



# **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **26 March 2024**

### **SECOND DESPATCH**

**Please find enclosed the following items:**

<b>Item 2</b>	Complex ASB Scrutiny Review - Draft Recommendations	1 - 12
<b>Item 3</b>	Review of the Council's Scrutiny Function - Outcomes	13 - 22

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# Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

## Review of Complex ASB – 2023/24

### Developing recommendations

- Recommendations should be “SMART” and linked to specific evidence. 5-10 is ideal.
- The Committee can form other conclusions and observations to be included in the final report.

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound

## Conclusion:

- Islington Council should aspire to take a “public health” approach to anti-social behaviour, focused on early intervention, robust use of data and reducing risk and harm. The evidence received by the committee has highlighted areas of good practice in the council’s work to respond to complex anti-social behaviour, and the following recommendations are intended to help further develop this work.

# Theme: Housing

## Recommendation 1

- **Evidence:** The Committee received evidence on the proposed restructure to housing services which will result in smaller caseloads for housing officers, allowing officers to work on a more local “patch”, and with less transfer of cases between teams. It is thought that this structure will improve relationships between residents and their housing officer, supporting the early identification and intervention in ASB issues, and provide more opportunities for issues to be dealt with before they escalate.
- **Recommendation A:** Housing Operations should complete the review of the officer structure. The intended outcome being a service that promotes and facilitates early intervention in anti-social behaviour issues. Housing officers having smaller caseloads and a more localised focus will help to build trust with residents, and allowing residents direct access to their Housing Officer will help to improve outcomes and empower our residents.
- **Recommendation B:** All services involved in preventing and responding to ASB should review their capacity for carrying out early intervention work and consider if resources are deployed effectively to deliver this aim.

# Theme: Housing

## Recommendation 2

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- **Evidence:** The Committee heard from both Council Officers and Housing Associations about the escalating level of need in general needs housing. Due to the severity of the housing crisis, an increasing number of new council and social housing tenancies were made to those with very challenging personal circumstances. Islington has a relatively high prevalence of mental health issues and drug/alcohol misuse in comparison to other London boroughs. There is limited supply of supported accommodation in the borough, and general needs housing providers have limited capacity to support to those with complex needs.
- **Recommendation A:** The Council should review if Islington has the right mix and supply of supported living options in the borough. If needed, pathways and resources should be put in place to best to support those with complex needs.
- **Recommendation B:** The Council should consider offering enhanced wrap-around housing support to new tenants, particularly in the early months of their tenancy, and in cases where tenants are already known to other services, or where ASB has been a factor in previous tenancies. This early intervention approach should help tenants to embed into their local community, live independently, and help them navigate local services as required. This would allow any tenancy and ASB issues to be identified and addressed at an early stage.

# Theme: Housing

## Recommendation 3

- **Evidence:** The Committee heard evidence on the importance of strong and resilient communities. Residents reported that they often did not know their neighbours and did not always feel comfortable speaking to them about low-level ASB issues. The Council does offer mediation in neighbour disputes, but it was reported that this is most effective at an early stage, before issues escalate and become entrenched.
- **Recommendation:** The Committee recognises the importance of building strong and resilient local communities as a way of preventing ASB issues, identifying issues at an early stage, and ensuing support and intervention is appropriately targeted. The Council should investigate if additional funding should be made available to estates, in the same way as the Thriving Neighbourhoods programme, to not only improve the built environment on estates, but to develop community initiatives. This may be particularly helpful in bringing communities together as part of the response to long-standing ASB issues on estates.

# Theme: Relations with stakeholders

## Recommendation 4

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- **Evidence:** The Committee heard evidence of how the council works with Housing Associations on ASB issues, however also heard examples of where these relationships could be developed further. For example, Housing Associations reported that information from the council on the needs and circumstances of new tenants could sometimes lack detail, and this meant that Housing Associations were not able to provide appropriate support to tenants with additional needs. Similarly, the committee heard that some housing associations would not routinely engage in the MARAC process when their tenant was perpetrating ASB.
- **Recommendation:** The Council should develop information sharing and partnership working agreements with housing associations around ASB issues. This will enable housing providers and other services to target additional support to tenants at an early stage, working to prevent ASB where possible, and allow for cases of ASB to be dealt with more holistically.



# Theme: Data and Systems

## Recommendation 5

- **Evidence:** The Committee heard evidence of the key systems used to report and manage ASB being outdated. A new and improved online reporting tool is being developed. The Committee also heard that the Community Safety Team is reliant on manual logging of cases. It is thought that improved systems that made use of data flows and linked to other council systems would enhance the work of services, increase productivity, and ultimately provide better services for residents.
- **Recommendation:** The Council should invest in improving the systems used to report, manage and monitor ASB issues. This will allow officer resources to be deployed more efficiently in responding to ASB issues. The Committee would like to see a clear scope and timeline for this improvement work.

# Theme: Communications and working with residents

## Recommendation 6

- **Evidence:** The Committee heard from residents that people are unclear of ASB definitions, what is a Council or Police matter, which is the right agency to report to, how to report ASB, what evidence will be needed, and what to expect from the Council in response. In the evidence session with residents, council tenants asked for a clear matrix of different types of ASB, explaining how to report and setting expectations around the response.
- **Recommendation:** The Council should produce and distribute information to all residents with clear definitions of ASB; how to report ASB; why it is important to report ASB; which agency will respond; and to set expectations around communications and response times. This could also include advice on how to engage with neighbours, how the council supports residents with mental health and substance misuse issues, and advice on how residents experiencing ASB can access help to support their own wellbeing. This information should be available in a variety of formats and a clear communications plan should be developed, with regular ongoing communications and dedicated resources.

# Theme: Communications and working with residents

## Recommendation 7

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- **Evidence:** The Committee heard evidence from residents that they were unclear what would happen when they reported ASB. Some residents did not have a clear understanding of what might happen when they report ASB, what enforcement action might look like, or how long it would take. The Committee also understands that sensitive personal data cannot be shared with neighbours.
- **Recommendation A:** When responding to ASB issues, the Council should send clear communications to residents to outline what is likely to happen in response, and explain what information can and cannot be shared. This should also explain when further reports should be made, and why it is helpful to continue to report issues.
- **Recommendation B:** The Council should develop training for councillors, TRAs, community groups, and other local organisations to explain definitions of ASB, reporting mechanisms, issues around information disclosure, and expected responses. This will help those in community leadership positions to signpost to relevant services.

# Theme: Early Intervention

## Recommendation 8

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- **Evidence:** The Committee received evidence on the MARAC process and the Chair observed a complex MARAC session. This demonstrated good practice in agencies coming together and working holistically to resolve complex ASB issues. The Committee also heard about the new model of neighbourhood policing, proposals to restructure housing services so officers have a smaller and more local caseload, and the work of the Community Safety team in monitoring local ASB issues. There may be learning from the MARAC process that could be applied at an earlier stage to intervene in local ASB issues before they escalate.
- **Recommendation:** The Council should develop a process of holding local ward level / early intervention multi-agency ASB boards to review and respond to ASB issues before they escalate and reach the threshold for MARAC. Taking a multi-agency approach at an earlier stage should enable a more comprehensive local response.

# Theme: Early Intervention

## Recommendation 9

- **Evidence:** The Committee heard about the complexity of cuckooing cases and concerns from officers that this was becoming a commonplace issue. While the committee heard how the council and police works together to address cuckooing issues, however often this is only after significant disruption to local residents.
- **Recommendation:** The Council should develop an early intervention pathway for cuckooing cases. This could include a dedicated support worker who can monitor cases and offer support to individuals who have previously been cuckooed.

## The following are not recommendations, but are intended to be covered in the final report

- Getting the right balance between enforcement and engagement.
- The need to monitor take-up of drug and alcohol services, considering that Islington has higher prevalence than many other London boroughs.
- The importance of building strong and resilient communities.
- Equalities issues – all communities must have the confidence to report ASB issues and trust that action will be taken.
- Recognition that the council has been evolving and adapting its approach to ASB over the past year.

