

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 5 MAY 2009

**M71, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Abdul Asad (Chair)
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Ahmed Hussain
Councillor Waiseul Islam
Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor A A Sardar
Councillor David Snowdon

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Abdal Ullah

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr H Mueenuddin – Muslim Community Representative

Officers Present:

Ashraf Ali – (Scrutiny Policy Officer)
Lutfur Ali – (Assistant Chief Executive)
Margaret Cooper – (Head of Transportation & Highways)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community))
Afazul Hoque – (Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager)
Jebin Syeda – (Scrutiny Policy Officer)

Amanda Thompson – (Team Leader - Democratic Services)

1. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EVALUATION

The Chair advised that an evaluation session had been arranged for all Committee Members on 19 May at 6.30pm and he hoped all would be able to attend.

The aim of the session was to establish what had worked well and not so well during the year, and to start developing the work programme for the new municipal year.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bill Turner and Co-opted Member Mr Ahbab Miah.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Oliur Rahman declared a personal interest in agenda item 8.1 which referred to a school in his ward, and a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8.4 because he was an employee of Jobcentre Plus. Councillor Rahman left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

Councillor Abdal Ullah declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6.1 on the basis that he was a Member of the Cabinet when the original decision was taken, and left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

4. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

5. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

None

6. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

None.

7. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

7.1 Report Called In - Communities, Localities & Cultural Services Directorate Capital Programme 2009/2010

Further to his declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Abdal Ullah left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

The Chair outlined the call-in procedure to the Committee.

Councillor Ahmed Hussain for the Call-in Members referred to the reasons in their requisition and highlighted the main issues that they held with the provisionally agreed decision to agree a number of schemes which would form the Communities Localities and Cultural Services Directorate's 2009/2010 Capital Programme.

Councillor Hussain stated that none of the improvement schemes included areas in his ward and he had identified a number of key areas which required improvement. These were:

- Wellington Way – improved lighting
- Bow Road – Traffic calming measures to Central Foundation
- Upgrade of pedestrian crossing on Burdett Road and St Paul's Way
- Archibald Park – more adequate lighting due to the anti-social behaviour after dark on and around the park

Councillor Hussain advised the Committee that the improvement agenda had been established from a 2005 Cabinet meeting and was therefore out of date, and there were now a number of areas in the Borough that were in desperate need of an upgrade in terms of parks, roads and streets.

Councillor Hussain then responded to questions from the Committee and stated that his objection was not just due to the fact that there were no improvements planned for his ward, but because the agenda was out of date and it was likely that there were also other areas that the schemes would not cover.

He stated that people with pushchairs and wheelchairs experienced problems trying to cross Burdett Road and St Paul's Way and that the pedestrian crossing needed upgrading. The contribution from TfL meant that there was no reason why the Council couldn't improve the mentioned areas, especially the traffic calming on Bow Road.

Councillor Abdul Ullah, Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, and Margaret Cooper, Head of Transportation and Highways, then addressed the Committee on behalf of the Cabinet in response to the Call-in and made the following points:

The improvement document was a five year plan required by the Mayor for London setting out how the Council intended to deliver his transport strategy at the local level, and it followed specific guidance issued by the Mayor and set out core themes and priorities. The Mayor was currently reviewing his Transport Strategy and would only issue instruction to the local authority to review their LIP when his own strategy was published.

In the meantime, a bid to TfL for funding was made annually and was last agreed by Cabinet in May 2008. The bid was consistent with the themes set out in the 5 year plan but the specific projects included took account of local priorities and issues identified through on-going liaison with Members, LAPs and other stakeholder groups.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair announced that there would be a five minute adjournment following a discussion with Councillor Ahmed Hussain regarding his conduct during the meeting.

Councillor Hussain advised that he would be withdrawing from the meeting.

RESUMPTION

Councillors Hussain and Eaton had left the meeting.

The Chair invited Councillor Ullah to continue his response to the Call-in.

Councillor David Snowden expressed a protest at the Chair's conduct and left the meeting.

Councillor Ullah noted that prior to the adjournment Councillor Hussain had interrupted his presentation by making comments.

Councillor Ullah advised that in response to the alternative course of action proposed in the call-in requisition, the following was achievable:-

Wellington Way request for improved lighting

Officers were currently reviewing options for improving lighting in Wellington Way with a view to implementing these works with funding from the Streetlighting capital budget referred to in the Cabinet report.

