



Brent

## MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 26 March 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair) and Councillors Aden, Colacicco, Crane, Ezeajughi, Mashari and Long

Also Present: Councillors Miller and Tatler

### 1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillors Stopp and McLennan (Deputy Leader). Councillor Long was present as a substitute member of the committee in place of Councillor Stopp.

### 2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. **Deputations (if any)**

None.

### 4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 5. **Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

### 6. **Order of Business**

That the order of business be amended as set out below.

### 7. **Supporting Business Growth in Brent**

The Chair advised that the committee had requested an update from the Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills on both the actions taken to respond to the recommendations set out in the April 2017 Task Group Report on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME), and the wider programme of activity developed across the Council to support the business growth and enterprise agenda.

Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) drew the committee's attention to the update report and highlighted that members

had received a first look at the Brent Business Portal. Comments and questions from the committee were welcomed.

The Chair questioned the response taken to the task group recommendation regarding the appointment of a business champion for SME. Councillor Tatler explained that the view had been taken that the Business Board had the expertise and resourcing to fulfil the role of champion for SME to a greater degree than a single officer of the council. The Chair advised that for any future update reports it would be helpful to provide an explanation of the reasons for alternative courses of action being taken, where these diverged significantly from the recommendations made.

The committee sought further information on the transparency of the Business Board and queries were raised regarding the integration of the Board with the council and the availability of the minutes of the Board's meetings for members to view. The committee questioned how the council could further develop their employment support offer and proposed that members be apprised of the resources available to enable them to better signpost residents.

Councillor Tatler advised that currently the Business Board was in its infancy but would be led by the businesses represented. Members' comments regarding Board minutes and transparency would be discussed with the Board. Responding to members' queries regarding employment support, Councillor Tatler spoke on the opportunities provided by supporting smaller supply chains to meet bigger contracts and advised that a regional job show event would be held in Wembley in October. The West London Alliance would be represented at the job show along with the business sector. Matthew Dibben (Head of Employment Skills and Enterprise) thanked the committee for the feedback provided, highlighted the support for residents provided via the Harlesden Hub and Brent Works and welcomed any support from members in engaging members of the community.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills explore with the Brent Business Board measures to promote transparency of practice and integration with the council, including making minutes of meetings available to Members and Officers.
- ii) That the Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise write to Members to outline the support and opportunities available to Brent residents seeking employment.

## **8. Annual Safer Brent Partnership Report 2017/18**

As Chair of the Safer Brent Partnership, Carolyn Downs (Chief Executive, Brent Council) introduced the Annual Safer Brent Partnership report for 2017/2018 to the committee, explaining that the report provided a review of performance for the past year. The Partnership was a statutory community safety partnership, required under Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act conferred a legal responsibility on the agencies in the partnership to consider the impact on crime and disorder of everything that they do, and to jointly create a strategy to reduce

crime, disorder, substance misuse and reoffending in Brent. The responsible authorities that were required to take part in the Safer Brent Partnership included the council, the Metropolitan Police, the London Fire Brigade, the National Probation Service, the Community Rehabilitation Company and the NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group. In addition, the community and voluntary sector was represented in the partnership, alongside Victim support and the Chairs of the Adult's and Children's Safeguarding Boards. Members' attention was drawn to section 2.1 of the annual, which provided an overview of performance against the Partnership's priorities for 2017/18.

Carolyn Downs introduced Acting Detective Superintendent Owain Richards (Deputy Borough Commander) to the committee, noting the revised structure of the Metropolitan Police that was shortly due to be implemented. Under the new structure a Basic Command Unit (BCU) led by one Borough Commander would cover the boroughs of Brent, Harrow and Barnet. Owain Richards was representing that BCU and would help to address members queries on the annual report. Davina Smith (Community Safety Manager) and Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities) were also present to address members' queries.

The Chair thanked Carolyn Downs for her introduction and welcomed Owain Richards, Davina Smith and Councillor Miller to the meeting.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee queried the impact of reduced resources on community policing and sought particular comment intelligence gathering and relationships with key communities. It was noted that street grooming did not appear in the report, despite a growing national awareness that this issue had been greatly underestimated, and it was queried what Brent was doing to address this issue. Further assurance was sought that street grooming was not taking place on an organised and significant scale in Brent and it was queried what online policing presence there was for Brent in addressing child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Questions were raised regarding the displacement of criminal activity in circumstances where groups of individuals congregating in public places were asked to disperse by police and cross-borough working. Members further queried whether particular measures were being taken in preparation for the Euro 2020 tournament to address prostitution, as had been the case for the 2012 London Olympics, and details were sought on whether intelligence was actively gathered on where brothels were being established.

With reference to the table at section 2.1 of the annual report, members noted that the first priority regarding gangs stated that data was not currently available and sought further details of what was outstanding and why. Reflecting on the data provided, a member queried whether there was any evidence that Brent's gang population was ageing. Members commented on the impressive results achieved via the Offender Management Programme, particularly in relation to gangs and queried whether learning from this initiative was being applied by other authorities. Questions were raised regarding measures to design-out crime (for example by increasing street lighting in certain areas) and on the use of CCTV. Clarity was also sought on the point at which activity was deemed anti-social. Members sought further information regarding the public health response to substance misuse and the consideration given to the social and economic factors affecting offending.

Clarity was sought regarding the accessibility of the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service.

Responding to the queries raised, Owain Richards advised that he did not believe that the current level of police resources had impacted operational effectiveness and emphasised that the deployment of resources was intelligence led. A challenge for policing in Brent however, was local need verses pan-London need, as Brent provided officers to support significant challenges in other boroughs. With regard to community policing, this was seen as the bedrock of the Metropolitan Police and the number of officers would not change. Owain Richards outlined Operation Makesafe to the committee which had been developed in partnership with London's boroughs to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community, such as hotel groups, taxi companies and licensed premises. Councillor Miller advised that the predictive modelling matrix developed by the council would allow the early identification of those at risk of being sexually exploited. Councillor Miller further commented that taxi licensing for London, which was undertaken by TfL on behalf of the Mayor of London, needed greater safeguards in place and ongoing communication with the Mayor of London was needed on this issue. Carolyn Downs advised that the committee could be assured that the Brent's safeguarding framework was secure and robust. CSE was an issue taken very seriously and the Brent Children's Safeguarding Board had taken specific responsibility for leading on this issue. The Partnership was not aware of CSE on a large and organised scale in Brent but it was known that there was a significant relationship between gangs and CSE. Addressing members' queries on the online police presence, Owain Richards advised that the Metropolitan Police worked alongside the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command and the National Crime Agency, as well as voluntary organisations.

Owain Richards explained that randomised controlled studies had evidenced that hot spot patrolling was effective and that the Sergeants in charge of each of the three Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) in Brent were tasked with considering issues of displacement. The deployment of SNT resources was reviewed biweekly with the council's Community Safety Manager, Davina Smith. Councillor Miller advised that Members could support targeted deployment by helping to promote reporting of anti-social or criminal activity by members of the public and highlighted the role of the Partnership Tasking Team and the use of Criminal Behaviour Orders in successfully reducing anti-social activity. Carolyn Downs advised that the council was working toward improvements in joint working with other boroughs, particularly in relation to Safer Brent Partnership priorities, and the new Borough Commander for Brent, Harrow and Barnet had indicated to the three boroughs where he felt greater joint working was required.

Councillor Miller outlined the council's approach to prostitution in Brent and highlighted that the main priority of the work undertaken was the safety of the women involved. The council's approach to brothels was therefore complaint led and related to anti-social behaviour concerns, as it was recognised that aggressive brothel closure could simply lead to an increase in street prostitution. Davina Smith emphasised that the council ran a range of programmes to help sex workers exit prostitution and noted that often they had multiple issues, including substance abuse, for which support was needed.

