

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.10 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 26 APRIL 2017

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

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)

Councillor Abdul Asad

Councillor Amina Ali

– Scrutiny Lead for Development and
Renewal

Councillor Clare Harrisson

– Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and
Wellbeing

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

– Scrutiny Lead Member for
Governance

Councillor Helal Uddin

Councillor Danny Hassell

Councillor Andrew Wood

Co-opted Members Present:

Dr Phillip Rice

– Church of England Representative

Fatiha Kassouri

– Parent Governors

Shabbir Chowdhury

– Parent Governors

Christine Trumper

– Parent Governors

Other Councillors Present:

Mayor John Biggs

Councillor Rachael Saunders

Apologies:

Asad M Jaman

– Muslim Faith Community

Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

– Scrutiny Lead for Resources

Councillor Julia Dockerill

– Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services

Councillor Oliur Rahman

Others Present:

Steven Ashley

– Independent Chair Local Children's
Safeguarding Board

Officers Present:

Andreas Christophorou	– (Divisional Director, Communications)
Sharon Godman	– (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Afazul Hoque	– (Interim Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance)
Debbie Jones	– (Corporate Director, Children's)
Nancy Meehan	– (Interim Improvement Manager, Children's Social Care)
Nasima Patel	– (Divisional Director, Children's Social Care, Children's)
Peter Quirk	– (Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer)
Will Tuckley	– (Chief Executive)
Stuart Young	– (Interim Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Graham White	– (Acting Corporate Director, Governance)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Asad M Jaman; (Muslim Faith Community); Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Scrutiny Lead for Resources); Councillor Julia Dockerill (Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services); and Councillor Oliur Rahman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest.

3. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 Ofsted Single Inspection Framework Outcome 2017

The Committee received and noted a report that followed the outcome of the Ofsted Single Inspection of children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The inspection took place between 23 January and 16 February 2017 and the overall judgement being that Children's Services in Tower Hamlets are inadequate. The report provided the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a summary of that inspection, the findings, the high-level response to date and an outline of the process to agree an improvement plan.

This was followed by questions and comments from Members which is summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that there were many lessons to be learned and the Ofsted inspection had looked at the experiences of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Tower Hamlets. The inspection found that those children and young people are not always receiving the services they deserve. Therefore, the Council's response to the inspection findings needs to ensure that vulnerable children and families receive the best service possible;
- Noted that Ofsted's "Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards" ('the SIF') sets out a single assessment framework for assessing local authorities;
- Noted that a Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) has been established to take forward the improvement work. This will meet every six weeks and for the first time on 24th April 2017. It will be independently chaired by Alan Wood, a former DCLG appointed Commissioner and former Director of Children's Services. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services along with the scrutiny lead will also be on the CSIB. The Independent Chair will produce a report to the DfE three months from the date of the Direction and every quarter thereafter. In addition, it was noted that the DfE had appointed an Intervention Adviser, reporting and accountable to the Secretary of State, will be providing reports every six months following reviews to determine progress made improving its children's social care services;
- Noted that the merger of Adults and Children's Services Directorates into the Education Social Care and Wellbeing (ESCW) Directorate had, had an impact upon the ability of ESCW to ensure that purposeful work takes place to protect children in need of help and protection;
- Noted that social workers and managers must receive relevant training to counter child sexual exploitation, and that children identified as at risk of sexual exploitation are subject to risk assessment and should be offered responsive and appropriate help;
- Noted that management oversight and supervision must be strengthened and that all work is recorded appropriately to an acceptable standard;
- Noted that the Council needs the CSIB needs to exercise strong governance over the financial resources within the Children's Services Directorate. Whilst these finances will continue to be subject to the

Council's normal budget management processes including reporting on a quarterly basis to the Cabinet and affording the Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to challenge and review (e.g. to ensure that the management and delivery of service has an appropriate "child" focus);

- Noted that at the time of the inspection 18 children had been reported to be living in private fostering arrangements. The inspectors had apparently found a lack of understanding of what constituted a private fostering arrangement. Assessments had it was noted apparently failed to consider whether children had been trafficked or abandoned by their parents. Basic safeguarding checks had not been conducted in most cases. Whilst the Private Fostering Panel, designed to review all private fostering arrangements, had not met for 12 months. As a result, the risks to children were unknown, leaving children in potentially harmful situations. However, the Directorate had taken immediate action to review each case when the inspectors had brought this to its attention;
- Noted that the Inspectors had commented that Tower Hamlets had good systems for identifying and recording those children who go missing from education. Also Headteachers in Tower Hamlets fully understand the processes for monitoring and reporting absenteeism from schools. Managers had good partnerships with other boroughs to share information about children coming to Tower Hamlets and children who were the authority's responsibility but had been placed out of the Borough;
- Noted that the Inspectors had stated that the Council had effective systems to oversee the missing child register. There are 133 children currently on the register, three of whom are "looked after".
- Noted that the local authority has a good partnership with local schools, which effectively implement the protocols and processes for referral when a child is missing. In addition, the local authority has well-established safeguarding arrangements for children who are found to be in unregistered schools;
- Noted that the Council collectively has a role in addressing those issues identified by the Inspectors (e.g. Need to know that reviews are being undertaken in a assiduous manner and to look at the quality of level of decision making);
- Noted that the Directorate would wish to work together with Scrutiny to ensure that the Service is being provided in a culturally sensitive manner to meet the needs communities who the Council seeks to serve (e.g. a greater customer focus and seeking families views on potential solutions);
- Agreed that it would wish to undertake a regular overview of the delivery of the children's social care services;
- Noted that the new Independent Chair of the Local Children's Safe Guarding Board expected to be invited to provide regular updates to Scrutiny so that there can be robust challenge of senior stakeholders on the effectiveness of services for the most vulnerable children in Tower Hamlets. Also the Committee needed to be confident that other partners are fully engaged the solutions to the challenges identified

cannot be addressed by the Council on its own (e.g. the National Health Service and Metropolitan Police Service);

- Commented that it would expect going forward to have an overview of a wide range of issues, including the Children and Families Plan; and
- Commented that it would expect that the Performance Indicators in the Plan are accurate and pertinent.

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

6.1 Chief Executive Organisational Culture and Governance

The Committee received a presentation from Will Tuckley (Chief Executive) that provided a short presentation outlining current approaches to cultural transformation and change and the links to the Council's governance framework and organisational development initiatives. In response to the presentation the Committee reviewed where the Council are on the change transformation journey; inquired about the key challenges; questioned what has changed as a result of the programmes to date (e.g. changes in member culture, impact of work to support develop officer/member relationships, and behaviours). A summary of discussions on the above may be summarised as follows.

The Committee:

- Noted that consideration needs to be given as to how the Scrutiny Process can best support cultural transformation and change;
- Noted that there has been better employee engagement with 18 Chief Executive Roadshows; Staff Conference; Staff Survey; Managers' Forums; Conversation groups and a range of communication channels;
- Noted that whilst there has been a high level of resident satisfaction highlighted in the Annual Residents Survey. There was still a need to ensure that the Council that services were delivered in a joined up fashion;
- Noted that through a mixture of external and internal recruitment there would be a blending of ideas within the officer corps;
- Noted that top three values voted for by staff are (i) Working together; (ii) Delivering service excellence; and (iii) Acting with honesty and integrity;
- Noted that the next steps in the cultural transformation would see: (i) A focus on delivery of priorities; (ii) The evidence our improvement journey with a focus on outcomes; (iii) strengthen the Council's partnership work with local people, partners and regional partners; and (iv) To be clear about the Council's values and ambition to drive through change and improvement.
- Noted that in future updates on comparative data over a number of years would be provided; and

- Noted that current approaches to cultural transformation and change and links to the Council's governance framework would feature in the inductions provided to Councillors.

7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Chair asked the Committee to submit any pre decision scrutiny of the unrestricted Cabinet papers prior to the 2nd May, 2017 meeting.

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

Nil items

9. 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.

10. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

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

Nil items

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

Nil items

The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.

Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee