



**Overview and Scrutiny  
Annual Report  
2016/17**

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## Introduction



The challenge for scrutiny is to focus on the important issues. In local government there are always many competing priorities to deal with and the challenges faced by NHS colleagues are also enormous. So, the last year for my scrutiny committee was about looking at decision-making in the areas which matters most to the priorities of the council and the Cabinet, and which are also of great concern to the borough's residents. As this report shows, we spent a lot of time in committee reviewing these issues, ranging from council housing management to school standards, NHS transformation, and landlord licensing.

We dedicated time to looking at some issues in great depth by setting up task and finish groups. I think the task group on Signs of Safety was excellent in developing recommendations for the Cabinet as have been the task groups on housing associations and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). I'm looking forward to seeing this year how the recommendations are implemented. We have been very proactive in getting out and talking to residents and community groups and hearing from organisations such as Healthwatch Brent at committee. I would like to thank everybody who has contributed, and played their part. Finally, I would also like to thank our co-opted members for their contribution and in particular Dr Jeff Levison who has stepped down from scrutiny after many years of service.

### **Cllr Ketan Sheth, Chair of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

Scrutiny is most effective when it is strategically planned. This is exactly what we set out to achieve during the first year of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. In its simplest form this has meant themed meetings. More significantly, it has also meant three task group investigations which come together over a year to tell a single story.



Choosing the subject of this story came down to an obvious choice. When the retention of business rates is fully devolved to local authorities in the next couple of years it will be the biggest reform to council funding in three decades. All the residents of Brent will benefit if the council understand the implications of this change and is in a position to take advantage of the reform. As far as we can tell, Brent is the only council to carry out a full investigation into Business Rates devolution and the report has not only influenced the strategy of our council but has also been presented to other authorities at wider scrutiny meetings. Our Budget Scrutiny Panel report also looked in detail at these themes, and our final Task Group of the year examined ways we could help Brent's small businesses to grow and therefore maximise our Business Rates base. Of course, we also investigated a myriad of other issues – from development and planning strategies, to complaints against the council and civic enterprise – but taking this strategic direction, and focussing on an important subject from three different angles allowed us to add value to Brent over the last year.

### **Cllr Matt Kelcher, Chair of Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee**

## Part One: Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

### 1. Work programme 2016/17

The 2016/17 work programme looked at a range of policy areas in the committee's remit, including adult social care, children's services, education, health, housing, and public health. The work programme was largely agreed at the start of the municipal year to allow members to map out and plan their activities. It also built in enough capacity to ensure there was the flexibility to respond to events as they arise and space for issues that Brent's residents may suggest over the year. The work programme included scrutiny – holding Cabinet members to account – as well as policy development by task groups which developed recommendations for the Cabinet.

#### 1.1. Housing

Housing was a sizable area of work. On 20 July 2016, Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee focused on housing issues, discussing reports on **landlord licensing**, Brent's **Ethical Lettings Agency** and the scrutiny task group report on Brent's **housing associations**, which was chaired by Councillor Tom Miller. Brent has three landlord licensing schemes: additional, selective and mandatory. It was clear to members that **landlord licensing** has varied widely in its effectiveness. Selective licensing in the three wards where selective licensing was introduced has been the most successful and the number of properties licensed exceeded the initial estimates of the number which require a licence. There was more detailed discussion of the implementation of the schemes, and a number of recommendations made to Cabinet. Cllr Sheth joined the council officers, as they undertook inspections of suspected properties in Kingsbury to better understand the policy, the process involved and the impact.

Officers and the Cabinet member updated the committee on the **Ethical Lettings Agency**. In 2015 the council had asked Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) to lead on establishing the agency. The committee heard that the proposal had not been viewed as viable by Brent Housing Partnership, but that a number of other projects had been brought forward. It is now intended to wait for details of a London-wide letting agency being developed by the Mayor of London. Again recommendations were made to the Cabinet.

