

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report

Tower Hamlets Council
April 2017

Overview and Scrutiny Chair Forward

Awaiting copy from OSC Chair Cllr John Pierce

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1.0 Context and introduction

- 1.1 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Sub Committees discharge the statutory duty enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Act 2011 of holding the executive to account and scrutinising performance, policies and strategies.
- 1.2 Over a number of years the scrutiny function has operated as part of the overall governance framework of the Council and has been structured with a main Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported by a Health Scrutiny Sub Committee.
- 1.3 This year the Council introduced changes to the scrutiny arrangements recognising the need for scrutiny to adopt and embrace the changing structural and governance environment which it operates within.
- 1.4 In Tower Hamlets the majority of the social housing provision is managed by Registered Social Landlords and housing is a key priority for local people as noted in the Annual Residents Survey. Recognising this importance the Council has established a Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee which has provided a vehicle for scrutiny and dialogue with the decision makers within those bodies.
- 1.5 In addition a Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee has also been set up as part of the Best Value Action Plan with the aim of scrutinising the grants making process and overall approach to grants ensuring that an objective, fair, transparent and co-ordinated approach is adopted and implanted.
- 1.6 Tower Hamlets is also currently hosting the Inner London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising of the neighbouring boroughs of Newham, Hackney and City of London. This Committee has considered the local Sustainability and Transformation Plan.
- 1.7 Following a review the important function of scrutinising proposed executive decisions was improved this year by giving pre-decision scrutiny higher priority on the agenda and circulating to members a list of both the items on the next Cabinet agenda, as well as all forthcoming decisions published by the Council. In addition, the meeting dates of the Scrutiny Committee have been moved further in advance of Cabinet in order to allow greater time for consideration of pre-decision scrutiny questions, and therefore more substantive responses. In addition, the Committee now monitors a log of the status of the requests it has made.
- 1.8 Through the work planning framework and the approach to individual scrutiny reviews the Scrutiny Committee has focused on adding value by making clear evidence based recommendations for action based on community needs. The Committees' focus and culture has embraced a

non-partisan and inclusive approach and this coupled with the revisions to pre scrutiny of executive decisions has resulted in no decisions being called in during the year.

1.9 Membership

1.10 The membership of the Committee is politically proportionate, and representative of the composition of the Council , there have been a number of revisions to membership during the year as a result of changes to the political composition of the Council and following a Council By election .

1.11 The membership of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is as follows:

Chair: Councillor John Pierce

Vice Chair: Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Chair of Grants scrutiny sub committee

Councillor Amina Ali Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal and Chair of Housing scrutiny sub committee

Councillor Julia Dockerill Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services

Councillor Clare Harrison Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing and Chair of Health scrutiny sub committee

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim Scrutiny Lead Member for Governance

Councillor Oliur Rahman

Councillor Helal Uddin

Councillor Abdul Asad

Co-opted Members:

Dr Phillip Rice (Church of England representative)

Vacancy (Roman Catholic Church representative)

Asad M Jaman Muslim Faith Community

Fatiha Kassouri Parent Governor

Shabbir Chowdhury Parent Governor

Christine Trumper Parent Governor

1.12 Appointment of co-opted and Lead members

1.13 The appointment of relevant and representative co-opted members on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Sub Committees ensures that the scrutiny function reflects the needs aspirations and concerns of our communities. It also provides a forum for sections of our community and facilitates a two way dialogue with our residents. The Co-opted members also bring new skills, knowledge and ideas to the work of the Committees.

1.14 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoints a number of Scrutiny Leads aligned to the Council's directorates. The role for these Councillors is to work with the Committee in determining the approach to and focus for the work of the scrutiny function.

1.15 Annual review

1.16 The following section of the report provides a summary of the key elements of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee listed under the Scrutiny Lead areas. Along with the complementary work of the Health, Housing and Grants Scrutiny Sub Committees.

2.0 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair, Councillor John Pierce

2.1 Work planning

2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee used an evidence and risk based approach to developing its annual work programme and that of the sub Committees. Councillors were provided with detailed briefings on key information, developments and issues for each of the Cabinet Portfolio areas. And when determining the range and breath of topics for the year councillors took into consideration factors such as:

- The extent of public and member interest
- The significance of any budgetary implications
- Current performance and user satisfaction
- Any scrutiny review already planned or being carried out by other bodies
- New developments or changes, and
- The Committee's ability to influence outcomes.

2.3 The Housing and Health Scrutiny Sub-Committees have also held work planning sessions, and developed their own work programmes. The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee's work programme is mainly based around the programme of grant decisions to be made in the year, although it may add additional items as relevant.

2.4 Training and development for scrutiny councillors

2.5 Working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny there have been a number of targeted training and development interventions, which have supported councillors in delivering effective scrutiny during the year. This has included topic specific work looking at the Budget Scrutiny, financial monitoring and Outcome Based Budgeting along with a focused and practical workshop for the Grants Scrutiny Committee members.

2.6 The co-opted members of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all of the sub Committees also attended a workshop session which provided a detailed induction and introduction to the Council, its relationship with our communities and an explanation of the governance framework and roles and responsibilities of Committee members.

2.7 All of the training sessions have included good practice tips and techniques aimed to supporting the development of the skills of Scrutiny Committee members in delivering effective and insightful review of services, decisions and outcomes. This training has focused on planning scrutiny reviews, developing questions and recommendations and measuring outcomes.

2.8 Community engagement

2.9 The Overview and Scrutiny committee has taken a pro-active approach to engaging with Tower Hamlets communities during the year. This has included holding information gathering sessions in a range of community venues to attract and engage local residents in the Prevent and Night-time Economy scrutiny reviews. The committee has used variety of channels to engage communities in the work through the year including a short video clip, social media feeds and links to agendas and press releases to engage the local media.

2.10 The committee has also provided a platform for key partners and other public sector bodies to engage with communities and to be held to account for service and operational performance. This has included spotlight sessions with senior health and Metropolitan Police representatives and leading social housing providers.

2.11 The Council has produced a scrutiny toolkit with the aim of providing Officers, Members, stakeholders and local communities with guidance and advice on how the scrutiny function works. This guidance will be updated annually incorporating lessons learned and best practice from other local authorities.

2.12 The guidance highlights the various options members have in carrying out Scrutiny of a specific topic, with the most appropriate medium selected depending on the nature of the issue and the driver for the scrutiny work. The range of methods currently employed includes:

- ordinary items on the Scrutiny Committee agenda (including budget and policy framework items, budget scrutiny , monitoring and challenge , pre decision scrutiny and call in) ;
- spotlight sessions (where attendees are questioned and held to account on a range pertinent issues within their remit);
- reviews (which allow members to examine a topic in-depth over multiple sessions with officer support, with a view to developing a report with recommendations to the executive for improvement); and
- Challenge sessions (similar to reviews, but with only one session and typically in slightly less depth).

2.13 Supporting the scrutiny function

2.14 The Council has developed an agile and efficient project based approach to providing officer support for the scrutiny function. This approach enables the Council to allocate a range of policy and strategy resources, skills and knowledge to support scrutiny and aids the

mainstreaming and embedding scrutiny in the overall work of the council and its communities.

- 2.15 An example of this approach is the project team supporting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which consists of a Democratic Services Officer managing the logistics and governance procedures, independent legal advice provided by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, a Communications Officer providing advice on engagement and promotion of the work, and a Senior Strategy Officer providing research, analysis and project management expertise.

3.0 Budget and Policy framework items

3.1 Medium Term Financial strategy and budget monitoring

- 3.2 The Committee considered The Council's Provisional Financial Outturn 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. Members asked a range of questions, including about the underspend of the youth service grant; modelling undertaken to forecast the likely impact of charging for adult social care services; losses in valuation appeals; and staffing and agency costs, particularly in children's social care.

- 3.3 Councillors also reviewed and noted the budget monitoring on a quarterly basis in respect of the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets. Questions concerned the nature of the HRA budget, clarify on in year and carry forward savings and drivers for capital budget underspend.

- 3.4 Councillors were very impressed about the new improved format and presentation of the financial information this year, especially the summary documents, use of colour and detailed breakdown of directorate budget positions. The only area requiring action for future monitoring reports in the font and layout used for the detailed capital programme reporting.

3.5 Strategic Plan and Delivery plan 2017/18

- 3.6 The Committee reviewed the refreshed Strategic Plan and were very impressed with the revised approach, format and more citizen focused presentation, particularly the use of key statistics and infographics to highlight both council performance and contextual information about Tower Hamlets. The document will be reviewed and used as a key intelligence source to inform the Committees work programme for the coming year.

- 3.7 Suggested future roles for the scrutiny function included helping to fully develop the associated Delivery Plan particularly around community based outcomes and the Grants Scrutiny Committee looking into the range and scale of grants funding provided by the Council.

3.8 Housing Strategy

- 3.9 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee had considered the draft strategy, however the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was keen for both through the Local Plan and Housing Strategy to look at how the Council supports people with middle income to help them stay in the borough who have very slim chance of getting social housing but cannot afford to buy in the borough.
- 3.10 The Committee recommended that the Council reviews its partnership working with RSLs as they are changing to a business model and not always in the interest of local people. Regeneration is a big issue and given the challenge facing another borough it is important we learn the lessons from this and work with local people and our housing providers. The Committee also asked about the impact of welfare reform and benefit cap, succession of tenancy and letting system, Intermediate housing and resident pathway to help people make the right choices.

3.11 Substance Misuse Strategy

- 3.12 The Committee considered the draft Strategy, in advance of it being presented at Cabinet. Members asked Cabinet member Cllr Khatun and officers about anti-social behaviour related to drug use, and the effect this has on communities. They also discussed low-level drug use and other psychoactive substances. In particular, members were concerned at Tower Hamlets' status as a market for drug users, attracting people from outside the borough, and discussed how this could be addressed.
- 3.13 Ultimately, members wanted to know when they and the community could expect to see the positive results of the Strategy. Officers emphasised the difficulties of estimating this, especially given issues in the reliability of the data used for substance misusers, and also urged realism given the complexity of Tower Hamlets. However, the borough is recognised as a good practice area by Public Health England, and use of heroin and crack has been dropping.

3.14 Community Engagement Strategy

- 3.15 The Committee received and noted a presentation that outlined the Council's approach to developing the Community Engagement Strategy for 2016-2019. They recognised that whilst this strategy was being developed in a climate of continuous reductions to public spending it presented an opportunity for communities to take a greater role in shaping and delivering in priority areas i.e. Local residents will be effectively informed, engaged, involved and empowered by the Council. They will actively help define local priorities, design, deliver

and evaluate services and inform council decision making in areas that impact on their lives.

- 3.16 There are four key priorities to be considered in developing the approach ; (1) Shaping the borough through a greater say by residents in the design and delivery of local services; (2) Supporting local people by building their skills and confidence to organise themselves at a local level; (3) Make Tower Hamlets digitally active; and (4) Make engagement more meaningful;
- 3.17 As a result of discussions arising from this review the Committee made recommendations regarding the need carefully consider how engagement is undertaken and to develop and approach to flexibility of the structures to be used to meet the divergent needs and social structures in the diverse communities of Tower Hamlets.

4.0 Budget scrutiny 2016/17

- 4.1 For 2016/17 the Committee developed an approach to budget scrutiny which enabled them to take a strategic overview of the risks associated with the deliverability of the savings plan and the potential impact of the proposals on Tower Hamlets' communities. This approach ensured that the Committee were able to gather a range of evidence on both the strategic elements of the proposal and carry out an in depth review of a smaller number of key growth and savings business cases.
- 4.2 Initially the Committee considered the key external and internal drivers including the scale of funding and service changes, the introduction of the Outcome Based Budgeting, three year budget approach and the Transformation Programme.
- 4.3 The Committee then reviewed the Mayor's strategic approach and the links between the proposed budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management approach and the refreshed strategic plan. Along with an examination of the nature of the financial resources funding the budget including council tax and business rates, reserves policy, schools funding, capital and housing revenue account budgets and the robustness of the approach to risk.
- 4.4 The final part of the process consisted of a review of the range of budget pressures and proposed growth allocations along with an overview of the extensive range of savings proposals with the focus and lens for the scrutiny work is on the priority areas: Enabling growth in the borough and prevention and proactive initiatives .In addition that the approach for the in depth reviews was in determining that the proposed outcomes were clear and appropriate and that the evidence base and rationale was robust, and to consider areas of significant risk and the robustness of the mitigation measures.

4.5 The Committee developed a range of robust outcome focused recommendations which looked at both the overall budget package and process and also drilled down into the detailed impact of a number of the key savings and growth proposals.

5.0 Monitoring and challenge

5.1 The Committee carried out in depth scrutiny of the Councils performance using a number of approaches this year, including Spotlight Sessions with the Mayor and Cabinet Members where the Committee focused on specific areas of Council activity or new policy development (e.g. Children's services and the Youth Service).

5.2 The Committee reviewed the Strategic Performance Monitoring Report each quarter, where performance trends were reviewed and detailed scrutiny of action plans and improvement initiatives carried out.

5.3 For the end of year review for 15/16 performance members were pleased to note the improvement in the proportion of adoptions of ethnic minority children, as well as in all of the housing strategic measures. However, they expressed concern at the deterioration in sickness absence amongst council staff and recycling rates.

5.4 Following the review of Quarter 3 performance in 16/17 it was suggested and recommended that the Committee could take a more focused in depth approach to scrutinising performance in future , by carrying out more in depth reviews of specific areas of ongoing performance concern and looking performance outcomes for communities , examining the drivers and role that the Council has in influencing performance (i.e. Councils role in relation to schools and examination performance) and examining in year performance for measures which have traditionally been measured annually and reviewing comparator benchmarking data (i.e. longer scale review of sickness performance in local and national context).

5.5 Complaints and information annual report 15/16

5.6 This is a really useful review for the Committee as it helped to inform the work and focus for the scrutiny function. The Committee identified the opportunity for greater overlaps between member's enquiries and complaints and identify common issues; In addition whether some member's enquiries can be turned into complaints given in some cases they are complaint about a service. The Committee noted an increase in children social care complaints and requested additional information to understand what this is about and what actions have been implemented.

5.7 Report of Investigations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

5.8 The Interim Divisional Director, Legal provided a summary of the statutory requirement to report use of these powers, and reported that no applications were made in the first, second and third quarters of 2016/2017. The Committee highlighted a desire to add to the work programme for 2017/18 a review of the use of investigatory powers in combatting crime and anti-social behaviour.

5.9 Reset of the Commercial Contract with Agilisys for the Provision of ICT Services

5.10 This item was considered by the Committee as a pre-decision item. The Committee agrees with the findings of the review that the current ICT service provision is not good enough and has seen significant disruption to service provision. The Committee requested further confirmation of number of local people employed and how many apprentices have led to employment through this contract. The Committee was concerned about the potential redundancies that may result as a result of relocation of service desk and asked that this be managed effectively to minimise any compulsory redundancies.

5.11 Integrated employment service

5.12 The Committee reviewed information on the development of several measures relating to the long-term delivery of Integrated Employment Support across the borough. This included information on the upscaling of the Raising Aspirations pilot and the Growth Borough ESF Programme; the development of a new CRM system and related methodologies, and related service reviews across the council which need to be considered as part of the long term implementation of IES. The Committee raised a number of issues including the need to increase the numbers of places for apprentices across the Borough; and to Re-establish the Economic Growth Partnerships and review the local jobs market.

5.13 There were also recommendations concerning assistance in helping residents whose first language was not English to get on in work or learn more about their rights and responsibilities, the provision of child care to enable parents to get access into the jobs market; and a need to increase the number of vocational courses.

5.14 Business engagement in the community

5.15 The Committee reviewed a range of information provided by Officers relating the support the Council provides for the business community in Tower Hamlets. Councillors requested more detailed information regarding a number of the key areas including support for small

business and the emerging detail on business rate relief and the potential impact on Tower Hamlets businesses.

5.16 Update on Tower Hamlets Education partnership

5.17 The Committee reviewed the background to the development of the partnership model and considered the emerging Government policy position on school improvement. They also asked for clarification on the current and ongoing resource commitment from the Council to the partnership and examined the relationship with other functions of the Council.

5.18 In recognition of the changing structural and the new governance environment in school support and improvement, the Committee will want to consider how it can scrutinise approaches and outcomes in a way that influences school choices. Due to the emerging diversity in schools provision and the early developmental stage for the partnership the Committee would like to review the impact of the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership as part of the forward work plan.

5.19 Post 16 Education

5.20 The Committee questioned Officers on the significant variation in comparative performance of pupils in Tower Hamlets schools in GCSC examinations, and Post 16 options (including “A” levels). Additional information was requested on comparative career destination outcomes for pupils taking “A” levels and vocational qualifications. The Committee would also like to look separately at the work of the Virtual School in the future work programme, and the support that is provided for pupil’s considering university entry.

5.21 Public Health Savings – Phase 1

5.22 The Committee had an extensive discussion on the public health savings proposals and we would like to note our thanks to the Cabinet Member and Director for attending the meeting. The Committee was concerned about the short time period for the public consultation but recognise the pressure the council is under to deliver the savings within the financial year. The Committee requested details of evidence base of projects that were delivering successful outcomes for local people.

