

Appendix A

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee (RPRSC) Scrutiny Tracker 2023-24

These tables are to track the progress of scrutiny recommendations to Cabinet, suggestions for improvement, and information requests made by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, with details provided by the relevant lead departments. It is a standing item on the Committee's agendas, so that the Committee can keep track of the recommendations, suggestions for improvement and information requests it has made, alongside the related decisions made and implementation status. The tracker lists the recommendations, suggestions for improvement and information requests made by the Committee throughout a municipal year and any recommendations not fully implemented from previous years.

The tracker documents the scrutiny recommendations made to Cabinet, the dates when they were made, the decision maker who can make each decision in respect of the recommendations, the date the decision was made and the actual decision taken. The executive decision taken may be the same as the scrutiny recommendation (e.g. the recommendation was "agreed") or it may be a different decision, which should be clarified here. The tracker also asks if the respective executive decisions have been implemented and this should be updated accordingly throughout the year.

Scrutiny Task Group report recommendations should be included here but referenced collectively (e.g. the name of the scrutiny inquiry and date of the agreement of the scrutiny report and recommendations by the scrutiny committee, along with the respective dates when the decision maker(s) considered and responded to the report and recommendations. The Committee should generally review the implementation of scrutiny task group report recommendations separately with stand-alone agenda items at relevant junctures – e.g. the Executive Response to a scrutiny report and after six months or a year, or upon expected implementation of the agreed recommendation of report. The "Expected Implementation Date" should provide an indication of a suitable time for review.

Key:

Date of scrutiny committee meeting - For each table, the date of the scrutiny committee meeting when the recommendation was made is provided in the subtitle header.

Subject – this is the item title on the Committee's agenda; the subject being considered.

Scrutiny Recommendation – This is the text of the scrutiny recommendation as it appears on the minutes – **in bold**.

Decision Maker – the decision maker for the recommendation, (**in bold**), e.g. the Cabinet (for Council executive decisions), Full Council (for Council policy and budgetary decisions), or an NHS executive body for recommendations to the NHS. In brackets, (date), the date on which the Executive Response was made.

Executive Response – The response of the decision maker (e.g. Cabinet decision) for the recommendation. This should be the executive decision as recorded in the minutes. The Executive Response should provide details of what, if anything, the executive will do in response to the scrutiny recommendation. Ideally, the Executive Response will include a decision to either agree/reject/or amend the scrutiny recommendation and where the scrutiny recommendation is rejected, provide an explanation of why. In brackets, provide the date of Cabinet/executive meeting that considered the scrutiny recommendation and made the decision.

Department – the Council directorate (and/or external agencies) that are responsible for implementation of the agreed executive decision/response. Also provided, for reference only, the relevant Cabinet Member and Corporate Director.


Implementation Status – This is the progress of any implementation of the agreed Executive Response against key milestones. This may cross reference to any specific actions and deadlines that may be provided in the Executive Response. This should be as specific and quantifiable as possible. This should also provide, as far as possible, any evidenced outcomes or improvements resulting from implementation.

Review Date - This is the expected date when the agreed Executive Response should be fully implemented and when the scrutiny committee may usefully review the implementation and any evidenced outcomes (e.g. service improvements). (Note: this is the implementation of the agreed Executive Response, which may not be the same as the scrutiny recommendation).

Recommendations to Cabinet from RPRSC



None.

Suggestions for improvement from RPRSC to Council departments/partners

| Meeting date and agenda item | Suggestions for improvement | Council Department/External Partner | Response / Status |
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| 6 Sept 2023– Planning Enforcement | To avoid unnecessary back and forth dialogue between officers and residents, improve communications around the standard of evidence required to proceed with planning breach complaints. This should include public education, and improvements to the planning enforcement webpage including the reporting mechanism. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration | <p>Initial response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>Yes we will look into this, and report back to the Committee by February 2024. However the evidence required will depend on the nature of the particular case that is under investigation. We can standardise it as much as we can – our existing acknowledgment letter goes some way in addressing this issue. An example copy is attached as Appendix A(i).</p> <p></p> <p>CompAcknLetter - revised temp.pdf</p> <p>Updated response received on 16/02/24:</p> <p>The process has been reviewed and the internet page re-written. This is now with the web team and a completion date of 25th March 2024 has been set.</p> |
| | Review the effectiveness of the Planning Enforcement Investigation Guide to better manage residents' expectations of the planning enforcement process (e.g. providing clarity on planning enforcement timescales). | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration | <p>Updated response received on 16/02/24:</p> <p>The enforcement investigation guide has been re-written to take on board the requirements of the Committee. This has been circulated to the Committee by email, and will be available on the Council website by 25th March 2024.</p> |

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| | <p>Undertake an audit to determine the wards with the highest amount of planning breach complaints, and the wards with the highest amount of enforcement activity. This intelligence should be used to develop a targeted strategy to prevent planning breaches e.g. targeted planning education and/or communications campaigns etc. The Audit should also categorise the types of breaches receiving enforcement notices.</p> | <p>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration</p> | <p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>We will look to do this but are currently waiting for our new software to be introduced. Currently scheduled for April 2024.</p> |
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| <p>7 Nov 2023 – Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Report</p> | <p>Liaise with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to explore whether further census data could be provided to the Council on the specific properties in the borough identified as 'unoccupied dwellings'.</p> | <p>Peter Gadsdon – Corporate Director, Resident Services</p> | <p>Initial response received on 10/01/24:</p> <p>The 2021 Census provides an estimate of the number of unoccupied homes in Brent as at March 2021 (7.4% of dwellings - 9,425 in number). This data is not available for specific dwellings but has been published down to MSOA/LSOA level by the ONS. This information has been analysed by the Council's Data & Insight team. A summary paper is available on request.</p> <p>The census figure is more than three times higher than the administrative count of empty homes sourced from the Council Tax Base. The census took place when lockdown restrictions were still in place and the pandemic timing is known to have impacted on the census count, with some residents being temporarily away (e.g. some private renters). The ONS acknowledges that this would have had a significant impact on the number of unoccupied homes at that time, providing an atypical count.</p> <p>Additional response received on 07/02/24:</p> <p>To further explain the discrepancy between the census and administrative figures - the main reason the census figure is so much higher is likely to be due to the pandemic timing. The census count of the number of unoccupied homes will count many privately rented homes that were empty temporarily in March 2021. This is something ONS has acknowledged. In other words – the census provides a very atypical count of unoccupied dwellings (and is already three years out of date). If the census was carried out now, it is highly likely the census measure would be much lower and closer to the council tax measure. Appendix A(ii) describes this in further detail.</p> <p>Having liaised with the ONS they have confirmed that no additional data can be provided on 'unoccupied dwellings'. The ONS response was as follows: <i>"It is not possible to provide data at the level of individual dwellings, this is covered by the Census Act 1920. This Act contained provisions prohibiting the release of personal census information and set out penalties for unlawful disclosure. Parts of the Census Act 1920 have now been replaced by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 makes it an offence to disclose any census information relating to an identified or named person while it remains in the custody of the UK Statistics Authority, of which the Office for National Statistics is the executive office. Current</i></p> |
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| | | | <p><i>Government policy is that the UK Statistics Authority should retain all census returns from the 1921 Census onwards, for 100 years."</i></p> <p>Councillors are able to report empty properties or any property related issue to revsinspectors@brent.gov.uk and to meena.patel3@brent.gov.uk for both domestic and commercial property.</p> <p>In regard to how information on empty properties is used to generate more income and housing stock - the department is carrying out a review of empty properties plus those exempt awaiting probate and those exempt receiving care elsewhere to make sure the data held for billing is as accurate as possible. This review includes contact with owners encouraging them to engage with the Council to put the property back into use.</p> <p>Attached as Appendix A(iii) is the report showing all exempt and empty properties by ward. The report contains no information that could release personal data or provide a way to do so. It will be made available through the council's open data site on a regular basis.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>23-12-07 Empty homes_CTax vs. Censi</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Council Tax Exemption Discount</p> </div> </div> |
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| <p>24 Jan 2024 – Safer Brent Partnership Annual report 2022-23</p> | <p>Share more information and brief Members on the Community Trigger to help them understand how to support their residents to use it.</p> | <p>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration</p> | <p>Response received on 15/02/24:</p> <p>We will share more information on the Community Trigger with committee members via members briefings and the members bulletin.</p> <p>For information, the Community Trigger is a process which allows members of the community to ask the Community Safety Partnership to review their responses to complaints of anti-social behaviour (ASB) where they feel insufficient action has been taken. The Trigger is open to all Brent residents of all ages and is not tenure specific. You can request to activate the trigger whether you own your home, privately rent your home or live in a social housing property. The Trigger is designed to ensure that Brent Council and its partners work together to try and resolve any complaints about anti-social behaviour, which have not been adequately dealt with. We will do this by talking about the problem, sharing information and using our resources to try and reach an agreeable outcome.</p> <p>The Trigger should be used if you believe your complaint has not been dealt with. The Trigger cannot be used to report general acts of crime, including hate crime.</p> <p>The Trigger does not replace the complaints procedures of individual organisations, or your opportunity to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman or Independent Police Complaints Commission.</p> <p><u>When can I use the Trigger?</u></p> <p>The Community Trigger can be used in the following situation: If there have been three complaints regarding ASB made to the Council, Police or a Registered Housing Provider (social landlord) in the last six months and you consider insufficient action has been taken. For the purposes of the community trigger, ASB is defined as “behaviour causing harassment, alarm or distress to members or any member of the public”.</p> <p>The complaint of ASB must have been made within one month of the ASB taking place and the request to activate the trigger must be made within six months from when the original complaint was made.</p> |
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| | | | <p>Anonymous reports do not meet the Community Trigger threshold as in order for the trigger to be effective the panel must review the given details of each time a person has reported the ASB (i.e. the organisation it was reported to with the name of the employee that was spoken, incident reference number(s) and information about the incidents reported).</p> <p>Exempting anonymous reports also prevents fraudulent or malicious use of the trigger process. Vexatious or persistent and unreasonable complaints will be referred to our Corporate Complaints Team and dealt with under the Dealing with Vexatious Complaints Policy.</p> <p><u>How do I use the Trigger?</u></p> <p>To use the Community Trigger you can either complete an online form, telephone 020 8937 1058 or write a letter to: Community Trigger, Community Safety Team, 5th Floor Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way Wembley HA9 0FJ.</p> |
| | Ensure there is a clear priority around Tackling Violent Crime, including Knife Crime in the Community Safety Strategy. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration | <p>Response received on 15/02/24:</p> <p>A recommendation was made at scrutiny to have a strategic priority with tackles knife crime. It was agreed following member feedback and consultation with the chair of Safer Brent to reword the priority in the Community Safety Strategy 2024-2026 to read “tackling violent crime with a specific focus of knife crime” and ensure this work stream is delivered and measured through the action plan.</p> |

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| | Have a greater focus on targeting youth violence through our grants programmes. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration | Response received on 15/02/24: £400,000 worth of funding has been secured by the Community Safety Team from the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to work on youth targeted interventions for years 23-25. The fundamental goal of the grant is responding to exploitation and risky behaviours to target intervention towards victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and vulnerable young adults who require the most intensive mentoring and support to help them recover and reduce the risks of further exploitation. There will be two elements to the project focusing on those who have been identified as a victim, at risk of CSE, CCE, wider exploitation, have a national referral mechanism or additional risk factors. The programme will offer mentoring support and diversion interventions to aid a reduction in exploitation and to increase access to mainstream services. The second element of the service will target local schools and educational establishments to raise awareness of exploitation risk, negative behaviours, healthy relationships, (including challenging misogyny), creating cultures that challenge gender-based harassment, bullying, violence and promoting positive peer support. |
| | Collaborate with Safer Brent Partnership to access funding from the VRU and similar grant funding routes. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration | Response received on 15/02/24: Applications for VRU grant funding will be done in conjunction with safer brent partnership core partners. Use of VRU grant funding will align with priorities under the Safer Brent Strategic action plan which will be managed by the delivery groups which sit under the Safer Brent Partnership. |

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| | <p>Work with the Police and Safer Brent Partnership to improve the granularity and quality of data and impact assessments, with the aim of presenting the impact of crime and criminality on specific communities. This consists of sharing and reporting more granular data around the key priority areas of the report e.g. domestic violence and violent crime.</p> | <p>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration</p> | <p>Response received on 15/02/24:</p> <p>Access to police data by the Council's community safety analyst has been improved to obtain victim and offender profiles around priority crimes. There are also ongoing discussions with the police senior leadership team to improve 3rd party access and data quality recorded on SafeStats. For information, SafeStats is a unique and secure data platform hosting a variety of London's crime and community safety datasets from key organisations in one place. These include the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metropolitan Police Service (all offences) London Ambulance Service (all dispatches) British Transport Police (all offences - Underground/Overground) London Fire Brigade (all dispatches) Transport for London (all bus incidents) Hospital Emergency Departments (all walk-in victims of violence) Royal National Lifeboat Association (all launches to incidents along the Thames) <p>Partnership data required from Community Safety Partnership (CSP) partners to inform impact assessments will be facilitated through delivery and operational groups under the Safer Brent Partnership.</p> |
| | <p>Maintain the current level of resource in the Community Safety team</p> | <p>Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities and Regeneration</p> | <p>Response received on 15/02/24:</p> <p>The Community Safety Team is predominantly grant funded with only 3 permanent positions. Brent CST cannot guarantee grant funding to be maintained at the same level but have put in a growth bid see if the revenue budget can be increased.</p> |

Information requests from RPRSC to Council departments/partners

| Meeting date and agenda item | Information requests | Council Department/External Partner | Responses / Status |
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| 19 July 2023– Shared Service Performance & Cyber Security | Provide further detail on how the Council is ensuring third party suppliers are adhering to Brent's cyber security strategy and requirements. This should be inclusive of the findings from the third-party supplier survey currently underway. | Minesh Patel – Corporate Director, Finance & Resources | <p>Initial response received on 24/08/23: We have developed a third-party assurance framework and security board who will oversee deployment and actions coming out of the framework, an assessment report will be shared with the Committee in six months' time.</p> <p>Updated response received on 15/01/24:</p> <p>A data gathering and analysis for 3rd party supplier assurance is underway. This activity includes all suppliers receiving a Data Protection Impact assessment to review and complete. Information Governance then evaluates the response in collaboration with Shared Technology Services to assess and agree cyber resilience.</p> <p>As part of phase 1 of this programme we have prioritised 44 of the tier 1 and 2 applications that are hosted outside of Brent Network and/or are a hybrid solution. The reason for this is that any applications hosted by us (around 83 applications) is covered by Brent's cyber security framework and measures. Out of the 44 suppliers a detailed assessment has been completed for 20. There were no risks identified for them and a few of the suppliers require the processing agreement to be reviewed by legal. This is now underway.</p> <p>We have also contacted 63 tier 3 suppliers to complete the assessment framework. This activity is due to be concluded by Jan/Feb and a final report with the outcome and next steps will be shared by March 24.</p> |
| 6 Sept 2023– Planning Enforcement | Provide a breakdown of: 1. Planning breach complaints by ward and; 2. Types of breaches that have received enforcement notices by ward | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration | <p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>Need to await for new software to be installed. This is scheduled for April 2024.</p> |

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| | Provide planning enforcement timescales. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration | <p>Response received on 24/10/23:</p> <p>We will need to review this and find away of recording it on our new database. We shall aim to close cases within 8 weeks if no evidence of breach. If evidence of breach, direction will be made on where we are going with the case.</p> <p>A site visit if one is required, is to take place within one month.</p> |
| 24 Jan 2024 – Safer Brent Partnership Annual report 2022-23 | The timeframe for implementing the response at Wembley Stadium and Wembley Arena to support the victims of sexual violence. | Alice Lester – Corporate Director, Communities & Regeneration | <p>Response received on 15/02/24:</p> <p>A meeting was held with the Football Association (FA), the Police and the Community Safety Team in November 23 to discuss better supporting victims of sexual violence. One of the key initiatives was to train Wembley Stadium stewards to better understand the behaviours associated with sexual violence.</p> <p>The department is awaiting a follow up meeting from the FA to develop the initiatives and timeline for completion (likely to be June 2024).</p> |