

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2018

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

Members Present:

Councillor Dave Chesterton (Chair)
Councillor Clare Harrisson (Vice-Chair) – Scrutiny Lead for Health, Adults & Community
Councillor Danny Hassell – Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Ayas Miah – Scrutiny Lead for Governance
Councillor Helal Uddin – Scrutiny Lead for Place
Councillor Andrew Wood – Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Shah Alam

Co-opted Members Present:

Shabbir Chowdhury – Parent Governors
Joanna Hannan – Representative of Diocese of Westminster
Fatiha Kassouri – Parent Governors
Dr Phillip Rice – Church of England Representative
Christine Trumper – Parent Governors

Other Councillors Present:

Mayor John Biggs
Councillor David Edgar
Councillor Rachel Blake
Councillor Joshua Peck

Apologies:

Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Rabina Khan
Asad M Jaman – Muslim Faith Community

Officers Present:

Agnes Adrien – (Team Leader, Enforcement & Litigation, Legal Services)
Vicky Clark – (Divisional Director for Economic Growth and Development)

Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Fiona Heyland	– (Head of Waste Strategy Policy and Procurement, Public Realm, Communities Localities & Culture)
Neville Murton	– (Divisional Director, Finance, Procurement & Audit)
Robin Payne	– (Interim Divisional Director, Public Realm)
Elizabeth Bailey	– Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
Sharon Godman	– (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

It was noted that there were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

2. **UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

2.1 **23rd November, 2017**

Agreed the minutes subject to the following revisions:

Item 9.1 COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT - Actions delete “How is Governance working with schools and teachers regarding complaints” and insert “How is the Council supporting schools to prepare for the governance issues arising from the introduction of the new data protection legislation”

Item 10 VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Councillor Clare Harrisson Scrutiny Lead for Health, Adults & Community

Delete “The Committee noted that the Refugee and Homelessness officer had been appointed” and insert “The Committee noted a verbal update regarding the scrutiny report on access to healthcare for the homeless”

2.2 **13th December, 2017.**

The Minutes were agreed subject to the following amendment:

Item 12 SUMMARY NOTES FROM BREXIT CHALLENGE SESSION

It was agreed to add into the minute under the questions and comments from the Scrutiny Challenge Session section the following bullet point:

Details to be provided on those European Union and Non-European Nationals employed by the Council.

2.3 15th January, 2018

The minutes were agreed subject to a number of minor changes in regard to format and grammar.

3. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG 2017/2018

Noted

6. CHAIRS UPDATE

6.1 Budget Scrutiny Report

Councillor Dave Chesterton introduced the Budget Scrutiny Report and the Committee noted the principal recommendations contained within the report which may be summarised as follows:

1. That the Council should publish the draft budget for consultation with the Committee and local residents in early December;
2. That Consultation with businesses and local residents should take place earlier to allow feedback to be considered by the Committee in their deliberation of the budget proposals;
3. That Scrutiny Leads should play a greater role in budget monitoring of their portfolio areas to enable them to effectively review and challenge budget proposals;
4. That scrutiny over the next municipal year is carried out to consider risks of the Council participating in the Pilot scheme;
5. That the Council develops its work on Brexit to minimise impact locally
6. That the Council should ensure there is greater dialogue and engagement with residents when recovering housing benefit overpayments;
7. That the Council invests in resources to procure and manage contracts in- house to ensure providers are held to account on delivery of their contracts.
8. That the Council lobbies the Government for additional capital reserves to fund fire safety remediation works on privately owned accommodation in the Borough; and

9. That the Council lobbies the Government for additional capital reserves to fund retrofitting sprinklers in high rises above 8 storeys.

7. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

Nil items

8. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Committee received and noted the agenda for the Cabinet meeting to be held on 30th January, 2018 with particular reference to the Council's 2018-19 Budget Report and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-21. The questions arising from the discussions on this report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee noted that:

- The Capital Programme sets out the relevant expenditure including the time horizon for capital projects and that over the next six to nine months work will be undertaken to ensure that all the relevant documents are kept in proper alignment as this process evolves;
- Commented that there was a need to look at a proper budget cycle process **e.g.** the cycle infrastructure programme is referenced across a number of areas and it appears to lack focus. It is important that there is an ongoing commitment to investment in such an infrastructure and the Council and its partners are working together to get it right;
- Noted that there needs to be a plan of action informed by all the various strategies and going forward the Council will have a process that has an overview of what is to be done and be available earlier to allow for there to be a considered scrutiny of the process;
- Noted that the development of the Budget Report and Medium Term Financial Strategy provides a linkage to the strategic policies that the Council wishes to invest in and then looks at the funding streams to deliver those priorities;
- Welcomed the proposal to DH Welcomes investment in the purchasing over the next two years of new vehicles for the Underground Recycling System;
- Noted that there is £90m from available from Section 106 although the Council will need to consider its strategic priorities and then look at the funding sources to deliver those priorities;
- Indicated that it wished there to be discussions throughout the year in the development of the process; and
- Noted that the Quarterly Budget Monitoring report would allow there to be a regular scrutiny of the process.

