



Brent

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 15 January 2019 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair), Councillor and Councillors Nerva, Gill, S Butt, Gbajumo, Kabir, Mashari and Colwill

Also Present: Councillors Johnson, Stephens, McLennan, Miller and Tatler

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Councillor Colwill advised that he was attending in place of Councillor Kansagra, who had submitted apologies for the meeting.

Councillor Ketan Sheth, a member of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, had also submitted apologies for the meeting.

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 held on 5 September 2018 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

6. Chair's Report

The committee considered the Chairs report which included comment on the agenda for the current meeting and arrangements for the next meeting on 7 February 2019, which had been postponed from December 2018.

RESOLVED: that the report from the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be noted.

7. Knife Crime Task Group Scoping Paper

A report proposing the establishment of a Task Group on Knife Crime was considered by the committee. The purpose of the task group would be to gain a better understanding of knife crime in Brent and of how interventions could reduce knife crime. A full scoping paper for the task group and terms of reference were attached as appendices to the report. These detailed that the task group would review the links between knife crime and gangs in Brent; review partnership working arrangements with regard to a public health approach to knife crime; and, review what needed to be done locally to complement the wider London approach.

The report explained that the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee fulfilled the role of the Crime and Disorder Committee for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. In this capacity, the committee could review or scrutinise decisions made and actions taken by responsible authorities with regard to crime and disorder functions. It was intended therefore that the task group investigate the work undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership as a whole and the final recommendations would be made to the Partnership via Full Council in accordance with the powers of the Crime and Disorder Committee and the council's constitution.

Chris Whyte (Operational Director, Environment Services), Karina Wane (Head of Community Protection), Superintendent Louis Smith (Metropolitan Police) and David Evans (Partnership Manager, St Giles Trust) were present to address the committee's queries.

In the subsequent discussion, members questioned what steps would be taken to engage with victim's families and victim support in Brent and whether the task group would consult ex-gang members and offenders. The committee also questioned whether the task group would explore the use of a social housing panel for at risk youths.

David Evans advised that the St Giles Trust worked with young people affected by serious youth violence or gang crime. He outlined the range of support and activities provided by the St Giles Trust and explained that since the services were commissioned in April 2017, they had worked with 49 young people. In response to members' comments regarding consulting victims and perpetrators, David Evans emphasised that often perpetrators of knife crime had been victims of knife crime in the past. Karina Wane added that the St Giles Trust also provided wrap around support with families and that many of the frontline workers had lived experience of the issues at hand. It was emphasised that any work the task group undertook with ex-offenders would be subject to safeguarding considerations.

Karina Wane confirmed that housing was a significant issue as many of the young people affected by knife crime were at risk in the area where they lived. This was a pan-London issue. Superintendent Louis Smith recommended that the task group may wish to escalate issues to the Mayor and the new Serious Violent Crime Unit with regard to potential cross borough funding for relocating families at risk.

Councillor Kabir (proposed Chair of the Task Group) thanked members for their comments and confirmed that they would be taken on board by the task group.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a task group on knife crime be established, with scope and terms of reference as set out in Appendices A and B to the report, but with particular attention paid to the following:
 - a. speaking with victims and their families;
 - b. engaging those with relevant insight such as ex-gang leaders or offenders, subject to safeguarding considerations;
 - c. the impact of housing pressures and pan-London/cross borough solutions.
- ii) That the task group include a representative from Brent Youth Parliament and any other people from the local community with relevant expertise as appropriate.

8. Budget Scrutiny Panel Report

The committee considered the report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, which had been convened following the publication of the Cabinet's draft Budget proposals for 2019/20 and 2020/21 in October 2018 and comprised members from the council's three Scrutiny Committees. The Chair highlighted that he had chaired the Budget Scrutiny Panel and explained that the Panel had met with Cabinet members, the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer as well as Strategic Directors, and Operational Directors from the council's five departments: Chief Executive's; Resources; Regeneration, Growth and Environmental Services; Community Wellbeing, and Children and Young People. The purpose of the panel was to scrutinise the Cabinet's plans and offer suggestions and amendments to improve the proposals where appropriate. In particular, the Panel focused on the Budget proposals set out in appendices to the Cabinet report of 15 October 2018, which had been divided into four categories: recommended, difficult, very difficult and most difficult.

