

# Annual Report – 2023/24

## Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees



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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Annual Report is to provide an overview of scrutiny arrangements in Redbridge over the 2023/24 municipal year and to reflect on the highlights and outcomes of the work undertaken by the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Policy Development Committees.
- 1.2 2023/24 has brought in a new approach to ways of working in terms of how Redbridge Council undertakes scrutiny and policy development to hold its decision-makers to account. As well as having Scrutiny bodies to undertake the statutory scrutiny function, including monitoring performance, undertaking pre-decision scrutiny and scrutinising budgets, the Council introduced 6 Policy Development Committees (PDC), which are member-led bodies designed to fully utilise the skill and expertise of backbenchers, undertaking in-depth work on priority themes linked to the Redbridge Corporate Plan.
- 1.3 After what has been both an interesting and challenging first year of the new governance structure, in adjusting to the new ways of working, we are pleased to report that the new working processes have resulted in a number of policy development recommendations that are anticipated to yield exciting outcomes as they are progressed and implemented into 2024/25 and beyond.

# 2. Background

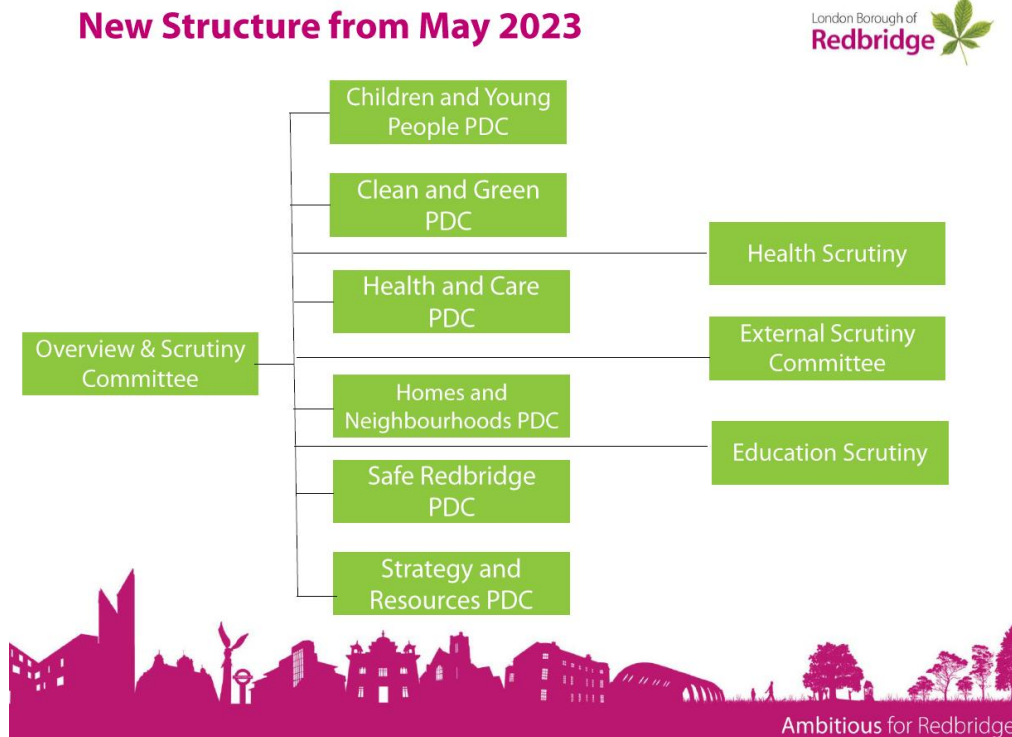
- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function - a power by which back-benchers hold the executive to account, and a duty to review policies and services on behalf of the public. Scrutiny holds an equal status to Cabinet and provides an independent examination of Council decisions. It ensures the accountability of Cabinet, and other public organisations, and has a key role in challenging and informing policies and decisions, promoting transparency, and involving the public.
- 2.2 On 22 April 2024, the Government published refreshed guidance for Local Authorities<sup>1</sup>. It supports the view that scrutiny is an essential role which provides elected Members with the ability to check and challenge services, strategies and policies that are delivered by the Council or partner organisations, as well as to acknowledge good practice, and it has the potential to impact the lives of residents and the places in which they live.
- 2.3 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)<sup>2</sup> identifies the four principles of effective scrutiny, in that it:
  1. provides constructive "critical friend" challenges;
  2. amplifies the voice and concerns of the public;
  3. is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
  4. drives improvement in public services.
- 2.4 As such, Scrutiny must be challenging, but also seek to support decision-makers to do their work better, by transparently discussing matters and recommending workable solutions to improve service delivery, ideally with public and stakeholder engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-combined-authorities-and-combined-county-authorities)