On 23 November there was a report to committee about **Housing Needs Services** and vulnerable clients. Audit Committee made a recommendation that following an Ombudsman's report into housing a vulnerable person scrutiny should review what improvements the Housing Needs service had made in working with vulnerable people affected by domestic violence. At the meeting, scrutiny members sought details of the training put in place to improve awareness within the Housing Needs Service of domestic violence policies and the feedback mechanisms employed to provide ongoing assurance that this training was sufficient. Clarification was sought on

whether the options in the report were open to private tenants and homeowners as well as Brent Housing Partnership tenants. Again, recommendations were made.

Probably the largest area of housing overview and scrutiny was at a special committee meeting on 19 October 2016 which discussed the options for the **management of housing services**.

Committee made sure that tenants and leaseholders of Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) were aware of the special meeting taking place on 19 October, and it was promoted at the BHP Talkback forum and on social media. Members were pleased that the meeting had a very high turnout of members of the public with 25 people attending and six residents also made contributions at the meeting. Before the committee meeting members visited housing which was managed by Brent Housing Partnership. Committee made a number of recommendations to Cabinet after a very detailed discussion involving the Cabinet member for Housing and Welfare Reform and senior officers. One of the recommendations was around scrutiny of this function in the future if the service was returned in-house. To explore further an in-house option, the council set up Brent Housing Partnership Member and Residents Board, of which Cllr Sheth is a member.

## **1.2. Health**

The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has a statutory remit to scrutinise health services. At committee in September 2016 there was a review of the **Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP)**. Members received a report from the Chief Executive of Brent Council and the Chief Officer of Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about the STP. Also attending the committee meeting and contributing to the discussion were the Chief Officer, Brent Harrow Hillingdon CCGs, Healthwatch Brent, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Strategic Director, Community Wellbeing, and the Director of Strategy, London North West Healthcare NHS Trust. Members questioned the extent to which Brent had been able to influence the setting of local priorities within the STP and asked about engagement activity.

Another area of health scrutiny was the **NHS estate in Brent**. In November last year there was the presentation of a report about the estate in the borough. Officers from NHS Property Services also attended the meeting. Members queried whether the reorganisation of the NHS had posed difficulties for developing the NHS estate, whether the facilities comprising the estate were in a good condition and how well-situated they were to meet the needs of the borough. A further query was raised regarding whether the Clinical Commissioning Group had any discretion regarding the national policy of charging market rents. NHS Property Services advised that the move to charge market rent for NHS buildings was determined by Department for Health and NHS England policy. Committee heard that out-of-hospital hubs were identified in 2014 and reflected a practical assessment of where there was scope for extension in the NHS estate. The locations and numbers of the hubs were being reviewed as part

of the work between Brent CCG and the council. A number of recommendations were made by the committee.

There has been more engagement with **Healthwatch Brent** who again attended the committee on 23 November 2016 to contribute to the discussion on NHS estate in Brent. This follows their attendance on 20 September 2016. Committee is planning to do more visits to NHS services in the borough and is planning a visit to the A&E department at Northwick Park in the future. Brent also takes part in and contributes to the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Sheth is Brent's representative on the committee which is made up of seven London boroughs.

### **1.3. Adult Social Care**

The September meeting heard reports on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and **New Accommodation for Independent Living (NAIL)** project. A report updating the committee on the project was introduced by the Operational Director Social Care. Committee heard that the project was the largest and most strategically important efficiency and quality improvement initiative in the Adult Social Care. It aimed to identify, develop and acquire alternative forms of care to residential care for all vulnerable adult client groups in Brent.

Outcomes for people going into residential care were not as good as for those who remained in their own communities and the NAIL project sought to address this by supporting people in an independent living setting, allowing them to remain in a home of their own, or in their own communities. It was emphasised that independent living was not a prescriptive model of service design and could look very different for different people with different levels of care and support needs. The project had been active for two years.

