

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

**FULL COUNCIL – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004**

**REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Since my last report to Full Council in June, each of the scrutiny sub-committees has met and agreed their respective work programmes, which are attached for information. These have been developed by scrutiny Members in collaboration with the relevant lead officers to ensure that full yet realistic and flexible work programmes are in place for each of the sub-committees throughout 2004/05.

With these work programmes in place, the scrutiny panels are about to commence their next round of meetings. The Quality of Life Panel is scheduled to meet on the 21<sup>st</sup> September and the agenda will feature updates on the South Kilburn Masterplan, the Wembley Stadium Area Development, a report on Monitoring Supporting People and a referral to scrutiny for consideration of the planning and enforcement process in Brent. The Empty Properties Task Group was formally established at the Panel meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2004 and will consider, as part of its investigations, whether the Council is achieving value for money against other housing spending priorities and whether opportunities exist for the development of a sub-regional approach to tackling empty homes issues. The first meeting is now scheduled to take place in October so I will report back on the progress of this task group in future reports to Full Council.

The Lifelong Learning Panel will meet on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004 and will look at the Inspection of Cultural Services, the Connexions Service in Brent, Early Years Best Value Review and the Ofsted Action Plan. At this meeting, Panel Members will also receive the final report of the School Governors – Maximising their Contribution Task Group, which concluded its investigations in August. The report lists a number of recommendations put forward by the task group which seek to identify a number of practical measures to help maximise the contribution of school governors in Brent's schools. The report will be presented to the Executive in due course for consideration and comment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the task group's investigation.

At the Social Care Panel meeting in July, Members considered the Costs of Framework (i) and received a report from Richard Grice of the IDeA on the London Social Services Pilot Improvement Project. At the next meeting, which is scheduled to take place in November, the Panel will consider the Complaints Annual report, Older Peoples Services inspection, update on the Disability Issue Day and Strategy Day Report and the Social Services Star

Rating. It was previously anticipated that the Social Care Panel would receive the final report of the Joint Commissioning Strategy (Intermediate Care Provision) Task Group at this time. However, work is still progressing and the task group is continuing to consult with elderly residents and their representatives about the Council's performance in terms of its involvement in the provision of intermediate care. Consequently, the task group's final report is now expected in January 2005.

The Performance and Finance Select Committee is scheduled to meet shortly and Members will consider a variety of issues including Revenue Monitoring 2004/2005, an update on the 2003/04 Audit Plan and Vital Signs Quarters 1 and 4. There will also be an update on the work of the Onyx Task Group, which has commenced its investigations. Some consultation has been undertaken with Members and I would urge all Councillors to return their questionnaires to the Task Group support officer, Michael Royce (PRU). These responses will be used to identify problems regarding household waste collection and to ensure that a practical investigation is undertaken by the task group with viable and effective recommendations developed.

The Forward Plan Select Committee has met three times since my last report and has considered a range of issues including the Connexions Service, forced marriages, re-tendering of the parking contract, Youth and Community Centres Review, Best Value Review of Sports Service and personalised disabled parking spaces. At the next meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September, the Select Committee will consider briefing notes on issues including Wembley Stadium Event Day Parking Controls, draft Air Quality Action Plan, Ninth London Local Authorities Bill and the Pavilion at Neasden Recreational Ground.

The latest edition of the Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter was recently circulated to all Members of the Council and provided a concise explanation about the overview and scrutiny functions in Brent. In addition, there were general updates on training and Member development issues, details about current overview and scrutiny task group activity and general information bulletins. In this edition there was also an interesting interview with both myself and Councillor Thompson who, as Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny, welcomed the opportunity to comment on the overview and scrutiny processes in Brent.

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004, Members reviewed the work of scrutiny over the last twelve months and considered the objectives for 2004/05. Consideration of the work programmes and the Annual Scrutiny Report, as well as a discussion on good scrutiny practice enabled Members to consider new ways of working and methods by which to enhance the scrutiny function in Brent. As Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, I look forward to further enhancing the scrutiny process in Brent with the support and encouragement of all Members. As you know, the Annual Scrutiny Report has now been circulated and I hope that this has been an enlightening read for all Members!

With regards to Member development and training a visit to the GLA is being planned for later in the year. Members, particularly those involved in the

scrutiny process, will be invited to participate in the organised visit to the GLA to watch a scrutiny select committee in action. Further details about this and other training events, including a visit to another local authority, will be circulated in due course by Adam Pokun (Mayor's Office and Member Development Manager).

Local Democracy week will take place between 18<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October this year and the Council is planning a number of events to mark the week. One such event is a mock scrutiny meeting involving children from local schools. I very much hope this proves a success and encourages young people in the Borough to participate in the Council's decision-making processes, of which scrutiny is now an important element.

**Councillor Tom Taylor,  
Chair, Scrutiny Committee**