



**Resources and Public Realm  
Scrutiny Committee  
12 July 2016**

**Report from the Director of Performance,  
Policy and Partnerships**

For information

Wards affected: ALL

**Annual Work Programme 2016-17**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the scope of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for the next municipal year 2016-17. The work programme covers a broad range of items and policy areas across corporate resources, regeneration and environment, transport and community safety and was selected by members of the committee based on criteria for effective scrutiny. It also sets out the remit for the committee and its responsibilities for scrutiny.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to discuss and agree the report and the work programme set out in Appendix 1.

**3.0 Background**

In March 2016 Full Council endorsed a proposal to adopt a new model for scrutiny and rather than one have two committees: Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and a Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. This is to ensure a stronger, more joined-up approach which has more impact on the quality of life of Brent residents, but retains a focus on specialised areas. Despite having two committees, there will be some areas such as scrutiny of the annual Budget in which members of the two committees will work together.

- 3.1 The purpose of the committee is to hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions, support policy development and provide scrutiny of external public bodies and services, including education, health and other partners as specified by the Localism Act 2011. It will also co-ordinate work with other local bodies which have scrutiny functions.
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- 3.2 Scrutiny is a member-led process which looks at the performance of Brent Council and other organisations in the borough to ensure that they deliver good quality services to local residents. The role is to challenge effectively and the committee endorses the principles of effective scrutiny which have been developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. They are to provide a 'critical friend' challenge to Cabinet, be independent-minded, drive improvement in public services, and finally to provide a voice for concerns of the public and Brent's communities. The committee sets out to do this in a constructive way.

#### **4.0 Remit**

- 4.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee's remit is to scrutinise a broad range of services provided by the local authority including corporate resources, (including Customer Services, Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Procurement and IT) as well as regeneration, regulatory services, environment, transport and community safety as well as scrutiny of Brent's partners such as the Police. Its remit covers the portfolio areas of the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment & Skills, Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities.
- 4.2 Under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities are required to appoint at least one committee to provide overview and scrutiny. The committee is also responsible for scrutinising the partnership work of the Safer Brent Partnership and receives their annual reports each year.
- 4.3 The committee has its own chair and vice-chair and is made up of six other elected members. In accordance with the council's Standing Orders, there are no co-opted members for the Resources and Public Realm.

#### **5.0 How scrutiny works**

- 5.1 The committee will set up three task groups a year. They are an intensive and effective tool and offer members the opportunity to collate and assess evidence and make recommendations to Cabinet or partner organisations based on a substantial amount of collected evidence. The recommendations and evidence are written up in a report, which is a substantial document. Scoping papers, membership and terms of reference for task groups will be agreed by a committee report and they will focus on particular topics or issues of local concern. Task groups are not limited to the members of the Committees. Rather, all non-executive members – that is all members who are not in the Cabinet - can participate in task groups. These scrutiny task groups will also create opportunities for a broad range of organisations, stakeholders and the public in Brent to get involved in the work of scrutiny and inform its work.
- 5.2 Committee will hear a number of reports in its remit from which it can make recommendations to Cabinet. At committee there are in effect two types of approach to scrutiny. Firstly, pre-decision scrutiny where scrutiny examines the Cabinet's policies, objectives and programmes in order to help inform their
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development before they agreed. Pre-decision items are often identified through the forward plan. Secondly, there is post-decision scrutiny in which scrutiny examines the implementation of a Cabinet policy in terms of service delivery. This enables the Cabinet to review the effectiveness of its decision-making, helping it recognise any unforeseen consequences and assisting it in revising its policy and aims. However, committee is not limited to pre-decision and post-decision of Cabinet policy.

5.3 The Local Government Act 2000 requires every local authority to have a mechanism which allows for executive decisions made but not yet implemented to be 'called in' for consideration by scrutiny. Call-in is intended to be used in exceptional circumstances for decisions believed to be contrary to the authority's decision-making principles. Through the process of 'call-in' decisions can be considered by the Scrutiny Committees or scrutiny panel if deemed more appropriate. The remit of the committee's call-in is set out in 4.4.

5.4 A call in request can be made by the scrutiny committees; or if five non-Cabinet members of the council make a request. A call in request must be submitted within 5 days of the relevant decision being made or in the case of a decision made by officers within 5 days of the date on which the record of the decision is made publicly available in accordance with the Access to Information Rules.

## **6.0 2016-17 work programme**

6.1 In order to be able to scrutinise effectively and to co-ordinate its activities with the Cabinet's forward plan of decision-making the committee has agreed its own work programme for 2016-17. These include the items it will discuss at committee and its three task groups for the municipal year. The work programme in Appendix 1 is a reasonable amount of work for committee. However, some committee time has been kept back to give the committee flexibility to be able to look at issues which might arise at very short notice.

6.2 To develop its work programme the members have decided on items which best suit the criteria for effective scrutiny in Brent. It is up to the committee to select the items for inclusion in its work programme, however ideas were brought together from a number of sources to assist members in their choices.

6.3 Ideas included suggestions from service areas, external inspections, performance and budget monitoring information, the Cabinet forward plan. There are also a number of statutory items which have to be on the committee's work programme such as annual complaints report and the annual report on the Safer Brent Partnership.

6.4 Ideas and suggestions were judged against key criteria for inclusion in the scrutiny committee's work programme. These include:

- clear alignment with priorities set out in the Borough Plan and Brent 2020 Vision.
  - outcomes and benefits which can be delivered by the intervention of scrutiny.
  - is there a major council policy or strategy to be agreed by the Cabinet seeking contribution from scrutiny.
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- subject is related to underperformance of a service where the intervention of scrutiny would enable an improvement in performance.
- the issue being scrutinised can directly be influenced by the actions of the council – i.e. is not a review of national policy over which the council is unlikely to be able to exert any influence.
- there is clear evidence that the subject is of significant public concern and merits the consideration of scrutiny.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Diversity Implications**

9.1 There are no diversity implications immediately arising from this report.

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Contact Officers**

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