The committee's attention was drawn to the 32 recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, set out in the attached report, along with the detailed explanation of each proposal.

The Chair advised that Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader) was present, with Ravinder Jassar (Head of Finance) to help address any questions the committee may have.

Councillor McLennan advised that since the publication of the Cabinet's budget proposals, internal discussions within the Labour Group had determined that certain proposals would not be taken forward at the current stage, including 15 minute care visits and the reduction of library opening hours. Commenting on the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, Councillor McLennan confirmed that these all appeared viable suggestions and would be given careful consideration by the Cabinet. The committee was subsequently reminded that the public consultation on the budget proposals did not conclude until 31 January 2019.

In the subsequent discussion the committee raised a number of queries. Members sought assurance that if any of the budget proposals had negative unintended consequences following their implementation Cabinet would review the decision and explore alternative options, including reinstating the original service. A Member particularly welcomed the proposal of the Budget Scrutiny Panel that every proposal be subject to an equality impact analysis and questioned whether the council had sufficient officer capacity to undertake such action.

Questions were then raised regarding whether Britain's impending exit from the European Union had yet had any discernible effect on the council tax and business rates base line for the borough. The committee sought assurance that the council's council tax support scheme would be safeguarded moving forward. The committee highlighted that neighbourhood CIL funds could be used in a more coordinated and strategic way, noting, by way of example, that residents were currently encouraged to bid for funds to replace and plant street trees on an individual/street-by-street basis. Further queries were raised regarding the additional funding provided by central government to repair roads and the progress achieved in raising funds for the borough of culture programme. Members emphasised that the council needed to be mindful that funding provided to the voluntary sector was not reduced to the point at which it was no longer able to function and highlighted that CVS Brent brought a significant amount of money into Brent.

Members further questioned whether Cabinet intended to pre-emptively and pro-actively explore the viability of different options for delivery of library services. Additional details were sought in relation to the operation of the proposed family hubs. Members asked for clarification regarding the implications of Roundwood youth centre being used as school premises and requested an overview of the proposals for Bridge Park. A number of queries were raised regarding community safety and the proposed cuts to the Met Patrol Plus scheme.

In response to the committee's questions, Councillor McLennan confirmed that the Cabinet would of course revisit a decision if it resulted in unintended negative consequences. Ravindar Jassar explained that all of the budget proposals had been subject to initial equalities screenings, undertaken by the appropriate service manager, reviewed by an equalities officer and signed off by the relevant Strategic Director. Where equalities issues were identified, those proposals were then subject to full equalities impact assessments which would be published with the budget proposals in February 2019. Approximately 20 of the proposals had been subject to full equalities impact assessments. Training had been provided for all officers undertaking the equalities screenings and assessments.

Ravinder Jassar confirmed that council tax collection and business rates collection was currently on target and there had been growth in business rates from the previous year. With regard to the council tax support scheme, this was currently being reviewed in response to universal credit, with a view to implementing a new scheme for 2020/21. Councillors McLennan and Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning) confirmed that consideration would be given to applying a more co-ordinated approach with respect to applications for neighbourhood CIL funds, though it was emphasised that these could not be used to address revenue gaps and needed to have community support. Councillor Krupa Sheth (Lead Member for Environment) would be asked to specifically consider this with regard to community applications for replacing and planting new street trees. Addressing concerns regarding voluntary sector funding, Councillor McLennan advised that the council would work with its key partners to ensure that the voluntary sector was supported and added that many voluntary organisations had applied for CIL funding.

Councillor McLennan reiterated that the proposals contained in the budget proposals report to Cabinet in October 2018 regarding libraries had been discounted at this stage but explained that discussions would continue to be held

regarding delivery options for future consideration. Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Community Safety) discussed the possible options and impacts regarding the Met Patrol Plus scheme. The committee heard that a likely outcome would be that the number of officers be reduced to approximately 6 officers, which due to a number of vacancies was what the scheme was currently operating with. The work of the Met Patrol Plus was valuable and enabled a level of responsiveness to issues that residents identified as causing difficulties that might not otherwise be achievable. The Metropolitan Police had advised that after the current cycle of funding for 2020/21, they were expecting to completely remove funding for the scheme.

