

One Community Many Voices Event 10th October 2011

Feedback from the table top sessions

The One Community Many Voices event was held during Local Democracy Week on the 10th October. Participants were invited to take part in table top facilitated discussion sessions on a variety of subjects. They were also encouraged to write their own comments on the flip chart paper provided. Comments from the event are set out below and will be fed back to participants and will be sent to the council's overview & scrutiny committees to inform their work programmes.

Employment, Skills and Economic Opportunities

- We need to encourage more local venture and businesses
- How can we use the strength of having a multi-lingual population?
- Empty properties – how can young people be trained to help renovate them.
- Harrow link – job creation
- More training for adults on how to access employment
- How can we encourage investment in green industry in Brent?
- Need to find the unique selling point for to attract business / industry into the borough
- Better use of the business units available in Brent
- How do we encourage entrepreneurial areas in the borough?
- Encouraging local procurement
- Encourage businesses to provide school and work experience
- Schools are now making work experience optional – how do we help to promote the value of this
- Volunteering opportunities for young people that provide work experience with rewards
- Are we providing too much money for children in care – too much freedom?
- Work with employers to identify the skills needed by people to gain employment
- Identify what skills will be most relevant in the future
- Marketing / Selling Brent – improve image
- Design centre
- More support in schools for young people on applying for jobs, CV writing and interviews.
- Good quality careers advice
- More apprenticeships, employer networks and business associations.
- Opportunities in Park Royal - linking support to local people and support for businesses in difficulties.
- Invest in local shopping centres
- Transport link to employment opportunities
- Training for young people from an early age – the minimum wage is a problem for small and medium size companies. Lobby government
- Link young people's development with the most successful companies
- Employer partnership supply chains
- Provide advice on self employment

- Hold a Dragon's Den style event around job and business creation
- Mentors into employment – role models

Health and Social Care

Mental health

- Mental health issues are becoming more prevalent in Brent. In the current climate people are struggling to cope. Services in Brent are poor and there is a lack of information and support to people who need it most.
- A delay in mental health support for people in custody is problematic. It can take up to 24 hours for a practitioner to attend the police station to assess someone with suspected mental health problems. People with mental health problems should not be in custody, but need to be linked in to other agencies where they can receive the help and support they need.
- Mental health services – services in Brent should not be closed. People need to be helped to live well with their mental health problems and not left isolated and alone.
- Isolation of the elderly and people with mental health problems is an issue. Are there projects in Brent working to get these people out and about and meeting up with friends, or attending day centre facilities? It should be noted that some people felt that replacing day centres would not be a good use of resources.

Patient and public involvement

- Involving the public more in the work of the council and health services should be a priority.
- Brent council should work with the NHS to publicise the way people can get involved in their local health services – e.g. as a member of a foundation trust.
- Patient and public involvement – The health service should make better use of patients to help plan and deliver services.

GP commissioning / GP services

- There is confusion about the roles and responsibilities of GPs in the new commissioning landscape. There needs to be better communication with the public on what clinical commissioning groups will do and GPs plans for services. Patient Forums need to be better advertised so that more people can get involved.
- Could Brent GPs introduce text message reminders to patients when they have appointments? Some people complained that they had been removed from their GP list for missing appointments, but they had been forced to make their appointment weeks in advance.
- Should GPs be in charge of health budgets? Some people were unhappy about this.
- GPs need to be better trained to understand mental health issues. What are the training requirements for GPs in this field, as patients are being disadvantaged by GPs not understanding the full range of mental health problems that people face.

Health and social care services

- There is a shortage of NHS Dentists in Brent. How can access to dental services be improved?
- We should be looking to locate services in neighbourhood settings where possible and avoid centralising into hospitals.
- Health service budgets – How are the reductions in health budgets affecting services in Brent? Is the council up to speed on the implications of the local NHS's plans?
- Reducing health tourism – are people coming to the UK to take advantage of our health care system, and if they are, how can this be stopped?
- Information on health and social care – what signposting is there in Brent for people looking for more information about health and social care services? Using the internet doesn't suit everyone.
- Health and social care services should be better integrated and assess the whole needs of the person, not put up artificial boundaries between services.
- Waiting times for hospital appointments are increasing and this is unacceptable.
- Does the NHS locally follow NICE guidelines and are patients properly involved in making decisions about their care? Does the local NHS have a strategy, is their effective monitoring and governance of local NHS services.
- There is a significant difference in the quality of surgical procedures that people receive. People need to be aware of this, the potential risks of having surgery and the fact that if something goes wrong, seeking redress is extremely difficult.
- People are being confined to their homes because of cuts to health and social care services. Brent council should help and champion these people.

Children and families

- Is there adequate support for children in schools with SEN? Are behavioural difficulties addressed in an effective way in Brent?
- What support can the council offer families who don't speak English? Is there a family learning programme in Brent, for example?
- Children in care are given too much by the council. A lap top is given to each child in foster care for them to do their school work. Is this a good use of resources, when all they do is play games on them and foster carers can't afford laptops for their own children? Do children in care need to be escorted to school as they are currently? Again, is this a good use of scarce resources?
- How is the council working to ensure more children in care are adopted?
- Could the council provide more support for children who are struggling, academically, in schools?

Housing services

- Housing – Can the council do more to tackle damp and disrepair in the private rented sector in Brent? Environmental Health Officers should be more proactive to address the problems in the PRS and not wait to respond to complaints.
- Tenancy agreements – What support can be given to tenants on 6 month short hold tenancies who face possible eviction, or are living in substandard conditions? What will the council do, what won't it do?

Other areas

- Contracts with the council – could more be done to help small businesses win council contracts. Contract requirements can be too onerous for some small businesses and so they choose not to tender for contracts.
- Energy bills – these are too high and people are complaining that because they now have fewer home visits from health workers / social workers, they are not able to discuss their heating problems with someone who may be able to advocate on their behalf.
- Preventative work and early intervention – this is where the council and health service should focus. How can the school nursing service contribute to early intervention work and has the council considered the long term savings that can be made through early intervention in health and social care fields.

Environment and Sustainability

Summary of main themes:

- Defining what sustainability means in Brent
- Changing communication methods to effective behaviour change for recycling e.g. town centre films, projects led by young people, community champions, politicians on the street
- Have labels for bins showing what goes where
- Lobby big business on packaging
- Improve business waste approaches
- Assess the risks of rolling out the green deal for those in poverty and on benefits
- Communicate government changes on rules about concrete drives and assessing what can be done about those already there
- Improve council use of recyclable items e.g. stationery, publications, cups
- Assess and communicate the implications of law changes around community involvement in planning in future
- Identify how the carbon impact of regeneration plans is assessed by the council and balanced against other benefits sought for the borough
- Improve cycle provision in the borough
- Rationalise the different warden services in the borough

Service issues to feed back to E&N

- TfL consultation on PR2
- Concern about not being able to recycle in Willesden Lane above shops and the fact that there are no longer newspaper bins
- Need greenery in front gardens - trees in pots. Consider a deal with plant a nursery and Brent magazine competition for best front gardens in borough
- The access to allotment on Furness Road is narrow and there is no access for cars whilst the youth centre is being rebuilt. The allotment officer has not been replaced. Who should residents talk to as we cannot transport compost to the allotment

- Promote the climate change pledge in the Brent Magazine again
- Put more saving water information on the website

What is sustainability?

- Top down action as well as grass roots action which needs statutory change to ensure success via Mayor of London and central government

Recycling

- We need labels on the bins to say what goes in which bin. Use what was in Brent Magazine including diagrams and make into a sticker (multiple reiterations of same message)
- People worried about contamination and possible fines are leaving their rubbish next to Brent public bins (multiple reiterations of the same message)
- There is no explanation on what to do with new bins, better communication is required.
- What will happen to people who do this incorrectly?
- Use resident's associations and get officers along to demonstrate
- Have roadshows area by area, using politicians to communicate the changes, soap box or mega phone work would be better
- Stop sending paperwork – make films and show them in town centres, DVDs, films in the post office
- Use Harlesden Town Centre Team and learn from their approaches
- Streetwatchers operate as part of Neighbourhood Watch. Use these people to educate others
- Schools have been overlooked – use them as young people are best at getting the message to the rest of the family , educate children to change behaviour of parents, have school visits to the sorting site, Youth Parliament visit recycling site
- Have resident visits to sorting site
- Do not use Area Forums as they have 60 people representing 44,000 and fail to achieve anything – scrap them
- There are still issues for flats
- How does the mixed recycling and sorting work, will there be burning of materials like in France?
- People are putting their vegetable waste in plastic bags and we need community champions to educate their neighbours on things like this
- Fear cut backs in communication budget on recycling
- Bin men should not be talking on their mobiles whilst collecting rubbish as it disturbs people in the neighbourhood
- Lobby Tesco and get more shops to use paper bags like Primark. There was an idea to turn plastic bags into beautiful cups and saucers at Park Royal – what happened to this idea?
- Separate out Metro papers from other waste
- Promote the number for free removal of white goods
- Note the council is not using recyclable cups and sent out information on changes to recycling in non recyclable envelopes

Business Waste

- Follow Westminster example where officers go and identify which business has left waste on the street instead of paying for business waste disposal (tv show)
- Encourage businesses to get rid of oil correctly and fine them if they do not

Housing

- Environmentally friendly housing needs to be built by RSLs
- Green deal involves a charge to the tenant in the small print – before going down the green deal route poverty and ability to pay need to be considered particularly for tenants on benefits
- Few resources in the Council to inspect and enforce standards in private rented homes (about 9 officers to cover around 20,000 properties). The private rented sector now plays a vital role in Brent due to the acute shortage of social rented housing and it faces added pressures brought on by increasing homelessness/use of private rented homes as temporary accommodation, and by the cuts in housing benefit.
- Thousands of tenants, including children, are living in homes that fall well below the Decent Homes Standard and around 40% contain serious health and safety hazards. Private tenants have no security of tenure and therefore when they complain about their conditions, they risk losing their homes altogether. Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group believe that Brent should devise a new Housing Strategy for the Private Rented Sector and that a priority should be given to pro-active inspections to drive up standards.

