



MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Tuesday 23 April 2024 at
6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Conneely (Chair), Councillor Long (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Akram, S Butt, Fraser, Georgiou, Miller, Mitchell, Molloy, J.Patel and Shah.

Also Present: Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) and Councillor Tatler (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth)

1. **Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members**

Apologies were received from Councillors Aden (with Councillor Molloy attending as substitute) and Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam (with Councillor Fraser attending as substitute).

2. **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor S.Butt and Akram both declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 – Regeneration in Brent as members of the Planning Committee.

No other declarations of interests were made at the meeting.

3. **Order of Business**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business on the agenda to enable the Scrutiny Progress Update – Recommendation Tracker (Agenda Item 8) to be considered as the first main item of business on the agenda. The minutes therefore reflect the order in which the items were dealt with at the meeting.

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 27 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

5. **Matters Arising (If Any)**

None.

6. **Deputations (If Any)**

There were no deputations considered at the meeting.

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

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) introduced the report presenting an updated version of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee recommendations Tracker.

Members were invited to comment on the updates provided, with the following issues raised:

(a) Shared Service Performance & Cyber Security

Having noted the additional response provided on 12 April 2024 regarding the progress in completion of the Data Protection Security Assessment by third party suppliers concern was expressed regarding the slippage in timescales, which the Committee AGREED should continue to be kept under review as part of the scrutiny work programme moving forward.

(b) Development of Brent Climate Action Data Dashboard

Having noted the response received on 10 April 2024 to the recommendations made by the Committee in February 2024 regarding clarification on the inclusion of additional monitoring information to provide wider comparisons to Inner and Outer London, Councillor Mitchell (in response to a request by the Chair) advised she would provide further detail on the additional measures being sought.

(c) Establishment of devolved Climate Advisory Forum

Having noted the response received on 10 April 2024 in relation to the proposed establishment of a devolved Climate Advisory Forum to monitor and provide feedback on delivery of the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy recommended by the Committee in February 2024, the Chair advised that whilst recognising the capacity and resources issues identified the Committee remained keen to advocate for more proactive involvement and engagement with residents around delivery of the strategy. On this basis, she advised the Committee would continue to monitor progress on the development of a more formal mechanism for resident engagement in the process.

(d) Contribution of Controlled Parking Zones towards Council's climate commitments

Having noted the response received on 5 April 2024 to the recommendations made in relation to the role of CPZs in contributing towards the Council's climate commitments, the Chair advised that the committee had felt further detail was required on the proposals raised and way in which it was felt CPZs could specifically contribute towards climate related objectives. As such it was AGREED that a further update be sought in relation to the originally issues raised by the Committee.

As no further issues were raised it was **AGREED** to note the updates provided within the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker, subject to the actions detailed above.

8. Regeneration In Brent

Councillor Tatler (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth) was invited to introduce a report providing an outline and update on delivery of the Regeneration programme across Brent, including the challenges that had arisen

over recent years in terms of the delivery of existing schemes and lessons learnt, focussed around the framework of the Council's eight growth areas and schemes within them. In presenting the report, Councillor Tatler highlighted the wide scope of regeneration activity across Brent and Council's role in setting the overall policy framework, context, capital programme and direction for growth, as part of the Local Plan with delivery subject to the necessary site assembly and construction procurement arrangements. The report had been focussed on a high-level approach towards delivery of the programme, with members advised that the Local Plan was supplemented by additional guidance in relation to issues such as affordable workspace, s106 obligations, sustainability and amenity space as well as related housing targets for each growth area supplemented by securing the necessary range of supporting grant funding.

In highlighting the overview of existing regeneration schemes across each growth area, including delivery against local plan targets for new homes, the Committee's attention was also drawn to the challenging financial and economic circumstances impacting on the ongoing viability of the programme, which members were advised also provided important context to the update and included issues relating to build cost inflation, interest rates, labour and construction skills costs and shortages, affordable housing grant rates, the overall funding landscape and constraints alongside the need for policy consistency from government. The position had been further impacted by additional requirements in relation to planning and building legislation and safety requirements and despite Brent being recognised as one of the largest areas for delivery of housing provision across London and seeking to learn and innovate in terms of its approach towards regeneration, these challenges had meant some schemes would not be able to proceed until financial viability improved.

Following on from presentation of the report, the Chair then invited Pete Firmin (representing local residents within the South Kilburn area) to address the Committee on progress with delivery of the estate regeneration programme in that area. Having thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak, Mr Firmin advised that the update provided for the Committee was not felt to have addressed the current issues facing delivery of the programme within South Kilburn. Citing the original Masterplan adopted in 2017 for redevelopment of the South Kilburn Growth Area he raised concerns that the current development was providing less than 50% social housing, which was outside of the original target set and which it was noted had the potential, given concerns around viability, to be reduced further to 20%-30% social housing provision, which it was felt would make meeting the commitment to existing residents more difficult to achieve. In addition, concerns were also highlighted in relation to build quality given problems reported with cladding, mould and heating with specific reference made to Swift Court and the lack of meaningful communication with residents on delays in project delivery such as those involving the Carlton Boulevard development.

Councillor Conneely (as Chair) thanked Mr Firmin for his contribution and attendance at the meeting advising that the issues raised would be picked up as part of the Committee's review of the update provided. With no further questions from members, the Committee then moved on to consider the update provided by Councillor Tatler on regeneration activity with the following comments and issues discussed.

- Whilst recognising the high-level nature of the overview provided concerns were expressed at the limited detail provided relating to progress on the delivery of specific schemes and lessons learnt in relation to the delivery of individual schemes. In noting the case examples provided within Appendix 1 of the report relating to a selection of schemes, members advised they were also keen to explore the timescales for delivery and wider viability issues impacting each scheme. Further detail was also requested on the reference, within the lessons learnt section of the update report, to some schemes not being able to proceed until financial viability had improved and what impact it was felt this would have on the capacity to deliver the Council's current regeneration and housing targets and strategy.

In response, Councillor Tatler felt it important to highlight the difficulties being experienced given the nature of the financial viability challenges identified not only in Brent but across the sector as a whole. Whilst committed to continue delivery against the affordable housing targets in Brent, she confirmed that this had meant some schemes had needed to be paused or reassessed involving consideration being given to the inclusion of different forms of tenure and affordable housing products and a wider range of development opportunities in order to maximise viability on schemes moving forward. Given the scale of the housing crisis it was no longer felt possible to address the challenges identified purely through the provision of social housing, with a wider approach required across all parts of the housing sector and more stability in terms of the governments overall policy framework. In terms of the specific reference to the South Kilburn Promise, confirmation was provided of the commitment towards the delivery of properties at affordable social rent, with over 60% of the programme having been completed, as well delivery of the Medical Centre, Carlton Boulevard scheme and green spaces. In response to a query regarding the figure of 44% included within the appendix of the report for affordable social rent, clarification was provided this only related to the Hereford & Exeter scheme. Reference was also made to specific site assembly and viability issues impacting on delivery of the Wembley Housing Zone scheme which had required a need for further agreement with the GLA on the grant funding provision under the Building Council Homes for London programme.

- Following on, the Chair advised that the Committee felt it would be useful if further details could be provided on the schemes which had been paused and those at risk due to the current viability assessment process, with Councillor Tatler explaining that the main schemes over which the Council had direct responsibility and control were the South Kilburn development and Wembley Housing Zone. As schemes within other growth areas involved land not directly owned by the Council these would be more difficult to provide status updates on. In terms of delivery of the New Council Homes Programme, the Committee were advised this fell under Councillor Knight's remit as Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Reform with a report having recently been provided for Cabinet updating on delivery of that programme.
- In response to further clarification being sought on the breakdown of units being provided within the South Kilburn development at affordable rents, Councillor Tatler confirmed that the new units were all being provided at affordable social rent levels which Councillor Georgiou (as the member who

raised the query) advised he would seek further detail to clarify following the meeting.

- Further details were sought on the potential impact the proposal put forward by the Mayor for London to create a publicly owned Development Corporation may have in terms of ongoing delivery of the Council's regeneration programme. In response, Councillor Tatler advised that whilst likely to have more benefit for boroughs with smaller scale development programmes anything that was likely to enhance the approach towards delivery on a London wide basis and reduce costs was welcomed, as long as Brent's needs were listened to, and Brent could meaningfully contribute.
- Whilst noting the examples of existing regeneration schemes provided within Appendix 1 of the report the Committee highlighted the limited details provided on individual scheme delivery highlighting, as an example, that the details provided on the Hereford & Exeter scheme within the South Kilburn development accounted for 250 out of a total of 2000 homes to be delivered under the overall South Kilburn growth area scheme. The Committee therefore requested that as part of their ongoing review further detailed breakdowns on individual scheme delivery and progress be provided. In response, Councillor Tatler felt it important to remind the Committee of the high-level nature of the update provided, with further details available, as and when specifically requested on individual schemes.
- Moving on, details were then sought as to whether (given the current economic climate) any alternative funding models had been considered outside of private developer contributions especially for schemes with potential viability issues in order to avoid compromising on the level of affordable housing and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liability within individual schemes. In response, Councillor Tatler advised that alternative models of funding had been explored with the Council constantly looking to identify innovative solutions given the current economic pressures and challenges identified in order to ensure schemes remained viable and avoided the need for any compromise in terms of delivery and the investment return. Highlighting the Council's strong record in the generation and collection of CIL receipts, their importance in contributing towards wider community infrastructure projects across the borough as well as the Mayor of London's strategic responsibilities (including transport and infrastructure commitments) was also recognised as key requirements in delivery of the regeneration programme.
- Following on from the previous point, clarification was also sought on any benchmarking undertaken with other local authorities regarding the approach towards funding and viability impacting on the delivery of schemes, recognising that the issues were not unique to Brent and being experienced on a pan London basis. Whilst recognising the value of collaborative working and outlining the work being undertaken between the housing, regeneration and planning teams across the Council and also with other local authorities through organisations such as the West London Alliance and the Deputy Mayor for London, Councillor Tatler also felt it important to highlight the progressive and ambitious nature of the regeneration programme within Brent, which the Council remained keen to ensure they retained responsibility for

delivery on at the same time as working to develop opportunities (such as the West London Orbital route) in partnership with other authorities and partners.

- Clarification was also provided on the position regarding the CIL contribution generated through the Hereford & Exeter Scheme within South Kilburn with members advised of the ongoing viability challenges affecting the scheme. It was noted these included the requirement to include a second staircase in blocks over seven floors in height which had also increased pressures in relation to construction and design costs impacting on viability and also the number of housing units that could be included within a scheme. It was confirmed that work was ongoing with developers in relation to individual schemes to see whether proposals such as building higher (where appropriate) may be able to improve viability.
- Continuing on the theme of funding and viability, a query was raised in relation to the transparency of the commercial agreements and arrangements being entered into with developers, with particular reference to social value requirements. In terms of the planning application process, officers confirmed that details of the viability assessments supporting each application presented to Planning Committee were included within reports, although these details would need to exclude any information classified as commercial sensitive. Whilst keen to maximise the potential to deliver Affordable Housing and social value within each scheme, officers highlighted the balance needing to be achieved in order to ensure the largest number of developments were able to progress and remain viable in the current economic climate with Brent felt to have one of the most transparent processes in terms of the viability assessments undertaken.

In response to examples provided of the original proportion of affordable housing proposed within schemes being reduced as schemes were progressed and to the increasing pressure on delivery targets, Councillor Tatler assured members of the Council's ongoing commitment towards its overall target for the delivery of affordable housing across the borough. In outlining the review process, officers advised that the initial requirements for delivery of affordable social housing within individual schemes would be included with the relevant s106 agreement with developments also subject to a review mechanism designed to secure the maximum possible contributions towards affordable housing as schemes were progressed, in order to recognise any change in position regarding their viability. Given the challenging nature of the current economic climate there had been a need, in some cases, for developers to reevaluate the viability of individual schemes and seek changes as a result in the proportion of affordable social housing included to enable the scheme to progress. In these circumstances there would be a need to seek approval to any change in the original permission granted.

- Referring to the requirements in relation to the time limited nature of grant funding being provided through the GLA Affordable Homes Programme and delays in delivery of schemes being created by the wider macro-economic and viability challenges identified, details were requested on a breakdown of individual schemes where the grant funding requirement had been impacted

as a result of any delay in delivery. Given the detail required, Councillor Tatler advised this information would need to be provided following the meeting.

- Given the issues highlighted, the Committee advised they were also keen to explore whether there was need to reconsider the overall approach identified towards strategic regeneration in Brent with a focus, as an example on refurbishment rather than replacement across the growth areas identified. In response, Councillor Tatler felt the approach outlined in the report still remained viable highlighting that many of the schemes involved Infill or new developments rather than replacement of existing stock.
- Referring to section 3.4.1 of the accompanying report circulated with the agenda, members, whilst noting the breakdown of affordable housing units provided, felt it was difficult to assess delivery without the provision of further supporting benchmarking and contextual information including the number of properties being delivered as social housing against the targets and how that compared with other local authorities. In response the Committee were advised that it was Councillor Knight (as Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) that would be best placed to advise on specific delivery against housing targets with the overall target in Brent based on requirements within the London and Brent's own Local Plan which related not only to social housing, but also a wide range of other tenures making it more difficult to benchmark against.

Following on from this issue, members highlighted a need for what they felt was a more joined up approach between the relevant lead member portfolios in the presentation of detail to the Committee around the approach towards regeneration and delivery of housing targets. In addressing these concerns, Councillor Tatler clarified the distinction between both the Regeneration, Planning and Growth and Housing portfolios and high level of joined up working at both a policy, planning and operational delivery level between both lead Cabinet Members alongside the regeneration, housing delivery and planning teams.

- Continuing the focus on delivery of Affordable Housing targets, members advised they would be keen to seek a further breakdown of the figures in section 3.4.1 of the report in terms of targets and delivery against the different recognised sub sets of Affordable Housing across the borough which Councillor Tatler advised it would be possible to provide based on annual returns the local authority was required to produce.
- The Committee then moved on to focus on the effectiveness of regeneration schemes as a whole and impact more widely in terms of large-scale developments within growth areas working for local residents and communities and providing the necessary supporting infrastructure. In confirming that she remained proud of the Council's record in terms of the delivery of regeneration across the borough, Councillor Tatler highlighted a number of the wider associated benefits not only in terms of supporting infrastructure but also the creation of employment, skills and training opportunities. At the same time, however the need was recognised to ensure local residents were better aware and more fully engaged in the development of these initiatives and opportunities e.g. through the use of Resident Panels

and other mechanisms such as the Church End Community Engagement project to capture views locally. In responding to concerns which it was reported had been expressed by local residents regarding delivery of associated infrastructure improvements, particularly in the Alperton and South Kilburn areas, relating to transport, the delivery and maintenance of public realm and health facilities Councillor Tatler highlighted that whilst the delivery of associated infrastructure was secured through planning and the relevant s106 and CIL agreements this would also rely on the relevant partners such as health and TfL. In terms of maintenance, whilst providing the necessary capital funding to deliver the improvements identified revenue funding support would also be required to support ongoing maintenance which remained an issue given the limited funding support being provided for the public sector as a result of the impact of the government's programme of austerity. In recognising the issues highlighted, the Committee identified what they felt was the need to explore in more detail the lessons learnt through the delivery of large-scale developments and management of associated infrastructure in order to inform future developments. In seeking to assure members, Councillor Tatler advised these were issues already being considered alongside wider challenges such as the impact of the climate emergency and current working patterns as part of a process of ongoing evaluation which also included the approach towards design, construction and funding of individual schemes, the management of estates and delivery of relevant employment and training opportunities.

- As part of the discussions details were also sought on the limited use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) to support site assembly and also on the impact of marketing being undertaken by local developers for new build developments given the potential concerns in relation to the impact in driving up property prices and rents. Whilst highlighting that the marketing of private developments was not something the Council had direct control over and would not have any impact on level of social housing being delivered, as this was secured through separate planning agreements, Councillor Tatler took the opportunity to highlight the ongoing work with developers to focus on the delivery of other elements of regeneration activity such as job and employment opportunities with the main influence on the delivery of numbers of affordable housing units remaining the viability issues currently impacting on delivery of individual schemes rather than the nature of different tenures included.

In terms of CPOs Councillor Tatler highlighted the complex and lengthy nature of the process, which was why they had often only been used as a last resort for large scale development schemes and the need identified to streamline the process in order to make it more effective.

- In terms of the wider impact of development across the private rented sector at also increasing property value and rents, Councillor Tatler felt it important to recognise the contribution made by private developments in terms enhancing the supply of housing across the borough with the key issue remaining the need to address the pressures in supply and demand as a means of addressing affordability alongside the need to tackle inflation and impact on the cost of living and wages etc. Reflecting on the issues raised, members

also highlighted a need to ensure the type of housing being provided represented identified demand.

- Reference was then made to the inclusion of community space and facilities within regeneration schemes including not only those on land owned by the Council but also in private schemes secured through planning agreement with members keen to encourage (wherever possible) that additional community space was incorporated into current and future regeneration plans. In terms of specific concerns relating to the Yellow Community facility in Wembley Park, members were advised that whilst the site was not owned by the Council alternative community space provision was due to be provided within the site development.
- As a further issue, members welcomed the reference made to Affordable Workspace and sought details on the type of land use involved and consideration being given to the different types of workspaces required. In terms of the different types of employment space being secured, members were advised this would reflect the nature of the different employment sectors including the predominance of small and medium-term businesses supported through Town Centre Managers across the borough and also efforts made to encourage the arts and creative sector and to encourage the intensification of use in recognised industrial sites such as Park Royal.
- The opportunity was also taken to highlight issues relating to build quality not only in terms of schemes being delivered directly through the Council but also through private developers and how it would be possible to deliver the highest standards along with clear accountability for maintenance including Registered Providers. In recognising the importance of this issue, Councillor Tatler highlighted the work already being undertaken by Councillor Knight (under her housing remit) in seeking to work with Registered Providers and hold them to account alongside the work being undertaken through the Development Control and Building Enforcement Teams to secure a high standard of design and build quality through the planning process supported through the Local Plan and SPD on Sustainable Design. In terms of further action, the Committee was advised that any further ideas or proposals in order to support build quality would be welcome.

