

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET**

**HELD AT 5.32 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 2009**

**COMMITTEE ROOM, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE  
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Lutfur Rahman (Chair)	(Leader of the Council)
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	(Lead Member, Resources and Performance)
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed	(Lead Member, Culture and Leisure)
Councillor Anwara Ali	(Lead Member, Health & Wellbeing)
Councillor Alibor Choudhury	
Councillor Marc Francis	(Lead Member, Housing and Development)
Councillor Clair Hawkins	
Councillor Sirajul Islam (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Joshua Peck	(Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Abdal Ullah	(Lead Member, Cleaner, Safer, Greener)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Shahed Ali	
Councillor Tim Archer	
Councillor Abdul Asad	(Lead Member, Children's Services)
Councillor Stephanie Eaton	(Leader Liberal Democrat Group and Scrutiny Lead Member: A Healthy Community)
Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader Conservative Group)
Councillor Alexander Heslop	
Councillor Ahmed Hussain	

**Others Present:**

**Officers Present:**

Lutfur Ali	– (Assistant Chief Executive)
Andy Bamber	– (Service Head, Community Service)
Kevan Collins	– (Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Aman Dalvi	– (Corporate Director, Development & Renewal)
Jim Elliot	– (Lettings Policy Advisor, Development & Renewal)
Alan Finch	– (Service Head, Corporate Finance, Resources)

Tony Finnegan	– (Communications Officer)
Julian Francis	– (Political Adviser, Conservative Group)
Isabella Freeman	– (Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services))
Dean Grant	– (Diary Secretary to Lead Members)
Stephen Halsey	– (Corporate Director, Communities, Localities & Culture)
Chris Holme	– (Service Head, Resources)
Afazul Hoque	– (Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager)
Tara Mann	– (Housing Policy Officer, Development & Renewal)
Chris Naylor	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Jackie Odunoye	– (Service Head Strategy & Development)
Layla Richards	– (Leader's Executive Assistant, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
John Roog	– (Service Head, Older People and Homelessness)
Nick Smales	– (Service Head 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games)
Martin Smith	– (Chief Executive)
Angus Taylor	– (Executive Team Leader, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
Kazim Zaidi	– (Political Advisor to the Labour Group)
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### **COUNCILLOR L. RAHMAN (CHAIR) IN THE CHAIR**

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Mr J. Goldup, Corporate Director Adult Health and Wellbeing for whom Mr J. Roog Service Head Older People and Homelessness, was deputising.

**Noted.**

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**Councillor O Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to Tower Hamlets Homes and Councillor Ahmed was a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Tower Hamlets Homes.

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained

recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic Park and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.

**Councillor M. Francis** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to housing strategy and initiatives with housing associations, and Councillor Francis was an independent member the governing body of the Old Ford Housing Association.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to housing strategy and initiatives with housing associations and Councillor Peck was a member of the governing body of the Gateway Housing Association.

**Councillor S. Islam** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to:

- The Authority's Strategy for delivering more and better housing and Councillor Islam was a tenant of Tower Hamlets Homes.
- The Authority's Housing Strategy, including potential partnership between the Authority and Tower Hamlets Community Housing in a Local Homes Initiative Pilot Project, and Councillor Islam was a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.1 "Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee" (CAB 149/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.1 "Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee" (CAB 149/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to formalised governance for the collective arrangements between the five Olympic Boroughs, intended to secure local benefits and a sustainable legacy in these boroughs, and Councillor Peck's employer was party to a contract with the Olympic Delivery Authority.

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.2 "High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme" (CAB 150/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that:

- The report contained recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.

- The report contained recommendations relating to the regeneration of the Ocean Estate area and environs and Councillor Ahmed was also a member of the governing body of the Ocean Regeneration Trust.

**Councillor M. Francis** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 "Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the Authority working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and Councillor Francis was an independent member the governing body of the Old Ford Housing Association.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 "Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the Authority working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and Councillor Peck was a member of the governing body of the Gateway Housing Association.

**Councillor S. Islam** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the ongoing review of the Authority's Lettings Policy (which determines nominations from the Common Housing Register for properties in the ownership of the Authority (managed by Tower Hamlets Homes]) and Councillor Islam was a tenant of Tower Hamlets Homes and also on the Common Housing Register (also known as the Housing Waiting List).

**Noted.**

### **3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The Chair **Moved** and it was: -

#### **Resolved**

That the unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Cabinet held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair, as a correct record of the proceedings.

#### **Variation to Order of Business**

The Chair indicated that, having been advised by the clerk that:

- There was a valid request for a deputation.
- There were pre scrutiny questions, to be presented later in the proceedings by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, relating to the item of business to which the deputation related, which the Cabinet were required to take into account in their deliberation of that item of business.

- Normally, with the consent of the Cabinet, the item of business to which the deputation related was considered as soon as possible after the receipt of the deputation.

He considered it appropriate that the Order of Business be varied so that the Audit Commission presentation in respect of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/2008 could be received prior to the deputation and related business.

