

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT****Full Council – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009****Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once since my last report and the Neighbourhood Working Manager the Committee on the operation of Neighbourhood Working. The Committee is to receive a report in 3-6 months on members' engagement, commitment and satisfaction with the process, and new ways of involving residents.

The Committee also considered aspects of performance relating to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), or Registered Providers (RPs), operating in Brent. Officers have worked with RSLs and partner boroughs in the West London sub-region to develop a performance management framework and reporting methodology. The agreed framework had been rolled out to the Council's Joint Commissioning preferred partners and Brent Housing Partnership. Additional detailed monitoring of BHP was done outside of this framework. The committee heard from the Chief Executives of Paddington Churches Housing Association and Stadium Housing Association. Although resources had not been made available to continue the Brent Social Housing Tenants Forum, members were informed that officers were reviewing how the forum could be revived. Information is to be brought to the Committee in future from London and Quadrant Housing Association, together with performance comparisons of Registered Social Landlords in Brent and elsewhere, and feedback from estates such as Stonebridge, Church End and Chalkhill which had transferred from Council ownership.

A final report on access to health sites by public transport, already considered by the Health Select Committee, is to be passed to the Council's Executive for approval, before being sent to other organisations.

The next meeting of the Committee will discuss IT support to Members. The Committee also agreed to set up a task group on support services for women exiting prostitution. This arose following the issue of prostitutes' health and exiting strategies being raised with Brent's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and partners.

As reported last time the Budget Panel met shortly before the last meeting of Council and considered the financial issues forming the background to the debate on the first reading of the 2009/10 budget that took place on 24 November. At the same meeting the Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs updated the Panel on the situation regarding the Council's deposits held in Icelandic Banks. Formal complaints have been lodged with administrators. The provisional local government settlement has included a special provision where any

losses suffered will not be charged to the 2008/09 or 2009/10 budgets, but rather in 2010/11. The Panel was informed that the Performance and Finance Select Committee was keen to have a monitoring role in future Council investments, which would be in addition to the Panel's recommendation that the Audit Committee have a role in monitoring control over investments.

The Panel having asked for further information be presented to it on trading units in general and, in particular, legal services, communications and consultation, the People Centre, and trading with schools, considered this at its most recent meeting..

The Panel has over its last two meetings considered the budget positions of the Council's three service areas: Environment and Culture, Children and Families and Housing and Community Care.

The Panel has been briefed on the Government's consultation on changing the methodology of the Working Neighbourhood Fund Grant which as previously reported is likely to mean that Brent would receive £4.4M as opposed to £8M over the 3 year period with the consequence that Brent In2 Work would be severely impacted. The Panel noted that MPs and Ministers were being lobbied to support the Council's position.

The Health Select Committee heard from Fiona Wise (Chief Executive, North West London NHS Hospitals Trust) on the Trust's financial position and was informed that the savings plan for the current year was challenging, but the deficit of £5.9M had been reduced to £5.1M. The North West London Health Trust was determined to break even and in future close any budget gap by making recurring savings. NHS Brent had given the Trust a one-off grant of £6M to ease the Trust's financial problems, but with conditions to be met. Fiona Wise answered questions over the difficulties faced by the Trust in making savings. As part of Brent's Acute Services Review, Brent and Harrow PCT are to consider the balance between community and hospital care with consultants appointed to produce a discussion document by March 2009. Fiona Wise informed members that another issue for the future would be how to rebuild or replace current buildings. Asked about the review of stroke and trauma services, the committee heard that these were currently the subject of a comprehensive bidding process, the outcome of which would be of strategic importance to the Trust. The Committee asked that Fiona Wise present an update on the Trust's financial position to at its February 2009 meeting.

The Select Committee heard from Elizabeth Robb (Director of Nursing, North West London NHS Hospitals Trust) on the incidence and trends of MRSA and Clostridium Difficile over the past year. The Trust has no jurisdiction over care homes but incidences of MRSA and Clostridium Difficile were reported to the Health Promotion Agency and the homes were asked to work with the PCT to reduce infection levels. The Committee commended the Trust on the successes achieved and improvements made.

The Select Committee again heard from Fiona Wise (Chief Executive, North West London NHS Hospitals Trust) this time on the independent review of maternity services at Northwick Park Hospital. As part of the action plan the Trust has developed in response to the findings and recommendations of the review. This includes the closer monitoring of women at risk and increasing the number of mid-wives. In answer questions, Fiona Wise informed members that the biggest challenge in the action plan was to rid the hospital of the stigma caused by the bad publicity around the issue of the maternal deaths. Around one-

third of the extra 20 midwives had already been recruited and, while the Trust had had more success than other trusts, it was difficult to recruit experienced midwives, especially in London. The Committee resolved to monitor the take up of maternity services at Northwich Park Hospital.

The Select Committee has considered the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check for 2007/08 which had assessed the Trust as fair for service quality and use of resources, and consequently was classified as underperforming under terms of the NHS London Performance Regime relating to finance. An action plan has been drawn up to ensure compliance with the Health Check care standards for 2008/09. The Committee will be further considering the health check at its next meeting in April 2009.

As mentioned above, the recommendations of the joint Overview & Scrutiny and Health Select Committee task group on public transport access to health sites subject were presented to the Health Select Committee's meeting in December. The recommendations were agreed subject to minor amendment.

Helen Bedser (Head of Performance and Development, Hestia Housing and Support) briefed the Select Committee on Hestia's role as Brent LINK's permanent host. It had been appointed with effect from 1 December 2008 following a competitive procurement process, and the contract was due to run until 31 March 2011. A formal launch is to take place in 2009. The Committee will be receiving an update on the work of the LINK in April 2009.

The Select Committee was briefed by Jo Ohlson (Director of Primary Care Commissioning, NHS Brent) on progress with the Primary and Community Care Strategy and the issue of whether to launch formal consultation exercise at this stage. It heard that proposals were expected to be ready in January 2009 around a common service specification for every GP practice, with a proposed network of services in each cluster. The Committee agreed to support NHS Brent's proposal to issue a discussion document on the Primary and Community Care Strategy in January 2009, on the assumption that there would be 3 public meetings and the involvement of Area Consultative Forums.

The Select Committee was informed of the development of an Urgent Care centre at Central Middlesex Hospital, and that consultations were taking place with stakeholders including the public. The issue is to be discussed at the Brent NHS Board in January or March 2009 after which it will be considered by the Health Select Committee after this meeting.

Dr Jim Connelly (Director of Public Health, NHS Brent) presented a report to the Select Committee on the results of NHS Brent's Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check for 2007/08. The trust had been assessed as weak in relation to both quality of services and use of resources, and an action plan was drawn up to ensure that the trust complied with the Health Check core standards for 2008/09. Members heard that the situation had now been turned round with compliance in all standards expected by the end of the current financial year.

The Select Committee has considered the progress of performance on LAA health priorities. Members agreed that prior scrutiny work carried out on relevant LAA targets should be reviewed and further updates presented every 6 months, and that a report on a new intermediate care strategy should be brought to its meeting in February 2009,

The Select Committee has received an update on the Stroke and Trauma Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee which the Council agreed to be part of at its last meeting. Service consultation documents are expected to be released later in the year.

In considering its work programme, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that in March it would receive a report on children's safeguarding in light of the Haringey child protection case.

The Committee received the final report of the Healthy Relationships task group, set up in response to a recommendation from the Brent Youth Parliament, to consider how to involve parents and faith groups in talking to young people about sex and relationships. The task group had considered evidence from a wide range and its report would be submitted to the Executive in due course.

The Committee was updated on primary and secondary school places. It heard that local authorities worked to a planning margin of surplus capacity in order to allow for parental choice and sudden increases in pupil numbers. Brent worked to a tight margin of 5%, but was not always able to achieve this. The Council had expanded provision significantly in the past few years, but it had reached the limit of possible expansion using its own resources, so further expansion was now dependent on new funding streams, such as Building Schools for the Future (BSF). A report on the £80M BSF bid will be provided to the Committee when further information is available.

The BSF is expected to provide a major opportunity to improve Special Education Needs (SEN) provision in the secondary sector. SEN services are to be subject to an improvement and efficiency review in 2009, and breakdown of SEN data by gender and ethnicity is to be provided to the Committee.

Having considered a report on progress in addressing concerns about the lack of youth facilities and activities in the North Kilburn area, the Committee agreed to support the work of the North Kilburn Partnership.

The Forward Plan Select Committee in December considered three call-ins. The first being on the controlled parking zones programme, another on the review of sports facilities in Brent and on the Council's travel plan. Having discussed the decisions taken by the Executive at some length with the lead members and officers the decisions of the Executive were noted.

The Select Committee considered the Executive's decisions on St Augustine's High School BSF Programme: Shared Community Use of New Sports Hall Facility (Provision of New Community Sports Hall in South Kilburn) and has forwarded its views to the Executive.

The Performance & Finance Select Committee was briefed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the position of the Council's deposits with two Icelandic Banks. It heard from Butlers, a firm appointed two years ago to advise on the Council's overall financial position. The general view was that the Icelandic banking collapse could not have been foreseen and that there had been an over reliance on credit rating agencies. Butlers was encouraged by the Committee to persuade credit rating agencies to review how they produced ratings and information sources.

The Select Committee considered the waste contract performance. It was informed that the Council aimed to recycle 40% of its waste by 2012, whilst Veolia's target for 2010 was 30%. It was recommended that Supermarkets be pressured into reducing packaging. A further waste contract performance update will be presented to the Select Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

The Corporate Complaints Manager reported a decrease in complaints from previous year to its lowest in 10 years. The Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter had similarly been positive and no formal complaint had been issued against the Council.

The work of the asset management task group was considered and it was noted that work on asset transfers in response to the Quirk Report was to be undertaken. The select committee heard that the Council was continuing to work with the Brent Association for Voluntary Action with regard to the possibility of setting up a Voluntary Resource Centre. A task group meeting is required in 2009, the date of which is to be determined and volunteers sought for this meeting.

On considering the Performance and Finance Review 2008/2009, Quarter 2 the Select Committee noted that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment February 2009 refresh score was on target to achieve a 3 star rating. The Council however continues to lobby the Audit Commission for a revision of its methodology used to assess library and museum visits. LAA agreements affected by the economic downturn such as housing and employment were also being negotiated with a view to their re-assessment. Members were informed that Council focus was now on the Comprehensive Area Assessment that was to replace the CPA in 2009.