



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

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All task group reports, agenda papers, and minutes of scrutiny committee meetings for 2018/2019 are published on Brent Council's webpages, which also have full details of minutes, attendees at a committee meeting and recommendations made by the scrutiny committees.

Membership 2018/2019

Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ketan Sheth, Chair
Councillor Reg Colwill, Vice-Chair
Councillor Ihtesham Afzal
Councillor Rita Conneely
Councillor Claudia Hector
Councillor Promise Knight
Councillor Ahmad Shahzad OBE
Councillor Anita Thakkar
Alloysius Frederick, Roman Catholic Diocese Schools, Co-Opted
Helen Askwith, Church of England Schools, Co-Opted
Simon Goulden, Jewish Faith Schools, Co-opted
Sayed Jaffar Milani, Muslim Faith Schools, Co-opted
Iram Yaqub, Parent Governor Representative Primary Schools, Co-Opted

Housing Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Janice Long, Chair
Councillor Michael Maurice, Vice-Chair
Councillor Abdi Aden
Councillor Tony Ethapemi
Councillor Faduma Hassan
Councillor Robert Johnson
Councillor Daniel Kennelly
Councillor Thomas Stephens
Michele Lonergan, Brent Leaseholders, Co-Opted
Karin Jaeger, Brent Tenants, Co-Opted

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Matt Kelcher, Chair
Councillor Suresh Kansagra, Vice-Chair
Councillor Neil Nerva
Councillor Kieron Gill
Councillor Saqib Butt
Councillor Erica Gbajumo
Councillor Sandra Kabir
Councillor Roxanne Mashari

1. Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Public Health and Culture

On 10 July 2018 the committee reviewed the work by Public Health England and **childhood immunisation** programmes for school-age children in the borough during 2017/18. The report by Public Health England also looked at immunisation programmes for children aged 0-5 years under the national Routine Childhood Immunisation Schedule. The committee was told that in line with other London boroughs, Brent had not achieved the World Health Organisation recommended 95% uptake coverage for the primaries and Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR); however, the borough's rates were one of the highest in north-west London. Two recommendations were made by the committee to Public Health England.

A special committee was organised on 21 November 2018 to review the vision and strategic objectives of the **London Borough of Culture 2020 Programme**. The report presented by the Lead member highlighted that winning the bid for being the London Borough of Culture in 2020 had provided an opportunity to invest in the Brent's rich cultural heritage, arts and young people. In addition, young people had been at the heart of the bid which demonstrated the importance the local authority put on young people's futures. The London Borough of Culture in 2020 will also provide an opportunity to improve the lives of residents in the Borough and engage the diverse communities living in Brent. Seven recommendations were made by the committee.

Diabetes rates are high in Brent and a significant health challenge, according to a report presented to the committee on 10 July 2018. Brent Clinical Commissioning Group and the Lead Member discussed with the scrutiny committee the local response in Brent, including addressing high-risk factors, prevention, diagnosis and treatment initiatives and the system-wide approach for helping people who are managing diabetes. Two of Brent's Diabetes Community Champions spoke about their experiences of engaging people at various events, and there was also a contribution from the Chief Operating Officer of diabetes.co.uk at the committee meeting. Three recommendations were made by the committee.

Health

The committee has found that a significant issue for the NHS and local authority social care is planning and managing **winter pressures**. A report to committee on 30 January 2019 updated members about learning from the previous winter and set out a system-wide approach to winter preparedness in Brent for the winter of 2018/19 by the NHS, and social care. Joining the discussion at committee on 30 January 2019 were leadership representatives from London North West Healthcare Trust, Imperial Healthcare Trust and Brent Clinical Commissioning Group.

On 13 December 2018 there was a committee meeting with the leadership team of London North West Healthcare NHS Trust to update members about the inspection report by the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** which was in the summer of 2018 and which examined services provided by the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust.

On 28 November 2018 there was a discussion of the **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)** offer in Brent, and the improvements and investments identified in the CAMHS Local Transformation Plan. The report, presented by Brent

Clinical Commissioning Group, updated the committee on progress against the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee's task group, chaired by Councillor Shahzad, in 2017 which reviewed Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The committee was told that work on developing a programme of peer and staff support in schools was ongoing as well as the engagement and recruitment of community champions. One of the recommendations from the task group was a joint engagement event for parents by the local authority and Brent CCG. This took place on 12 February 2019 at Brent Civic Centre.

Brent Healthwatch attended for the discussion on health items at the committee in 2018/2019.

Adult Social Care

On 17 April 2019 the Committee discussed an Update on Transforming Care Programme: Learning Disabilities. The report gave a background to why the Transforming Care programme was developed and an update on Brent's progress against national and regional requirements and priorities. It also set out the priorities for this year agreed at the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2019. Brent Healthwatch attended for the discussion as well.

Children's Services

The **Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2017/18** was reviewed by committee on 18 March 2019. At the meeting to discuss the issues set out in the report alongside the Lead member were three head teachers from Brent schools. Linked to this item at the same committee meeting was a discussion of a separate report about the **underachievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage**.

On 28 November 2018 the committee discussed a report on the **Youth Offer in Brent**, including details on the delivery of services such as Connexions, Brent Youth Parliament, services delivered from Roundwood Youth Centre, and the Brent Youth Zone website. On 28 November 2018 there was a report looking at the development of **family hubs** in Brent. The report provided information about children's centres in Brent and an overview of family hub models and their potential to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. In advance of the meeting, members of the committee visited a family hub in Pimlico run by Westminster Council.

In 2018/19 the committee set up a task group to review **contextual safeguarding**, which was chaired by Councillor Hylton. The five recommendations made by the task group, agreed by the scrutiny committee, were presented to Cabinet on 17 June 2019.

Safeguarding Boards

Members scrutinised the annual reports of the borough's two statutory safeguarding boards to review multi-agency partnership work. The annual report of the **Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board** (LSCB) was presented on 8 October 2018 by the Independent Chair. The report outlined the activities of the Brent LSCB from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The committee also reviewed the report of the **Brent Safeguarding Adults' Board**. The report was presented by the Independent Chair who introduced the report which provided a summary of safeguarding activity carried out by Brent Safeguarding Adults' Board and its partner organisations across social care, health and criminal justice, in line with the priorities of the Board.

2. Housing Scrutiny Committee

The Housing Scrutiny Committee undertook a range of activity over the past year. Its focus was on those areas that matter greatly to local people.

Housing Estates

An important area of focus for the Housing Scrutiny Committee in 2018/19 was reviewing **housing estates** in Brent. On 12 July 2018 there was a discussion about the Estate Parking Project, commissioned by Housing Management and working in collaboration with the Parking and Highways teams in Environmental Services, to consider the introduction of more effective parking controls. No scheme has yet been introduced.

There was a timely look at grounds maintenance at the committee meeting on 13 September 2018. The report provided an overview of the **grounds maintenance** arrangement across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land as well as an outline of the contract management arrangement, and the council's approach to tree management. The committee resolved that Housing Management Team shares data on the consistency of grounds maintenance across estates and any planned improvements and that the Housing Management Team considers the possibility of extending the Community Infrastructure Levy bid scheme to include estates.

The Housing Scrutiny Committee also set up a task group in 2018-19 to review **service provision on housing estates**. The scrutiny review focused on three housing estates: Chalkhill, Stonebridge and Church End. These estates were among the earliest regeneration areas in the borough, and the estates are now managed by Registered Providers. Recommendations from the task group included – consistency – the introduction of a Brent Standard, providing accessible information, waste management and external cleaning, complaints and service requests, transparency of service charges, parking, roads and pavements and grounds maintenance design. The report was presented to Cabinet in June 2019.

On 25 April 2019 there was a discussion on tackling **anti-social behaviour**. This report provided the Housing Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the handling arrangements for anti-social behaviour complaints perpetrated or affected by resident living in homes and/or estates managed by the council. In particular, it provided clarity surrounding cases managed by Brent Housing Management and those referred to the Council's Community Protection Team. The committee recommended that officers review the process of reporting ASB to Registered Providers and seek to standardise the processes in line with the council's.

On 29 November 2018 the committee received a paper on the draft Asset Management Strategy. Officers stated that the strategy was aimed at building long term commitment including future opportunities over a period of time ranging from 1 to 30 years. There was a robust discussion which focused on the future and the demands on housing such as climate change, bike storage and digital provision. The strategy is due to be presented to Scrutiny Committee in November 2019. Due to the importance of the strategy the committee resolved that an additional housing scrutiny meeting be convened to discuss the first draft of the asset management strategy. This will need to be factored into the work programme going forward.

Housing Policy

The committee looked at the draft Allocations policy on 13 September and an update on 29 November. Discussions included waiting lists for housing and what criteria was applied. The Allocations policy is used to allocate the limited supply of housing and the committee debated the options presented. The report went to Cabinet after a public consultation.

Finance and Performance

On 29 November 2019 the Housing Scrutiny Committee discussed the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)** within a local and national policy context, along with the key challenges for the borough and how they are being managed. The report provided members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Housing Revenue Account budget, focusing in particular on specific aspects of the Housing Revenue Account such as ring-fenced funding, self-financing arrangements and impact on the Housing Revenue Account as a result of the lifting of the borrowing cap, which was announced by the Government in 2019.

At committee on 6 February 2019 there was a review of the 2017/18 **Complaints Annual Report** with a particular focus on complaints performance for housing issues by the Community Wellbeing Department. The report included a summary of the root cause of complaints and improvement actions in the Housing Directorate during 2017/18. The Housing Scrutiny Committee took a particular look at the performance of Brent Council's housing management at a separate meeting on 6 February 2019. The report outlined the current performance for Brent Housing Management from April to December 2018 in key improvement areas and highlighted performance targets alongside monitoring data, commentary and progress against the improvement plan work.

At 27 March there was a report on the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) system being introduced as part of the Transformation programme into housing management. The system was being rolled out with the customer portal due in late 2019. The meeting recommended that a report on progress and satisfaction of the CRM be provided at an appropriate committee meeting in autumn of 2019 to ensure targets were being met and that a Member Development session be organised on the completion of the Customer Portal.

On 25 April 2019 there was also a look at Rent Arrears. This report had an analysis of the Council's rent collection and arrears. It provides detail on rent collection performance for 2018-19. The report outlines some of the key factors influencing rent collection and arrears recovery and describes what action is being taken to maximise collection. Specific focus is given to describing what constitutes technical arrears, small arrears/low levels of debt and how these are managed. Amongst the recommendations was that DWP representatives be invited to attend a future Scrutiny meeting to answer any questions in relation to Universal Credit.

6 February 2019 saw a review of Welfare Reform and Homelessness (including the Homelessness Reduction Act. The report provided information about the impact of Welfare Reform on housing services and homelessness in the borough, feedback on the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as well as an overview of how challenges and outstanding risk have been managed. On 25 April 2019 the Committee scrutinised the draft **Tackling Financial Exclusion Strategy** and delivery plan and

discussed the proposed next steps in the process. The strategy is developed in recognition of the fact that some people, either by choice or lack of access, find themselves excluded from mainstream financial products and services. It also recognises the importance of helping people to build their financial capability, financial literacy and financial health. This strategy is supported by a delivery plan that details the actions that the council will deliver in partnership. These actions are based on the strategic objectives of:

- Help residents to move from benefits to sustainable employment,
- Help residents overcome high levels of debt and promote responsible borrowing,
- Encourage residents to build their awareness of financial services and make appropriate choices with their finances.

The committee proposed some work on younger workers, more publicity for Credit Unions and better debt advice from the Councils employment advisers.

Fire Safety

Housing Scrutiny Committee spent a significant amount of time monitoring fire safety in the borough in response to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower in June 2017. On 29 November 2018 there was a progress update on the recommendations in the task group report on fire safety in low rise domestic properties. On 25 April 2019 the scrutiny committee was given an update about progress made with fire safety in the borough, which also reviewed the task group's recommendations and the progress to date with implementing them. Although noting the report on fire safety in the borough the committee resolved that the fire safety programme should be kept under continuous review.

Private Rented Sector

The Housing Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Private Rented Sector and Brent Council's schemes for **landlord licensing** in 2018/19. On 13 September 2018 there was a report providing an outline of the council's landlord licensing scheme within the context of private rented housing in Brent. The report included an overview of its financing, impact on landlords and tenants as well as challenges and future strategies. This looked at the impact of the different licensing schemes introduced in the borough to date. The committee recommended that Housing Management Team reviews content and layout of current landlord licensing webpages, and ensures sufficient level of information and advice is available and accessible to residents. In addition, throughout the year there were questions raised about the backlog of applications for licences which did result in the backlog being cleared.

Scrutiny Café

In October 2018 the Chair undertook a scrutiny café at Willesden Library. The 29 November Committee discussed the findings from this event. Licensing issues and inspections were a particular theme raised by residents. Committee members emphasised the need for proactive inspections.

3. Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

The committee considered a range of issues within its remit during 2018-2019 and heard evidence from Brent Cabinet and executive officers and external stakeholders. This included two in-depth scrutiny inquiries which were undertaken through Scrutiny Task Groups, one on **affordable housing**, looking at ways of increasing affordable housing in new developments and another set up to consider **knife crime** in Brent and possible further actions the council and partners could take to reduce knife crime.

