



Full Council
18 November 2024

**Report from the Corporate Director
of Law and Governance**

**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Chair's Report**

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| Wards Affected: | All |
| Key or Non-Key Decision: | Council |
| Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open |
| List of Appendices: | One Appendix A: Updated Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25 |
| Background Papers: | None |
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 To present Full Council with the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's 2024-25 work programme, and to provide an update on meetings and activities undertaken by the committee since the last meeting of Full Council on 19 September 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

- 2.1 Note the report and the updates provided for both the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC).
- 2.2 Note the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's 2024-25 updated work programme, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The work of the committee contributes to the delivery of all of the strategic priorities within the Borough Plan as it seeks to support, advise and enhance the Council's activity. The recent activity outlined in this report contributes most specifically to the "A Healthier Brent," "The Best Start in Life," "Prosperity and Stability in Brent" strategic priorities within the plan.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 Brent Council has two scrutiny committees: the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. The council also participates as a full voting member in the North West London Joint Health Overview Scrutiny (NWL JHOSC). Councillor Ketan Sheth was re-elected as chair of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Council Meeting on 22 May 2024 and also continues to serve as chair of the NWL JHOSC.

- 3.2.2 A scrutiny committee can review anything which affects the borough or its inhabitants, subject to its remit. The remit of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is set out in the Council Constitution under the Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committees which includes:

Adult social care; Safeguarding; Children's services; Cultural services; Education; Health; Housing; Public Health and Wellbeing.

- 3.2.3 As part of its remit set out in the constitution, and its role to review the provision and operation of health services within the borough, the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee can scrutinise, and make recommendations to NHS organisations or relevant health service providers.

- 3.2.4 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's 2024-25 work programme is detailed in Appendix A. In developing its work programme, the committee held a work programming meeting, attended by committee members, Cabinet members and Corporate Directors. At this session committee members prioritised items to include on the work programme based on a set of criteria. Prioritisation ensured that items included on the committees work programme were (i) a strategic priority as set out in the council's 2023-27 Borough Plan (ii) of concern for a significant number of the borough's residents (iii) a significant cabinet decision or (iv) part of a forthcoming policy review or a new strategy being developed by the Cabinet. This was undertaken to ensure that scrutiny

has a significant impact and adds value to the council's policy process. Statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny recommends that for scrutiny to be effective, scrutiny committees focus on conducting fewer in-depth reviews on highly significant topics¹.

- 3.2.5 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met for its second meeting of the municipal year on 18 September 2024. The meeting focused on two reports from the Children and Young People (CYP) department. The first of these reports was an overview of SEND provision across the borough. Members were given an overview of services for Brent's children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and were also given an insight on the national context regarding the Council's obligations towards children and young people with SEND. The Committee were made aware of the much greater level of need with the number of children on an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) rising by around 10% per year since 2014 and the figures in Brent also reflecting that increase. As a result of such an increase, the Committee were advised that there had been pressure on Councils to assess each child and put in place the right package of support for them, but this had not been matched with provision of funding by central government. The Committee also heard that as well as an increase in need, the Council had also seen an increase in the complexity of need, with around 40% of children with an EHCP also having an Autistic Spectrum Condition.
- 3.2.6 The Committee were pleased to hear that despite the challenges with funding and demand, there were successes to be celebrated. The Cabinet Member and officers from CYP detailed the work the Council was doing to maximise the support available to children and young people with SEND, including both inclusive provision and specialist educational provision. A large part of the work in addressing the pressures was delivering the SEND capital programme which aimed to provide more than 400 local SEND places. There were some areas for improvement outlined to members. It was recognised that there was a gap for post-16 provision which the new post-16 skills and resource centre in Welsh Harp would help to address, and there was continued work being carried out to reduce the waiting times for families applying for an EHCP. The Committee were also asked to recognise the work of Brent's local schools, who had stepped up provision and built additional support into their schools, whether that be through new buildings, additional staff, or improved institutional learning.
- 3.2.7 The Committee also heard from the Borough Lead Director of the North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) who provided an overview of support for children with SEND from a health perspective. He advised the Committee that health colleagues had been working closely with the Council to prepare for a SEND local area inspection. The Committee were informed that a paper would be presented to the Brent Children's Trust (BCT) regarding commissioning arrangements for some of the health services supporting children and young people with SEND. There were some challenges reflected in the report, particularly in relation to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

¹ *Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities* (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government), p21

waiting times and a workshop had been arranged to address the issues and come up with some innovative ways forward. In relation to special school nursing provision, the partnership had committed to some non-recurrent funding to support additional capacity within the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Tryst (CLCH) service and there were ongoing discussions to see how that could be made permanent at North West London (NWL) level so that it could be tied to the development of a common service specification across NWL. The Committee committed to keep themselves abreast of developments in this area, by making specific recommendations and information requests and will invite the department for a follow up report in the next municipal year.

- 3.2.8 The second item discussed at the meeting was on the subject of Early Years provision and progress made towards meeting the expansion of childcare entitlements. The Committee were informed about the rollout of expanded childcare entitlements within Brent and plans for the distribution of the capital grant allocation provided by the DfE, as well as the approach for delivering the requirement to have a wraparound offer for school-aged children to access childcare between 8am and 6pm during the school term. The Committee were provided context with it explained that in the Spring Budget of March 2023, Central Government had announced a significant expansion of early years childcare entitlements and proposals for the development of a wraparound offer for school-aged children. The report outlined the borough-wide response to those new arrangements and also highlighted some of the most significant changes in childcare provision which include an opportunity for local providers to step up their provision to support families in the early years.
- 3.2.9 It was highlighted to the Committee that the majority of early years provision in Brent was provided by independent nurseries or childminders, with the local authority playing an administrative support role. The Committee were advised that there was excellent provision on offer in Brent and that Brent was well placed to meet the extra demand. It was revealed that the early years sector in Brent was strong, with 98% of childminders and 94% of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) nurseries rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The report commended the early years providers, noting the importance of the Council and its members fully understanding the contribution providers made to the borough.
- 3.2.10 The report offered reassurance about how Brent had prepared for the expansion and was supporting providers and the parent carer experience of finding an early years place. It was acknowledged that the focus for the government had been on getting parents back in to work, but the sector and the Council were keen to use this as an opportunity to ensure there was a focus on good quality childcare and education in early years to set children up well for school and into adult life. The Committee were also pleased to hear firsthand from a voluntary agency nursery manager and an early years childminder who both not only thanked the Early Years Team and the Inclusion Team for supporting all nurseries and childminders in the borough but also explained what additional support they required moving forward and provided suggestions to make Brent's offer even more comprehensive.

3.2.11 The Committee will meet for its third meeting of the year on 20 November 2024. At this meeting, members will focus on three items concerning Housing. These items are; the performance and resident satisfaction of I4B and First Wave Housing, an annual update from Brent Housing Management and the current status of the Temporary Accommodation and Homeless Prevention services.

3.2.12 Councillor Ketan Sheth is Brent's representative and Chair of the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC). The first meeting of the municipal year was hosted by North West London NHS on 22 October 2024. At this meeting, the Committee had constructive discussions around Palliative Care, a new Mental Health strategy for North West London and continued discussions on Primary Care Access following on from their meeting in March. Although the Committee had some good dialogue with NHS partners, it was felt that there still is substantial work to be done before the Committee can be satisfied with the proposals that are been presented The Committee will continue to work with neighbouring boroughs and the NHS to ensure the best possible outcomes for residents are achieved during these challenging times.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Members of the Committee continue to be fully engaged in the development and delivery of the scrutiny work programme.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no equity, diversity or inclusion implications arising from this report.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no communication implications arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Debra Norman

Corporate Director, Law and Governance