Bow Road - traffic calming for Central Foundation

Bow Road was in fact the responsibility of Transport for London and the Council was not able to spend the TfL LIP funding on this road. However the Council could lobby TfL for these improvements and the high profile of the High Street 2012 project along the A11 (which included Bow Road) would provide an excellent opportunity to pursue these proposals. A request for a PUFFIN crossing would be made as a matter of urgency as well as a risk assessment of the need for a school crossing patrol officer.

Upgrade of pedestrian crossings on Burdett Road

Burdett Road was also the responsibility of TfL which again could be lobbied for these improvements.

Upgrade of pedestrian crossings on St Pauls Way

The whole area was currently being reviewed including the design of a masterplan for the corridor which integrated with all the surrounding new developments.

Archibald Park

Whilst the streets around this park were all well lit, the tree cover could obstruct lighting and the need for further pruning would be considered. This work could be accommodated from the capital budget for streetlighting.

Committee members then put detailed questions to Councillor Ullah and Margaret Cooper concerning the alleged anti-social behaviour in Archibald Park, complaints received in respect of Bow Road, and road safety outside schools.

There was a discussion concerning the call-in.

Councillor Waiseul Islam stated that although he considered that all the concerns raised by the Call-in had been met within the scope of the Cabinet decision, he was keen that they be addressed as soon as possible particularly in relation to the 'zebra' crossing on the New Road, Whitechapel, near Kobi Nazrul Primary School, and the speed humps in Walden/Vanden Streets.

Following the discussion the Committee voted on whether to refer the item back to the Cabinet for further consideration and it was

RESOLVED:

That the alternative course of action proposed in the Call-in not be pursued and the decision of the Cabinet be confirmed.

8. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Development of Pan Disability Panel

Afazul Hoque, Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager, introduced a report concerning the development of the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel (THPDP).

Members were advised that the THPDP had been designed to improve engagement with the local disabled population by increasing the actual numbers the Council spoke to and the methods for doing so. It was expected that around 500 members would be consulted on issues by post, phone and email. The structural and operational aspects of the model had been further developed in recent months to reflect the views of local disabled people and those with an interest in disability issues.

Tower Hamlets Council and the Primary Care Trust were the main drivers behind the establishment of the THPDP, which had a key role to play in

ensuring that disability equality was delivered in multiple services across the Council and the services of partner organisations.

In response to questions Mr Hoque advised that adverts seeking the 500 members would be placed in newspapers and local disabled groups would also be targeted. The Panel would also have a direct link to the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel as a member of the steering group would be co-opted onto it.

The Chair **moved** and it was **RESOLVED**

- 1) That the work in developing the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel be noted; and
- 2) That a link with Overview and Scrutiny be achieved by
 - (i) inviting the THDPD to report on its work as part of the Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) six-monthly monitoring;
 - (ii) involving the THDPD in review work when appropriate and
 - (iii) including a scrutiny challenge session within the 2009/2010 work programme to help ensure that the THPD can contribute to the ongoing work of the Council and Partnership be included.

9. SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

9.1 Parental Engagement in Secondary Education - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group

Councillor A A Sardar, Scrutiny Lead, Prosperous Communities, introduced the report to the Committee and additionally took the opportunity to thank all the Council officers who contributed to undertaking the review.

Councillor Sardar advised that the scrutiny review topic was identified to help ensure the right support was provided to parents to help their children reach their full educational potential.

The Committee noted that the recommendations covered three main areas:

- Better access to information
- Support to access services
- Improved consultation with parents

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the recommendations and thanked Councillor Sardar and the Working Group for their work on such an important issue.

The Committee

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the draft report be taken forward for submission to Cabinet; and
2. That the Service Head for Scrutiny and Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Prosperous Communities.

9.2 End of Life Care - Report of the Health Scrutiny Panel

The Chair introduced the report submitting the recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel's review on End of Life Care.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to Councillor Stephanie Eaton and officers for all their hard work, and

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the draft report be taken forward for submission to Cabinet, and
2. That the Service Head for Scrutiny and Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel.

9.3 Early Intervention, Child Protection - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group

The Chair introduced the report submitting the recommendations of the Early Intervention – Child Protection Working Group

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to Councillor Bill Turner and officers for all their hard work, and

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the draft report be taken forward for submission to Cabinet, and
2. That the Service Head for Scrutiny and Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Excellent Public Services.

