



**Full Council**  
19 November 2012

**Report from the Director of Strategy  
Partnership and Improvement**

For Action

Wards Affected:  
All

**Report from the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the overview and scrutiny committees in accordance with Standing Order 14 and covers the period since the last Full Council meeting in September 2012.

**2.0 Detail**

One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1 The committee last met on 16 October 2012 and members considered reports on the following:
- 2.2 The Complaints Annual Report was presented to the committee and members were advised that the implementation of the revised 2 stage complaints procedure has been successful with nine out of ten complaints being successfully resolved at the first stage. Members' questions focussed on how complaints were used for service improvement, compensations payments, and the implementation of a new corporate database. Members were particularly concerned about the response time for children and families and adult social care complaints but were informed that an action plan had been developed in conjunction with the service to build capacity and improve performance.
- 2.3 The committee received a presentation highlighting the vision for the Working with Families Initiative and an update on the project so far. Members raised questions regarding the budget for the project, how families were selected to participate in the project, how this initiative

would differ from previous work and how the council could ensure that partners were fully engaged.

- 2.4 Members of the committee also discussed the Performance and Finance Report for Quarter 1. Queries were raised regarding a number of indicators linking them to progress against relevant One Council projects, particularly in relation to Special Educational Needs. The committee also requested that new indicators relating to adoption in the borough were considered. The committee will be receiving a full update on the One Council Programme at its next meeting.

#### Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.5 The committee last met on 11 October 2012 and members considered reports on the following:
- 2.6 The chair of Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) informed members that the 2 year term of office for the current BYP members was drawing to a close and elections would be held on 17 November 2012. Work that was currently being undertaken to strengthen the link between BYP and schools had resulted in a greater number of nominations for those elections. The committee was reminded that the opening of the Roundwood Youth Centre would be on 1 November. Representatives of the NHS and Safeguarding Team attended a recent BYP meeting to consult with young people about mental health and medical issues, when bullying was singled out as an area of particular concern. The issue of gangs has been highlighted by the UK Youth Parliament as an area of concern and this will be debated at a meeting in the House of Commons on 27 November 2012.
- 2.7 The committee discussed a report that set out progress against the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection Action Plan. Members raised concerns about the level of funding for children's centres particularly following the loss of Sure Start funding. Further discussion by members focussed around training for social workers, the council's responsibility parameters for Looked after Children (LAC) and the representation of LAC on bodies such as the BYP to ensure they are being heard.
- 2.8 The committee received a report on the Child Poverty Strategy 2011 – 2021. The Child Poverty Act 2010 required all local authorities to produce a strategy following a child poverty needs assessment. Members heard that this was a high level strategy that set out key objectives and priorities of the council and partner agencies and was linked to other strategies. Members raised concerns about how the strategy would be implemented and monitored and how the council and partners could ensure joined up and co-ordinated approach to decisions that affect the lives of children. The committee will closely follow the implementation of the strategy.

#### Budget and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.9 The Budget and Finance Overview & Scrutiny Committee has met twice since the last report to Full Council.

- 2.10 On 11 September the committee received a presentation from the Director of Regeneration and Major Projects which set out the budget pressures and issues facing the department and the main areas of capital spend. Members spent some time focusing on the impact of welfare reform particularly in relation to homeless applications and acceptances, the numbers in temporary accommodation and preventative actions that the council can take. How the council could access unspent Section 106 was a key area of discussion with members seeking assurance that ward level data would be made available. The two areas of capital spend that dominated the committee's questions were the schools programme and the Civic Centre. Members were pleased to learn that a full governance process for each capital project was now in place. The Committee also received an update on the budget which centred on the Local Government Resource Review.
- 2.11 On 9 October the committee received a presentation which highlighted the Environment and Neighbourhood department's current budget position, budget pressures and issues. Areas of concern for members were the cost of waste going to landfill, income levels particularly from the sign shop, One Council savings targets and the structural issues that were being addressed within the department's budget. The committee also received an update on the council's current budget position included information on the actions being put in place to address in year budget pressures. Members focussed on the underlying budget pressures, the delay in the announcement of the local government settlement, the economic climate and the impact of the proposal from the government to freeze council tax for a further year.

#### Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.12 The Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 17 October 2012 and received a presentation on Brent's multi-agency data hub which included the latest data from the census. Members' questions focussed on the implications for the council in terms of raising demand for housing, employment and income levels in the borough, future projections for school places and the impact of predictions for health and adult social care.
- 2.13 The Chief Executive of CVS Brent attended the meeting to present a progress report on the objective of the organisation and the developing infrastructure support for the voluntary sector in Brent. Members spent some time discussing progress to improve the capacity of local civic society, partnership work with local and regional statutory and non statutory partners, and the ability to attract funding from external funders.
- 2.14 The committee received a presentation on the voluntary sector in Brent. This included a breakdown of the number, size and focus on organisations in Brent as well as funding and governance arrangements. Members were concerned about the low level of external funding that was being attracted into the borough in

comparison to other local authorities. The committee felt that councillors could play a key role in signposting organisations in their area to CVS Brent for support in governance and capacity building.

### Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.15 The Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 9 October 2012 and considered a report on the closure of Accident and Emergency (A&E) services at Central Middlesex Hospital overnight. The service has been closed between 7pm and 8am for around a year, and despite efforts by North West London Hospitals Trust to recruit more doctors to staff the A&E, they are not able to employ the doctors needed to run Northwick Park and Central Middlesex A&Es overnight. The committee felt there was little option but to endorse the Trust's position that the A&E remains closed overnight for a further year, with a review in six months time.
- 2.16 This item related to the Committee's response to the Shaping a Healthier Future consultation on service reconfiguration in North West London. The NHS is proposing to close the A&E at Central Middlesex Hospital for good. The committee felt that a strong clinical case for change has been made by NHS North West London and that health services needed to be reconfigured to secure better outcomes for patients. That said members felt it was important that effort is focussed on the successful implementation of the borough's Out of Hospital Care Strategy before the reconfiguration of acute services is completed. Changes to the acute sector are dependent on improvements in primary care. It is also important that the services to be provided from Central Middlesex Hospital in the future are confirmed as soon as possible. Work should begin with local communities to spell out what the future is for the site so they can be reassured their health and wellbeing won't be adversely affected by the changes. The decisions on Shaping a Healthier Future will be made in February 2013.
- 2.17 The committee also considered a report on the council's plans for public health. Although members supported the proposal to integrate public health services within existing council teams across the authority, they did not endorse the recommendation that the council shares a Director of Public Health with Hounslow Council. The Executive will be considering a final report on this in November 2012, and will have sight of the scrutiny committee's recommendations on this matter.

### **3.0 Financial Implications**

3.1 None

### **4.0 Legal Implications**

4.1 None

### **5.0 Diversity Implications**

5.1 None

## **6.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

6.1 None

### **Contact Officers**

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