In conclusion, the Chair asked the Committee to submit any pre decision scrutiny of the remaining unrestricted Cabinet papers to the officers by 12:00 noon on the 26th January, 2018.

(The responses to the pre-decision scrutiny questions of the unrestricted Cabinet papers for the 30th January, 2018 meeting is attached at **Appendix 1**).

9. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

9.1 Cabinet Member Spotlight - Work and Economic Development

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor Joshua Peck (Cabinet Member for Work & Economic Growth) that highlighted a number of key points in relation to Work & Economic Growth including “Work Path” and employment support; skills improvement and work related training; enterprise and business support programmes; high streets and town centres. It was noted that there had been a review of Skillsmatch delivery which had resulted in the design and launch of a new model. This included the communications campaign; the single telephone contact number and website information. The Committee were advised that the programme has already delivered over 700 people into work this year, which has exceeded the previous comparable period by 23%. There has been increase in job entry over comparable period to last year seen in all major groups including Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, Women, Black and Minority Ethnic Women and persons with disabilities.

The Committee noted that regarding skills improvement and work related training there had been training programmes delivered in Construction; Teaching Assistants; Childcare; Pre-Employment and Interview Coaching; ESOL Co-Ordination and Sector based ESOL (Including ESOL for Health and ESOL for Construction). In respect of the key achievements for economic growth it was noted that there was a “Ready” suite of business support - Start-up, Growth, Retail Marketing, Supply Chain; the Whitechapel Enterprise Hub and the High Street pilot work including shopfronts and regeneration projects. The questions and comments from Members on the report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that work was being undertaken to broker greater access to quality of jobs and in terms of sustainability **e.g.** work needs to be sustained over many years’ not just large injections of capital and then leave it at that.
- Noted that with regards to Wood Wharf work is being undertaken to develop sustainable employment programmes;
- Was advised that the Council is supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and businesses to create apprentice positions and to help such businesses maintain their viability against larger competitors;
- Noted the work currently being undertaken in Tower Hamlets to keep local shops viable and resist the trend of conversions of shops to residential;

- Noted that the scheme has benefitted a larger percentage black and minority ethnic groups residents than earlier programmes and is therefore a significant improve over such schemes;
- Noted that the regeneration of areas such as Brick Lane aims to reflect the needs of the customers; environmental health; address ASB issues and ensure that the area reflects the multiple layers of heritage;
- Commented on the importance of addressing the skills shortages in London through local colleges and businesses to address skills gaps in a range of industries;
- Noted that with regards to helping families work is being undertaken to address any barriers to work to ensure that parents can access child care when they seek employment e.g. getting planning agreed for pre-school provision and providing more skilled staff to increase provision of pre-school places; and
- Noted that the £360,000 investment in the Watney Market site will provide a bespoke service for young people and it is a very tangible investment in the future of the children of Tower Hamlets.

10. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

10.1 Recycling Scrutiny Challenge Session Action Plan

The Committee received a report that followed up from the scrutiny challenge session on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the Borough. The report and recommendations were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April, 2016. Subsequent to that an action plan had been developed to address the recommendations. The report and accompanying action plan was accordingly endorsed by Cabinet in September, 2016. It was noted that this report reviews the progress against the original recommendations. The questions and comments from Members on the report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that the challenge session had taken place on 19th January 2016 and been chaired by Cllr Denise Jones, Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities and Culture. The aim of the challenge session had been to explore ways in which the Council and its partners could influence residents to increase the amount of recycling and to 'recycle right'; and how social housing landlords and landowners can work together to facilitate this. The session was underpinned by three core questions (a) what actions can the council and its partners take to inform residents of the importance of recycling, encouraging and to encourage residents to increase the amount of recycling they do and reduce the amount that is contaminated (b) how can landlords, landowners, managing agents, and developers improve recycling facilities on their estates and how can they facilitate residents to recycle more, and recycle right, and (c) what financial opportunities can the Council access to support recycling activities and what the options

are available to use S106 planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy;