<sup>2</sup> [Home - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(cfgs.org.uk\)](https://www.cfgs.org.uk/)

- 2.5 Redbridge Scrutiny arrangements were changed in 2023/24 in response to changes to the governance structure, which were agreed by Council in May 2023, as set out below<sup>3</sup>:



- 2.6 **Scrutiny Committees** work within the remits of their individual terms of reference and contribute towards both the improvement of services and the development of the Council's policies and strategies. To be effective, any scrutiny input in the policy/strategy development process should be timely, to ensure that the views of Scrutiny Members are built in at an early stage. The past year's work is summarised in **Section 3**.
- 2.7 **Policy Development Committees (PDC)** have a remit for considering matters that are linked to the Corporate Plan, using discursive, exploratory and investigative methods. The past year's work is summarised in **Section 4**. A detailed report on the work of PDCs in 2023/24 is included as a substantive agenda items for consideration by the Overview Committee alongside this report.
- 2.8 The work of both types of bodies had been substantially supported by the two Scrutiny Officers, in this first year of implementing changes to the Council's governance structure, in liaison with Chairs, Corporate Directors, Subject Matter Experts and Project support officers. The methodology of this work involved public meetings, workshop sessions, site visits, consideration of data and research information, presentations and discussions with subject experts and other key stakeholders, and the production of outcome reports, which will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It is anticipated that recommendations be monitored and reported back to the PDC / Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

<sup>3</sup> Member Development presentation, May 2023

## 3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees

### 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committees can consider issues as relevant to their terms of reference. To minimise potential duplication, pre-decision scrutiny, and reports relating to finance, performance and complaints and insight of council services, is primarily undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), including updates on petitions, relevant Ombudsman reports and the Council's arrangements for handling complaints.
- 3.1.2 Meeting monthly, prior to Cabinet, the OSC can call-in reports for pre-decision scrutiny to question relevant Cabinet Members and officers on their reports, and to provide comments to Cabinet, for consideration as part of its decision-making process. Selection of items for scrutiny is undertaken in liaison with the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokesperson.
- 3.1.3 As with many other authorities, this year saw great financial challenges for the Council and a focus on key developments which were of particular interest to Redbridge residents and their families, and some of the topics selected for scrutiny included the following:
- Our Future Fairlop Master plan
  - Housing Strategy
  - Wanstead Youth Centre
  - New Lease for Oakfield Playing Fields
  - Budget Strategy

#### **The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor John Howard said:**

*"In the 2023/24 municipal year, the borough faced a number of challenges and growing pressures, and the Scrutiny Committees and relevant PDCs helped to ensure a proper and full examination of the Council's proposals.*

*Throughout the year, we were able to effectively and robustly challenge the decisions set out by the Executive and provide additional input to give our residents a better service.*

*I would like to thank all the members that took part in the scrutiny process and the council officers for helping to support our work".*

### 3.2 External Scrutiny Committee

- 3.2.1 Over the past year, the Committee met 6 times (including 2 additional meetings) and it considered updates from the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, Vision, Thames Water, Environmental Agency and Redbridge's Youth Council.

- 3.2.2 After receiving an update on the Casey Review (Metropolitan Police, it was agreed that the Superintendent / senior officers would attend every meeting, for greater accountability to the Council and the public, particularly on key areas of crime impacting Redbridge residents, such as knife crime and burglary / theft.
- 3.2.3 The previous and successive Superintendents had both attended meetings during the past year, and Thames Water and the Environment Agency had attended for the first time in a number of years to update the Committee on plans to mitigate flooding, especially around River Roding. In addition, TfL (Transport for London) attended twice, to provide an overall update on plans to improve bus transportation in Redbridge and to answer queries around the issues with the Central Line, and regarding the new SuperLoop bus route on Woodford Lane, which attracted resident engagement.
- 3.2.4 The two Youth MPs, and the Deputy Youth MP attended the last meeting and outlined their experiences of going through the Election process, and of working with the Redbridge Child Friendly Ambassadors, to develop and deliver against their manifesto.