Law & Governance  
7 Newington Barrow Way, London, N7 7EP

Report of: Councillor Flora Williamson, Chair of the Policy and Performance  
Scrutiny Committee

Meeting of: Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date: 26 March 2024

Ward(s): N/A

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## Subject: Scrutiny Review – First Phase

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1. At its meeting on 21 September 2023, the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee agreed the Terms of Reference and project plan for the Scrutiny Review. It was agreed that the first phase of the review would consider the committee structure, the Councillor Call for Action Protocol and Communications Plan.
- 1.2. The current scrutiny committee structure was established in 2014. Following changes in the Council's priorities, Executive Member portfolios and the Council's departmental structure, the relationship between the committees and the Council had become overly complex and caused confusion and duplication. The Community Wealth Building directorate had no clear relationship to a committee. The commitments in the Islington Together 2030 Plan were not all within the remit of a committee and oversight of corporate risks had become inconsistent.
- 1.3. The Member Project Board have met a number of times to develop and refine the proposed committee structure and consultation took place with the Executive, Corporate Management Team and all councillors. The Member Project Board approved the proposed new structure, attached as Appendix 1, on 11 March 2024, following a second round of consultation, open to all councillors on 28 February.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve the proposed new committee structure, attached as Appendix 1.

- 2.2. To note the Scrutiny Communications Plan, attached as Appendix 2.
- 2.3. To approve the replacement of the Councillor Call for Action Protocol with a Councillor Right to Refer, in a future Constitution update to Council, in accordance with the Localism Act.
- 2.4. To note that the new committees' Terms of Reference are currently being developed.
- 2.5. To note that the proposed new committee structure and their Terms of Reference will be submitted to Annual Council for agreement, within a Constitution Update report.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. Following the Local Government Act 2000, an Executive form of governance was introduced, and the scrutiny function established, in 2002. Although the arrangements have been reviewed from time to time since, the current committee structure and the procedures supporting their operation, have remained unchanged since 2014.
- 3.2. At its meeting on 13 July 2023, Council agreed that 'a review of the Overview and Scrutiny function should be undertaken and will include revised Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.'
- 3.3. The Scrutiny Review Member Project Board, comprising of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee have considered a number of different options for the proposed new structure and are recommending the new committee structure detailed Appendix 1. This is comprised of five scrutiny committees, as follows:  
  
Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee  
Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee  
Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee
- 3.4. The Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee will be the main overview committee, with responsibility for oversight of Executive functions. The remaining committees largely operate as review Committees, although all the committees, with the exception of the Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee, now have some statutory functions.



- 3.5. The proposed structure incorporates those services which previously did not have a clear relationship with a scrutiny committee and simplifies reporting arrangements where possible.
- 3.6. The Member Project Board have committed to review the new structure at the end of the first municipal year, to ensure that it is working as intended and will make adjustments if needed.
- 3.7. Increasing engagement in scrutiny was one of the priority objectives for the review and the new communications plan, including both internal and external comms is attached for information, as Appendix 2.
- 3.8. The Councillor Call for Action was replaced by a Councillor Right to Refer by the Localism Act 2011. The Member Project Board have agreed that the Constitution should be updated to reflect the new arrangements and this will be included in a future Constitution Update to full Council.
- 3.9. The second phase of the review will consider how the work of the scrutiny committees is conducted and supported and update the related procedures, taking the statutory scrutiny guidance issued by the government and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (GfGS) 'Good Scrutiny Guide', both issued in 2019, into consideration.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1. **Financial Implications**

- 4.1.1. There are no financial implications arising from the review. It was a pre-requisite of the review, that any recommendations must be supported within existing resources.

### 4.2. **Legal Implications**

- 4.2.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The scrutiny function was established under the Local Government Act 2000. There is discretion about the structures and procedures, as long as they continue to meet the legal requirements. Legal advice will be sought on any proposed changes arising from the review to ensure that the arrangements continue to be appropriate and lawful.

### 4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

- 4.3.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this decision.

#### 4.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed. The report has no negative impacts on protected characteristics and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is therefore not required.

## 5. **Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

- 5.1. The proposed review of the scrutiny function was agreed by Council on 13 July 2023. It is recommended that the proposed terms of reference and timeline detailed in Appendix 1 are approved to agree how the review will be undertaken and that a project board is established to oversee and approve the work, subject to final agreement by Council.

**Appendix 1:** Proposed Scrutiny Committee Structure

**Appendix 2:** Scrutiny Communications Plan

**Background papers:** None

**Final report clearance:**

Authorised by:

**Councillor Flora Williamson, Chair of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee**

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## Appendix 1

### Proposed new Scrutiny Committee structure:

#### Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Finance, Capital Programme, Asset base, Investment / New Build programme, Economic infrastructure and Inclusive Economy, Procurement and Social Value, Council Tax, Community financial resilience, Communications, Resident Voice / Experience, Complaints, Inclusion, Equalities, Corporate Performance, Corporate policy development, Corporate Risk Register, Digital Services, HR, Electoral Services, Statutory Utilities and Emergency Planning. Main overview committee, statutory role in decision making.

#### Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Healthy and independent lives, Public Health, Integrating Health and Care, Adult Mental Health, Adult Social Care, Adult Safeguarding, Assistive Technology. Statutory health committee.

#### Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Education, SEND, Safety, Safeguarding, Family Help, Early Years, Progression to adulthood, Looked after Children, Play, Physical activity, Tackling obesity and Mental health (children and young people), Youth Offending and Corporate Parenting. Statutory education committee.

#### Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Community safety, Estates, Housing repairs and safety, Housing need, Homelessness, Private rented sector, Landlord services, Voluntary and Community groups and organisations, Community learning, Community based food provision, Culture, Heritage, Libraries. Statutory crime committee.

#### Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee

Net Zero Carbon, response to the climate emergency, sustainable energy, re-use, recycling, waste reduction and management, cleaner neighbourhoods, people friendly streets, liveable neighbourhoods, highways, trees, parks, open spaces, transport, parking, active travel, active together, physical activity, leisure.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Scrutiny Communications Plan

External Communications			
Date	Activity	Channel	Who to action
Preliminary	Information on website to explain the role of Scrutiny in layman's terms. Need to consider where it should be and if there should be additional information about other functions – Executive for eg.	Democracy or main website	Dem Services
Launch (post Annual Council)	Article to encourage engagement with Scrutiny to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain its purpose, introduce the committees and their roles, highlight recent achievements.</li> </ul>	Islington Life (if approved)	Comms (Dem Services to provide content)
June (annually)	Publicise final Scrutiny Review recommendation reports when they are submitted to the Committees for approval.  Thank anyone who contributed to the review, send link to report / copy of report	Social Media  Email	Comms (Dem Services to provide content)  Dem Services
June-July (annually)	Publicise new Scrutiny Review topics & call for evidence  Invite residents to get involved, attend meetings, give evidence, suggest evidence that the committee should consider etc.  N.B. Consider more accessible ways to submit evidence on line etc – via Lets Talk Islington platform for eg and how this gets to be submitted to the committee.	Social Media & latest new email	Comms (Dem Services to provide content)

## APPENDIX 2

All year	Publicise meetings  Before the meeting: promote particular agenda items and how residents can engage / participate  After the meeting: raise awareness of any decisions, share webcasting clips.	Social Media	Comms (Dem Services to provide content)
Internal communications			
Date	Activity	Channel	Who to action
Monthly	Member newsletter to include a section on Scrutiny to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calls for evidence</li> <li>• A round up of how the committees are progressing with reviews</li> <li>• Details of review reports being considered by the Executive and the responses</li> <li>• Other scrutiny news</li> </ul>	Emailed Newsletter	Committee Services Team Leader
Launch (post Annual Council)	Article to highlight the review, the new structure and improve understanding of the scrutiny function to: Explain its purpose, introduce the committees and their roles, highlight recent achievements.	IC Bulleting (if approved)	Comms (Dem Services to provide content)
Ongoing / all year	Include the scrutiny function and committee structure in all officer governance training and offer specific training opportunities to those colleagues involved in supporting scrutiny	In house training	Head / Deputy Head of Democratic Services and Governance

**APPENDIX 2**

<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Regular training for members on Scrutiny. This year this includes:</p> <p>23 May 24 Workshop for Scrutiny Committee Chairs MANDATORY (In-house)</p> <p>20 June 24 The Role of Scrutiny Committee HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (In-house)</p> <p>16 July 24 Questioning Skills HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Ed Hammond, CfGS)</p> <p>2 Sept 24 Financial Scrutiny HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Ed Hammond, CfGS)</p> <p>10 Dec 24 Financial Scrutiny &amp; The Budget HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (In-house – Paul Clarke)</p>	<p>Member training and development</p>	<p>Head of Democratic Services and Governance and Member Support Manager</p>
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