Accordingly the Chair **Moved** the following motion for the consideration of members of the Cabinet, and it was: -

### **Resolved**

That the Order of Business be varied as follows:

- Agenda Item 5.0 "Audit Commission Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/2008 – Presentation by Audit Commission" be the next item of business to be considered.
- Subsequently the Cabinet return to the order of business detailed in the agenda.

## **4. DEPUTATIONS & PETITIONS**

Please note that the order of business was varied by resolution of the Cabinet earlier in the proceedings (See Agenda Item 3.0 "Unrestricted Minutes" – Variation to Order of Business) in order to allow this item to be considered following agenda item 5.0 "Audit Commission Annual Audit And Inspection Letter 2007/2008 - Presentation By Audit Commission", so that the Audit Commission presentation in respect of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/2008 could be received prior to the deputation and related business. However for ease of reference the deliberations of the Cabinet, and subsequent decisions taken, are set out below in the order detailed in the agenda.

At this juncture the Chair Informed members of the Cabinet that:

- The Assistant Chief Executive had received one valid request, from the Tower Hamlets Leaseholders Association, to address them in respect of Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12"
- That a statement had been **Tabled** by the Tower Hamlets Leaseholders Association, a copy of which would be interleaved with the minutes.

Following receipt of the deputation, points of clarification sought and given, and an address from the Lead Member Housing and Development in response to the deputation, the Chair thanked the deputation for coming to address the Cabinet and then **Moved** the following motion for the consideration of members of the Cabinet and it was: -

### **Resolved**

1. That the following deputation be formally received and noted: -

Mr J. Bloxon, Chair of Tower Hamlets Leaseholders Association, in respect of Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB/146/089);

2. That the points raised by the deputation be given consideration during the Cabinet deliberation of the item of business to which the deputation related; and
3. That any outstanding issues raised by the deputation be referred to the Corporate Director Development And Renewal for attention and response in writing within 28 days, in accordance with the Authority's Constitution (Part 4, Rules of Procedure, Section 4.1 Council Procedure Rules, Rule 20 Deputations).

**5. AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/2008 - PRESENTATION BY AUDIT COMMISSION**

Please note that the order of business was varied by resolution of the Cabinet earlier in the proceedings (See Agenda Item 3.0 "Unrestricted Minutes" – Variation to Order of Business) in order to allow this item to be considered following agenda item 3.0 "Unrestricted Minutes" and prior to the deputation and related business. However for ease of reference the deliberations of the Cabinet, and subsequent decisions taken, are set out below in the order detailed in the agenda.

Mr Adewale Kadiri, the Audit Commission Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead and Relationship Manager, in introducing the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, at the request of the Chair, summarised the key points set out therein as follows:

- The report provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council in 2007/08. and from any inspections undertaken by other public inspectorates and regulating agencies since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.
- The Council had performed strongly over the year:
  - It had been assessed as continuing to be four star in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Direction of Travel judgement was that it was "improving well".
  - It had been judged as "performing strongly" in its Corporate Assessment, the highest possible scoring.
  - Ofsted had assessed the Council's services for children and young people as level 4, the best possible score.
  - The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) had given a rating of three stars for the Council's services for adult social care, the highest possible score.

- It had maintained an overall score of three for the “Use of Resources” element of the CPA scorecard, out of a possible score of four.
- In relation to the audit of the Council in 2007/8 the Council’s auditor had given an unqualified opinion on the 2007/08 accounts. However although the quality of working papers supporting the financial statements had improved a number of significant but not material errors had been identified.
- The inspection had identified one or two areas where the Council needed to build on recent progress with further work and improved performance, such as waste management, waste recycling and achieving the Decent Homes Standard.

A discussion followed which focused on the following points:-

- Considered that although the Audit Commission comments relating to housing provision, and in particular that of affordable homes were encouraging, however its assessment was based upon a snapshot between the end of stock transfer under Housing Choice and the establishment of Tower Hamlets Homes (also known as the ALMO). Progress towards the achievement of Decent Homes had been significant since this point and the work was ongoing, however the evidence of this needed to be more persuasively conveyed to the Audit Commission. The Council was also now in the process of investing a significant amount of its own resources in the achievement of Decent Homes, but much was also dependent on an imminent Government announcement of the availability of resources of a much greater scale for this.
- Welcomed the positive comments of the Audit Commission in relation to the Council’s partnership working to achieve Community Safety.
- Considered that the Audit Commission comments and assessment in relation to recycling performance were a backward look and did not reflect the significant improvement since this period. The proportion of waste recycling by the Authority had almost reached 25% in March 2009 whereas in 2006 it had been 7%. Hope was expressed that the new Comprehensive Assessment Assessment regime would be more reflective of true performance.
- Noted that significant work had been undertaken by the Corporate Director Resources and his team to improve financial reporting and in particular quality assessment work, and that the District Auditor had expressed some confidence that a more favourable assessment was probable in relation to the Authority’s 2008/09 accounts.

Clarification was sought by Cabinet members, and given by both Mr Adewale Kadiri and Mr Jon Hayes, District Auditor, in relation to a number of points including:

- Areas of the Council’s performance which did not compare favourably with the direction of travel of other authorities.
- With regard to the score of 2 out of 4 for the “Financial Reporting” element of the Use of Resources assessments: areas of weakness identified and how performance could be improved.

- Areas of notable practice in other Council's which the Authority could examine with a view to driving forward performance.

The Chair thanked Mr Kadiri and Mr Hayes for their presentation, and then **Moved** and it was:-

### **Resolved**

That the Audit Commission Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/08, and presentation by the Audit Commission, be noted.

## **6. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **6.1 Chair's advice of Key Issues or Questions in relation to Unrestricted Business to be considered**

Please note that the order of business was varied by resolution of the Cabinet earlier in the proceedings (See Agenda Item 3.0 "Unrestricted Minutes" – Variation to Order of Business) in order to allow this item to be considered following agenda item 4.0 "Deputations and Petitions", so that the Audit Commission presentation in respect of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/2008 could be received prior to the deputation and related business, including this Agenda item. However for ease of reference the deliberations of the Cabinet, and subsequent decisions taken, are set out below in the order detailed in the agenda.

The Chair informed members of the Cabinet that Councillor Asad, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, had **Tabled** a sheet of questions/ comments arising from the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in respect of the unrestricted business contained in the agenda for consideration, a copy of which would be interleaved with the minutes.

Councillor Asad, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

- Informed members of the Cabinet that the Committee:
  - Had given consideration to a "Call-In" of the Cabinet's decision of 8<sup>th</sup> April in respect of the Communities, Localities and Cultural Services Directorate Capital Programme 2009/10; and following deliberation had endorsed the Cabinet decision.
  - Had considered a report on the development of a Pan Disability Panel (PDP) which it was intended should provide a comprehensive mechanism for community engagement with disabled people and play a key role in delivering disability equality across the services of the Council and its partner organisations. The Committee had requested the support of the Cabinet and the Authority's Directorates in development of the PDP, specifically through funding secretariat support for it. The



- Committee also agreed that it and the Health Scrutiny Panel develop a working relationship with the PDP.
- Had considered Scrutiny review reports on:
    - Parental Engagement in Secondary Education
    - End of Life Care
    - Early Intervention, Child Protection
    - Child Poverty
  - Informed members of the Cabinet that he had nothing to add to the questions/ comments raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in the tabled paper regarding: -
    - Agenda Item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12"
    - Agenda Item 11.1 "Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee"
    - Agenda Item 11.2 "High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme"
    - Agenda Item 13.1 "Review of the Council's Lettings Policy"

The Chair thanked Councillor Asad for presenting the contribution of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and then **Moved**, and it was: -

### **Resolved**

That the questions and comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted, and that these be given consideration during the Cabinet deliberation of the items of business to which the questions/ comments related.

## **6.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

The Clerk advised that no provisional decisions taken by the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009, had been referred back to Cabinet, by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for further consideration.

## **7. A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE**

### **7.1 Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12 (CAB 146/089)**

**Councillor O Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to Tower Hamlets Homes and Councillor Ahmed was a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Tower Hamlets Homes.

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic Park and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.

**Councillor M. Francis** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to housing strategy and initiatives with housing associations, and Councillor Francis was an independent member the governing body of the Old Ford Housing Association.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to housing strategy and initiatives with housing associations and Councillor Peck was a member of the governing body of the Gateway Housing Association.

**Councillor S. Islam** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7.1 "Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009/12" (CAB 146/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to:

- The Authority's Strategy for delivering more and better housing and Councillor Islam was a tenant of Tower Hamlets Homes.
- The Authority's Housing Strategy, including potential partnership between the Authority and Tower Hamlets Community Housing in a Local Homes Initiative Pilot Project, and Councillor Islam was a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report, summarised the salient points contained therein commenting that:

- Cabinet had considered and agreed the draft Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy for consultation in December 2008. Over the subsequent three months there had been very positive feedback from stakeholders to the consultation. Very helpful comments from residents, local housing associations and people with expertise in this area had been received and the Strategy now proposed for adoption had been revised and strengthened as a result.
- The Authority had a strong track record for housing provision having delivered the most number of affordable homes of any local authority in London over the past two years. It was working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to meet the Decent Homes Standard and significant progress had been made in this regard on many of the housing estates in the Borough. Although the problems on housing estates in the Borough were acknowledged, the Council continued to deliver a good service despite difficult circumstances and competing priorities.
- The extent of housing need in the Borough demanded further action and these steps were set out in the framework of the Housing Strategy. The Council would continue to work with RSL's and Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), also known as the ALMO, towards all existing homes

meeting the Decent Homes Standard. It would work with THH to bring the significant improvement in Housing Management performance, for both tenants and leaseholders, and the consequent achievement of a two star rating from the Audit Commission. This would in turn trigger the release of the large scale public subsidy needed to achieve the Decent Homes Standard for the Council's housing stock, including the investment in new kitchens and bathrooms.

