

SUMMONS ITEM 8(c)

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

FULL COUNCIL – 18th APRIL 2005

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It has been some time since my last report to Full Council about the work being undertaken by the various scrutiny sub-committees so I am happy to provide a brief update for Members about the different activities that have been underway.

With regards to scrutiny task group activities, the Empty Properties Strategy Task Group is still gathering evidence as part of its investigations. Following some delays the final report is not now anticipated before May 2005. The final report of the Joint Commissioning Strategy (Intermediate Care Provision) Task Group was endorsed by the Social Care Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 16th March 2005. This report will be considered by the Executive in due course. At its meeting on 16th March 2005, the Social Care Scrutiny Panel discussed future task group activities and it was agreed that a scoping exercise be undertaken for the establishment of a task group to consider elderly residents' accessibility of sport and recreation in Brent. This task group will commence its investigations early in the new municipal year.

A briefing report on the report of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, 'School Governors; Maximising their contribution' will be considered by the Executive on 12th April 2005. This report provides officer comments on the recommendations of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel's final report and also gives an update on recommendations implemented so far, and additional information on the legal, financial and diversity implications of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny report.

The Building Schools for the Future Task Group is yet to commence its investigations as a result of staffing limitations in recent months. However, it is anticipated that investigations will commence early in the new municipal year.

A number of meetings of the different scrutiny sub-committees have taken place since my last report. As always, the Forward Plan Select Committee has met regularly and considered issues such as the Annual Workforce Monitoring report, the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, Award of Parking Contracts, Environment Capital Spend and the Youth and Community Centres Update.

A second joint meeting of the Lifelong Learning and Social Care Scrutiny Panels took place on 8th February 2005 to enable Members to further consider issues

arising from Children Bill. Feedback from this meeting has been positive and Members have commented on the benefits of holding such joint meetings in order to share and debate important information.

A joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees took place on 22nd February 2005 as part of the annual budget setting process. This meeting was well attended and a number of Lead Members were present to respond to questions from the Committee Members. Feedback about the meeting and the changes to the budget scrutiny arrangements has been positive.

A special meeting of the Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel took place on 1st March 2005 to enable an in depth, one-off investigation into issues around Neasden Goods Yard. Following a referral from the Lead Member for Environment and Planning, this meeting was arranged so that representatives from the Environment Agency and the Council could meet with Members and identify a suitable way forward for dealing with problems at the site. Representatives from the Environment Agency attended the meeting as did I and the Lead Member for Environment and Planning. It proved to be a very useful meeting with a good discussion regarding the various nuisance problems at the site, the action that has been taken to date and suggestions about how to progress the matter in the future. Consequently, the Panel formulated a number of recommendations. The Panel will receive an update on this item at its next meeting

The Lifelong Learning and Social Care Scrutiny Panels have also met in recent months and considered a range of issues. The Social Care Scrutiny Panel will hold its final meeting of the year on 12th April 2005, at which time it will complete its 2004/05 work programme. Any outstanding items on the remaining work programmes will, where necessary, be rolled over into 2005/06.

The Scrutiny Committee met on 7th April 2005, at which time Members reviewed the work that had been undertaken by the different scrutiny sub-committees over the course of 2004/05. The work programmes of each of the sub-committees were assessed, outstanding items on the scrutiny agenda considered and verbal updates presented by each of the Scrutiny Chairs. There was also a detailed discussion on suggested areas for improvement in 2005/06 regarding the scrutiny function in Brent. Members raised a number of issues that will be incorporated in the Annual Scrutiny Report 2004/05, which will be published in June/July 2005.

Councillor T Taylor
Chair, Scrutiny Committee.