In July 2018 the Committee considered **Brent Council Priorities for 2019** onwards and how the council would deliver its policies and priorities of the administration, with evidence from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The Committee also considered **Council property and assets** and the new assets strategy, including an examination of how Brent could use its properties to generate workspace and office space for local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Evidence was heard from the Deputy Leader, the Strategic Director for Resources and the Interim Director of Property.

In September 2018 the committee considered a report on progress with the implementation of the **Digital Strategy**, including an examination of the protections afforded to vulnerable residents. Evidence was received from the Deputy Leader and the Head of Transformation. The Committee considered the **highways contract performance**, including surfacing and repairs, with evidence from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning, the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, the Operational Director of Environment Services and the Head of Highways and Infrastructure. The committee also considered **area based working**, with evidence from Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning on the Council's area based approach and the progress of the new Town Centre Managers and Neighbourhood Managers.

In January 2019 the Committee considered the draft **Local Plan**, which was in development for launch in 2020 and due for consultation during 2019, with evidence from Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways, Planning, the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, the Operational Director Regeneration and the Head of Planning, Transport and Licensing. It also heard an update from the Deputy Leader and officers on **food banks** and the Cabinet actions following the Food Banks Scrutiny Task Group report recommendations made in 2017-2018 and received a report from the **Affordable Housing Task Group**.

In January 2019 the Committee received a report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel, which had been convened following the publication of the Cabinet's **Draft Budget Proposals for 2019-20 and 2020-2021**, which were considered further in February 2019, including the Council Tax Support scheme and potential impacts of Council Tax collection moving in-house. In February 2019 the Committee also considered the **Annual Report on Complaints 2017-2018**, with evidence from the Deputy Leader of the Council.

In March 2019 the Committee considered **Contracts 2023 and the merits and obstacles of bringing services back in-house** and examined the feasibility and options for bringing the Business Rates service back in-house when the existing contract expires. It considered the Council's **Air Quality** Pledges and how the council

is progressing with local air quality action plan measures, with evidence from the Cabinet Member for Environment, the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Operational Director of Environment Services. It also considered initiatives to reduce barriers and increase **recycling in flats**, including current challenges with regards to increasing recycling and what steps are being taken to develop the best possible recycling service for residents.

At its April meeting the Committee considered the **Economic Impact of Wembley Stadium** with oral and written evidence from the Head of Operations of the Football Association, the Senior Manager of Deloitte Sport Business Group and an Assistant Manager of Deloitte. It also considered Tackling **Illegal Rubbish Dumping** on Non-Council Land, with evidence from the Cabinet Member for Environment, the Head of Neighbourhood Management, as well as a report **on street parking management of larger vehicles** and an update on **Electric Vehicle Charging**, with evidence from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning.

4. North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overall, members focused on **Shaping a Healthier Future** (SaHF), the North West London Joint Committee, **Continuing Healthcare** and **Health Based Places of Safety** as the main areas of scrutiny in 2018/2019 for the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). There was a particular focus on the future of Shaping a Healthier Future (SaHF) and the proposed reconfiguration of acute hospitals (SOC 1). It was confirmed to members during 2018/2019 that the NHS would no longer be taking this programme forward.

Some topics are still dealt with and reviewed by local health scrutiny committees. The JHOSC does not need to deal with all issues but sought to be strategic in its selection of topics. The test for selecting a topic is based on whether it impacts or affects all or most local authorities who are members of the JHOSC. In 2018/2019 the members of the JHOSC were Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow and Westminster. Richmond is a co-opted member of the Joint Committee. There was also an approach to Hillingdon Council to ask if they wanted to take part in the North West London JHOSC in the future.

The NW London JHOSC held three meetings in 2018/2019. Full details of the minutes and agenda item papers are available on Brent Council's website. The agenda items for 2018/2019 included:

- Shaping a Healthier Future (SaHF)
- Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP)
- The proposed reconfiguration of acute hospitals (SOC 1) and the compliance with reconfiguration test
- North West London Joint Committee of CCGs
- Winter Plans
- Patient Transport Strategy
- Health-Based Places of Safety
- NWL CCG's use of consultants
- Congenital Heart Disease standards implementation in London
- Integrated Care Systems and the NHS Long-Term Plan in North West London
- Continuing Healthcare Policy.

The North West London JHOSC is not the only joint health scrutiny committee in London; others have also been established including Inner North East London JHOSC, North Central London JHOSC, South West London JHOSC, and South East London JHOSC.