



**SCRUTINY  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2014 – 15**

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## INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY

This has been an exciting and challenging year for scrutiny in Brent. In May 2014 we introduced a new structure for our Scrutiny function with a single Committee responsible for co-ordinating an integrated work programme and establishing time limited tasks groups. The council wanted to ensure a stronger, more joined-up approach to scrutiny which could have more impact on the quality of life of Brent residents. This has ensured greater focus by leading and coordinating scrutiny of all areas that affect the quality of life of local people

During the past year this Committee has explored a wide range of issues related to the performance of council and partner agencies services, as well also key community concerns raised by residents. The Scrutiny Committee has actively monitored the implementation of previous scrutiny task groups and focused on ensuring that scrutiny is able to add value to policy development within the council and with partners through its findings.

The financial environment for local government and public services more generally continues to be very challenging. This has meant big cuts in the council's budgets with £54 million needing to be saved over the next two years and the council has been forced to make difficult decisions. We must find new, smarter, more efficient ways of delivering services at reduced cost at the same time that our population continues to grow and to make increasing demand for services - older more vulnerable people require support, more school places are needed to educate our growing school-age population and we must find more homes for the increasing number of people living in the borough. It is in this context that scrutiny has continued to operate. Our role as critical friend and as a source of evidence to support decision-making is a key part of ensuring changes to services are being made in the most appropriate way.

But we too must find ways to work more efficiently and to ensure that reduced resources are used to consider the most important issues faced by our local population.

Since our last annual report we have considered a range of important issues through our task group reviews:

In 2014 – 15:

- Individual Voter Registration
- Budget Panel
- Use of the Pupil Premium Grant

And in 2015 – 16

- Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care under the Shaping a Healthier Future Proposals

We have also supported the implementation of reviews undertaken during the later part of 2013 – 14 to ensure the agreed recommendations have been adopted. These are:

- Gangs in Brent
- Tackling Violence against women and girls

Section Two below gives more information on why we investigated these issues, what we found and what has changed as a result of our recommendations.

We have participated in the NW London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny committee which considered the implications of the Shaping a Healthier Future proposals designed to radically change hospital services across North West London.

This report also outlines the work we have undertaken via the regular meetings of the Scrutiny Committee and more detail on our committee deliberations can be found in Section Three.

As Chair of the Scrutiny Committee I have also welcomed the opportunity to participate in the London Scrutiny Network. This group collaborates on the design and deliver of a pan London scrutiny development programme and sharing of best practice.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for the contribution they have made to the continuing effectiveness of scrutiny. Without their on-going support and participation within task groups Scrutiny would not be able to address local issues. I would also like to thank the officers who have supported our investigations, from the services across the council and from our partner organisations.

But most of all I would like to thank residents of the borough, the evidence you bring to our deliberations and your continuing engagement with us means that we will continue to try and improve the services which we provide, representing your concerns to local decision makers. In particular. I would like to thank the following organisations and people for their support:

- Brent Youth Parliament who engaged with us on our work to consider the Pupil Premium.
- Brent Schools Partnership who also worked with us on the Pupil Premium task group
- Residents who engaged with us via Brent Connects consultation events and forums
- The various voluntary sector, faith and community groups that have met with Members of the Scrutiny committee to provide they views and experiences of Brent which inform our work.



***Cllr M Aslam Choudry  
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee***

# SECTION ONE: THE BACKGROUND

## WHAT IS SCRUTINY

The purpose of the Scrutiny Committee and the activities that it undertakes, is to enable all members who are not part of the Cabinet to engage with and influence the policy development and decision-making of the council. This is achieved through scrutiny of the council's decisions, contributing to the development of strategies and policies, member-led investigations of local issues or community concerns and the scrutiny of other public agencies services. The findings from scrutiny work are reported to the Cabinet for their consideration and response.

Scrutiny acts as a check and balance to the Cabinet and also seeks to involve the public to provide of a voice for local people on the local issues which are of concern to them.

Scrutiny provides members with the opportunity to question Cabinet members, senior officers and other statutory partners in order to gain knowledge around an issue and make effective, evidenced-based recommendations. It also enables members to represent the views of their constituents and provide community leadership on local priorities such as health services and policing.

### Brent's Scrutiny Principles

In Brent we have adopted the following principles for effective scrutiny:

- **Being Member-led**

The Scrutiny Committee determines its own programme of work and decides which issues to explore and what evidence to seek. Members take an active role in the scrutiny process, for example by going on visits, taking part in consultation activities with service users, residents and discussions with local organisations.

- **Taking a consensual approach**

Effective scrutiny works towards developing a consensus-based view of the service or issue under consideration, focused on the needs of service users and residents.

- **Being evidence based**

Scrutiny should take evidence from a wide and balanced range of sources in order to develop a rounded view of the issues under consideration. Recommendations made by scrutiny should be supported by the evidence gathered and be informed by the views and experience of the local community.

- **Providing constructive challenges**

Good scrutiny should foster a style of constructive challenge with officers, partner agencies and other witnesses, enabling sharing of views in an open and positive manner to improve public services and outcomes.

# THE SCRUTINY STRUCTURE AND PROCESS IN BRENT

## A New Structure

Following the local election in 2014, the council wanted to ensure a stronger, more joined-up approach to scrutiny which could have more impact on the quality of life of Brent residents. It therefore established a single Scrutiny Committee. This has ensured greater focus by leading and coordinating scrutiny of all areas that affect the quality of life of local people.

As Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, along with my fellow members, I have extensive experience in community engagement. This ensures that the scrutiny committee focuses consistently on the issues that matter most to Brent. As a Committee we meet ten times a year and consists of 14 members comprising eight councillors, four voting education co-opted members and two non-voting co-opted members.

## How We Work

The Scrutiny Committee:

- Holds the Cabinet to account for its decisions.
- Supports policy development through commissioning member-led investigations of issues affecting the community or borough.
- Provides scrutiny of external public bodies and services, including education, health and other partners as specified by the Localism Act, 2011.
- Coordinates activities with other local bodies charged with scrutiny functions, for example, Healthwatch, tenant scrutiny and Brent's Safer Neighborhood Board.
- Reviews and monitors performance to ensure continuous improvement.
- Receives call-in of Cabinet decisions, public petitions and community calls to action.
- Commissions in-depth reviews to be carried out by task and finish groups and to be brought back to the committee for consideration
- Produces an annual report on its work showing, in particular, the impact of the work of the committee in improving outcomes for local people
- Brings different agencies together to broker solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

In addition to its work as a committee, the Scrutiny Committee commissions more detailed investigations of particularly complex issues to be considered by time-limited task groups. Recommendations from these groups' investigations are presented back to the Scrutiny Committee on completion and, if agreed, these recommendations are then submitted to the council's Cabinet for consideration.

## Scrutiny Forward Plan and work programme

It is important that scrutiny focuses resources on key issues for the council and residents. In order to enable this during May 2014, Members were consulted to identify the priority issues for consideration for the Scrutiny Committee forward plan and subjects for task group investigation. The list of suggested topics derived from this exercise was reviewed and prioritised at the scrutiny members' programme of work meeting in June. A draft programme of work was then prepared by officers and reviewed by the scrutiny committee in early July, this informed the Scrutiny Committee's Forward Plan 2014-15.

The Forward Plan is a working document, considered at each meeting of the committee. As issues emerge throughout the year, members can request that priority items be added and heard by the Scrutiny Committee.

### Developing Scrutiny Protocols

As the new Scrutiny Committee has become established, new ways of working have developed and we have produced a range of documents and processes to underpin the scrutiny arrangements. Amongst these are: protocols for recording, collecting and circulating data and information requested during scrutiny meetings from officers and partner agencies. We have also focused on greater engagement with local people and service users through our task group work, while refreshing our scrutiny webpages and producing a public leaflet on the role of scrutiny.

## SECTION TWO: TASK GROUP REVIEWS

One of the most powerful forms of investigation available to scrutiny is the task group, through which councillors can give detailed consideration to specific issues over a longer time frame. In this section, we summarise the work of task groups and the impact that their work has had.

This section covers two periods:-

- Task groups who reported at the end of 2013/14 and therefore their implementation and impact of their work took place in 2014/15.
- Task groups that commenced during the period 2014/15.

If you would like to read the formal report of any of these task groups please visit the scrutiny web site <http://brent.gov.uk/your-council/democracy-in-brent/local-democracy/scrutiny/scrutiny-task-group-reports/> or click [here](#)

## IMPLEMENTING TASK GROUP REVIEWS FROM 2013-14

A Review of Gangs in Brent and the Development of Services for Prevention, Intervention and Exiting

**Chair: Cllr Zaffar Kan Kalwala**

### **Why we investigated this**

The task group was established in response to public concerns that gangs in Brent were proliferating and the number and severity of gang-related violence was also rising. The project sought to develop a clear understanding of the extent of the gangs problem and undertake research in areas where little has previously been known, such as the makeup and extent of girl gangs and sexual exploitation of vulnerable young women by gang members. Brent required a strategy to deal with gangs and the capacity to ensure those who wish to exit the gang involvement were supported into more positive pathways.

### **What we found**

#### **Defining 'gang' and developing a strategy**

From the many ways to define what a gang is and how it is organised, the task group discovered that there was no one agreed definition and that it needed to develop an overarching strategy which clearly defined what a gang was and the nature of gang involvement.

#### **Key risk factors for gang membership**

Brent is a young borough; the 2011 census data showed that roughly 25% of the total population in Brent is less than 19 years old. This meant that this issue, if not dealt with effectively, could leave many more young people in Brent at risk. Research on the drivers of gang members and youth violence pointed to a number of risk factors which are most common to this group.



The following were revealed as drivers of gang membership in Brent:

- Being young and male;
- Being a victim of bullying or violence;
- Discrimination and stereotyping;
- Having a member of the family or friends circle who is a gang member;
- Family breakdown and dysfunction (including domestic violence);
- A lack of positive role models (including an absent father);
- Poor educational attainment;
- Having a drug or alcohol misuse problem;
- Mental and emotional health problems;
- An absence of aspirations;
- Having a perceived need for protection;
- Unemployment or underemployment and the need for money;
- Living in a culture that strongly identifies success with material wealth; and
- Poverty or growing up in social housing.

### **Girls in gangs**

This was an area that the task group were keen to investigate. Although there was little evidence to suggest that Brent had a girl gang problem, there was anecdotal evidence that there was a developing problem, across London, of sexual exploitation of young women by males associated with gangs.

### **Gangs in Brent**

Brent is one of 19 priority boroughs the Met identified as a 'Trident borough'. There are 15 recognised gangs in Brent; these gangs are most commonly geographically located on or near social housing estates and in areas of relative deprivation. Based on arrests and convictions, the main types of offences committed by Brent's street gangs were: firearms offences, drug dealing, robbery burglary, violence and anti-social behaviour.



Police statistics also highlighted that despite London-wide reductions in gun crime, Brent saw a 10.8% increase and is also experienced increases in knife crime, well above the London-wide figures.

### **Prevention, intervention and exit services**

The task group found that more prevention work was needed, particularly in schools and Pupil Referral Units to educate young people on making healthier life choices and rejecting gang membership. Robust intervention services also needed to be developed; these programmes would offer gang-involved young people a clear alternative which allowed them to stop offending and choose a more positive lifestyle. Exit services, similar to interventions, were required for high risk gang members who could not simply quit their gang because of an imminent danger to their own lives or to their close family.

### **What has changed**

Using the task groups recommendations, Brent's Ending Gang and Youth Violence Strategy and its accompanying action plan was developed by scrutiny officers in partnership with Brent's Community Safety team. The strategy was approved by Brent's Corporate Management Team and the Safer Brent Partnership; with the agreement that a Borough

Gangs Delivery Group owned the document, oversaw its implementation, where responsible for its delivery.

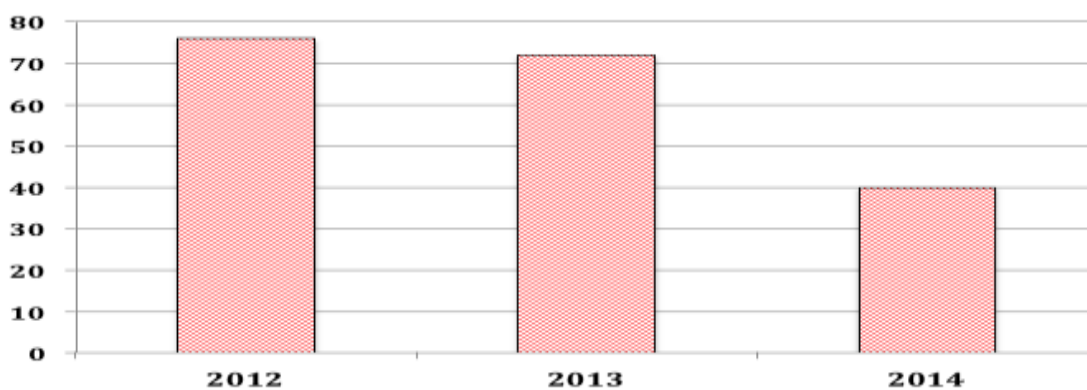
The Borough Gang Delivery Group members approved the strategy and the plan; it also suggested additional activities for inclusion within the action plan. Members of the group include Brent Council: Community Safety, Children’s Services, Safeguarding, Housing, Youth Offending and Public Health. Our partners include: the Police, Probation Services, NHS, College of North West London and Coram’s Children Charity.

Gangs and serious youth violence was made a borough priority. The gangs strategy provided a clearer vision and governance structure, this was supported by a delivery plan which set out both ownership and detail on how the strategy was communicated across the partnership and communities. Brent is working with other local authorities such as Westminster sharing information and building cross border relationships. The partnerships have maximised the use of data from all agencies, including the voluntary and community sector, and Safer Brent Partnership have been able to develop a partnership response based on well-informed profile of gangs, girls in gangs and sexual exploitation.

Community safety partners have made excellent progress in delivering objectives set out in the strategy and now have delivery structures which are fit for purpose. Partners have worked hard to maintain robust multi-agency identification, assessment and risk management processes with clear referral pathways. This has improved the management of risk, threat and harm to victims and high risk gang members. Outcomes have improved in relation to targeted interventions e.g. prevention, diversion, gang-exit programmes, resettlement and reduced re-offending for gang members. Brent has strengthened the links with custodial estates and developed rehabilitative programmes for individuals that provide appropriate support in education, training and employment.

Brent and its partners have built and continued to maintain community trust and support by engaging with community members in resident forums in Harlesden, and via our invitation to the Home Officer to compete a Local Assessment Feb 2015, to speak to peers and community members, as well as young people, regarding the gang problems in Brent. The community has also been involved in the Gang Call Ins work and will continue to be a vital part of ending gangs and youth violence in Brent.

As part of the action plan under Stronger Local Leadership partnership key Performance indicators were established to measure and track performance, performance is now measured every quarter. The below bar chart shows the number of recorded Gang Flagged Crime reports in Brent each year between 2012 – 2014 -



In 2014 there were 40 Gang Flagged Crime reports, which was a 44% year on year decrease from the 2013 figure and a 47% decrease on the 2012 figure. This indicates that gang related offences are significantly down.

The Gangs task group provided a strategy which was the platform for understanding and tackling serious youth violence and gangs, the original strategy is currently being reviewed and will be refreshed in May 2015; where it will address the changing profiles of gangs.

## Tackling Violence against women and girls

**Chair: Cllr Ann John OBE**

### **Why we investigated this**

Violence against women is an illegal, intolerable act and is a human rights violation. Brent is recognised as one of the most ethnically diverse population in the country and a significant proportion of these communities have religious and cultural ties to areas of the world where the harmful practices of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour Base Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriages (FM) are prevalent. In 2012 the Home Office reclassified Domestic Violence to include HBV and the government decided to make FM a criminal offence. This led members of the previous Scrutiny Committee to express an interest in forming a task group to look further into the possible evidence of harmful practices in Brent; focusing on FGM, HBV and FM.

### **What we found**

#### **The scale and nature of Harmful Practices in Brent**

The task group wanted to establish the prevalence of harmful practices in Brent. We found that there was very little data held and the data that was held by the organisations we contacted was not shared between partners. We met with a number of community groups to gather anecdotal evidence based on their experiences and talked to national and local charities with expertise in this area. While we couldn't be certain about the extent of these practices within Brent we believed that they were significant enough to recommend that a mapping exercise was undertaken to establish the number of women and girls at risk and that this work should be coordinated with partners and specialist charities.

#### **Awareness, Knowledge and Criminality**

The task group believed that there was a worrying lack of knowledge and understanding in Brent about harmful practices, the impact they have and the legislation relating to them. All of the women's groups we met with agreed that raising awareness within affected communities was key to tackling harmful practices. The task group recognised the important role that schools have in raising awareness and safeguarding. We undertook research with school governors and whilst 64% of our respondents were aware of all three offences, only 21% said that they were covered as part of existing safeguarding training.

#### **Partnership working including referral processes and pathways**

The task group found that while there were many organisations currently working with women and girls affected by harmful practices, there was frequently a lack of coordination between partners and a lack of clarity about referral pathways. This contributed to the negative experience of many of the women we talked to. The task group therefore recommended that a harmful practices strategy was developed within the wider Violence against Women and Girls Strategy which provided a clear framework for partners to work

within. We also recommended that all key staff from relevant agencies undertake training to ensure a better understanding of the issues, identification of those at risk and establishing referral pathways.

### **Services and accessing available funding**

It was clear that for better more coordinated services to be available voluntary and statutory agencies need to work together. This would not only enable organisations within Brent to pursue all avenues of available funding but ensure that services that are commissioned have a real and lasting impact.



### **What has changed**

The task group identified 12 recommendations, which were reported to the council's Cabinet in March 2014. Recommendation two of the task group report states: That work in relation to the implementation of the Harmful Practices Strategy is the responsibility of:

- The Local Children's Safeguarding Board
- The Health and Wellbeing Board
- Safer Brent Partnership

In accepting and welcoming the report, Cabinet asked that the Policy and Scrutiny Team coordinate the development of an action plan to tackle the issues identified in the scrutiny report. In order to produce a multi-agency action plan, a partnership group was formed to identify and evaluate the actions required to implement the recommendations. The group consisted of representatives from across the following partners:

- Brent Adult Social Care
- Brent Children's Social Care
- Brent Local Children's safeguarding
- Brent Public Health
- Brent Community Safety
- Brent Equalities
- Brent Geographical Information Service
- Brent Police
- Brent Multi-Agency Front Door
- Brent CVS
- Brent Schools Partnership
- ADVANCE/Hestia Housing
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- North West London Hospital Trust

Brent and its partners were already delivering pockets of excellent service and we needed to identify this work, and opportunities to build on it, across Brent. The action plan brought together and co-ordinated existing work already planned and being delivered across the borough and identified a number of new priorities and actions, all designed to address the twelve recommendations made by the scrutiny task group. Some actions within the plan require ongoing work and this was expected if we were to successfully imbed these actions and processes into future service delivery and commissioning.

The governing boards acknowledged and agreed to the content of the action plan for implementation. They agreed to continue to support the work and activities taking place as part of the action plan and encourage the actions to be imbedded in the future planning of services. The work outlined in the action plan has had positive impacts on Brent's communities and drove services to improve the rights and outcomes for women and girls.