In closing the discussion, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions and in highlighting the process as the start of the discussion outlined the wide ranging nature of the issues to be covered in relation to individual scheme delivery, lessons learnt and challenges in relation to viability. In view of the issues highlighted during the discussion the actions agreed as an initial outcome of the scrutiny process were **AGREED** as follows:

Recommendations to the Executive

- (1) Working alongside the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Councils to develop a unified London building standard with stricter quality measures than required by current legislation and regulations.
- (2) To call on London Councils to establish a unified agreement across London boroughs seeking a consistent methodology for assessing affordable housing.

- (3) Lobby the next government to increase the obligation on the private sector to deliver more affordable homes

Suggestions for Improvement to Council Departments

- (1) To incorporate plans for additional community spaces into current and future Council regeneration projects.
- (2) Where appropriate, and consistent with the adopted Local Plan, to negotiate for additional community space within private developments in the borough.
- (3) To identify opportunities for implementing additional mechanisms that ensure private developers meet high quality standards (as set out in the adopted Local Plan and associated SPD Design Guidance) and are more accountable to both residents and the Council.
- (4) To provide a member briefing session on viability assessments, covering key topics such as affordable housing and social value.
- (5) To review the viability assessment criteria for council-owned housing schemes to include consideration of the Council's reduced housing benefit costs (e.g. by not accruing Housing Subsidy Loss) as a result of residents being moved from temporary accommodation into permanent social housing accommodation.

Information Requests

- (1) To provide a breakdown of the amount of affordable housing units (by housing product type) delivered since 2020/21.
- (2) To provide further detail on the Council's affordable housing targets (broken down by affordable housing product type).
- (3) To provide further detail (including examples) of where site assembly has presented challenges for the Council, and if possible, how much costs have been incurred over the last 10 years, as a result of these challenges.

9. Redefining Local Services (RLS) Contracts

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) was invited to present a report that updated the Committee on the first year (2023/24) performance of the Redefining Local Services (RLS) programme service contracts relating to Highways services, Parking enforcement, Integrated waste and recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, winter gritting, and Grounds maintenance. In introducing the report, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that the report included contextual background information on the RLS programme alongside details on the implementation and performance of each contract over their first year of operation.

Following the initial overview of the report, contributions, comments and questions were sought from the Committee, with the subsequent discussion summarised below:

- Having reviewed the performance data provided, details were sought on whether there were plans for this to be provided and made more accessible for the public in an open data format, which Councillor Krupa Sheth advised she would be willing to take away as a proposal for further consideration.
- Referring to section 5.1 of the report provided for the Committee, further details were sought on the original vision which had emerged alongside the RLS commissioning process to achieve greater integration of back-office functions in order to support the creation of a digitally and data-led, streamlined and customer focussed system involving more integrated working across services and how far this had been implemented across departments and systems. In response, the Committee was advised of the establishment of a new dedicated back-office support function across Public Realm designed to support the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing contracts using data supplied through the Fix my Street App as a means of assisting to shape delivery of the service. It was confirmed that the system was also able to share data with other divisions and contractors.
- In highlighting the key priorities initially identified when establishing the RLS programme (as set out in section 3.1 of the report provided for the Committee) including the creation of a clean, green environment and to fully engage with local communities to understand their needs, members were keen to explore if it was felt the new contracts had been successful in achieving the stated objectives. Whilst recognising that the new contracts had required time to bed in, it was felt the time taken for this process had been effective with positive results now starting to be identified for example in relation to clean and green environmental and social value benefits including the planting of trees, sustainability projects, enhanced community engagement and greening of the Council's fleet vehicles. Councillor Krupa Sheth also highlighted work being undertaken to review the provision of enforcement activity and campaigns.
- The Committee then moved on to focus on waste collection and recycling as part of the Integrated street cleansing, waste collection and winter maintenance contract and action being taken to address the high level of complaints regarding the poor quality of the blue sacks provided for paper and cardboard as part of the twin stream fibre recycling process along with operation of the service by the contractor. In acknowledging and recognising the initial concerns raised, Councillor Krupa Sheth supported by officers advised that in order to address the quality issues highlighted a new supplier had now been secured for provision of the blue sacks. Overall, the move to a twin stream fibre recycling process was still felt to have been appropriate given the cost-effective nature of the option, value provided in being able to reduce levels of contamination in the waste stream and associated opportunity to increase income from the sale of the recycled material. It was confirmed that whilst not all blue sacks had been replaced those residents who had reported or requested a new sack had been provided with them. Details were also sought on the trial previously recommended for consideration in relation to the provision of a wheelie bin rather than blue sack, where requested by

residents as an alternative under the twin stream fibre recycling scheme. In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that work was ongoing in relation to implementation of the trial which it was anticipated would commence in September.

In addition to concerns regarding the quality of the sacks provided, members sought further details on the action being taken to address issues regarding performance in relation to collection of the sacks by the contractor. Once again, these concerns had been recognised with Councillor Krupa Sheth advising that where complaints or issues were raised these were being fed back to the contractor with spot checks being undertaken supported by a programme of staff retraining to ensure the necessary process and practices were being followed. Members were encouraged to report any further specific issues so these could be reviewed and investigated.

- Highlighting an increase in the residual waste stream during October 2023 identified within Appendix 4b of the report to the Committee, and reduction in paper and card accepted during the same period, members sought further detail on whether this was related to introduction of the twin recycling scheme and, if so, how it had been addressed. In response, members were advised that this involved a number of different factors with it noted that during the first year of the contract less recycling had been extracted from collections than in previous years. Whilst partly related to the change in contract and service, other factors which members were advised needed to be taken into account included the cost-of-living crisis meaning people were spending and buying less therefore generating less packaging with producers also being more environmentally conscious and selling their goods with less packaging. Another key change had involved the switch to a different Material Recovery Facility (MCF) which operated on a different and stricter set of acceptance criteria to the previous MCF, meaning that more recycling had initially been rejected before it went through the processing stage. This had also been accentuated with paper and card being removed from the total recyclable material presented, therefore making the contaminants within the recycling stream become more apparent as the paper and card made up a significant percentage of the tonnage. To counter this, the contractor (Veolia) had been asked to split communal collections from kerbside collections as the bulk of the contamination came from communal rounds supported by an active behavioural change program to work on communal rounds designed to improve recycling rates. In terms of the impact on costs, members were advised that as a result of the reduction in contamination of paper and card going to an alternative specialist re-processor, it had been possible to mitigate for any additional costs incurred from higher rejected loads. The rise in yields now being experienced had also provided a higher rebate value than if it were to go through a regular MRF with costs associated with residual waste managed through existing revenue streams meaning the new arrangements had met budget requirements.

In response to a query regarding the current income being generated through the sale of recycled paper and card members were advised that whilst overall waste tonnage had decreased it had still been possible to generate improved income for the levels of recycled material collected given the low levels of

contamination and reduced processing costs meaning the scheme was still able to operate within budget.

- In noting the details provided within the report on plans to address the behavioural change required to support improvement in recycling rates and to reduce contamination in waste collections further details were sought on the approach being taken and targeted resident engagement strategies. As a starting point, members were advised of the move towards a more data led approach involving a focus on key contaminants identified within the waste stream at the MRF, bins being tagged as contaminated by collection crews, repeat offenders being highlighted and contacted or visited by recycling officers and work to address communal contamination within flats or HMOs in partnership with the managing agents/caretakers. In terms of developments planned for 2024-25 members were advised these included round by round contamination checks using a camera at the recycling facility to provide data on those rounds highly contaminated in order to target outreach and communications, a bespoke communication plan for HMO's, the introduction of bin lid stickers with key contaminants and QR codes for further information and call to action, the development of data to identify and target hot spots as well as a targeted communication campaign to identify common contaminants with the use of AI also being considered to support the overall approach towards mapping and targeting future campaigns.
- Reflecting on the issues highlighted in relation to communal housing and HMOs members queried whether better utilisation of data held through the Landlord Licensing Scheme may be able to assist improving waste management associated with those properties for example through the targeted provision of access to the relevant number and type of collection bins and to identify landlords in breach of their agreements. In response, the Committee was advised that available data was already subject to review supported by a system of site visits and work with the relevant managing agents to understand capacity needs. It was confirmed that use of data available through the Landlord Licensing Scheme to support that process could also be considered working in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security, which the Committee advised they would, as previously highlighted, be keen to see progressed.
- As a further issue, details were sought on the information available for households living in flats above retail premises regarding waste management and recycling arrangements. In response, members were advised that guidance and information was already available and provided for those households living above retail premises with further work and research already identified in relation to waste management and recycling behaviour in and around commercial and retail properties.
- Highlighting the changes made in relation to outsourcing of the Bulky Waste service and new eligibility criteria being established for free collections an update was sought on whether it had been possible to expand the criteria beyond those claiming Council Tax Support. In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that it had been possible to expand the criteria which now included a wider range of welfare benefits including those claiming Housing

Benefit, Income related Job Seekers Allowance, Pension Credit, Income Support and the housing element of Universal Credit.

