



Brent

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday 8 November 2022 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Conneely (Chair), Councillor Long (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Akram, S Butt, Bajwa, Georgiou, Miller, Mitchell, Patel, Collymore and Fraser

Also Present: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee) for Items 6 & 7.

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies were received from Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam and Councillor Shah, substituted by Councillor Fraser and Councillor Collymore.

2. Declarations of interests

Councillor Conneely made a declaration in relation to Item 8 - Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report 2021-22, due to her work with a local organisation that had received funding from the Violence Reduction Unit to provide mental health services to young people

3. Deputations (if any)

None.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 6 September 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising (if any)

None.

6. Brent Council's Grants Programmes (joint item with the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee)

Councillor Donnelly – Jackson (Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities & Culture) introduced a report updating the Scrutiny Committee on the Council's grants programmes with particular emphasis on the participatory budgeting initiative "You Decide" whereby the local community were actively involved in voting for the local projects they believed would most benefit the community and should be awarded funding.

Lorna Hughes (LH) Operational Director, Engagement Strategy and Communications advised the Committee of the broader scope of grants that the

Council made available to community in addition the You Decide Grants including the smaller Love Where You Live Grant that awarded up to £1000 and the Edward Harvist Grant that was a medium level grant offering up to £5000 for applicants. There were also grants available for the Carbon Offset Fund, Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and Brent Health Matters. The Committee heard that the You Decide funding of £2 million was split equally between the 5 Brent Connect areas, with each area allocated £400,000. The emphasis of the You Decide Participatory Grant was to maximise community engagement, it was felt this approach had been successful with an unprecedented 149 application received with 479 residents having taken part across the 5 separate events.

The Committee were advised that Brent had provided the largest participatory budgeting funds across London, however going forward with the current budgetary pressures there were likely to be uncertain times ahead in accruing revenue from NCIL to support this.

In summarising LH shared that the trialling of the You Decide Participatory Budgeting Scheme was felt to have been a successful initiative, allowing for increased community engagement and local organisations to benefit from funding that was invested back in to the community. It was acknowledged that there were further areas of development to build on to increase the reach and further enhance community engagement.

In order to provide the Committee with greater insight in to the experiences of the community groups who had actively applied for a grant, several community organisation representatives were in attendance to share their experiences.

The Chair proceeded to invite the first community speaker Jon Coming - Higgs from Elders Voice to address the Committee, with the following key points shared:

- Elders Voice was a local organisation that supported elderly residents to live safely and independently in their own homes through community support.
- The application experience had been overwhelmingly positive, Mr Coming – Higgs advised the Committee that if he had to apply for a grant in the traditional capacity he felt it was unlikely to have been successful as the nature of their project was focused on learning how to support the elderly community with outcomes being qualitative rather than quantitative, a lack of measurable data may have hindered their application success if the grant application was rolled out in the more traditional way.
- It was highlighted as a strength that Brent valued the voices of the local community and had explored a more dynamic approach to community engagement and grant allocation.
- It was suggested that to continue to build on the success of the You Decide Grant process that Local Authority grant commissioners should learn the language of local organisations rather than having an expectation of local residents and organisations learning the language of commissioners as this could lead to a gulf in communication whereby officers are missing what really matters to local residents.

- Mr Coming – Higgs expressed his gratitude to Lorna Hughes (Operational Director, Engagement Strategy and Communications) for her commitment in trying to break down barriers and provide the local community with a meaningful voice to support effective positive change.

The Chair thanked Mr Coming – Higgs for his contribution to the meeting and asked officers if they had any clarifying questions, as no issues were raised the next community speaker, Leslie Barson, Granville Community Kitchen was invited to address the Committee.

- Ms Barson began by expressing that she felt the You Decide scheme was a welcome opportunity for the local community to gain an insight in to the work of community organisations and also provided a unique way for community grant applicants to apply for funding. However she felt that there were some operational issues that could be improved to support the experience for budget applicants.
- It was felt that the application process was weighted heavily in favour of applicants who had a strength in public speaking, as part of the process was to present publicly to your local Brent Connects area to persuade your local community why they should vote for your application. There was concern that this could disadvantage some projects from being awarded funding and also discourage some applicants from making an application at all.
- It was suggested that to support public participation it may also be useful to have hybrid events where attendees could take part and vote /present via Zoom as well as in person.
- It was felt there was some disparity regarding the success of the Brent Connects sessions in terms of the number of attendees, Ms Barson advised that there were very low numbers at the event she presented at in comparison to other events.
- Ms Barson shared that she had feedback from some residents that they weren't clear on where their address fell in terms of which Brent Connects event they could attend.
- The final area of development raised was with regard to the lack of clarity received from Brent in terms of the paperwork needed to progress the process of receiving funding from the point of successful applicants being awarded the grant. Ms Barson reflected that in the case of the Granville Community Kitchen, they were awarded the grant on 18 June 2022 however to date the funds had not been received.
- Ms Barson advised that part of the delay in receiving the funds was due to additional paperwork required that Ms Barson felt had not been made clear at the beginning of the process, additionally it was felt there was a lack of timely communication with officers at some points in the process. Concern was shared that this could deter some groups from applying due to the amount of paperwork required for what was considered a relatively small grant in grant terms.

- Ms Barson closed her comments by re-iterating her thanks to Brent on behalf of the organisation and echoed her belief that once all the “teething issues” had been resolved the You Decide system of awarding grants was an innovative way to involve the local community in participatory budgeting.

The Chair thanked Ms Barson for sharing her experience and advising on areas that she felt could be developed further, it was noted that the input shared would inform the Committee’s questioning to support improving the process.

Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair of the Community Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee asked Ms Barson what she believed were the top priorities that needed to be addressed to improve the bidding process. In response Ms Barson advised that she believed that the key priorities were to increase opportunities for public participation, giving the example of hybrid options to join meetings, increased publicity of the applications that were being presented to vote on so that members of the public could read up in advance on the organisations and their projects and providing applicants at the outset of the application process with a break down of the process including all the documentation that would be needed.

As there were no further questions, the Chair invited the third community speaker Sacha Dsane from Financial Harmony to share her experience with the Committee with the following key points shared:

- Ms Dsane advised the Committee that her organisation’s project that aimed to support adults and young people in financial literacy and personal finances had been unsuccessful in being awarded a grant.
- Ms Dsane felt that in general terms the application process went well although the public speaking element of the application process had not been best suited to the presentation of her organisations application.
- The event that Ms Dsane spoke at was well subscribed with approximately 200 residents in attendance, however among these attendees there was one particular group who had brought approximately 60-70 supporters with them to vote. It was felt this immediately disadvantaged all other applicants for this session
- In closing her comments Ms Dsane commended the idea of encouraging more community engagement in the grants awarding process for community schemes, however felt it was important to recognise the balance needed in ensuring voting was undertaken fairly.

The Chair thanked Ms Dsane for her contribution to the meeting and asked the Committee if they had any further questions. The Committee did not have any specific questions, however in thanking Ms Dsane for her representation, the Committee noted the issues raised and recognised that some group’s abilities to mobilise a group of supporters to vote for their project did not necessarily reflect how useful the project could be to residents.

The final speaker Colin George was then invited to address the Committee to share his feedback in his capacity as a resident who participated in the voting process at one of the You Decide events, with the following key points shared –

- Mr George shared that he had been a Brent resident for 45 years and active as a community volunteer since 1978, therefore had a wealth of experience within the community and voluntary sector. In addition to this he was also a trustee of the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum.
- Mr George advised the Committee that he felt it should be made clear to applicants and voters that grants being allocated in line with the NCIL criteria should include lasting benefits, Mr George felt this was not evident in the presentations shared at the event he attended.
- As a neutral observer, Mr George felt he was in a position to make fair assessments of all the presentations heard and in his assessment felt that there was no correlation between the strength of the presentation and their success rate, leading to further queries regarding how fair the voting system was.
- Mr George felt that the general organisation of the event was good, however it was suggested that more information on the applications would have been of benefit for members of the public attending.
- In line with the comments made by the other community speakers Mr George believed that efforts should be made to prevent large numbers of supporters registering to attend to vote at events as votes would then be awarded on the basis of friendships and affiliations rather than projects being assessed on their own merits