Tackling Violence against Women and Girls is a borough priority and this reflected in the borough plan and the 2015 VAWG strategy. Tackling VAWG is now reviewed annually by the Health and Wellbeing, Children's Safeguarding, Adults Safeguarding and the Safer Brent Partnership.

We have continued to raise awareness in communities and schools through an ongoing robust training and awareness programme. The council has been recognised nationally as leading on tackling VAWG and council officers have spoken at a number of conferences on the strategy and action plan.

Brent and its partners, which include many of the third sector VAWG and voluntary organisations are continuing to work closely through the borough wide VAWG forums and are currently devising protocols to share more information. As a result services have become more accessible and responsive to the needs of vulnerable women and girls in Brent.

## TASK GROUP REVIEWS 2014-15

### Promoting Electoral Registration

**Chair: Cllr Neil Nerva**

#### **Why we investigated this**

The task group was established in response to the challenges posed by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the most significant change in the electoral system for 100 years. The right to vote is fundamental to democracy and it is for this reason that Brent Council's new administration made the issue a corporate priority. Brent has always had a significant level of under-registration. However, the transition to IER presented an opportunity to better understand how significant the problem was, and more importantly, offer practical proposals as to how Brent, and our partners, could improve registration.

#### **What we found**

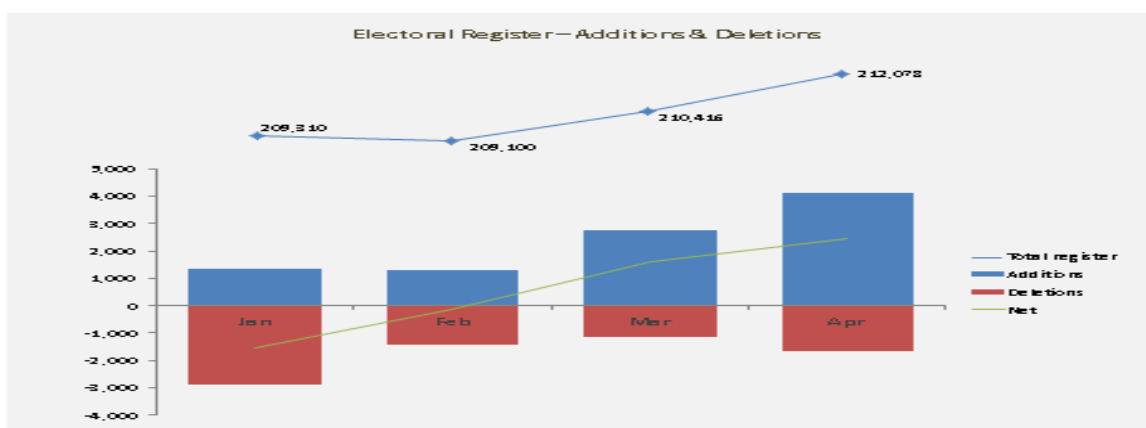
There was a lack of clarity around e-registration and the potential for registration fraud and identity theft. The national matching exercise, where existing electors whose details were matched on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Customer Information Systems (CIS) revealed, 79% Green matches, 3% Amber and 18% Red. Overall 67.6% of electors in Brent were successfully matched, just under the London average of 68%. Brent is an incredibly diverse borough and no two wards are the same, large numbers of Brent's residents speak English only as a second language; something which further highlighted the need for a bespoke approach to engaging with key community groups and areas. The task group felt that there is a need for greater engagement with vulnerable residents and their representative groups (VCS organisations). Similarly, there was a need to increase engagement on civic participation in the borough, particularly amongst Brent's young people and minority ethnic groups.

The task group concluded that the Electoral Commission’s (statutory) registration form was not as clear as it could have been and important information was missing, there were a number of internal and external partners within the housing sector and higher education that were ideally placed to feed into the strategy and to help with voter registration. 32% of Brent’s residents are now living in the Private Rented Sector which is characterised by short-term tenancies and, therefore, were at an increased risk of not registering. We also found that there were a number of negative consequences of being removed from the electoral register besides not being able to vote, of which residents did not know and need to be made aware of; e.g. unable to undergo a credit reference checks.

### What has changed

The task group report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee in November 2014, which endorsed the recommendations. Since the report was agreed by service areas, the Programme Management Office (PMO) has been tasked with developing a project to support the implementation of the recommendations made by the task group. The Project started in January 2015 with an advertising campaign, which included adverts on Gumtree, local buses and tube station and social media. The team have completed promotional activities and are now focusing on outreach and community engagement activities. They have also been consulting with local faith groups and residents forums.

As part of the ongoing project, the Business Intelligence team produces a monthly IER tracker which monitors the progress of the electoral register additions and deletions, the tracker also monitors the number of returned and outstanding Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs).



Using Mosaic, the team are able to track demographic trend and focus efforts where it is most needed. Since the beginning of the project voter registration has increased by 2768.

## The Budget Panel 2015-16

**Chair: Cllr M Aslam Choudry**

### **Why we investigated this**

The Budget task group was set-up to enable scrutiny members to undertake more detailed discussion and exploration of the council's financial position, current budget pressures and the emerging budget proposals for 2015 – 2017. This included examining the main issues, risks and impacts arising from changes to the local population and legislation, while considering the actions being taken by the council to minimise the negative consequences of budget reductions.

The task group's remit covered:

- Contributing to the budget setting process through discussions with Cabinet Members and Strategic Directors.
- Considering the budget strategy and proposals within the context of the objectives set out with the Borough Plan and the aims of the Administration.
- Supporting the longer term service planning of the council by focusing its discussions on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the principles for budget setting, the robustness of the budget and the ability to deliver savings, and possible risks to the Council.

### **What we found**

Developing the Council's budget for the period 2015/16 and 2016/17 was the most challenging that the council has ever faced and the scrutiny task group appreciated the difficult decisions that the Administration was required to make to set a balanced budget. Since the election of the current coalition government, there has been a focus on reducing the national deficit within a tight-time table. This has resulted in very substantial reductions to the grant funding available to local authorities and radical changes to the way in which this is allocated across the country. The impact of policy reform across a range of areas and unprecedented macro economic circumstances have had a fundamental impact on Brent's residents and therefore on their expectations of what the council should do to help meet their needs.

