

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Full Council</b> 10 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources</b>
<b>Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Chair's Report</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Council
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025-26
<b>Background Papers:</b>	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 update to Full Council on 15 September 2025.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

- 2.1 Note the report and the updates provided for both the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC).

### **3.0 Detail**

#### **3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

- 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," "The Best Start in Life," "Prosperity and Stability in Brent" strategic priorities 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 Committee (NWL JHOSC). Councillor Ketan Sheth was re-elected as chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Council Meeting on 22 May 2024 and also continues to serve as chair of the NWL JHOSC.

- 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's 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 Committee's 2025-26 work programme is detailed in Appendix 1. In developing its work programme, Committee members have prioritised items based on a set of criteria. Prioritisation ensures that items included in the committee's work programme are (i) a strategic priority as set out in the council's 2023-27 Borough Plan (ii) of concern for a significant number of the borough's residents (iii) a significant cabinet decision or (iv) part of a forthcoming policy review or a new strategy being developed by the Cabinet. This is undertaken to ensure that scrutiny has a significant impact and adds value to the council's policy process. Statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny recommends that for scrutiny to be effective, scrutiny committees focus on conducting fewer in-depth reviews on highly significant topics<sup>1</sup>.

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

- 3.2.5 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met for its second meeting of the 2025-26 municipal year on 17 September 2025. The meeting focused on an update from the NHS followed by three substantive reports. Pippa Nightingale, CEO of London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust provided an update to the Committee on significant improvements to Sickie Cell care in North West London, highlighting Brent's large patient population and the NHS's past shortcomings in meeting their needs. A redesigned care pathway, co-developed with patients and service users, included a new Acute Hub at Hammersmith Hospital offering direct access to specialists and a 24/7 triage service. The Committee were also informed that outpatient services at Central Middlesex Hospital have been extended, with plans to operate seven days a week. She also outlined proposed changes to the Urgent Care Centre at Central Middlesex Hospital, including earlier closing hours to align with radiology services and better resource allocation across sites. The Committee discussed capacity, staffing, and communication, and thanked her for her contributions.
- 3.2.6 The first of the reports presented to the Committee was on the topic of Children's Oral Health. The report presented by the Lead Member and Brent's Public Health team outlined the state of children's oral health in Brent, highlighting concerning statistics such as 43% of children experiencing dental decay by age five. Members were informed that despite historically high levels, recent trends show a slight improvement, attributed to targeted interventions like the oral health bus, supervised toothbrushing programmes, and educational campaigns. It was noted, however, that challenges do still persist due to entrenched beliefs, misinformation, and limited access to child-friendly dentistry. The Committee were pleased to hear that Public Health had been working to shift parental attitudes, improve early intervention, and collaborate across sectors to address these issues holistically. However, the Committee raised concerns about the effectiveness of interventions and the slow progress compared to similar boroughs such as Lewisham. Public Health acknowledged systemic barriers, including national NHS contract limitations and cultural factors, but emphasised ongoing efforts such as partnerships with schools, libraries, and Brent Health Matters. Future plans included expanding surveys to better understand needs, increasing outreach, and promoting dentistry as a career among youth. While Brent's oral health outcomes remain below national averages, improvements are anticipated over the next 5–10 years, especially with continued multi-agency collaboration and community engagement.
- 3.2.7 The second item discussed at the Committee meeting was the Brent Period Dignity Project, introduced by the Deputy Leader. This item was put forward in the Committee's work planning sessions by the Brent Youth Parliament. Members were informed that the project aimed to tackle period poverty by reframing it as a dignity issue and providing free menstrual products across Council-owned sites in Brent. Initiated in 2020 following the Poverty Commission's findings, the project collaborates with 'Hey Girls' to distribute products in libraries, Family Wellbeing Centres, food banks, and other community hubs. It also includes educational materials to reduce stigma and raise awareness. While recognising that measuring the scale of period poverty locally was challenging, uptake data indicates a clear need. The Committee

were informed that the Council plans to embed the initiative as a standard service and expand its reach, including to schools and care settings. The Committee, including Brent Youth Parliament, raised concerns about gaps in access for young people not in education, care leavers, and culturally sensitive communities. Officers acknowledged these gaps and committed to improving outreach, including through partnerships with Brent Health Matters and the voluntary sector. Monitoring was currently based on product uptake rather than detailed personal data, and staff training was being enhanced to address stigma. The Committee encouraged broader engagement, including with gyms and faith schools, and stressed the importance of universal access without judgment. The Council affirmed its commitment to evolving the project and welcomed suggestions for expanding its reach.

- 3.2.8 In the final report of the evening, the Committee were updated on the Impact of Youth Justice Service Delivery in Brent. The report presented by Brent Council's Youth Justice Service (YJS) outlined a multi-agency approach to youth justice, highlighting successes in reducing custody rates, first-time entrants, and reoffending, though some data fluctuations were noted due to small cohort sizes and the impact of COVID-19. Members heard that the YJS has been rated as delivering at least a "good" service, with strong out-of-court disposal processes and a focus on restorative justice. However, challenges remained, particularly around disproportionality affecting Black Caribbean males and ensuring victim voices were heard. The Committee were encouraged when informed that preventative work was being strengthened through initiatives like the Targeted Prevention Hub and partnerships with organisations such as My Endz 2.0 and CAMHS, which provide early mental health support. The Committee did however raise concerns about data inconsistencies and the need for more preventative and culturally sensitive interventions. The team acknowledged the link between youth offending and factors such as deprivation, educational challenges, and undiagnosed mental health needs. Officers assured Members that YJS works closely with partners to divert young people from the criminal justice system, offering tailored support including education, employment, and apprenticeships. The service was also aligning its work with broader Council strategies like the Youth Strategy, SEND Inclusion Strategy, and Black Community Action Plan. Suggestions were made to explore successful diversionary programmes from other boroughs, such as community-led sports initiatives, to further enhance Brent's youth justice offer.

### **The Committee's continued focus on Housing**

- 3.2.9 Each year, the Committee's work programme allocates equal time to all areas within its remit. Over the last two municipal years, the Committee has discussed numerous reports relating to Housing. Below is a brief summary on each of these items. Brent Housing Management Update (Nov 2023) - The Brent Housing Management (BHM) update highlighted key improvements and ongoing challenges in housing services, including significant reductions in void turnaround times, enhanced tenant engagement, and preparations for new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The Committee discussed issues such as repairs, succession policies, fly-tipping, youth homelessness, and leaseholder compliance in mixed-tenure blocks. Recommendations included improving

cross-service coordination and better collection and sharing of recruitment and financial impact data. The Committee were encouraged to be informed that BHM aimed to deliver more proactive, community-focused services through restructured contracts, in-house support, and targeted engagement strategies.

