



**MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND
PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday 30 May 2013 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Van Kalwala (Chair) and Councillors Arnold, Clues, Harrison, HB Patel, RS Patel and Krupa Sheth

An apology for absence was received from: Councillor Green.

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2013

that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2013 be approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendment:-

line 25, page 2- replace 'rears' with 'arrears'

3. Matters arising

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) – performance update

In response to a query from Councillor H B Patel concerning what action was being taken in respect of the potential total rental arrears of £1.5m, the Chair advised that a response from BHP would be sought.

4. Brent Fire Services - update

Terry Harrington (Borough Commander, Brent London Fire Brigade) gave a presentation on Brent Fire Services and advised that an initial efficiency savings forecast target of £65m was now more likely to be around £50m. Options for changes to the Fire Services in London were presently at consultation stage, with the '101-151' option being the preferred option. Terry Harrington advised that the proposals included the closure of 12 fire stations and removal of 18 fire appliances across London, of which four fire appliances would be redeployed elsewhere. Members heard that the London Fire Brigade's (LFB) budget was not set on a borough by borough basis and that service configuration was optimised for prompt mobilisation and responses to fire incidences across London. Terry Harrington drew Members' attention to the present Brent Fire Services resources as set out in the presentation and it was noted that there no plans in the current proposals to remove any fire appliances or close any stations in the borough. Wembley fire station had also been identified as a station of particular strategic importance.

Terry Harrington informed members that the LFB's standards included first appliance to be at the scene of an emergency within six minutes, and a second appliance to be there within eight minutes. Brent' performance recorded 67.7% for first appliance arriving within six minutes and 77.6% for the second appliance arriving in eight minutes. In terms of average time attendance times in Brent, the first appliance average was 5 minutes, 41 seconds and the second appliance was 6 minutes, 38 seconds. This compared with the LBF average of 5 minutes, 29 seconds and 7 minutes and 6 seconds respectively. Terry Harrington referred to the likely impact of the proposals in response times for first appliances arriving at a fire scene for each ward, with most of them forecast to have a response ranging from 1 to 24 seconds faster. He explained that although there were no proposed changes to fire services in Brent, changes in neighbouring boroughs were forecast to result in the time differences predicted for a number of Brent wards. Members noted that the forecast was drawn up through a computer programme model.

Terry Harrington also outlined a number of community fire safety initiatives, these being:-

- Setting up of Adult Safeguarding Board, with a High Risk Panel sitting beneath this
- Rough sleeping – setting up of a Strategy Group focusing on rough sleeping and also on accommodation not originally built for residential purposes, with work also taking place with relevant partner agencies
- Visual audits of buildings such as derelict buildings
- Sprinkler initiative for residential properties and working with organisations such as Brent Housing Partnership (BHP)
- Youth engagements – working with schools, junior citizens and continuation of the London Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) scheme

Members then discussed the presentation and an enquiry was made on whether there would be any changes to the number of staff and whether this would affect Brent Fire Services. Although the community fire safety initiatives were welcomed, it was asked whether there were a sufficient number of skilled staff to undertake these in view of the financial pressures faced by LFB. In terms of reduction of fire risks, members asked whether evidence of this could be provided. A member sought further information in respect of how the predicted changes in response times per ward had been calculated. The sprinkler initiative was also welcomed as it was proven to be effective in minimising damage to neighbourhoods when fires did occur. Confirmation was sought as to when the LBF budget would be finalised and further information was sought as to the options put to consultation. Targets for the previous year and for the next period were also requested, as well as comparisons with London boroughs with similar profiles. Further details were also sought concerning actions being taken to reduce areas identified as presenting a high fire risk.

In reply to the issues raised by committee, Terry Harrington advised there would be a scaling down of staff numbers across London, however all the fire teams in Brent would remain in place, although there may be a loss of a small number of posts. Around 500 posts over the whole of LBF would be cut by March 2015, however Terry Harrington added that a large proportion of these posts could be achieved through natural wastage as a number of staff were approaching 33 years or more

service. Members noted that Brent Fire Services consisted of the Borough Commander, three station managers and four watch managers. At Wembley Fire Station, there are four watches consisting of 22 staff, making 88 in total, whilst Willesden Fire Station had four watches of 12 staff each, totalling 48 and Park Royal Fire Station four watches of 8 staff each, totalling 32. In addition, there were 12 staff members for the centrally located LIFE team and five staff in the Fire Safety Team. The committee heard that there would be some losses in terms of support resources. Terry Harrington acknowledged that the community initiative proposals were ambitious, however he felt that there were sufficiently skilled staff and efforts would be made to ensure they were allocated to an appropriate strand depending on their abilities and level of authority. The Schools Team was a centrally dedicated resource that focused on schools identified as high risk, whilst watch managers were also tasked specific projects.

Terry Harrington advised that he could provide a future report to the committee detailing on a wide range of types of fires and a breakdown of figures. Flooding was the only type of incident where there was an increased risk, whilst action was still being taken to identify the most vulnerable in terms of fire risk and a referral system had been set up which had referred three people in the previous week. The sprinkler initiative played an important role in protecting people and preventing damage to property and required serious consideration about where was appropriate to locate sprinkler systems, whilst a presentation on sprinklers could be provided to members if they so wished. With regard to ward data, Terry Harrington explained that the data had been obtained from the last two years in response to all calls. Members heard that P1 postcodes and P1 individuals indicated high risk, and a profiling of such factors was taking place to gain further information. In areas such as estates, the LBF liaised with partner agencies and meetings took place with the Brent Police Borough Commander to discuss issues and 'estate days' took place jointly with the police. A database also existed of people who the LBF had made visits to, whilst MASH was being utilised to help identify 'hard to reach or hard to know' individuals. Other initiatives included education, 'shock tactics' and fitting smoke alarms. Terry Harrington advised that there were also a number of challenges in getting the right message across effectively to the public, such as Brent's transient population and the number of other languages spoken in the borough, which made the need to undertake a joint stakeholder, holistic approach even more important.

Turning to the budget, Terry Harrington advised that the budget proposals had initially been put on hold following a representation from the Mayor of London. The consultation was due to end on 18 July 2013 and public meetings were being held in all London boroughs, including a joint public meeting involving Brent and Harrow. The feedback from the consultation would then be collated and a review of the concerns raised would take place before implementation of the final proposals that would happen sometime in August 2013. It was agreed that Tony Harrington would provide information on consultation review and final proposals to members through Kisi Smith-Charlemagne (Policy and Performance Officer, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement).

5. Employment and Enterprise performance update

Shomsia Ali (Head of Employment and Enterprise, Regeneration and Major Projects) presented the report and introduced herself to members, explaining that

she had taken up the post in March 2013. The previous report to committee had provided details of the external review of employment provision in Brent. The outcome of the review included a number of recommendations which sought the implementation of innovative activities that complemented and designed to drive better provision of existing employment provision, including the creation of an Employment and Enterprise team. Shomsia Ali drew members' attention to a number of objectives as set out in the report and then updated them on progress with regard to the Employment and Enterprise team. A Navigator Manager had been appointed to help deliver the Navigator Service and was supported with the recruitment of six Navigators. The Navigator Service had been in operation since January 2013 and their immediate priority was to focus on those who were most impacted by the welfare reforms. A Business Development and Partnership team had also been established to help attract external funding to the borough for the delivery of employment, skills and enterprise provision and would work closely with the council's voluntary and community sector partners. This team also had another role in designing and commissioning services to drive better value from existing provision or to plug gaps in provision to meet priority needs. Shomsia Ali advised that recruitment for the Business Development Manager had been pushed back by a week. With regard to key work streams, one of these was to maximise opportunities for Brent residents to secure employment opportunities at the London Designer Outlet due to open in late October or early November 2013, where some 1,500 jobs would be created. A presentation was being given to retailers on 27 June 2013 and this represented a big opportunity. An update to members would also be presented at a future meeting in respect of obtaining employment opportunities for Brent residents with Europa, the organisation contracted to run Facilities Management for the council.

Shomsia Ali advised that she will chair the Employment Working Group of the Welfare Reform Group and terms of reference and an initial action plan had been agreed. One of the targets of the group included 35% of households impacted by welfare reform to be supported into employment and this would include working with Jobcentre Plus who were keen to work with the council on improving outcomes. The committee noted that presently a review of Brent Adult and Community Education Services (BACES) was taking place with a view to ensure it at the centre of the borough's employment offer and to refocus its energy as an employment centred training organisation. A feasibility and scoping study was underway to explore the potential for setting up an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) in either child care or the hospitality industry. A draft report was recommending that a pilot ILM model for 'atypical child care' be set up on a BHP estate, however it was not felt that an ILM model would be feasible for hospitality mainly because of the significant upfront investment required, although a meeting had been arranged with the main hotel chains in the borough who were keen to be involved in a programme supporting and training local residents to access jobs in the hospitality industry. The Wembley Works team continued to support residents into employment, including recruitment with Europa and liaising with Quintain and working with colleagues in the Planning Service to build an employment and supply chain clause in respect of Section 106 agreements. Shomsia Ali advised that the Wembley Works team was presently being reviewed and a consultation on proposals was due to end on 6 June 2013, although no significant changes were proposed.

Members commented that the formation of the Employment and Enterprise Team as a whole was running behind schedule and further observations were sought in respect of action being taken to remedy this. Further information was also requested in respect of measures to obtain additional funding and other activities undertaken by the Navigators team. The high unemployment levels amongst young people was highlighted, although working with the Brent 14-19 Partnership was fruitful and there were also a number of high achieving pupils in this age group in the borough. One member felt that there were examples of replication with regard to employment services and cited the signposting undertaken by the Navigator team as an example, as he suggested that this was also done by BACES and the College of North West London. In addition, a number of objectives were not new and consideration needed to be given as to whether the costs involved in the Navigator Service were balanced by the benefits to the borough. Further details were sought as to how to identify specific residents who would be most affected by the welfare reforms and was each case being considered individually. In addition, it was asked whether attempts to identify such residents of housing associations not participating in the Navigator service was also being undertaken. In respect of BACES, a member questioned the need to re-focus its' role as an employment training centre as other organisations were already fulfilling this role and were the funders content with this change in direction.

A member commented that there was not much detail in the report in respect of an engagement strategy with businesses, including those in Park Royal, to develop partnerships with them and create more jobs for local residents and further observations were sought on this. Further information was asked with regard to steps to upskill residents, whilst it was also felt that there was room for improvement in respect of obtaining apprenticeships for local residents. In respect of the Navigator team target of 35% of households impacted by welfare reform to be supported into employment, it was noted that to date there were only ten job outcomes and the cost of the pilot Navigator Service was sought. It was suggested that changes be made to the Navigator Service in view that it was currently behind in some targets and did staff need further training. The number of residents participating in the service and what happened to those who did not lead to a job outcome was sought and it was also asked whether it was felt that the targets would be met by the end of the year. Views were also sought on the future vision for the borough with regard to business, enterprise and employment.

In reply to the issues raised by members, Shomsia Ali acknowledged that the establishment of the Employment and Enterprise team were presently behind schedule due to a delay in the recruitment of significant roles, including that of her own, and that they were in the set up phase. Whilst the Navigator Service was now in operation, it had been established on the basis that other services (including job brokerage services) existed in the borough, to which the Navigators could refer residents for further support. Since the commencement of delivery it has transpired that there is a dearth of quality job brokerage service in the borough, and those that exist have limitations set by strict eligibility criteria, such as the Work Programme. Shomsia Ali stressed that the Navigator Service is a pilot service and was therefore regularly reviewed. A formal review of services would commence in June/July 2013. Once the Business Development and Partnership team was fully operational, it would focus on securing external funding for the borough, although members noted that there less such funds available than there had been in previous years. Shomsia Ali agreed that whilst there were fewer funding opportunities now than pre

2008, external funding opportunities did still exist. Its success would be influenced by effective lobbying of the right people and organisations and in developing a strong network. Greater collaboration with voluntary organisations was also desirable to ensure partners in the borough worked together on bidding opportunities rather than compete against each other which may limit the success of the borough as a whole. Shomsia Ali emphasised the importance of working with partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, NWL College and work programme providers and to meet such organisations formally on a quarterly or bi-annual basis and ensure that the right and joint objectives were being set, as well as setting a shared action plan.

Shomsia Ali advised that the Navigator Service would continue to produce newsletters for Members and this would be incorporated into an Employment and Enterprise newsletter in future. She advised that the 35% target for the Navigator Service was an end of year target, however it was behind the profile target for this stage of the year and consideration of what changes needed to be made was being undertaken. She added that it is important to remember the service in the context it operates. The Navigator Service is engaging with those residents who are not engaging in other services and who are furthest away from the labour market. 35% job outcome target for this group is a significant challenge. Members noted that the costs of the Navigator Service pilot was £413,000, although as it was a pilot scheme, there was no commitment to this spending in subsequent years and its continuation would be dependent on progress. Shomsia Ali felt that it would be premature to be making wholesale changes to the Navigator Service at this stage as it had only been in operation for a few months and there would be a time lag factor between introducing initiatives and seeing the results of it. With regard to the future vision of business, enterprise and employment in Brent, Shomsia Ali stressed that this needed to be an informed decision and that by going to the market, research could be undertaken to ascertain the potential for business growth and the prospects of job creation. However, she advised that further evidence needed to be obtained before forming this vision. She advised that a research project was currently being commissioned which, amongst other things, was looking into potential growth sector, and this would inform the vision for enterprise in the borough.

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director – Corporate Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) added that welfare changes impacted in many ways, such as increases in residents running into rent arrears. A number of registered social landlords were responding by taking a more robust approach to this and the number of evictions was increasing as a result of this. Such matters would result in an increase in demand for the council to provide temporary housing and provide additional pressure on the council's budget. Efforts were being made to encourage residents to consider even part time work as a means to increase their overall income as some would assume that any work would harm their eligibility to receive benefits. Cathy Tyson advised that around 2,000 residents had been identified as being potentially vulnerable to due to the changes to Housing Benefit, whether they be tenants of private sector property, registered social landlords or BHP. She also explained that the job density measure for Brent was 0.6, which equated to a deficit in available jobs of 40% relative to the borough's working age population, an extremely challenging figure to address. The job density in Park Royal was particularly low and many of jobs in that location were not highly skilled.

The Chair requested that information be provided in respect of the ten job outcomes secured by Navigator Services to date, including what type of posts had been secured, whether they were on a permanent basis or otherwise and the hours of work involved, as well as an update on the Navigator Services' overall progress for the next meeting. He also requested an update on Employment and Enterprise performance for the meeting on 3 October 2013.

6. **Work programme 2013/2014**

The Chair drew members' attention to the work programme and welcomed any further suggestions. He advised that the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked that this committee look into use of CCTV and it was noted that this was most likely to be considered at the meeting on 22 July 2013.

7. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on Monday, 22 July 2013 at 7.00 pm.

8. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Z VAN KALWALA
Chair