At the same time wider changes in society have forced local authorities across the country to rethink the way in which they commission and provide services to meet local needs and aspirations. People are, on the whole, living longer lives, with increasing consequences for the way in which they need to access care services, and the length of time they continue to need such services. In Brent, the number of people aged over 80 years is up by 24% and the number aged over 65 years by more than 10%. This has obvious implications for the council's cost base, driving up the number of vulnerable adults that the council may need to support, the level of their needs and the length of time for which those needs may need to be met. Local authorities have responded to these pressures by redefining models of care provision, increasing the emphasis on programmes designed to enable vulnerable residents to live their own lives without support and where this is not possible to exercise greater choice about how their needs are met.

In addition to very specific comments on the budget, the panel made a number of broad observations on the budget impact on local communities:

- Members of the task group expressed their concern regarding the problems faced by the most vulnerable residents in Brent as a result of the continued government reductions in public spending. This was not just in relation to council cuts to expenditure but the combined impact of the benefit cap, the introduction of Universal Credit and rising living costs. Residents are being affected by an 'accumulation' of factors, which are national, local and economic. Changes to local services need to be assessed in relation to the combined impact across a number of services which could impact disproportionately on groups who use a number of services, provided by a range of public agencies, not just the council. This should be reflected in the equality assessments that support the transformation and budget process.
- Given the future outlook for public expenditure levels, it is vital that actions and services to promote long-term community resilience and independence are prioritised. The voluntary sector is vital to achieving greater community resilience and members of the task group asked for reassurance that the structures and capacity is in place to take this agenda forward.
- During the public consultation for the Borough Plan, residents found it difficult to identify areas for budget reductions. Communications on the budget need to clearly articulate the reality that not all the required savings can be achieved by 'efficiency' measures. Some services will need to be reduced to a statutory level, with a focus on those most in need or in some cases stopped entirely to achieve a balanced budget.
- More effective management of current and future demand is a critical lever in reducing the council's costs. Behaviour change is central to this, whether this is more recycling or helping to reduce the need for children's social care. The task group would like more information on the programmes that will prevent future need for more intensive, higher cost services and will be looking at proposed savings in this context.
- Recent data from the Residents Attitude Survey has suggested that many people are capable and happy to access services digitally. This needs to be a central focus of the Community Access Strategy and service delivery in the future.
- A pressing concern for many residents is the high cost and availability of decent housing. Creative working with partners to secure more and better provision of all types of housing tenures within the borough should be a future priority to support stable local communities.
- It is vital during this period that the Council maintains a focus on attracting economic investment to the borough, supporting growth and fair employment for local people.

### **What has changed**

The Cabinet responded positively to the concerns raised and the debates held by the Budget Panel Task Group of the Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations made by the panel were inline with the Cabinets views and provided valuable support to the decisions required to be made. The Budget Panel's report and recommendations were included as part of the Final Budget Report which was agreed by the meeting of Full Council in March 2015.



## The Use of the Pupil Premium Grant in Brent

**Chair: Cllr Eleanor Southwood**

### **Why we investigated this**

The purpose of this task group was to identify where opportunities exist for a more joined-up, holistic and borough wide use of the PPG. We recognise that the PPG is a key mechanism for not only increasing educational attainment, but for offering our young people improved chances for living healthy and happy lives. Throughout our research, visits and meetings, the task group focused on how the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) could further reduce the numbers of children living in poverty and the numbers of young people not in employment education or training across our borough.

The role of the local authority in relation to schools is changing and the Brent Schools Partnership is a fledgling organisation, whose success is vital for ensuring that information, practice and support is shared amongst Brent's family of schools. The PPG is being extended to children in early year's education and the task group was keen that the experience of the PPG to date informs how this funding is used. The task group recognised that early intervention is the best way to give children a great start and we are excited about the difference that the Early Years PPG could make in Brent.

### **What we found**

#### **Data Analysis - Closing the attainment gap**

The task group found that there are a number of influencing factors which contribute to the gap in attainment. It was clear that the gap became wider as children progressed through school and that early intervention is key to progress and closing the gap for all disadvantaged groups.

#### **Setting the tone for Brent Schools – The Vision**

The task group found that all children disadvantaged or not, are likely to do better in higher quality schools. One of Brent's priorities is improving school quality by raising overall achievement. Moreover, school improvement has a large role to play in narrowing the gap because the achievement gain in moving from an inadequate school to an outstanding school is bigger for those who are the most disadvantaged. Mitigating the effects of child poverty and reducing it are key drivers of improving children and families' health and wellbeing. Children and young people should be able to enjoy their education and achieve the best results they can. The council's vision is to raise educational standards at all key stages and close attainment gaps between groups.

#### **Coordinated Schools Strategic Leadership: Sharing good practice, information, resources – including teaching staff and training – teachers and school governing bodies;**

The task group found that to improve outcomes for all children requires good strategic partnership working, where schools take the lead. Good quality data provided centrally is also essential; schools can benchmark themselves against other schools locally and nationally. Schools should be in a position to network and use local support from the council and other partners to improve performance and attainment.

#### **Improving outcomes for Looked After Children and Children Excluded from School**

After analysing the data on Looked after Children (LAC) the task group felt that as corporate parents of LAC, we need to do a much better job; starting with achieving 100 percent of Personal Education Plans (PEPS) for Looked After Children are completed to the highest quality. The task group felt that further analysis is required for disadvantaged children who

were excluded from school. Children, who are excluded for a fixed period, could also benefit from additional targeted support when attending PRUs.

### **Innovation and Advancement in Education**

The task group found that Brent schools are already very innovative and creative with their interventions on closing the attainment gap. There were wonderful examples of Brent secondary and primary schools trying unconventional interventions and being able to show impact and improved outcomes for children. However advancements in education attainment is continuously evolving and to keep abreast of this, requires constant research and trials, which should be embedded as part of day to day life in schools.

### **What do our young people want?**

The task group found that it is not just formal academic or vocational qualifications which hamper young people's chances of securing employment. National and regional research indicates a lack of 'employability' skills – for example, Basic English language and financial numeracy - as a significant barrier for employers looking to recruit. The consultation exercise conducted as part of the Employment & Enterprise strategy identified this as a significant issue in Brent, particularly amongst young people and those for whom English is a second language (EAL).

### **Supporting Parents and Building Self-Resilience**

We found that identifying parents who need support early will be key to improving attainment and closing the gap. Data shows that the gap often occurs during early years, this is a time when parents need to have the parental skills to ensure that their child's progress is on track and they are not underperforming. The task group welcome the Early Years PPG (April 2015) and believe that work with early years setting will be essential to the grant being implemented and utilised effectively.

### **What has changed**

The work of the task group will be completed and formally reported in April 2015. The impact of our investigation will be reported in the 2015 – 16 annual report.

