

Meeting of the

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 20 January 2014 at 7.00 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

VENUE

Room C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5
Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

Members:	Deputies (if any):
<p>Chair: Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman Vice-Chair: Councillor Rachael Saunders, (Scrutiny Lead, Adults Health & Wellbeing)</p>	<p>Councillor Tim Archer, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor David Snowdon) Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed, (Designated Deputy representing Councillors Motin Uz-Zaman, Rachael Saunders, Helal Uddin, Abdal Ullah and Amy Whitelock) Councillor Harun Miah, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Fozol Miah) Councillor Peter Golds, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor David Snowdon) Councillor Helal Abbas, (Designated Deputy representing Councillors Motin Uz-Zaman, Rachael Saunders, Helal Uddin, Abdal Ullah and Amy Whitelock) Councillor Judith Gardiner, (Designated Deputy representing Councillors Motin Uz-Zaman, Rachael Saunders, Helal Uddin, Abdal Ullah and Amy Whitelock)</p>
<p>Councillor Stephanie Eaton, (Scrutiny Lead, Resources)</p>	
<p>Councillor Fozol Miah</p>	
<p>Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, (Scrutiny Lead, Children, Schools & Families)</p>	
<p>Councillor Helal Uddin, (Scrutiny Lead, Communities, Localities & Culture)</p>	
<p>Councillor Abdal Ullah, (Scrutiny Lead, Development & Renewal)</p>	
<p>Councillor David Snowdon, (Scrutiny Lead, Chief Executive's)</p>	
<p>1 Vacancy</p>	
<p>[Note: The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members].</p>	

Co-opted Members:

Memory Kampiyawo	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Nozrul Mustafa	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Mr Mushfique Uddin	– (Muslim Community Representative)
Dr Phillip Rice	– (Church of England Diocese Representative)
1 Vacancy	– (Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster Representative)

Committee Services Contact:

Angus Taylor, Democratic Services,

Tel: 020 7364 4333 E-mail: angus.taylor@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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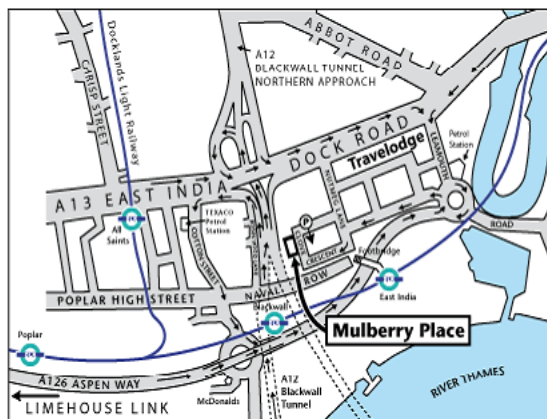
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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 20 January 2014

7.00 p.m.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th January 2014.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.02 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2014

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

Members Present:

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman (Chair)
Councillor Rachael Saunders (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor David Snowdon
Memory Kampiyawo
Nozrul Mustafa
Rev James Olanipekun
Dr Phillip Rice

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Ohid Ahmed
Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Denise Jones

Co-opted Members Present:

Memory Kampiyawo – (Parent Governor Representative)
Nozrul Mustafa – (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun – (Parent Governor Representative)
Dr Phillip Rice – (Church of England Diocese Representative)

Officers Present:

Agnes Adrien – (Team Leader, Enforcement & Litigation, Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
Mark Cairns – (Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Dave Clark – (Acting Service Head Resources, Development and Renewal)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community), Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
Everett Haughton – (Third Sector Programmes Manager, Third Sector Team, Development and Renewal)

Chris Holme	– (Acting Corporate Director - Resources)
Frances Jones	– (Service Manager One Tower Hamlets, Corporate Strategy and Equality Service, Chief Executive's)
Ian Read	– (Communications Advisor, Communications, Chief Executive's)
Louise Russell	– (Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality, Chief Executive's)
Louise Stamp	– (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)
John Williams	– (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
Louise Fleming	– (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from

- Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs
- Councillor Fozol Miah
- Mayor Lutfur Rahman
- Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director Development and Renewal

The Chair **Moved** and it was

Resolved

That the apologies for absence be received and noted

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services, CE's)

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest were made.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair informed Members that

- He had received no response to his request for information on the Mayor's diary sheets and the subsequent Freedom of Information request. As no information had been forthcoming, he intended to formally request the information again.
- He was disappointed that the Mayor had again given his apologies for the meeting and although he noted that the Mayor would be available for the meeting on 1st April 2014, he intended to invite the Mayor to the

next ordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th February 2014.

