

Chair's Report

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

September 2019

Good evening, and welcome to the September meeting of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. We have a very busy agenda, but I also think we have some really interesting and timely discussions.

Brent Statement of Licencing Policy

Every local councillor will know that the way a local authority sets its licencing policy is of huge interest to the local community. It is not just a technical decision, but a statement of principles that has a huge impact on the borough's public health, crime rate and night time economy.

This is why we were very keen, as a committee, to engage in a piece of pre-scrutiny on this issue. The document we will be scrutinising is a very early draft version of the council's policy. This means that scrutiny will have an excellent opportunity to influence the process at a very early stage. I will be directing the committee to particularly focus on the main principles they think should be reflected in the document, any areas they think are missing, or issues that are overlapped in the first draft.

The time to look at the specific details of how the policy will be implemented will come later in the process, though I am sure the committee might also ask if the council has resources to meet all of the commitments in the policy draft statement.

Council Tax Support and Local Welfare Assistance

This is a hugely important issue and now is the right time for scrutiny to look at it. When Council passed our latest two-year budget in February, this included provision to make reform to our system of Council Tax support. However, as evidence has emerged that the new system would unfairly impact on some of our most vulnerable residents it has now been dropped by the Cabinet and new ideas need to be considered. Simultaneously, as the borough continues to adapt to the roll out of universal credit it is vital that we look again at these important issues.

To prepare for this item, all members of the committee have been offered the chance to visit the Harlesden Hub, and talk to the charities and officers who work their every week offering support to residents in areas like Council Tax Support and welfare assistance.

Knife Crime Scrutiny Task Group Final Report

Following our preview of this task group's findings at our last full committee meeting, I am really pleased that this excellent report has now been published. I think it is particularly impressive that the report focuses on this issue as a social and public health matter, and suggests early intervention rather than trying to fix a problem after it has occurred.

I will also be supporting the chair of the task group, Cllr Kabir, in presenting these findings to Cabinet and Full Council, where I will give her some of the speaking time allotted to the Chair of this committee so that she can present these findings to the wider council and public.

Carlton and Granville Centre Site

Earlier in the year a Cabinet paper around the redevelopment of this site was called in to my Committee. This was an issue with huge public interest and we had a dozen people in support, and opposition, to the Cabinet policy.

At the time, the Committee agreed to send back this paper to be passed only if they took account of specific additional recommendations we made. This item is to investigate if these additional recommendations have been implemented.

Budget Scrutiny Panel

The final item on our September agenda will be to formally begin the work of the Budget Scrutiny Panel for this period.

As ever, this will be a cross-committee and cross-party panel which will look at the principles and priorities around the Cabinet's budget setting process (we leave it to the Audit and Standards Committee to take a look from an accountancy point of view).

We will look to publish our final report in January so that it can be presented to Cabinet and Full Council before the final vote in February.

Best wishes,

Matt

Cllr Matt Kelcher

Labour Councillor for Kensal Green Ward

Chair, Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee