



MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday 5 September 2017 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair), Councillor Davidson (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Colacicco, Crane, Ezeajughi, Stopp and Mashari

Also Present: Councillors McLennan, Southwood and Tatler

1. Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aden. Councillor Choudhary was substituting for Councillor Aden as a member of the committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2017 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Brent Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) Update

Fiona Kivett and Sadie East (Change Managers) delivered a presentation to the committee which detailed the outcomes and learning from the Council's first Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) and described the progress of three new OBRs established in 2017. The committee heard that OBRs were underpinned by design methodology and involved working with a wide range of stakeholders to re-imagine ways of working and jointly develop and test solutions. The first OBRs had been carried out in 2016 and had focussed on Housing for Vulnerable People, Employment Support, and Welfare Reform and Regeneration. The OBRs had generated a number of ideas in response to the key insights from community research. These had included the design and testing of a community hub model in Harlesden and a number of new projects such as a single homeless assessment pathway, commissioning short term accommodation and redesigning disabled related adaptations processes from a customer perspective. The new OBRs focussed on Domestic Abuse, Edge of Care and Gangs. These were currently at the information gathering 'discover' phase and next steps would include undertaking more community and professional research. Following this the OBRs would progress to the developing and testing stage.

In the subsequent discussion the committee questioned how the subject-focus of the OBRs were selected, how decisions were made about who should be

consulted, including whether particular demographics or communities should be targeted and how and by whom the interface with people was managed. With regard to the Domestic Abuse OBR, the committee strongly emphasised the importance of early intervention and raised several related queries, particularly questioning how early intervention initiatives could be progressed. The committee fully supported the discussion of this issue in schools, highlighting the dual benefit of helping to prevent children becoming perpetrators in the future and helping to identify children experiencing domestic abuse at home. Members noted that the focus of outreach and policy tended to be on the victims of Domestic Abuse and on women in particular and suggested that the OBR extend that focus to include men. Discussing the OBR on gangs, the committee queried whether gang activity had increased in Brent, how the council currently worked to tackle this issue and how the outcomes of the OBRs would be monitored to assess their effectiveness.

Responding to the queries raised, Fiona Kivett explained that support was provided by a range of services and agencies in identifying key stakeholders, who in turn were engaged when research plans were developed. The change team had been trained in community research techniques, including ethnographies. Experience had revealed that one of the best approaches was to carry out interviews and discussions in partnership with trusted members of the community. The change team also signposted interviewees to sources of support. Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities) advised that the stakeholder base included third sector organisations and partnerships which were already engaging with people affected by the issues under consideration.

Addressing the importance of early intervention, Sadie East advised that the research for the Domestic Violence OBR had included victims reflecting on what support or interventions may have made a difference to them at the time. A clear theme from the research undertaken had been the need to teach children and young people what healthy relationships looked like. Councillor Miller advised that the Council had created additional officer posts which would focus on early intervention and had developed a predictive modelling tool to help identify those most at risk. The work being done with schools on domestic violence would be reviewed to assess whether this needed to be strengthened and the committee would be provided with information on this matter. Sadie East acknowledged that the focus of the OBR research had been on those with direct experience of Domestic Abuse but this focus could be expanded to include engaging with particular target or under-represented groups. The committee further heard that an organisation which works with perpetrators was assisting in identifying people who would participate in the research.

Responding to members' queries relating to the OBR on gangs, Councillor Miller advised that a report would shortly be going to the Safer Brent Partnership which set out statistics on gang activity but confirmed that there had been a slight increase in this activity. There had been a London-wide surge in violent crime and a small percentage of this related to gangs. Members were cautioned that whilst both represented significant problems, their causes and the profile of those involved differed. It was important for the council to encourage community and voluntary groups providing services to young people to engage with each other to help them co-ordinate and avoid duplication. The stronger communities strategy was currently in draft but this would include a programme of work around gangs and community cohesion, some of which was already being implemented. The OBRs provided the

council with valuable qualitative data which helped to reveal issues or gaps in services. The outcomes would be tracked in measurable ways and monitored by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That the research undertaken with regard to the Outcome Based Review on Domestic Abuse include a male perspective.

5. **Follow Up Review on Brent High Street Initiatives**

Councillors Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) and Southwood (Lead Member for Environment) presented a report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment which provided a performance analysis of the newly recruited town centre managers, the digital high streets project and the in-house uniformed litter patrol service. It was noted that Members of the committee had undertaken a site visit to Harlesden high street to support their scrutiny of the various Brent High Street Initiatives and that two Town Centre Managers Grace Nelson and Rubina Charalambous were in attendance at the meeting to aid discussion.

The committee discussed the report and questioned how a place-based approach avoided becoming Wembley or Harlesden centric. Members sought further information on the establishment of Business Improvement Districts (BID) and the process of selecting areas appropriate for these. Questions were raised regarding the role of the Town Centre Managers and whether performance indicators for these positions included street cleanliness. Noting the excellent work being done by the Town Centre Managers, a member queried whether there was a greater focus on strategic rather than practical developments. The committee further queried whether the intention was to extend the provision of town centre managers to more areas of the borough.

Discussing the uniformed litter patrol service, a member commented that the deployment of the team was not sufficiently ambitious, should be more imaginative and that there should be a street cleanliness performance indicator. Another member of the committee queried what would be required to support the expansion of the team. Questions were raised regarding the disparity between the number of fixed penalty notices issued and those paid and what actions could be taken to improve the timeliness of payments. Further queries were raised regarding the hours of operation and the responsibility for educating residents on appropriate waste disposal. An update was sought regarding the task group recommendation on local community champions. Clarity was sought regarding the level of investigations undertaken into illegally dumped waste, the use of signs and other advertising to emphasise a strong message against this offence, and collaboration with teams dealing with landlord licensing.

In response to the queries raised, Councillor Tatler emphasised that the town centres were defined within the strategy approved by Cabinet. This strategy set out seventeen town centres in total, with nine priority areas identified as most in need of support. Other areas were recognised as running effectively without council assistance, though support would be provided where required. Matthew Dibben (Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise) advised that interest in BIDs had been expressed by a number of associations and the viability of these would be explored.

Councillor Tatler emphasised that strengthening the infrastructure of Town Centres made those centres more viable for BIDs.

Addressing members' questions on Town Centre Managers, Councillor Tatler explained that an important part of their role was to establish relationships with businesses and identify issues affecting their respective areas. The Town Centre Managers explained that issues were logged daily, often relating to environmental services, such as illegal dumping and licensing issues. Quick resolutions to these issues were achieved helping to build trust with businesses and other stakeholders. The look and feel of the highstreets was a top priority and a lot of work had been done to ensure streets were cleaner and shopfronts were freshened up. Councillor Southwood explained that five neighbourhood managers had been recruited to cover the five Brent Connects areas and confirmed in response to a query that it was an aspiration to have five town centre managers. Before and after profiles, including photographic evidence, could be provided within the report which would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

Councillor Southwood addressed the committee's questions on the uniformed litter patrol team, emphasising that it was currently in its infancy and was not yet up to capacity. The role of the Town Centre managers in providing targeted information to assist in deploying the team to maximum efficiency was highlighted. Chris Whyte explained that there was a corporate Performance Indicator for Veolia (Brent's Public Realm Contractor) and the uniformed litter patrol team supported Veolia in keeping the borough's streets clean. Consideration would be given to how this indicator could be divided to reflect the different but complimentary strands of work. Councillor Southwood confirmed that it was envisaged that this team would develop and grow over time and that the data collected via the neighbourhood managers would help to inform any decisions about how best to meet the needs of these areas going forward. It had been determined that the role of community champions was best served by community groups, however this did not preclude the possibility of appointing individuals to this role in the future.

Dennis Lewis (Waste Enforcement Manager) advised that the disparity between FPNs issued and those paid could in part be addressed by the inability of officers to receive payment at the point of issue. However, the team now had the technology to enable payment to be taken as soon as an FPN was issued and it was anticipated that this would help to address this lag in payment. Members' attention was drawn to the data provided on waste enforcement investigations and the committee was informed that signs were put up as part of the work of the patrol team regarding illegal dumping and the team worked closely with private sector housing.

RESOLVED: that the report and update provided by Officers and Lead Members be noted.

6. Update on Recommendations of S106 and Community Infrastructure Task Group

The Chair advised that the report before the committee set out the progress made against the recommendations of the Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task Group, as modified by the committee at its meeting on 12 July

2016. The report presented a Red/Amber/Green assessment: thirteen actions were categorised as green, ten as amber, one as red and one, 'not applicable. Councillor Tattler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skill), Amar Dave (Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment) and Alice Lester (Head of Planning Transport and Licensing) were present to address the committee's queries.

The committee discussed the report. A member commented on the lack of clarity around CIL and sought confirmation of the officer lead for this area. Questions were raised regarding the possible uses and restrictions of S106 and CIL spending and clarity was particularly sought regarding paragraph 3.14 of the report. It was queried how the recommendations of the report accorded with the Council's planning objectives.

Responding to the committee, Alice Lester advised that CIL fell within her remit as Head of Planning. Policy on CIL was developed in discussion with the Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skill and the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, within the context of legislative arrangements. A report would be submitted to the Cabinet in the coming months on this matter. Councillor Tatler confirmed that Neighbourhood CIL had a named officer and that work on Strategic CIL was ongoing with a focus on mitigating the impact of developments and aiding growth. Alice Lester highlighted difficulties of recruiting to positions within the S106/CIL and Planning Policy teams and advised that the positions had been reviewed and re-advertised via professional networks. Councillor Tatler detailed the restrictions around CIL and S106 spending and emphasised that these monies must not be viewed as a way of filling gaps in the revenue budget. Alice Lester further advised that CIL was only meant to be a contribution to the cost of infrastructure and difficult choices would need to be made about how best to direct these funds. It would be important to anticipate areas of future growth to try to improve infrastructure in advance of development and to identify how best to mitigate the impact of current and future growth.

Councillor Stopp reported that the leader of Hammersmith and Fulham Council had stated that they would be using CIL contributions to fund the building of affordable housing. The Lead Member and Officers present advised that legislation prohibited the spending of CIL on affordable housing. In view of Councillor Stopp's assertion, Members and Officers were asked to contact their counterparts in Hammersmith and Fulham to clarify if and how CIL contributions were being used to fund affordable housing.

Members subsequently requested that the following be provided to the committee before the next meeting: a briefing paper regarding the monies generated by the Community Infrastructure Levy, expanding on paragraph 3.14 of the report; information on whether the net CIL contribution per dwelling of £8,200 against the delivery of affordable housing represented a net loss or gain with regard to the physical and social infrastructure; and, the current total outstanding sum of CIL funds held by the council, alongside the list approved projects and categories of prioritisation.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the report and update provided by Officers and Lead Members be noted.

- ii) that Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skill) provide an update to the committee regarding the outcome of her discussions with her counterpart in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham with respect to the use of CIL contributions to fund affordable housing.

7. Update on the Devolution of Business Rates Task Group

Councillor Davidson (Chair, Devolution of Business Rates Task Group) advised that the Task Group had created a productive report which had been fully endorsed by Cabinet. It was highlighted that the Devolution of Business Rates had been delayed, however, the policy of encouraging business had not. Of the task group's recommendations, there remained a number of powerful actions for Brent's businesses. Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader) further explained that in preparation for the anticipated devolution of business rates, London's local authorities were considering pooling business rates to provide a level of financial stability across the region. For Brent, this would ensure an additional £4million in 2018/19 and a further £4.8million the following year. A report on this matter was due to be submitted to Cabinet. Althea Loderick (Strategic Director Resources) and Ravinder Jassar (Head of Finance) were also present to address member's queries.

A member subsequently questioned how the council addressed attempts by business owners to avoid paying business rates by dividing businesses into separate parts. Further queries were raised regarding the increased use of Wembley Stadium, how this affected the Stadium's Business Rates, the Stadium's current rateable value and whether there were any discounts or relief applied. The committee questioned whether Planning Policy would change to reinforce a desired mix of residential and business use in developments. Considering the recommendations of the task group in detail, members emphasised the value of having a named lead member responsible for Business Rates and highlighted that more could be done to enhance local partnerships. Members further questioned whether the apprenticeship scheme could be extended to the Football Association (FA), the target for the number of residents in the scheme and why the scheme was most prevalent in the Wembley area. Queries were also raised regarding the role of Brent Business Boards in attracting business to the borough.

In response, Ravinder Jassar confirmed that there was no evidence to suggest that business owners were dividing their business to avoid paying business rates, though assured the committee that this issue would be examined. The increased use of Wembley Stadium did not affect the level of business rates payable as this was based on the rateable value of the property. Althea Loderick outlined the rateable value of Wembley Stadium. In April 2016, this had been £6,200,000 and had risen to £7,800,000. The original rateable value for the Stadium in 2010 had been £10,000,000 but this had been reduced in 2011. Althea Loderick advised that she would liaise with the Valuation Office to ascertain the reasons for this reduction. Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) advised that Brent's Planning Policy currently emphasised mixed residential and business developments.

Councillors McLennan and Tatler confirmed that the practicalities of business rates fell within the portfolio of the former, whilst responsibility for business growth sat

with the latter. A dedicated portfolio could be created if deemed necessary going forward. Matthew Dibben (Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise) advised that a Brent Business Board was launched in November 2016 and brought the council together with voices from the business community. The Board aimed to change perceptions of Brent, its skill base and workforce now and in the future. In December 2017, the first year of the Business Board would be reviewed and next steps considered. It was certainly an aspiration to include the FA as an employer within the Apprenticeship Scheme. Target setting for the scheme was in its infancy at 50 residents for 2017. The scheme was borough wide and aimed to generate opportunities throughout the borough. Councillor McLennan highlighted the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy for 2017-2018 which would meet the public sector requirement of 2.3 per cent of the workforce, equating to 500 apprenticeships across four years internally.

The Chair emphasised that this issue would continue to be scrutinised as part of the process of budget scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the report and update provided by Officers and Lead Members be noted;
- ii) that the Strategic Director of Resources provide an update the committee on the outcome of her discussions with the Valuation Office regarding the reduction in the rateable value of Wembley Stadium in 2011.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 7 November 2017.

The meeting closed at 9.22 pm

M KELCHER
Chair