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

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

The clerk informed the Committee that:

- No unrestricted decisions of the Mayor in Cabinet on 4th December 2013 had been "Called-in".
- One decision taken by the Mayor under his executive powers had been called in and would be considered at item 5.1.

5.1 Call-in of Mayoral Executive Decision 046: Community Chest and Community Events Fund - Round 4

The Committee considered the report entitled "Community Chest and Community Events Fund Round 4" as considered by the Mayor on Monday 2nd December 2013 (Mayoral Executive Decision published on Tuesday 3rd December 2013) and which had been "Called In" by Councillors Carlo Gibbs, Sirajul Islam, Khales Uddin Ahmed, Ann Jackson and Joshua Peck. This was in accordance with the provisions of Part Four Sections 16 and 17 of the Council's Constitution.

The Chair explained the procedure for hearing a "Call-In" and invited Councillor Ann Jackson, representing the Councillors "Calling-In" the Mayor's decision to present the reasons for the "Call-In".

Councillor Jackson summarised the reasons for "calling in" the Mayoral Decision, outlining the key concerns of the "Call-in" Members, and setting out the action sought from the OSC as set out in the report and to address these as follows:

- There was concern that following the decision to move £161,695 from Community Grants into the Community Events fund there would no longer be any community grants budget for the remainder of the year. However, there was now an unallocated events budget of almost £80,000 all to be spent between

January and April 2014. There was concern about allocating an additional £80,000 budget for events in the months running up to the 2014 election without giving any real justification. There was also concern that the budget would be used for things not included in the Council's overall budget considerations.

- The Mayor stated in his decision that "I have questioned four Community Chest funding applications where the proposed funding awards, as listed in Appendix 1 had negative comments originating from programme officers against them. Although officers may come to the view that an application is poor and/or that it should not receive funding, there are from time to time cases where, when taking account of wider circumstances, projects are worth supporting in the view of the perceived potential community benefits." It was felt that Appendix 1 did not give the rationale behind the comments.
- The Mayoral Decision did not however state what factors he believed justified his decision was based on nor what differences with officer recommendations he had. It appears highly likely that what instead of actually carefully considering the impact of this grant funding the Mayor has just copied and pasted his previous mayoral decision notice as this decision is virtually identical to that made on the 19th June this year. We would ask that the O&S committee look into this and to ask the Mayor on what he based his decisions and why he has abdicated his responsibility to have informed and clear regard to the allocations of funding.
- To be sure of any discrepancies between the original officer advice and the final decision we would ask that the O&S Committee request all papers and assessments which went to the CGPB as well as the individual funding applications themselves to be sure they meet the relevant criteria for this fund.
- The latest round of Community Chest grants had been decided in secret and had not been made properly public. This was concerning as it was felt that this had an impact on the community and it was not felt that the Council was serving the voluntary sector properly.
- It was felt that the Mayor should take back the report for further consideration, giving rationale for his decision.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources indicated that he would do his best to deal with any matters raised by the Committee, however he had addressed many of the points at previous call-in meetings and would not respond to questions relating to individual organisations. He responded to the concerns raised by the "Call-in" Members:

- Funds were transferred from Community Chest to Community Events as the Community Events was a more successful funding stream with a bigger demand and a higher number of applications.
- The Corporate Grants Programme Board (CGPB) has looked at the discrepancies and these have now been addressed.
- The CGPD has a remit to make recommendations to the Mayor on applications for grant funding and there is a clear process set out for doing this. All successful applications for grant funding demonstrated clear community objectives and social benefits.

Members of the Committee sought clarification from Councillor Choudhury on the following points:

- How the success of the funding stream was measured and what were the actual benefits and outcomes of the community events.
- Whether the Voluntary Sector still needed the same level of support in the current climate.
- Whether the restrictions of the pre-election purdah period also applied to attendance at Council funded events.
- Concern was expressed over the closed nature of the process and the process for challenge. A request was made to make papers available to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and clarification was sought as to why they weren't already made readily available.
- What compensation was made to those organisations that had been cut off from funding due to administrative errors and what support is given to small organisations that are refused funding to make a successful application in the future.

