

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 1 – 2013/2014: GOVERNANCE

PANEL MEMBER FEEDBACK FROM VISITS

Panel Member Name	Organisation Attended/Venue	Date of Visit	Purpose of Visit	Observations/ Findings	Conclusions and Recommendations	Additional Comments
1 Cllr John Gallagher	<i>Dormers Wells Ward Forum Meeting</i> Queen's Park Residents Association david.p.ryder@bt.com (David Ryder)	Tuesday 3 Sept 2013	Observe Proceedings	<p>Dennis Frost, the Co-ordinator, was very helpful with papers and directions.</p> <p>Centre Committee was very welcoming to me. First meeting there and North Primary School but the next will be the new Dormers Wells High.</p> <p>Prompt start, I was introduced, no Police (apologies), environmental crime or park rangers, notes handled expeditiously.</p> <p>Confusing discussion on Ward, Southall and national matters.</p> <p>The Chair did most of the speaking. Andy Buddle spoke.</p>	<p>Police should be encouraged to attend all Forum meetings.</p> <p>Envirocrime and Rangers should attend.</p> <p>Officers should be invited to attend on matters such as the Martinware matter.</p> <p>The outside speaker on the elderly was interesting.</p> <p>Although this was not mentioned at the meeting, I am aware that the Southall Ward Forums have pooled some of their money in a central fund for major projects which affect more than one of them. This seems a good idea to me.</p>	<p>Redesign this form to make more observations space available.</p> <p>I left after an hour due to dependency on public transport.</p>
2 Cllr Anthony Young	<i>Southfield Ward Forum</i> Carlton Road Day Centre, 8-10 Carlton Road, Chiswick, W4 5DY	Wednesday 11 Sept 2013	To observe the meeting.	<p>Good attendance, informed debate, good conclusions reached.</p>	<p>Residents' Associations tending to monopolise debate.</p>	

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3	Cllr Harvey Rose	Isleworth and Brentford Area Forum Meeting Brentford Free Church, Boston Manor Road (Half Acre), Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 8DW	Thursday 19 Sept 2013	To observe the operation of Brentford Area Forum in comparison with Ward Fora in the Borough of Ealing.	The meeting discussed the future of Isleworth Public Hall (clearly a controversial item); nominal consideration of some planning applications. Earlier there was a presentation from the Police, followed by several questions.	It is apparent from recent Minutes that this Forum has a budget of £7,000 which is used to help funding for small grant applications (limited to £500 each). These grants are clearly used for local activities and projects not normally included in Council expenditure. By contrast, Ward Fora in Ealing are sometimes asked to provide funding for traditional Council services.	The Forum covers 4 Wards, meeting every 2 months. Approximately 50 people attended, largely because of the one controversial item. Good chairing. Members were provided with individual microphones.
4	Cllr Gurmit Mann	Southall Broadway Ward Forum Meeting St George Community Centre, 8-12 Lancaster Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB1 1NW	Thursday 19 Sept 2013	To observe.	Poor attendance. Residents raised the issue of car parks and car park charges. The Community Safety Officer did not present a report. Nobody was listening to the Chair.	I suggest that there should be a verbal environment report at least once a year at these meetings. The relevant service officer should attend the next meeting to answer the questions that were raised by the public at this meeting. The Chair should control the meeting properly.	-

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5 Cllr Rajinder Mann	Southall Broadway Ward Forum Meeting St George Community Centre, 8-12 Lancaster Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB1 1NW	Thursday 19 Sept 2013	To observe the meeting.	<p>Poor attendance as only 13 people attended the meeting.</p> <p>Residents were busy with their mobile phones during the meeting.</p> <p>Lack of health and safety information.</p> <p>The meeting was not functioning properly.</p> <p>There was lack of control by the Chair.</p> <p>Residents were talking with each other and not through the Chair.</p> <p>A community safety report was not presented.</p>	<p>The Chair was unable to give a proper answer to a resident's question on CPZ.</p> <p>If unsure about any answer then they should call the relevant officer to answer this at the next meeting.</p> <p>I suggest that an Envirocrime Officer should attend at least one meeting a year in every Ward to verbally update the residents on the issues.</p>	-
6 Cllr Anthony Young	Southall Broadway Ward Forum Meeting St George Community Centre, 8-12 Lancaster Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB1 1NW	Thursday 19 Sept 2013	To observe the meeting.	<p>Weakly chaired, Committee Administrator frequently answering questions which the Chair should have taken.</p> <p>Two Councillors sitting as far apart as possible. The non-Chair refused to speak for much of the</p>		