6.0 Pre –decision scrutiny

6.1 There has been a much greater emphasis on pre decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions this year. At each meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews Cabinet papers and provides a list of recommendations and questions which the Chair reports at the start of each Cabinet meeting , thereby informing the Cabinet decision making process. The Committee has also carried out in depth reviews of key

strategic and policy decisions, questioning relevant Cabinet members and requesting additional information.

6.2 Pre decision scrutiny – Local Council Tax reduction scheme 2017/18

6.3 The Committee reviewed the basis for and associated consultation evidence which has been used to inform the development of the Local Council Tax reduction scheme for 2017/18. Information was provided on the historical and statutory basis for the scheme and the proposed strategic approach for 2017/18. In addition the requirement for the final scheme to be approved at the Full Council meeting on 18 January 2017.

6.4 Councillors raised a number of strategic approach and practical and detailed implementation questions and queries in relation to the proposed approach for 2017/18, a number of which were answered during the debate. The Committee supported in principle the suggested approach, particularly the current direction of travel and the commitment to continuing support for those households that qualify for 100 % reduction in Council tax liability.

6.5 Pre decision scrutiny – Fees and Charges 2017/18

6.6 The Committee considered an overview of the strategic approach to fees and charges income for the coming year and the varied nature of the range of statutory and discretionary fees and charges levied by the council. Councillors asked a number of questions relating to the detailed nature of specific charges, including the historic basis for adult education charges and contractual relationship with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

6.7 Pre scrutiny: Draped Seated Woman – Selection of local hosting partner

6.8 The Committee supported the intention to host the iconic piece of art at a suitable location in the borough, where the citizens of Tower Hamlets could enjoy its benefits. The Committee also recognised the educational value that the piece will have in providing schools and young people with close up experience of contemporary art.

6.9 Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Papers -Local Plan and the Housing Strategy.

6.10 The Committee reviewed and commented on the draft plan and proposals for consultation and engagement with local people. The comments from the Committee focused on the following areas:
Consultation: Ensure there are appropriate methods for digital engagement with local people on draft Plan and consider and put in

appropriate measures for engaging with people whose English is second language. In particular consider how minority groups and communities will be engaged. Local ward councillors provide very useful local knowledge and should be engaged and they can also help connect to different stakeholders at locality level.

- 6.11 The Committee registered concern in respect of the continuous development of the borough and whether the infrastructure to support this will keep pace and in particular the Committee was keen to hear about the numbers of new schools and health centres that would be developed. Equally significant is to ensure that the transport infrastructure is developed to cope with the demand. The Committee commented that partnership working with TfL, Schools and NHS would be crucial to deliver the objectives of the Local Plan.
- 6.12 Employment is a key priority for the Council and Committee was keen to ensure that through the Local Plan we look to address the high graduate unemployment and support our residents into employment. The Committee recommended that the Statement of Community Involvement is radical and truly supports the Council's vision for a transparent and open organisation and become a leader on this. The Committee asked that the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Transparency Commission be considered in the development of this.

7.0 Call in of decisions

- 7.1 During the year no decisions of the Mayor in Cabinet in respect of unrestricted or restricted reports on the Cabinet agenda were 'called in'.

8.0 Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions:

- 8.1 The Committee has used Spotlight Sessions where the Mayor, Cabinet Members, Senior Officers and key partners attend the meeting for a robust question and answer session usually looking in depth at an area of performance, policy or an issue of community interest within their portfolio or area of responsibility.
- 8.2 An example of the approach and outcomes from spotlight sessions is the review of the new housing delivery model at the Mayors Spotlight Session. The Committee questioned the Mayor and supporting officers on the implementation plans and approach to developing a range of Housing Delivery Models to support the Councils priorities around the local housing market. The Committee raised a number of questions and queries around accountability, relationship with Tower Hamlets Homes, level of risks particularly relating to the charity model, and a request for assurances that appropriate checks and balances were in place.

8.4 The Committee recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee carry out a regular review of the new and emerging delivery bodies as part of its 2017/18 work programme.

8.5 Spotlight on Youth Service

8.6 Cabinet member Cllr Saunders and officers attended to discuss the review of the Youth Service and youth centres, and the interim delivery model. While useful information was provided about the findings of surveys of young people, parents, carers and other stakeholders, the Committee suggested that additional information which had informed the reviews, in particular, the analysis of facilities' use, be published, to help make the case for the model.

8.7 It was agreed that, given that analysis has revealed considerable under-use in the past, it will be important to monitor this closely going forward, so that the same problems do not arise. The Committee is likely to return to this topic later in its work programme for the year.

8.8 Scrutiny spotlight -Outcomes for Children in Care

8.9 The Committee noted that the Council was at the time of the review undertaking an Ofsted inspection of Children's Services. They considered common themes and key issues in respect of the outcomes and success factors for Children in Care.

8.10 The Committee requested that a mechanism is put in place to enable the views and recommendations of the Care Leavers Group to be provided for the Committee to inform future work scheduling. A request was also made that there is representation from the Committee on the Corporate Parenting Board.

8.11 Chief Executive Spotlight session - Organisational culture and governance (This session is planned for a future meeting of the Committee).

8.11 Welfare reform spotlight session

8.12 The Committee considered the presentation from the Deputy Mayor that highlighted a number of key issues relating to Welfare Reform and this was followed by questions and recommendations from Members. The key areas of focus and recommendations from the review related to the need to provide clear pathways to advise people especially those in the poverty trap that is preventing them from climbing out of welfare dependency. Greater focus on how the Council can work with our partner agencies and practical support the Council could offer to families regarding Universal Credit?

8.13 Scrutiny Spotlight – Focus on Anti-Social behaviour

- 8.14 This review consisted of an update on the progress on the action plan for the Scrutiny Review from 2015 looking at “How the council, police and social landlords promote the reporting of incidents of drug dealing, drug taking and related ASB in communal spaces and communicate the outcome of this reporting”
- 8.15 The Committee questioned a range of witnesses including Councillor the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, representatives from Tower Hamlets Homes, the TH Community Safety Team, a Chief Inspector from the Metropolitan Police Service and other housing providers.
- 8.16 Overall the Committee concluded that a lot of work has been done following the review, and that there is a real momentum to some of the strands of partnership working and particular initiatives to combat ASB locally. The Committee requested a follow up this piece of work when the review it is next considered by Cabinet (this will be added to the work programme for 2017/18).

8.17 Crime and Disorder Spotlight

- 8.18 The Committee received an update from the Borough Commander Sue Williams about Policing and Crime matters in relation to electoral fraud and the Police Services response including the letter from Assistant Commissioner Helen King, Assistant Commissioner, Professionalism, and Metropolitan Police Service to Katharine Viner the Editor of the Telegraph.

9.0 Petitions

- 9.1 The committee did not receive any petitions during the year.

10.0 Follow up reviews

- 10.1 Scheduled through the year there have been a number of reviews of previous scrutiny reports and recommendations, to check progress and assess the impact of the review and opportunities for further additional scrutiny work.

Examples include

- Challenge session progress update: Supporting delivery of successful town centre (high streets and markets).
- Challenge session progress update – Improving cycling safety
- Challenge session progress update : Anti-social behaviour

- Challenge session progress update : Contract specification and management in Tower Hamlets – Ensuring maximum value for money and securing community benefits

11.0 Reviews and Challenge Sessions

11.1 Scrutiny review Night-time Economy

- 11.2 A prosperous Night Time Economy (NTE) can be a great asset to an area, creating opportunities for economic growth and regeneration, as well as supporting the vibrancy of local neighbourhoods.
- 11.3 Successful NTEs do, however, also generate potentially damaging issues around anti-social behaviour, crime and environmental pollution. Striking the balance between promoting a flourishing NTE and protecting the quality of life of residents is a major challenge for local authorities.
- 11.4 The NTE in London is currently high on the agenda of city leaders, and has been made a top-priority by the new London Mayor with the recent appointment of London's first Night Czar, the introduction of the Night Tube. These developments, together with the rapidly changing demographic and economic make-up of Tower Hamlets, made it an opportune time to review the Council's current approach to the borough's NTE.
- 11.5 The Review was underpinned by six core questions:
1. What do we define as the Night Time Economy? Are there different trends within the NTE of Tower Hamlets, e.g. clustering of particular types of establishment, concentrated footfall at specific times of night?
 2. What are the spatial impacts of the NTE in the borough?
 3. What policies does the Council currently have in place for management of the NTE and are these/have they been effective in serving the needs of both business and residents?
 4. What policy innovations have been developed by other Local Authorities that LBTH could use to improve its own NTE management approaches?
 5. What is the wider cost-benefit analysis of NTE, e.g. tax receipts offset against policing/enforcement/health costs?
 6. What is the Council's long term vision for the NTE in the borough and is it fit for purpose?
- 11.6 The review took the form of four evidence sessions firstly planning and economic development, then Cabinet Member for Community Safety, the Community Safety Service, the Public Health Service and the Metropolitan Police. And finally the British Hospitality Association and the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers.

11.7 The review culminated in a public meeting addressed by London Borough of Tower Hamlets Mayor, John Biggs, and the Mayor of London's Night Czar Amy Lamé. The event, attended by over 70 people, heard evidence from local residents, business owners and night time economy professionals. The Committee is currently considering the evidence that it has heard over the six month review, and will publish a report in early summer outlining its findings and recommendations for the future management of the night time economy in the Borough.

11.8 Challenge Session: Social Value Act

11.9 The challenge session focused on the Council's implementation of the Social Value Act provisions in the procurement and commissioning of services. The overall objective was to assess the impact of social value clauses throughout the commissioning cycle, with a particular focus on the monitoring and measurement of social value activity and outcomes.

11.10 Evidence was provided on the procurement and commissioning systems and approach in place along with detail on the monitoring and measurement activity undertaken. The session also conserved best practice approaches and further developments in the social value environment to inform the development of the recommendations.

11.11 The challenge session developed a range of recommendations which were subsequently presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations covered social value policy, commissioning and procurement approach, measurement and monitoring of social value, determining the impact on outcomes from social value activity, improved cross organisational working and a revised approach to communication and information.

11.12 The challenge session recommendations will aim to improve and standardise the overall approach to social value procurement in the Council by developing a policy framework and specific social value priorities. In addition the development and implementation of robust contract measurement approaches to ensure that all suppliers comply with the social value provisions in the contracts and effective measurement of the impact for our communities of social value activity.

11.13 Challenge Session: Free School Site Allocation

11.14 The Education Act 2011 made changes to the arrangements for the establishment of new schools by enabling them to be established either via the central government programme where proposers apply directly to the Department for Education (DfE); or where via a free school presumption process which sees free school providers bid to operate a new school that the Council has identified the need for.