Addressing a query on police response times, Owain Richards advised that the Metropolitan Police's target was to respond to 90 per cent of emergency calls within 15 minutes and non-emergency calls within one hour. Response times have been a concern for Brent for a number of years and for the last reporting period 82 per cent of emergency calls were responded to within the target period. The committee heard that nationally, police forces were moving towards a new call response model called TRHIVE. The model - Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement - was used to assess the appropriate initial police response to an emergency call. The Metropolitan Police was investing in various measures to improve response time, including in resolving calls over the telephone where appropriate, providing appointment cards and additional training.

Davina Smith clarified that the reference to unavailable data in the table at section 2.1 of the annual report, referred to the priority to increase the number of high harm gang members engaging with intervention programs to exit gang and criminal activity. The data was not currently available as this was usually produced slightly later on in the year. However, as of the current date, the offender management programme had helped to reduce gang and related reoffending by 49.99 per cent. Councillor Miller confirmed that the average age of Brent's gang nominals was slightly older than other boroughs but explained that this was due to a few older members, rather than an older cohort overall. Owain Richards highlighted that the Home Office had been evaluating good practice in responding to gangs and youth violence and had visited Brent as part of this process. Davina Smith added that the initial feedback on this visit had been very good and highlighted that Brent Council, together with the London Borough of Lewisham, had been successful in securing £3.2million funding to deliver a pan-London response around gangs. Carolyn Downs further informed members that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, had observed a meeting regarding casework on gang members and knife crime and had spoken positively about the work taking place in Brent.

During the discussion on designing out crime, Owain Richards confirmed that trained officers provided specialist advice to the council on designing out crime for new developments and areas of regeneration. Carolyn Downs advised that CCTV did not reduce the level of crime but did help police identify and prosecute those responsible. Turning to the question of when actions could be deemed anti-social behaviour, Councillor Miller highlighted that though there were a number of factors to consider, the repetition or persistence of an issue was a key indicator. The council had recently been reviewing the community safety pages on the website to provide greater information to members of the public about how to report issues and on what would happen after a report had been made.

Carolyn Downs emphasised that Brent had a significant drug and alcohol misuse programme but noted that unfortunately, funding was not available to undertake early preventative work. Davina Smith clarified that the IDVA service based at Northwick Park was in addition to the existing IDVA service which provided via GPs and other primary healthcare settings. It was emphasised that the breadth of the IDVA offer was more substantial than in other boroughs.

During members' discussion, officers confirmed that the following information requested by members would be provided to the committee outside of the meeting: trends regarding levels of prostitution in the borough, against resource input; data on the number of Brent police officers deployed/seconded outside of the borough;

information on the geographical accessibility to the Independent IDVA Services; and, tables showing response times to emergency and non-emergency calls.

The Chair thanked presenting officers and members for their contribution to the discussion.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the 2018/19 Annual Report of the Safer Brent Partnership include information on the work undertaken to:
  - a. address online child sexual exploitation; and,
  - b. design-out crime.
- ii) That the Head of Community Protection in consultation with the Metropolitan Police produce a guide for Members on the reporting processes for crimes and anti-social behaviour, to enable Members to better assist Brent residents.
- iii) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Lead Member for Stronger Communities engage the London Mayor's Office in dialogue regarding taxi licensing in London and the sufficiency of safeguarding considerations particularly relating to Child Sexual Exploitation in this process.
- iv) That the results of the Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) being undertaken in 2018 be presented to the relevant scrutiny committees and the proposal that a joint meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the OBR on gangs be noted.

