

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**Full Council – 24th November 2008****Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

As I reported to Council on 24th October 2008, the Health Select Committee considered the results of the 2007/08 National Patient Satisfaction survey on GP access. Tessa Sandall (Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning, Brent NHS) was present at the meeting and advised that there had been a 29% response rate in Brent, which was below the national and London average and 2% lower than Brent's response rate from 2006/2007. After having questioned Ms Sandwell on the outcomes of the survey the select committee gave notice that it would want to consider this issue further at a future meeting. The select committee heard from Sarah Curtis (GP Led Health Centre Project Manager, Brent NHS) on NHS Brent's plans for a GP led health centre. It was noted that a Health Needs Assessment had identified the Wembley Centre for Health and Care as the favoured location of a GP Led Health Centre. Helen McGovern (Chair of Brent Medical Committee) was present and questioned the impact of an increasing population in Brent. Mark Easton (Chief Executive, Brent NHS) was also present and the select committee heard that a significant proportion of GPs in Wembley were approaching retirement age and therefore it was essential that steps were taken to ensure the area was sufficiently staffed. An area of land has been reserved in the vicinity of Wembley Stadium which will present a good opportunity to improve access to health care for Wembley residents.

The select committee also considered the North West London Acute Strategy and the NHS Brent Strategic Plan. The outcome of the review of Willesden Centre for Health and Care which had been undertaken in light of a couple of unfortunate incidents and concerns about staffing levels was considered. The review had recommended that 19 new staff be recruited and efficiency levels improved through the Centre taking a more proactive role. The select committee was advised that Monks Park Health Centre, which offered a wide range of services, was being under-utilised and there was a need to provide more community services.

A special meeting of the select committee is due to meet on 19th November 2008 at Northwick Park hospital to consider topics including the North West London NHS Hospital Trust's finances and ward cleanliness and infection control.

The Budget Panel has again met and questioned the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the situation surrounding the Council's deposits of £15m in two Icelandic banks. After a discussion on the possibility of offering members more

of an opportunity to scrutinise such investments by the Council, it recommended that the next meeting of the Audit Committee should consider how best to do this. After discussing the Council's proposal to commission an independent review of its investment strategy and the associated internal control systems, it was recommended that the Council await the outcome of the review being carried out by the LGA and Audit Commission before going ahead with its own review. It was also agreed that the outcome of the LGA/Audit Commission review should be considered by the Audit Committee. Members will recall that this matter was further debated at the last meeting of Full Council.

The Budget Panel noted the proposal to develop the Schools Capital Programme over a 10-year – as opposed to a four-year – period, as well as separating out major elements of the programme such as the Primary Capital Programme and Building Schools for the Future, and combining resources available to schools with mainstream Council resources and developer contributions.

The panel was informed of the need to review assumptions made in the medium-term financial strategy in line with the steeper than expected deterioration of the economic and financial situation and it considered the policy on setting fees and charges.

The panel is again due to meet on 13th November 2008 when it will consider which aspects of the corporate budgets it would like to follow up as part of its scrutiny of the 2009/10 budget process and the Leader will be attending to answer questions arising from consideration of the first reading of the 2009/10 budget, which is also presented to this meeting of Full Council.

The Performance and Finance Select Committee has met and considered the performance of the Council's waste contract with specific reference to recycling, street cleansing, missed collections and complaints. The select committee was informed that the recycling initiative has had a marked effect on the level of recycling, with an increase of 500 tonnes in recycled waste collected up to the end of September compared with the same period the previous year. The select committee was also informed that there had been a significant increase in the amount of organic waste and a corresponding reduction – of over 5,000 tonnes – in the amount of waste sent to landfill sites. Up to the end of September 2008 the average level of recycled waste was just under the whole-year target of 30%, and the level for September itself was over 35%. The select committee questioned the Council's Director of Streetcare on progress on developing an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission's inspection of the Council's waste management service.

The select committee heard how the Council and its partners are tackling vandalism relating to graffiti and tagging. It was informed about the implementation of the Adult Social Care Transformation and the Adult Social Care budget for 2008/09. The select committee considered the second of a series of reports on the Council's policy on leasing Council-owned buildings to community organisations that would culminate in a report to the select committee in March 2009. The select committee also heard from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the situation concerning the Council's deposits of £15m with two Icelandic banks. It was informed of the

views of the Budget Panel and it agreed to receive a report at its next meeting on the possible role of the Audit Committee, Budget Panel and Performance and Finance Select Committee in scrutinising the Council's investment strategy. It was also hoped the Council's advisors would be able to attend this meeting.

The select committee considered the Council's 2007/08 end-of-year performance, measured against the national set of Best Value Performance Indicators. Members were informed that this would be the last year in which performance would be measured in this way, as future performance would be measured against Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. The select committee was informed about the Council's spending, activity and performance in the first quarter of the 2008/09 financial year. Generally performance against the corporate strategy was good, with 57% of measures on target.

The Forward Plan Select Committee has met once since the last report. The Select Committee was updated on arrangements with regard to the Delegation of Anti-Social Behaviour Order Functions to Brent Housing Partnership and heard that discussions were due to take place with regard to the role of the Community Safety Team. Members heard from the Lead Member and Lead Officer in respect of the North Circular Road Regeneration Area. The Council had a vision to improve facilities over a period of time in the North Circular Road area and a 2 stage consultation with residents was planned, with the first stage already completed. Members noted that there were no details of specific plans at this stage although a number of ideas were under consideration. The Select Committee also heard from the Lead Member and Lead Officer with regard to the Strategic Review of Sports Centres in Brent and proposals were due to go the November meeting of the Executive. The Climate Change Strategy was discussed and it was noted that the consultation was to be extended at the request of Members, following concerns raised by a number of local businesses. The Select Committee also agreed to request that members of the Executive be briefed with regard to the role of scrutiny committees and their functions.