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**The Chair of the External Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Daniel Morgan-Thomas said:**

*"2023-24 was an interesting year for the External Scrutiny Sub-Committee: at the Metropolitan Police's initiative we have had representation from them at every meeting, which has allowed the Committee not only to scrutinise the local force's implementation of the Casey Review but also to address topical concerns as they have arisen.*

*An additional meeting with transport providers has allowed Committee members and residents to address issues of concern and the Committee benefitted once again from input from local young people and environment stakeholders, the Environment Agency and Thames Water – both of whom we hope will be able to join us again next year".*

### 3.3 Health Scrutiny Sub-committee

3.3.1 Over the past year, the Committee considered the following items:

- Patient Survey Results relating to King George Hospital and Queen's Hospital



- BHRUT<sup>4</sup> update on Whistleblowing and Compliance with NHS England Guidance on 'Fit and Proper Person Test'
- NHS update on Primary Care Access
- North East London Cancer Alliance update on Cancer Waiting Times
- NELFT update on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- NHS update on Aldersbrook Medical Centre
- Integrated Care Board - Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Redbridge 2024-28
- Health Protection updates relating to vaccination programmes: COVID, Influenza, Measles etc
- Joint Committee updates (ONEL, INEL, Whipps Cross – see below)

3.3.2 The Maternity Scrutiny Task and Finish (T&F) Group was established under the former governance system to review the current provision of maternity services for Redbridge Women. Work had been significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic, and the implementation of a new governance system, and the outcome report is due to be finalised at a future Committee meeting, informed by research, service users and service leads. Given that PDC's now have a remit to shape policy and recommend areas of improvement, this is the last such T&F Group.



3.3.3 In early 2024, local authorities received notification of changes to the law and regulations<sup>5</sup> around Health Scrutiny and the reconfiguration of NHS services, and the Committee will consider the implications of this legislation at a future meeting.

### **The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee, Councillor Beverley Brewer said:**

*"2023/24 has been an exceptionally challenging year for health services. The Health Scrutiny committee has been active in seeking to represent the concerns of local people, meeting on six occasions to consider a number of reports, including patient survey results, whistleblowing, primary care, cancer, mental health and the NHS North East London estates strategy. We expressed ongoing concerns that waits for cancer treatment locally are significantly longer than the national targets. Child and Adult Mental Health Service waits are another area of serious concern.*

*Our March 2024 meeting was well attended for a discussion about the Aldersbrook Medical Centre, in line with the council's policy to support improved access to primary care. We were pleased to hear that after our discussions, an extension was agreed to the current arrangements for the medical centre, which many local residents felt strongly about.*

*In April 2024 our meeting focussed on the new Health and Wellbeing strategy, and periodic health protection updates were provided at each meeting.*

<sup>4</sup> Barking Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust

<sup>5</sup> [New Legislation relating to Health Scrutiny \(2024\)](#)

*Committee members have also been active on joint health overview and scrutiny committees for Outer North East London and for Whipps Cross. The continued delays in the long promised redevelopment of Whipps Cross remain a source of great concern and our concerns have been made known at these meetings."*

### 3.4 Education Scrutiny Sub-committee

3.4.1 Over the past year, the Committee met three times and considered the following items:

- Elective Education – Children whose parents choose to home school their children.
- Pupil Place Projections – to scrutinise the level of provision of school places in Redbridge.
- Grammar School Education – relating to education delivered by Redbridge's two Grammar Schools – Ilford County and Woodford County ( hall pictured above).
- Additional Provision for children with special educational needs, delivered in mainstream schools.
- Alternative Provision, including the Pupil Referral Unit, for those children and young people who had been excluded from mainstream education.
- 2022/23 Test and Examination Results.



3.4.2 The Children and Young People Policy Development Committee, in considering the themed work around children and young people's mental health, referred two matters to the Education Scrutiny Committee for consideration in 2024/25: Trauma Informed practices in Schools and the work being done with young people who are Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET).

#### **The Chair of the Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Councillor Anne Sachs said:**

*"The Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee met on three occasions in 2023/24.*

*In July 2023, the Sub-Committee received a presentation about pupil numbers projections. Members expressed concerns that reduction in the number of forms of entry would affect whether parents got their preferred school. We received a report on grammar schools. Members were concerned about tutoring, and that places for pupils on Pupil Premium were not filled. The response was that many primary schools provide support. For comparison, further information was provided as requested about how performance compared with other grammar schools in London.*

*In November 2023, the Sub-Committee considered ARP updates on Additionally Resourced Provision (for pupils with Special Educational Needs) and expressed concerns about the recruitment and retention of Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) and Occupational Therapists. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Cabinet Member (this was done in January 2024). We also considered a report on Elective Home Education (EHE) and in response to our expressed concerns, we were assured that all staff involved had safeguarding training.*



*In January 2023, the Sub-Committee considered the 2023 Examination and Test Results. We expressed concern about the recruitment and retention of teachers, and about the A Level results, which were below the average, notwithstanding above average prior attainment. We also considered a report on 'Alternative Provision, including the Pupil Referral Unit'.*

*The Sub-Committee received two references through Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Children and Young People's PDC and Safe Redbridge PDC, requesting that we consider trauma informed practice/training in schools', and the re-engagement with education of young people who have been involved in the criminal justice system, respectively, which will be considered in 2024/25."*

### 3.5 Outer North-East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC)



3.5.1 This JHOSC was established in 2006 by the London Borough Councils of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and is clerked by Havering. Essex County Council and Healthwatch organisations were subsequently added to the membership. Redbridge held three elected Member positions on this JHOSC (Councillors Beverley Brewer, Sunny Brar and Bert Jones).

3.5.2 It has a remit to scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services that affect two or more participant authorities. Whilst efforts are made to avoid any duplication, the terms of reference does not exclude scrutiny by individual authorities, where required.

3.5.3 Over the past year, the JHOSC considered the following items:

- Community Collaborative Programme
- NHS Updates and Performance
- Continuing Health Care Policies
- Cancer Services
- System Recovery and Resilience
- Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care
- London Ambulance Service
- NHS Finances
- Joint Committee Merger Proposal

### 3.6 Whipps Cross Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC)

3.6.1 This JHOSC, also clerked by Waltham Forest, was established in 2021 to scrutinise the Barts Health NHS Trust Whipps Cross Hospital Redevelopment Plans. Whilst the urgent need for a new hospital has been acknowledged, Redbridge Members have raised particular issues relating to bed numbers, the future of the Margaret Centre (End of Life Care / palliative care services), transport, changes to surgical services, and statutory consultation. Redbridge holds two elected Member positions on the JHOSC (Councillors Beverley Brewer and Sunny Brar).



- 3.6.2 Updates on the work of JHOSCs are routinely reported to the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee. In view of reported delays in the hospital redevelopment plan, a recommendation was made to Cabinet through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to liaise with the Department for Health and Social Care regarding the impact on Redbridge residents.

### 3.7 Inner North-East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC)



3.7.1 This JHOSC was established in 2010 to scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services that affect two or more inner London participant authorities (City of London, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest), and is clerked by Waltham Forest. Councillor Beverley Brewer is an observer representative, as nominated by the ONEL JHOSC. Over the past year, the JHOSC considered the following items:

- Community Collaborative Programme
- NHS Updates and Performance
- Integrated Care system Five Year Forward Plan
- System Recovery and Resilience
- Continuing Health Care Policies
- London Ambulance Service
- Barts Health / BHRUT Closer Collaboration

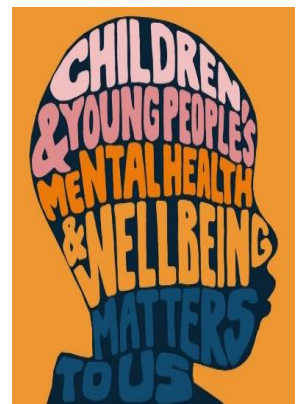
## 4. Policy Development Committees (PDC)

### 4.1 Children and Young People PDC

#### **Theme(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:**

##### **Theme 1 – Children and Young People’s Mental Health**

The work on Children and Young People’s Mental Health was vast, given the demands upon mental Health Services. The Committee chose to carry out a performance exercise (RAG/ Red Amber Green rating) on a recently published Government report to ascertain Redbridge’s benchmark position. Although Redbridge was able to demonstrate several areas of excellence, there were some areas that were rated as Amber and Red. Members gained information by hearing from officers, partners and delivery services at formal meetings and undertaking visits to a range of facilities that deliver targeted services to young people who require mental health support, i.e. ELHAP. Service Managers and Officers have worked collaboratively to ensure that service delivery for young people is improved.



## **Theme 2 – Child Friendly Borough Status**

Presentations were received highlighting progress against each of the badges of the Child Friendly Borough (CFB) Programme, to identify any gaps in the journey towards UNICEF accreditation for Redbridge. Evidence was gathered from all services within the Council, enabling Redbridge to achieve an excellent milestone of being identified as the first London Borough to receive UNICEF CFB accreditation.



Manchester City Council have just begun their accreditation journey and undertook a visit to Redbridge, where officers were able to showcase the ways in which good practice had been achieved, through listening to the issues affecting children and young people in relation to their mental health, and through their involvement in a Youth Democracy Programme (Your Voice Matters), whereby presentations by young people were made to Scrutiny and Cabinet Members. The PDC Chair took part in an interview with UNICEF's Research, Evaluation and Participation Manager from Child Friendly Cities & Communities as part of the Development Evaluation, to offer ideas on how the programme could be further developed. The outcome report recorded 11 recommendations.

### **The Chair of the Children and Young People Policy Development Committee, Cllr Saima Ahmed said:**

*"The newly formed PDC, transitioning from our previous scrutiny framework, represents a significant step forward in how we shape and implement policies, especially concerning children and young people. Our focus on early intervention, for children and young people's mental health, and the Council's Child-friendly Borough Programme have fostered inclusive and participatory policy development, ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and considered among others.*

*Members of the C&YP PDC engaged in extensive work, including research, site visits and regular meetings, to gather firsthand insights and feedback. Shared experiences from stakeholders, partners, and service users, including young people, helped identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities. This proactive involvement ensures that proposed recommendations are practically effective and responsive to the real needs and aspirations of young people.*

*Through this dedicated and dynamic approach, the committee aimed to create policy, strategy and practice recommendations that genuinely enhance the well-being and development of children and young people.*

*As the chair, I'm pleased to see how the committee worked together in progressing the policy goals aligned with our wider Redbridge plan. I would like to thank the supporting officers, the directorates, the members, and everyone involved for ensuring the effective function of this committee".*

## 4.2 Clean and Green PDC

### Themes(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:

**Theme 1 – Sustainable Transport Strategy** – Two selected areas of focus were Road Safety and Active and Sustainable Travel. The Committee heard evidence from Transport for London, Ramblers Association, Cabinet Members from Hackney and Waltham Forest, and subject experts within the council. The report recorded 17 recommendations with cross party agreement and Cabinet Member input.



### **Theme 2 – The Future of Waste Collections and Disposals**

The PDC began this theme as an informal workshop to understand the current position, as the contract with East London Waste Authority (ELWA) had come to an end in December 2027, in view of the need for future arrangements, to include food waste collection, by March 2026, in line with new legislative requirements, however it was recognised early on that this theme would overrun into 2024/25. Work undertaken to date included meetings with ELWA and ReLondon, and visits to two waste processing facilities Jenkins Lane in Barking and Ilford Material Recovery facility (pictured above with PDC members).



Work undertaken to date included meetings with ELWA and ReLondon, and visits to two waste processing facilities Jenkins Lane in Barking and Ilford Material Recovery facility (pictured above with PDC members).

**Theme 3 - Green Urban Landscape Project** – For this theme, it was decided early on in the year as a TFG had just reported to Cabinet on their work on Nature and Environment, that this theme be deferred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (November 2023) to receive a monitoring report to determine if this theme needed to be further explored. Members of the C&G PDC attended this meeting, so that they were able to take part in discussion. For this reason, the theme was not pursued in 2023/24.

### **The Chair of the Clean and Green Policy Development Committee Cllr Joe Hehir said:**

*“Working as Chair of this newly formed committee has provided me a great opportunity to lead on two targeted enquires.*

*Both selected themes link into the Redbridge Corporate Plan and will be important over the next few years. Our STS report will feed into the new Sustainable Transport Strategy in 2025 and the changes to waste collections and disposal, e.g. Food Waste collections earmarked for introduction in March 2026 by government, and our Waste contract is up for renewal in late 2027.*

*After meeting with the local Ramblers Association in terms of encouraging more walking, Transport for London (TfL) Officers about increasing the usage of buses in the borough and Cabinet Members from other local authorities in Hackney and Waltham Forest, together with consideration of our many discussions, I am very pleased as Chair to have presented a completed report, agreed by members of the Clean & Green PDC by February 2024, (the first PDC to produce one of their chosen reports), proposing no less than 17 recommendations to feed into the Redbridge new STS affecting the following areas. i) Road Safety and*



*speeding, ii) Active and Sustainable Travel – walking and cycling, and iii) Public Transport, (encouraging greater use of, particularly buses in the borough).*

*We are now working on our second theme, WC&D and members agreed to focus in on the following four areas: i) Food Waste, ii) Recycling in flats, iii) Recycling and waste minimisation, and iv) Contract issues which cut across all areas. Members have so far heard from LBR Officers, have visited Jenkins Lane and the Ilford Recycling Centre, met with East London Waste Authority (ELWA), heard the recent Landlords Forum, and met with Officers from the London Borough of Merton about their best practices and challenges. It is hoped we will have this report completed in the autumn of 2024.*

*I want to take the opportunity to thank my Vice Chair, Committee members, the Cabinet member and LBR Officers across the Transport and Waste areas who have worked incredibly hard this year to assist with delivery of the STS and progress on the Waste report. I also want to pay special mention to Gurdeep Sehmi, Scrutiny Research and PDC Co-ordinator, who has been a significant help to me these last 12 months, in assisting me Chairing and delivering on this PDC”.*

### 4.3 Health and Care PDC

#### **Theme(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:**

##### **Theme 1 – Independent Living**

The PDC recognised assessed data and information and considered the importance of observing the ‘12 principles’ (‘Pillars of Independent Living’ / 12 basic rights of disabled people’) in action, and considered extensive engagement, including discussions, presentations and site visits, with engagement from relevant staff and service users to provide a ‘lived experience’ of these principles. The PDC’s outcome report includes key findings to support 6 recommendations, developed alongside the second theme (see below), which focus on staffing, collaborative working across partner organisations, provision of data and awareness raising,

##### **Theme 2 – Disproportionality**

The PDC assessed data and information and considered the importance of observing the ‘12 principles’ (‘Pillars of Independent Living’ / 12 basic rights of disabled people’) in action. Following discussions and presentations about existing data, it was apparent that further data was required, which was in the process of being collated within the Council, including ward based comparative data. It is envisaged that member engagement in this work would be ongoing in the course of the rollout of this information, to enable short and long term strategic interventions to address any disparities.

#### **The Chair of the Health and Care Policy Development Committee said:**

*“Chairing the Health and Care PDC has been a privilege, the group did research and analysis and delivered 6 recommendations. This piece of work also revealed a compelling case for the regular implementation of similar endeavours. Through meticulous examination, it has become evident that a consistent commitment to this type of work is essential for fostering continuous improvement and facilitating the development of more targeted recommendations.*

*The six recommendations put forth in, though broad in scope, are indispensable in addressing key areas of concern and opportunity. Some of these recommendations necessitate not just incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental strategic shifts. They highlight the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond*

*surface-level remedies, emphasising the importance of overarching strategy changes to drive sustained progress and advancement.*

*As we reflect on the insights gleaned from this endeavour, it becomes increasingly apparent that the journey toward improvement is ongoing. It is imperative that these findings serve as a springboard for ongoing evaluation, iteration, and action. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, we can ensure that our efforts yield meaningful results and contribute to the realisation of our organizational objectives”.*

#### 4.4 Homes and Neighbourhoods PDC

##### **Theme(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:**

##### **Theme 1 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy**

The PDC conducted wide-ranging research on this subject, including visits to the Malachi Project, The Salvation Army and The Foyer, to hear from service users and staff within temporary accommodation services. It was recognised that this theme was a cross-cutting theme within the Council, with work ongoing collectively to address the challenges, so the work plan focussed around the consultation plan for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. At the time of publication of this report the outcome report was in the process of being finalised.



##### **Theme 2 – Leisure Facilities – Access and Accessibility (to date, work is ongoing)**

Members started work on this theme late into 2023/24 and received information and research including information from Redbridge Vision and Leisure regarding access to library services, with a focus on encouraging residents to access services after the COVID pandemic, benchmarked against other Local Authorities. Members also heard from the Libraries Manager from London Borough of Merton about their work to increase take-up of library services. Work will continue into 2024/25.



##### **The Chair of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Policy Development Committee, Cllr Kumud Joshi said:**

*“The setting up of the Redbridge PDCs has been a good change from the Scrutiny Committees. This allows Councillors to get more involved in policy making and getting to know the challenges faced by the officers. I feel we needed to narrow down the scope of work as we all had a struggle to find our focus in the beginning. Work on Theme 1 helped us to appreciate the issues faced by residents and officers when they help residents to find independent living. Work on Theme 2 enabled us to review the Mega Mix programme and understand what works well in attracting young people during the school holidays, and we are currently investigating library usage with a potential to increase the footfall at least to pre-covid levels, hopefully with innovative approaches”.*



## 4.5 Safe Redbridge PDC

### Theme(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:

#### Theme – Youth Diversion and Early Intervention

The PDC initially developed a wide-ranging scope of topics, including Violence Against Women and Girls, Knife Crime and Domestic Abuse. Whilst it was recognised that these are important issues, in view of the ongoing work being undertaken across the Council to address them, such as the Redbridge Crime Commission, Members selected a focal point around early intervention and preventative approaches that could keep young people safe from involvement in criminal activity.

The PDC considered data and research, heard from stakeholders and external organisations and undertook a series of focussed site visits to inform their findings. The report made 21 recommendations which included reference to the use of third sector organisations, data and performance monitoring and further work to identify gaps in service provision.

#### The Chair of the Safe Redbridge Policy Development Committee, Cllr Mustaq Ahmed said:

*"This year provided me a great opportunity to Chair the newly formed Safe Redbridge PDC, working with my peers to investigate how the services work to keep Redbridge residents safe. We chose to look deeper into Youth diversion activity and found that the support they receive from the Redbridge provided services and voluntary sector organisation complement each other. We have considered evidence from a number of site visits, presentations, and research information to inform the findings and recommendations. An approach that highlights the importance of and works to specifically target the root causes of violent behaviour was emphasised as important.*

*I am pleased that the work enabled us to understand the hard work being done by Officers and partners as well as challenges that they face, allowing us to draw conclusion and provide recommendations that we hope will assist the Cabinet Member and Officers to address some of the gaps. A collective understanding and ambition were developed that the Council wants Redbridge to be a market leader in our youth offering and early intervention framework providing alternative pathways to young people at risk of involvement with serious violence."*

## 4.6 Strategy and Resources PDC

### Theme(s) considered and a summary of outcomes:

#### Theme – Employment, Skills and Enterprise

The PDC opted to look at one major theme for this year. This was Employment, Skills and Enterprise. However, during their research period, this subject was felt to be too vast and, given the potential for employment opportunities the Borough's small businesses hold, it chose to focus on how the Borough supports small businesses to bid for council contracts directly, or as sub-contractors and thus be able to flourish and grow. Sharon Strutt, Head of Regeneration and Elizabeth Hannam Economic Development Team Manager provided Subject Expert support to the PDC and undertook a visit to the Ilford Exchange to hear about the IDP



and had meetings with owners of small business to hear about their experiences of applying for Council contracts.