- The provision of all the affordable housing required to meet housing need was not possible in two years, particularly in the current economic climate. It was recognised that a huge level of public subsidy was required to guarantee social for rent housing to those in need of it. However the Housing Strategy set out proposals intended to maximise the draw-down of these resources, when they became available, to provide social for rent homes for those that needed them the most. It would be two to three years before these homes were built, so in the intervening period the Housing Strategy included other significant initiatives to mitigate overcrowding:
  - Encouraging the release of small sites in partnership with Housing Associations such as Tower Hamlets Community Housing and Poplar HARCA to provide family size community housing, and it was anticipated this would deliver 100 new homes in the next 18 months.
  - The intended buying back of approximately 150 properties bought under the "Right to Buy" legislation, with this initiative focusing on 3 to 4 bedroom family sized units. The aspiration of the Cabinet was that this initiative, and the small site release scheme, should be expeditiously progressed, and the new homes completed by 2010, so that overcrowded households did not have to wait a long time to be rehoused.
  - Reform of the Authority's Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
  - Continued work to mitigate under occupancy such as the Cash Incentive Scheme to release family sized homes.

It was anticipated that the new approach of refocusing priority on overcrowding would help house 500 overcrowded households and the anticipated cost of these initiatives to the Council would be approximately £20 million.

- Councillor Francis considered this to be a strong down payment on what the Council could achieve in this field after 2010, and that it was noteworthy that no other Council was taking similar action to improve housing conditions for its residents. He considered that the Strategy was a testament to the commitment and determination of the current Leader of the Council, other Cabinet members and in particular Councillor Peck, Lead Member Resources and Performance, who had all lent their support to the commitment of the large scale level of investment required to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. He commended the Strategy for approval to the Cabinet.
- Addressed the matters raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in relation to the report; as set out in the tabled sheet of questions and comments presented by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the proceedings:

A discussion followed, during which the Housing Strategy was universally welcomed as building on the remarkable progress of the last two years and taking the Authority forward significantly in this area. Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, was commended for his clarity of vision, dedication and hard work in the delivery of the Administration's aspirations relating to housing over recent months and to the Leadership of the Administration in this regard. The following points were also made:-

- The holistic nature of the proposed Housing Strategy for example the emphasis on achievement of street and environmental cleanliness, and also the incorporation of environmental responsibility was welcomed. It was considered that this would build on the improving standard of the environment on housing estates resulting from the £7 million additional resources allocated to the Estate Improvement Programme which included a deep clean, repairs redecoration, environmental works etc.
- The focus on more cohesive communities and also the support of work relating to domestic violence and women only refuges, sometimes a Cinderella service, was welcomed.
- With reference to paragraph 2.15 of the Housing Strategy appended to the report, consideration that the Malmesbury Estate had great potential to provide a small site regeneration proposal that could provide Decent Homes and significant improvements in the locality than would otherwise be achieved.
- With reference to paragraph 3.32 of the Housing Strategy appended to the report, consideration that joined up working, using local knowledge to target multiple occupancy properties of most concern, could provide added value, in terms of community safety, to the proposed buy back initiative focused on the remaining blocks on council estates.
- In relation to the buy-back initiative consideration that implementation should be prioritised and expeditiously implemented to optimise value for money in the context of the downturn in the housing market. Mr Dalvi, Corporate Director Development and Renewal undertook to provide members of the Cabinet with a progress update on identification of suitable properties and preparatory work for their acquisition.
- Contrasting views were expressed by Councillor Eaton, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, (speaking with the consent of the Cabinet) and Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, regarding whether the Authority's commitment to car free developments had been slightly weakened by the Strategy.
- The reduced emphasis on the provision of student accommodation in the Borough was considered appropriate.
- Clarification/ assurance was sought and given regarding safeguards to prevent resale of the properties to be acquired under the buy-back initiative.
- The Officer team was formally thanked for their contribution to the production of the Strategy.

The Chair in **Moving** the recommendations as set out in the report:-

- Formally extended his thanks to Mr Dalvi, Corporate Director Housing and Development and Ms Odunoye, Interim Service Head, Housing Strategy and Development, together with their team of officers for their contribution to production of the Housing Strategy.
- Commended Councillor Francis, Lead Member for Housing and Development, for his commitment in driving forward the Administration's housing agenda over recent months.
- Requested that the Corporate Director Development and Renewal note the aspiration of the Cabinet that 100 new social for rent homes be delivered in 2009.

And it was:-

### **Resolved**

1. That the Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy 2009-12 attached at Appendix 1 to the report (CAB 146/089) and the associated Action Plan set out at Appendix C to the Housing Strategy, be approved;
2. That a capital estimate of £19.4million be approved and the commencement of appropriate preparatory work to deliver the required acquisitions for the Right to Buy Buybacks programme as detailed in paragraph 4.7 of the report (CAB 146/089), be authorised; and
3. That it be noted that further associated Housing Strategy Delivery reports will be presented to Cabinet.

