

Chair's Report

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

January 2020

Good evening and welcome to the first meeting of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny of this new year, and new decade!

As has become a January tradition, we will be using this meeting to analyse the cabinet's budget proposals for the coming financial year. Between October and January, I chaired the cross-committee budget scrutiny panel which took a detailed look at issues in the budget, and budget setting process. Our final report is included in the papers for tonight's meeting and I hope it will give members of the committee some ideas and topics as they seek to question our important witnesses on these issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved in producing the final report, particularly those councillors and officers who stayed late at the civic centre during some dark winter nights to answer questions and provide important perspectives for our work.

Tonight is certainly not the last opportunity for backbench councillors to analyse the budget or have their say. The proposals will go to cabinet where councillors and the public can attend to have their say, and of course for a final vote at full council. However, this meeting should be seen as an important part of the process, and we will seek to get some clear commitments from the council leadership around the recommendations in the budget scrutiny panel's report.

Whilst the budget discussion will certainly get significant attention, we also have some other very important business on the agenda.

Firstly, we will be launching our next task group which will look into the issue of violence and abuse against women across Brent. I hope the task group can provide some new insight into how the council can coordinate with its key partners to tackle this disturbing problem.

Next, we will be looking at the council's property and capital strategy. In broad terms, Brent is very revenue poor as a council, but our capital position is more favourable. Therefore, it is vitally important that we use these limited levers in a strategic manner which ensures we can meet our goals and reduce capital spending in future years.

It is therefore unsurprising that the committee has always taken an interest in these issues, and I look forward to a further discussion tonight.

Finally, as councillors we often get contacted by Brent residents who have concerns about the areas in which the council chooses to invest its pension fund. We have a clear responsibility to ensure this is done in an ethical manner, but also that we ensure there is enough money in the pot to ensure the dedicated public servants

who work for us are able to live comfortably in retirement. I anticipate a lively debate on exactly how to strike this balance.

Best wishes,

Matt

Cllr Matt Kelcher
Chair, Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee