



# Brent

**Full Council**  
18 September 2017

## **Report from the 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 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to present, detailing programme of work and items discussed during the committee meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> July.

### **2.0 Detail**

2.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny 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).

#### *2017-18 Resources and Public Realm Committee Members*

Councillor Matt Kelcher (Chair)

Councillor Joel Davidson (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Abdi Aden

Councillor Lia Colacicco

Councillor George Crane

Councillor Ernest Ezeajughi

Councillor Sam Stopp

Councillor Roxanne Mashari.

### **3.0 Engagement and development**

Ahead of the committee's second meeting of the 2017-18 municipal year, members of the committee visited Harlesden High Street in preparation of the follow up review on the Brent high street initiatives report that will be presented on 5 September 2017.

The Chair of the R&PR will be attending a Centre for Public Scrutiny training course on 12<sup>th</sup> September, that will focused on effective chairing skills.

#### **4.0 Committee Meetings**

Since the last chair's report in July the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has met twice. A summary of the meeting follows.

On 11 July 2017, the committee received the following reports:

##### **4.1 *The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 2017-18 Work Programme***

The Chair introduced the report on the committee work programme for 2017/18 and detailed the strategic approach taken in developing the programme, which is included as an appendix to this report. The resulting work programme covered a broad range of items and policy areas across corporate resources, regeneration and environment, transport and community safety and extended beyond the council to include an item on employment and employability in Brent, to which the Department of Work and Pensions will be invited to contribute. Recognising the significance of the council's Digital Strategy, many of the reports to be presented to the committee would also include comment on the Digital element. As part of the committee's commitment to make its work programme strategic, it will include in its annual report at the end of the year a dedicated section which will encompass its findings and work in relation to digital strategy and delivery.

Members noted that site visits undertaken by the committee during this period had been extremely valuable and had enhanced the committee's ability to scrutinise the issues presented. As such the committee has agreed an number of visits that will support the items of 2017-18 work programme.

In the subsequent discussion, it was noted that a report on Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) was due to be submitted to the committee at its next meeting and officers were requested to review what consideration was given to past Task Group reports by those undertaking the OBRs. The Chair also clarified to the committee that any members wishing to be involved in proposed Task Groups should indicate their interest to the Chair and Scrutiny Officers.

##### **4.2 *Strategic Overview of the Council's Funding***

The committee received a presentation outlining the council's funding position, highlighting key risks and obligations, and noting the current level of uncertainty resulting from the absence of the Local Government Finance Bill from the Queen's Speech on 21 June 2017. In concluding the presentation, Andrew Ward outlined a number of key developments in local government finance including: business rates devolution and the potential to join a London pool if devolution of the rates was to proceed; school funding and the national funding formula; Adult Social Care and NHS integration; and, the Homelessness Reduction Act.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee questioned how the council was responding to the current uncertainty. Clarity was sought regarding the reported figure of £4.5m procurement savings and the challenges that this

target had presented. Further comment was sought on the £1.25m income to be generated via civic enterprise. It was queried how the council would capitalise on the increased use of Wembley Stadium and particularly, what the revenue benefit was for the council of the use of Wembley Stadium by Tottenham Hotspurs. Questions were raised regarding the anticipated level of revenue from the in-house litter enforcement team, whether this could be maximised by a more aggressive deployment of the team and how this had been accounted for in the budgeting process. The committee questioned what work had been undertaken to identify how the council would meet the £13m funding gap for 2019/2020. A member highlighted the need to safeguard pensions and meet any percentage increase in staff pay and questioned how prepared the council was to meet these eventualities. Members sought information on Brent's comparative position to other local authorities with regard to per capita cost of services and business rates generated in the borough.

#### *4.3 Proposed Scope for Scrutiny Task Group on the use of Food Banks in Brent*

The Chair introduced the report setting out the proposed scope for the Scrutiny task group on the use of food banks in Brent. The task group had been requested by members following a noticeable increase in the usage of food banks, both in Brent and nationally. It was proposed that the task group would look at Brent, London and the national picture, with a focus on understanding the issue and the current position of central government, local authorities and other public sector partners. Specifically, the task group would analyse four key areas: understanding the drivers and scale of the problem; policy and practice; the experience of the resident; and, public perception. Members' attention was drawn to Appendices A and B to the report detailing in full the proposed scope and terms of reference for the task group respectively.