After several visits and meetings with stakeholders, the committee found that there was a gap in respect of the understanding of social value, not only by small businesses bidding for Council contracts, but also some commissioners and project managers that are responsible for managing contracts. Although several recommendations were developed upon conclusion of findings, one of the main recommendations was for Redbridge to develop a Social Value Strategy and provide training to contractors and council officers to ensure that the Borough has and promotes Sustainable Procurement and understands the social value benefits contracts bring into Redbridge. The work on this theme concluded in January 2024, with the outcome report being agreed at the February Committee meeting so that it can be progress to a future OSC.



The Chair in considering the work plan for 2024/25 wishes to receive an update on the progress against recommendations that arose from The Council's Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis to see if the PDC can input in the development of the Redbridge Anti-Poverty Strategy. The report made 8 recommendations.

**The Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Development Committee, Cllr Judith Garfield said:**

*"At an early stage the PDC felt that the theme was too broad, and after a workshop where members revised the theme to ensure that it met with council objectives and was in line with the Redbridge Corporate plan, the committee was clear in its aim to improve the lives of Redbridge residents and it was decided to revise accordingly. The initial workshop included presentations on the Councils current work to help residents and businesses overcome challenges in light of the cost-of-living crisis including support to access employment, to manage debt and maximise benefits. This was framed around ensuring we have the right policies in place to help our residents to be financially resilient.*

*The Committee received more detailed presentations from officers on the work of the Strategy Directorate and the Resources Directorate including Business Rates and Procurement and from the Economic Development Team including business support. Members were keen to further explore the business support offer and specifically the impact the Council's procurement of goods and services has on local businesses and residents. Visits were set up to gather greater insight into work being undertaken in this area. In addition, investigations were made into the Council's corporate tendering processes and practices around procurement and social value.*

*I would like to take the opportunity of thanking all the stakeholders, partners and officers who gave evidence and supported the recommendations in the report. I would like to thank all committee members who worked tireless and gave freely of their time this year to contribute to the work that the committee achieved.*

*A special mention and thank you to the Scrutiny Officer who worked incredibly hard throughout the year to ensure the committee ran smoothly and efficiently."*

## 5. Achievements and acknowledgements for 2023/24

- 5.1 Embedding a new governance structure whilst maintaining business as usual** – We acknowledge the collaborative input of Members, Officers and stakeholders which has assisted in progressing the work plans for the scrutiny activities outlined in this report, particularly the Chairs and Vice Chairs for steering the work of the Scrutiny Committees and new Policy Development Committees, and we thank them for their supporting comments within this report. Similarly, the Chairs wish to put on record their thanks to everyone for their input over the past year, whether it has been by attending meetings, providing information or facilitating site visits. They also record their appreciation of the efficient and effective advice and support provided by the Scrutiny Research and Policy Development Committee Co-ordinators (Jilly Szymanski and Gurdeep Sehmi), who have continued to discharge the Council's statutory Scrutiny functions, delivering a full programme of scrutiny activity throughout the year, including an ongoing indepth scrutiny task and finish group, whilst innovatively establishing the new PDCs.
- 5.2 Continued involvement of Scrutiny Co-opted Members** – The terms of reference of some scrutiny bodies allows for Co-opted Member appointments to provide local or specialist knowledge and input in scrutiny discussions. We wish to acknowledge the 2 non-statutory (i.e. non-voting) Co-opted Members appointed to serve on the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee (one from Healthwatch Redbridge), the 2 appointed to serve on the External Scrutiny Panel, and the 3 statutory (voting) Co-opted Members appointed to serve on the Education Scrutiny Panel, welcoming new member Ms Adela Kay as the Roman Catholic representative on the Education Scrutiny Sub-committee. We also wish to put on record our thanks to the two resigning members this year, for their service: Mr Jon Pushkin (Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee) and Mr Kevin West (External Scrutiny Committee). A recruitment process will be undertaken to fill these vacancies, as well as the vacancy for a secondary school governor representative on the Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
- 5.3 Recommendations have been made by Scrutiny Committees and PDCs to Cabinet** - We are pleased to report that a total of 63 PDC recommendations were accepted by the PDCs for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which has a remit to referral recommendations to Cabinet, to consider when developing policies and strategies into 2024/25 and beyond.

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