

Summons Item 9 (c)

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

FULL COUNCIL – 29th November 2004

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

My last report to Council in October provided Members with a brief update about the work of the Panels and Select Committees, as well as information about Local Democracy Week, which was a resounding success. In this report I will provide a quick update on the work of the sub-committees, comment on upcoming training events and will speak about general issues that are of interest in the Scrutiny arena.

At the last meeting of the Performance and Finance Select Committee on 16th November 2004, Members received a presentation on the Parking Account, the Annual Complaints Report and an update on the performance of the Benefits Service. There was also a progress update about the work of the Onyx Task Group, an item on Social Services Funding and the 2004/05 Capital Programme Budget Monitoring Report .

The Forward Plan Select Committee met on 26th October and 17th November 2004. At these meetings Members received briefing notes on issues such as the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of Drugs Audit, One Stop Shop Annual Performance Report, Paul Daisley Hall Charges Increases, Civic Centre Project, Copland School-Sale of Land, Revised Park Strategy for Brent 2004/06, the Public Toilet Strategy and the Adoption and Permanency Policy. As always, the relevant Lead Members and officers had been requested to attend these meetings and respond to Members' questioning. It is worth noting that arising from the Select Committee's interest in the Draft Air Quality Action Plan over recent months; a request has been submitted by the Lead Member for Environment and Planning for Scrutiny to investigate air quality problems around Neasden Waste Depot. This request will be formally considered by the Management Board on 1st December 2004, however it is anticipated that the issues will be considered by the Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 19th January 2005. The outcome of the proposed discussions will be fed back to the Executive thereafter and to all Councillors via a future Chair's report.

As I'd previously advised in my last report, a joint meeting of the Social Care Scrutiny Panel and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel took place on 9th November 2004, to enable Members to consider the Children Bill. As you are all aware, the Children Bill will have far ranging implications for the Council so this meeting was an important step in keeping Members abreast of the proposed legislation, the implementation process and the far-ranging implications for Brent. This meeting was well attended by Members from all

parties and following interesting presentations from the Director of Social Services and the Chief Executive, Members posed a number of questions about the Children's Commissioner, how the proposed reorganisation would be managed, the mechanisms and systems in place to cope successfully with the move towards integrated services and the implications for Adult Services and Community Care. Given the timescales for implementation of the Bill, it has been agreed that a further joint meeting of the Panels should take place in early February to provide Members with a further update about the local approach to implementation. This meeting will be advertised in advance and all Members of the Council will be welcome to attend the meeting to raise awareness about this important issue.

The special meeting of the Social Care Panel is expected to take place in mid-December 2004 to allow Panel Members to consider those items that are on the work programme. As you know, the previously scheduled meeting on 9th November had been postponed to enable the joint meeting of the Lifelong Learning and Social Care Scrutiny Panels to take place on this date.

As mentioned above, the Management Board will meet on 1st December 2004 to consider the work programmes of the Panels and Select Committees and to receive updates on all current task group activities. It is some time since the last Board meeting so there will also be a discussion about future task group activities, the outcome of the joint Lifelong Learning and Social Care Scrutiny Panels, the ACF/SUCF progress report (October 2004) and consideration of all requests for items to be placed on the Scrutiny agenda. Members of the Board will also consider a petition concerning road cleaning and street management in the Church End Estate, and the request submitted by the Lead Member for Environment and Planning, as mentioned above. It is anticipated that both issues will be considered by the Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel in January. Following agreement by Full Council at its last meeting on 25th October, the Board will also consider a request for Scrutiny to look at Parking Enforcement issues in the Borough.

With regards to Member development and training, a Member visit to the GLA has been organised by Adam Pokun (Mayor's Office and Member Development Manager) with the help of the GLA Member for Brent and Harrow, Councillor R Blackman and will take place on Tuesday, 30th November 2004. The visit will enable Scrutiny Members to watch a meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee. Members will then meet with GLA members/officers to discuss the work of the GLA and the role and influence of Scrutiny. As with previous visits that have taken place, I am sure the event will provide a valuable opportunity for Members to hear about the role of scrutiny in other arenas; the outcomes and the challenges. I will of course provide information about this visit in my next update to Full Council in January 2005 along with full details about all scrutiny activities that are underway.

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