

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.10 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2017

**ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)	
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Amina Ali	Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services
Councillor Clare Harrisson	Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim	
Councillor Oliur Rahman	
Councillor Helal Uddin	

Co-opted Members Present:

Dr Phillip Rice	(Church of England Representative)
Asad M Jaman	Muslim Faith Community
Fatiha Kassouri	Parent Governors
Christine Trumper	Parent Governors
Shabbir Chowdhury	Parent Governors

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Rachael Saunders
Mayor John Biggs

Apologies:

Councillor Abdul Asad

Officers Present:

Christine McInnes	(Divisional Director, Education and Partnership, Children's)
Nasima Patel	(Divisional Director, Children's Social Care, Children's)

Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Equality)
Peter Quirk	Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer
Afazul Hoque	(Interim Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance)
Tim Williams	(Post 16 Development Officer, Children's Services)

1. VICTORIA EKUBIA

The Committee noted with great sadness the Victoria Ekubia had passed away recently. Victoria had been a Co-opted Member for a number of years on this Committee and a stalwart of the local and voluntary community sector.

The Chair then invited Doctor Phillip Rice to address the meeting regarding Victoria and Members acknowledged that she had made a very positive input to the deliberations of the Committee particularly with reference to provision of children's services and that she had been deeply committed to the Roman Catholic Church and a governor on two local Catholic Schools.

Finally, it was noted that there would be a minutes silence at the next Full Council on 22nd February, 2017 for Victoria and that on Tuesday 28th February 2017 there would be a Memorial Service at Our Lady and St Catherine Siena, 177 Bow Road, London E3 2SG.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Abdul Asad

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received

4. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

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

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd January, 2017 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

5. SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE

The Committee agreed to the appointment of Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim as the Scrutiny Lead Member for Governance

6. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

7. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

**8. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG
2016/17**

Noted

9. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

Noted

10. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

10.1 Outcomes for Children in Care

The Committee noted that children and young people looked after are not a homogenous group and come with different experiences and needs. They may be looked after for a few days or for many years. However, regardless of these different circumstances Tower Hamlets has the same aspirations for the children and are responsible for as any parent would. Tower Hamlets want children and young people to develop into resilient, successful individuals, able to form healthy relationships and take advantage of every positive opportunity presented.

Children and young people who are in the care of LBTH are among the most vulnerable in the community. They are entitled to the best services that can be provided and achieving this for them requires understanding, commitment and passion from all agencies and individuals who hold a responsibility to provide services for them.

In Tower Hamlets like in other authorities work is being undertaken to address the principles of timeliness for children and risk reduction for children, rather than risk management as a result of learning from national and local reviews, understanding new risk such as gangs, family violence. In order to deliver to these principles Tower Hamlets Council has agreed as a Children's Services Directorate Team to make early help more targeted, the thresholds adapt to new risks, work better in partnership with families and decision-making more robust earlier in the child's journey with Tower Hamlets.

In noting the contents of the report and attached appendices the Committee offered comments for input into continuing to improve outcomes for Looked after Children. These may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that Councillors have a duty to ensure that the voice of the local looked after children is heard and what needs to be done to improve the lives of these children;
- Noted that a significant number of older looked after children are entering care which does present a number of particular challenges and situations;
- Noted that the Service is currently working to train and support staff so as to improve the user experience e.g. individual advocacy to help the young people to assert themselves and to support them through further and higher education;
- Indicated that it would be most interested in having an opportunity to consider any recommendations made by the Young People to improve the support that they receive;
- Stated that they wanted to know what is the Services relationship with schools and that the Service has developed a good relationship with employers and works to ensure the opportunities on offer are viable;
- Noted the role played by the Virtual School Head and that they wished to receive a report in the work of the Virtual School at a future meeting e.g. The work of the Head and his team to support young people in Further/Higher Education.
- Noted the work that the Service has undertaken in building up the self-belief of the young people and to have a focus on their positive qualities;
- Noted the overall the numbers of Young People are low when compared to other Councils;
- Noted that the young people wished to see more of the actual decision impacting on their lives delegated to the Corporate Parenting Board;
- Noted that Scrutiny Members were welcome to take an active role in the Board; and
- Noted that the Board would consider any growth bids; consider the rights and welfare of the young people and to learn from best practice.

10.2 Update on Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

The Committee received a presentation that highlighted a number of issues in relation to the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership including:

1. A history of collaboration driving improvement;
2. A strong family of schools;
3. A community commitment to great education; and
4. Effective leadership from governors.

The main points of the discussion on this report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that the majority of local authorities are developing such partnerships where teachers and schools are in control of, and responsible for their own improvement; schools have the opportunity to learn from each other so that effective practice spreads more quickly; the best schools and leaders can also extend their reach across other schools so that all schools improve; groups of schools can facilitate, commission and broker support and challenge to individual schools and other groups of schools collaborate and access the support they need;
- Noted these partnerships are tailored to the needs of the communities that they seek to serve;
- Noted the partnerships are not intended to replace the local authorities instead it offers a means whereby schools can be offered bespoke support facilitated by local authorities e.g. Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs; and
- The partnerships aim to make Governmental Educational Policy work best for the local family of schools.

10.3 Post 16 Education

The Committee received a presentation that highlighted a number of issues in relation to Post 16 Education including:

- Targeted work on groups of students not currently succeeding;
- Development of supported internships for young people with Special Educational Needs;
- Development of alumni groups;
- Widening access to selective universities;
- Focus on educating parents on the full range of post school activities; and
- Developing employability skill and social and cultural capital.

The main points of the discussion on this report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that previously students had the option to retake units towards their A level and AS level examinations. This is no longer available;
- Noted that the performance of students had remained consistent for the past 4 years;
- Noted that more work would be undertaken to improve the guidance on the options available to young people e.g. information on the full range of academic and vocational options. In response the Committee stated that it would wish to see students being also offered the option of both academic and vocational mix;

- Noted that the incentives for schools to encourage students to attend their sixth forms instead of considering other possibly more vocational options are significant. Many students and their families prefer to take the academic option and vocational courses can be very resource intensive
- Noted that the Higher Education Awards process has been revised to improve the access to support for the whole range of young people ;
- Noted need to encourage students to consider Higher and Further Educational institutions in the basis of their suitability and not their proximity to the students family home; and
- Noted that work is also needed to look at apprenticeship routes that provide an opportunity to gain a full bachelor's or master's degree. These courses have been designed in partnership with employers, with part-time study taking place at a university.

11. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items

12. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The questions raised as part of the pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet papers for 7th February as set out in Appendix A

13. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Nil items

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

15. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items

16. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

17. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS

Nil items

**18. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR
CONSIDERS URGENT**

Nil items

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**