## **8. A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY**

### **8.1 Child Poverty Strategy (CAB 147/089)**

Mr Collins, Corporate Director Children's Services, at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report, summarised the salient points contained therein, commenting as follows:

- Preventing and tackling child poverty was not a new agenda and there was a commitment to this that extended from local to national level. The Strategy was intended to bring together commitments and activities, such as those for worklessness and overcrowding, and sharpen their focus on ending child poverty.
- One of the key objectives was to take more than one thousand children out of child poverty by 2011, which was an even more important and challenging deliverable in the current economic climate.
- The new three year Children's and Young People's Plan had identified tackling child poverty as one of its three cross cutting priorities and this would require deepening the work with parents and promoting engagement with families and children. The Strategy provided the framework for achieving this and it was built around four key priorities
  - Removing barriers to work
  - Developing pathways to success

- Breaking the cycle of poverty
- Mitigating the effects of poverty

Mitigating poverty did not mean offering hope for the future but taking action now.

Councillor Hawkins, Lead Member Children's Services commented that:-

- There were far too many children living in poverty which disadvantaged them and their families in many ways. The Administration shared the commitment to ending child poverty and not accepting disadvantage as an excuse for poor attainment and limited life chances.
- The Authority's approach and success to date had been recognised with the award of Beacon status for preventing and tackling child poverty, only one of three authorities across the country to receive this. A key element of this success was the provision of services offered through the network of Children's Centres to reduce child poverty at the start of a child's life.
- The Children's and Young People's Plan set out that tackling child poverty was key to everything the Authority did. The Child Poverty Strategy set out a wide range of positive activities for optimum impact in reducing child poverty. Councillor Hawkins considered that these must be a priority for all in the Tower Hamlets Partnership.
- The Strategy recognised that there was a limit to what could be achieved locally and the continued lobbying of Government was needed to maintain the focus on its commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020.
- The context of the current economic recession only served to increase the importance of reducing child poverty.
- The Strategy was to be commended for approval to the Cabinet because it would help the Administration achieve the aspirations of the Community for Social Justice, reducing inequality and creating opportunity for all.

Councillor Peck, Lead Member Resources and Performance, commented that to mitigate the effect of poverty the Strategy must tackle fully the issue of debt and the poverty trap. It was recognised that many people despite working, and working hard, had large historic debts and therefore little disposable income as a result of their efforts. Many considered giving up work and claiming benefits instead, because they were unaware of the benefits they were entitled to if they were in employment. The take up of family tax credit in Tower Hamlets was very low. Consequently financial literacy was of great importance to all parents, not just those that were unemployed, and the commitment in the Strategy to mitigating the effects of poverty through provision of in depth financial literary training needed to reflect this. Accordingly, Councillor Peck proposed the following amendment to the Child Poverty Strategy appended to the report for the consideration of members of the Cabinet:-

- Section 10 Planned Actions, Sub-section headed "Mitigating the effects of poverty, we will...", second bullet, first line "Provide in depth financial literary training to unemployed parents..." be revised by deletion of word "unemployed"

A discussion followed, during which the proposed strategy was broadly welcomed. Councillor Hawkins, Lead Member Children's Services, and Corporate Director Children's Services, were commended for their vision and commitment in developing the Strategy. The following points were also made:-

- Commented that as a member of the Bangladeshi Community who had grown up in Tower Hamlets there was now a palpable sense of opportunity for young people in Tower Hamlets to do well for themselves, which was far greater than a generation previously. The high aspirations of the Authority for young people, and the promotion of opportunity for them, were detailed in the Strategy. The barriers to opportunity were not so much language for third generation Bangladeshis but more inflexibilities in the educational system, which the Strategy endeavoured to address for example through the supporting of schools to deliver an Out of School Hours Learning entitlement.
- All public bodies had a role to play in promoting the eradication of child poverty by 2020.
- Consideration that the poverty trap was a key barrier preventing parents getting into employment and the Council needed to be leading the challenge to Government to eradicate this, despite the need for substantial resources and additional complexities in the benefit system.
- Commented that the Authority had lobbied Government for additional public subsidy to keep rent increases down, and indeed to be permitted to use its own resources to do so, and this had been right because of the number of families upon which such increases had a great impact. Registered Social Landlords had not made appropriate increases in rent levels, and many parents would find the increase difficult to pay when on the borderline between benefit and employment. This Government must be pressed on this matter.
- Consideration, in relation to families of prisoners and ex-prisoner, that it was important to break the cycle of crime (and the victims of crime) and the consequent impact of this on children and families. Benefit take up should be a priority in doing so as it was acknowledged that many did not do so. Considered that the "Strangers into Citizens" initiative was useful in this regard through its regularisation of status.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations contained in the report (taking account of the amendment proposed by Councillor Peck), and it was:-

**Resolved:**

That, subject to (a) below, the Child Poverty Strategy attached at Appendix 1 to the report (CAB 147/089), be agreed:

- (a) Section 10 "Planned Actions", Sub-section headed "Mitigating the effects of poverty, we will...", second bullet, first line: deletion of word "unemployed".

## 9. A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

### 9.1 Joint Drinking Control Zone with LB Hackney for Arnold Circus and Shoreditch (CAB 148/089)

A discussion took place which focussed on the following points:-

- Commented that the problem of alcohol and drug taking in the churchyard at St Leonards was recognised. Also relayed that Councillor O'Flaherty, a Councillor for Weavers Ward considered the introduction of a Drinking Control Zone (DCZ), as proposed in the report, would alleviate the anti social behaviour in the area.
- Concern that it would be wrong to conflate alcohol misuse by street drunks with that street drinking as a result of the night time economy, with one requiring enforcement action and the other a more measured approach.
- Consideration that although DCZ's had proven successful in other areas of the Borough for a period, enforcement by the Metropolitan Police had waned. Consequently the longevity of the proposed DCZ required consideration, together with the securing of a commitment from the police to take enforcement action for the duration of the DCZ. The Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture undertook to take this matter up with the Borough Commander.
- Noted that Table 2 within paragraph 4.11 of the report contained a typographical error in relation to the estimated cost of the leaflet campaign for consultation.
- Commented that the DCZ in Bethnal Green near a children's nursery had proven successful.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

#### **Resolved:**

1. That the proposal to undertake statutory consultation for a Drinking Control Zone in accordance with the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (and associated regulations), in Arnold Circus and the surrounding area, as indicated in the plan attached at Appendix A to the report (CAB 148/089), be endorsed; and
2. That Full Council be recommended to authorise the Director of Communities Localities & Culture to:
  - (a) Consider any representations received to the consultation referred to in resolution1 above;
  - (b) Approve the making of the proposed Drinking Control Zone for the area indicated on the plans attached as Appendix A to the report (CAB 148/089); and
  - (c) Consider the inclusion of any additional areas within the Drinking Control Zone, referred to above, identified during the consultation as appropriate for such inclusion.



**10. A HEALTHY COMMUNITY**

The Clerk advised that there were no business to be considered under this section of the agenda.

**11. ONE TOWER HAMLETS****11.1 Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee (CAB 149/089)**

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.1 "Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee" (CAB 149/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.1 "Five Boroughs Olympic Joint Committee" (CAB 149/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained recommendations relating to formalised governance for the collective arrangements between the five Olympic Boroughs, intended to secure local benefits and a sustainable legacy in these boroughs, and Councillor Peck's employer was party to a contract with the Olympic Delivery Authority.

The Chair informed members of the Cabinet that the report had been withdrawn upon the advice of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services), who had been requested to do so by the Five Boroughs in order to provide an opportunity to resolve technical difficulties with the proposals. The report would instead be submitted to for consideration at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

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

**Councillor Rofique U. Ahmed** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.2 "High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme" (CAB 150/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that:

- The report contained recommendations relating to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Councillor Ahmed was a Board Member - Olympic Delivery Authority - Planning Decision Team.
- The report contained recommendations relating to the regeneration of the Ocean Estate area and environs and Councillor Ahmed was also a member of the governing body of the Ocean Regeneration Trust.

Mr Smales, Service Head Olympic and Paralympic Games, at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report:

- Summarised the salient points contained therein as follows:
  - High Street 2012 was a strategic regeneration initiative which sought to maximise investment along the A11 corridor using its status as the final stage of the route for the Olympic and Paralympic marathon.
  - The High Street 2012 historic buildings conservation scheme was the first of a range of projects along the A11 corridor stemming from the recently completed Vision Study. The Vision Study proposed such schemes with a view to supporting the ongoing regeneration of the high street and continuation as a vibrant place and engaging the local community in regeneration activity and the 2012 Games.
  - The Vision study proposed a programme of facade improvements to historic buildings along the route and English Heritage had agreed funding of £1million on a match funding basis.
  - The report sought approval for the adoption of the necessary capital estimate for the historic buildings conservation scheme, and the criteria for prioritisation of development along the route.
- Addressed the matters raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in relation to the report; as set out in the tabled sheet of questions and comments presented by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the proceedings.

A discussion followed during which the proposals contained in the report were broadly welcomed, and which focused on the following points:-

- The rationale for the prioritisation of the five clusters of buildings, detailed at paragraph 4.5 of the report, for improvement works.
- The importance of improving the Authority's own buildings and securing improvement to the public realm was emphasized in the context of funding having been identified for this scheme in the Authority's 2009/10 Budget, but its resources ultimately being finite.
- The importance of and potential for bringing forward improvement works to school buildings along the High Street 2012 route including those of Central Foundation, Phoenix and Guardian Angel schools. Mr Collins, Corporate Director Children's Services undertook to examine the case of Guardian Angel School, but assured Members that improvements at the former two schools would be delivered in time.
- The importance of undertaking improvements to Bancroft Library given its close proximity to High Street 2012 and the Olympic marathon route. Clarification was sought and given regarding the current position in respect of securing external funding from English Heritage or other sources of funding for this scheme.
- Formal thanks extended to Mr Smales for his hard work in developing a package of improvements that ran the length of the A11 corridor, and in particular for the inclusion of the block of buildings to the north of St Mary's Church in Bow which would be celebrating its 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the time of the 2012 Olympics.