## 9. **Engagement and Consultation Review**

The committee received a presentation from Genevieve George (Partnership and Engagement Manager) on the community engagement review. It was emphasised that the review, currently underway, would be a thorough, root and branch review, supporting the development of a new vision for community engagement and achieving improved outcomes through stronger resident engagement and a focus on two way dialogue. This new vision would, in turn, be reflected in an expanded provision, responding to feedback on existing engagement channels and drawing on the council's Digital Strategy to maximise online modes of engagement. The new vision would also reflect an enhanced alignment with the stronger communities agenda, working the voluntary sector to support community cohesion.

Genevieve George introduced the committee to the role of the Partnerships and Engagement team and provided a detailed overview of the current provision and resources for engaging and consulting with residents. The committee heard that the review was currently moving into Phase 2, which, following the feedback from Phase 1 would encompass the development of an action plan to expand the review. Sharing the highlights from Phase 1 of the review, Genevieve George advised that the outcomes had included the need to avoid duplication, the development of an online tool kit, better use of social media, increasing the number of residents shaping services and enabling residents to be involved to achieve improved outcomes. It

was envisaged that consultation on the Phase 2 action plan would be undertaken during May to July and, following that a report would be submitted to Cabinet later in the year, presenting a new Strategy for consideration and approval.

The Chair thanked Genevieve George for her presentation and expressed that disappointment that the Lead Member was unable to attend the meeting to take part in the discussion.

Members expressed enthusiasm for a collaborative approach to engagement, in contrast to traditional consultation models and questioned how residents would be encouraged to participate in this approach. Members subsequently queried whether any external organisations with expertise in consultation would be engaged as part of the review. Further queries were raised regarding existing stakeholder management practice and how this interacted with the consultation strategy. The committee sought further detail about the funds available to support residents to engage with the council and community activities. It was queried how the council's presence on social media was monitored. Queries were raised about how the council could encourage new people to attend meetings such as Brent Connects and how the invitation distribution lists for such meetings were managed. Further details were sought about the model used for the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum.

In response to the queries raised Genevieve George spoke on the benefits of a pre-consultation stage which followed a design process and allowed residents and stakeholders to discuss views and ideas without the constraints of an existing vision or set of ideas. This was a more vigorous and inclusive approach to consultation and had been utilised as part of a recent review of voluntary sector needs. Another important part of effective consultation was, however, being honest and transparent about the resources available. Genevieve George further explained that Brent was in a fortunate position with regard to grant funds for residents and highlighted the success of the Love where you live campaign which provided small grants of £500 for local projects. There were a number of other funds accessible to residents and details of these could be circulated to members.

With regard to the community engagement review, Genevieve George explained that an objective view would be sought from other organisations such as the Consultation Institute which had a good reputation for working with residents as well as other stakeholders and partners. The council's stakeholder engagement practice was being revisited as part of the review to ensure a joined up approach with partners. Responding to the query regarding social media, Peter Gadsdon (Director, Performance, Policy and Partnerships) advised that the Communications team monitored most channels where the council might be discussed and there was software in place that would also identify this.

Addressing queries on Brent Connects and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum, Genevieve George advised that it was important to look at what people wanted to achieve from the meetings and how residents could assume a greater role. It would be important to get more organisations involved and a number of ideas were being explored. However, it would be pre-emptive to highlight any one idea over another before the review had been completed. It was confirmed that invitations for Brent Connect events were sent preferably by email but also by post where no email address was provided. The Brent Connects distribution lists had expanded in recent years and these were refreshed every quarter. The Voluntary Sector Forum was

being considered as part of the review and there was a desire for it to have a greater focus on actions. It was currently chaired by a member from the voluntary sector and the agenda was largely comprised of items from CVS Brent. The most recent meeting of this forum had been very well attended.

Members of the committee thanked Genevieve George for the work being undertaken by her team and advised that members were eager to support the council in its efforts to promote meaningful engagement.

RESOLVED: That the Partnerships and Engagement Manager provide a briefing note on the work being undertaken to review the engagement strategy, along with the supporting action plan for circulation to the committee.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

M KELCHER  
Chair