

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**  
**Pre-Decision Question - Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2 May 2017**

<b>Cabinet Report</b>	<b>Question / Response</b>
<p><b>5 .3 Approval to proceed with guidance on new rent levels</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>1. What rents will Tower Hamlets Housing Benefit Society and the Wholly Owned Company now charge in regards to this decision?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Committee are referring to the two housing delivery vehicles approved by the Mayor in February, namely Mulberry Housing Society (a Community Benefit Society) and Seahorse Homes Limited (a Wholly Owned Company).</p> <p>The relevant Cabinet report in February proposed that:</p> <p>(1) Mulberry Housing Society will let sub-market affordable rented homes. This could comprise a range of rent levels including both London Affordable Rent and Tower Hamlets Living Rent. It is likely that, in line with the Affordability Commission recommendations, the preferred mix will be an equal split between LAR and THLR, subject to viability, in line with the proposals put before Cabinet on 2 May.</p> <p>(2) Seahorse Homes Limited will let market rented and intermediate rented homes. This could comprise a range of rent levels, both within and exceeding Local Housing Allowance levels. Whilst having a commercial purpose and seeking to maximise return on investment, it is likely that the company will agree a rents and lettings policy that incorporates an affordability assessment of prospective tenants to ensure that the market or intermediate rent levels adopted are affordable to each individual at the point of letting.</p> <p>Where the two delivery vehicles are bringing forward new build housing development proposals, they will be subject to the same guidance and negotiation on rent levels as other developers, whether registered housing providers or private development companies.</p>

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<p><b>5.4 Approval of S106 Funding to Cycle and Pedestrian Improvement Project 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>1. Under the new transparency drive for Section 106 funding, how will ward councillors be informed of improvements to their ward?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Infrastructure Delivery Framework (IDF) has established an open and transparent process for decision making regarding the funding of infrastructure projects. As with all decisions made by Cabinet, this information is available online before and after the Cabinet meetings.</p> <p>The decision made through the IDF approves the allocation of funding to a project which then becomes part of the Council's Capital Programme. As work on individual project design and delivery proceeds, it is expected that local ward members are informed / consulted on projects in their area as is appropriate.</p> <p><b>Question</b></p> <p>2. What consultation has happened with ward councillor as of the decision on this paper?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>In the particular case of the Cycle and Pedestrian Improvement Project 2017, the majority of the 19 included projects are relatively minor and will have little impact on changes to the way the street operates – so information shared is more likely through notification of works. Where there is scope for more significant design changes then a wider public consultation would be carried out, including local ward members.</p> <p>While short briefing notes and a plan provide sufficient information on small localised projects, the introduction of Commonplace consultation software on area-wide projects has allowed a much better level of engagement to be achieved: far more detail of schemes and their justification can be provided in text and with interactive plans which allow residents to comment on the proposals and add other comments on specific locations. Used so far on four areas within Stepney and Old Ford Road, the web-based process has generated a much higher proportion of responses, and allowed a picture of emerging responses to be analysed quickly and reported back to local Members.</p>

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	<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>3. How will you ensure that ward councillors are better engaged going forward?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>It is important that engagement is undertaken at the right time in the process of developing projects, when the necessary level of detail is available to make the engagement worthwhile. At the IDF approval stage, there is often only summary information available on the project, as detailed options testing and design is not undertaken until there is some assurance that funding will be available to support the resulting project.</p> <p>The PID template includes a section on stakeholder engagement. Presenting Service Areas can be encouraged to briefly detail engagement to date in this section so it can be monitored through the IDF process.</p> <p><b>Question</b></p> <p>4. What if any steps are in place to make this data available through our open data platform?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Officers are engaged with work on the open data platform to understand how this system may be useful across the IDF process. To date no formal steps have been agreed.</p>