# TASK GROUP REVIEWS 2015-16

## Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care under the Shaping a Healthier Future Proposals

Chair: Cllr Reg Colwill

### Why we are investigating this

Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and North West London Hospitals Trust (NWLHT) plan to transform the way health care is provided in Brent through three major transformational programmes:

- Shaping a healthier future – the reconfiguration of hospital services, and in particular developing the long term future of Central Middlesex Hospital;
- Primary Care Transformation – making it easier to see your GP and making more treatments available in a community setting; and
- Whole systems integrated care – joining together health and social care to provide more integrated health services to patients

It intends to deliver care at a reduced cost while still achieving better patient outcomes. These plans are reflected in the CCG's five year draft strategy and is a direct response to the Shaping a Healthier Future proposals for West London. SaHF is the regional reconfiguration of hospital services, which is intended to put in place more integrated and locally available services and reduce dependence on acute hospital services.

However, in order for these changes to hospital services to be implemented successfully it is critical that primary care, particularly access to extended GP's services through locality networks is in place and operating effectively. The intention of this scrutiny taskgroup is to review the current implementation of the primary care element of the CCG's transformation programme.



### What we will consider

This task group is currently running and will conclude its investigation in June 2015; however the task group intends to review the following areas:-

- There are currently 67 GP practices in Brent. These are formed into four networks for the provision of primary care and as the basis for extended services. The review will assess the sufficiency of the range of services provided from these four GP networks, opening hours, waiting times for appointments and the numbers of patients served by each network in relation to the current and future needs of the population. This will include meeting the target for urgent appointments seen within 24 hours. The long term aim is that by 2017 urgent appointments should be seen within four hours and other appointments within 48 hours. The task group will consider the feasibility of achieving these targets within the planned investment programme.
- Geographical location of GP's, public transport access to GP's and the physical condition and suitability of GP premises to provide additional primary care services.

- A £10m fund has been established to facilitate the creation of GP networks and in particular make it easier for patients to see a GP through improvements to technology and information sharing across GP networks. The task group will explore how this fund has been used to improve patient access, especially in relation to extended opening hours and weekend opening across GP networks and the sharing of patient records.
- It is proposed that extended GP networks should provide more diagnostic services, clinics and support for management of long term health conditions. The review will assess how these programmes are being developed and the timeframes in relation to the timetable for changes to hospital provision and reconfiguration.
- Closure of the A&E facility at Central Middlesex hospital has already taken place in September 2014. This review will look at any resulting impact in terms of increased demand for GP services, including whether the GP networks are sufficiently developed to deal with the anticipated patient shift from A&E to local primary care providers. Conversely it will also assess if problems in accessing GP appointments are leading to avoidable attendances at A&E facilities.
- The planned changes to the configuration of services at Central Middlesex Hospital includes the creation of a 'Hub Plus' at the site which will provide an extended range of primary care services including GP access and out-patient services. The task group should review the set of proposals, the number of intended patients and how people will access this care.
- Under the future 'whole systems integrated care model', GP's are expected to undertake a key role in the co-ordinating of care plans, sign-posting to additional care services and providing primary care support that enables people to more effectively self-manage long term conditions and avoid admissions to hospitals. The taskgroup should examine the extent to which GP networks have the necessary capacity to take on these roles and the investment that is required to make the intergrated care model work effectively.
- The task group will consider the communications strategy for encouraging people to use GP services effectively, particularly for those residents who may not be registered with a GP and rely on A&E hospital services. This should include consideration of messaging to residents on when not to request a GP appointment for minor ailments and more effective management of demand.
- The taskgroup should particularly focus on the needs of vulnerable groups in terms of accessing GP services such as people with a learning difficulty, the elderly, people with limited mobility, the homeless, recently arrived residents and people with limited English language skills.
- To consider the capacity of GP's to take on the role of care coordinators and support the planned integration of health and social care provision

### **What has changed**

This task group is currently underway and will conclude in June 2015, a further update on the impact of this investigation will be included in the annual report for 2015/16

# NORTH WEST LONDON JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SHAPING A HEALTHIER FUTURE

## Background

The North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) was formed by ten (mainly) North West London boroughs at the request of NHS North West London as part of the statutory consultation process for Shaping a Healthier Future (SaHF). It comprises representatives from the boroughs of Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond, Wandsworth and Westminster. It meets with representatives of NHS inner North West London to consider matters concerning health care subject to consultation. Brent continues to be an active participant in the JHOSC and it is represented on the Committee by Cllr Aslam Choudry and Cllr Mary Daly.

The JHOSC held its first meeting in July 2012 and completed its review of the hospital reconfiguration consultation in November 2012 with the submission of its final report to the NHS.



This submission completed the JHOSC's statutory role in the reconfiguration process.

In November 2013, following the final decision on the structure of the reconfiguration setting out which hospitals would be developed as major and local hospitals, the North West London Collaboration of Clinical Commissioning Groups requested that the JHOSC continued to provide a forum where issues relating to SaHF, which cross borough boundaries, could be scrutinised and discussed. This was agreed.

## Role

The stated purpose of the JHOSC since November 2012 has been to consider issues with cross-borough implications arising as a result of the Shaping a Healthier Future reconfiguration of health services, taking a wider view across North West London than might normally be taken by individual Local Authorities. Specifically

1. To scrutinise the 'Shaping a Healthier Future' reconfiguration of health services in North West London; in particular the implementation plans and actions by the North West London Collaboration of Clinical Commissioning Groups (NWL CCGs), focussing on aspects with cross borough implications.
2. To make recommendations to NWL CCGs, NHS England, or any other appropriate outside body in relation to the 'Shaping a Healthier Future' plans for North West London; and to monitor the outcomes of these recommendations where appropriate.
3. To require the provision of information from, and attendance before the committee by, any such person or organisation under a statutory duty to comply with the scrutiny function of health services in North West London.

Individual local authority members of the JHOSC will continue their own scrutiny of health services in, or affecting, their individual areas (including those under 'Shaping a Healthier Future'). Participation in the JHOSC will not preclude any scrutiny or right of response by individual boroughs.

## 2014-15 Overview

Three meetings were held during 2014-15

6<sup>th</sup> August 2014 to consider:

- Shaping a Healthier Future - Programme overview briefing
- Briefing on Accident & Emergency Unit reconfiguration
- NWL JHOSC - Next meeting and future arrangements

16<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to consider:

- Terms of Reference of the North West London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Shaping a Healthier Future SH - A&E, Maternity and Paediatrics Update
- Work Programme

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015

- London Ambulance Service update
- Travel Advisory Group
- Shaping a Healthier Future update
- Healthcare Commission verbal update

The planned implementation timeframe for SaHF runs up to 2018. It is proposed that the JHOSC operates alongside the implementation programme up to 2018 with its duration expanded should the SaHF programme run beyond this date. Future annual reports will continue to summarise the activities of the JHOSC.