In the subsequent discussion, members agreed that a visit be conducted by the task group to a food bank as part of the research undertaken and questioned how the conclusions of the task group would be taken forward by the council. The Chair emphasised that currently there was no legislation around this issue, nor any formal council policy in place. There was an opportunity to ensure that the council was at the forefront of responding to this issue, reflecting on partnership working and providing a clear steer locally.

On 5 September 2017, the committee received the following reports:

#### *4.4 Brent Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) Update*

The committee received a presentation on the outcomes and learning from the council's first three Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) and outlining the progress made on the ongoing OBRs. The committee heard that OBRs encompassed working with a wide range of stakeholders to re-imagine ways of working and to jointly develop and test solutions.

The first OBRs were carried out in 2016 and had focussed on housing for vulnerable people, employment support, and welfare reform and regeneration. Building on the learning from the first set of OBRs, three more had been established for 2017 focussing on domestic abuse, adolescents on the edge of care and gangs. These were currently at the information-gathering phase,

and the next steps included undertaking more community and professional research including ethnographies, focus groups with perpetrators, and professional interviews with other services, horizon scanning, in-depth case analysis, and financial modelling. Following this the OBRs would progress to the development and testing stage.

#### *4.5 Follow Up Review on Brent High Street Initiatives*

The committee received a report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, which provided a performance analysis of the newly recruited town centre managers, the digital high streets project and the now in-house uniformed litter patrol service. It was noted that members of the committee had undertaken a site visit to Harlesden high street to support their scrutiny of the various initiatives.

The committee heard that two of the three town centre manager positions had been appointed in May 2017 and recruitment for the remaining position was ongoing. Twelve-month plans had been written by the Town Centre Managers in consultation with ward members, business representatives and council services. Officers updated members on the Digital High Streets project and advised that the pilot had run in Wembley from January 2017. The committee was updated regarding the progress made with regards to the in-house uniformed litter patrols which had commenced on 13 July.

#### *4.6 Update on Recommendations of S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group*

The committee was provided with updates on each of the recommendations made by the 2016 S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group. The Cabinet member explained that some recommendations were further along than others, due to their varying levels of complexity.

The committee queried the issues encountered in recruiting to the neighbourhood CIL officer posts, as well the rate of progress in utilising CIL funds.

#### *4.7 Update on the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group*

The lead Cabinet member made the committee aware that there was not a Finance bill in the Queen's Speech this year, but that the business rates pool for London boroughs is going ahead and this could mean a possible £4.8 million for the council in 2018.

Members asked officers about measures that small businesses might take to avoid paying the correct business rates, as well as about the rates paid by Wembley Stadium and if they had received any tax reliefs. The committee asked about mixed use premises, and sought information on the number of office spaces converted to housing.

### **5.0 Upcoming Scrutiny Meetings and Activities**

The next meeting of 2017-18 is scheduled for 7 November 2017 and the items which it will consider are:

- Annual Report on Complaints 2016/17
- Update on South Kilburn Regeneration Programme
- Factors making welfare and benefits claimants vulnerable
- Community Access Strategy, and
- Food banks and poverty task group report.

### **Contact Officers**

Kisi Smith-Charlemagne  
Scrutiny Officer  
[Kisi.Smith-Charlemagne@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Kisi.Smith-Charlemagne@brent.gov.uk)  
020 8937 2129

Mark Cairns  
Policy and Scrutiny Manager  
[Mark.Cairns@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Cairns@brent.gov.uk)  
020 8937 1476

Peter Gadsdon  
Director Performance Policy & Partnerships, Performance Policy and  
Partnerships  
[Peter.Gadsdon@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.Gadsdon@brent.gov.uk)  
020 8937 1400