The Chair thanked Mr George for his comments and proceeded to allow the Committee to ask officers questions, which are noted below:

- In response to a Committee question regarding how the challenges as a result of increased budgetary pressures in local government would impact the support provided to local Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) organisations, officers advised that work was ongoing to support and prepare the CVS in their preparedness for the challenging times ahead. This included support to encourage greater collaboration and networking to aid CVS organisations in submitting bids in partnership to increase their funding opportunities.
- The Committee raised concerns regarding the potential abuse of the participatory budgeting system with particular regard to the issues raised around block voting. In response the Committee were advised that where suspicious voting activity had been observed, votes had been removed. Moving forward further discussion would be undertaken to facilitate fair voting systems.
- In response to a Committee observation that 25-29 year olds were under represented at You Decide events in addition to generally low attendance at

events in the South of the borough, the Committee were advised that it was a priority to engage more young adults to make sure their views were represented, particularly where there were projects that were specifically targeted towards young people. It was noted that Brent Youth Parliament would be instrumental in supporting the success of this. It was also suggested that collecting additional demographic data at future events could support the identification and targeting of under represented groups . Processes could then be put in place to increase engagement ensuring as broad a demographic group were represented and could contribute at subsequent events.

- The Committee queried the lack of community engagement due to the very low number of attendees at the Brent Health Matters You Decide Event in Willesden. In addition to this the Committee noted that as health inequalities were widely acknowledged to profoundly impact people from ethnic minority backgrounds it was important that people voting for projects adequately reflected this group. As a result the Committee questioned how confident they could be that the results from this event reflected the voice of the community. In response to the Committee query, officers established that Pride celebrations had taken place in London on the same day therefore possibly impacted event numbers at the event. In acknowledgement of the points raised officer advised that to add value to the process of future events they would explore setting a minimum number of participants in addition to reaching out to under represented communities to encourage engagement either as a member of the public voting or as part of an organisation bidding for funding.
- In terms of the Carbon Offset Funding Grant the Committee noted the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that funding was used to maximise the impacts of carbon reduction, this led the Committee to query if delegating the decision making responsibility to residents as part of the participatory process was the most effective way to maximise funding, particularly as residents were not experts in this area. This raised further queries as to how residents had been supported to understand Carbon Offset Funding.
- Officers advised the Committee that the decision was taken to pilot using the part of the funding in this way after recognising the low carbon literacy among residents in Brent, therefore it was recognised as a priority to engage and communicate with residents from the outset to educate and support increased carbon literacy. This objective was achieved through focusing on reaching all sections of Brent's community, tapping into existing networks but also making sure to target hard to reach areas and those who were reluctant to engage. This involved producing communications and marketing materials in community languages and lots of face-to-face community engagement with expert speakers to provide technical advice.
- Officers felt delegating some responsibilities to residents through the participatory aspect of the scheme was appropriate as part of the pilot

project to allow residents to feel involved in affecting positive change in the community to reduce emissions and tackle climate change.

- It was felt there was a high value attached to the work undertaken with the residents planning group. The group had vastly increased their knowledge in understanding carbon emissions and how the carbon offset fund worked. It was hoped this information would then cascade out into the wider community, offering increased community knowledge and engagement.
- Officers noted Committee comments recognising the scope to utilise the research available as to how to maximise funding to achieve maximum impact in reducing emissions. It was confirmed that the Carbon Offset Funding would not be distributed in the same way moving forwards, following confirmation from the Cabinet meeting in June 2022, the remainder of the funding would be split 60% to council housing, 30% to schools and the remaining 10% to be kept as a buffer for other funding bids.

