



Full Council
10 September 2012

**Report from the Director of Strategy
Partnership and Improvement**

For information

Report from the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the overview and scrutiny committees in accordance with Standing Order 14 and covers the period since the last Full Council Meeting in July 2012.

2.0 Detail

One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1 An update on the Civic Centre Project was discussed at the committee's July meeting. Members' questions focussed on flexible working, the charging strategy for parking and rooms within the Civic Centre and the savings attributed to the project. A number of concerns were raised about whether or not transportation services would be sufficient to facilitate access to the Civic Centre.
- 2.2 The committee received a report that provided an update on the Housing Needs Transformation Project, which the committee had last discussed in July 2011. Members heard that the key aim was to deliver performance improvements with fewer resources in a more challenging operating context driven by welfare reform, recessionary pressures and rising demand. Members' concerns centred around customer satisfaction and the likelihood of the number of complaints increasing due to a reduction in staff.
- 2.3 Members of the committee also discussed the Performance and Finance report for Quarter 4. Questions were raised on spending pressures on placement and safeguarding budgets, street cleaning and the impact on partner organisations of council delays in making payments.

- 2.4 The committee will meet again on 16 October 2012.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.5 The committee last met on 19 July 2012 and members considered reports on the following issues:
- 2.6 The chair of Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) provided members with an update on the work of BYP. The committee was informed that they had identified a number of concerns. These were: that not enough is being done to tackle bullying in schools, there needs to be more valuable work experience offered to young people and there are not enough activities for young people in the school holidays. Members agreed that the BYP can suggest items to be put onto the agenda for the committee to consider.
- 2.7 Members were provided with a report on issues found in Brent schools, many of which were found as the result of audit work. Members' questions focussed on the responsibility of the schools and their governing bodies, the council's audit and inspection regime and the support and training in place for head teachers and governing bodies. The Director of Finance informed the committee that he had written directly to all Head Teachers and Chairs of governing bodies outlining the importance of strong financial controls and the importance of following strict financial regulations and good practice. The committee has asked to receive an update report in six months.
- 2.8 The committee received a presentation on the Adoption Inspection and the Adoption Scorecard. Members were particularly interested in the Special Guardianship Orders, the increased risks and what the council does to mitigate those risks. Questions were also raised about the number and success of transracial adoptions in Brent.
- 2.9 The committee will meet again on 11 October when it will be updated on the Safeguarding and Looked After Children action plan along with a report on Corporate Parenting.

Budget and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.10 At its meeting in July the Budget and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the budget strategy 2013/14 to 2015/16. Members spent some time exploring issues relating to the changes to local government funding and the new homes bonus. Budget pressures relating to: adult social care, children's social care, the changes to benefits, temporary accommodation and increased demand for services were also discussed.

- 2.11 The committee also received a report on the localisation of council tax benefits focussing on the financial impacts to the council and proposed mitigation. Members' queries focussed on: the implications of the tight timescales and the resources needed to implement the new scheme, the risks to the council, the choices open to the council in achieving the required savings and the impact of other welfare benefit changes.

Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.12 The July meeting of the committee focussed on crime and community safety. A report on crime statistics in Brent included an in depth look at burglary. Discussions centred on the areas that were most affected in Brent, the types of perpetrators and the actions being taken by partners to reduce burglary in Brent.
- 2.13 Members received a presentation on the multiagency Integrated Offender Management project. Concerns were raised about the participation of partners particularly in relation to mental health provision and about employment opportunities for ex-offenders.
- 2.14 A report on the introduction of the Local Joint Action Groups which are designed to streamline the delivery structure of Brent's Crime Prevention Strategy Group was discussed. Members queried how under represented partner agencies, such as mental health, could be encouraged to become more involved.

Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.15 The Committee last met on the 18 July 2012. The main issue considered by members was the merger of North West London Hospitals NHS Trust and Ealing Hospital Trust – whilst the merger is progressing, members are concerned by the amount of transition funding that could be required to support the new organisation (as much as £96m). It was agreed that this should be followed up so that councillors can be sure that services aren't affected as the organisational changes take place.
- 2.16 A report on tobacco control and smoking cessation was considered. Councillors have agreed, in the light of a new paper from ASH (the anti-smoking charity) to recommend that the Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee reconsiders its tobacco investments. This recommendation will be considered in September.
- 2.17 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Shaping a Healthier Future continues, and a Health Partnerships OSC response is also being developed. The committee is running a task group on diabetes in Brent, which should report later in the year.
- 2.18 Mental health is a theme for the committee this year – a report on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies was taken in July. A

further report on step up mental health services in the borough will be considered in October.

3.0 Financial Implications

3.1 None

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Diversity Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

6.1 None

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