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				<p>meeting.</p> <p>Chair had forgotten to switch off mobile phone.</p> <p>Only 13 attendees, quite argumentative, meeting dysfunctional and public dissatisfied. Acoustics poor.</p> <p>Meeting ended by public leaving, rather than by the Chair.</p>		
7	Cllr John Gallagher	<p>Acton Central Ward Forum St Mary's Church, The Mount, Acton, W3 9NW</p>	<p>Wednesday 2 Oct 2013</p> <p>Review on behalf of Scrutiny Review Panel 1.</p> <p>I was unable to attend the Elthorne Ward Forum scheduled for 10 October due to rearrangement of other engagements.</p>	<p>Cllr Chapman and Ms Bains were also present.</p> <p>31 residents or observers were present at the opening, together with two Councillors, the Administrator and Apprentice, the Police Licensing Officer, a PC, a Special Constable, the ASB Manager and a Health & Safety Officer. More people came in during the meeting and had to stand.</p> <p>One Councillor sent her apology for lateness.</p> <p>All relevant papers were</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillors and staff from the Scrutiny Panel should be introduced by the Chair.* 2. The status of budget proposals should be clear. 3. Envirocrime officers should be present.* 4. Police reports should include Ward statistics and be available in writing.* 5. Items under any other business or public forum should be 	<p>We cannot stop the public discussing planning applications!</p> <p>Acton Wards are receiving requests for funding for items other than environmental concerns. I think this needs to be clarified.</p>

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				<p>on the chairs. Refreshments were available before the meeting.</p> <p>Someone asked why Ms Bains was taking photographs and I had to explain why she, Cllr Chapman and I were present. The Chair should have introduced us.</p> <p><i>Any Other Business</i> seemed to be the equivalent of the Public Forum. Seven items were put forward at the meeting not in advance.</p> <p>There was confusion over the report from the ASB Manager and the Police. The Police report lacked focus and residents complained about street drinking and the absence of SNT statistics.</p> <p>The envirocrime report was encouraging but the officer was not there to present it; a practice common to all Ward Forums I understand.</p>	<p>submitted in advance of the meeting and tabled on the agenda.</p> <p>6. I have no idea what to do about people who turn up late and have to stand*.</p> <p>*Apply to all Ward Forums.</p>	

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				<p>The budget was presented but only the applications from the Church and Acton Business Watch (at which I thought I ought to declare an interest) were discussed. There was no clear decision taken by the Councillors or the public on priority, need or even on what was recommended or accepted.</p> <p>I picked up a criticism of the Council's website as clumsy when residents were discussing how to find a planning application under <i>Any Other Business</i>.</p>			
8	Cllr Ann Chapman	<p>Acton Central Ward Forum St Mary's Church, The Mount, Acton, W3 9NW</p>	Wednesday 2 Oct 2013	To observe an Ealing ward forum meeting in another part of the Borough from my own.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillors offer a 'mini-surgery' for half/one hour before the meeting to see residents – however, on this occasion, a resident had turned up an hour before the meeting but had to wait 40 minutes for any Councillor to be there. 2. One Ward Councillor 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutiny Panel should view/note summary of survey findings from ward forum attendees. 2. Formula for meeting was much as expected and offered mix of updates from councillors and officers together with opportunities for 	

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					<p>did not attend the forum.</p> <p>3. 28+ local resident attendees.</p> <p>4. Signing in sheet, envirocrime report, and survey forms for completion by attendees and summary results of previous surveys readily available. Comprehensive minutes of previous meeting available.</p> <p>5. Policing/safer communities agenda item somewhat confused and dominated by overlong area police report duplicating police ward forum agenda. SNT not present.</p> <p>6. Hospital update on agenda but did not seem to be of great interest to attendees.</p> <p>7. Budget tabled with</p>	<p>residents to raise issues. Residents attending seemed happy with format and content.</p> <p>3. There is an unresolved duplication between Ward Forums and Ward Police Panels – updates to Ward Forums need to be focussed with detail taken to the Police Panel for those more interested.</p> <p>4. ‘Mini-surgery’ seems a good use of time/ resources (provided Councillors are there).</p>	

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				<p>two new proposals; unclear what was to be approved and what then had been decided.</p> <p>8. Good engagement by one Councillor taking up particular issues.</p> <p>9. Main resident contributions from residents who are clearly regular contributors; majority silent.</p> <p>10. Some issues raised by residents could have been handled directly in one-to-one with Councillors rather than at forum as no wider interest – but that is residents' prerogative!</p>		
9	Cllr Anthony Young	Perivale Ward Forum Perivale Community Centre Horsenden Lane South, Perivale, Middlesex, UB6 7NP	Thursday 3 Oct 2013	To observe the meeting.	Very good attendance, some members of the public proposing unworkable solutions to problems.	More political as split Ward. Also members of the public more political.
10	Cllr Ann Chapman	Brent Connects Willesden Area Forum Meeting – LB Brent College of North West	Wednesday 16 Oct 2013	To observe another Borough's ward forum	1. Meeting is chaired/run for the year by a single Councillor. Others may attend; in this case 2	1. This format is closer to Ealing's old Area Committees than current Ward Forums, The Brent Connects structure is 5 groupings of between 3 and 6 wards, in the