The committee heard that NAIL was the largest and most strategically important efficiency and quality improvement initiative within the Adult Social Care Department, and that it aimed to identify, develop and acquire alternative forms of care to residential care for all vulnerable adult client groups in the borough. The project had been active for two years and the report before the committee outlined areas of learning, detailed mitigating actions taken and progress so far.

### **1.4. Safeguarding**

In November 2016, committee received the annual report of Brent Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The LSCB report, which was presented by the Independent Chair, was questioned by members who queried the effectiveness of the relationships between different agencies across Brent, how this compared with other London boroughs and the powers of the Board to challenge organisations. Questions were raised regarding the involvement of local communities and plans for wider engagement. The committee sought the Independent Chair's view on the safety of children in Brent who were at risk from harm, the efficacy of Brent professionals at

recognising children at risk and the safeguarding performance of Brent's schools. A number of recommendations were made.

In February 2017, the committee discussed the annual report of the Brent Safeguarding Adults' Board, which was presented by the Independent Chair, and reviewed its work for 2015-16. Also attending the committee meeting, and taking part in the discussion, were the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Strategic Director for Community Wellbeing. The 2015/16 Annual Report provided a summary of safeguarding activity which had been carried out by the Board's partners across the social care, health and criminal justice sectors in Brent, and focused on four major areas: prevalence of abuse; multi-agency response to safeguarding risks; the Board's strategic priorities; and learning from case reviews to improve safeguarding practice.

At committee members had a wide-ranging discussion with the Independent Chair about levels of commitment from statutory partners, the opportunities for local community and voluntary organisations to get involved in the work of the Board and the overall strengths of partnership work in Brent. There was discussion about the involvement in the work of the Board by contractors who provide housing and adult social care services for Brent Council. In 2017/18, it is intended that the two safeguarding reports will be heard together at Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

### **1.5. Children's Services**

A report reviewing school standards and achievement for 2015-2016 was discussed at committee in March 2017. Currently, 96 per cent of Brent schools are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, well above the national average. The arrangements which had supported this improvement were outlined to the committee. Collaborative, school-led partnerships were now a key feature of Brent's education provision. These themes were discussed with a number of Brent headteachers who attended the meeting.

Members also had a wide-ranging discussion about a report outlining the progress made in delivering reforms to services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These reforms were required following the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014 and a new SEND Code of Practice in 2015. Among the issues discussed included progress to the deadline for conversion to the new Education, Health and Care Plans, engagement with the borough's parents, strategic commissioning with health partners and identifying children with SEND and in providing effective support to improve outcomes and life chances.

### **1.6 Wellbeing and Public Health**

Members of the committee organised an Air Quality workshop to discuss the council's new strategy and to feedback their views as part of the consultation process. The workshop focused on the public health aspects of poor air quality and what the local authority could do to encourage residents to make changes which improve air quality.

## **2. Task and Finish Groups**

Time-limited task groups made up of a small group of councillors – and sometimes co-opted members – were set up during 2016/17 to look at a number of areas in detail by the committee. Each of the task groups developed recommendations from their work.

### **2.1. Housing associations**

The objective for the task group, which was chaired by Councillor Tom Miller, was to gather evidence to develop a set of recommendations for the Cabinet. Rather than reviewing all the wide-ranging legislation, the task group's scope was limited to five areas: the Right to Buy extension, social housing supply, 1% social rent reduction, Pay to Stay, and partnerships with housing associations.

As part of their evidence gathering, members spoke to chief executives and senior officers of a number of housing associations operating in Brent including Apna Ghar, Genesis, Innisfree, Metropolitan, Network Homes and Origin. They also met with the then Cabinet Member for Housing and Development, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing, Operational Director Housing and Culture, and the Head of Housing Policy. To be able to understand the issues from different perspectives the task group members also spoke to the representatives from two tenants' organisations, the chief executive of a housing co-operative, the chair of a resident-managed housing association as well as two experts in housing policy.

Members of the task group were:

- Councillor Tom Miller (Chair)
- Councillor Janice Long
- Councillor Arshad Mahmood
- Councillor Orleen Hylton
- Councillor Jun Bo Chan
- Jacky Peacock OBE, Executive Director Advice4Renters.

The task group reported back to Cabinet in November 2016 with a number of recommendations.

### **2.2. Signs of Safety**

The task group was set up to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of Signs of Safety by the Children and Young People's department since early 2015. Signs of Safety is a practice framework for working with children and families and child protection which was developed in Australia in the 1990s and is used today by a



number of children's services departments in local authorities in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States, Australia and Canada.

In 2014, Brent Council was awarded funding from the England Innovations Project, which is managed by the Department of Education, to introduce Signs of Safety as a practice model in children's services.

The scrutiny task group completed its report, which includes four recommendations. It held a number of meetings to help members better understand the challenges and opportunities of implementing of Signs of Safety in the Children and Young People's department, and gather evidence for the report. These meetings included discussions with front-line social workers and practitioners, senior officers and the Strategic Director as well as the Cabinet member for Children and Young People. Members of the task group were shown how the Signs of Safety approach works in practice. The full report will be discussed by Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny committee on 1 February. The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet

The members of the task group were:

- Cllr Aisha Hoda Benn, task group chair
- Cllr Dr Amer Agha
- Cllr Bhagwanji Chohan
- Cllr Suresh Kansagra
- Cllr Shama Tatler.

The task group reported back to Cabinet in March 2017.

### **2.3. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

This task group was set up to review the challenge of providing mental health services to Brent's young people. According to data based on national projections, it's thought that one in ten school-age children in Brent have a diagnosable mental health condition which equates to an estimated 4,575 children and young people. However, while early intervention can prevent crisis and the development of long-term mental health conditions in later life, national research suggests that only one in three of those with diagnosable conditions will access any form of mental health support.

The task group talked to providers of services in the borough, community representatives and local authority officers about CAMHS in Brent at present.

Members of the task group included:

- Cllr Ahmad Shahzad OBE, task group chair
- Cllr Ruth Moher
- Dr Jeff Levison, co-opted committee member
- Cllr Neil Nerva
- Hamza King, representative Brent Youth Parliament.

The task group will report back to Cabinet and health organisations this year.

### 3. Visits and engagement

Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has been committed to improving scrutiny by carrying out visits outside of formal committee meetings. This allowed members to see at first-hand how services are delivered, and speak with service users and residents about services. Visits have helped to complement the discussion which takes place at committee meetings, and accounts of the visits have been written up in a standing report to the committee so that there is publicly available information about what members did.

Last year, the committee members made a number of visits, including:

- August 2016, Landlord licensing raids in Kingsbury
- September 2016, Willow House in Wembley
- September 2016, Brent Housing Partnership services
- March 2017, Northwick Park Hospital

Members of the committee will also be organising more visits in the future. The committee regards the work it does outside of committee meetings as highly important. It gives scrutiny the ability to respond to changing events as they happen, and takes the committee out of the formal environment of the civic centre. It hopes to develop this further in 2017/18.

Also, special mention should be given to a meeting of Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) at the civic centre on 30 July with a Scrutiny Officer to do a presentation on Scrutiny. Cllr Sheth was invited back to BYP to do a 'hot seat' event to answer questions from BYP members.

As part of European Local Democracy Week 2016, the chair hosted a first Scrutiny Café at coffee shop in central Wembley in October. The café allowed residents to meet with the chair face-to-face and suggest ideas for scrutiny. It also helped to take scrutiny out of the formal atmosphere of the civic centre. Also, European Local Democracy Week from 10 to 16 October. Cllr Sheth spoke to pupils at the Winston Churchill Lycee in Wembley about local democracy, participation and scrutiny and also took part in a phone-in on K2K Radio on the same topics with Councillor Matt Kelcher.

In addition, scrutiny has been making use of social media to enhance its accountability and transparency. The committee has been using Twitter to update residents about what it's been doing and to engage with organisations.

Cllr Sheth has also written columns for a number of newspapers about the work of the committee and contributed a guest blog to the e-newsletter produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny about the task group on Signs of Safety and what lessons the committee learned.

The Chair of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and a Scrutiny Officer also attended Brent Connects area forums last year to do a presentation on the committee's work because it was important to explain the new dual scrutiny committee structure which was agreed by Full Council in March 2016, and the role of scrutiny

within the local authority more generally. The engagement with residents at those meetings was good – and lively at times – and residents were given the opportunity to put forward their ideas. Meetings attended included:

- June 2016, Brent Connects Willesden
- June 2016, Brent Connects Kenton and Kingsbury
- July 2016, Brent Connects Wembley
- July 2016, Brent Connects Kilburn.

#### **4. Wider Scrutiny Networks**

Members of the committee have been involved with scrutiny networks and organisations outside Brent. One of the most important of these has been the London Scrutiny Network, which is made up of representatives of scrutiny committees from a number of London boroughs. Cllr Sheth attended a number of these meetings during 2016/17.

The committee has also built links with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). Cllr Sheth attended the centre's annual conference on 1 December 2016, which this year was on the theme of democracy and governance and was attended by members from local authorities nationally. Cllr Sheth presented at one of the workshops on the theme of scrutinising complex relationships, highlighting the best practice used in Brent.

On 8 December 2016 the (CfPS) organised a Health Accountability Forum which was attended by scrutiny members and organisations involved in health scrutiny, including a member of Brent's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Officer. The forum, which was in part an update about health policy, included presentations on the state of adult social care by a policy adviser from the Local Government Association. There was also a presentation about the Independent Reconfiguration Panel – the body which review proposals for changes to NHS services that are contested and advises the Secretary of State for Health. The NHS also gave a presentation about new models of care, including the 50 vanguard projects in place nationwide.

Finally, The Chair of the committee has also been involved with the Institute of Local Government (INLOGOV) at the University of Birmingham.

## **Part Two: Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee**

### **5. Work programme 2016/17**

The process of agreeing the annual work programme for the Resources and Public Realm Committee was greatly improved for 2016/17 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 was kept under constant review through discussion between the committee Chair, Strategic Directors and the Head of Strategy and Partnerships. The 2016/17 work programme allowed for both scrutiny and overview covering a wide range of policy areas within the committee's remit, including regeneration, environment, 2017/18 – 2018/19 budget and resources. The committee also reviewed work of the Performance, Policy and Partnership Department, focusing on the prevent strategy and the Safer Brent Partnership update on community safety.

#### **5.1. Regeneration and Environment**

##### *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 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 of London two month consultation. Member also requested that a representative of the OPDC attend the committee as part of the council's Planning Strategy.

##### *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 the service had been 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 compulsory purchase orders by council to acquire land to support development of housing to meet housing need. Members also requested an update to the committee following the quarterly meeting with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform 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 the 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's budget found £200,000 to target worst areas, and in this budget a further £2 million to accelerate road repairs, included patching. Members had been extensively involved in looking at priorities for action.

Members queried the quality of the works carried out and how to ensure that Brent will not have the same problems recurring. Members also raised the issue of damage caused to pavements by local businesses and to roads by TFL. Members asked about how works were prioritised and how this was communicated to residents. Members requested that the Committee be provided with performance data for a six-month period regarding timeliness for contractors' performance for highway repair. Officers were asked 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 recommendations 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 the viability of CCTV open day and report back to the committee. 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 some issues had arisen, such as the pilot with Kingdom Security Ltd. 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.

#### *Report for Scrutiny on Brent's High Streets*

Cllr Tatler and Cllr Southwood presented the report. All seventeen high streets in Brent are an important aspect of its character. The report presented the importance of the cleanliness of the high streets, and how it reflects both to residents and to visitors of the borough. The council is aiming to make Brent cleaner, to make feel better about their surroundings and improve their quality of life. Currently the cleaning service is provided by Veolia who aim to provide a Grade A standard of no litter or refuse being left behind and that this would be constantly monitored. Timed Waste collections will take place, together with collections of commercial waste and Brent will be introducing a 12 month trial of local Litter Patrols. A focus is being made on Wembley High Road for regeneration to fund improvements including the delivery of a vision for the new Town Centre, and the Town Centre Management Plan. Other current projects include the development of properties in the area including the disposal of various buildings, improvement to the existing urban square, and landscaping and planting trees.

#### *Environmental Sustainability*

A report summarising the work undertaken across key service areas to address the issue of sustainability was introduced to the committee by Councillor Southwood (Lead Member for Environment). The report was wide ranging and addressed seven key areas: transport and travel; air quality; in-house carbon management; street lighting and parking; public realm and waste; parks and biodiversity; and, flood risk management. The committee also welcomed representatives from the Environment Agency, Lee James (Team leader, London West Partnerships and Strategic Overview Team) and Edward Crome (Lead for engagement with Brent on planning matters) who outlined the borough's flood risks and explained the structures in place for responding to these.

Members questioned plans the council had to regenerate areas with persistently poor air quality, address traffic congestion in the borough and tackle proposals to include an incinerator in the Brent Cross Cricklewood development. They also discussed charges on diesel vehicles. Further questions were posed regarding the contractual arrangements for disposal of residual waste, referring to a BBC report which listed Brent as the second worst borough in London for fly-tipping. Members questioned whether there was insufficient targeting of enforcement activity and sought details of the level of evidence required to pursue prosecution.

#### *Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny of Proposals Relating to Tackling Illegal Rubbish Dumping and Litter with Uniformed Street Patrols*

Councillor Southwood (Lead Member for Environment) presented a draft report which would be finalised and submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 13 March 2017. The report

reviewed the uniformed street patrol pilot which had been undertaken with Kingdom Security Ltd, outlined the available options for taking the service forward from June 2017 and concluded that the creation of an in-house service would be the most advantageous of these options.

In the ensuing discussion, several queries were raised by the committee including whether formal minutes had been taken of discussions between officers and Kingdom Security Ltd. Further information was sought regarding the intended balance of enforcement activity for minor littering offences with larger-scale illegal rubbish dumping and how amending this relationship could affect the viability of the model. Members questioned whether Kingdom Security Ltd were London Living Wage accredited, whether the anticipated wages for an in-house team were appropriate, and if the proposed future model was the best option.

## **5.2. Resources**

### *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.

### *Income Generation*

The Strategic Director of Resources delivered a presentation detailing all the on 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 we want to protect the services residents care about the most, then we need to create new income streams and find ways to save money.

### *Update on Community Access Strategy\*/Customer Care & 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 achievement 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.

### *Capital Programme and Investment Strategy*

Cllr McLennan presented the report which gave an overview of whole Capital Programme in Brent, its current performance and an update on the Investment Strategy. The Committee also noted the present and future Capital Programme's budget, the reasons for the underspend in 2017 and the implementation of an action plan addressing the under-importance of the capital programme. The various portfolios (Schools, Housing, Estate Regeneration – South Kilburn, Highways and Infrastructure, Estate Regeneration – non-housing, and Corporate Landlord) which made up the Capital Programme were discussed - together with the risks which might affect the programme. An update was given of the investment strategy and also additions to the programme, which had been approved by Cabinet after the budget setting process had taken place. These included schemes approved in 2016 such as the Knowles House Scheme, London Road, Ujima House, and highway investment in the borough.

### **5.3. Performance, Policy and Partnerships**

#### *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 3 years which was included in the report where available for the purpose of comparison. A departmental/service area analysis was provided for the 2015 – 2016 operational year (based on the current structure). The headlines of the report were discussed, volume of complaints, the nature and reasons for complaints, outcomes, timeliness, compensation and ombudsman complaints.

#### *PREVENT Programme*

The committee received a report and introductory presentation on delivery of the Prevent programme in Brent. Kibibi Octave (Strategic Prevent Coordinator) highlighted that under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015, the council had a duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The council approached this duty as a safeguarding concern, recognising the risks of grooming, extortion and harm that vulnerable people could be subject to. The requirements of the Prevent Statutory Guidance, including the requirement to conduct risk assessments and develop an action plan, were outlined to the committee.

In the subsequent discussion the Committee queried the use of terms such as 'pre criminal' and sought further details regarding engagement with Brent's Muslim community. Members emphasised the importance of engaging the whole of a community, including seeking women's voices and of supporting good governance of community groups and organisations, including supplementary schools. Further



questions were raised regarding any potential alignment with work relating to gang recruitment and activity and the provision of training to community leaders.

*Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report and Update on Community Safety Safer partnership item.*

This item was attended by Michael Gallagher (Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police), Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities), Karina Wane (Head of Community Protection) and Amar Dave (Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment). The committee questioned the work being undertaken to combat anti-Semitism and raised concerns regarding incidents of intimidating behaviour associated with religious sectarianism in Brent's Islamic communities. Referring to the statistics provided regarding hate crime in Brent, members sought further detail regarding the groups affected and questioned why there had been an increase in hate crime related to religion.

Members queried the procedure for information sharing with local councillors following the occurrence of a major crime in their wards. In view of the rising figures associated with anti-social behaviour and gang activity in Brent, the committee requested an overview of the work being undertaken to tackle such issues, including drug dealing and prostitution, and highlighted a number of hotspots of illegal activity in the borough. Members questioned which initiatives were pursued with the borough's schools, particularly around issues of domestic violence and violence against women and girls.

#### **5.4. Call-in**

##### *Granville Centre, South Kilburn Development*

Following a call-in by a number of backbench councillors, the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee met in a special meeting in December to consider plans for the Granville Centre as part of South Kilburn Development. The Committee decided not to refer the decision back to Cabinet but did make a series of key recommendations about how such projects could be better managed in future. These were:

- That the committee supports the continued use/occupation of the Carlton and Granville Centres Site by the Granville Plus Nursery School;
- That the Cabinet agree that the use of the Carlton and Granville Centres Site by the Granville Plus Nursery School should be paramount to any discussions regarding the future of the site;
- That the Cabinet agree to ensure that the Granville Plus Nursery be fully involved regarding the design of the facility;
- That the Cabinet agree that a twelve-month timetable detailing the collaborative process for determining the future development and use of the site, engaging all key stakeholders, be produced as soon as possible in association with the

council's partners in the project, the South Kilburn Trust and the Greater London Assembly;

- That the twelve-month timetable be presented to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in three months' time;
- That the Constitutional Working Group consider establishing a formal mechanism to capture Ward Member consultation in any significant decisions affecting their areas, ensuring that Ward Members have sufficient chance to review and comment on any proposals prior to Cabinet consideration;
- That the Constitutional Working Group consider a process to ensure that appropriate consultation has been conducted prior to significant decisions being undertaken and explore the possible inclusion of a 'stakeholder' section in Cabinet reports;
- That a report detailing in full the extent and nature of the collaboration between the council, the community and key stakeholders in the progression of the development of the Carlton and Granville Centres Site be provided to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee in six months' time.

## **6. Task and Finish Groups**

### **6.1. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106**

Membership:

Cllr Harbi Farah (Chair)  
Cllr Mary Daly  
Cllr Wilhelmina Mitchell-Murray  
Cllr Mili Patel  
Cllr Chohan Bhagwanji  
Mr Faraz Baber

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.

### **6.2. Devolution of Business Rates**

Membership:

Cllr Joel Davidson (Chair)

Cllr Tom Miller  
Cllr Bernard Collier  
Cllr John Duffy  
Cllr Neil Nerva  
Cllr Helen Carr  
Cllr Michael Maurice

Cllr Davidson, chair of the task group presented the task groups 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 tasks 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 were 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 Councillor's Duffy and Miller contributed to the discussion stating that this was a cross party piece of work and that the task group welcome the Devolution of Business rates and see 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 Lead member, the report and recommendations will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

### **6.3. Budget 2017/18 Scrutiny Panel Report**

Membership:

Cllr Matt Kelcher  
Cllr Mili Patel  
Cllr Shama Tatler  
Cllr Ernest Ezeajughi  
Cllr Joel Davidson  
Cllr Ketan Sheth  
Cllr Reg Colwill  
Cllr Bhagwanji Chohan  
Cllr Suresh Kansangra

Cllr Kelcher and Cllr McLennan presented the report which introduced the new budget scrutiny process. This included details on plans to increase the level of Council Tax in the area over the next few years that the Cabinet will be announcing a "demand-led" review of CPZs in Brent – should an issue be raised by local residents or the ward councillor – and with the aim of devising a new long-lasting parking policy. The Panel has identified areas of overspend in Adult Social Care and in Children and Young People's Departments – owing to the increasing demand for Social Care being unpredictable and the challenges of a changing democracy. All the detailed cuts and savings brought forward by the Cabinet have been considered, and further information has been requested accordingly. All of the areas where saving might be made which include in Adult Social Care, in Environmental Improvement, and in Regeneration. This was followed by the key recommendations.

## **6.4. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

### Membership

Cllr Sam Stopp (Chair)

Cllr Janice Long

The committee received a task group report on how the council can grow and enhance power of SMEs in the borough. Cllr Tatler welcomed this report and its focus on SMEs due to their importance as sources of employment. The Committee discussed businesses' online and high street presence and the council's role in supporting them to flourish in borough, as well as that of the West London Alliance and West London Business, and how the sub-region can promote and support investment. Members agreed the task group's recommendations on developing an SME support programme and a programme to improve skills, creating the role of business champion to advocate for SMEs, and investing in business incubation and support services. The report will be considered at Cabinet in July.

## **7. Visits and engagement**

The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny committee believes that visiting sites and speaking with service users where possible, provides a real first hand insight when scrutinising these services. The Resources and Public Realm committee made a few visits in 2016/17.

- CCTV Control Room
- Brent High Streets
- Granville Centre, South Kilburn Development
- Stonebridge Estate

The Chair of Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and a Scrutiny Officer also attended Brent Connects area forums in Harlesden to do a presentation and explain the new dual scrutiny committee structure which was agreed by Full Council in March 2016, and the role of scrutiny within the local authority more generally.

European Local Democracy Week from 10 to 16 October. Cllr Kelcher held a Scrutiny Café at the Ruboi Coffee Bar in Willesden, where he spoke to local residents about scrutiny. The chair also attended Newham Catholic College where he took part in a question and answer session with the Schools council and also took part in a phone-in on K2K Radio on the same topics with Councillor Ketan Sheth.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> November the Scrutiny function along with Children and Young People Services, took part in the 2016 Youth takeover day Challenge. Young people from across the borough took part in various challenges with a focus on democracy and scrutiny.

## **8. Wider Scrutiny Networks**

Cllr Kelcher attended the annual conference of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on 1 December 2016, which this year was on the theme of democracy and governance and was attended by members from local authorities nationally.

## Appendix 1

### Overview and Scrutiny Contacts

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**This report was produced by the Policy and Scrutiny Team at Brent Council.**

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