With the permission of the Chair, a member of the public commented that in some local authorities, the budget scrutiny process was conducted in public and questioned what evidence the Panel had taken with respect to its recommendations regarding libraries. The member of the public further asserted that when previously explored, the option of libraries being delivered via a charitable trust had been found to deliver minimal financial savings. The Chair thanked the member of the public for their contribution and explained that the Budget Scrutiny Panel had put forward suggestions for exploration by Cabinet and were not decisions. It was explained that the recommendations had been formulated after interviewing Lead Members, Strategic Directors and other relevant officers. It was added that unfortunately, savings that had previously been disregarded as minimal might not be considered so in the current financial context. The Chair concluded by acknowledging the concerns raised by the member of the public and proposing that the committee recommend that community libraries are appropriately consulted in any discussions regarding future delivery models for the libraries.

During the discussion the committee requested that the following information, which could not be provided during the meeting, be made available to the committee subsequently:

- Confirmation of whether any data had been gathered regarding the impact of Britain's impending exit from the EU on West London Business and if so, a summary of the information.
- An assessment of whether Britain's impending exit from the EU had affected council tax and business rates base.
- Details of the services to be provided within the proposed Family Hubs (when available)
- Details of the proposals regarding the redevelopment of Bridge Park
- A report on the level of indebtedness of those in receipt of council tax support.
- An update on the council's property review.
- An update on the fund raising for the Borough of Culture.
- An assessment of what the £600k pothole funding provided from central government would achieve for Brent.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Cabinet note the committee's endorsement of the recommendations detailed in the report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel and provide a full response to each of these;

- ii) That Cabinet be recommended to take a proactive approach to the future delivery of library services to protect against a reduction in hours and ensuring appropriate consultation with community libraries;
- iii) That the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment provide a written report to the committee detailing the success or otherwise of the council's recent community skips initiative, aimed at combatting illegal rubbish dumping (fly-tipping);
- iv) That a joint letter from the Lead Member for Community Safety and the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee proposing an equitable funding formula for Met Patrol Plus officers which reflects deprivation and crime levels, be sent to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.
- v) That Cabinet consider a mechanism to ensure that applications for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funds may fit into a wider coordinated and strategic programme across the authority, such as for tree planting and replacement.

9. Consultation on the Draft Brent Local Plan

The Chair advised that in preparation for the current meeting members of the committee had met with officers to discuss the Brent Local Plan. The meeting had been very useful and the issues discussed expansive. At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning) introduced the report to the committee, which provided an overview of the development of the council's new Local Plan, the results of initial public consultation and plans for further consultation. Members were advised that Alice Lester (Head of Planning, Transport and Licensing), Paul Lewin (Team Leader, Plan Making) and Rob Krzysowski (Spatial Planning Manager) were also present to discuss the report and address members' questions.

The report detailed that Brent's Local Plan needed to be updated to reflect changes to national policy, the London Plan and Brent's latest aspirations. This process had commenced in summer 2017 and thus far there had been three separate phases of consultation: 1) pre-issue of Brent Local Plan Issues and Options during 2017; 2) Brent Local Plan Issues and Options Feb 2018; and 3) Brent Local Plan Preferred Options Nov 2018. This latter consultation had closed on 3 January 2019. There had been a good response to the consultations in terms of number and quality. The plan's content was extensive and as such the responses diverse. The next stages of consultation were anticipated to be publication in summer 2019 (a statutory stage required for a minimum of six weeks) and examination in autumn 2019 including proposed modifications arising from representations made during the previous consultation stage and the Inspectors feedback.

In the subsequent discussion the committee questioned whether the Plan anticipated future trends regarding employment and skills shortages and how it supported the provision of high value jobs for Brent residents. With regard to the Carbon Offset Fund, members questioned what opportunities there would be to achieve carbon offsetting in Brent. Queries were raised regarding inter-departmental consultation in the development of the Local Plan. Members welcomed the focus on design and place-making to reduce poverty and social exclusion and questioned whether organisations such as Town and Country Planning

Association (TCPA) and more widely, wildlife and environmental organisations, had been engaged. Members further queried whether officers would pursue themed consultations with regard to environmental issues and sustainable transport. It was queried how the council's key partners would be engaged to have ownership in supporting the delivery of the Local Plan.

