



Brent

Full Council
19 September 2016

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

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Report from the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Matt Kelcher**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Council's Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 14. The report covers the period from 18th May 2016 to present detailing committee members, planned training, programme of work and items discussed during the committee meetings.

2.0 Detail

2.1 *Scrutiny Committees*

In February 2016 Full Council approved the adoption of a new model for the Council's statutory scrutiny function and associated activities. On the 18 May 2016 the council moved to a model of two scrutiny committees, which meets six times per year. This structure replaced the single scrutiny committee model had been in place since May 2014. The intention of the new Scrutiny model is to enable more in-depth scrutiny of key issues with a more strategic approach to planning the scrutiny work programme to support the achievement of the council's corporate aims and priorities. Scrutiny activities will focus on these issues where scrutiny can add value and improve outcomes through their interventions.

The scrutiny function has two scrutiny committees; The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. Across the new structure there would be a total of 12 scrutiny meetings held during the municipal year, six per committee. This model will have the advantage of a more integrated approach within each committee to scrutiny of thematic and related policy and services issues. A more coherent work programme will give more opportunity for members to develop expertise across services and hold detailed discussions.

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

This committee covers corporate resources, (including Customer Services, Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Procurement and IT) as well as regeneration, regulatory services, environment, transport and community safety. The committee is composed of eight elected members (seven from the Labour Group and one opposition group member which is consistent with current political balance arrangements).

2.2 *Training*

On the 26 May 2016 the Scrutiny Committee received Member Development training “Effective Scrutiny” lead by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The purpose of this session was to brief Members on their role on the Scrutiny Committee in accordance to the governance of the Council, as well as to outline the legal and statutory function of Scrutiny with regard to both the council and other public service providers. The session also covered the important community engagement aspect of Scrutiny activities and creating local accountability. The second section of the training provided an introduction to scrutiny questioning skills and influencing techniques.

Members are scheduled to attend a further CfPS Scrutiny Member development session on the 11 October 2016.

2.3 *Programme Planning*

The processes of agreeing the annual work programme for the Resources and Public Realm Committee has been greatly improved this year with workshops organised for Scrutiny Members and Strategic Directors to design a relevant, focused and strategic annual work programme. The programme was agreed at the committee’s first meeting and will be kept under constant review through discussion between the committee Chair, Strategic Directors and the Head of Strategy and Partnerships. The forward plan has been reviewed at each meeting of the Resources & Public Realm scrutiny committee and CMT is also reviewing the work programme at their regular meetings.

A copy of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Forward plan is attached (Appendix 1)

2.4 *Committee Meetings*

Since its formation the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has held 2 meetings. These meetings were under the chairmanship of Councillor Matt Kelcher. A summary of all the meetings is as follows:

On 12 July 2016, the committee received the following reports:

Development Management Policies

The Planning Policy and Projects Manager introduced the report which reminded the committee that on 16 January 2016 Full Council approved submission of the draft Development Management Policies Development Plan Document to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. Having taken account of all the representations, both in writing and at the Hearing, the Inspector advised the council to consult on proposed main modifications.

Members questioned ways of including in DMP 14 requirements for infrastructure provision at an early stage of housing development or at pre-planning stage, the definition of affordability in terms of housing and whether

the levels were realistic, particularly for existing residents, and what were the mechanisms in place to reach the maximum target of 50% of housing in a major development to be affordable. Members also raised queries regarding the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) and the Mayor 2 month consultation. Member also requested that OPDC a representative of the OPDC attend the committee as part of the Council's Planning Strategy.

Task Group on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106

The task group chair introducing the task group report, advised that the review was concerned with the CIL and S106 policies, engagement both with communities and members, funding collection and allocation. The committee commended the work and commitment of the Sudbury local residents, asked how lessons learned could be communicated to other areas through Brent Connects and workshops and it was suggested that a route map be prepared and circulated.

The committee discussed the former ward working funding as an alternative vehicle and were reminded that CIL had the advantage of being for the entire ward instead of for successful community group bidders. The committee agreed that the recommendations made by the task group be approved and the development of an action plan across the council and partner organisations to take these forward.

Brent Council's financial position

The Heads of Finance presented the current context of the council's financial position. The committee heard about local government sources of income, the likelihood of future reductions, Brent's financial position as at February 2016, budget savings previously agreed, further savings required, and the impact of Council Tax changes and also new legislation.

Members in discussion raised questions on the increasing Council Tax base and the impact on collection rates, the effect of business rate devolution on new services, the protection of existing services and how schools could protect special educational needs provision from forthcoming Dedicated Schools Grant restrictions proposed under the review of the national funding formula.

