



**Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny
Committee**
9 January 2018

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Performance, Policy &
Partnerships**

Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	One: • Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report set out the findings and recommendations of the recent budget scrutiny task group.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee is recommended to endorse the report at Appendix 1 and the recommendations contained therein.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 This year's budget scrutiny task group was formed at the halfway point of a two-year budget. As a result, it has undertaken budget scrutiny in a slightly different way than in previous years. This includes focusing on specific policies where it had concerns, rather than reviewing all spending plans (which last year's task group had already examined), as part of its legal duty to scrutinise the budget. Alongside this, the task group has also looked at the impact of the plan to pool business rates across the London boroughs.

3.2 The task group was comprised of members from the three scrutiny committees and chaired by the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee. It met three times, including a session attended by the Leader and Deputy Leader, to discuss the proposed pilot for pooled business rates in London. Relevant members of the Cabinet and senior officers also attended to inform discussions of the progress against savings proposals from the existing budget. It was also advised by experts from London Councils, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

3.3 The task group has made 12 individual recommendations, as follows.

1. Brent should dedicate some time and intellectual space to mapping out the potential consequences of Brexit for the borough, particularly in the areas of population, housing and manufacturing exports.
2. Brent should advocate a form of sub regional investment for the “strategic investment pot” produced in the London business rates pool, if the arrangement becomes permanent. The West London Alliance could deliver investment in our region of London.
3. The criteria Brent should adopt for strategic investment are as follows:
 - That the capital investment should have a spend to save rationale, and, in some way, reduce Brent’s anticipated revenue spending in forthcoming years.
 - That the investment aligns with the Council’s political priorities.
 - That the investment should represent a sound long-term financial decision.
 - That the money spent makes a significant positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in Brent.
4. Brent should leave no stone unturned in attempts to grow the local private sector. Two ideas it should specifically look at are appointing a business champion and using the procurement system to support local businesses.
5. A report on progress in delivery of the new sexual health services for the borough should come before Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny in six months’ time.
6. The Council should always give due consideration to ensuring a geographical spread when strategically purchasing property.
7. The Council should set a target to keep bulky waste collection requests low in order to reduce costs and the amount of materials finding their way into landfill.
8. The special collection service page of the Brent website should be re-designed to give maximum exposure to alternative and sustainable options which residents can use to dispose of bulky waste, particularly charity retailers in the borough. Helpline staff should also be trained to offer alternative options in the first instance.
9. The Council should look to develop sustainable ways for people to dispose of mid-sized waste items as a way of reducing illegal rubbish dumping.

10. A report should be sent to the appropriate scrutiny committee in twelve months' time, demonstrating how the change of contract due in July 2018 affects parking enforcement in the latter half of 2018.
11. The Council should look into the possibility of hiring an external partner to find more advertising space in the borough on a no-win no-fee basis.
12. A review of pavement licencing in Brent should be carried out to see how much we could generate from this source. This should take particular account of price and enforcement.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Scrutiny is an important part of the budget development process. The report does not have direct financial consequences per se, since decisions on the budget will be taken by Council.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications of the task group report.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications of the task group report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The task group was made up of members of the three scrutiny committees. It was also advised by officers, as well as experts from London Councils, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Director of Performance Policy & Partnerships