



Full Council
22 June 2015

**Report from the Chief Operating
Officer**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Report from the Chair of Scrutiny, Councillor Dan Filson

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Council's Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 14. The report covers the period from March 2015 to present detailing committee members, planned training, programme of work and items discussed during the committee meetings.

2.0 Detail

2.1 *Scrutiny Committee*

In May 2015 the Council selected five new members to serve on the Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny training was arranged for committee members and this took place on 9 June, with two substitute members taking part. The first scheduled Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 16 June. The Chair of the Committee can add an oral report on any issues arising. The Chair of the Committee has held initial meetings with officers to discuss the process for developing a 2015-16 programme of work and will meet with the full Scrutiny Committee over the coming days to develop further the forward plan. It is unlikely the Committee will map out fully how the forthcoming year will be used as the Committee will want to retain some flexibility as to its programme, not least so it can respond to issues as they may arise and to ensure room for issues that members of the wider public may suggest.

The Chair has invited all members of the Council, not just members of the Committee, to make proposals for items for inclusion in the work programme, and these will be reviewed by the Committee, as will ideas submitted by the public. Scrutiny Committee will also review the Cabinet Forward Plan and consider reports from such task groups as are created. The Committee will

make greater use of time-limited task groups involving a small group of councillors and others, usually led by a member of Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 *Training*

On the 9 June the Scrutiny Committee received Member Development training. The purpose of this session was to brief Members on their role on the Scrutiny Committee in accordance to the governance of the Council, as well as to outline the legal and statutory function of Scrutiny with regard to both the council and other public service providers. The session also covered the important community engagement aspect of Scrutiny activities and creating local accountability. The second section of the training provided an introduction to scrutiny questioning skills and influencing techniques.

2.3 *Programme Planning*

The Chair of the committee has held an informal meeting with officers to discuss the 2015/16 programme of work and will be meeting with the entire Scrutiny Committee to further develop and confirm their forward plan. All members had been invited by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to make proposals for items for inclusion in work programme; these will be reviewed by the Committee.

Scrutiny Committee members also reviewed the Cabinet Forward Plan and considered feedback from other members on issues for Scrutiny committee agendas and task groups.

A copy of the Scrutiny Forward plan is attached (Appendix 1)

2.4 *Committee Meetings*

Since the last scrutiny report to Full Council the Committee has held 2 meetings. These meetings were under the chairmanship of Councillor Aslam Choudry to whom we owe much thanks for his leading the Committee over the last year. A summary of all the meetings is as follows:

In March 2015, the committee received an update on the Community Access Strategy and the projects designed to deliver the strategy. The committee voiced concerns regarding how the projects were addressing the diversity of the borough and in particular the needs of residents whose first language isn't English.

In March 2015, the committee also considered housing pressures in the borough, particularly homelessness and housing supply and demand. The committee investigated the impact of welfare reform, the use of empty properties, overcrowding and the potential for inspecting licenced properties. The committee received information on the 'Work Programme Scheme' which has been established to tackle unemployment in the borough; the committee noted the work on this issue.

On the 30 April 2015 the Scrutiny Committee heard from the Operational Director of Community Services, who presented a report summarising the work undertaken across key service areas to address the issue of sustainability. The Committee raised several queries regarding air pollutants

and the use of diesel fuel, seeking information on when TFL would be introducing non-diesel buses, how the council would encourage the use of non-diesel private and commercial vehicles, how traffic flow could be improved across the borough and the number of charging points provided in Brent for electric vehicles. Further information was sought regarding the work done with property.

In April 2015 the Brent Clinical Commission Group introduced a report detailing its commissioning intentions for 2015/16. Members' attention was drawn to the evidence base underpinning the commissioning intentions. This drew specifically on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Brent Better Care Fund Plan. The Committee requested an update be provided to a future meeting.

The last item heard in April 2015 was a report on the Review of Equalities and HR Policies and Practices, conducted between October 2014 and January 2015 by the Deputy Leader of the Council. The report was introduced to the Committee by the Chief Executive and members welcomed the review. During the subsequent discussion concerns were raised regarding the number of staff failing to receive supervisory appraisals, the implications this had for staff progression and whether managers were using the appraisals as an effective tool to support staff.

The Committee also sought clarification on Black Asian Minority Ethnic BAME representation at senior management. The Chair highlighted the importance of ensuring that there was robust monitoring of the action plan and the Committee agreed that an update should be provided on the progress achieved in six month's time.

The Committee received one task group report, with a second to be received at the 16 June Scrutiny Committee:

- The use of the Pupil Premium Grant in Brent – 16 recommendations made and agreed. This was a considerable body of work and an example of how councillors, officers and others can produce serious detailed examination of a key issue.
- Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care in Brent (received at the 16 June Scrutiny Committee)

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 16 June and will have considered:

- The paediatric services provided to Brent residents and the potential impact changes to paediatric services at Ealing Hospital will have on Northwick Park Hospital.
- Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care in Brent, Interim feedback on the work of the Scrutiny Task Group focusing on Access to Extended GP Services and Primary Care in Brent. The report

outlined the task group scope and methodology and provided an overview of emerging findings and recommendations.

- Public Health - priorities and progress; as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, local authorities have new responsibilities for public health. The report outlined these responsibilities and how the Council is discharging these.
- Access to affordable childcare; the report looked at the challenges of providing access to affordable, quality childcare.

The Chair of the Committee can add an oral report on any issues arising.

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