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	London, Denzil Road, Willesden, NW10		equivalent.	<p>did and 3 sent apologies; some never attend. The meeting seemed Officer rather than Member led.</p> <p>2. About 30 attendees; this is lower than typically, possibly because of the agenda or the fact that there were major local traffic problems that evening. Venue was also difficult to find (possibly not the case for locals). Apparently there are several regular attendees, some vocal, others just listen.</p> <p>3. Each meeting includes a 'soapbox' slot where any resident/ representative of a group can have (nominally) 3 minutes to present on any topic they wish – in this meeting there was an update on Brent Transition and a representative of</p>	<p>although not as formal.</p> <p>2. Still more of an information-giving than engagement exercise; limited local focus.</p> <p>3. Ealing Councillor involvement/ contribution to forums is greater.</p>	<p>case of Willesden 4 wards. It replaced the previous area consultative forums about 6 years ago. It was reviewed 18 months ago as the format was thought to have become stale and too dependent on PowerPoint presentations rather than being interactive.</p> <p>New ideas were introduced such as 'question time' panels and use of post-it notes to capture residents' views.</p> <p>Meetings are held quarterly, in different venues across the area, advertised in the Brent magazine (like Around Ealing, 10 copies per year). In the past flyers were also distributed but budget cuts have meant this no longer happens. 2 ward newsletters per year are sent to a mailing</p>

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				<p>Brent Housing Action speaking about discrimination by letting agencies.</p> <p>4. Policing is not on the agenda as meeting covers several wards and this is done at ward level.</p> <p>5. As this quarterly meeting round fell around Local Democracy Week, young people had been invited to make a presentation to the meeting; in this case, three 6th formers gave a presentation on 'What does democracy mean for us'. This was well received but typically the meetings are not aimed at young people as they are engaged in other ways/forums.</p> <p>6. There was a standard presentation from a housing officer on the new Housing</p>		<p>list/distributed via libraries etc.; nicely presented.</p>

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				<p>Strategy, which has been given to all sectors. This did not seem to be of great interest to the attendees and could probably have been better presented at a single Borough wide meeting for those specifically interested.</p> <p>7. Each ward has a budget (£30k p.a.) to spend on local projects. Suggestions are put forward by residents/ local groups, reviewed and prioritised by councillors and then agreed by the director of service (i.e. not chosen by residents). Budget is for one-off not ongoing projects and cannot be used to replace services which have been cut. Update given on each ward's projects by neighbourhood coordinator.</p>		

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9 Cllr Anthony Young	Joint Local Government Association/Centre for Public Scrutiny – Good Governance Workshop Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ	Tuesday 22 Oct 2013	To participate in the Workshop	<p>Attendance about 25, mixed Councillors/officers.</p> <p>Introduction short – most interesting contribution from Nottinghamshire who had changed from Cabinet model to a Committee system.</p> <p>Workshop – good opportunity to discuss governance with other with different priorities – some wanting to change the other way, some where change was a manifesto commitment.</p> <p>One or two common themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committee System – ‘silo’ effect; - May be too many Councillors; - Quality/quantity of decisions; - Partnership working more difficult in Committee System; - Report writing deteriorates in Cabinet System. 		

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10 Cllr Anthony Young	Brent Connects Kingsbury and Kenton Area Forum Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9	Tuesday 22 Oct 2013	To observe the meeting	Attendance very low (10), due to venue at Civic Centre. Refreshments provided. Agenda more generalised than local. Late start – 7.12pm 4 Councillors (12 possible) including Chair. Microphone passed around. School pupils – part of local democracy week. Planning update. Refreshment break after about 35 minutes. Parking charges exorbitant. LIP funding – transport schemes both general and local.		

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11	Cllr John Gallagher	South Acton Ward Forum Centre for Armenian Information and Advice, 105A Mill Hill Road, Acton, W3 8JF	Wednesday 23 Oct 2013	Ward Councillor	Apart from me, did not have anyone there from the Panel.	
12	Cllr Theresa Byrne	Ealing Broadway Ward Forum Ealing Council Chamber, Ealing Town Hall, Ealing, W5 2BY	Wednesday 23 Oct 2013	Observe the Ward Forum as part of the Scrutiny Panel.	This Ward Forum was well run for a public meeting. It had a clear agenda, but the major problem, in common with most I would imagine, was that it was dominated by a few voices. Meetings by their nature encourage a few well informed or well opinionated people to dominate and this meeting was no different. The Councillors knew the information, understood the local area (though were not sure about my new address!) and were familiar with those who dominated the meeting.	