9.4 Child Poverty - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group

Further to his declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Oliur Rahman left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

David Galpin, Legal Advisor to the Committee, informed Members that as this report had only be made available at the start of the meeting, it did not satisfy the requirements of paragraph 5.1 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules detailed within Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, and therefore the Chair would need to decide whether or not it should be accepted under the 'special circumstances' detailed at paragraph 6.5.

At the request of the Chair, Lutfur Ali, Assistant Chief Executive, advised the Committee that the report had been unavailable for public inspection within the standard timescales set out in the Constitution, because the Working Group were reliant on vital information not received in time by one of the partner agencies.

Councillor Anne Jackson, Scrutiny Lead, One Tower Hamlets, further advised that it was important that the report be considered prior to consideration of the Child Poverty Strategy by the Cabinet at it's meeting the following evening.

The Chair subsequently agreed the special circumstances and reasons for urgency as reported to the meeting and determined that the item should be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Jackson introduced the report to the Committee and additionally took the opportunity to thank all the Council officers who contributed to undertaking the review.

The Committee noted that the main aim of the review was to consider a community leadership model which contributed to creating One Tower Hamlets using child poverty as a case study. In focusing on this, the Working Group considered the following:

- Key issues related to child poverty including:
 - English for Speakers of other Languages and courses to improve literacy and numeracy skills;
 - Access to employment, including childcare provisions;
 - The London Child Poverty Pledge;
 - The Employment Strategy;
 - The role of Job Centre Plus.
- Use of Members' experience to develop a greater understanding, through research, focus groups and interviews, of the experience of local people living in poverty;
- Establish how the research and casework element of Members' work can be used to help develop the Tackling Child Poverty Strategy;
- Access information available to Members to exercise their community leadership role;

- Develop and test and evaluate a model of community leadership role for strengthening One Tower Hamlets.

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the recommendations and thanked Councillor Jackson and the Working Group for their work on addressing child poverty.

The Committee

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the draft report be taken forward for submission to Cabinet, and
2. That the Service Head for Scrutiny and Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for One Tower Hamlets.

9.5 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report

The Chair presented the draft report detailing the work undertaken by both the Committee and the Scrutiny Lead Members and their working groups during the year.

The Committee discussed the ongoing progress that had been made in embedding Overview and Scrutiny within the Council, and the fact that the majority of the work programme agreed at the start of the year had been delivered. It was noted that although some Members did not have Scrutiny Leads roles, they had made significant contributions to the work of the Committee.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their efforts over the last 12 months.

Before agreeing the recommendations Councillor Waiseul Islam asked that the final report be circulated to all Members of the Committee before its submission to Council.

On a vote of 5 FOR and 1 ABSTENTION the Committee

RESOLVED

To endorse the draft report and authorise the Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities to agree the final report before its submission to Council, following consultation with the Chair and relevant Scrutiny Leads.

**10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED)
CABINET PAPERS**

The Chair **moved** and it was **RESOLVED**

That the following pre-decision questions be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:

Agenda Item 7.1 Tower Hamlets 2009/12 Housing Strategy (CAB 146/089)

1. Did the Cabinet consider whether we would have been better off building new large family size homes rather than buy back properties?
2. As part of this scheme will the Council buy back RSLs properties which were sold under the right to buy scheme?

Agenda Item 11.1 Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee (CAB 149/089)

1. Can the Cabinet Clarify why Newham and Hackney are leading on this and how the decision to make Sir Robin Wales the Chair of the Committee was agreed?
2. How much will Tower Hamlets contribute towards this Committee and what is the expected benefit as this does not seem to be clear?

Agenda Item 11.2 High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme (CAB 150/089)

1. Can the Cabinet clarify why the St Clements Hospital site is not on the list of the High Street 2012 historic buildings conservation scheme?
2. What measure is the Council taking to re-open the Bow road toilets under the high street 2012 scheme?

Agenda Item 13.1 Review of the Council's Lettings Policy (CAB 152/089)

1. Will the Cabinet consider giving greater priority to waiting time within our Lettings Policy as a consideration in allocating properties

The meeting ended at 8.55pm

Chair, Councillor Abdul Asad

Overview and Scrutiny Committee