

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

FULL COUNCIL – 22ND JANUARY 2007

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This is my third report to Full Council, and I am pleased to be able to update members on the valuable work that has been carried out in the area of overview and scrutiny since my last report.

The work of the Budget Panel continues at a pace, with three meetings having taken place since my last update. Members have been briefed on the budget issues affecting a number of individual service areas, and the Deputy Leader of the Council has attended meetings to respond to questions on the Capital Programme, and the measures the administration plan take to bridge the budget gap. The current PCT financial difficulties have also been highlighted as a significant area of concern for the Council's budget process.

The Panel have now produced an interim report, which will be presented to administration members with the aim of influencing the development of their draft budget. By the next meeting of the Panel at the start of February, the draft budget will have been published, and Panel members will have the opportunity to question the Deputy Leader of the Council (Lead Member for Finance & Resources) on this document. The Panel's conclusions will then be brought before the Executive when it considers the draft budget at its meeting on 12th February 2007.

The potential impact of the current financial problems facing the PCT has also been a key issue of concern for the Health Select Committee. PCT representatives, including the new interim Chief Executive, Nigel Webb, attended the Committee's December meeting to present an update on this situation. However, given the level of concern regarding the proposed cuts, the Select Committee decided that the formal scrutiny process should be taken forward through the establishment of a task group.

The first meeting of the PCT task group took place on 9th January and was well attended by partner agencies and members of the public. A series of meetings will now take place over the coming month, at which the PCT Turnaround will be examined in greater depth. The PCT will be given the opportunity to make further representations, and evidence will be taken from those within the healthy economy who will be affected by the cuts. The findings will then be reported back to the next meeting of Health Select Committee and, subsequently, Full Council.

The main Overview and Scrutiny Committee also met before Christmas. The membership of the task groups on Tourism and the Voluntary Sector were agreed. Members also agreed a number of changes to the work programme for the year, including a request that the Head of IT attend the next meeting to

present the Corporate IT Strategy submitted to the Executive. As part of the work of co-ordinating the work of overview and scrutiny a report has also been requested from the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work in relation to Looked after Children.

The Forward Plan Select Committee has met twice since my last update to Full Council. The decisions taken on Residents' Parking Permits were called-in at the November meeting. At the request of the Committee, the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation, the Assistant Director of Environment and Culture (Streets and Transportation) and the Director of Transportation attended to update and answer questions Members had on the item. The Select Committee was satisfied with the information it received and had no comments to pass back to the Executive. At the December meeting the Select Committee received briefings on a number of items, including the Regeneration Action Plan. The Select Committee expressed concern that the Plan was under funded and requested that this view be noted by the Executive.

Finally, a special meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee was arranged in November following the decisions on the report "*A Strategy for the Development of Primary and Secondary Schools – Options for Delivering Additional School Places*" being called in. The Committee agreed that in addition to expanding existing schools there was a need for a new school in the borough and requested that the Executive give greater consideration to the Wembley Park (Bridge Road) site for the location of an Academy. The Executive have taken note of the views of the Committee and this matter is under further consideration by the Executive. The outcome of its further deliberations will be known by the time of the Council meeting.

**Councillor Dorman Long,
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**