Councillor Choudhury responded as follows:

- £426,305 had been allocated to date which had delivered benefits and had built capacity for a number of community organisations. The measurable outputs would be provided for Members of the Committee. 107 applications had been received which benefited a range of groups in the Borough.
- The Voluntary Sector still needed to be supported financially by the Council due to central government cuts. It played an important role in improving the lives of residents through local service delivery. The Council would continue to provide assistance to organisations to generate their own income if possible.
- There would be no funding of community events during the pre-election purdah period.
- The minutes of the Grants Board meetings were available on request and there was a clear process for scrutinising the individual Mayoral Decisions through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee call-in process.
- The Council acknowledged its responsibility to the Voluntary Sector and it would continue to support organisations and applications where possible. It should also be noted that the Council awarded nearly £250,000 to the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) to provide such

support. The CVS had also been made aware of the Members' concerns.

- The process was not secret and the scrutiny process was important as it was vital to have an accountable process and the Executive would continue to cooperate as much as possible. It was acknowledged that an administrative error had been made and this had been picked up and rectified.

The Chair concluded the Members' questions by proposing that the Rationale column in Appendix 1 be amended to read "Officer comments" to provide clarity. The Chair thanked Councillor Alibor Choudhury for his presentation and his responses given. Councillor Choudhury and Councillor Ohid Ahmed then left the room while the Committee considered the Call-in.

The Chair advised the Committee that he had raised the issue of the decisions being taken in secret and he had been assured by the Mayor at the last meeting of the Cabinet in December that he did not take decisions in secret. However it had transpired that the decision which was the subject of the Call-in had been taken the day before the last Cabinet meeting.

A discussion ensued which covered the following points:

- It was felt that the Cabinet Member was aware of the need to demonstrate outcomes and should acknowledge this requirement.
- This was important funding and there needed to be an honest and frank discussion about where the funding was being directed as it was felt that it was not benefiting the Borough as a whole. It was felt that the funding was being directed to certain areas in the West of the Borough where the Mayor had the majority of his voter base.
- It was important to maintain the integrity of the Committee and all sets of minutes relating to the transfer of the funds should be made available to Committee Members.
- There was concern regarding the pre-election purdah period and if any events during this period had been previously funded by the Council, the Mayor should not be able to attend and benefit from the publicity.
- There was concern that there were a number of organisations which had been established by young inexperienced entrepreneurs in the Borough who needed more assistance than others when making grant applications. Concern was also expressed over the administrative errors made and the groups which had been unsuccessful.
- Funds should be transferred back to the Community Chest as there needed to be resilient and for a balance between the two funding streams.
- In addition to the minutes, the Members of the Committee needed to see the officers' recommendations, the Equality Impact Assessments, the criteria which needed to be met by applicants and all the organisations that had applied. It was important to protect the Council's reputation and to demonstrate openness and transparency.
- Concern was expressed over the process for calling in these decisions. It was not felt to be effective enough as Members were given the same

information every time and there was little value to the process if the information was not forthcoming. It was questioned whether the current process worked for the community.

In summarising the discussion the Chair concurred with the points made by the Committee and asked whether the current system was working for the community. He proposed that the decision be referred back to the Mayor for the following reasons:

- The decision should be reconsidered in view of the administrative errors made to ensure that unsuccessful organisations have not been punished because of those errors.
- Consideration should be given to reinstating the money into the Community Chest.
- All minutes should be made available to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Due to the serious concerns over the public perception of the use of money in the run up to the election and there should be a condition added to any funding agreement, preventing invitations to political parties to attend events, to ensure that there is no undue political gain or publicity and to protect the integrity of the Borough.

The Chair noted a suggestion that there be a further report on general grants issues submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. He advised that he had asked officers to provide a map of where funding had been awarded in the Borough; the criteria for assessment and the officer recommendations. To date this information had not been forthcoming. It was important to set a deadline for receipt of this information.

