



Full Council
20 November 2023

**Report from the Corporate Director
of Communities and Regeneration**

**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Chair's
Update Report**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Updated Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. To update Full Council on the meetings and activities of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting of Full Council on 18 September 2023.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Full Council:

Note the report and the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's updated 2023/24 work programme within.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to the Borough Plan and Strategic Priorities

3.1.1 The work of the committee contributes to the delivery of all of the strategic priorities within the Borough Plan as it seeks to support, advise and enhance the Council's activity. The recent activity outlined in this report contributes most specifically to the "A Healthier Brent" strategic priority within the plan.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Brent Council has two scrutiny committees: the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. The council also participates as a full voting member in the North West London Joint Health Overview Scrutiny (NWL JHOSC). Councillor Ketan Sheth was re-elected as chair of the NWL JHOSC at its first meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year in July 2023.

3.2.2 A scrutiny committee can review anything which affects the borough or its inhabitants, subject to its remit. The remit of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is set out in the Council Constitution under the Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committees which includes:

Adult social care; Safeguarding; Children's services; Cultural services; Education; Health; Housing; Public Health and Wellbeing.

3.2.3 As part of its remit set out in the constitution, and its role to review the provision and operation of health services within the borough, the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee can scrutinise, and make recommendations to NHS organisations or relevant health service providers.

3.2.4 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's 2023/24 work programme has been amended since the last Full Council meeting was held and is detailed in Appendix 1. It outlines the policy areas and council decisions the committee plans to review during the 2023/24 municipal year. Statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny recommends that for scrutiny to be effective, scrutiny committees focus on conducting fewer in-depth reviews of highly significant topics¹.

The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

3.2.5 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met for its second meeting of the municipal year on 21 September 2023. The Committee reviewed a two-

¹ *Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities* (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government), p21

part item on the Outcome of Ofsted's ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) Inspection and the Current Children's Social Care Improvement Activity. The paper was introduced by Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People). The Committee were informed that the department had been very pleased to receive an overall 'good' rating when the new judgement was published in April 2023 following the inspection in February 2023, with 'good' across the board in all sub-categories. This was the first time Brent had been judged 'good' across the Board in all areas. In 2018 the Council had been judged 'good' overall, with some variability in sub-categories.

- 3.2.6 Within the inspection outcome, there were some areas for improvement that Ofsted expected the Council to action. The Committee were informed that the Council was expected to produce an action plan to Ofsted within a specified time period of 60 days based on the 4 recommendations given, which had been completed. Alongside that, the Children and Young People (CYP) department had a wider, comprehensive practice improvement plan which picked up other areas that had been highlighted during the inspection, but which had not been included in the Ofsted recommendations. One of the main priorities of this was the revised workforce development plan to create stability in the workforce at every level, particularly those hard to recruit, frontline posts. Councillor Gwen Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools) added that the inspection had come at a time of significant change within the CYP department, with both Nigel Chapman and Palvinder Kudhail (Director of Integration and Improved Outcomes) relatively new to their posts. Although workforce and turnover is a national problem, Brent wants to be a leader in attracting good quality social workers to Brent on a long-term basis and Councillor Grahl expressed that both had demonstrated good leadership on that across London.
- 3.2.7 In relation to the second part of the paper: 'Current Children's Social Care Improvement Activity', Nigel Chapman highlighted that retaining social worker staff was the biggest risk area to the department regarding social work activity. Workforce and turnover of social workers had been a factor in the Council's looked after children (LAC) work being judged as 'good' as opposed to retaining its 'outstanding' judgement from the previous inspection. It was highlighted this was both a national and regional issue, and the last nationally published data on social workers showed that the number of agency workers had risen by 13% from September 2022. In Brent, the number of agency workers increased by 19%, meaning Brent was above the national average in terms of agency workers, and vacancies were also high at approximately 20%. However, the Council's caseload activity, which was a determining factor in social workers feeling well supported, was manageable and below the London average. The Committee were also advised that the issues around social worker recruitment and retainment were beyond a single local authority's ability to control. However, the Committee were informed of the London Pledge which has now been running for a year. Local authorities in London have signed up to the Pledge which caps the rates social workers were paid through an agency. This has had a lot of impact, and within a year the Council's spend on agencies has reduced and stability has been increased.

Alongside this, local authorities in London were waiting for central government feedback on further reforms in the workforce. The service has been meeting with agency staff to talk about the benefits of converting to permanent employment, and since April 2023 the service had secured 7 former agency staff who converted to permanent, and there were 3 further agency workers in the pipeline to become permanent.

- 3.2.8 The second item reviewed was the SEND Strategy Implementation and Readiness for a Joint Ofsted / CQC Inspection. Councillor Gwen Grahl introduced the report which updated the Committee on the SEND Strategy, which was an important obligation of the local authority. The report highlighted several positives including the additional 427 placements that had been introduced across the borough in both mainstream schools and a new school being built; there was no longer a deficit in the High Needs Block from which SEND support was funded and the waiting times for accessing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) had improved significantly. The Council had invested in the provision of post-16 skills and was building 2 additional centres in Welsh Harp and Airco Close. It was highlighted that there was further work to do in this area given the huge increase in demand recently; there were now over 3,000 children in Brent with an EHCP, compared to this time last year where there was just under 3,000. The continued growth was a national position and is putting a strain on the system. Nigel Chapman highlighted that the positive is that there were now more children being educated within mainstream schools, but there remained pressure for the Council to provide special school places.
- 3.2.9 In relation to readiness for a Joint Ofsted / CQC Inspection, the CYP department had been working closely with colleagues in health including Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) to ensure it was as prepared as possible. The new inspection framework has been introduced in January 2023 and only a handful of inspections have taken place so far, with feedback from those areas showing that it was a much more granular inspection process than the previous version and looked more in depth at the experience of children and young people. The Committee were informed that there were 3 possible narrative judgements from the inspection: that the experience and outcomes of children and young people was generally consistently good; that the experience and outcomes for children and young people were inconsistent or that the experience, and outcomes for children and young people were generally poor. CYP have been working with Jonathan Turner (Borough Lead Director – Brent, ICP) in preparation for the inspection in order to know where there are issues. He agreed that outcomes were generally good but that there were areas where plans to improve the experience of children and young people were needed, for example around waiting times for ASD and ADHD assessments. The Brent ICP will be bidding to the NWL Integrated Care Board (ICB) to level up some of Brent's services, but that would not be resolved by the time of the inspection so those plans also needed to be evidenced during the inspection. Another area needing focus was the Special School Nursing Service provided by Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) as demand for that service would increase when special school places increased. The ICP is looking at producing a business case to invest more into

those services, but in the short term the ICP had released some Section 256 funding to support CLCH to recruit on an interim basis.

- 3.2.10 The Committee were pleased to hear about the positive work being undertaken between the Council and a cluster of schools in Harlesden on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme. The alignment work being completed with Brent Health Matters, Family Wellbeing Centres and the Intervention First Teaching Programme would make a real difference in the way localities worked together to support children. The intention is to continue learning from the approach and expand to other school clusters, targeting the next group of schools with additional needs through the next 2 academic years. The Council are now developing a more formalised relationship with other school clusters in order to work with them to develop local programmes. Jen Haskew (Head of Setting and School Effectiveness) is now having regular meetings with cluster leads so a mechanism to cascade good practice can be formed. The Committee heard that both primary and secondary schools were coming together regularly to meet and recognise the key issues for the communities and parents in their areas and how those needs could be met. Using funding provided by the Council, the Harlesden cluster had developed a curriculum called 'my world' which was about adjusting the curriculum to relate to the experiences of the pupils in their school. The cluster also had a good practice model of how schools could work well together across phases with a common language in the curriculum.
- 3.2.11 A report on Adult Social Care CQC assurance was also scheduled to be reviewed at the Committee meeting. However, this item was withdrawn and will be reviewed at another meeting later in this municipal year.
- 3.2.12 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is set to meet on 22 November 2023 for its third meeting of the municipal year. Here the committee will review three items:
- Brent Housing Management. The item will inform the Committee on readiness for tenancy satisfaction measures and an update on responsive repairs performance.
 - The second paper will report on the performance and outcomes of the New Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS) since its move to The Turning Point in Harlesden from Wembley.
 - The final item will focus on the performance, quality and impact of the new pilot scheme for Selective Licensing in three wards in the south of the borough since its launch in August 2023.

The North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC)

- 3.2.13 Since the last report to Full Council, the NWL JHOSC met at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) on 12 September 2023 for its second meeting of the municipal year. At this meeting the Committee first reviewed Proposals For Consultation On The North West London Wider Review Of Palliative Care. Jane Wheeler, (Acting Deputy Director, Mental Health, NHS North West London) introduced the report. The Committee were

updated on the proposed model of care that had been co-produced. Several key points were also highlighted during the review of this item. It was noted that currently not all boroughs in North West London provided the same offer of palliative care for residents within their own homes. Secondly, the support for residents received from out-patient services was also inconsistent in each area. The Committee were then informed that there was currently some unmet need for people that required to be embedded into provision. Finally, an update was given on the ongoing engagement and possible provisions over the options of delivery and commissioning, prior to formal consultation on the new model of care.

- 3.2.14 The second item reviewed was an update on the NWL Mental Health Strategy. Carolyn Regan (Chief Executive, West London NHS Trust) introduced the report and raised several points regarding progress made to date. The Committee were informed that a sizable amount of data analysis was being completed to assess need, prevalence and demand for the service. There was a Working Group which included representation from all boroughs and there had been some engagement events over the past few months. Details of the analysis would be made available to the group and stakeholders within the following weeks. The Committee were then advised that the approach for the strategy was being built on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and setting out key principles. The first phase was only looking at adult services, and needs of children and young people would be explored at phase two. The ambition was for the first draft to be shared with stakeholders in October 2023.
- 3.2.15 The final item focused on the Consultation Proposals On The Future Of The Gordon Hospital. Toby Lambert (Director of Strategy and Population Health, North West London Integrated Care Board) introduced the report and explained that it was solely about the future of acute mental health services for adult residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council and where to allocate mental health investment. There were four options which had come out of the workshops, which included; a return to the status quo in 2019 prior to the closure; to continue with the current provision, with inpatient services only available at the St Charles Centre for Health & Wellbeing; to move the Mental Health Crisis Assessment Service to the Gordon Hospital and keep everything else the same as current arrangements or to reopen some beds at the Gordon Hospital, at a smaller scale than previously. It was yet to be decided which options would be included in the formal consultation, but the ICB and Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust's (CNWL) were committed to a discussion about all options. The Committee then discussed the proposal of a separate, more local meeting being established by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council for the purpose of continuing the scrutiny of the Gordon Hospital proposals as none of the other borough's residents were affected by the proposal apart from a very small cohort in Brent. It was agreed by the Chair that this could take place as most other Committee members had agreed to the proposal.
- 3.2.16 The next NWL JHOSC meeting is scheduled to take place on 05 December 2023 at the London Borough of Hounslow.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Non-executive members were involved in developing the work programme as part of their membership of the committee.

4.2 Councillors will discuss this report at the Council meeting.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no communication implications arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Zahur Khan

Corporate Director, Communities and
Regeneration