



Full Council – 23 November 2009

Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Leader of the Council attended to update the committee on the Council's priorities, covering the following areas:

- the provision of school places in Brent,
- impact of the recession on the borough,
- children's social workers, and
- the importance of exploring opportunities for shared services with partners and other London boroughs.

Members of the committee raised a wide variety of issues with the Leader and the outcome was that the committee asked for the following:

- information on referrals to children's services for child neglect / safety issues, including whether referrals are increasing and if this was attributable to Baby P or the recession,
- information on the number of companies that have taken up the Council's reduction in business rates that is being offered to small businesses during the recession, and
- information on the shared services agenda.

The committee was updated on the modernising of day opportunities for people with learning disabilities being undertaken as part of the transformation programme in Adult Social Care. It felt that the carers needed to be re-consulted and so requested that an update on the transformation be provided to the meeting of the committee on 9 February 2010.

The first councillor call for action was considered by the committee. Councillor Powney had requested that the item be considered, which concerned the volume of traffic travelling down Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road and called for Tubbs Road to be reclassified as a 'B' road. The committee heard from a member of the public representing residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to the matter at the next meeting of the committee and that representatives from the Transportation Unit and Transport for London be invited to attend this meeting to respond to questions from Members. It was also agreed that Members of the committee should make a site visit to the roads prior to the next meeting.

The annual report of the Local Strategic Partnership and its self evaluation were also considered as were the recommendations of the recycling in flats task group.

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee heard from the Lead Member for Children and Families who updated the committee on the recently established cross-party body looking at safeguarding children in Brent. This had been set up in the aftermath of the Baby P case to review child protection arrangements and comprised the Leaders of the three main parties, the parties' education spokespersons, the Chair of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Lead Member for Children and Families.

The committee received an update on the provision of school places in Brent and on the progress of Brent's bid for BSF (Building Schools for the Future) funding. The annual report from the Brent Youth Parliament was considered and a number of decisions were taken on it.

The committee was informed of the new process for allocating and funding nursery places. Members noted that this issue would be put before the Executive in January 2010, with approval sought as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). They agreed to reconsider the issue before it was presented to Full Council as part of the budget process.

The progress made by the Brent Children's Partnership Board in 2008/09 on delivering the strategic priorities identified in the 2006/09 Children and Young People's Plan was considered and a number of decisions taken including inviting NHS Brent to a future meeting to discuss issues of concern.

The final report of the task group on pupil safety on the journey to and from school was submitted to the committee and the recommendations agreed for forwarding to the Executive. The committee also requested that the report and recommendations be included in the Council's Crime Prevention Strategy.

The Budget Panel has met twice since the last meeting of Full Council. It has received a presentation on the action plan for the Council's four-year improvement and efficiency strategy for the period 2010-2014. The Panel asked that information on the progress of the staffing and structure review and the review of strategic procurement be brought to a future meeting of the Panel. The meeting also heard from the Director of Housing and Community Care on the adult social care budget and forecast for 2009/10. Members noted that the net budget for the service was £87.7m (£109.2m gross), with a relatively small overspend of £127,000 currently forecast. The department was seeking to reduce the predicted overspend, but in general this budget was volatile and demand-led.

At its more recent meeting, the Panel considered the financial issues that formed the background to the debate to be held at Council on the first reading of the 2010/11 – 2013/14 budget. The Leader of the Council attended to answer questions from members. The Panel also considered the budget issues facing the Children and Families service.

The Health Select Committee has considered a report, written by the Audit Commission, which documented the findings of the Commission's review into how health inequalities were being tackled by the Council and its partners. The select committee was informed that the Audit Commission project was composed of two stages with this review being the first stage of the project. Members noted that whilst at borough level the overall health of

the population was consistent with the national average, there were areas in the borough where residents were experiencing significant health inequalities. The select committee asked that a report be presented to it in February 2010 on the work being done to increase physical activity carried out by adults in Brent, which forms the second part of the Audit Commission's work.

The select committee heard from the Chief Executive NHS Brent on the results of the GP Access Survey for 2008-09 and on the progress of the smoking cessation service in Brent. It was agreed to make the latter item a standing item on the agenda. The Chief Executive also introduced a presentation pack which provided the select committee with an overview of the progress made in implementing 'Healthcare for London'. In 2008/09 NHS Brent developed its Commissioning Strategy Plan which set out a 5 year investment programme but was having to review the plan to ensure that it was aligned with others across North West London.

Members received an update from the North West London NHS Hospitals Trust on the reconfiguration of emergency surgery and paediatric services across Brent and Harrow as part of the Acute Services Review and on the service reconfiguration across Brent and Harrow with regards to stroke services.

The Performance and Finance Select Committee considered a review of Brent Housing Partnership's Responsive Repairs Service Void Management and Capital Programme. It also received an update on the performance of the Council's Waste Services Contract with Veolia, specifically with respect to waste and recycling, street cleansing, missed collections and complaints and an update on the development of a revised Waste Strategy for Brent.

As part of the select committee's standing remit it has also considered the first quarter performance and finance review for 2009/10.

Finally, at the last meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee the decisions taken by the Executive on the following items were reviewed in light of the reasons given by members for calling-in the decisions:

- Third pool in Brent – progress report
- Authority to participate in a West London collaborative procurement for the provision of home care, including housing related support and 'integrated' home care support for adults
- Authority to participate in a West London collaborative procurement for residential and nursing care for adults
- Brent Civic Centre – concept design proposals and authority to tender contract for a design and build contractor

The select committee did not agree to send any views back to the Executive on these items.

At the same meeting the select committee received a number of briefing papers on items included in the Forward Plan.