



Brent

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held as an online virtual meeting on Wednesday 14 April 2021 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT (in remote attendance): Councillor Mashari (Chair), Councillor Kansagra (Vice-Chair) and Councillors S Choudhary, Johnson, Kabir, Hassan, Long, Miller and Shah

Also Present (in remote attendance): Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources), Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning), Southwood (Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform) and Krupa Sheth (Lead Member for Environment)

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies were received from Councillors Perrin and Mahmood.

2. Declarations of interests

None.

3. Deputations (if any)

None.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5. Matters arising (if any)

None.

6. Building a Better Brent - A Review of the Brent Council Priorities and Strategies

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources introduced a report on the progress on the Borough Plan 2020/21, the Borough Plan 2021/22 and the Council's policy framework.

Shazia Hussain, Assistant Chief Executive then gave a presentation on the Borough Plan 2021/22 and the key supporting strategies and plans and specifically the Poverty Commission, the Equality Strategy, the Black Community Action Plan and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. She advised that the Borough Plan was developed within the changed local, regional and national context including the impacts of the global pandemic and other pressing challenges affecting a range of service and policy areas such as the climate emergency and

the housing crisis. The Borough Plan would have five overarching strategic themes with desired outcomes and actions that would run for the entirety of the plan and form the basis of its delivery. She assured members that detailed delivery plans were in place for each of the supporting strategies and plans and that all were supported by performance measures and key indicators that were linked to other Council strategies and service plans. She advised that refocused performance reporting was being developed alongside this and new reports would be presented on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee was then invited to raise questions on the updates provided, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- It was noted that corporate and departmental strategies were refreshed at different times and some, such as the Financial Inclusion Strategy 2015, Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-17 and Housing Strategy 2009-14, were currently being reviewed.
- In response to a question regarding the delivery of corporate and departmental strategies, it was noted that they were developed and managed on a departmental basis, reviewed regularly and subject to member scrutiny. The successful delivery of the Borough Plan was subject to the successful delivery of these strategies.
- It was noted that the new performance framework was being developed with a number of principles in mind. Progress on activity would be monitored using key performance indicators and corporate performance reports to ensure that the leadership be assured of delivery with proportionate and meaningful performance measures including the use of 'journey' indicators to demonstrate progression to long-term aims.
- In response to a question regarding measuring the performance of poverty reduction actions, it was noted that a number of the key indicators included in the performance framework would feed into the overall picture of poverty in the borough. Members suggested that the national measures of relative and absolute poverty be taken into consideration when measuring poverty levels across the borough.
- Whilst it was recognised that more work needed to be done to ensure residents did not litter, it was noted that Community Clean-Ups and Skips were important initiatives that encouraged community participation and awareness.
- In response to a question regarding the level of funding for environment-related services, it was explained that social value could be used as a means of helping to provide alternative methods to support local communities over and above the services that were already delivered. It would also look to engage and embed social value within procurements across the council, members and supplier base.
- It was noted that the Council was committed to working alongside Transport for London to ensure residents continue to use cleaner modes of transportation as restrictions are lifted, for example by promoting active travel and Schools Streets. It was recognised that changes to travel infrastructure needed to be coupled with community engagement at every stage.
- In response to a question regarding the impact of population growth on the delivery of key strategies and plans, members were assured that each

strategy had a year-by-year delivery plan that would account for changing local, regional and national contexts.

- It was noted that pavement widening schemes were being implemented by the Highways Team in conjunction with Town Centre Managers and were funded through pandemic-related central government funding. These schemes were being reviewed regularly and residents were encouraged to report any issues that may arise.
- In response to a question regarding the impact of the Transport Strategy on those with disabilities, it was noted that it had been developed in consultation with the Disability Forum and the Royal National Institute of Blind People. Members were assured that the administration were committed to ensuring all transport infrastructure was accessible.
- It was noted that there would be a steering group for each priority outlined in the Equality Strategy and membership comprised of those groups and individuals who would be delivering its objectives.

7. Air Quality Task Group Scrutiny Report and Recommendations

It was agreed that this item be taken before item 7 on the agenda.

The Committee was invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- It was noted that a number of funding sources were being considered for infrastructure projects to promote sustainable travel. This included the use of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy, which would provide grant funding for community-led projects related to sustainable travel. Members encouraged officers to look to improve existing infrastructure as well as building new infrastructure.
- While the safety of children on School Streets had not been raised as a London-wide issue, members concerns on this matter were noted. Members were assured that discussions would take place on how to ensure children felt safe on these roads and it was noted that funding had been received to install cameras on a number of Schools Streets in the borough.
- In response to a question regarding through traffic to the North Circular Road, it was noted that the Healthy Neighbourhood scheme sought to divert through traffic away from residential areas and as such reduce carbon levels in these areas. It was recognised that this was a long-term ambition and traffic levels in these areas may increase in the short-term.
- In response to a question regarding the benefits of the Healthy Neighbourhood scheme, it was noted that the Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning had received a number of representations from residents who felt much safer walking and cycling in these areas. It was also hoped that air quality would increase and congestion be reduced in these areas. It was recognised that some residents were not happy with the scheme, and members were assured that if the trials were not successful they could be amended or removed.
- It was noted that air quality in those areas designated as Healthy Neighbourhoods, Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods or School Streets was being monitored and would be evaluated. This would involve cross-comparisons would other boroughs and an understanding of the relevant mitigating

factors. All data would be shared with the Committee and published online at when available.

8. **Delivering a Better Brent - Quarter 2/3 Performance Reports**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources introduced a report on the Council's corporate performance in the second and third quarters of 2020/21. The content of the report focused primarily on the Borough Plan, Building a Better Brent (2019-2023) and its priorities.

The Committee was invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question regarding delays in the construction of affordable homes during the pandemic, members were assured that the Council were not significantly behind their house building targets. It was noted that around 255 families had now moved into those homes already constructed.
- Regarding the void process, members were assured that the target re-let time for properties with major works of 72 was achievable. A voids task force had been established and would be chaired by the Operational Director in order to identify and address the issues affecting voids turnaround times. A new accountability process had also been identified, with one officer now responsible for all voids.
- In response to a question regarding accountability for those contractors that were not performing as expected, it was noted any contract was subject to a set of required targets. Should these targets fail to be met, the Council would take measures to improve performance and, if necessary, impose penalties. Members suggested that details of the measures taken be included in future performance reports.
- It was noted that the third quarter saw a further decline in the performance of Category 2 highways defects repaired on time. The contractor reported staff shortages when a number of teams had to self-isolate, but the backlog caused by these absences had been addressed and it was likely that performance would improve. It was explained that some highways services would be taken in-house over the coming months, which it was hoped would improve performance.

9. **Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker**

The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table, which tracks the progress of recommendations made by the Committee, was noted.

10. **Brent Poverty Commission Report and Recommendations**

It was **RESOLVED** that this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

11. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was noted.

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm

R MASHARI
Chair