Mr Smales, Service Head Olympic and Paralympic Games, and Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, also responded to requests for clarification/ assurance in relation to:

- The potential for improvements to Altab Ali Park as part of the 2012 programme of improvements.
- Regeneration of the St Clement Hospital site.
- The potential for improvements to Whitechapel Market.
- The refurbishment and good usage of the art deco former Wickhams Store, as part of the 2012 programme.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

**Resolved:**

1. That the adoption of a capital estimate in the amount of £ 2 million for the High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme, be approved;
2. That the priority criteria for development as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report (CAB 150/089), be approved; and
3. That the Corporate Director Development and Renewal be authorised to progress the schemes as set out in Paragraph 6 of the report (CAB 150/089).

### **11.3 Budget Process 2010/ 2011 (CAB 151/089)**

Councillor Peck, Lead Member Resources and Performance, at the request of the Chair, briefly introduced the report:

- Summarising that the report broadly set out the financial parameters for 2010/11, and outlined the proposed budget setting and strategic planning process to be undertaken during 2009/10.
- Commenting that the budget setting process would be of great importance given the tough financial constraints facing the Authority as a result of aspects of the recent Government Budget and the current economic downturn.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

**Resolved:**

1. That it be noted that the Corporate Director, Resources will undertake an exercise to review the financial outlook for the Authority in terms of expenditure and income as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report (CAB 151/089);
2. That it be agreed that any additional committed growth put forward by Directorates as part of the process referred to in resolution 1. above

will need to be matched by the equivalent value in efficiency savings from that Directorate;

3. That the outline budget process for this exercise and the rest of the budget process as set out at Section 5 of the report (CAB 151/089) and timetable set out at Section 6, be agreed; and
4. That it be noted that a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet in July 2009 setting out the parameters for the 2010/11 budget process and inviting Cabinet to agree a budget strategy.

## **12. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

The Clerk advised that there were no business to be considered under this section of the agenda.

## **13. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

### **13.1 Review of the Council's Lettings Policy (CAB 152/089)**

**Councillor M. Francis** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 "Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the Authority working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and Councillor Francis was an independent member the governing body of the Old Ford Housing Association.

**Councillor J Peck** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 "Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the Authority working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and Councillor Peck was a member of the governing body of the Gateway Housing Association.

**Councillor S. Islam** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13.1 Review of the Council's Lettings Policy" (CAB 152/089). The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained information relating to the ongoing review of the Authority's Lettings Policy (which determines nominations from the Common Housing Register for properties in the ownership of the Authority (managed by Tower Hamlets Homes]) and Councillor Islam was a tenant of Tower Hamlets Homes and also on the Common Housing Register (also known as the Housing Waiting List).

Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report commented that the report before the Cabinet was for information, but he had considered it appropriate to provide an update on the direction of travel in respect of the ongoing review of the Authority's Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The review had been undertaken because of indications that in part the Lettings Scheme was not working as

well as it might and Tower Hamlets had fallen behind other local authorities in the way it dealt with this issue. He also considered that it was imperative that the policy outcome of the review was robust in its resistance to the approach to such policy by previous Liberal Democrat administrations.

Mr Elliot, Lettings Policy Advisor, summarised the salient points contained in the report as follows:-:

- The context for the report had been a significant excess of demand over supply for housing and the high levels of overcrowding particular to Tower Hamlets.
- The report provided a progress update on the review of the Authority's Lettings policy, set out the issues the review needed to address and the direction of travel of the review so far.
- The report set out that the framework of the existing Lettings scheme, which largely determined priority based upon housing need, with waiting time a secondary or tertiary factor. The scheme was complex to administer and explain and no longer commanded the confidence of Councillors and the Community. Under this policy homeless households received a high proportion of the available supply. The policy was designed to do this, however, this outcome was no longer considered appropriate given the high levels of overcrowding in the Borough and a key objective of the review was to achieve a more balanced outcome.
- Although Tower Hamlets had a good track record in addressing overcrowding given that 32% of available supply had been allocated to these households in the last five years, the direction of travel of the policy review would be to enhance the priority given to waiting time, which was likely to result in an increased proportion of housing supply being allocated to overcrowded households and a reduced allocation to homeless households. It was thought that this would support reducing demand from homeless households as a revised policy was likely to end any perceived advantage to taking this route.
- The report also set out how the recent successful appeal by Newham Council to the House of Lords would enable greater flexibility for local authorities in shaping lettings policies to meet local priorities and be congruent with strategy.
- The impact of draft proposals for a revised Lettings Policy were being carefully modelled so that the impact of any changes could be predicted and proposals adjusted accordingly, if necessary to ensure the desired outcomes were achieved.. Central to this process would be an Equalities Impact Assessment to ensure that any new proposals were not discriminatory. There would also be consultation with stakeholders.
- The report indicated that Officers intended that the new Lettings Policy should consist of a revised allocations scheme and an annual lettings plan containing targets agreed by Cabinet. This would ensure that the outcomes of the revised policy would be congruent with the Authority's objectives and its Housing Strategy.

