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|  Brent | Full Council 15 September 2025 |
| | Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources |
| 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: Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025/26 |
| Background Papers: | None |
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To update Full Council on the meetings and activities of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee since the last update to Full Council on 07 July 2025.

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 work programme for the 2025/26 municipal year, attached as Appendix A 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 Committee (NWL JHOSC). Councillor Ketan Sheth was re-elected as chair of the Community and 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's 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 2025-26 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 first meeting of the 2025-26 municipal year on 02 July 2025. The meeting focused on two annual safeguarding reports. The first of these reports was the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report; 2024-2025. Nicola Brownjohn, the Independent Chair of the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board informed the Committee that she was pleased with the work that the board had carried out in the past year, her first full year as the Independent Chair. The Committee were given details on the development of the new SAB Strategic Plan 2024-26 and the three main priorities within it that the board will be concentrating on: self-neglect, substance misuse and housing and learning from safeguarding reviews. The Committee were also pleased to hear that the backlog of reviews dating back to the time of covid had now been reduced significantly.
- 3.2.6 Members were also informed that throughout the year the board had been working on strengthening governance aspects such as performance and audit standards. The Independent Chair was also very pleased to report that the main partners of the board; the ICB, Police and Brent Adult Social Care had come together and worked endlessly on self-assessment and improvement programmes. She continued to say that many aspects of the board were working very well together and highlighted better quality of Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) and a much better use of the high-risk panel. The Committee were also informed of one of the most important projects of the year which was the Community Engagement Project. Again, the Independent Chair was pleased with the progress made and praised the assistance and guidance provided by Healthwatch in making it a success. She went on to say that Healthwatch was imperative in ensuring she was able to engage with residents of the borough whilst also ensuring that she was introduced to the right people within community groups for her to engage with. Members were also updated on one of its key concerns from previous years which was transitional safeguarding. They were pleased to hear that both the Adults and Children's partnerships were working closer together ensuring a strengthening of transitional safeguarding into adulthood. They were informed of the three main cohorts being targeted; people with additional needs, care leavers and those exposed to higher risks of exploitation. The Chair went on to say that Brent was doing well in all aspects within the remit of the Board but there is always a desire for continuous improvement and that she had confidence in Brent's processes.
- 3.2.7 The second item discussed at the Committee meeting was the Brent Safeguarding Children Partnership Report; 2024-2025. Keith Makin, the Brent Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineer started by advising members that the key role of the partnership was to seek assurance and to

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

ensure that the three statutory partners; Health, Police and the Council worked closely together on safeguarding and were well sighted on strategic priorities that needed to be developed and achieved. He also took the opportunity to inform the Committee that he was pleased with the work and progress the partnership had achieved in the past year, his first full year as the Independent Scrutineer. Members were advised of the many achievements that have been made in the past year including the development of a new data dashboard aided by PHEW. This will be used by all partners and groups to better understand the landscape of Brent, understanding issues and concerns whilst also assisting in targeting areas of improvement. The Committee were pleased to hear that the partnership were developing plans to work more closely with children and young people within the borough and with the Brent Youth Parliament to ensure their voices and opinions are heard. This will be further enhanced by the creation of a system of having young scrutineers working with the Independent Scrutineer assisting him to scrutinise the partnership as a whole. This initiative is uncommon and unique but is something that he has successfully introduced in three other boroughs prior to working with Brent.

Members were also informed that the partnership had continued to work closely with Community Safety through the Safer Brent Partnership ensuring representation at the Safeguarding Children's Forum and Case Review Group. He also emphasised the collaboration with the SAB on transitional safeguarding, highlighting not only on its importance but to also stress that it was not common practice for boards and partnerships to work so closely together.

- 3.2.8 The Committee were updated on the work the partnership has done to date on complying with the new Working Together 23 guidance whereby they have implemented important changes such as the introduction of Lead Safeguarding Partners who will meeting throughout the year focussing on the inclusive strategic overview of the partnership and its work. They were also advised that the partnership are leading on the work needed to introduce the statutory requirements of the Children's Wellbeing and Education Bill. Members were pleased to hear the priorities and key targets for the next twelve months which include the creation of an online safety group focussing on online safety and mobile phone usage, further emphasis on data collation and analysis, the introduction of the young scrutineers and a special focus on neurodiversity, especially on girls with hidden autism in primary schools, something that has been picked up through multi-agency audits.
- 3.2.9 The Committee will meet for its second meeting of the year on 17 September 2025. At this time, members will focus on three items: Children's Oral Health, Period Dignity and The Impact of Youth Justice Service Delivery in Brent.
- 3.2.10 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 the London Borough of Hillingdon on 17 July 2025. The Committee had very productive discussions on Maternity provisions in North West London including outcomes and equity across the region, Adult Mental Health and the Reconfiguration of the ICB and

the possible implications on services. The NWL JHOSC will meet for its second meeting of the year on 09 September 2025 at London Borough of Harrow where they will be reviewing Special School Nursing, The future of Place Based Partnerships and Dentist Commissioning and Children's Dental Health.

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:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director, Finance and Resources