Due to time constraints additional questions regarding the Carbon Offset Funding would be addressed at the next Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in January 2023. Officers welcomed Committee members to email them any specific questions directly.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions to the discussion, and closed the item by summarising the suggestions for improvement and information requests made by the Committee, which are noted below:

The Committee noted the following suggestions for improvement:

- i. Ensure monies distributed as part of the Carbon Offset Fund are targeted to communities/areas in most need.
- ii. Introduce a ballot system into the 'You Decide' initiative, whereby residents who wish to attend decision days apply for tickets in a ballot. Tickets could then be allocated randomly to avoid block voting and popularity contests
- iii. Capture and include information such as age and ethnicity in 'You Decide' data gathering to ensure attendees voting are representative of the borough's demographic
- iv. Add a requirement for those applying for monies as part of the 'You Decide' initiative to have someone with lived experience as part of their presentation.
- v. Utilise local councillors in engaging hard to reach residents to participate in future 'You Decide' decision days.
- vi. Improve communications around the 'You Decide' application process so forthcoming applicants are aware of the eligibility criteria, and time commitments associated with the application process before applying. This includes setting out clear expectations around the documentation successful applicants need to provide, and the time it will take to receive funding.

- vii. Strengthen criteria for allocating NHS funding through Love Where You Live grant funding to ensure monies are directed to the appropriate organisations for maximum impact in reducing health inequalities amongst Black African Heritage communities.
- viii. Support our voluntary and community sector organisations in building new income generation streams.

The Committee noted the following information requests:

- i. Provide voting data across all “You Decide” sessions that have taken place so far in 2022. To be inclusive of the voting data related to the Carbon Offset Fund, NCIL, and Brent Health Matters Health and Wellbeing grants.
 - ii. Provide detailed information on the ‘You Decide’ project monitoring processes in place.
 - iii. Provide information on the difference between the standard NCIL application rounds versus the ‘You Decide’ application rounds and the rationale why the monies are split this way.
 - iv. What is the approach to preventing duplication in funding across Council directorates, especially in a time of oversubscription of grants with diminishing resource?
 - v. Provide a feasibility report into different options for voting on ‘You Decide’ decision days to increase accessibility.
7. **Draft Borough Plan 2023-27 (joint item with the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee)**

The Committee received a report detailing the draft Borough Plan 2023-27, which had been developed with departmental leads and set out the vision and strategic priorities developed with CMT and Cabinet earlier this year. The Committee were asked to note and comment on the report before endorsing ahead of its finalisation in early 2023.

Councillor Butt highlighted that the plan laid out the ambitions of the administration to achieve the best outcomes for Brent residents, including increasing skills and employment opportunities, providing a good standard of education in all Brent schools, delivering on the commitment to increase the affordable housing stock in Brent and ensure that Brent residents have every opportunity to thrive. Councillor Butt advised of the financial challenges going forward due to the lack of adequate funding and mismanagement of the budget from central government, however highlighted that despite the budgetary pressures he felt the Labour administration in Brent had demonstrated they were able to positively manage the funds they had to work with residents and provide high level public services, it was felt that the draft borough plan continued to illustrate the Labour administration in Brent’s commitment to support residents.

The Committee had a number of questions on the draft borough plan, with the following key points discussed –

