



**MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday 6 December 2012 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Van Kalwala (Chair), Councillor Clues (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Harrison, Naheerathan, HB Patel and RS Patel

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Green and Krupa Sheth

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 October 2012

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 October 2012 be agreed as an accurate record subject to Councillor Naheerathan being shown as having given apologies for absence.

3. Matters arising

Crime updates

Kisi Smith Charlemagne, Performance Officer advised members that she would circulate the supplementary report on crime updates to the next meeting in February 2013.

4. Deputations

None.

5. Employment programme update

Members received a report which provided an update on the current labour market position in Brent and set out the challenges faced by the Council in relation to rising unemployment and deprivation that were likely to worsen with the introduction of welfare reforms. Andy Donald, Director of Regeneration and Major Projects outlined the context, the extent of deprivation and the responses put in place to tackle those growing problems.

Members heard that a team of 6 navigators had been recruited to start work in January 2013 in close co-operation with housing teams. Their remit was to engage the most excluded individuals and families who were likely to be hardest hit by the benefits cap in April 2013, offer support to them to mitigate the impact. The Director added that the navigators would carry a caseload of about 2,604

households drawn from a group of residents most at risk of homelessness/displacement. The success of the project would be measured by the number of families enabled to stay in their homes, through employment and effectiveness with other services.

He continued that a welfare reform group had been set up that met regularly to consider how best to reach and offer assistance to those who were likely to face shortfalls in benefits. Teams were working very closely with partners at Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme to agree a process that would better connect the Council's services to direct support and prevent homelessness. This may involve co-locating employment staff within Housing to provide direct support and a robust performance monitoring process to ensure all partners delivered the right services to the client group. Navigators would also be a key part of this process and the "Working with Families" project.

The Director also informed members that a number of steps were being taken to address the gap between training and employment and with that in mind, the curriculum, structure and delivery of BACES would be reviewed to ensure a fundamental shift in emphasis to vocational objectives. A feasibility/scoping study was also being commissioned into the set up of three vocational training centres. These would be along the lines of Intermediate Labour Markets and would be aligned as closely as possible with major regeneration projects.

Members noted that a bidding framework and brief was being set up to identify a group of voluntary sector providers that would be able to support employment provision in the borough. It was envisaged that experienced providers would be paid on a results basis to support voluntary referrals. Furthermore, the group would investigate ways that small teams of local people could be recruited and trained by the voluntary sector to raise awareness of the benefit changes in local Jobcentre Plus offices and other community meeting points.

Brent in2work had continued to deliver advice and guidance to local residents seeking employment and training opportunities from the Wembley Works office. Over 100 local unemployed residents had found work through Brent in2work since April 2012 which included 59 jobs with the new Hilton Hotel. This was as a result of a successful collaborative working of Brent in2work, Job Centre Plus (JCP), College of North West London (CNWL) and Wembley City.

Work was also continuing with construction contractors such as Skanska and Wilmot Dixon to ensure that training, apprenticeships and employment aspects of S106 agreements were adhered to. Partnership working with Denne contractors continued to create positive outcomes for the local residents in South Kilburn, with further work being developed with Catalyst Housing as Phase 2 of the regeneration project progressed.

In welcoming the report, members enquired from the Director as to how the caseload for the navigation team would be selected, what actions were being taken to encourage small businesses and the possibility of using Section 106 agreements to support people into employment. He was also asked to clarify the review of BACES in the vocational training centres.

The Director responded that the employment team working in close partnership with officers from housing department would focus on residents who could be vulnerable to the benefit changes, unemployment and homelessness. He added that through employer partnership with Park Royal Partnership, the Council would signpost small businesses to organisation that could offer assistance to those businesses. In respect of section 106 agreements, he stated that it was within the Council's remit to use those agreements to support people into work, citing as an example the agreement with Quintains to notify Brent first of the availability of employment in its construction developments in Wembley.

Members also heard that a team would be set up to oversee the review of BACES, looking into the current success rate from recruitment to employment and how they could engage with the business community to identify which areas of work were expected to grow in employment terms and match them with the skills of those working for BACES. The Director continued that the review was expected to be completed by the end of the financial year. He undertook to report the performance of the Council's initiatives to the Committee in April 2013.