- 11.15 Whilst the DfE has opened new free schools in the central programme by acquiring sites, in a crowded borough such as Tower Hamlets, new school sites generally arise as part of large site developments. Through an evidence based exercise as part of preparing the Local Plan, the Council has achieved a number of site allocations for schools and these will require the free school presumption process for the provider to be appointed.
- 11.16 The aim of the challenge session was therefore to explore ways in which the Council can ensure it offers families the kind of school places they seek, sufficient to meet demand both now and future. The process of undertaking a free school presumption exercise is new in Tower Hamlets and there was an overwhelming desire to ensure the process is right, given the Council's efforts to restore its reputation on transparency and on regaining the public's confidence.
- 11.17 The Regional Schools Commissioner attended the session bringing valuable insight and advice on the free school presumption process. Also in attendance were representatives from free schools and community schools providing an even balance of opinions?
- 11.18 Our recommendations cut across the themes of understanding need, ensuring a fair and transparent free school presumption process which involves the community, and working together in a more coordinated approach with internal and external stakeholders.
- 11.19 Delivering Prevent Duty: Promoting safeguarding in Tower Hamlets scrutiny review report**
- 11.20 The Committee noted that in 2015, the Government's Counter-Terrorism and Security Act introduced a duty on councils to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism. Tower Hamlets it was noted was a priority area under the duty and hence why on behalf of local residents, it was important to understand what the Council and its partners are doing to deter people away from terrorism and violent extremism. The Council has strong reputation for its work in this area, particularly in the way it has embedded the required safeguarding mechanism under the duty into its existing safeguarding arrangements.
- 11.21 The report made 13 recommendations on how the Council and our partners can add value to what is already happening under the 'Prevent Duty'. Our recommendations cover three themes of:
- **Safeguarding young people;**
 - **Promoting cohesion in Tower Hamlets; and**
 - **Developing leadership around Prevent.**

11.22 The recommendations had been developed following discussions over five sessions. Three additional co-opted members, Sarah Castro, Rob Faure-Walker and Dr Farid Panjwani, participated in the review bringing their academic knowledge, hands on experience of working with communities on cohesion and understanding of the impact of counter-terrorism policies on communities to the discussions.

11.23 Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Session

11.24 Cllr Helal Uddin presented a report from the scrutiny challenge session on Homelessness. The session focused on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with dependent children and pregnant women over the six week statutory period, the long term viability of moving away from B&B placements, Council's prevention work and customer satisfaction of homeless applicants.

11.25 The report makes 17 recommendations focusing on a number of areas including development of the new Housing Strategy, providing information to members and wider public and improving customer services. The report will now be sent to the Cabinet Member and Directorate to develop an action plan responding to the recommendations

11.26 Challenge session: Community Cohesion

11.27 This scrutiny challenge session focussed on community cohesion in Tower Hamlets. In light of the findings and recommendations highlighted in the Casey Review on opportunity and integration the discussion aimed to understand the implications of this on Tower Hamlets.

11.28 The challenge session reviewed some aspects of the work of the Council and its partners presently and historically to consider the impact of cohesion and equalities work in the borough and what can be done further to enhance cohesion in the borough. The session also looked at how we measure cohesion and whether the measure is adequate, the level of segregation and integration in the borough, how we promote cohesion activities, how cohesion could be mainstreamed in council activities. The session additionally considered ESOL provision in the borough and how this can support cohesion. The report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the next municipal year.

11.29 Youth Service challenge session

11.30 The challenge session was carried out in the context of an ongoing consultation on a proposed reorganisation of the Integrated Youth and

Community Service (“the youth service”). The challenge session was prompted by concerns about whether the significant changes made to the youth service (i.e. the interim delivery model put in place from July 2016) and the larger changes to come as a result of service review and reorganisation, adequately address the “lessons learned” from previous shortcomings in service delivery and provide the right service for local young people.

11.31 The challenge session aimed to ensure that the future plans for the youth service have properly absorbed “lessons learned” from past work and have explored innovative approaches to achieving desired outcomes. Three main areas of focus during the challenge session were:

- the resilience of the service,
- the staffing of the service, and
- the approach to outreach.

11.32 The outcome from the sessions is a report containing a set of eight recommendations which focused on more inclusive working practices with other council departments and the voluntary and community sector, improved engagement with current and potential female service users. In addition exploration of alternative funding sources , improved interface with the police regarding initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and the development of an improved performance and outcomes framework.

12.0 Health Scrutiny Sub Committee Chair Councillor Clare Harrison

12.1 Background

The Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee is the primary way in which the democratically elected councillors of Tower Hamlets are able to voice the views of their residents and hold the relevant NHS and social care bodies to account. By doing this, the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee acts as a lever to improve the health of the local population by ensuring their needs are considered as part of the commissioning delivery and development of health and social care services in the borough.

12.2 During 2016/17 the Sub-Committee adopted a thematic approach to its work, focussing on the issue of 'Access to Health and Social Care Services' in Tower Hamlets. To this end, the Sub-Committee focussed on one substantive item relating to this theme at each of its four ordinary meetings – Community Pharmacy, Primary Care infrastructure, Access to Early Years and Adult Mental Health Services.

12.3 In addition the Sub-Committee continued to receive occasional and statutory reports relating to the performance of the local health and social care system, and Cllr Harrison also chaired the Inner North East London (INEL) Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC), a body which has jurisdiction over the scrutiny of sub-regional health care planning such as the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs).

12.4 For 2016/17 and 2017/18 LB Tower Hamlets holds the rotating Chair on the Inner North East London (INEL) Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). This body comprises of LB Tower Hamlets, LB Hackney, LB Newham and the City of London Corporation (together with LB Waltham Forest as observers), and is tasked with scrutinising health and social care plans and/or decisions that may affect one or more member authority. In accordance with s.245 of the NHS Act 2006 and the Local Authority (Overview and Scrutiny Committees Healthy Scrutiny Functions) Regulations 2002, the JHOSC is able to refer certain decisions (formal 'cases for change') to the Secretary of State if it is felt they have been taken without due consultation and engagement.

12.5 During 2016/17 the JHOSC has met four times, with business focussing on the Transforming Services Together (TST) programme and the North East London Sustainability & Transformation Plan (NEL STP). Together with borough level transformation programmes, such as Tower Hamlets Together, the TST and STP are NHS proposals for redesigning healthcare provision at the multi-borough and sub-regional level. Both of these plans include re-configurations of services that could have an impact on Tower Hamlet's residents and it is therefore important that JHOSC provides democratic oversight. Over the course

of the next municipal year, INEL will continue to offer overview of the STP and will receive formal 'cases for change' as and when they arise from the local NHS."

12.6 Community Pharmacy

12.7 The Sub-Committee considered the significant but often overlooked role of Community Pharmacies in the delivery of primary health services to local residents. According to NHS England, nationally there has been a 20% increase in the use of pharmacies in recent years, although the Government intends to reduce pharmacy funding by some £300 million during 2017/18.

12.8 The Sub-Committee heard that the 48 pharmacies in Tower Hamlets play an important role in supporting the prevention agenda by offering easily accessible and low level interventions, such as sexual health and smoking cessation support, as well as offering social and economic benefits to many of the borough's high streets. However, it was felt that pharmacies had even greater potential to fulfil a role as a high street clinic and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Local Pharmaceutical Committee were working together to make this more of a reality.

12.9 The Sub-Committee recommended that following issues be considered when developing the future offer:

- That the lack of 24 hr pharmacy access locally is addressed, especially in terms of how this can support night-time hospital discharges;
- That better and more comprehensive pharmacy performance dashboards are developed to help drive up quality and provide sound evidence base for future decision making around provision;
- That the number of pharmacies with access to GP notes/shared medical records are increased.

12.10 Planning & Primary Care Infrastructure

12.11 The Sub-Committee considered the issues facing the commissioning, planning and delivery of primary care services in the borough, in the context of increased demand for services arising from a growing population.

12.12 The CCG and the GP Care Group highlighted the main challenges facing primary care, including; the recruitment and retention of staff (especially GPs), the changing make-up of the GP workforce (i.e. more salaried staff) and patient frustration with the process for getting an appointment. The LBTH Public Health team set out the Council's approach to planning for future health infrastructure needs, which is based on projected population increases.

12.13 In response to these challenges the CCG and GP Care Group have; created the GP Care Group as a Community Interest Company (CIC) to help consolidate the local primary care offer, obtained additional resources from the GP Access Fund to set up four primary care hubs in the borough where residents can access appointments out of core hours, developed a 'physician associate' scheme to offer greater support to GP practices.

12.14 The Sub-Committee recommended that following issues be considered by the CCG, GP Care Group and LBTH Public Health/Planning:

- That the planning of healthcare infrastructure take account of the geographic dimension of population growth e.g. physical space constraints in certain localities;
- That the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) continue to be spent on addressing the borough's health priorities
- That consideration be given to the quality/access to non-GP primary care services in the borough, e.g. dental care, opticians.
- That a strong local offer to attract and retain GPs in Tower Hamlets is developed collaboratively.

12.15 Early Years and Access to Care

12.16 The Sub-Committee considered the main challenges facing 0-5 year olds in the borough, which include; high rates of child poverty, low birth weights, above average infant mortality rates, lack of school readiness, excess weigh & obesity, dental decay, and lower levels of vaccination/immunisation coverage.

12.17 Officers from Children's Services and Public Health set out what is being done to improve access to health and social care for 0-5 year olds in the borough, with a particular focus on ensuring that early interventions were improving outcomes. Ongoing work includes; redesigning the Children's Centre offer, developing the Tower Hamlets Together model to integrate early-years services with universal health services and developing a new model of care for specialist children's community health services.

12.18 Over the course of 2017 work will focus on developing the relationships between the children's centres / child and family hubs to wider services including primary care, specialist children's health services, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), children's social care and services for school age children. The Sub-Committee recommended that the following issue be considered by LBTH Children's Services and Public Health going forward:

- That links between hospitals and children's centres be strengthened to ensure birth data is shared and children automatically registered at CCs and A&E usage for minor ailments is reduced;

- That Children's Services strengthens their understanding of whether vulnerable families are missing out on CC provision through data collection/analytics;
- That CCs work to strike a sensitive balance between free and charged services they offer so as not to create a 'two-tiered' system;
- That CCs work to provide an adult offer to support new mothers, especially those from BME communities, who risk being isolated to language barriers etc.

12.19 Access to Care for People with Mental Health Problems

12.20 The Sub-Committee considered the main barriers facing people with mental health problems have in accessing the services they need in Tower Hamlets. According to the CCG and ELFT these include; lack of awareness about mental health within the population, stigma (especially amongst specific communities), the fragmentation of provision, mistrust of services, excessive waiting times, transition at 18 and issues for carers/partners of those with mental health problems in accessing support.

12.21 The CCG and ELFT set out the undertaken by the Tower Hamlets Mental Health Partnership to address some of these challenges in recent years, including; redesigning dementia care pathways, establishing clear pathways for adults in crisis to ensure bed availability, developing a high quality supported accommodation offer within the borough and developing a primary care mental health service (inc Peer Support/Navigation). The partnership intends to build on these over the course of 2017, working within the NEL STP to develop a population-based approach to mental health (such as tackling the wider determinants, enhance links with General Practice, further improve urgent and community care pathways, better integrate physical and mental healthcare and prompting whole person care commissioning.

12.22 The Sub-Committee recommended that following issues be considered by the CCG, ELFT and other local mental health care providers:

- That work continue to achieve the 5 Year Forward View objective of reducing suicides by 10% - this is significant in a borough where there is an increasing student population;
- That councillors be given more information about where they can signpost residents with mental health needs that they come into contact with via casework;
- That the choice of mental health interventions offered in primary care is reviewed to ensure that there are alternatives to Cognitive behavioural therapy;
- That the interface between local mental health services and the Criminal Justice System (inc. YOT) be considered to ensure pathways for support/interventions are clear.

