

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**Full Council – 8th September 2008****Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Since my last report to the Council in June, there have been a number of issues that Overview and Scrutiny has been investigating.

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that has taken place since my last report, the Leader of the Council was asked to attend to provide an update on the Administration's priorities for the year ahead and thereby help develop the relationship between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Lorber outlined the four key themes for the Administration; crime and community safety, regeneration, young people and sustainability. Councillor Lorber stated that the underlying key message he wanted to get across was that the Council was embarking on a major improvement programme. The Council had been consistently recognised as a good council rated as having excellent prospects but it was time to challenge the authority to reach a level of excellence. Members of the committee question the Leader on issues relating to regeneration of the North Circular Road area, improving the lives of people, looked after children, extended schools, the fear of crime, the provision of new library facilities and recycling. As a way of keeping track with how the Council was performing in these and other areas, the Committee asked the Leader to come back in 6 months time to report on the progress of achieving the stated aims of the Administration. The Leader indicated he would be happy to do this and was thanked for his attendance.

The Committee considered the first annual report on the work of Partners for Brent, Brent's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The report set out the partnership's achievements and developments during 2006-7 and 2007-8 and the Leader of the Council was invited to comment on the report. In concluding the discussion, the Chair suggested that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee might want to take a closer look at the outcomes of the young people's partnership. It was agreed that any progress on this and other priority areas for the LSP could be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time. In the meantime Members felt it was a matter of concern that the target on smoking cessation would not be met and consequently would lose the Council some funding.

The final report of the task group on increasing participation in sport through sports clubs was put before the committee and the chair of the task group, Councillor Mrs Fernandes presented the recommendations which were agreed and forwarded to the Executive.

The Budget Panel had recommended in its final report for 2007/8 that the further provision of recycling facilities should be considered alongside the introduction of compulsory waste recycling as a way of increasing recycling rates and reducing waste going to land-fill. The committee considered this matter and agreed to ask Councillors Clues, HB Patel and Thomas to consider best practice in other boroughs in providing recycling facilities on housing estates, houses in multiple occupation, flats above shops etc and asked that a scope for this piece of work be drawn up and presented to the members named.

The Committee received the annual report of Overview and Scrutiny for 2007/08. This is a very full report which reflects the work of all of the committees/sub-committees within Brent's overview and scrutiny structure.

There have been three meetings of the Forward Plan Select Committee since the last update. At the meeting of 2nd July, Members discussed an Executive decision that had been called in concerning *Authority to Tender Contract for Insurance for Public Liability and Property Insurance*. In noting the decisions of the Executive, Members sought clarity concerning the need for urgent powers to renew motor insurance cover and subsequently its requirement to be approved by the Executive. The Select Committee also sought further details concerning the court judgment in respect of the Council's participation in London Authorities Mutual Ltd. Controlled Parking Zones was another item under discussion at this meeting, where views were sought with regard to future pricing policy on this issue.

At the meeting of the Select Committee on 30th July, the Select Committee discussed three further call-ins:

- **Service Improvement – Proposed Structural Changes**
Members discussed staff sickness levels, staff satisfaction levels and also progress on the new Civic Centre, including the consultation that had been undertaken with staff on this.
- **Modernising Transport – Authority to Award Contract for the Implementation of Phase 2 of the Transport Review**
Members discussed the criteria for pupils with Special Educational Needs qualifying for transport provision to and from school, projections for the level of savings that could be made through working with the Primary Care Trust and the effect of the proposed changes on the size of Brent Transport Service's fleet.
- **Authority to Tender Contract for the Provision of Passenger Transport**
Members raised concern about the checks carried out on the escorts who were to accompany the service user when using the taxi service.

No recommendations to the Executive were made on these call-ins.

The Forward Plan Select Committee had also discussed the *Domestic Vehicle Crossing Policy* at recent meetings. On the meeting of the 2nd July, Members discussed the draft policy being presented to Area Consultative Forums and enforcement issues with regard to vehicle overhangs. At the last meeting on 20th August, the Select Committee requested that the Executive carefully considers how enforcement will be undertaken in view of the resources available.

The Performance and Finance Select Committee has met once since the last report and considered an update on the performance of the waste management contract. Members asked what steps were being undertaken to prevent contamination that had been affecting recycling performance, particularly with regard to 'wet' recycling, and also sought an explanation of incidences where missed refuse collections had arisen. An update on the select committee's task group on *Asset Management* was also discussed and Members considered how they would use the information that had been obtained. During discussion of another item on *Property Asset Disposals*, Members requested further information on the potential to raise revenue. Members also considered the Performance and Finance Review (Quarter 4) and Outturn 2007/2008 and the Brent Local Area Agreement 2007/2008. The Select Committee considered areas that were currently underperforming and it was requested that the issue of tackling graffiti be considered at the meeting in November.

The Budget Panel has met for the first time this financial year to consider the process for setting the budget for 2009/10 and the budget pressures over the medium term. This was the same report that had been considered at the meeting of the Executive on 14th July 2008. The Panel was informed that the intention was to get the main features of the 2010/11 budget provisionally agreed also. By extending budget planning from only being a one year process it is hoped that this will allow better planning as some saving measures often take longer than just one year to deliver. Measures being considered to reduce the budget gap were also presented. The Panel noted that recycling offered a potentially significant saving to the Council. The Panel was informed that provision for service priority growth would be directed to delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources informed the Panel that as a result of the success of the first LAA the Council was likely to be awarded around £8 million of Performance Reward Grant. The Panel enquired about the potential for increased income from additional Council Tax from the increased number of residential units being built in the borough but it was pointed out that this had to be balanced against the consequent increase in demand for Council services. The Panel will at a future meeting be considering the issue of fees and charges. Information on the budget pressures in Adult Social Care was received and the Director of Housing and Community Care attended the meeting to explain this and the effects of the transformation programme underway in this area. It was noted that at the next meeting in October an officer and hopefully a member from Hammersmith & Fulham would be attending to give a comparative view on budget processes in other Councils.

The Health Select Committee met in July when it considered Brent's Draft Health and Well-Being Strategy for 2008-2018. This had been produced in close collaboration with the Brent tPCT as well as a range of service areas across the Council. The Chair of Brent tPCT Public and Patient Involvement Forum was present at the meeting and welcomed the planned cycle of two-yearly reviews and sought further information on the ways in which the needs of all members of the community would be addressed in the strategy. It was explained that the strategy recognised the importance of working with all members of the community to highlight the importance of preventative action; specifically support and empowerment to ensure the good health of individuals, rather than a focus on treatment of ill-health alone. The select committee noted that the strategy was to be presented to the Board of the Brent Primary Care Trust on 24th July 2008, and to the Executive of the Brent Local Strategy Partnership on 30th July 2008. The select committee also noted that the current health and well-being action plan only covered 2008-10 of a ten year period for the main strategy. Most of the items it contained were existing projects or services that were consistent with the aims and vision of the overarching strategy and were designed to deliver

the health and well-being objectives within the recently agreed Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008-2011. The Council and its partners would need to develop future programmes of work focused on reducing health inequalities and promoting well-being as part of its ongoing service planning and partnership activities.

The select committee considered the future of the Burnley Road GP surgery. Residents in the Dudden Hill area were concerned that the surgery, which was closed in 2002, would not be re-opened as had originally been intended. Access to other health sites in the area had been problematic for some residents, exacerbated by the re-routing of the 226 bus whilst Thames Water worked on Anson Road. The Chief Executive of Brent tPCT was present to hear the concerns raised. He advised that he had been present at a recent public meeting to discuss the Burnley Road practice, which had been well attended by both residents and staff. He explained that the practice, which was now located in the Willesden area, was well-attended in its current location and the prospect of re-location had not been well received by a majority of people at the meeting. In the circumstances the select committee agreed that a task group be formed to consider access to health sites in the borough and that the issue of the Burnley Road surgery be included in the task group's terms of reference.

Jo Weallans from Community Investors Development Agency (CIDA) provided a presentation to members of the select committee on the work conducted by CIDA towards the establishment of a Local Involvement Network (LINK) in Brent. The select committee heard that CIDA was in the process of facilitating a smooth transition from Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPIF) to LINKs, and that a substantive LINK host would be in place by 1st October 2008. The select committee heard about plans to enable wider participation in Brent LINK, which included building strong networks of local groups with robust consultation and communication, and maintaining a dialogue with the Council and partner agencies. It was agreed that a work protocol should be established in the near future, and that the select committee should take an active role in monitoring the work generated by the LINK. It was agreed that the appointment of an elected member champion for the LINK should be considered at the next meeting of the select committee.

The Director of Strategic Commissioning at Brent tPCT gave a presentation on the Brent tPCT Strategic Plan which set out goals for improving health and reducing inequalities in the borough. The Plan also linked with the implementation of the Healthcare for London proposals.