- 3.2.10 New Single Homeless Prevention Service (Nov 2023) - The Committee were updated on Brent's Single Homeless Prevention Service, now rebranded as "Turning Point" and based in Harlesden. It detailed its transition from an online model to a face-to-face, multi-agency approach to better meet the complex needs of single homeless individuals. Funded through a £2.1 million outcome-based contract, Members were informed that the service collaborates with partners like Crisis and the DWP to improve accessibility and outcomes. The Committee explored homelessness drivers, service sustainability, and support for vulnerable groups including care leavers and young adults, while raising concerns about outdated communication channels. Recommendations included assessing the viability of in-housing the service by 2027, improving demographic reporting, correcting phone line messaging, and sharing data on accommodation refusals and discharge safeguards.
- 3.2.11 New Selective Licensing Scheme (Nov 2023) - The Committee discussed the then new Selective Licensing Scheme, which had launched in August 2023 across Dollis Hill, Harlesden & Kensal Green, and Willesden. It aimed to improve property standards and reduce anti-social behaviour in Brent's Private Rented Sector. Funded by a £640 five-year licence fee, the scheme had issued 1,000 licences from 3,000 applications and planned to inspect 50% of licensed properties, with increased staffing to support enforcement. Social housing was exempt, and Wembley Park was excluded due to its newer housing stock. The Committee discussed compliance strategies, the distinction from HMO licensing, and recommended better councillor communication and prioritised enforcement of unlicensed HMOs.
- 3.2.12 i4B and First Wave Housing (FWH) Performance Update (Nov 2024) - The i4B and First Wave Housing (FWH) performance update highlighted progress in property acquisitions, emergency repairs, and compliance monitoring, while identifying areas needing improvement such as tenant satisfaction, void turnaround times, and rent collection, particularly due to Universal Credit challenges. A deep dive into voids revealed delays across multiple stages, prompting plans to streamline processes and improve value for money. The Committee discussed anti-social behaviour, tenant wellbeing, and difficulties acquiring properties with private freeholders, endorsing a strategy to avoid such purchases. Recommendations included receiving detailed action and engagement plans, ensuring future reports specify mitigation actions when targets are missed, and enhancing communication to improve Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- 3.2.13 Brent Housing Management (BHM) Performance Update (Nov 2024) - The Brent Housing Management (BHM) Performance Update focused on the newly introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), revealing a gap between high transactional satisfaction and low perception-based satisfaction, particularly around complaints and anti-social behaviour. To address this,

Members were informed that BHM had introduced 25 Area Tenancy Managers to improve communication and tenant engagement. The Committee discussed void management, succession rights, eviction trends, and support for tenants with language barriers, alongside a review of IT systems to enhance diversity data and tenancy audits. Recommendations included incorporating health and safety considerations in future updates and providing data on tenant diversity.

**3.2.14 Temporary Accommodation and Homeless Prevention Service (Nov 2024) -**

The Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Prevention Service update highlighted Brent's growing housing pressures, with rising temporary accommodation (TA) numbers driven by a shrinking Private Rented Sector, landlord exits, and post-pandemic cost increases. The Committee discussed long-term TA stays, out-of-borough placements, and the effectiveness of Locata, while officers outlined efforts to bring empty homes back into use and the limitations of Compulsory Purchase Orders. Youth homelessness and employability support were raised by Brent Youth Parliament, though no youth-specific schemes currently exist. The Committee were assured that the Council continues to collaborate on pan-London strategies.

**3.2.15 Housing Items scheduled to be reviewed in 2025/26 -** During the 2025/26 municipal year, the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee will be reviewing numerous Housing matters. Below is a current list of items scheduled:

- November 2025 - Response to Housing regulator findings and Brent graded at C3.
- November 2025 - Update from the Housing Improvement Board - This is a new agreed standing item following the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The Committee will receive a mid-year report and a further update at the end of the municipal year.
- March 2026 - Housing Management: Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Brent Housing Management (BHM) performance.
- March 2026 - Area Tenancy Management Model and an update on Empty Properties.
- March 2026 - Temporary Accommodation, Supported Exempt Accommodation and Homelessness Prevention.
- March 2026 – End of Year Update from the Housing Improvement Board.

**3.2.16** The Committee will meet for its third meeting of the year on 19 November 2025 where the Committee are scheduled to discuss Housing items listed above.

**3.2.17** Councillor Ketan Sheth is Brent's representative and Chair of the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC). The second meeting of the municipal year has been rescheduled to 18 November 2025 and will be held at London Borough of Harrow where they will review Special School Nursing, The future of Place Based Partnerships and Dentist Commissioning and Children's Dental Health.

**4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

- 4.1 Members of the Committee continue to be fully engaged in the development and delivery of the scrutiny work programme.

## **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 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 7.1 There are no equity, diversity or inclusion 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:**

***Minesh Patel***

Corporate Director, Finance and Resources