

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT TIME NOT SPECIFIED ON MONDAY, 27 JULY 2015

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

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)	
Councillor Danny Hassell (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Peter Golds	– Scrutiny Lead for Law Probity and Governance
Councillor Denise Jones	– Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities & Culture
Councillor Md. Maium Miah	– Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Helal Uddin	– Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	–

Co-opted Members Present:

Victoria Ekubia	– (Roman Catholic Church Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun	– (Parent Governor Representative)

Apologies:

Nozrul Mustafa	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Dr Phillip Rice	– (Church of England Representative)
Councillor Mahbub Alam	–
Councillor Amina Ali	– Scrutiny Lead for Adults Services
Councillor Oliur Rahman	– Independent Group Leader

Officers Present:

Paul Buckenham	– (Development Control Manager, Development and Renewal)
Mark Cairns	– (Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Ruth Dowden	– (Complaints & Information Manager, Legal Services, Law Probity & Governance)
David Galpin	– (Service Head, Legal Services, Law Probity & Governance)
Kevin Kewin	– (Service Manager, Strategy & Performance)
Susan Mulligan	– (Communications Advisor,

	Communications, Law Probity & Governance)
Louise Russell	– (Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality, Law Probity & Governance)
Andy Scott	– (Interim Service Head Economic Development, Development and Renewal)
David Tolley	– (Head of Consumer and Business Regulations Service, Safer Communities, Communities Localities & Culture)
Owen Whalley	– (Service Head Planning and Building Control, Development & Renewal)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
IN ATTENDANCE	
Mark Baynes	– (Love Wapping)
Muhammad Haque	– (LAWRIGHTERS LondonUKInt)
Ted Jeory	– (Deputy Editor Bureau of Instigative Journalism)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Nozrul Mustafa; Dr Phillip Rice; Councillor Mahbub Alam; Councillor Amina Ali and Councillor Oliur Rahman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

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

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July, 2015 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Nil items

7. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Challenge Session Report: Town Centres Policy and Delivery

The Committee received a report that outlined the recommendations for supporting the delivery of successful town centres (high streets and markets). It was noted that it is widely recognised that town centres, high streets and markets are vital in supporting opportunities in employment, social capital and economic growth in the area. However, there are many challenges facing town centres including changes in the way people shop, changes in the population demographic, strategic competition and national legislation. In addition, the population demographic of people who live and work in the borough has changed over recent years, becoming more ethnically diverse with more households with an income of above £60,000. Therefore evolving the offer and encouraging new businesses which can capitalise on the needs of new consumers is an essential part of ensuring town centres can thrive. The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows.

The Committee:

- Wanted to be advised on what work was being undertaken in the new growth areas and felt that it was important to focus upon development of a “sense of place” in the high roads, high streets and identifiable town or village centres of Tower Hamlets. In addition, that the recommendations contained within the report should be used to inform the future evolution of the Local Development Framework.
- Heard that the development of a Business Improvement District (BID), where local businesses in a location vote to invest collectively to improve their environment, was being investigated as an option for Shoreditch.
- Heard that once the review was agreed, it would be submitted to Cabinet with an action plan for approval.
- Heard that the Director and his team are working to build the recommendations contained within into the Local Development Framework which itself will be subjected to further scrutiny.

Accordingly, the Committee

RESOLVED to:

Agree the draft report and the recommendations contained in it;

Request that the report be submitted directly to the Mayor, the chair of the Development and Strategic Development Committees, and Cllr Dave Chesterton, in advance of the action plan’s development and approval; and

Authorise the Service Head for Strategy & Equality to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Review Group.

7.2 Corporate Revenue, Capital Outturn and Performance Monitoring Report 2014/15 Quarter 4 (Month 12)

The Committee received a monitoring report that detailed the financial outturn position of the Council at the end of Quarter 4 compared to budget, and service performance against targets. This included that projected year-end position for the:

1. General Fund Revenue, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme;
2. Summary of the movement on Reserves; and
3. An overview of performance for all of the reportable strategic measures.

