

## **Chair's Report**

### **Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee September 2019**

#### **December meeting**

Welcome to the last formal committee meeting of 2019. Tonight's meeting promises to be another interesting and informative discussion. These are the items we will be examining.

#### **a) Annual complaints report**

This is a standing item, which comes to the committee for review every year. Studying the data around complaints made to the council can provide vital early intelligence on where pinch points in the system are to be found, and help to adapt our approach.

In the past, the Committee have ensured that, for the first time, Brent's record on complaints was compared to other similar London boroughs. This was hugely helpful in understanding our record in context, and what we can reasonably expect from officers.

I am sure we will have another interesting conversation tonight.

#### **b) Data led service delivery**

Data is changing the way in which all public-sector organisations deliver service to their residents. New technology can help identify those most in need of support and predict crises before they arise.

However, there are also moral implications when local authorities collect data on their residents on such a scale.

We have commissioned a paper on this subject in line with our aim to be a strategic Committee, which looks at the big issues and adds value to discussions happening at high levels within the world of local government.

To help us to prepare, and to understand how the council is already using data in its work, I arranged for members of the committee to receive a live demonstration of one such system used in our community safety work, ahead of the meeting itself. I am sure this will inform our discussion on the night.

#### **c) Tourism in Brent**

We need to continue to grow our local economy to create the jobs of the future and generate the tax revenues we need to deliver excellent public services. One aspect of this is developing a new tourism strategy for Brent which seeks to maximise the huge

assets our borough must attract more visitors to Brent and encourage them to spend their money here.

I particularly want to ensure that our strategy looks beyond Wembley, important though our national stadium and fantastic arena are to attracting tourism.

I am therefore really looking forward to the opportunity to influence this draft plan at an early stage and follow up on the suggestion – in the last Budget Scrutiny Panel – that Brent should lobby for the power to set a ‘tourist tax’ on overnight visitors, as is common in the USA and most European capitals.

Of course, we know that influxes of visitors can also create problems for residents, so I am sure the committee will also be pushing for the council to invest in the infrastructure required to mitigate against this. For example, at the last Full Council meeting, Cllr Long suggested that provision of public toilets should be part of any tourist strategy, and I have therefore ensured that the report we examine will include information on toilet provision.

We will also have an outside witness, representing the Brent hospitality trade, to give their input at the meeting.

### **Budget Scrutiny**

The first meeting of this year’s Budget Scrutiny Panel took place on 31 October. This is comprised of councillors from both scrutiny panels. The general election and purdah period has delayed our work slight but we have meetings scheduled up to Christmas with various witnesses called and reports commissioned on different aspects of the council’s financial outputs.

We will produce our final report in time for it to be presented to our full committee meeting in January and use this as the basis to question the Deputy Leader on their budget ahead of the final decisions at Cabinet and Full Council in February.

### **Festive wishes**

I would like to pass on my best wishes for the season, on behalf of the whole committee, to all of those who have supported our work in 2019 - witnesses, officers, public speakers and many more!

Best wishes,

Matt

**Cllr Matt Kelcher**

**Labour Councillor for Kensal Green Ward**

*Chair, Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee*