



Full Council
21 November 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 and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 14. The report covers the period from 19 September 2016 to present, detailing Committee Members, planned training, programme of work and items discussed during the committee meetings.

2.0 Detail

2.1 *Scrutiny Committee*

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).

In October 2016, Councillor Miller resigned from the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to take up a post with the Cabinet. In November 2016, Councillor Stopp was appointed to the Committee following approval by Full Council.

2.2 *Training*

On 11 October 2016, Members of both Committees attended the second session on effective scrutiny, delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee are booked to attend the CfPS Annual Conference and training event on 1 December.

2.3 *Programme Planning*

The Resources and Public Realm Programme has seen one change, with the item on Brent High Streets being moved to 10 January 2017 to incorporate the current work taking place with Town Centre Managers.

A copy of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

2.4 *Committee Meetings*

Since the last Chair's Report in September 2016, the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has met once. This meeting was under the chairmanship of Councillor Matt Kelcher and a summary of the meeting is as follows:

On 8 November 2016, the Committee received the following reports:

(i) Income Generation

The Director of Resources delivered a presentation detailing the progress made towards delivering the Civic Enterprise Strategy. This includes details on activity undertaken to address the savings targets and how business plans can add value to improving outcomes for the Borough as well as meeting financial targets. It was stated that given the pace and scale of the financial cuts the Council is facing, if it wants to protect the services residents care about the most, then the Council needs to create new income streams and find ways to save money.

(ii) Update on Community Access Strategy* and Customer Care and Access

The Director of Brent Customer Services delivered a presentation detailing Brent's vision for transforming the way in which residents are able to access information, advice and services. The report provided Scrutiny Members with a summary of the Community Access Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 15 October 2014 and the progress that has been made in implementing the Strategy. The Committee discussed some of the key achievements, such as call rates and areas for improvement e.g. voice recognition systems. Members also enquired about mystery shoppers and ghosting to check the quality of the service offered.

(iii) Devolution of Business Rates Task Group

Councillor Davidson, Chair of the Task Group, presented the Task Group's report. Firstly, outlining the reasons why the Task Group was formed and the need for the Council to be ahead of this policy development. The Chair went on to describe the Task Group's methods for gathering evidence and its findings. It was stated that despite the lack of details available for this policy change, the Task Group was still able to formulate strong recommendations that would put the Council in a position to respond positively to the devolution of businesses rates. Members of the Task Group, Councillors Duffy and Miller, contributed to the discussion stating that this was a cross-party

piece of work and that the Task Group welcomed the devolution of business rates and saw it as a great opportunity for Brent. The Deputy Leader of the Council welcomed the report and stated that there are areas within business development that the Council is already working on and that the recommendations will support bringing all the work together. The Task Group made eleven recommendations that were all agreed by Committee and endorsed by the Deputy Leader and the report and recommendations will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

(iv) Annual Report on Complaints 2015/16

The Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships presented the report, providing an overview of complaints received by the Council during the period April 2015 to March 2016. There was a focus on the high level data for the past three years, which was included in the report where available for the purpose of comparison. A Departmental and service area analysis was provided for the 2015 – 2016 operational year (based on the current structure). The headlines of the report were discussed including, volume of complaints, the nature and reasons for complaints, outcomes, timeliness, compensation and ombudsman complaints.

2.5 Task Group

The Committee has received one task group report and the Budget Panel begins this week with its report heard by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2017:

- Devolution of Business Rates (received at 8 November 2016 committee meeting)
- 2017/18 - 2018/19 Budget Scrutiny Report (will be heard at 10 January 2017 committee meeting)
- Child Sexual Exploitation and Gangs is due to commence in February 2017 (will be heard at 3 May 2017 committee meeting)

2.6 Upcoming Scrutiny Meetings and Activities

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 10 January 2017 and will consider:

- Budget Scrutiny Report - a short budget scrutiny report to be published as part of the reports' pack for the January 2017 Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and to be responded to by the Deputy Leader at this meeting.
- Capital Programme – An overview of the Council's Capital Programme
- Brent Council Investment Strategy – A look at the Council's priorities for investment
- Brent's High Streets - A review of various issues impacting on the performance of high streets in Brent

Both Scrutiny Committees will be taking part in the annual Youth Takeover Challenge event on 18 November. Young people in Brent will take part in challenges where they will learn about democracy and help to solve actual challenges that the Council is facing. The day's events will be led by Children's Services.

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

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