

	<p align="center">Full Council 10 July 2023</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Communities & Regeneration</p>
<p>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Chair's Update Report</p>	

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:	One Appendix 1 Draft Committee Work Programme 2023-24
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Jason Sigba Strategy Lead – Scrutiny, Strategy & Partnerships 020 8937 2036 jason.sigba@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Tom Pickup Policy, Partnerships and Scrutiny Manager Strategy & Partnerships Tom.Pickup@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Janet Latinwo, Head of Strategy and Partnerships, Strategy and Partnerships 020 8937 4104 Janet.Latinwo@brent.gov.uk</p>

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide updates on the meetings and activities of the Resources and Public Realm Committee since the last Full Council meeting on 21 November 2022; as well as present the Committee's 2023/24 draft work programme.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the updates in the report; and the Committee's 2023/24 draft work programme within.

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.

2022/23 update

- 3.6. Since the last update to Full Council on 21 November 2022 the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has met four times (15 December 2022, 24 January 2023, 22 February 2023, and 25 April 2023).

15 December 2022

¹ Brent Council Constitution, Part 2, paragraph 36.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s133282/Part%202%20June%202023%20Procedural%20Rules.pdf>

² Brent Council Constitution Part 4.

<https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s132905/Part%204%20June%202023%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20.pdf>

3.7. The Committee heard from Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure, and Climate Action; and received a report from Resident Services outlining the proposed service changes to be included in the retendered Integrated Street Cleansing, Waste Collections and Winter Maintenance Services Contract ('The Integrated Contract'). The main service changes were coined as the Council's 'Preferred Service', which principally involved the move from i) a frequency-led to an intelligence-led approach to street cleansing, and ii) the switch from weekly commingled recycling collections for street level households to an alternate weekly twin stream recycling collection, with the separation of paper and card from containers. Committee members expressed concerns around how the 'Preferred Service' aligns with Council climate commitments; and questioned the 'robustness' of the proposed service changes against its intended outcomes and what our residents had told us their needs were via recent consultation feedback. The Committee also explored whether the 'Preferred Service' ensured value for money considering the budget pressures faced by the Council. At the end of the discussion, the Committee made the following suggestions for improvement (which have all since been accepted by Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services):

1. Produce a diagram/flowchart detailing all milestones from May 2019 when the Redefining Local Services (RLS) programme was first initiated.
2. Review household bulky waste collection charges, including consideration of a sliding scale of charges linked to the number of items to be collected, rather than the current fixed rate of £35 for up to five items.
3. Undertake a feasibility study on the potential for introducing a mixed approach to paper/card recycling collections, to explore whether any recycling collection rounds in the borough would be more suited to the use of bins rather than sacks.
4. Arrange a session with ward councillors and Neighbourhood Managers to inform the design and development of the new recycling engagement and communication plan that will accompany the roll out of the new recycling service.
5. Liaise with the West London Waste Authority to ensure access is reinstated for pedestrians and cyclists at the Abbey Road Household Reuse and Recycling Centre.
6. Improve collaboration between in-house enforcement teams and collection operatives in identifying fly tipping hot spots and collating evidence, to remove the burden from residents

24 January 2023

- 3.8. Councillor Rita Conneely, Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Committee presented the Budget Scrutiny Task Group Findings report³, which consisted of 13 evidence-based recommendations on the Cabinet's draft budget proposals for 2023/24. As context to the review, it was noted that the Task Group had recognised the challenging financial environment the Council was operating in, most notably having to navigate high inflation, and the long-term reduction in government funding, whilst catering to the increased demand in frontline services. Nonetheless, all recommendations put forward by the Task Group were accepted in full by the Committee, and subsequently agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 6 February 2023.

22 February 2023

- 3.9. The Committee welcomed Alex Nickson, Water Resources and Growth Lead from Thames Water to provide a progress update on the lessons learnt from the July 2021 flooding in the borough. This was a follow up meeting to the committee meeting that took place on 9 February 2022. Specifically the Committee were keen to understand what actions Thames Water had taken to strengthen collaboration between its organisation and local authorities, the Police, and the Fire Brigade to manage flooding moving forward. Also, the steps it had taken to improve its communication channels with residents and local authorities contacting them with flooding issues within its remit. The Committee were not convinced that lessons had been properly learnt since the 2021 flooding incidents, citing a recent example where Thames Water had failed to respond to members' specific concerns in writing ahead of this particular meeting. Nonetheless, Alex Nickson committed to returning to a later committee meeting to present Thames Water's 2025-2030 business plan and the London Level Strategy to appease concerns.

The Committee also heard from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Muhammed Butt, who presented a report on 'Spaces for Community Use'. The Committee questioned what available community assets existed in the borough for voluntary groups to carry out their work; how the Council currently supports its voluntary groups in accessing community space; how the Council were ensuring that Council-owned community assets were distributed fairly and transparently; and how the Council was utilising its community assets to generate income. Officers agreed to review the Council's approach to support voluntary groups accessing community space; and committed to attend a future scrutiny meeting to share the final Council Asset Review and the draft Property Strategy. At the end of the discussion, the Committee made the following suggestions for improvement:

1. The priorities for the new Property Strategy should include opportunities for partnership working with CVS groups that can demonstrate sustainable links to promoting Social Value in line with Brent's strategic priorities.

³ <https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s129287/6.a%20Appendix%201%20-%20Budget%20Scrutiny%20Task%20Group%20Final%20Report.pdf>

2. Inclusion of community spaces to be consistently encouraged and raised with developers making planning applications.
3. Local Ward Councillors to be informed when community properties become available to let.

25 April 2023

3.10. The Committee heard from Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure, and Climate Action; and received a report from Resident Services, providing an update on the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030. The report highlighted the current key focal points of the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency 2022-24 Delivery Plan (adopted by Cabinet in June 2022), namely the new, localised, Green Neighbourhoods pilot. The Chair invited evidence from Brent's Friends of the Earth. The Committee also provided feedback on the proposed pilot itself, and more generally questioned whether the 2022-24 Delivery Plan was ambitious enough. Additionally, the Committee raised concerns on the lack of benchmarking provided in the report; Members stressed that this made it difficult to measure success and to compare the Council's climate action efforts to those of other local authorities. At the end of the discussion, the Committee made the following cabinet recommendations/suggestions for improvement:

1. Continue to lobby central government and the Greater London Authority (GLA) for additional funding to strengthen our efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
2. Introduce a 'climate implications' section into all cabinet reports to ensure that all key decisions are aligned with our net zero targets.
3. Develop an accountability framework (such as a dashboard) for the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 that is accessible on the Council's website to demonstrate to residents how Brent is performing on its climate ambitions for 2030 and 2045. This framework should also benchmark our activities/efforts with other local authorities for context.
4. Explore opportunities to use strategic CIL (SCIL) monies to fund additional infrastructure projects that are directly aligned with our climate commitments (set out in the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030).
5. Engage with Brent Friends of the Earth and other relevant community partners to support and improve the delivery of the Council's Climate Action agenda.

3.11. The Committee also heard from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform, Councillor Mili Patel, and received a report from Finance and Resources on the 2022/23 Q3 Financial Forecast. It was reiterated that the current and medium-term economic environment that the

Council was navigating remained volatile and uncertain with high inflation, particularly affecting energy costs, rising interest rates, and war in Ukraine precipitating the cost-of-living crisis. Consequently, this made it more difficult for the Council to plan future service levels and the required resourcing envelopes. In terms of the most material risks to the Council's overall financial position, an overall overspend of £3.2m was estimated, made up of £1.6m within the Dedicated Schools Grant, and £2.3m within the Children and Young People directorate. Nonetheless, the Committee delved into the reasons for the overspends mentioned, and questioned how these budget pressures were being managed in light of the volatile economic environment the Council was operating in. At the end of the discussion, the Committee recommended for the lead member to continue to lobby central government for the long-awaited local government finance reforms.

2023/24 update

Next meeting: 19 July 2023

- 3.12. The next meeting of the Resources and Public Realm Committee will be held on 19 July 2023. The Committee will formally agree its work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year (please see Appendix A).
- 3.13. In developing its work programme, the Committee reviewed documents such as the Corporate Forward Plan and Borough Plan 2023-27. The Committee also held sessions with cabinet members, corporate directors, and the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee to temperature check key priority areas (i.e. ensure it can make impact/add significant value to the shortlisted items), avoid work duplication, and most importantly confirm the work plan reflects matters of local community concern.
- 3.14. Members will also review the following reports:
- Budget 2023/24 (Summer) Update
 - IT Shared Services and Cyber Security
- 3.15. The work plan is a living, flexible document, responsive to the needs of Brent residents. The final programme will therefore be regularly reviewed throughout the municipal year by the Committee and updated accordingly where necessary.

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:

Zahur Khan

Corporate Director – Communities
& Regeneration