- The Committee queried whether the objectives in the borough plan were achievable within budget when taking in to consideration the additional financial pressures the council was under. In response the Committee were advised that budgetary pressures were considered in the creation of the plan and the financial situation would continue to be monitored parallel to the objectives on the plan. , making changes as and when necessary. It was noted that the lack of certainty and delivery of single year budgets from central government increased pressures in planning local services.
- It was confirmed that when the revised Borough Plan comes in to place there would be a degree of harmonisation with strategies and policies on the existing plan to ensure that the plan accurately captured the administrations' vision for Brent and the steps needed to achieve this.
- In response to a Committee concern that the extent of Brent's climate ambition was not reflected in the borough plan, it was noted that feedback from residents demonstrated that climate concerns had not featured on residents top priorities. Despite this the Council were clear in acknowledging its social and moral responsibility to act upon climate concerns. As discussed previously some of the greatest impacts in reducing carbon emissions was through work with schools and addressing adaptations to Brent's housing stock. Pending confirmation of funding and whether there would be a significant rent cap introduced, the council was not yet in a position to confirm if carbon offset in relation to investment in Brent's housing stock would be achievable.
- The Committee questioned officers regarding what they felt to be a lack of accountability on the plan coupled with ambiguous target setting, noting that specific targets would support clearer measurable outcomes. Officers reassured the Committee that the borough plan remained a live document and would not be finalised until the beginning of the next financial year. The Committee noted that specific target setting had been more challenging during the current stage of the plan's construction due to the ambiguity around government funding. It was hoped that assurances would be made from central government confirming funding, once actual funding figures were known it would be possible to include more specific detail and areas of accountability in the plan.
- In terms of the Borough Plan section "The Best Start in Life" whereby it was noted that Raising the attainment of Black African and Caribbean boys had been a feature of the last borough plan, the Committee were curious as to whether this had been achieved in the previous four years. In response it was confirmed that the funding agreed by the Schools Forum to support this initiative had been highly effective in narrowing the attainment gap from 12 to 8 points. Schools agreed that strong effective leadership, an allocated member of staff "champion" to lead on the initiative, tackling racism and stereotyping were all key to being able to minimise the attainment gap.
- The Committee heard that when the current data is shared from schools if it were found that the levels of improvement had not been maintained there would be a need to approach the Schools Forum to explore further funding streams to ensure

the gap continued to reduce.

- The Committee acknowledged there were still gains to be made in managing transitional safeguarding issues and a strong action plan was needed to continue to effectively manage this.
- In response to a Committee question requiring clarity on the council's position of delivering on 1000 new council homes and how many of these would be in addition to the current housing stock and how many were replacement homes, it was confirmed that in the last 4 year period 768 new homes had been built, with a target of an additional 1000 new homes in the next 4 year period.
- The Committee noted that Brent were the only London borough to exclusively build social housing properties, with all other council's building projects including shared ownership and market rent. It was acknowledged that if further support was not received from central government, Brent may have to also start building mixed tenure homes under these conditions in order for it to be viable to continue to also build homes for social rent.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions including Councillor Sheth for attending in order to participate in the joint scrutiny items. The meeting was then moved on to consider suggestions for improvement and information requests which were agreed as follows:

The Committee noted the following suggestions for improvement:

- i. Ensure the outcomes/success criteria under each strategic priority is more specific, measurable, and accountable
- ii. Involve the worker community (i.e. trade unions) in the consultation/engagement process.
- iii. Make our climate action commitments more prominent throughout strategic priorities
- iv. Include 'togetherness' and 'community cohesion' throughout strategic priorities
- v. Ensure there is continuous engagement with the Brent Integrated Care Partnership on the Borough Plan.

The Committee noted the following information requests:

- i. What have we done (or what are we planning to do) to involve communities who haven't been involved historically in the consultation process for previous borough plans?
- ii. What targeted engagement is planned with marginalised/hard to reach groups in the borough?

Please provide a breakdown on the amount of people consulted/engaged with so far in order for the committee to establish how representative the data set is of the borough's demographic.

8. Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report 2021-22

The Chair invited Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive and Chair of the Safer Brent Partnership to introduce the Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report 2021-22 for the Committee to note the Safer Brent Partnership, Annual Report Financial Year 2021 – 2022 and the activities undertaken to support agreed priorities. Additionally, for the Committee to provide recommendations to feed into the Safer Brent – Community Safety Strategy and related delivery for 2023 – 2025. Key highlights from the report were shared as follows:

- There were positive themes throughout the report, namely reductions in anti social behaviour, knife crime and gang related crimes. Despite the successes the Safer Brent Partnership were clear that there was no room for complacency and continued to sustain momentum moving forwards.
- Although there had been a general reduction in gang and knife crime, Dollis Hill and Neasden had seen an increase in these types of crime, this had illustrated a significant shift as historically Harlesden and Wembley had always recorded the highest figures in the borough in relation to these crimes. It was established that further exploration was needed to understand why Dollis Hill and Neasden were now presenting as hot spot areas, the Committee noted that the shift in crime prevalence across the borough may impact the way that police resources are distributed across the borough.
- There had been an uptick in sexual offences against women and girls, further exploration was needed to ascertain whether the increase in reported figures was due to an actual increase in activity or if more effective reporting was in place.
- Domestic Abuse Services and MARAC were working collaboratively to manage Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) with Youth Offending becoming progressively more engaged in the multi -agency approach to tackle VAWG.
- The Partnership recognised that a renewed focus to increase opportunities to support skills, employment and education for individuals within the justice system was necessary to improve outcomes in this area.

