



Full Council
21 September 2022

**Report from Director Engagement,
Strategy & Communications**

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Chair's Report

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| Wards Affected: | All |
| Key or Non-Key Decision: | Council |
| Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act) | Open |
| No. of Appendices: | Five Appendix 1 Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker Appendix 2 Wembley Events Management report from Resident Services (19 July 2022) Appendix 3 Cost of Living Crisis report from Resident Services (6 September 2022) Appendix 4 Deputation received from Mr Phillip Grant RE: Poverty Commission item at Committee Meeting, 9 March 2022. Appendix 5 Committee Work Programme 2022-23 |
| Background Papers: | None |
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1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present Full Council with a report providing updates on the meetings and activities of the Resources and Public Realm Committee since the last Full Council meeting on 11 July 2022.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the updates from the Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.

3 Detail

- 3.1. Brent Council has two scrutiny committees; the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. The Council is also a member of the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC).
- 3.2. A scrutiny committee can look at anything which affects the borough or its inhabitants, subject to its remit.
- 3.3. Brent Council Standing Orders allow for the chairs of the scrutiny committees to report to ordinary Council meetings on the activities of their committees¹.

The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

- 3.4. The remit of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee is set out in the Council Constitution under the Terms of Reference for scrutiny committees². The remit of the Committee includes:

Corporate policy, partnerships and resources; Budget; Customer services; Commercial services; Planning policy; Environmental policy; Public realm; Employment and skills; IT; Recycling; Regeneration; Transport and highways; Community safety; Property; Emergency planning and business continuity.

- 3.5. The Committee is also the Council's "crime and disorder committee" for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006 and as such may review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of the crime and disorder functions by the responsible authorities (as defined by section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) who make up the Safer Brent Partnership, in order to make reports or recommendations to Full Council.

¹ Brent Council Constitution, Part 2, paragraph 36.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s123308/Part%202%20April%202022%20Procedural%20Rules.pdf>

² Brent Council Constitution Part 4.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s123310/Part%204%20May%202022%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20.pdf>

2023/23 update

- 3.6. Since the last update to Full Council on 11 July 2022 the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has met two times (19 July 2022 and 6 September 2022).

19 July 2022

- 3.7. The Committee heard from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finances, Resources and Reform, Councillor Mili Patel, and received a report from Finance and Resources on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The report highlighted the uncertainties and risks with regard to budget setting, as part of the process of setting the Council's budget for the year 2023/24. It was acknowledged that the report reflected financial uncertainty in the national economy, owing to factors such as Covid-19, high levels of inflation and the global impact of the war in Ukraine. Due to the lack of clarity around future levels of funding for local government, the Committee were advised that it was difficult to be precise around future financial targets. Nonetheless, the current working assumption was that £28 million of savings would need to be made. These estimates would be a major factor in the construction of the Council's budget for 2023/24. At the end of the discussion, the Committee made the following suggestion for improvement: Schools deficit area of the financial outlook to be effectively scrutinised by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (CWB). This has since been accepted by Councillor Ketan Sheth, the Chair of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, whereby this substantive item will be covered at their committee meeting on 22 September 2022 as part of the 'Implementation of SEND review and high needs block' item.
- 3.8. Members received an update on the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy, leading to the following suggestions for improvement, all of which have now received full responses from Council departments (refer to Appendix 1):
1. Undertake further consultation with the community and our voluntary sector to identify gaps in the current strategy.
 2. Involve councillors to identify gaps in the strategy and to assist with championing the strategy provisions.
 3. Digital Champions Network – recruit, train and resource digital champions from marginalised and disenfranchised communities.
 4. Re-launch the Network as a programme/scheme to raise its profile
- 3.9. Further to the Resources and Public Realm Committee meeting on 9 March 2022, members were updated by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure, and Climate Action, Councillor Krupa Sheth and senior officers on progress to implement the recommendations of Baroness Casey following the events of the Euro 2020 men's football final at Wembley stadium (Appendix 2). At the end of the discussion, the Committee made the following suggestions for improvement to Resident Services and the Football Association (FA), all of which have now received full responses (refer to Appendix 2):

1. All relevant partners (including landowners, housing associations etc.) should be brought together to review current security provision in the Wembley events area, including identification of responsibilities and jurisdictions to rectify gaps.
 2. There should be a clear and robust relationship between the Council, FA, SSE Arena and Wembley Stadium to:
 - a. share event information about events in advance to local partners including the Council and Police;
 - b. to engage with residents;
 - c. to look at signage to aid route planning/traffic management and;
 - d. to uphold enforcement agreements
 3. For the Council and any other partners involved to consult with local councillors, residents and key partners to gather information on traffic management arrangements to review how effectively they are responding to congestion hotspots identified by councillors, residents and partners.
 4. Make better use of resources including ward councillors' local knowledge and information gathering role, as they can provide community feedback on local issues.
 5. That the recommendations for this item go beyond the Casey Review, as subsequent updates will focus on overall partnership management of events around Wembley.
 6. For the FA, Wembley Stadium and Arena to promote public transport for events, particularly concerts.
 7. That the FA community factsheet with travel diversions, road closures and other useful information is shared widely. Please include councillors on dissemination lists in addition to partners and residents.
 8. Look at North End Road to identify the effects events have in terms of traffic, dispersal of people and anti-social behaviour to amend traffic management arrangements to alleviate the impact in these hotspots.
- 3.10. Further to the Full Council report of 11 July 2022, the Committee agreed the scrutiny work plan for the 2022-23 municipal year; The work plan will be regularly reviewed by the Committee and updated accordingly where necessary.

6 September 2022

- 3.11. The Committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy & Citizen Experience, Councillor Eleanor Southwood, and received a report from Resident Services on the actions the Council is taking to mitigate the impact of the Cost of Living crisis on Brent residents (refer to Appendix 3). Members put forward a number of questions/concerns relating to the effectiveness of Council initiatives, and as such how they would be funded moving forward, taking into consideration dwindling budgets and the fact that the cost of living crisis could last for years to come. Members also reviewed specific timescales/milestones of initiatives; and questioned how the Council is ensuring the engagement/consultation taking place as part of the cost of living activity is representative of the diversity of our residents (e.g. considers the views/needs of those from different ethnicities such as Black/Asian communities, and those who need extra support such as residents with disabilities). At the end of the

discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations and suggestions for improvement:

Recommendations to Cabinet:

1. Lobby central government for increase to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to help alleviate the burden of the cost of living crisis on residents.

Suggestions for Improvement made to Resident Services:

1. Improve our publicity of credit unions within the borough, highlighting how residents can use these services to navigate the cost of living crisis.
2. Explore co-operative options³ with regards to the Community Shop model referenced in the paper from Resident Services (refer to Appendix 3).
3. Incorporate NHS support for residents into the Council's Cost of Living communications plan.
4. Use Council's role and relationship with the NHS to lobby for more support for our residents to strengthen our efforts in helping them through the cost of living crisis.

3.12. Under 'Matters of Local Concern', Councillor Conneely referenced a deputation received from Mr Phillip Grant at the Committee Meeting on 9 March 2022 (refer to Appendix 4). The Committee have since received information from Council departments reassuring the Committee about the quality and accuracy of the information that was presented to the Committee on 9 March 2022. The Chair flagged that it is important that the Committee and council officers are clear and transparent in their communications (e.g. not using acronyms, using up to date terminology etc) when asking for and sharing information in public meetings. This is so residents observing committee meetings can be confident in the information that is being shared. Nevertheless, it was reiterated that issues relating to the affordability in our housing stock is a significant concern for both scrutiny committees, as well as for the Cabinet, and our residents.

3.13. Committee members also agreed the establishment of a Scrutiny Budget Task and Finish Group, consisting of members from both the Resources and Public Realm and Community and Wellbeing committees. These members are Councillor Rita Conneely (Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee), Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee), Councillor Tom Miller, Councillor Jayanti Patel, Councillor Diana Collymore, and Councillor Hannah Matin. The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee, presented a scoping paper whereby committee members then agreed the scope and terms of reference for the upcoming Task Group. It was noted that the task group would bring an evidence-based recommendations report on Cabinet's draft budget proposals for 2023-24 to the Resources and Public Realm Committee meeting on 24 January 2022 to then be discussed and agreed by the Committee. It was also stressed that members

³ Cooperative options aim to give people more involvement and control over the services they use by putting council resources in their hands. This means delivering services in partnership with communities, rather than to communities.

of both scrutiny committees who are not members of the task group would have opportunities to feed into the task group process to raise any financial areas of concerns requiring scrutiny. Nonetheless, a report from the Committee would then be presented to Cabinet for consideration in February 2023, alongside the report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources on final budget proposals.

- 3.14. The Chair of the Committee went on to highlight that changes had been made to the Scrutiny Work Plan 2022/23 (Appendix 5). It was echoed that the Work Plan is a living, flexible document, responsive to the needs of Brent residents.
- 3.15. Lastly, the Chair flagged the Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker, which has assisted the Committee in monitoring the progress of recommendations, suggestions, and information requests made by members in past committee meetings. The Chair highlighted that in addition to the improvement suggestions tabled in the Tracker (Appendix 1), that it had been stressed to Council departments to be proactive in involving councillors and voluntary partners in consultation/engagement activity. The Chair also referenced the suggestions for improvement made to the FA (Appendix 2), noting that we have already seen an improvement in the relationship between local councillors and Wembley Stadium. For instance, ward councillors will be invited to attend the quarterly Wembley Stadium Residents and Businesses Liaison meeting to discuss and be consulted on matters such as security provision and traffic management on event days.

Next meeting: 8 November 2022

- 3.16. The next meeting of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee will be held on 8 November 2022. As it currently stands, members will review the following papers:
1. An update on Council Grant Programmes
 2. Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report
 3. Quarter 2 Financial Report 2022/23
- 3.17. As highlighted in paragraph 3.14, the Scrutiny work plan (Appendix 5) is a living document, where agenda items could be subject to change ahead of the next Committee meeting.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Equality Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 Councillors will discuss this report at the Council meeting.

Report sign off:

Lorna Hughes,
Director of Engagement, Strategy &
Communications