- The principles that it was considered should underpin a new Lettings Policy and were being taken into account by the review were set out at paragraph 4.11 of the report.
- The remainder of the report examined specific issues regarding the review of the bands determining priority for housing and other specific policy areas such as the sons & daughters policy; the position of foster carers; medical assessments, reforming the bidding policy and under occupancy. It emphasised in particular the need for a careful and thorough review of how medical assessments are conducted given the level of concern expressed by Councillors on this issue.

A discussion followed, during which progress update and direction of travel in respect of the Authority's review of its Choice Based Lettings Policy was broadly welcomed. Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, was commended for the clear direction he had given to the review and his hard work in shaping the new policy proposals which were emerging. The following points were also made:-

- Serious concern was expressed regarding the current process for medical assessments of applicants for housing: the way these were undertaken, the transparency of the process and the validity of the outcome. It was considered essential that the new Lettings Policy ensure that an applicant's medical history was objectively taken into account in any determination of an application for housing. It was also considered that it was inappropriate for a Council Officer without medical qualification to gauge the impact of a medical condition on an applicant's quality of life and the relevance of this to any application for housing. It was noted that an analysis of 1<sup>st</sup> stage and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage appeals, on medical grounds, had shown that a higher percentage of appeals were granted at 2<sup>nd</sup> stage rather than at 1<sup>st</sup> stage; and that this indicated that the assessment process was not as robust as it should be and this needed to be addressed.
- Consideration that although provision of appropriate housing was a major influence on the quality of life for residents, it was not possible for the Council to meet all the expectations of residents in terms of housing provision. In this context concern was expressed that the current Lettings Policy allowed residents to make unrealistic applications for the housing (for example to apply for a 4 bedroom property rather than a 1 bedroom property when only the latter was needed) and the new Lettings Policy should address this as the processing of such applications wasted resources and delayed the processing of other legitimate applications.
- Consideration that although progress had been made, during the review of the Lettings Policy, in relation to the position of foster carers and their prioritisation for housing, further progress was needed. It was felt that a great deal could be done for the relatively small number of children affected by this issue, with little impact on others in the Borough who were on the housing waiting list. It was emphasised that the Authority was a corporate parent and therefore must live up to its responsibilities in the context of the Lettings Policy.

- Consideration that non-membership of the Common Housing Register (CRH) on the part of a Housing Association resulted in their exclusion from access to opportunities to re-house tenants resulting from such membership [vacancies in the housing stock of a CHR partner being available to other CHR partners] and the outcome of this for the tenants of such Housing Associations could be severe in terms of their prospects of obtaining decent homes. It was suggested in this context that the Authority proactively encouraged all Housing Associations to become members of the CHR.
- Consideration that although the direction of travel of the Lettings Policy Review was positive there should be a further opportunity for Councillor level review and shaping of the final policy proposals before the new draft policy entered the public domain.
- Clarification was sought and given in relation to:
  - A perceived commitment made at a recent meeting of the full Council, to indicate to applicants for housing the length of time they would be on the housing waiting list at the point of application, and any liabilities the Council might then have were it not able to meet the indicated timescale.
  - Whether modeling the impact of the new Lettings Policy for community groupings on the housing waiting list would be informative.
- Formal thanks extended to Mr Elliot, Lettings Advisor Development and Renewal, for his contribution to the ongoing development of the new Lettings Policy.
- Councillor Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, responded to the matters raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in relation to the report; as set out in the tabled sheet of questions and comments presented by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the proceedings.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

**Resolved:**

That the contents of the report (CAB 152/089), be noted.

**Announcement**

At this juncture the Chair informed those people present that this meeting of the Cabinet was the last in the current Municipal Year and he wished to formally thank Chief Officers and Lead Members for their hard work during the past year.

**14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The agenda circulated contained no Section Two business (business containing information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government, Act 1972. There was therefore no requirement

to exclude the press and public, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, to allow for consideration of such business prior to the conclusion of the meeting.

**SUMMARY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**15. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items.

**16. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**16.1 Chair's advice of Key Issues or Questions in relation to Exempt / Confidential Business to be considered.**

Nil items.

**16.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Nil items.

**17. A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE**

Nil items.

**18. A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY**

Nil items.

**19. A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY**

Nil items.

**20. A HEALTHY COMMUNITY**

Nil items.

**21. ONE TOWER HAMLETS**

Nil items.



**22. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil items.

**23. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.35 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Lutfur Rahman  
Cabinet