

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 29 JUNE 2016
SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND LOCAL SERVICES

The Council is invited to note the Annual Scrutiny Report 2015/16

FOR INFORMATION

1. Following the end of the Municipal Year, attached is the Annual Report for 2015-16 of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
2. A hardcopy of the Scrutiny Annual Report has been provided as part of this agenda for ease of reference, although in general hard copies of the report will not be produced to keep costs down and in keeping with our environmental commitments.
3. As in previous years, the report will be made available on the Council website.
4. Councillors are asked to share the report with residents and businesses to show the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committees over the past year and how the public are welcome to provide their input.

FOR INFORMATION

Tony Redpath
Director of Strategy and Local Services

Background papers used in the preparation of this report: None other than previously published documents.

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Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16

Scrutiny Chairman's Foreword

Scrutiny is a Councillor-led statutory function within the Council. A strong and robust scrutiny function is an important part of the Council's Governance structures. It is responsible for holding decision makers to account on behalf of borough residents and helping to develop policies and initiatives that make the borough a better place to live and work.

The Annual Report provides an important opportunity to look back and reflect over the last year. In the following chapters, Scrutiny Chairmen have given a personal account of the work of their Scrutiny Committee. Each Chairman has given details of some of the successes of scrutiny and reflected different approaches which have been taken with the aim of helping the Council meet the challenges it faces. This includes descriptions of scrutiny committees holding decision makers to account, members reviewing topics at their regular meetings as well as in-depth work carried out as part of working groups.

The Scrutiny Steering Group, comprising the five Scrutiny Chairmen, met regularly during the year to discuss a wide range of topics. This included attendance by senior officers at Scrutiny Committee meetings as well as the findings of external enquiries, such as the Casey Review, and their possible relevance to Scrutiny at the Royal Borough. Chairmen also held their regular meeting with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy and the Town Clerk to scrutinise financial performance and plans for the future.

Effective scrutiny depends on the opportunity for members to have early input into the development of appropriate policies, plans and decisions in advance of the Cabinet Member taking the decision. At their most recent meeting, Scrutiny Chairmen agreed two measures to promote this early involvement so that backbenchers have real influence. These two measures relate to the classification of key decisions as well as scrutiny involvement in the procurement process.

All proposed key decisions are classified by Scrutiny Chairmen and given a 'rating' which indicates the level and nature of the scrutiny to be undertaken by the relevant Committee. Scrutiny Chairmen took the time to consider the definitions contained within the rating system and came to the view that these should be expanded to account for key decisions which may not have a high impact but could be regarded as of high public interest.

The second measure concerned scrutiny involvement in the procurement process when a contract is being specified. A schedule setting out major contracts and their expiry dates is to be developed for the Committees. This will hopefully enable members to reach an informed decision about those

contracts where they feel it would be useful to have more scrutiny involvement.

Finally, I would like to thank Cllr Marshall, who is standing down as Chairman of the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee, for his experience, commitment and contribution. I would like to welcome Cllr Mackover who will chair the Committee in 2016/17.

We have an open door and welcome public suggestions for scrutiny. Ideas can be sent to us by letter, email or the website www.rbkc.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Councillor David Lindsay
Chairman – Scrutiny Steering Group

Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee

We monitor the performance of the Council's Adult Social Care services and of the NHS trusts that serve the Royal Borough and evaluate proposals for changes in the way those services are delivered paying particular attention to the views of service users and voluntary organisations. The Committee wants to ensure that the voice of the patient and the voice of the service user is listened to and acted on.

Councillor Charles Williams, Chairman

Committee's remit: This Committee not only scrutinises council-run and commissioned services but also fulfils the Council's statutory duty to scrutinise health services in the Royal Borough.

This was my first year as Chairman. I would like to thank Cllr Robert Freeman for the inspired leadership he gave the Committee and his dedication to the improvement of health and social care in the Royal Borough.

Better co-operation between Adult Social Care and the health services continues to be a major concern for the Committee. We had a very useful visit to the Urgent Care Centre and the new Integrated Care Hub on the St Charles site which was followed at the next meeting by a presentation to the Committee by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on the development of whole systems integrated care. We look forward to visiting the Hub again and the second hub at the Violet Melchett site in Chelsea when they are fully operational. These facilities, where Health, Adult Social Care and the voluntary sector work together to help older people should improve the quality of their lives and reduce demand on acute services.

We continued to participate in the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) which scrutinises proposals for the reconfiguration of acute health services in North West London. The NHS have yet to put forward proposals detailing how new out of hospital services will be able to support a reduction in the number of acute hospital beds.

The Committee, jointly with the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee (HPSC), set up a working party to review the temporary closure of Thamesbrook, the last care home to be run directly by the Council, in May 2014 following the discovery of elevated levels of legionella bacteria in the water system. The working party was chaired firstly by Cllr. Robert Freeman and latterly by Cllr. Quentin Marshall, Chairman of the HPSC. The Report was considered by the Committee and referred to Cabinet. Most of the recommendations concerned the management of the Council's property estate but they included a specific request to Cabinet to review the management structures and interface between departments for buildings

which are occupied by vulnerable adults and develop a protocol to ensure safe and effective operation and maintenance.

The Committee spent a significant amount of time looking at issues concerning Piper House and Ellesmere which are managed by voluntary sector and private providers for the Council which had had adverse reports by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It considered that the capacity of the Triborough organisation to manage and monitor contracts was a concern. A working party, chaired by Cllr. Aouane, which looked at contract management reported just after the year end.

The Committee does not limit its involvement in Safeguarding to consideration of the annual report of the tri-borough safeguarding board. It is something which must always be considered when looking at service reconfiguration and health or social care providers' responses to CQC reports.

Scrutiny has a vital role to play in advising on and monitoring changes in how services are delivered and ensuring that the views of service users, relatives and other stakeholders are taken into account.

Two new contracts for the provision of homecare in Kensington and Chelsea came into operation in the last quarter of 2015. The Committee had been consulted on the contract specification and it received a report at every meeting from November on the implementation of the new contracts. The Committee was aware that officers had put a great deal of effort into managing the transition to the new providers. Unfortunately, the standard of the service fell short of the level expected; there was some improvement towards the end of the period covered by this report, and the Committee will continue to monitor progress.

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, which provides mental health services in the borough came to the Committee in November to report on its response to the CQC's report which had criticised some management practices at St Charles Hospital and the management of acute admissions at busy times. The Trust has also presented proposals for the reconfiguration of Community Mental Health Services. I asked that a non-executive director of the Trust came to the meeting, which I believe should be normal practice when an NHS Trust makes a presentation to the Committee on an adverse CQC report or a major service reconfiguration.

Organisations representing service users were invited to put questions to CNWL at the meeting; the Committee greatly valued their input. We asked CNWL to come back in 2016 to report on progress on their response to CQC and the community mental health services. Several contracts for adult social care services and public health have been extended whilst proposals for new contracts, often on a tri-borough basis are developed. It is

important that Scrutiny committees have the opportunity to consider contract specifications where major changes are proposed and that we can consider the views of services users and other stakeholders.

The Committee welcomed Go Golborne, an intensive pilot project to combat child obesity in one ward. We shall follow its progress, and the independent evaluation carried out by the University of Kent, with interest.

In April 2015, councils took on responsibility for sexual health services. Kensington and Chelsea has joined the other London boroughs in commissioning a London-wide service. Scrutiny committees will need to work together to find ways of monitoring this service effectively.

We have continued to work with Healthwatch and have found that the reports of its Dignity Champions who visit NHS and social care facilities, to be very useful, sometimes providing insights into the quality of care which are lacking from the CQC's more formulaic approach to inspection. The chairman of Healthwatch Central West London, Christine Vigars and the managing director of West London CCG, Louise Proctor, have continued to be non-voting co-opted members of the Committee. I would like to thank them and Dr Fiona Butler, Chairman of the CCG, for their invaluable contributions to the work of the Committee. I would also like to thank officers and the Committee for their work during the year and especially the vice-chairman Cllr. Will Pascall for his support and encouragement.

Cabinet and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

The Committee works to ensure there is adequate policing and proper fire cover for Borough residents, works to maintain good community relations and low levels of crime. And it is our job to challenge the decisions of the Council Cabinet and Cabinet Members, and to scrutinise the Annual Budget, to ensure that what they do provides the maximum benefit for the people who elected us all.

Cllr Pat Mason, Chairman

The Committee Remit

The Royal Borough's Cabinet and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee has a wide remit to scrutinise business handled by the full Cabinet that does not fall within the remit of another Scrutiny Committee.

It carries out the functions of a Crime and Disorder committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006. It also considers matters of corporate management or interest including local democracy, decision-making by the Council, the Council's budget and overall financial management; corporate policy, information and communication technology, corporate grants, community relations, and regeneration and economic development.

Introduction

It's been a roller coaster year filled with many interesting issues suggested by Committee Members, and some Key Decisions that need to be scrutinised at short notice because, from my point of view, Cabinet Members or someone else appeared not to have factored scrutiny into their timetable. I can't believe that Cabinet Members would deliberately timetable the release of Key Decision reports and the decisions themselves in a way that makes it difficult for scrutiny committees to do our jobs adequately, but when I'm frustrated that I can't get a proposed decision on to a meeting agenda before it's taken, I sometimes stamp my feet and think that's what's happened.

Procurement

The Procurement Working Group finished taking evidence in March 2016, but assembling what is likely to be 100+ pages of sometimes technical contract information into an easy-read, easy to understand report is taking some time. I am impatient to get the job done so that the report can begin its journey from the Committee to the Cabinet - hopefully to have many of the recommendations agreed and implemented - and then on to the Full Council.

The Council spends about £300 million on goods, construction works and services, and at the most recent review, 350 contracts were recorded on the Council's Contracts Register. The Working Group noted that in the financial years 2014-15 and 2015-16, overspends, contract performance failures and debt write-offs Council may have cost as much as £9 million, and anything we can do to save even half of this figure has got to be worth working towards.

With this in mind, the Working Group examined a number of contracts including Passenger Transport, Total Facilities Management, the Tri-Borough ICT Strategy, Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre, Holland Park School, Violence Against Women and Girls, Pensions Administration and Managed Services.

These contracts were measured against the Council's approved Procurement Strategy, and the areas where the working group had concerns and made recommendations for improvement include the planning stage that we believe is the most important stage that spawns the contract specification. Get this wrong and it can adversely affect the service the Council wants to provide, can result in time and cost overruns, and cause reputational damage to the Council. Other areas where recommendations have been made include contract letting, the award and implementation process, contract management, the role of scrutiny and the Council's sovereignty.

BT Managed Services

The Committee spent a lot of time during the year monitoring the BT Managed Services contract. The project had been delayed for a year but then went ahead in January 2015 despite reservations expressed to the Cabinet by this Committee. The Procurement sub-group spent two long sessions examining the problems with the BT contract, and it seems clear that the contract was not ready to go live when the Cabinet gave its approval. Consequently, the Council has been exposed to significant extra costs trying to remedy what is an ongoing problem. The Cabinet certainly has the right to manage the business of the Council, but with big and complicated contracts like BT Managed Services that can cause so much disruption if they fail to work as planned, I believe the Cabinet should listen more attentively to the scrutiny committees. After all, scrutiny committee members are overwhelmingly very knowledgeable, often with a wide range of business experience.

Individual Elector Registration

The other issue we followed through the year was the introduction of Individual Elector Registration. The process of moving to the new

system fairly quickly identified over 12,000 people who could not automatically be transferred to the new IER register. Under the old system, one resident could register everyone in the household, but IER stipulated that each person had to register individually and produce identity evidence if the Council could not verify who they were. Given the mass of multi-occupied properties in the Borough, difficult-to-access estates, and population churn, the hard-working Electoral Registration Team had a difficult job getting the 12,000 figure down.

The Committee was determined to reduce the number of unverified and unregistered electors before the 1st December 2015 cut-off date the Boundary Commission will use to calculate any new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries. In the end, the figure was reduced to 8,780 unverified electors by the deadline.

I have been told by Electoral Registration officers that only a small number of the 8,780 electors removed from the register needed to be added back on. Some of these admitted they had not opened any of the many Council letters advising them what they needed to do to stay on the register. The tentative conclusion, I am told, is that taking all of the issues into account, a large majority of the electors removed were correctly removed. We will wait to see if there is any change in this proposition as we move along. The Committee spent considerable time on this issue because we didn't want residents to lose their vote in the mayoral elections and European Union Referendum, although they were able to register until close to the poll dates.

Some things we did in 2015-2016

The Committee had a very busy year covering a lot of ground at the 9 scrutiny meetings we held. The 10th meeting was cancelled. Here are some of the things that we did:

- Established a Procurement Working Group to examine the Council's Procurement Strategy and decide if it is still fit for purpose, and make recommendations for improvement in any areas where it may not be.
- We received regular reports on the introduction of the new Individual Elector Registration system. Despite the best efforts of the Electoral Registration Office, the number of RBKC registered electors had dropped by 8,780 by 1st December 2015 – the date that will be used to calculate any new Parliamentary boundary changes. As discussed elsewhere in the report, Electoral Registration Officers believe that these electors were correctly removed from the register.
- We looked at how the Returning Officer and the Electoral Services Team conducted and administered the polls in the Kensington Constituency and the parts of Chelsea and Fulham Constituency within RBKC during the 2015 General Election.

- Twice yearly, we invited the Leader of the Council, the Borough Fire Commander and the Borough Police Commander to meetings to report to the Committee.
- We scrutinised the proposed severe reductions to the policing budget and the £6.4 million reduction to the Fire Brigade budget in 2015.
- Subject to due process, we held ourselves ready to discuss the performance of the Fire Brigade and the Council response during the 31st October 2015 major fire incident at Adair Tower, W10.
- In the context of crime reduction, we agreed to carry out a scrutiny of the CCTV systems of housing association landlords in the Borough.
- We received reports on Anti-Radicalisation work, Prevent and the Counter-Extremism Strategy. We noted the excellent work that many voluntary groups are doing to promote these.
- We examined the pattern of violent crime and gang-related incidents and discussed measures to prevent this.
- The Committee scrutinised the Annual Budget and a variety of Cabinet financial and budget reports throughout the year.
- The Committee agreed to participate in the Child Sexual Exploitation Working Group.
- The Committee has scrutinised the BT Managed Services Contract at every meeting during the year.
- The Committee examined the Neighbourhood Reform pilot scheme to tackle long term worklessness in the Borough.
- We looked at how alternative Models of Governance might work at RBKC, and discussed the current scrutiny arrangements.
- The Committee examined the Council's staff profile and the Your Voice Staff Survey that presented various concerns that the Committee wanted remedied in an Action Plan.
- We scrutinised the Council's Emergency Planning and Resilience strategy: IT system crashes, how to provide vital services during emergencies etc.
- We examined the Tri-Borough project five years on: What has been achieved, how much further can it be extended?
- We scrutinised a number of procurements at the Committee: Large IT projects, Fox Primary School, and the Mayor of London's annual 'affordable' homes build target for the Borough that the Council has been unable to meet for some years.

Looking ahead

Now that the government has included a "Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill" in the 2016 Queen's Speech, I expect that the Committee will be able to discuss the proposed provisions of this legislation as it may apply to the Council and the communities we serve in due course.

The Review of the CCTV systems covering TMO and housing association estates, from a crime prevention effectiveness context, has gone live, and

the results will be reported to the Committee in due course. We will want to find out what changes Mayor Khan has in mind for the Metropolitan Police and the Fire Brigade, and how such changes are likely to affect the Borough.

We will invite the Leader of the Council, the Borough Police Commander and the Borough Fire Commander to attend meetings twice during the year to give their reports and answer questions from the Committee.

I expect that the Committee will continue to bear down on the BT Managed Services problems until the time comes when the contract is working normally.

The Committee will also scrutinise the Annual Council Budget and advise the Cabinet if we believe their priorities are the right ones or if we think there are any beneficial changes that could be made.

A number of Councillors have expressed concerns about the way the Key Decision process works in practice, and so I hope that the Committee will find the time to carry out a Review and suggest recommendations for improvement.

Thanking Committee Members

I would like to thank the Vice-Chairman, Councillor James Husband, who is also a member of the Procurement working group and has given us some good advice there. I also need to thank Councillors Adrian Berrill-Cox, Barbara Campbell, Emma Dent Coad, also a member of the Procurement working group, David Lindsay, Andrew Lomas, an original member of the Procurement working group, Daniel Moylan, Will Pascall and Andrew Rinker, Chairman of the Procurement working group.

Many of the suggestions for scrutiny come from Committee Members, Councillors from both Parties who are not Committee Members, and sometimes from residents and groups in the Borough whom I visit. I think this is a good thing because it hopefully means that the Committee scrutinises a wider range of issues, and in my dreams I imagine we are becoming more visible to our electorate because we are listening to the ideas they have for scrutiny.

Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

The Committee's Remit

Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee covers many important services, and in particular is at the forefront of the Borough's care for some of our most vulnerable residents.

Councillor David Lindsay, Chairman

Introduction

In last year's Annual Report, I described how the focus of the Committee was continuing to move away from education and towards Family and Children's Services. This shift is reflected in the Committee's work programme for the year constructed around themed meetings with many of the topics suggested by members of the Committee, elected and co-opted. We will continue to ensure that the focus is on Family and Children's Services, but will not ignore education, even though local education authority responsibility is markedly less, and becoming more so, than a decade ago.

I have outlined below the topics considered during the year, how we held the Executive to account and detailed work by the Committee on areas of risk connected to vulnerable children.

Topics Considered During the Year

The Committee has scrutinised a wide range of topics and the highlighted examples below show the breadth and the depth of the Committee's scrutiny.

- The Troubled Families Programme – the Committee considered the designing of Phase 2 including the need to engage more broadly with a wide range of providers.
- The Annual Schools Performance Report – this set out the very positive performance results for both primary and secondary schools in the Royal Borough. The Committee were also made aware of future national policy changes relating to changes in primary school assessment to be introduced in the following year.
- Progress on Implementing Outcomes from the Library Services Review – the Committee heard about the challenges and issues facing the library service.

- Childhood Obesity and 'Go Golborne', Healthy Lifestyle Pilot Project – the Committee was able to gain an insight into the size and complex problem of childhood obesity. Members also received information about evidence based solutions which it was hoped would be applied more widely.

Holding the Executive to Account

A key part of the work of the Committee is to hold the Executive to account and this is achieved in a number of ways.

The Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Education and Libraries (Councillors Elizabeth Campbell and Emma Will) regularly submitted reports to our meetings. The Cabinet Members also attended meetings which provided an opportunity for members of the Committee to question them about work performed over the year and importantly about plans for the future.

The Tri Borough Executive Director, Andrew Christie, regularly attended Scrutiny Committee meetings with senior officers from the Directorate. I would like to offer thanks on behalf of the Committee to Andrew Christie, who retired earlier this year. Mr Christie demonstrated his understanding of the role that Scrutiny plays in an effective governance process and he willingly engaged with that process and supported our Committee.

Another way in which the Committee held the Executive to account has been through our very thorough scrutiny of the Outturn, Revenue and Capital budgets.

Safeguarding, Child Protection and Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The Committee requested a report for its July meeting outlining the processes that Children's Services and Libraries and Archives Services have in place to identify key risks and mitigation measures for operational and transformation risks within their departments. This report provided very important context for the Committee's annual scrutiny of Safeguarding, Child Protection and Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

The Committee engaged an external consultant to assist with the preparation for this important scrutiny including identifying possible questions to ask the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board as well as the Cabinet Member and senior officers. The external 2016 Ofsted Report into the Family and Children's Services in the Royal Borough gave an 'outstanding' rating. The published report acknowledged the role of Scrutiny and I have quoted this below:

'Robust and effective scrutiny arrangements are in place and driven by a comprehensive business plan and work programme, which show that a range of themes are considered in detail and reported on. External consultants are used well to support members in their scrutiny role. Challenging questions on service delivery that hold officers appropriately to account are well evidenced in scrutiny minutes'.

This is an approach that we intend to continue and build on in future scrutiny enquiries.

Looking Ahead

As mentioned members of the Committee actively contributed their ideas and suggestions for the work programme for the coming year. Some of the topics that we are planning to scrutinise in the coming months include:

- An update on the 'Prevent' Strategy in relation to young people
- Special Educational Needs provision
- Female Genital Mutilation

Thank you

I would like to thank all members of the Committee, including co-optees, for their contribution and participation in the meetings.

Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Quentin Marshall, Chairman

After six years chairing the Housing and Property Committee and its predecessors, the pace of change has not slackened. The newly re-elected Government has introduced new Housing legislation that could have a profound effect on RBKC. Some of the early drafts revealed a lack of detail. This detail has begun to emerge but, depending on the outcomes, the final Act could still see the Borough having to sell a significant proportion of its social housing over time. The Cabinet Member, Officers and the Committee agreed this would be a perverse outcome when our duty to house remains unaltered (and indeed the pressure on demand grows).

In a similar vein, the numbers in Temporary Accommodation continue to rise, as do rents. This combination has led to significant unbudgeted costs for the Council that outweigh every other line item of spending. The Committee remained closely involved in questioning what we could do to mitigate some of the effects. The Council was able to take advantage of its very strong balance sheet, itself a reflection of long term prudent financial management, to allocate a significant sum to buy new houses to house families in Temporary Accommodation, thereby not only providing much needed homes but also reducing the strains on the budget. It is always tempting to spend reserves on current expenditure but the Council has rightly resisted. In tough times, this has allowed us much greater leeway to protect vital services.

One of the most controversial topics the committee confronted related to the phenomenon of 'Buy to Leave'. No common definition of this concept exists so our first priority was to define the term. We concluded it best refers to the intensity of occupation of our housing stock. We can all understand that a house that has been unoccupied for years is an empty home. But what about a flat used for a few weeks a year; a few days a week; or only during weekdays? Are these empty and so qualifying for inspection? We did not in conclusion identify a hard boundary but instead looked at macro data from across the Borough to identify signs that would correlate with lower levels of usage, such as falling electoral rolls, falling resident car parking numbers, lower water and electricity bills etc. We concluded that in much of the Borough there was some evidence that the intensity of use had fallen but the effects were not strong, with the exception of the south east of the Borough where the evidence was much clearer.

The Committee reported its findings to full Council, along with some options for action. The Council reflected on the ideas proposed and is now implementing various measures to lean against 'Buy to Leave'. The

Committee cautioned, however, with around 75% of the Borough's housing stock in private hands and in the second hand market upon sale, that there are very limited opportunities to intervene in anything other than a symbolic manner unless Parliament were to pass primary legislation.

Returning to the budgetary theme, the Committee scrutinised ongoing current and capital expenditure programmes. It spent some time looking into the scope for further cuts in both departments. With so many of the largest budget lines, e.g. temporary accommodation, outside our direct control, the scope for substantial further savings is limited. In the Property arena, cuts could indeed be counterproductive to the budget if they resulted in even bigger falls in income or missed financial opportunities.

The Council has spent £10m from the receipts of right to buy sales to refurbish Grenfell Tower (these funds, both receipts and expenditures, being ring fenced in the HRA). The newly re-clad tower is a vast improvement on the old building, delivering much better thermal efficiency, individual control over heating, several new homes, a refreshed boxing club space and an all round improvement to the aesthetic of the area. At around £100,000 per flat, this was an enormous commitment of resources. Most residents appear pleased with the results, although the committee did receive representations from some residents about the build programme. The Committee listened to these complaints and questioned the TMO and Officers about the claims made. The Committee satisfied itself that the works had been undertaken properly and that anyone with a specific grievance had had ample opportunity to have their complaint taken seriously and addressed via the TMO complaints process.

The Council has extracted substantial new value from its property estate over the last few years. This year was no different. Significant new schemes were proposed and initiated. Together, these will generate new income for the Council, so reducing the pressure on other services and the taxpayer.

The Committee has had several working groups throughout the year, including on the closure of Thamesbrook, buy to leave (as above), Garages and on Viability. The last of these is yet to report but together good work was done in all areas.

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, fellow Councillors and Officers for their work on the Committee over the last year. The Council's programme in the Housing and Property field remains very ambitious and exciting. I am sure the new Committee will relish their involvement in the year ahead.

Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Public Realm touches the lives of everyone who lives or works in the Royal Borough.

Cllr Marie-Therese Rossi, Chairman

The Committee's remit

This Committee has the power to scrutinise anything relating to the built or natural environment. This covers planning, waste management, flooding, parking and transport, street markets, licensing and environmental health. The Committee also has responsibility for the arts, leisure, museums and parks.

Introduction

Over the year the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has looked into a wide range of topics. The Committee in particular welcomes the very active steps taken to protect the amenity of residents from the impact of large developments, including basement excavations and the impact of construction traffic. Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London continue to seek to improve transport infrastructure across the Capital and there has been much publicity arising from the proposed location of the Chelsea Crossrail 2 station.

The Committee continues to monitor efforts to meet housing need. A joint meeting was held with the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee to comment on the evolving planning policies including those on affordable housing targets and amalgamations and de-conversions of flats. The Committee supported planning policies that reinforce the Council's aspiration for mixed housing developments across the borough.

The Committee continues to monitor the number of road collisions. It has taken an interest in the trial in parts of the borough of pay by phone parking which makes parking more flexible for visitors. The Committee takes an interest in improvements to the borough's roads including new cycle 'quietway' routes that aim to increase safety for cyclists and which form part of the Central London Cycling Grid. It also scrutinises the performance and budgets of relevant Council departments to ensure that despite tight budgets and efficiency savings, sufficient flexibility is exercised to safeguard the service standards expected by residents, visitors and those working in the borough.

Some of the more notable topics explored by the Committee this year include:

Improved protection for residents from large developments - the Committee has encouraged environmental health, planning and transport officers to work closely together to reduce adverse impacts on residents from basement and other developments. It has commented on a range of documents to this effect including: a local code to minimise noise and vibration from construction sites, a draft basements SPD that strengthens guidance on basement construction traffic management plans as well as a draft Transport and Streets SPD which deals with parking standards and construction traffic management plans in general. The Committee strongly supports restrictions to hours of noisy working for new planning applications. The Committee strongly approves the Council's Article 4 Direction that requires all basement developments to have planning permission and the restriction on the size of basements as measures that will minimise noise and nuisance to the residents living close to planning application sites.

Proposed Crossrail 2 Chelsea Location – A special scrutiny meeting was held in December to provide a forum where the Cabinet Member and Officers could respond to the TfL consultation document. Opposition to the proposed Sydney Street site has been well publicised and the Committee heard and discussed local concerns as well as the broader longer term transport implications. Discussion at this special meeting fed into the Council's official response to the Crossrail 2 consultation.

Air Quality Action Plan – poor air quality and climate change have a direct impact on the health and well-being of residents. The Committee discussed the Council's Air Quality and Climate Change Action Plan (AQCCAP) which aims to identify what steps the borough can take to improve air quality and minimise harmful emissions. Further updates on AQCCAP actions will continue to be discussed by the Committee.

