



## Annual Council Meeting – 17 May 2023

### Liberal Democrats Group amendment Agenda Item 7 (Annual Review of Constitution)

#### Effective Scrutiny in Brent

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee investigated the issue of “effective scrutiny” during the 2017/19 Parliamentary term.

The remit of their work is in the title of the report they produced, “*Effectiveness of Local Authority Scrutiny and Overview Committees*”.

The Committee report:  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/369.pdf>

Discussed and expressed views on a number of topics including:

- Importance of Council culture and attitude to Scrutiny
- Scrutiny independence
- Appointment of Chairs
- Resources for Scrutiny
- Officer attitude
- Reporting of Scrutiny findings & recommendations
- Public perceptions

One of the key conclusions was that Scrutiny should be as independent of the Executive as possible and the fact that this independence should be both real and visible.

Councillors can read the House Commons Report and come to their own conclusions.

To safeguard the effectiveness and independence of Brent’s Scrutiny Committees we propose the following changes to the structure of the scrutiny function as detailed within Part 3 of the Brent Council Constitution and to the procedural rules that apply to them:

1. Reports of the Scrutiny Committees and Task Groups along with the Executive Response to them to be reported to Full Council, to allow wider debate and consideration.

2. Standing Order 49 (iii) be amended to require that the Chairs of the existing Scrutiny Committees are Opposition Group appointments (in order to emphasise the independence of Scrutiny from the Executive).
3. That Standing Order 4 in Part 1 of the Constitution be waived in order to enable the above changes to come into immediate effect during the meeting.

We also propose that to ensure individual Scrutiny Committees are not overloaded and more able to cope with the required workload:

4. The Council agree to establish a Scrutiny Committee structure to mirror the departmental structure of the organisation to cover the work and responsibilities of each of the Corporate Directors, including the Chief Executive.
5. Following on from 4. above a report be brought to the next Full Council to put this new structure in place; and
6. If this structure is achieved, the Chairs of the new Scrutiny Committees will be shared between all Groups on the Council with each Opposition Group being allocated as least one Scrutiny Committee to chair.

Councillor Anton Georgiou  
Leader of Liberal Democrats Group