A number of west London boroughs have, due to continued concerns regarding the planning and implementation of the SaHF programme, now established an independent Healthcare Commission chaired by Michael Mansfield QC. Evidence considered by the Scrutiny Committee, from its role on the JHOSC, task groups and the main Committee contributed to the evidence submission made by the Council to the Commission. The west London Healthcare Commission will publish its findings in July 2015.

## SECTION THREE: THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The committee held 10 scheduled meetings in 2014 – 15, two of which were dedicated to planning the work programme and briefings on the legal and statutory responsibilities of the Scrutiny Committee.

As outlined in the introduction to this report, we have changed the structure of our scrutiny function to provide a more targeted approach to the committee's work. Scrutiny now meets as a single committee which covers both the council's statutory responsibilities with regard to health services and community safety as well as a cross cutting agenda looking at local service issues. The reports and issues that the committee considered during the year are set out in the following section.

Full details of issues considered and minutes of the meetings can be found by visiting <http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=444> or by clicking [here](#)

**Health issues and reconfiguration of health services** has constituted a significant proportion of the agenda of the scrutiny committee this year as Shaping a Healthier Future proposals, the performance of A&E at Northwick Park Hospital, changes at Central Middlesex and to maternity services impact on our local community. These are critical issues for local residents and the scrutiny committee has been active in exploring the planned changes and their consequences.

- In **August** and on **9<sup>th</sup> September 2014**, the committee discussed the proposals for the **closure of A&E at Central Middlesex hospital** and questioned the effectiveness of plans to deliver this closure and the impact on the A&E Unit at Northwick Park. In particular in September 2014 the committee challenged the proposals in the context of the Care Quality Commission findings with regard to the need for improvement in general at Northwick Park hospital and the ongoing concerns about waiting times at A&E in Northwick Park. The committee remained concerned about the implications of closure of CMH A&E on the overall emergency capacity available to Brent residents and the committee will continue to monitor the impact of changes. The committee has continued to review the performance at A&E at Northwick Park which has declined since the closure at Central Middlesex and has made known its concerns to NWLHT and the CCG.
- The **August 2014**, the committee was also appraised of plans to **transform healthcare in Brent** through Safeguarding a Healthier Future, primary care transformation and improved access to GP services. The committee was concerned about the level of support for GPs to carry out their additional functions and discussed in more detail the relocation of mental health services to Central Middlesex Hospital. As a result further detailed work on access to GP services is being undertaken by a Scrutiny task group which will report in June 2015. The committee agreed to continue to monitor the changes during its work programme in 2015.

- In **October 2014**, the committee received a report outlining how NW London Hospital NHS Trust plans to respond to **the Care Quality Commission's** findings from the inspection they undertook in May 2014. The results of this inspection were of considerable concern to the committee, suggesting that many services at the Northwick Park Hospital 'require improvement'. Councillors were briefed on the outcomes of the Quality Summit, chaired by the Care Quality Commission, which had developed an action plan in response to the weaknesses identified. On **26<sup>th</sup> November 2014** the committee received a further report on progress and members were able to raise their concerns re the implementation of the action plan in the context of continuing concerns about the performance of A&E at Northwick Park and the availability of beds for the emergency care pathway.

The committee will continue to monitor progress on the delivery of this action plan.

- On **26<sup>th</sup> November 2014**, the committee considered the impact of **changes to maternity, neonatal, paediatric and gynaecology services at Ealing Hospital**. The committee was advised that the services at Ealing are not sustainable without significant investment and that the majority of Brent women chose to use services at Northwick Park or Imperial Healthcare Trust. Whilst accepting these points, the committee is keen to ensure that Northwick Park Hospital has the capacity to cope with these changes, particularly in the context of the Care Quality Commission inspection report and as such we will continue to monitor this issue.
- On **26<sup>th</sup> November**, the committee was also briefed on the process for deciding the **new configuration of services at Central Middlesex Hospital**. Members were advised that it is proposed that services will include 24/7 Urgent Care Centre, Primary Care Hub, elective orthopaedics, mental health inpatient services and genetics laboratory. The committee was concerned to receive further information regarding costs and investment and also the impact of the shift of rehabilitation beds from Willesden Hospital to Central Middlesex Hospital.
- In **February 2015**, the committee was updated on the work of the **Systems Resilience Group** and specifically its work on winter pressures. Given the increasing demand for healthcare in the winter months, the committee was glad to be reassured about the preparedness of services to safeguard the health of residence particularly in the context of the ongoing pressures on emergency services at Northwick Park Hospital. The committee will continue to monitor this.



The Scrutiny Committee has also considered a wide range of important issues with regard to council services:

- On **9<sup>th</sup> September** we received a report on **parking services issues** and an update on the initial problems which had been experienced with regard to the introduction of online parking permits. Members had been particularly concerned about the impact of the changes on elderly residents and were pleased to hear that the Equalities Impact Assessment was to be reconsidered. They also expressed concerns about the issuing of visitor permits using the new system and also the use of CCTV to issue parking tickets. The Committee asked that Cabinet reappraise arrangements for issuing visitor parking permits and welcomed the arrangements made to respond to their concerns.
  
- In **October 2014**, we received the **Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report**, which provided the committee with an update of performance of children's safeguarding services against key priorities which have been identified either locally or nationally. We identified a number of gaps in the information provided including information regarding child welfare and safety in Brent, the use of food banks, child suicides and children at risk.
  
- The **October** meeting also considered the **draft school places strategy** and was briefed about the challenges confronting the borough with regard to the increasing demand for places – there has been a 38% increase in under-fives in the last ten years. The committee noted the detailed proposals in place to increase the number of primary and secondary school places and will continue to monitor this issue.
  
- On **3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014**, the draft **Employment, Skills and Enterprise Strategy** was presented to the committee. This strategy, designed to promote economic growth in the borough is set in the context of 18% rise in the working age population, a significant skills/qualifications mismatch and low earnings. The committee commented in the draft strategy which is due to go out to be finalised by the Cabinet in 2015. The committee has asked for further progress reports.
  
- The **3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014** meeting also received information about the **impact of the benefit cap** on Brent residents. We were advised about the number of residents now subject to the cap, their profile and the work the council is doing to alleviate difficulties they are facing and support local people into employment.
  
- In **January 2015**, the **Safer Brent Partnership** presented its annual report to the committee. Having outlined performance against existing priorities, the report summarised priorities for 2014 – 2017:
  - Violence against women and girls
  - Gang related offending
  - Anti social behaviour
  - Reducing re-offending

The committee welcomed the progress made in reducing the overall level of crime in the borough and also the innovative work that has been undertaken on reducing gang involvement. However members expressed concern at the high level of violent crime and particularly domestic violence. The committee has requested an update, and sight of the need analysis which drives the strategy in six months time.

- In **February 2015**, the committee received two education reports:
  - 6 month update on the implementation of the **Brent Education Commission** action plan
  - **Annual Report of the Academic Year**, setting out the standards and achievements of Brent schools in 2013 – 2014

The committee welcomed the continued improvement in education achievement but also noted that this was not consistent across all schools or groups of pupils. The committee was attended by a number of Brent Head Teachers who are part of the Schools Partnership.

- In **March 2015**, the committee received an update on the **Community Access Strategy** and the projects designed to deliver the strategy:
  - Improved telephony
  - Channel shift
  - Modernising face-to-face communication
  - Joining up service delivery with partners

The committee voiced concerns regarding how the projects were addressing the diversity of the borough, and in particular the needs of residents whose first language isn't English. We also asked that learning from other change projects is considered in the context of the access projects, particularly the learning from the parking project for the transition to online services. This issue will be considered further in December 2015

- The **March** meeting also considered **housing pressures** in the borough, particularly homelessness and housing supply and demand. The committee investigated the impact of welfare reform, the use of empty properties, overcrowding and the potential for inspecting licenced properties. The committee will receive a further report in six months.
- The **March** meeting also received information on the '**Work Programme Scheme**' which has been established to tackle unemployment in the borough and to improve health and well being by working with small and medium enterprises. The committee noted the work on this issue.

## Call In

In some circumstances, the Scrutiny Committee will hold a 'call-in' meeting. The purpose of a call-in meeting is for non-executive members to examine and consider the decision made by the Cabinet and for members of the committee to make suggestions and recommendations they consider appropriate. The Scrutiny Committee provides an opportunity for members to seek clarification of the methodology used in enabling a decision to be made, as well as explore work undertaken by officers culminating in the matter coming before the Cabinet.

There was one call in heard by the scrutiny committee during 2014-15. In August decisions made by the Cabinet on 21 July 2014 in respect of the Changes to Recycling and Green Waste Collections report were called in for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 20. The reasons for the call in were whilst not opposing the principle of charging for garden waste, members consider that the system proposed could be improved on. There were also concerns at the absence of crucial information in the report

It was resolved:

- That the decisions made by the Cabinet on 21 July 2014 regarding changes to recycling and green waste collections be noted;
- That a review be held following a period of 9 months after implementation;
- That efforts should be made to ensure the removal of the green waste bins be as close as possible to 1 March 2015 to minimise inconvenience to residents.

## Scrutiny Committee Membership

The Scrutiny Committee comprises the following councillors and co-optees:

- Councillor M Aslam Choudry (Chair)
- Councillor Reg Colwill (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor James Allie
- Councillor Mary Daly
- Councillor Wilhelmina Mitchell Murray
- Councillor Tayo Oladapo
- Councillor Ahmad Shahzad OBE
- Councillor Eleanor Southwood
- **Substitute Members**
- Councillor Joshua Mitchell Murray
- Councillor Neil Nerva
- Cllr Ramash Patel
- **Co-opted Members**
- Ms Christine Cargill
- Mr Alloysius Frederick
- Mrs Hawa Imame
- Dr J Levison

Throughout the year, the Scrutiny Committee has been assisted in its deliberations by officers from the council and from our partner organisations. These officers have made a significant contribution to the work of the committee and the committee is grateful for the time they have made available.

- Chief Executive, NW London Hospital Trust
- Dep Chief Executive NW London Hospital Trust
- Chief Operating Officer London NW Healthcare Trust
- Dep Chief Executive London NW Healthcare Trust
- Programme Medical Director Shaping A Healthier Future
- Chair Brent Clinical Commissioning Group
- Chief Operating Officer Brent Clinical Commissioning Group
- Clinical Lead Brent Clinical Commissioning Group
- Chief Operating Officer Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon CCGs
- Director of Quality Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon CCGs
- Chief Nurse London NW Healthcare Trust
- Independent Chair Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Chief Executive Brent Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Strategic Director Adult Social Services
- Operational Director Environment and Protection
- Strategic Director Children and Young People
- Operational Director Help and Education, Children and Young People
- Operational Director Housing and Employment, Regeneration and Growth
- Head of Employment and Enterprise, Regeneration and Growth
- Operational Director, Customer Service and Benefits, Regeneration and Growth
- Operational Manager, Ingeus

## THE FUTURE

Scrutiny in Brent will continued to deliver constructive and positive challenge to support the delivery of services to the people of the borough and provide a focus for the voice of local communities. During the past year Scrutiny members have tackled difficult and complex issues within an environment where the council and other public services are faced with hard financial choices and decisions. Scrutiny's role in informing policy development, raising concerns and promoting debate will continue to be vital to our local democracy.

The specific content of our work programme for 2015/16 is still to be determined but we will complete the outstanding projects from this year:

- Use of the Pupil Premium Grant in Brent
- Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care

It has not been possible to look at all the issues that have been brought to our attention during this year but we will be developing our work programme for 2015/16 in the next few weeks and this will include:-

- Access to affordable childcare in the borough.
- The performance of Brent Housing Partnership
- Priorities for Public Health.
- Licencing procedures and licenced premises
- Responding to Audit Findings

We will also be looking at how we can develop our approach to more detailed budget scrutiny and the delivery of the council's budget savings. Through our involvement in the London Scrutiny Network and collaboration with the Centre for Public Scrutiny the council will continue to learn from best practice and innovative approaches to public scrutiny. This will enable us to provide Members with the best training and development opportunities to support their scrutiny activities.

Brent will continue to contribute to the West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considering Shaping A Healthier Future developments and the recommendations that arise from the North West London Healthcare Commission.

It is indeed probable that the continuing reconfiguration in provision of healthcare will mean that health issues remain a regular feature on our committee's agenda, we look forward to working with health colleagues to ensure Brent residents receive the highest quality healthcare in these challenging times.

The potential changes in national government policy may also bring with it emerging issues for our work programme and we look forward to working with colleagues to examine the impact of these on the borough and local people.

**Cllr Aslam Choudry**  
**Chair of Scrutiny Committee**

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