Whilst the main points of the discussion in relation this report have been summarised and incorporated within the appendix to these minutes the Committee did raise the following specific issues:

The Committee:

1. Wished to receive a copy of the list of Tower Hamlets Councils public assets;
2. Wanted to know when the review of the Youth Services Administrative Support Functions would be completed; and
3. Indicated that with regard to New School Governor Induction Training that it be confirmed that Governors are made aware of their disclosable "interests".

7.3 Overview and Scrutiny Transparency Commission

The Committee received and noted presentations from local journalists and bloggers Mark Baynes and Ted Jeory, about local transparency, including how the Council can be more transparent; how residents could be better informed about Council activity, processes and decisions; how councillors could be supported to make more transparent decisions; how decision makers could be held to account transparently. Officers also presented to the committee on how the Council responds to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, and communication of information and decision-making regarding licensing and development.

In addition, the Committee received and noted the following questions submitted by Muhammad Haque:

What is the Tower Hamlets Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's priority?

- a) In the context of the most serious concerns that have been openly and publicly expressed by the lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of due diligence and lack of democracy in the behaviour of the LBTH Council?
- b) As made by all the known and public sources?
- c) Including and especially by a number of judges, at least ten MPs, at least four Government Ministers and in numerous comments published in print, online and in radio and TV programmes in the past two years?
- d) What is the position of the Tower Hamlets Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at this stage in answer to the Question from the Community - why is there not an audit and transparency route in place in the Council at present?
- e) What priority as the Tower Hamlets Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee attached to the concerns, knowledge, opinions on the absence of transparency and accountability among ordinary members of the Community across Tower Hamlets?

In their presentations and subsequent discussion, the local journalists expressed the following views:

- The Council Tax payer's interests should come before commercial and business interests.
- Councillor/Chief Officer allowances; property; expenses; business interests and hospitality received should be published
- The cost of each internal advertising in East End Life;
- Mayoral Executive Decisions should not be published in a Portable Document Format;
- The Council should publish redacted versions of MAB/CMT minutes;
- The culture of the organisation should be open and unrestricted;
- The Council should publish all credit card transactions over £10.00 and those payments of £100 to suppliers – They need to be easily identifiable so that there is a clear audit trail i.e. each supplier should have a unique identifier;
- The Council should publish if a Councillor has stood for more than one political party and who proposed and seconded them so that the public know that they are bona fide;

Other points made by the committee were:

- More Council meetings should be held at community venues;
- The Council should publish Councillors' timesheets;
- There should be greater involvement of the Young Mayor more in Council meetings.
- The Best Value Plan (under organisational culture) should also consider policy and procedures for whistleblowing and should look to the report by Sir Robert Francis following the inquiry into Mid-Staffordshire Hospital as a model for developing this.
- Details should be provided about who sits on the Freedom of Information (FOI) Board;

- The overall costs of transparency measures should be investigated
- Why do Members have to raise FOI requests rather than being provided with information as Councillors;
- The FOI disclosure log needs to be more easily accessible;
- Consideration should be given to supporting the development of Amenity Societies within LBTH to monitor planning and development in a conservation and other sensitive areas;
- The Council should publish a plain English glossary of terms used in Planning and Licensing, and use plain English where possible in letters and notices;
- The Council needs to encourage developers to publicise their intentions for particular sites in a way that is accessible to the public;
- There should be a weekly publication of planning and licensing applications and promotion of these issues at ward level;
- The Council should investigate how other councils inform residents about licensing applications;
- The Council needs to develop a protocol on how developers should engage the community;
- The Councils web site needs to be more accessible e.g. LB of Redbridge should be seen as a best practice example;
- There needs to be a dialogue with the community on how the "revenue" from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 is utilised in LBTH.

7.4 VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

The Chair informed the Committee that a Planning Session would be held on 1st September, 2015 to look at the Forward Work Programme.

8. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

As a result of a full and wide ranging discussion on the reports to be considered by Cabinet on the 28th July, 2015 a number of questions were raised. These questions together with the responses received are set out in the appendix attached to these minutes.

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

Nil items

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

Resolved:

That in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to

Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business on the grounds that it contained information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government, Act 1972.

11. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

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

RESOLVED

That the restricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July, 2015 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

12. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

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

Nil items

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

Nil items

Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Overview & Scrutiny Committee