12.23 Reablement Service - Scrutiny Review

12.24 The Sub-Committee conducted a Scrutiny Review of the Council's Reablement Service which supports residents aged 18+ when they are discharged from hospital and/or are already at home and starting to struggle with activities of daily living. Its main focus is to support residents to regain or improve their independence and functioning.

12.25 The Sub-Committee wanted to understand whether the current service offers accessible and effective care and gain an insight into the experience of service users. The review consisted of four evidence gathering sessions that brought together key partners in the delivery of local health/social care services, service users and third sector organisations. In addition the Sub-Committee also conducted a field visit to a best practice authority and met with staff from the Council's Reablement Service.

12.26 In considering the evidence submitted, the Sub-Committee recognised that the service was operating effectively and already planning to address some of the issues raised during the review. The Sub-Committee felt that there was still room for improvement and has made 16 recommendations that will enhance service user outcomes and experience, covering areas such as referral pathways, the hospital discharge process, personalisation and education/communication.

12.27 Other activity

12.28 In addition to these items, the Sub-Committee has also received and discussed reports on the following:

- Tower Hamlets CCG Commissioning Intentions
- CQC Inspection Report on ELFT, which rated the Trust 'Outstanding'
- CQC Inspection Report on RLH, which rated the hospital as 'Requires Improvement'
- The response of RLH to the inspection findings is ongoing and the Sub-Committee is receiving regular feedback on progress.
- CQC Inspection Report on Mile End Hospital
- Healthwatch TH Report on GP access
- Maternity Partnership Board: This body was created following the scrutiny review of Maternity Service conducted last year and provides oversight of the improvement action plan

13.0 Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Cllr Abdul Mukit MBE

- 13.1 This Sub-Committee was set up this year as part of the implementation of the Council's Best Value Action Plan. The aim of the Grants Sub-Committee is to ensure that the overall objectives of the grant scheme are being met based on identified need, that a fair geographical distribution of funding is being proposed, and that the full range of community needs are being met. It aims to support an objective, fair, transparent and co-ordinated approach to grant funding across the Council.
- 13.2 This year, the Sub-Committee has been mainly focussed on pre-decision scrutiny of the reports being presented originally to the Commissioners Decision Making Meeting and subsequently the Grants Determination Sub-Committee.
- 13.3 A review was undertaken early in 2016 of the operation of the sub committee which made nine recommendations, half of which have already been implemented including review of the membership, training for councillors and reviewing the grants register.
- 13.4 One of the recommendations was that the grants performance reports provider greater clarity on outcomes, more analysis and stronger focus on problem issues. This approach to reporting has been applied to MSG theme 2 Jobs, Skills and Prosperity and further work is being planned to rollout for other themes in the near future.
- 13.5 As articulated in the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, the Council is moving towards a commissioning approach. To this end, the Sub-Committee wanted to look at the arrangements being put in place to support local organisations. The Sub-Committee received a report outlining the co-production support to the voluntary sector to date for commissioned projects relating to Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience, and the Sub-Committee have asked receive another update further into the co-production programme.
- 13.6 At their meeting in March 2017, the Sub-Committee received a demonstration of the new GIFTS ONLINE grants management system which gave them with an opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations to be considered in the development of the new system.
- 13.7 Going forward, the sub-committee may wish to consider how it further develops its own work programme, and what arrangements it may wish to make to develop public engagement on the work of the Sub-Committee.

14.0 Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Chair: Councillor Amina Ali

14.1 During 2016/17, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee (HSSC) played a key role in highlighting areas of concerns and recommending improvement on some key aspects of social housing.

14.2 Housing in Tower Hamlets – understanding the key challenges

14.3 The HSSC commenced its work by taking a closer look at: Housing and Planning Act 2016; New Homes in England; Rogue landlords and letting agents; Recovering abandoned premises; Social Housing; Right to Buy; Vacant 'higher' value local authority housing; end of lifetime tenancies; and high income social tenants.

14.4 Under Occupation Review

14.5 As part of HSSC's work programme, a review group was set up to explore under occupation of social housing. For the purposes of the review, under occupation is defined as "where a household is occupying a property with one or more bedrooms above the statutory requirement".

14.6 The aim of the review:

- To explore the incentives available to encourage existing tenants to vacate accommodation;
- Ascertain whether practices of some Registered Providers (RPs), operating inside or outside the borough, have been more successful
- National best practice on this issue and establish if lessons learnt elsewhere were applicable to the circumstances of Tower Hamlets.

14.7 The review group noted that the Council's incentive schemes achieved over 650 under occupation transfers over five years – which is fairly consistent with other local authorities with similar demographics. Nevertheless, due to ever growing pressure on social housing, the under occupation review group wanted to explore further, to identify and recommend some innovative solutions.

14.8 The final report made a series of recommendations, including: improved communication; dedicated resource allocation to the scheme; proactively advising under occupying tenants on the advantages of downsizing; identifying future development specifically for under occupying tenants; policy change through revising the standard tenancy agreement.

14.9 Housing Repairs: good practice models

- 14.10 When considering regular performance updates on leaseholder services, the issue of repairs was picked up by this scrutiny sub-committee, as an area of particular interest. Subsequently, I dedicated a HSSC meeting to take a look at current practices on how different housing providers were delivering their repairs service. Also, how they were performing in the areas of: turnaround time; whether repairs needed repeat visits; dealing with customer complains; residents' satisfaction level etc.
- 14.11 During these meetings the HSSC received reports and presentations from the council's partners including: Swan, Poplar Harca, Gateway and Tower Hamlets Homes. The committee raised a number of issues including: residents' dissatisfaction with Mears contract; cost of repairs due to ASB in estates; un-necessary pressure to complete satisfaction survey; repair jobs requiring repeated visits etc.
- 14.12 In response to the feedback from members and the public, the committee were advised that the current contract is fairly new, and it may take a little longer - to see the full effect of the changes, which have been put in place recently.