Members asked that the following information be provided before the next meeting:

- Information previously requested on the Third Sector organisations which had contacted the Council and had been advised that there was no funding available.
- A Map of funding within the Borough, although it was noted that this was complex and would take longer to produce.
- The criteria for grant assessment.
- Officer recommendations on grants received.
- All remaining minutes and reports of Grants Board meetings since the MSG round was concluded which had not been previously circulated to Members of the Committee.
- Clarification of the purdah rules in relation to Council funded events.
- A summary of the outcomes and achievements of all Council grant funded events for the last two years.

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

Resolved

1. To refer the decision of the Mayor outside Cabinet back to the Mayor for further consideration for the reasons detailed above;
2. To request that officers produce a report for the next meeting of the Committee on general grants issues, encompassing the information requested as detailed above.

Action by:

Louise Russell (Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equalities, CE's)
Dave Clark (Acting Service Head Resources, D&R)
Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services, CE's)

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT - MAYOR

The Scrutiny Spotlight did not proceed as Mayor Lutfur Rahman had been unable to attend.

The Chair advised that he would be seeking legal officers' advice on whether it might be appropriate to invite opposition Members to Spotlight sessions in future. In response to a question regarding the provision in the Council's Constitution to require the Mayor to attend meetings of the Committee, the Chair asked legal officers to look into the issue outside of the meeting.

Action by:

David Galpin (Head of Legal Services Community)

7. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Reference from Council - Executive Mayor's Car

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

Resolved

Consideration of the item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th January 2014 to allow proper consideration of the additional information which had been tabled at the meeting.

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

7.2 Reference from Council - Watts Grove Depot Project and financial mechanisms for Dame Colet House and Poplar Baths projects - Draft OSC report to Council - To Follow

The Committee was advised that no paper could be circulated prior to the meeting and therefore it was proposed to have an informal discussion with a view to reporting formally to the Council meeting on 22nd January 2014.

The Chair felt that it would be useful to have a discussion prior to Council. The final report would contain the Committee's comments from previous discussions on this matter and read out some proposed recommendations for the report as follows:

- The decision to use the model selected for the Watts Grove Depot redevelopment was flawed, and vulnerable to potentially foreseeable changes. The consequence of those decisions has seen the Council incur costs of approximately £308,000 (as of 5th November), and lose out on the opportunity to provide 149 affordable homes. A partnership with an RP would have been a better option, but to pursue this now would involve starting the full and costly procurement process again from the beginning.
- Whilst the Mayor is entitled to make certain decisions in private, doing so makes it difficult to ascertain the full rationale for these, and for the Committee to discharge its functions (as was the case here). The Committee therefore believes that decisions such as these should be made in public unless absolutely necessary, and that where decisions are made in private, the Mayor should make himself available in person to justify his decision when requested by the Committee.
- Related to the above, the Mayor and Cabinet Members should adhere to the Council Constitution and attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when they are required, rather than leaving officers to defend their decisions. The absence of the political leadership of the Council from meetings has obstructed the Committee from fully carrying out its role in scrutinising their decisions.
- Where the Mayor rules out working with RSL partners on a project which is otherwise financially unviable he should justify his reasons for doing so.
- The Cabinet Member responsible for housing should provide accurate figures when commenting on the number of homes built by the Council, so that Members and residents can be confident that these are reliable.
- Cabinet members should be fully briefed and should have all the information they need before they attend meetings of the Committee, so that the Committee's discussions, findings and recommendations are based upon the fullest and most accurate information possible.
- Reports should be unrestricted in the interests of transparency, with exceptions for restricted papers only where absolutely necessary (such as commercially sensitive information). In this case, the Committee believes that more of the reports should have been unrestricted.

The Chair then asked Members for their comments on the proposed recommendations and they made the following comments:

- The first recommendation be amended to read "...A partnership with an RP *or another more economically viable model such as council housing*, would have been a better option."

- The second paragraph be amended to reflect that where decisions must be made in private, the basis and rationale for these should be clear and available for scrutiny just as for decisions made in public.
- Concern was expressed over the lack of transparency and the Chair concurred that the decisions should be on unrestricted papers where possible.

The Chair then **Moved** and it was

Resolved

A report be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th January 2014 including the recommendations above, as amended.

