## 3.0 Detail

3.1 A task group was created towards the end of the last municipal year to examine Financial Viability Assessments (FVAs) and explore concerns regarding their impact on the delivery of affordable housing in the borough. The task group was chaired by Councillor George Crane.

3.2 Progress of the committee was interrupted by purdah and the election cycle, but its initial work suggested that, firstly, the national and regional planning policy landscape was shifting considerably, and secondly, that it would be

beneficial to investigate a wider range of issues impacting affordable housing delivery.

- 3.3 Following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration, Highways, Planning, it was considered appropriate to broaden the scope of the task group's work from the narrow focus on the technical issue of Financial Viability Assessments.
- 3.4 Following the 2018 council AGM, Cllr Crane is no longer a member of this committee. It was also therefore decided to re-form the Task Group, with a new Chair and new membership, to continue the work with a broader remit, reporting back to the committee later in 2018.
- 3.5 The new task group's membership has yet to be finalised, but Councillor Neil Nerva has been appointed as Chair and Councillor Robert Johnson as Vice-Chair.
- 3.6 Revised Terms of Reference have subsequently been drafted and are attached to this report for consideration by the committee.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications of this report.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications of this report.

#### **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1 There are no equality implications of this report.

**Report sign off:**

***Peter Gadsdon***

Director of Performance Policy &  
Partnerships

## Affordable Housing in New Developments Task Group

### Terms of Reference

- To understand the policy context of subsidising housing and the barriers and solutions to affordable housing delivery
- Examine forthcoming changes to regional and national planning policy and guidance
- Analyse the supply of affordable homes (numbers and percentage) from new developments in Brent over the past 10 years
- Review best practice from other London boroughs
- Understand the full range of “affordable” and “intermediate” housing
- Learn from case studies in Brent where planning targets for affordable housing have been met
- Examine how land owned by public authorities can contribute to targets for affordable housing
- Understand if Brent is maximising the affordable housing contributions from developers and whether better use could be made of late stage reviews and Section 106 payments
- Investigate alternative models for delivery of genuinely affordable homes, such as Community Land Trusts
- Understand what the council believes is genuinely affordable for communities in Brent
- Gather evidence to feed into and influence the development of the new Local Plan and Housing Strategy

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