



**Full Council
9 September 2013**

**Report from the Assistant Director of
Policy**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Report from the Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the council's overview and scrutiny committees in accordance with Standing Order 14 and covers the period since last reported to Full Council in June 2013.

2.0 Detail

One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the July meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members welcomed the Interim Chief Executive, Christine Gilbert, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Butt, to discuss the administration's priorities as set out in the Borough Plan. Members' questioning focussed on key local priorities, target setting and how the plan would be monitored.

The Committee received an update on the restructuring of the senior management team and was informed that one of the main aims of the restructure was to enable Directors to work in a strategic framework that was flexible and robust with a greater role in community engagement. Areas of discussion included the timelines for recruitment, savings targets and transitional arrangements.

Members were also updated on the progress of the Working with Families programme which was introduced in 2012. The Head of Early Years and Support provided an overview of how the programme worked and the multi agency hub that went live in July 2013. The subsequent discussion focussed

on funding arrangements, data sharing between partners and the impact of welfare reform.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Since the last report to Full Council the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met twice. The committee has a standing item on each agenda to update the availability and take-up of school places, and in June received a full progress report on the council's 2012 strategy, showing increasing projected future demand, the challenges in meeting this, and the council's plans to do so. Committee members sought and received assurances about the standard of additional accommodation used as classrooms, and inquired about additional places for children with special educational needs (SEN), where it was acknowledged that further work was required.

Children with SEN were the focus of a report at the July meeting, updating improvements made to the SEN service in reducing reliance on statements and exceeding savings targets. Following on from the previous month's discussion, members pressed the Interim Director of Children and Families for plans on how additional capacity would be secured and were informed that additionally-resourced provision in secondary schools would be used, as well as relocating and expanding a school.

Striking statistics about the oral health of five year-olds in Brent (the worst in England in 2007-08) led the committee to request a presentation from the then Acting Director of Public Health on the origin and extent of this problem, and plans to address it with an Oral Health Plan. The committee resolved to request the local NHS to change rules which currently restrict NHS dentists from carrying out dental checks within schools.

The committee was updated by the Chair of Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) on changes since he took up his position in May 2012, including a restructure and new constitution. The committee sought and received assurances that children's opinions would be heard in the LSCB's work, through a "shadow board" and involvement with Brent Youth Parliament, as well as other plans to engage hard-to-reach groups.

The committee also reviewed the largely positive Ofsted inspection of the fostering service, which received an overall rating of good, with several areas receiving an outstanding rating. Members' queried the numbers of children placed outside of the borough, and of these, the numbers placed beyond neighbouring boroughs.

Partnership & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The main focus of the July meeting was crime and community safety. The committee received an update on the Safer Brent Partnership which set out the partnership's new vision and key priorities. Member's questions focussed on community and voluntary sector engagement, responsibility for delivery on the priorities and communication.

An update on gangs and serious youth violence provided the committee with an overview of the work that had taken place following the committee's task group report on gangs and the development of prevention, intervention and exiting services. The subsequent discussion centred on the use of MOPAC funding, intelligence relating to gangs, strategic actions being taken and prevention activity.

The committee received an update on crime statistics in Brent and the changes to how the Safer Neighbourhood Teams would be structured. Members asked for future crime statistics to include contextual information including: benchmarking against other similar boroughs, targets and some commentary. They also asked for ward based data to be made available.

A report on CCTV in Brent provided an overview of CCTV numbers, usage and constraints. The committee's discussion focussed on financial constraints, the new code of practice, the use of deployable cameras and performance information.

Health Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Members considered the commissioning arrangements and intentions of Brent CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group). Members were informed that commissioning is being undertaken in three waves: the first wave covering ophthalmology and cardiology is almost complete; the next wave will cover musculoskeletal, rheumatology, gynaecology and trauma and orthopaedics services. Members expressed some concerns over the level of public consultation that took place during the commissioning of the ophthalmology and cardiology services and have requested further details on the consultation and who it involved. Concerns were also raised over the expectations that GPs would need to provide "enhanced" services as part of the new arrangements for cardiology and ophthalmology. The committee intends to monitor the CCG's commissioning of services on an on-going basis.

The committee received an update on the issues facing Accident and Emergency services at Northwest London Hospitals, and was informed that, after the extremely poor performance reported at the last meeting, the targets for four hour waiting times in A&E were currently being met at Northwick Park. North West London Hospitals has advised that it has weekly meetings to discuss its "winter plan"; but the committee remained concerned, particularly in light of recent news reports, whether Northwick Park A&E will be able to cope during the forthcoming winter.

The committee also considered short updates on the following items:

- The pathology service serious incident; during which members expressed concern that they had been wrongly informed at the last meeting that the provider (TDL) was accredited;
- The serious incident at Central Middlesex Urgent Care Centre;
- the progress of Healthwatch Brent.

Budget and Finance Overview & Scrutiny Committee

In July the committee received an update report from the West London Waste Authority. This followed on from a discussion the committee had in January and a subsequent exchange of letters between the chair and the Director of West London Waste. Members were particularly interested in asking questions about actions being taken to review and revise financial processes and practices within the authority, the role of the authorities new Audit Committee and the work it has undertaken so far and the residual waste procurement project.

The committee also received an update on the Budget Strategy. This included information on the impact of the 2014/15 settlement and the outlook for 2016/17. Member's discussions focussed on the council's ability to deliver the required saving, the balance between statutory and non statutory services and ways of maximising revenue. This discussion provided the basis of the committee's development of its work programme for the year ahead.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 None

Background Papers

Minutes of committees

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