- Expressed concern that not enough done to provide information on where to get the recycling sacks. In response it was noted that there had been increased publicity on provision of the recycling sacks available in different locations and that disabled and elderly residents who live in a block of flats and would like recycling sacks but cannot collect them can contact Streetline to discuss their options through email Streetline@towerhamlets.gov.uk or by phone on 020 7364 5004;
- Agreed on the need to be flexible in the way the Council supports people to recycle and need to encourage the Registered Social Landlords to support their residents to recycle;
- Indicated that it was important to ensure that the Council work with those that want to recycle both communities and individuals;
- Noted that the Council is looking at the structures in public realm to reinstate the outreach work to reinforce the importance of recycling;
- Noted that the Council is working to get the management of the blocks and residents of the blocks to work together e.g. There is a programme on food recycling in blocks and getting the right elements in place to make it happen; and
- Noted that the Council is building up the capacity of the management of contract monitoring but current contract is unwieldy but if the contractor fails to meet the contract conditions the Council can and does enforce the default payments but whilst there are challenges overall it is working well.

In conclusion, the Chair Moved and it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee would welcome the report and looked forward to receiving a presentation at a future meeting on the Council's Communications Strategy in relation to recycling.

10.2 Quarter Two Corporate Performance Report

The Committee received and noted a report that summarised the Council's performance during quarter two of 2017/18 (July-September 2017) in delivering year two of its three year strategic plan. The year two plan, which was agreed by Cabinet in April 2017, built upon the Council's achievements in year one of the plan (2016/17) and set out ambitious plans to achieve the outcomes detailed in the Strategic Plan.

The questions and comments from Members on the report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted the current number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per employee and that it has been recognised that the measures in place currently are not sufficiently achieving the outcomes

expected i.e. sustained reduction in sickness absence, and that a different approach may yield better results.

- Was advised that the Council's sickness management processes are now subject to a review in line with the outcomes based accountability framework. Corporate Leadership Team has recently agreed a new Employee Wellbeing Plan, which will be underpinned by a range of measures to improve health in the workplace being launched from November onwards. The Council has started a review of all formal sickness management cases with a view of putting in place wellbeing plans for affected members of staff;
- Noted that a review of the occupational health service has been undertaken and the Council has commissioned a new ergonomic and physiotherapy services. Alongside this, the Council are introducing a new offer to support staff going through career transition;
- Was informed that following a review of industrial relationships in partnership with the trade unions, the first phase of the revision of employment policies and practices has now begun. The review will cover conduct, performance and improvement, staff wellbeing, collective consultation, employee grievances, managing discipline and whistleblowing;
- With regarding to delivering a range of activities to reduce staff sickness and improve wellbeing, the following activities are now taking place: (i) Staff wellbeing plan has been developed; Occupational Health Service will be reviewed to ensure it meets need (ii) Review of the absence management procedure is taking place; and (iii) A review of the way the Council reports sickness absence levels to focus on outcomes instead of compliance with procedures;
- Commented that the Council has only one indicator on "ASB" and "Adult Healthy Lives". Therefore, it was felt that as the Council is refreshing the Strategic Plan, it would seem sensible that these indicators are reviewed; and
- Asked for clarification on paragraphs 4.8.4 to 4.8.6 as they refer to "White British Children" and (in 4.8.6) "White British Working Class Pupils" interchangeably and would like to know how is "working class" measured.

11. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

The Committee received briefings from each of the following Scrutiny Leads:

1. **Councillor Clare Harrisson - Scrutiny Lead for Health, Adults & Community** – Noted the report regarding the progress on maternity services at the Royal London and the journey that this department has been on and how mothers felt new service is functioning. It was noted that the Trust had thanked the Sub-Committee for the report and how it has it helped the Trust move forward. Also noted that there would be an issue-specific 'deep dive' scrutiny regarding access to Health Care for Refugee's and the Homeless and that all scrutiny members were invited;

2. **Councillor Danny Hassell - Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services -**
Noted that there would be two sessions on the Gangs Issue when there will be interviews and workshops as part of this review. Received and noted the Ofsted Monitoring Report including the key points of improvement (i) details around the thresholds; (ii) performance management process (iii) Improved standards in social work practice (iv) Improved Management Overview; and that these improvements at this stage seemed sustainable;
3. **Councillor Helal Uddin - Scrutiny Lead for Place –** Noted with concern at the poor level of attendance at the last scrutiny challenge session and the need going forward to ensure a proper scrutiny of the Local Plan; and
4. **Councillor Andrew Wood - Scrutiny Lead for Resources –** Noted that there would be specific scrutiny sessions with a focus on the services that Young People want; identifying any gaps in such provision on the Island and access to facilities for younger children.

12. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Nil items

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 9.15 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor Dave Chesterton
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**