- The Committee then moved on to focus on street cleansing with members referring to previous concerns raised on the move to an intelligence led approach and additional concerns highlighted in relation to the current cleanliness of streets across the borough. As a result, an assessment was sought as to how effective it was felt the current intelligence led approach had been in terms of street cleansing performance. In reminding members of the objective behind introduction of the new approach in relation to providing a more cost effective, flexible and responsive service, the Committee was advised the new arrangements had involved not only changes to street cleaning frequencies but also the introduction of six rapid response teams covering the five Brent connects area with cleansing performance in line with the expected standards compared to the previous regime. The approach was supported by Neighbourhood Managers undertaking “proactive inspections” to assess street cleansing standards and flag any areas that needed improvement. To help facilitate the Intelligence led street cleansing approach, a new reporting tool Fix My Street (replacing Love Clean Streets) had been introduced. Based on the information being received through Fix My Street and from proactive inspections, the cleansing schedule was being regularly reviewed to target hot spot areas. As a result, the new intelligence led approach was felt to be working effectively involving a system of data capture that enabled a focus on areas receiving the highest number of reports as a means of targeting the most efficient use of street cleansing resource supported by the introduction of the Rapid Response Teams to provide a more flexible, proactive, and rapid response.

In noting the reliance on reporting to focus the targeting of resources, members queried whether this was likely to benefit more affluent areas of the borough based on residents access and use of the Fix my Street App, which officers did not feel to be the case based on the areas in which resources were being deployed as a result. Members were also reminded of the use of Neighbourhood Managers to proactively identify issues in addition to data generated through the App. In support of the issue highlighted, members felt it would be useful to receive a heat map outlining report locations with breakdowns by issue type, user type (e.g. resident, councillor, neighbourhood manager etc), and ward being reported through the Fix my Street App, which Councillor Krupa Sheth advised officers would be asked to investigate providing.

- Focussing on the user friendliness of the Fix My Street App members took the opportunity to highlight the number of outstanding jobs compared to the number of reports raised, as detailed within Table 9 of Appendix 4b within the report provided for the Committee and sought further details on the reasons for any blockages along with a breakdown of data on reports initiated but not submitted on the ‘Fix My Street’ application. In clarifying the position, officers advised that the completed jobs listed involved cases which had been resolved and closed with those not completed often involving the case being transferred to a separate department for action, which was not recorded in the data. In terms of overall user experience of the Fix my Street App members highlighted varying feedback which officers advised would be included as part

of a more comprehensive review being undertaken and on which further member input would be welcome, including ways to improve data utilisation to enhance street cleaning operations.

- In response to a query regarding the recent publication of data showing Brent as one of the boroughs with the highest levels of fly-tipping Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that this was partly explained by an increase in reporting alongside the way data was collected and reported by other comparable local authorities with officers also continuing to evaluate and refine the approach towards enforcement supported by associated communication campaigns.
- Moving on to review performance on the Parking Enforcement contract, reference was made to the service improvements outlined in Appendix 1 which included (as part of a new enforcement plan for the borough) areas with a higher number of contraventions being visited on a more frequent basis for enforcement activity. As a result, further details were sought on the impact this had had on the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) being issued with numbers expected to increase from 182,000 in 2022-23 to over 220,000 in 2023-24 along with the accompanying impact on income being generated as a result. In response, members were advised of the improvements which it had been possible to deliver through the enforcement plan including an increase in the number of enforcement hours across the borough which had led to an overall increase in income generated (including all sources) for the Parking Place Revenue Account (PPRA). In response to a further query regarding enforcement activity outside of normal hours, members were advised that arrangements were in place to regularly target specific locations including those areas with a night time or weekend economy or town centres, such as Kingsbury.

In clarifying the basis on which the contract for parking enforcement had been awarded, confirmation was provided that payments were not structured around the number of PCNs issued and had been based on rates for specific enforcement activity and performance standards. Referring to the other London Boroughs for which Martson (NSL) also worked as parking enforcement contractor, details were sought on the potential for any cross-boundary activity which members were advised would require specific reciprocal arrangements with Brent having their own dedicated team.

- In commenting on the robustness of current parking enforcement measures, the difference in practices operated across other London Boroughs was highlighted including PCNs becoming enforceable as soon as completed (enabling them to be served via post) rather than having to be physically issued, as was the current position in Brent, and which it was felt may improve adherence to parking restrictions across the borough. In confirming that the issue of PCNs via post was permissible members were advised that the current approach towards the enforcement regime across Brent operated in accordance with the London Code of Practice for Parking Enforcement with the use of postal PCNs also reliant on the DVLA for the supply of relevant details. In view of the issues raised, however, members advised they would be keen to receive further detail on the comparison of postal PCNs being issued by other London boroughs along with a review on the potential to issue postal PCNs within Brent when they could not be issued physically

incorporating data on the number of PCNs initiated but not issued and the most common reasons for not issuing them along with opportunities for improvement.

- In response to further details being sought on the tender process undertaken for award of the cashless parking service contract clarification was provided on the reasons behind the contract needing to be reprocedured which had followed a legal challenge on the original award, with RingGo subsequently being awarded the final contract. The use of reminder emails for permit renewals and enhancements to the purchase of permits and visitor parking were also clarified alongside continued use of on-street payment parking services.
- Turning attention to the Grounds Maintenance contract, concerns were raised regarding specific examples of poor performance by the current contractor in maintaining sports facilities as part of the contract which appeared to contradict with the statement in Appendix 3 of the report provided for the Committee regarding the positive feedback received on the quality of the service. As a result, the Committee requested further detail on how resident and user feedback was incorporated into monitoring the performance of the Grounds Maintenance Contract, particularly regarding the upkeep of football, rugby, cricket, Gaelic football pitches, and bowling greens within Brent Parks with Councillor Krupa Sheth advising that whilst feedback had been based on comments provided through Friends of the Park Groups she would ask officers to investigate the specific example raised during the meeting regarding the East Lane sports pitch.
- As a final issue, attention was also drawn to the performance of the Highways Maintenance contractor (O Hara Bros) in relation to the percentage of category 2 defects being repaired on time with further details requested on the action being taken to address the issue. Details were also sought on the escalation process that could be followed when reporting concerns regarding damage and repairs required to footways, with the example provided of concerns relating to Willesden Hight Street. Officers confirmed that members could raise these issues direct however, given the constraints on resources, each request would need to be assessed on the basis of high, medium or low risk and repairs actioned accordingly. Whilst those assessed as high risk would receive an immediate response the funds available to deal with the remainder of repairs would be allocated based on the risk identified.

At this stage in proceedings, the Committee agreed to apply the guillotine procedure under Standing Order 62(c) in order to extend the meeting for a period of 5 minutes to enable conclusion of the item and remaining business on the agenda.

In bringing the consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and members for their contributions towards scrutiny of the item and as a result of the outcome of the discussion the requests for additional information and suggestions for improvement identified as a result were **AGREED** as follows:

Suggestions for Improvement to Council Departments

- (1) To explore utilising data from the Landlord Licensing Scheme in order to provide the correct amount/types of bins needed per household.
- (2) To investigate incentive programmes for parking enforcement officers in comparison with other local authorities to establish whether this has led to more effective parking enforcement.
- (3) Consideration be given to optimising resource allocation on the 'Fix My Street' application to facilitate timely responses to complaints and case closure.
- (4) To list instructions on the 'Fix My Street' application for users to escalate/challenge responses that they are unsatisfied with.

Information Requests

- (1) To provide detail on whether there are any plans to make performance data for all RLS contracts more accessible to the public in an open data format, and if so, by when.
- (2) To provide more detailed information on the action the Council is taking to address O Hara Bros' poor performance in repairing category 2 defects.
- (3) To provide data comparison of postal penalty charge notice (PCN) issuance volumes with other London boroughs.
- (4) To provide information on the approach taken by Brent for posting PCNs when enforcement officers cannot issue (e.g. the vehicle drives away), data on the number of PCNs initiated but not issued and the most common reasons for not issuing them, and opportunities for improvement.
- (5) To explain how resident and user feedback is incorporated into monitoring the performance of the Grounds Maintenance Contract, particularly regarding the upkeep of football, rugby, cricket, Gaelic football pitches, and bowling greens within Brent Parks
- (6) To provide data on the reports initiated but not submitted on the 'Fix My Street' application and to provide a 'Fix My Street' heatmap visualising report locations with breakdowns by issue type, user type (e.g. resident, councillor, neighbourhood manager etc), and ward.

10. Committee Work Programme 2023/24

As this was the final meeting of the current Municipal Year members noted that Committee Work Programme without comment.

11. Any Other Urgent Business

No items of urgent business were identified. Prior to closing the meeting the Chair took the opportunity to thank all members of the Committee for their efforts and support over the previous year noting that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 17 July 2024.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

COUNCILLOR RITA CONNEELY
Chair