Responding to the queries raised, Councillor Tatler explained that the new London Plan had identified Brent as a borough that should seek to provide further industrial capacity. One of the ways in which this would be achieved would be through developments with mixed use, including residential, commercial and open spaces. Highstreets and Town Centres would be supported and digital connectivity would be improved across the borough. Rob Kryzowski added that helping start-up businesses in affordable workspace, working with the colleges and improving and promoting the borough's good links to Park Royal, Heathrow and via the proposed West London Orbital would all contribute to supporting a high-skills sector in Brent. Councillor Tatler further explained that the council was working together with neighbouring boroughs to attract some of the large high-tech employers, recognising that bringing those jobs to the region more widely would provide opportunities for Brent residents.

Paul Lewin advised that places that had introduced a carbon offset fund had used it in a variety of ways, including tree planting and home insulation in existing properties, which also benefitted in reducing fuel poverty. Moving forward, members would be consulted in the development of a strategy to determine how such funds would be directed. Alice Lester confirmed that there had been a number of different ways that colleagues across the council had been consulted on the draft Plan, including via senior managers groups, Forward Together sessions and various staff workshops. Councillor Tatler emphasised that the team had been very good at engaging a myriad of different groups within the community, including Brent Youth Parliament and developers working in Brent.

Rob Kryzowski advised that the council was very in tune with the TCPA's Planning Out Poverty guide and other best practice and emphasised that social inclusion underpinned all of the work of the Local Plan. Paul Lewin confirmed that the Local Plan was subject to sustainability assessments, health impact assessments and equalities assessments. External agencies were also involved including the Environment Agency, Thames 21 and Brent Clinical Commissioning Group. Furthermore, at a London level there were many policies that were quite detailed with regard to issues such as biodiversity. It was confirmed that themed consultations or focus groups could be held as proposed by the committee to further support the development of the Local Plan. Private sector partners were already being engaged and the council clearly communicated its expectations of developers. The subsequent draft publication version would be circulated to key stakeholders, from both the public and private sectors as part of the usual consultation process.

The Chair thanked the lead member and officers for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment and Lead Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning hold a themed consultation or focus group on the Brent Local Plan with a range of 'green' (environmental) organisations.

- ii) That the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment and Lead Member for Regeneration, Highways and Planning hold a themed consultation or focus group on sustainable transport, to consider together both active transport and public transport.
- iii) The committee commended officers for their work on the Brent Local Plan.

10. **Affordable Housing Task Group Report**

Councillor Nerva (Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Group) introduced the report advising that the task group had sought to gain an understanding of the barriers and solutions to affordable housing delivery. Members and officers were thanked for their contribution to the work of the task group and the committee's attention was drawn to the recommendations set out in the task group's report. Councillor Nerva emphasised that the key message to come out of the task group's work was that the council needed to continue to work really hard to identify places where affordable housing could be delivered and that this would often depend on cross-subsidy from private market housing.

The committee welcomed the report of the task group. A member sought clarity on the council's position with regard to combining smaller properties to provide the larger or specially adapted units needed to meet housing needs. Councillor Tatler advised that combining smaller affordable dwellings was difficult to support due to the significant overall need for affordable dwellings. In addition, family housing was what was predominately needed in Brent and as such, the council had a policy requirement to secure 25% of new dwellings across the Borough as family sized homes and new homes were required to meet accessible and adaptable standards set out in the London Plan and Building Regulations.. Speaking on the South Kilburn Regeneration, Councillor Tatler noted that it had been possible to incorporate needs of council tenants with specific vulnerabilities into the design of the properties.

During the discussion the committee requested the following information:

- An overview of the council's policy on combining existing properties to meet housing needs.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Cabinet note the committee's endorsement of the report and recommendations of the Affordable Housing Task Group;
- ii) The Cabinet note and consider the committee's additional proposal that plans for new housing developments take into account the known needs for people with disabilities awaiting housing provision;
- iii) The committee expressed its thanks to the individuals and organisations that contributed to the work of the task group and directed that they be provided with a final copy of the report.

11. **Committee Work Programme**

The committee noted the updated work programme.

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.23 pm

M KELCHER
Chair