RESOLVED:

that the progress report on employment programme be noted.

6. **Domestic violence**

The Committee received a report which looked at the process, terms of reference and limitations of Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews. The report also gave an insight into the lessons learnt from the first two inquiries to be held in Brent. Genny Renard, Head of Integrated Community Safety presented the report.

She started by setting out the purpose of a domestic homicide review which was to consider the circumstances that led to the death and identify where responses to the situation could be improved and lessons learnt in the future. She informed members about the current domestic homicide review in Brent and the legislative framework which established the requirement on Local Authorities to conduct such reviews. Members heard about fatalities that had occurred in Brent and for which two homicide review reports had been produced for the Home Office. She continued that work was still continuing on the third case which related to interfamily fatality.

In explaining the review process, she informed members that a review panel, led by an independent chair comprised of a panel made up of members of local statutory and voluntary agencies. The review panel had the chance to hear from family, friends and work colleagues as well as reviewed each agency's review of their involvement in a case.

She clarified that domestic homicide reviews were not inquiries into how someone died or who was to blame; they were not part of any disciplinary process. They were additional to an inquest or any other form of inquiry into the homicide.

Funding regime

Whilst domestic homicide review was a statutory requirement there were no additional funds attached to this work. In Brent the part time officer had been financed through additional funds gained from the European Daphne fund, which would not be available in the next financial year. The Integrated Community Safety Team would, through job realignment and some restructuring, seek to incorporate this additional work within the current staff budget.

Members were advised that as Brent had successfully completed three such reviews the Home Office were funding a programme here so Brent can develop the national guidelines. The first step would be to host a day in December 2012 at which all councils and Police services who had overseen Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews would come together to share experiences, tips, knowledge and highlight pitfalls. From the information gained, a "How To" pack would be developed.

RESOLVED:

that the report on domestic violence be noted.

7. **London Fire Brigade in Brent**

Commander Terry Harrington, Borough Commander London Fire Brigade (LFB), made a presentation to the committee on "Fire Service Delivery, The Way Ahead". Commander Harrington informed members that for the financial years 2013/15, the LFB was expected to make efficiency savings of around £65m, although the final would not be known until January 2013. He continued that when the grant settlement was finalised all options including staffing costs and appliances would be considered and subject to extensive consultations, any changes would be made around June 2013. He drew attention to the current resources in Brent (Park Royal, Willesden and Wembley fire stations) and added that none of the stations would be closed as a result of the review, although it was not conclusive at this stage.

In explaining how the expected budget savings would be achieved, the Borough Commander stated that an extensive modelling work would be carried out to identify options for a thorough review of fires, mobilisation patterns, station locations and station resources. He affirmed that strategic fire stations such as Wembley fire station would not be affected by any closure plans however if any station was to close, the LFB would still be able to meet its target response targets. Members heard that Brent's operational readiness was outstanding and that there was always a drive to improve attendance times, factors which would mitigate the likelihood of station closure in the borough. He then outlined some of the community fire safety initiatives.

Commander Harrington informed members that as part of its adult safeguarding initiative, the LFB was engaged with other agencies to assess risks of fire and to install smoke alarms. He continued that LFB was reviewing its rough sleeping strategy as it was known that rough sleeping could lead to fires. In addition, visual audits were carried out to identify derelict buildings and security measures taken including preventing unauthorised temporary uses as habitable accommodation. Where the inhabitants were suspected to be illegal immigrants, the involvement of the UK Border Agency was sought. He added that the benefits of sprinkler systems

in effectively dealing with fires in high risk areas could not be over-emphasised. Commander Harrington added that the LFB youth engagement initiative involved provision of information to key stage 1 and 2 pupils, junior citizens with the police and LIFE project.

In welcoming the presentation members expressed a view that the sprinkler seminar organised by the LFB as part of its safety initiative was well received. The Chair enquired about key issues which the LFB had with the Council. The Borough Commander stated that the LFB was engaged in partnership working and shared a common goal in ensuring a safe community.

RESOLVED:

that the presentation on London Fire Brigade in Brent be noted.

8. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, 7 February 2013.

9. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm

Z VAN KALWALA
Chair