	Full Council 16 November 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
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Chatan Popat, Strategy Lead – Scrutiny Democratic and Corporate Governance 020 9837 5068 chatan.popat@brent.gov.uk James Kinsella, Governance and Scrutiny Manager Democratic and Corporate Governance 020 8937 2063 james.kinsella@brent.gov.uk Amira Nassr, Deputy Director, Democratic and Corporate Governance 020 8937 5436 amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.0. To update Full Council on the meetings and activities of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee since the last update to Full Council on 14 September 2026.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

2.1 Note the report and the updates provided for the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 Note that an update on 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 renewed. This follows the establishment of the new Housing Scrutiny Committee, subsequent changes to its remit and reduction to the number of annual meetings held from six to five.

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 now has three scrutiny committees: the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and the newly formed Housing 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 elected as chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026.

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; Public Health and Wellbeing.

Members are reminded that all elements of Housing are now to be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

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 was approved at its last meeting held on 16 September 2026. However, the Committee are in the process of renewing the programme following the establishment of the Housing Scrutiny Committee. It continues to outline the policy areas and council decisions the committee plan to review during the 2026/27 municipal year. In developing its work programme, Committee members prioritise items to include on the work programme based on a set of criteria. Prioritisation ensures that items included on the committees work programme are (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 is 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 topics[1].

3.2.5 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met for its second meeting of the 2026-27 municipal year on 16 September 2026. The meeting focused on three substantive items relating to Childhood Asthma, Implementation of the Brent Youth Strategy and progress against the Brent Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth. Across the items, the Committee placed particular emphasis on demonstrating measurable outcomes, strengthening the quality and consistency of performance information, identifying geographical and demographic inequalities, and ensuring that interventions and investment were reaching those communities with the greatest need.

3.2.6 Whilst discussing Childhood Asthma, the Committee noted that the condition remained a significant health priority in Brent, reflecting historically high levels of asthma-related hospital admissions and continuing health inequalities. Members were advised that targeted case-finding had identified approximately 1,300 children with potentially undiagnosed asthma and that increased diagnostic testing had contributed to a 50% increase in new diagnoses. Approximately 900 children identified as being at higher risk had also received more detailed clinical reviews, with around 20% requiring changes to their medication. Whilst noting indications of reduced emergency admissions, the Committee raised concerns regarding inconsistencies within the performance information presented and requested clearer and more reliable data in future reporting. Members also considered specialist asthma nursing capacity, the Asthma Friendly Schools programme, vaccination rates, air pollution, inequalities between different communities and areas of the borough, and the impact of damp and mould within housing. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening links between health and housing services and providing more detailed ward-level information.

3.2.7 The second item discussed at the Committee meeting was the progress in implementing the Brent Youth Strategy, one year following its publication. Members noted the partnership approach to delivery, involving the Council, voluntary and community organisations and young people, together with the £4 million investment in youth provision. The Committee emphasised the importance of demonstrating the outcomes arising from this investment rather than focusing primarily on levels of activity. Members requested stronger performance measures relating to youth violence and offending, NEET levels, mental health and wellbeing, feelings of safety and participation, supported by demographic and ward-level data to enable assessment of the accessibility and equitable distribution of provision. The discussion also addressed preventative activity within schools, access to school facilities for community-based youth

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

provision and the continuing role of Brent Youth Parliament. Members also recognised the importance of ensuring that information provided to young people was accessible and that young people were meaningfully involved in the development and evaluation of services affecting them.

3.2.8 The final item considered at the meeting was the implementation of the Brent Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth. The Committee noted progress in strengthening partnerships, widening cultural participation and attracting external investment. Members were informed that approximately £1.5 million of external funding had been secured for Creative Community Brent and more than for Vibrant, alongside activity aimed at creating pathways into creative employment for young people and strengthening collaboration through the Cultural Compact. Members welcomed the progress made but highlighted the need for a stronger framework to demonstrate the outcomes and wider impact of cultural investment. Particular consideration was given to supporting smaller and grassroots organisations to access funding, providing capacity-building support, protecting grassroots cultural and music venues, making effective use of existing community spaces and ensuring an equitable geographical distribution of cultural investment. Members also sought improved monitoring of organisations applying for and successfully securing funding, together with ward-level analysis of investment.

3.2.9 Overall, for all three items, the Committee identified a consistent need for stronger evidence of impact, more robust performance measures and greater transparency regarding the geographical and demographic distribution of services and investment. Members emphasised the value of ward-level data and clear outcome-focused KPIs in enabling the Committee to assess whether strategies were delivering tangible improvements for residents and addressing inequalities. The discussions also reinforced the importance of effective partnership working across Council services, health partners, schools and the voluntary and community sector, alongside meaningful engagement with residents and young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

3.2.10 Following the establishment of a new Housing Scrutiny Committee and the decision made at Full Council to reduce the number of meetings for each Committee to five per municipal year, the meeting scheduled for 24 November 2026 has now been cancelled. Therefore, the Committee will meet for its third meeting of the year on 18 January 2027.

3.2.11 Officers from across the North West London region 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). Preparations are now 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