Notting Hill Carnival 2015 - Europe's largest street carnival takes place in this borough and has a significant impact on the environment and community safety in the immediate area. We continue to scrutinise how effectively local residents are informed of the event's arrangements. The Committee seeks to ensure, as far as is possible, that adequate measures are taken to protect residents from anti-social behaviour and noise during that weekend. Following pressure from the Committee better publicised public meetings are to take place this coming year so that residents' views are heard by those involved in organising Carnival's cultural, policing and street cleansing aspects. One result of the scrutiny discussions has been improved noise and nuisance complaints recording. The Committee continues to take a close interest in steps to build up the capacity of Carnival's management trust and measures to enable the event to become over time more financially self-sufficient.

Busking Regime – persistent busking near residential areas can cause noise and nuisance. The Committee has taken a close interest in ways to control excessive busking in order to protect local residents and businesses. From March this year, the 'Busk in London Team' has been active in busking hotspots. Council officers work with this pan-London team and local guidelines help to ensure local views inform the approach taken to control busking.

Counters Creek Storm Relief Sewer Response to Consultation – The Committee has a statutory duty to consider the dangers of flooding and in particular our local flood risk management strategy. The Head Teacher of Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School attended the March Committee meeting to highlight the school's concerns arising from the building of the relief sewer close by. Senior representatives of Thames Water explained at the meeting why this was the preferred location and what measures they would take to minimise adverse impacts during the building stage. The Council and all other interested parties recognise the need for the relief sewer to prevent flooding but the Committee's role was to ensure any harm to local residents and institutions was minimised.

Opera Holland Park (OHP) – the Transition: The Chairman of the OHP Trust and its General Marketing and Publicity Manager Arts and Culture attended a scrutiny meeting to explain in more detail plans to make OHP artistically and financially successful under its new financially independent status. The Cabinet Member took part in this discussion and the Chair of the Friends of Holland Park was also present as OHP impacts on the park, park users and local residents.

Garden Waste Collection Service – following an on-line petition by residents last year, the Cabinet Member consulted on alternative proposals and a paid for service was introduced by Suez in April. The Committee follows with interest the progress of the new service which is due to be reviewed this summer, and has sought to ensure the new arrangement reflects the needs of local residents.

Working groups

As a Committee, we aim to run several Working Groups each year, when necessary jointly with another Scrutiny Committee. These provide in-depth reviews of particular service areas and make recommendations for how the situation might be improved. The topics for review are decided in September each year based on suggestions by members of the public and Councillors.

Rubbish collection - this review has assessed the outcome from a trial in Earl's Court Ward of more focused action to prevent dumping of black bags and other rubbish, and faster clearance. Members toured the hotspot areas for rubbish dumping in the borough to seek reassurance on the standard of

street cleanliness on weekdays. The review thoroughly examined all measures to deter littering and included the potential for more extensive publicity to increase recycling rates. At the time of writing, final recommendations are likely to be discussed at September's Committee.

The financial viability of large scale developments (joint Working Group with the Housing and Property) - Members have explored ways of securing the maximum number of affordable housing units including social/intermediate housing from large scale developments. At July's Committee the final recommendations will be presented with the Cabinet Member present.

Planning Services Scrutiny Group – This working group reviewed planning services and explored how improvements could be made. At the July Committee meeting, the Planning Department and the Cabinet Member will respond to its recommendations. Two outcomes from the review are the greater transparency over pre-planning application advice and the greater accessibility from Council website planning pages of documents linked to applications.

The Year Ahead

The Committee will continue to monitor how the Council can best secure improved transport infrastructure in the longer term through influencing the debate on Crossrail 2. The Integrated Air Quality Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan continues to be developed and the Committee will continue to work with the Cabinet Member and officers in developing a local response to improve air quality linking these measures with actions to reduce polluting emissions.

Thank you

I would like to thank all Committee Members for their contribution and participation during the year.

Key Contacts

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