

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor D Long (Chair), and Councillors Dunn (for Councillor Clues), Detre, Fox, Leaman, Mendoza and Sneddon.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clues and Thomas.

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were none.

**2. Minutes of Last Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**3. Matters Arising**

Members received information about the strength of each Safer Neighbourhood Team, which was requested at the last meeting.

**4. Appointments to sub-committees**

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that Councillor Jackson replace Councillor Dunn on the Health Select Committee, with immediate effect;
- (ii) that Councillor Shaw be appointed as first alternate to Councillor Jackson on the Health Select Committee; and
- (iii) that Councillor Dunn be appointed as second alternate to Councillor Jackson on the Health Select Committee.

**5. Deputations**

There were none.

**6. IT Services – IT Strategy 2006-2010**

Members received a PowerPoint presentation on the IT Strategy from Tony Ellis (Head of IT). He stated that figures on the resources available for IT in other London boroughs showed Brent operated with a relatively small IT team with lower than average financial investment.

Tony Ellis advised members on the background and the key directions of the IT Strategy over the next 4 years. The strategy would improve levels of support to all service units through the adoption of standard methods of IT service management and a greater emphasis on performance management. This would result in improved delivery, availability and reliability of IT services. The integration of customer data would provide a unified view of the citizen and business to all service units and front line customer services, which would result in significant improvements in customer service and cost savings across the council. For the first time, services would be configured around the needs and requirements of the resident. Data quality and data sharing would be addressed as part of the Information Management strategy. The strategy would also increase the role for employing IT in business transformation to realise potential efficiency savings.

It was noted that a greater emphasis on using IT to assist the efficiency and effectiveness of everyday working practices would improve email/collaboration services, greater use of workflow and the development of mobile and remote working. The availability of high capacity broadband and wireless facilities would free staff from being tied to specific work locations and would allow flexibility in working patterns and office accommodation.

With regard to residents, Tony Ellis explained that they would be able to access information on services provided to them, which would transform online contact with the public and move from simple information provision to fully transactional and interactive services. This would develop a more cost effective means of service delivery. However, the take-up of the services would need to be encouraged and the public would need to have the appropriate skills to make use of them. It was envisaged that the provision of a faster and more "personalised" service provision would have a direct impact on the perception of and satisfaction with the performance of the council.

Members noted that Brent would enhance relationships and improve customer services by providing an up to date, effective, resilient and secure IT infrastructure, which would enable shared services, secure electronic communications with partner organisations, such as central government departments, the NHS and London Partners. The Green IT Agenda would also reduce the environmental impact of the use of IT in the council.

Members were informed that Lotus Notes would be replaced with Microsoft Exchange 2007 (MS Exchange). The advantage of MS Exchange was that it could save the council £100,000 and would allow staff to gain access to information around the council. Overall, the strategy superseded the previous IT and e-Government strategies and was intended to meet the requirements of the council's Corporate Strategy, the service area departmental IT Strategies, Central Government's Transformational Government Strategy, the Varney Report and ongoing technical developments in information technology.

The Chair enquired whether officers had taken into consideration residents who did not have access to computers and feared technology. In reply, Tony Ellis explained that residents without computers still benefited from IT

development as queries could be made over the phone, at one-stop-shops and through digital television. The change of structure would allow a more efficient service, as shared services would allow any member of staff to answer queries, instead of the customer being passed from department to department.

Members enquired when the implementation of MS Exchange 2007 would take place and asked whether it would include the live communication system, an explanation on Transactional Services and officers' vision of shared services. In response, members were advised that MS Exchange would take over Lotus Notes in October 2007; part of the implementation included instant messaging. Transactional Services provided a variety of ways to access a service, such as online, telephone, digital TV and shared services would allow connection with key partners of the council, such as the NHS, Police and central government departments.

Members raised questions on the strength of the security of the new technology. In response, Tony Ellis advised that because extra resources would be given to boost security, the threat to security would decrease. It was also noted that Government standards and external audit demand that councils' have a certain level of IT security when in operation. These standards would run parallel to Brent's own system. Members commented that although full of useful information, Brent's current website could be difficult to navigate; access to some information was difficult and names of old employees who had left the council were still on the website. In reply, it was accepted that there was a backlog on removing references to old employees but this was being dealt with. It was also noted that with MS Exchange accounts that became non-active after six weeks would be automatically deleted.

Members enquired why officers had not chosen less expensive software like open-source. Tony Ellis explained that these packages were in reality expensive as they required specialist staff to develop the programmes. In contrast MS Exchange costs £90 per user, which included everything from the licence to training.

Lastly, members enquired why wireless networking had not been included in the strategy. In response, members noted that at present there was no financial justification for wireless networking. There had been an intention to work with the West London Authority on this and less networking might be in the next IT strategy.

The cost implications were great and there would be a limited amount of security. Other councils had implemented wireless networking and Brent would aim to implement it in the future.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny committee are taken on board when implementing the IT strategy; and
- (ii) that the head of IT reports back to provide an update on the implementation of the IT strategy at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**7. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)**

Members were given a presentation by Martin Gormlie (Senior Community Safety Officer) and Alvin Wakeman (Control Room Operations Manager) on the process through which the CCTV strategy would be developed, the rationale behind developing the strategy, the key aims and objectives and the potential areas for development. Members were advised that coverage of CCTV cameras had grown across the borough as it responded to growing demand. It was a very expensive tool with each camera costing approximately £45,000 to operate so there needed to be clear benefits realised in using it.