Air Quality

- In Wembley and Harlesden there is poor air quality
- We need to clamp down on car use in the borough

Plants and wildlife

- Plant more environmentally friendly plants in the borough i.e. olives

Climate Change

- Look at planning arrangements for people concreting over their drives and communicating the change set out in recent bills about use of different materials to allow water to permeate through the drive covering.
- Learn from the USA and their water permeable materials for drives
- Discourage concrete drives
- Implications of law changes around community involvement in planning in future
- How carbon impact of regeneration plans is assessed by council
- Look at retrofit rather than rebuild where possible
- Have social enterprise facilitate implementation of solar panels street by street using door knocking to engage people in cutting carbon; link it with roof insulation work
- BHP work on solar panels on housing is positive
- Need to invest and coordinate solar panels on schools roofs

- Council lobby central government on the fact it has/is reneging on previous green pledges
- Concern about rezoning around Park Royal, Wembley , Neasden if waste site is placed in this area there will be raised pollution

Transport/travel

- PR2 bus has been withdrawn and the 206 and 224 diverted with extended routes to compensate. Concern about how TFL consulted upon this change
- Get more cycle path provision in the borough and address the issues at Blackbird Hill/Neasden shopping precinct
- Look at what lobbying can be done to change law so that people do not park on cycle paths
- Improve cycle parking provision in borough and at council buildings including showers/changing facilities
- Have cycle paths along routes to schools – Kingsbury High, JFS, St Gregory's, Claremont
- Have zero tolerance on parking near schools
- Improve transport links to sports facilities from north of the borough e.g. Vale Farm

Other

- Rationalise warden services

Children and Young People: Notes from workshop sessions

Session 1

- Full Brent Council review required re summer riots across London –what lessons can be learnt for Brent , recommendations of two major national enquiries and impact on Brent
- Young people hopes cut – big reductions in Education and health budgets as result of public sector budget cuts
- Develop Young Apprenticeships for local people - Brent Council version
- Need to support Connexions Service – quality and quantity maintained
- More free holiday clubs for foster carers –free in Hillingdon , Brent costs are high
- Children's Centres have been successful – review and improve longer term?
- More sports and recreational activities , more athletics tracks, more accessible routes for sports

Session 2

- Young people excluded from using community facilities in the evening- such as local schools
- KicZ football programme in partnership with QPR football club , finding money for £30,000 per year operating costs (feedback from Metropolitan Police)
- Where can young people make use of Parks – clear signage i.e. safe cycling

- Good practice projects included ABC football coaching; White House Association (social integration)

Session 3

- Young people working in Harlesden Town Centre project –good example of young people engaging and participating in policy development and improving local area
- More joined up projects and services involving children and parents, there is a tendency to separate areas for service planning and development
- Greater support for parents with family support
- More work required around Citizenship across all age levels- stress civic role and rights and responsibilities
- Effect of youth service cuts – the summer riots leave a lot of questions regarding youth provision locally
- Make use of local volunteers (local resources) such as retired teachers, youth workers, social workers

Session 4

- Not enough school places ; full review of Brent school places required
- Review policy on school academies and appeals procedure overall
- More innovation required re youth funding – look at best practice across the UK
- More funding required for youth services overall,
- More youth clubs required across the borough –including specialising subject on conflict resolution, coaching and mentoring , after school clubs
- Youth service operating as facility managers as opposed to youth workers

Post it note comments

- More funding of young people's activities and use of existing facilities in Brent, especially school sports gyms and playgrounds
- Young people should be encouraged to become business people
- Holidays are also a problem for families of children on free school meals
- After school clubs are expensive and many parents who need them are low paid
- Brent Council offering **proper** apprenticeships , this is an excellent idea but harder for them to offer since so many services (maintenance etc) are outsourced/privatised
- Motivational talks from young men who have previously been convicted and been to prison – to speak to young people
- More Councillors to visit schools and talk to them re issues for young children and debate
- How many places in the borough are available for use of young children: who staffs them, what are activities, what does lead to?
- Running down of play service facilities (free places) for LAC, SEN, Children on Child Protection Register
- No work experience at school now, help with vocational courses/apprenticeships

- No hope, aspirations are cut because of costs university costs £9,000 per annum plus living expenses
- Lack of facilities, things to do, without a degree, where is our future workforce coming from ; cut in Connexions service
- Improve transport links to existing facilities e.g. Vale Farm, Copthall; football pitches being planned at Kingsbury High School (very positive for local area)

Community Safety

- Not enough or not the right things for young people to do - there was a feeling that money was wasted on services "bad kids" would not attend and "good kids" parents did not allow them to go too
- Stop and search was an issue raised at all the groups - how it's done and why needs more explanation
- People felt they did not get the "right story" from the press, Brent was portrayed badly and this did not at reflect what it is like to live here
- Concern was expressed about the number of payday loan companies and feeling that there are unlicensed loan sharks operating on some of the estates
- Prostitution was linked to this with increasing pressure on family finances
- Fears about poverty driving crime