The Committee welcomed the areas of success in the report and in noting the continued areas of development asked some follow up questions to clarify the information shared, with the following points discussed:

- In noting that violent crime remained a strategic priority for the Safer Brent Partnership the Committee queried how partners had worked collaboratively to address violent crime, particularly in hot sport areas and what interventions would look like moving forward. In response the Committee were advised that following Harlesden and Wembley being recognised as previous hot spot areas there had been significant investment in to

supporting community engagement and police visibility in Wembley and Harlesden wards through the addition of Police Town Centre Teams. It was felt the increased visibility and positive relationship building within the community had a positive impact on wider community engagement as well as acting as a deterrent for certain crimes.

- Further community police engagement included the police meeting with local multi faith forums, GymSafe – a programme to support women feeling safe in gyms, a Summer Camp at Newman Catholic College and Police Cadets.
- Councillor Farah had also been active in the community to support police engagement with the community by leading community meetings on St Raphaels estate following a serious crime incident.
- The Committee heard that in response to the increased activity near Dollis Hill Tube Station and Neasden Town Centre, there was an opportunity to apply to the Violence Reduction Unit for funding to support specific work in these areas.
- In response to a Committee query regarding clarity on section 3.4 of the draft Community Strategy 2023-25 , the Committee required further information as to what the “public health” approach would look like in practice and if the Cost of Living Crisis was expected to impact upon crime rates. The Committee were advised that the process of embedding a public health approach in Brent’s practice had been underway, this included measures outlined in a report to the Health and Wellbeing Board suggesting ways that collaborative working could be effective in reducing crime, a VRU funded project delivered by the Young Brent Foundation – My Endz, that worked with a specific group of young people, funding had also been received to support the transition of young people moving from primary school to high school as this was recognised as particularly vulnerable time in terms of possible exploitation.
- Additionally the Westminster Drug Project had been commissioned to support young people with emotional health needs this included outreach work in schools.
- In response to the Committee query regarding the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on crime, the Committee heard that there had been a slight uptick in crime, however it was too early to attribute this to the Cost of Living Crisis.
- Following a Committee query regarding how the new strategic priorities were developed and the evidence base used to support this, the Committee were advised that crime statistics from both the MPS and MOPAC were used to identify priorities and followed up with monitoring to assess the impact of interventions to form an evidence base to support future funding applications.
- In responding to a Committee concern that it appeared that priorities relating to the LGBTQ community in terms of addressing hate crimes were missing

from the reports, the police advised that they did not have figures to hand on this particular area of hate crime, however would source feedback on this to share at a future meeting. Officers went on to advise that the Safer Brent Partnership did explore data on hate crimes, however recent trends suggested there were more issues with right wing extremism rather than homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, however it was acknowledged that there was likely to be underreporting and as such it would be a priority to explore ways in which safe reporting avenues could be established and communicated to vulnerable communities.

- The Committee recognised the role as a ward councillor could be a powerful tool in increasing trust and confidence linking the community with local policing, particularly in light of the relationship between the community and law and order over the last few years. It was queried whether this could feature more prominently in the strategy. In response officers felt that the issue should be a major priority for the police to lead on to re-establish and build trust and confidence among the community. Tania Martin, Metropolitan Police added that as an organisation the Met understood their current position in the eyes of the public and the gravitas in ensuring a positive relationship with the community was established.
- In response to a Committee question with regard to how officers ensured that in agreeing the draft priorities engagement with stakeholders included disproportionately affected groups, officers assured the Committee that consultation was undertaken with a broad group of disproportionately affected individuals affected by crime including those affected by their vulnerability, substance misuse, discussion with the Young People's Forum and those involved in the Brent Youth Justice system.
- The Committee were further assured that the priorities were still in their draft stage, therefore officers were keen to reach out to as wide a group as possible to seek further contributions to the plan to ensure it was as effective as possible in addressing the needs and safety of the local community.
- The Committee reflected that it would be useful to re-establish links with health partners at Safer Brent Partnership meetings to support and advise with particular regard to mental health support and how a genuine effective mental health offer could be established for residents.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions before moving the meeting on to consider suggestions for improvement which were agreed as follows:

The Committee noted the following suggestions for improvement:

- i. For the Partnership to develop new proposals on how we specifically engage with communities in the crime hotspot areas identified in the Annual Report.
- ii. For the Partnership to look further into the statistics of Homophobic, Biphobic, Transphobic, and Islamophobic Hate Crime in Brent, and should there be a strong evidence base, include these areas within the strategic priorities of the Strategy and related delivery for 2023 – 2025.

- iii. For the Partnership to reinstate a health representative on the Safer Brent Partnership Board
- iv. For the Partnership to explore how to improve prove communications in promoting safe ways of reporting domestic violence.

As the meeting was approaching the 3 hour time limit the Chair was required to ask members if they were willing to apply the guillotine procedure under Standing Order 62 in order to extend the meeting for a period of 15 minutes in order to complete the business on the agenda. This was confirmed by Committee members and the meeting resumed.

9. Police Engagement in Brent

Tania Martin, MPS updated the Committee that following previous feedback there had been a recent push on revising the structure of Ward Panel meetings. It was recognised that Ward Panels provided the community and the Police with a positive opportunity to engage and work together, therefore it was felt there should be a high value placed in ensuring Ward Panels were running effectively. As a result of the revised structure a new Ward Panel handbook , terms of reference and Code of Conduct were also being used to support the effective running of Ward Panels. The Committee heard that there should be a maximum number of 25 participants at Panels covering a broad range of demographics to truly reflect the Community of each Ward. It was understood that there was disparity among the different Ward Panels in terms of numbers and diversity represented. In order to support the continued development of Ward Panels feedback was requested from Committee members.

The Committee provided the following feedback and points of discussion:

- There was a lack of consistency from one ward panel to another, some ward's had very small numbers of attendees and others were well attended. There were also some Ward Panel's taking place where the local Ward Councillor had not been invited to attend.
- It was felt that much of the success of the Panel was dictated by the approach and commitment of the Sergeants who ran each Panel. The Committee noted that ideally Ward Panels would become more aligned, however it was recognised that there had to be flexibility to reflect the differing characters of each Ward and each Sergeant running the Panels. Tania Martin, MPS confirmed that feedback would be shared across Ward Panels to continue to improve the process.
- In response to a Committee query regarding the best path Councillors should take to seek accurate information from the Police following a significant crime happening in their ward, the Committee were advised that inconsistent communication had been recognised as an issue previously, in an attempt to improve channels of communication, this type of information would now be accessible from an Operations Manager covering the BCU.

- Some Committee members felt it would be helpful to consider a different structure to Ward Panels whereby one meeting could scrutinise the police priorities within the ward and an additional Panel could be convened for attendees to flag issues they were concerned about within the local community. It was felt this would be more effective in allowing local residents to share their concern and without impeding on the discussions that were needed to scrutinise the ward. Tania Martin, MPS agreed to take this information to explore further with colleagues.

10. **Scrutiny Work Plan 2022/23 Update**

The Chair confirmed there had been some changes to the Scrutiny Work Plan agenda and minor amendments to the wording.

There would be an additional Resources & Public Realm meeting held on Tuesday 13 December 2022 to discuss redefining local services.

The Resources & Public Realm meeting in January 2023 would look at the Budget Task Group.

11. **Scrutiny Progress Update - Recommendations Tracker**

The Chair updated the Committee that suggestions previously made on the abuse of parking permits had been followed up by the relevant officers.

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Councillor Rita Conneely
Chair