

	Full Council 14 September 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Chair's Update	

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
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.0. To update Full Council on the meetings and activities of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee since the last update to Full Council on 06 July 2026.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

- 2.1 Note the report and the updates provided for the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and North West London Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC).

- 2.2 Note that the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2026/27 municipal year will be provided as part of the next update report to Full Council once it has been officially agreed at the next meeting scheduled for 16 September 2026.

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 Sai Karthik Madabhushi has been appointed as chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026. Councillor Sapna Chadha has been appointed to serve as Brent's representative at the North West London Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (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.

Members are reminded that Housing will remain within the remit of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee until the new Homes Scrutiny Committee has been established, a schedule of meeting dates has been agreed, and work programme exercises have been completed.

- 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 2026/27 work programme has been finalised. Scheduled to be formally agreed at the committee's next meeting on 16 September 2026, it will outline the policy areas and council decisions the committee plan to review during the 2026/27 municipal year. 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 of highly significant topics¹.

- 3.2.5 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met for its first meeting of the 2026-27 municipal year on 30 June 2026. The meeting focused on two annual safeguarding reports. The first of these reports was the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report; 2025-2026. The Committee heard from representatives across the safeguarding partnership, including the Council, Metropolitan Police and NHS Integrated Care Board. Members were advised that safeguarding partners continued to operate within a challenging environment characterised by increasing demand, growing case complexity and significant organisational change. Despite these pressures, partners remained committed to maintaining effective safeguarding arrangements and ensuring services were delivered in ways that were safe, accessible and responsive to residents' needs. The importance of strong leadership, oversight and collaboration across agencies was repeatedly emphasised, particularly in relation to supporting vulnerable adults and ensuring that safeguarding services were provided in settings where people felt safe and supported.
- 3.2.6 The Committee were informed that the Board had completed its previous strategic priorities relating to self-neglect, housing, substance misuse and learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), and had embedded this work into business-as-usual activity. Examples included the development and launch of a self-neglect toolkit, strengthened multi-agency approaches to homelessness and substance misuse, revised SAR referral and learning processes, and expanded engagement with people who draw on care and support services. Members were advised that extensive community engagement had informed the Board's new one-year strategic plan, which prioritises safeguarding adults with complex care and support needs, with a particular focus on mental health, homelessness and suicide prevention, alongside wider work to prevent harm before crises occur. The Board also highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen community engagement, inclusivity and workforce development, while continuing to promote learning through regular multi-agency briefings, training events and "lessons learned" sessions.
- 3.2.7 Throughout the discussion, Members welcomed the progress being made but sought greater assurance regarding outcomes, performance information and the effectiveness of partnership working. Members also questioned the low

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

conversion rate of safeguarding referrals to Section 42 enquiries and the extent to which learning from SARs and national reviews was being translated into practice. Officers acknowledged the challenges associated with collecting meaningful multi-agency data and explained that the newly established Performance and Audit Sub-Group was beginning to analyse trends and identify areas requiring further scrutiny, including modern slavery, cuckooing and referral pathways. The Committee were also pleased to hear that all partners had reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening information sharing, improving operational partnership arrangements and ensuring future reports provide clearer trend analysis, stronger performance data and a more cohesive account of multi-agency safeguarding activity.

3.2.8 The second item discussed at the Committee meeting was the Brent Safeguarding Children Partnership Report; 2025-2026. The Committee were informed that whilst the number of formal Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews remained relatively low, there was extensive safeguarding activity taking place across the partnership. Members were advised that the Case Review Group routinely considered referrals and cases of concern, with learning being identified through thematic multi-agency audits, case reviews and ongoing scrutiny activity. This learning was then embedded through training programmes, briefings and wider workforce development initiatives. The Committee also heard that Brent had taken a leading role on online safety, engaging directly with children, young people, parents and schools to shape its approach. This had resulted in the development of the Brent Phone Pledge, which goes beyond national guidance by promoting safer and more consistent use of technology across school communities. The Partnership highlighted its commitment to strengthening learning from reviews, advancing transitional safeguarding arrangements and ensuring the experiences of children and young people were better reflected in future safeguarding work, including through proposals to introduce Young Scrutineers.

3.2.9 Members heard that partnership working remained a key strength and would become increasingly important as reforms associated with the Families First Partnership Programme continue to be implemented. Officers explained that Brent had already introduced aspects of these reforms, bringing early help and children's social care services closer together and strengthening multi-agency working through co-location and joint decision-making arrangements. The Committee was advised that improved information-sharing practices had been supported through the involvement of a wider range of partners at the Front Door, including housing, adult social care and domestic abuse specialists. Members were pleased to hear that the Children Young People and Community Development department was also playing a more prominent role within safeguarding arrangements, supported by designated safeguarding lead networks and strengthened links between schools and safeguarding partners. Members welcomed the recent positive Ofsted judgement and heard that stronger relationships had also been established with community safety partners, youth organisations and the voluntary sector. Whilst progress was acknowledged, officers recognised that there remained further opportunities to strengthen engagement across the partnership and continue improving information sharing between agencies.

3.2.10 The Committee also explored the key risks affecting children and young people in Brent and how the Partnership was responding to them. Neglect was identified as a priority area, with officers highlighting the importance of early intervention, professional curiosity and effective family support to prevent concerns from escalating. Members also discussed the ongoing risks associated with child exploitation, serious youth violence, missing children and gang-related activity, hearing about the work of contextual safeguarding panels, exploitation mapping exercises and enhanced partnership responses designed to identify and support vulnerable young people. Considerable attention was given to online harms and emerging risks linked to artificial intelligence, with partners stressing the importance of equipping parents, schools and professionals to recognise signs of online exploitation and abuse. The discussion also considered the safeguarding implications of unmet or undiagnosed SEND and neurodiversity needs, with officers emphasising the need for earlier identification and intervention.

3.2.11 The Committee will meet for its second meeting of the municipal year on 16 September 2026. At this time, members will focus on three items: The Brent Youth Strategy, The Brent Culture Strategy and Childhood Asthma in Brent.

3.2.12 Officers from across the North West London region, led by Brent, are working closely with the newly established West and North London Integrated Care Board (ICB) to re-establish the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC). Membership of the committee has now been confirmed, and preparations are underway to convene a work programming session, agree updated Terms of Reference, and establish a schedule of meetings for the remainder of the year.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Members continue to be fully engaged in the development and delivery of the scrutiny work programme, which is intended to be a flexible, living document that can adapt and change throughout the municipal year in response to the Committee's needs.

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