Annual Scrutiny Report 2015-16

The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee and previous Chair of the Scrutiny Committee Cllr Matt Kelcher presented the Annual Scrutiny Report. The Annual Scrutiny report is a summary of the work conducted by the Scrutiny function throughout the year. This includes task group work, questions and decisions made by the committee. The 2015-16 report also provides an outline of the programme of work and task groups planned for the upcoming scrutiny year 2016-17.

The committee received the Annual Scrutiny report which summarised the work conducted by the Scrutiny function throughout the year, including task group work, questions and decisions made by the committee. The 2015-16 report also provided an outline of the programme of work and task groups planned for the upcoming scrutiny year 2016-17.

On 6 September 2016, the committee received the following reports:

The Council's Planning Strategy/OPDC

The Planning Policy and Projects Manager introduced the report which provided update on council's planning strategy and development of the local plan going forward. The current strategy is based on core strategy and its five key areas. It was explained that there service had been working hard delivering significant housing. There was some discussion about making sure that all areas of the borough are included in development plans. It was also mentioned that the local plan needs updating, as the council stands the chance of increasingly losing planning appeals and developments. A representative from the OPDC gave a presentation on the development plans.

Members requested that scrutiny look at the use of CPOs by council to acquire land to support development of housing to meet housing need. Members also requested an update from the committee following quarterly meeting with Cabinet Member for Housing in relation to the recommendations from the scrutiny task group regarding work with housing associations. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment & Skills also agreed to meet with OPDC representative to discuss how surrounding areas can benefit from Section 106 funds.

Brent Road Resurfacing Strategy

The report was presented by the Head of Highways and Infrastructure. It was explained that the council experienced a high demand from residents in a challenging financial climate. It was stated that most of these were short term measures and last year budget found £200,000 to target worst areas, in this budget further £2 million to accelerate road repairs, included patching. Members have been extensively involved in looking at priorities for action.

Members queried the quality of the works carried out and how do we ensure that we will not have the same problems reoccurring. Member also raised the issue of damage caused to pavements by local businesses and to roads by TFL. Members asked about how works were priorities and how this was communicated to residents. Members requested that the Committee to be provided with performance data for 6 month period regarding timeliness for contractor's performance for highway repair. Officers to test FAQs and automated responses with community groups

Update on the implementation of recommendations from the CCTV Scrutiny Task Group

The Head of Community Protection presented the report and gave an update of the progress made against each of the 21 recommendation the task group had made. Members queried if the council could achieve more from S106 or CIL money and working closely with other partners and housing providers. Members also suggested working closely with schools and open days to educate about CCTV. It was agreed that the Community safety team would explore viability of CCTV open day and report back to scrutiny. It was also agreed that Officers would explore the potential for capital investment

Update on the implementation of recommendations from the Fly Tipping Scrutiny Task Group

The Head of Environmental Improvement presented the update report to the committee stating that there has been some issues arise, such as the Pilot with kingdom. It was stated that the pilot is going well, but that it is still early days, the council is encouraging Kingdom to focus on both simple litter

offences but trying to move them into more localised issues such as palm spitting. It was also explained that there is a need focus on working with landlords much more. There is also a service review to address what has become an unsustainable bulky waste collection process.

Members queried using other social media and creating a cross council database of community groups. Members also discussed ensuring that literature is in simple language that residents can understand. Members also wanted to know what communication and outreach Veolia carry out on a monthly basis.

The Committee has received one task group report, with a second to be received at the 8 November Scrutiny Committee:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (received at the 12 July committee meeting)
- Devolution of Business Rates (will be heard at the 8 November committee meeting)

2.5 *Upcoming Scrutiny Meetings and Activities*

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 8 November and will have considered:

- Income Generation – How the council can improve income generation, a look at income generation across departments
- Update on Community Access Strategy*/Customer Care & Access - A report looking at how accessible Council services are to our customers and residents
- Devolution of Business Rates Task Group – Report on the task groups findings and recommendations made.
- Brent's High Streets - A review of various issues impacting on the performance of high streets in Brent
- Annual Report on Complaints 2015/16 – A review of the complaints services work and performance in 2015-16

Both Scrutiny committees will be taking part in Local Democracy week and each committee chair will be holding a Scrutiny Café. These will be taking place in local Cafés where residents can drop by and discuss issues (within the committee's remit) that concerns them.

The Chair of the Committee can add an oral report on any issues arising.

Contact Officers

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