It was noted that the CCTV strategy was developed by the CCTV steering group. The initial draft had been circulated for consultation among crime reduction partners and voluntary sector groups. Whilst it was noted that the results had not yet been published, the draft had been brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on.

Members were advised that the reasoning behind the strategy was to create and ensure public confidence, safety, to enable proper management and to evaluate and monitor the CCTV system. The strategy was underpinned by twelve objectives which included the reduction of environmental damage, assistance in traffic management, town centre and event management and an increase of police presence in control rooms.

Members were advised of the potential areas of development. At present Westminster Council had adopted a 3G network which allowed for mobile CCTV. It was pointed out that whilst Brent could adopt this approach, this would be costly. A major area of development was around the new Wembley stadium where a S106 agreement had provided funding for new cameras within the area, which would be used to develop the systems. System links such as with the Kilburn High Road Crack Radio could be developed through Town Centres, Transportation for London (TfL) and the council, creating a monitoring scheme for Police use.

Members were given the opportunity to raise concerns and questions with regard to the presentation and the draft strategy set before them. Members enquired whether the cost of stand alone installation was at the level of quality required by the council given the high cost. It was explained that the cost included maintenance, transmission and the operation of the system but

nevertheless it was important to assess value for money. Fibre Optic Network were also outlined as a required standard, as they allowed cameras to zoom into view faces. Mobile units were the greatest asset and active investigations were underway into the purchase of these.

Members enquired how Town Centre CCTV was prioritised within the action plan and how the effectiveness of CCTV was assessed. It was reported that Town Centre CCTV would need to be included within the action plan. CCTV would be assessed by using factual data, information from crime prevention officers and against other criteria developed in other practices.

Members enquired on the number of cameras Brent had access to and whether the number of cameras could constitute an invasion of residents' privacy. It was reported that a balance needed to be reached. Currently there were 166 Council-owned cameras in use and links to Transport for London and the police cameras. However, the council would need to attain a level that the public would accept.

Members were advised that evaluation of 'crime prevention hotspots' were difficult to measure. At present hotspots were measured by questioning residents, police and partner groups, but a more advanced system would need to be created. It was noted that even though the presence of cameras would create a sense of security for residents, they might deter people from reporting crimes as they become reliant on CCTV cameras.

Members of the committee were invited to submit their comments on the draft CCTV strategy and to visit the CCTV control room at Brent House.

RESOLVED:-

that the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are taken on board when finalising the CCTV strategy.

## **8. Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA)**

Members received a briefing from Ros Howard (Service Unit Manager, Housing and Community Care) and Sarah McDermott (Adult Protection Co-ordinator, Housing and Community Care) on the Multi-agency Adult Protection report, which outlined the work of the Adult Protection Committee provided information on adult protection referrals and outlined the priorities for 2006/07.

It was noted that Brent was recommended by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate as an example of good practice and, as such, was a pilot authority in the Action on Elder Abuse, the Department of Health's project to develop a national monitoring and reporting process. This enabled Brent to develop robust statistical analysis processes. A multi-agency awareness day held in November 2005 in conjunction with the Domestic Violence campaign had raised awareness of adult protection issues across a wide range of agencies.

Members were advised that there had been an 80 per cent increase in Adult Protection Referrals from the previous year, 50 per cent of the reported victims of alleged abuse were older people, 62 per cent of the victims were female and 47 per cent were of victims were white British. The greatest single cause of abuse was physical followed by financial abuse. However, it was noted that there were significant decrease in the allegations made against care professionals from the previous year, 34 per cent of completed cases were substantiated and almost half of the allegations of abuse took place in the client's own home, lastly, 76 per cent of cases involved a multi-agency strategy meeting.

Members noted that the priorities of the Adult Protection Committee for 2006/07 included developing, monitoring and reviewing the Adult Protection Policy and Procedures, incorporating Safeguarding Adults and to organise and provide training to multi-agency partners. It was also noted that close links with London and National Protection Networks would be developed, as well as the expansion of information on the Brent Council Website and publication of the Develop an Adult Protection Newsletter; to maintain effective information systems to ensure accurate statistical monitoring.

Members were given the opportunity to raise concerns and queries with regard to the report. Members enquired why the referral percentage had increased from previous years. In response, they were advised that this was due incorrect referrals made to the department, however, a majority of the referrals received were made because of the campaign.

It was noted that there would not be a Department of Health awareness campaign this year, as some referrals made had been made incorrectly. However, referral units were now more aware of the criteria for referrals.

Members enquired whether services would be put under pressure with the large amount of referrals being made. It was accepted that the large number of referrals was putting the service and Adult and Social Care generally under pressure. Ros Howard stated that she was confident that the service area would be able to handle the work load, and the area would be monitored and assessed for its capability.

Members noted that vulnerable adults did not have the same legal protection as vulnerable children, as there was no legislation supporting older adults. This had made protecting and moving vulnerable adults complicated. Guidance from the Department of Health would be issued in the near future and members agreed that it would be beneficial to the borough if implemented.

Members stated that Ros Howard and her team had done an extraordinary job of raising awareness and provided an excellent service.

RESOLVED: -

that the report be noted.

9. **Voluntary Sector Funding Task Group.**

RESOLVED: -

that the update be deferred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

10. **Tourism Task Group.**

RESOLVED: -

that the update be deferred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

11. **Budget Panel.**

RESOLVED: -

that the verbal update be deferred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

12. **Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme Update.**

RESOLVED: -

that the report be noted.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

14. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm

D Long  
Chair