Action by:

Louise Russell (Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equalities)

Frances Jones (One Tower Hamlets Service Manager, Corporate Strategy and Equalities, CE's)

Mark Cairns (Senior Policy and Performance Officer, Corporate Strategy and Equalities, CE's)

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services, CE's)

7.3 Elections 2014 update and Tower Hamlets Local Code of Conduct

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND REASONS FOR URGENCY

The Committee was advised that Appendix B to the report had been marked to follow and had been circulated earlier and was tabled for Members' consideration. The special circumstances and reasons for urgency associated with consideration of the appendix were set out on the front of the appendix as below:

"Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for public access to meetings of principal councils and their non-executive committees and sub-committees, as well as to the business papers of those meetings. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is covered by this public access regime by virtue of section 9FA(6)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000.

A key requirement of Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 is that the agenda and any report to be considered at a council or committee meeting should be available for inspection by members of the public five clear days before the meeting. There are exceptions where the meeting is called on shorter notice or an item is added late to the agenda. The apparent intention of the publication requirement is to enable public participation in local authority decision making.

Section 100B(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that an item of business may not be considered at a council or committee meeting unless either –

- the item has been available for inspection for the required length of time; or
- by reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified in the minutes, the chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

In this case, the principal report was published with the agenda five clear days in advance of the meeting. The report identified that further information would be forthcoming at a later date, which is contained within this appendix. As the information concerns work being done to prepare for the elections to take place on 22 May 2014 and no decision is being required by the Committee, the Chair of the Committee may take the view that it is appropriate to consider the additional information despite it not having been published five clear days in advance of the meeting.”

The Chair subsequently agreed the special circumstances and reasons for urgency, indicating that he was satisfied that the matter was urgent.

Mr John Williams (Service Head, Democratic Services) presented the report which provided

- an interim update of actions being taken to ensure the integrity of electoral registration and the 2014 elections.
- a draft Tower Hamlets Local Code of Conduct.

Mr Williams summarised the salient points in the report, outlining the key points for Members attention as follows. Ms Louise Stamp (Electoral Services Manager) was also present for this item.

- Officers were meeting regularly with the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard, the Electoral Commission and other partners on electoral issues and the development of the Code of Conduct.
- A number of existing procedures were in place to promote integrity of processes at election time, including meeting with election agents to direct them to the Electoral Commission’s Code of Conduct and checks of all nomination papers by the Deputy Returning Officer.
- The training pack and briefing sessions for polling staff included a section on electoral fraud.
- A report on the number of properties with 6 or more electors is produced with officers making personal visits to all properties to confirm residency and updating the register as necessary. These checks to be carried out twice in the current year, once before the publication of the revised register and then two weeks before the deadline for registration.
- Prior to the issue of postal votes, reports are produced which detect any absent vote anomalies. Security checks enabled by new Regulations had been implemented.

- All postal voters requesting a re-issue are advised to follow a formal process, which is supervised by the Deputy Returning Officer.
- All postal voting statements are scanned and verified and statistical analysis is sent to all agents post-election.
- Postal votes would be sent out by Royal Mail Recorded Delivery.
- Post-election reviews take place with the Returning Officer and feedback is sought from Police, Agents and Presiding Officers.
- Following the publication of the new electoral register on 17th February 2014 the Mayor and all Councillors and political parties would be reminded to use up to date information for registration issues.
- A dedicated email address had been set up for the use of candidates, agents and campaigners.
- The draft Local Code attached as an appendix to the report would address local concerns about postal voting fraud and campaigning outside polling stations.
- A joint Communications Strategy would be produced with the Metropolitan Police to publicise the protocol and send out a message that fraudulent activity will be investigated.
- An independent report on electoral fraud matters was due to be published and officers would be preparing a response to that report for Members to consider. It was understood that the report would contain general recommendations for moving forward.
- Private housing blocks would be visited by officers over the next few weeks.

A discussion followed and Members made the following points:

- Concern was expressed over whether people would sign up to the Local Code of Conduct as it was not enforceable in law and whether the Police would take any action in the event of any breaches. *Ms Stamp responded by assuring Members that both the Police and Electoral Commission had been involved in the drafting of the Code and would take action.*
- There was concern over past problems of intimidation at polling stations and evidence of Councillors collecting forms from residents. *Mr Williams advised that it was not an offence to collect forms from residents and deliver to the Council offices. However, Members were assured that all parties would be asked to agree to not do so. Police were keen to address past problems with voter intimidation at Polling Stations and this was addressed in the Code. Presiding Officers would also be briefed.*
- It was felt that the wording of paragraph 4.2 of the Local Code of Conduct, which related to discrepancies due to the transient nature and the demographic of the Borough, should be revisited. *Mr Williams undertook to look again at the wording of the paragraph.*
- Clarification on when the Postal Votes would be sent out by Recorded Delivery was sought as there was concern that envelopes would be returned to the Sorting Office. *Ms Stamp advised that, due to security reasons, Members could not be provided with the date of delivery.*

However, Members were assured that this would be carried out as soon as possible.

- There were concerns over the image of the Borough and the use of Council staff in publicity. Assurances were also sought over the support being given to smaller inexperienced parties and how severe the Police enforcement would be at the Polling Stations. *Mr Williams advised that officers were conscious of the Police not taking a hard line with their enforcement. However there had been serious incidents of intimidation in the past and it was important not to have a repeat in the next election.*
- Clarification was sought over how officers would address the issue of additional names on the electoral register. *Ms Stamp advised that work was carried out daily on logging and scrutinising the numbers of voters at properties in the Borough. Properties had been visited with verification requested and checks would continue to be carried out.*

The Chair concluded the discussion and made the following points:

- The work with the Police was welcomed and every effort should be made to prevent electoral fraud.
- The proposed Communications strategy was welcomed and the Council should ensure the message gets out to all media channels, if necessary engaging a bilingual officer to liaise with all local radio and tv channels, that residents should not allow any fraudulent activities to take places in their properties.
- It was suggested that a script be written for all parties to use, and possibly to record a message on video to be shown on all possible communication channels to have a real impact.
- Officers should liaise with Members if necessary to help them access local media channels.
- Officers should keep the Chair updated on progress and the detailed information would be reviewed in due course. It was very important to take all necessary precautions to protect the integrity of the Borough in the 2014 elections.

The Chair then **Moved** and it was

Resolved

1. The draft Local Code of Conduct at Appendix A to the report be noted; and
2. The progress update at Appendix B be noted, subject to the comments made above.

Action by:

John Williams (Service Head, Democratic Services, CE's)
Louise Stamp (Electoral Services Manager, CE's)

7.4 Strategic Performance and Corporate Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Q2 2013/14 (Month 6)

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, and Mr Chris Holme, Acting Corporate Director Resources, introduced and highlighted key points in the monitoring report which detailed the financial position of the Council at the end of Quarter 2 2013/14 compared to budget, and service performance against targets. Ms Louise Russell, Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equalities was also present for this item.

A discussion followed making the following points:

- Clarification was sought on whether any new spending would be proposed in addition to that already circulated with the Cabinet agenda.
- Clarification was sought on the procedure for dealing with surplus buildings.
- The Committee noted in particular that Central Income collection and the residential burglary rate had not met targets.

Mr Holme and Ms Russell responded to Members' questions as follows:

- There were very little resources for any new spending. However there would be a specific meeting of the Committee held on 20th January 2014 to discuss the budget.
- An Asset Review was currently being undertaken and part of that would look at the disposals programmes. When the paper had been completed it would be shared with the Committee.
- The Committee was assured that improvement plans were in place to address the targets not met.

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

Resolved

1. That Quarter 2 performance for 2013/14 be noted; and
2. That the Council's financial position as detailed in section 4 and Appendices 1-3 of the report, be noted.

Action by:

Chris Holme, Acting Corporate Director Resources

Louise Russell, Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equalities

7.5 General Fund Capital and Revenue Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014-2017

The Chair proposed that a detailed discussion on the budget papers take place at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th November 2014. However, he was clear that there should be a focus on long term protection of services, without the need to dip into the reserves.

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

Resolved

1. That the information in the report be noted; and
2. That a detailed discussion on the budget would take place at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th January 2014, subject to the comments.

Action by:

Chris Holme, Acting Corporate Director Resources

Louise Russell, Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equalities

8. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Nil items.

9. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

11. 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.

12. 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 3rd December 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

13. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Overview & Scrutiny Committee