

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 22 April 2024 at 6.30 p.m.  
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel**

## Supplemental Agenda

- 7. **MARKETS CHALLENGE SESSION**
- 9. **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG**

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# Agenda Item 7

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Robin Beattie, Director of Strategy, Transformation, and Improvement</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Scrutiny Challenge Session on Supporting Markets and Traders</b></p>	

**URGENT** last meeting of OSC for this municipal year is on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 and report will need to be agreed by the committee.

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

	Step [Delete as applicable]	Date
Decision (Tier Four)	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22.04.2024

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities Zaid Islam, Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate Strategy and Communities
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards

**Executive Summary**

This scrutiny report establishes the findings and recommendations arising from the scrutiny challenge session on the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets. The report presents eight recommendations for agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenge session report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response to the recommendations;

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets for consideration and agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides recommendations on enhancing the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets, acknowledging their crucial role in serving diverse communities and contributing to the local economy.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 Supporting Markets and Traders is an objective under the Council's Strategic Plan priority to 'Boost Culture, Business, Jobs, and Leisure':

*Support small businesses, start-ups, and markets including Whitechapel Market, Petticoat Lane Market, Bethnal Green Market, Roman Road Market, Columbia Road Market, Columbia Road Market, Watney Market, Chrisp Street Market, Brick Lane Market, and put traders at the heart of their management.*

- 3.2 Markets serve as focal points of attraction in the community, drawing people into town centres and driving footfall to support local businesses. They serve diverse communities, facilitate cultural exchange, and offer a range of commodities at good value. However, as public spaces, the success of Markets in the borough is largely contingent upon the upkeep of infrastructure, trader facilities, waste management, and community safety. It is through this lens that the subject of Street Markets intersects with some of the broader issues that sit under the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Lead's portfolio.
- 3.3 Nationally, the Market industry faces significant challenges due to changes in purchasing habits and an ageing population. Fewer Markets across the country are operating with a financial surplus and there has been a reduction in the number of traders overall.
- 3.4 The scrutiny challenge session was chaired by Cllr Abdul Malik (Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member) and included:
- The Scrutiny Lead and Committee members undertaking site visits to Whitechapel Market, Petticoat Lane Food Court, and Ridley Road Market across February 2024 to gather evidence on best practice both

in Tower Hamlets and a neighbouring borough (Hackney), while also identifying areas for improvement. These visits facilitated engagement between Scrutiny and local traders, associations, and market managers.

- A Scrutiny Challenge Session focusing on the support provided to Markets and Traders on 6 March 2024 to gather evidence from the Council and external key witnesses. Following the session, Scrutiny developed recommendations aimed at enhancing the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets.

3.5 To ensure the ongoing sustainability of Markets in Tower Hamlets for both traders and customers, the scrutiny challenge session was underpinned by three core questions:

- What recent improvements have been made to Markets in the borough?
- What support mechanisms can the Council employ to ensure that Traders are thriving and at the heart of their management?
- How can the Council attract new and exciting entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses to trade in our Markets?

3.6 The Scrutiny Challenge Session involved a range of stakeholders including:

- Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills, and Growth
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members
- Council Officers
- Chief Executive of the National Association for British Market Authorities (NABMA)
- Chair of the London Street Traders Benchmarking Group (LSTBG) and Market Manager at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Traders including the Whitechapel Traders Association
- Market Manager at London Borough of Hackney and Board Member on the Mayor of London's Market Board.
- Co-Opted Member of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

3.7 The challenge session resulted in Scrutiny making the following recommendations:

**Theme: Market Infrastructure and Trader Facilities**

**Recommendation 1:** That the Street Trading and Market Service produces a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covering the status of all Street Markets, including land ownership updates and infrastructure gaps, along with corresponding work plans, to enable Scrutiny to track progress.

**Recommendation 2:** That the Council allocates resources and works with landowners to prioritise the provision of toilets, storage spaces, and free Wi-Fi

in Street Markets, ensuring traders are supported and enhancing the functionality and maintenance of these vital community spaces.

**Theme: Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime: Deterrence and Reporting**

**Recommendation 3:** That the Council's Community Safety Service works with the Street Trading and Markets Service to enhance crime deterrence in Street Markets. This includes increasing the presence of Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers on Markets, equipping traders with radios to better exchange intelligence and establishing a Police Partnership Taskforce based at the Town Hall for rapid response to crime incidents in Whitechapel Market.

**Recommendation 4:** That the Council's Community Safety Service and Street Trading and Markets Service consistently document incidents of ASB and crime in Street Markets, whilst also enhancing the public's ability to report crimes in Street Markets by strategically placing public signage and integrating QR codes for streamlined reporting.

**Theme: Waste Management and Enforcement**

**Recommendation 5:** That the Council strengthens waste management on Street Markets by ensuring the separation of Commercial and Market Waste and integrating a unified enforcement approach as part of the ongoing review of THEOs to address dumping practices in Markets.

**Theme: Attracting Younger Traders and Retaining Current Traders**

**Recommendation 6:** That the Council's Career Service and Street Trading and Markets Service work in partnership with local schools and young adults to organise pop-up events and training sessions to attract young people to the entrepreneurial opportunities available in Market trading.

**Recommendation 7:** That the Street Trading and Market Service produces and distributes a Traders Handbook aimed at supporting existing traders and retaining new ones.

**Theme: Improving Communication between Portfolio Areas**

**Recommendation 8:** That the Cabinet Leads for the Jobs, Skills, and Growth Portfolio and the Environment and Climate Emergency Portfolio implement an effective and ongoing communication mechanism, to enhance coordination and address Market challenges more holistically. This should incorporate an effective feedback loop involving officers and traders.

**4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The report considers anti-social behaviour and theft in Street Markets and the likely disproportionate targeting of women and girls based upon evidence provided by traders. The report also considers the likely underrepresentation of

younger Market traders in Tower Hamlets, aligning with national trends highlighting an ageing trader population.

## **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 The actions in the attached report are made as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the Council, as required under its Best Value duty. The report includes actions aimed at supporting Crime Reduction in Markets in response to evidence gathered during the Challenge Session.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 The report asks that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenge session recommendations are agreed.

6.2 No costings have been worked up for the recommendations and therefore any financial implications are unquantified at this stage. Any costing will need to be verified and where more than existing resources/activity will need to be approved through the appropriate governance processes or additional funding obtained (e.g. grants).

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The report asks for the eight recommendations from the challenge session to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Further legal considerations may arise through the implementation of the recommendations but these are not known at this stage.

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Scrutiny Report on Supporting Markets and Traders

#### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

Zaid Islam, Strategy and Policy Officer



# Tower Hamlets Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Report

## Challenge Session on Supporting Markets and Traders

April 2024



## Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this report which explores how the Council can enhance its support for street markets and traders in Tower Hamlets. As a business owner in the borough, I recognise the crucial role that local businesses and markets play in fostering a powerful sense of community and contributing to the local economy.

Tower Hamlets is known for its diverse markets which reflect the vibrant cultural fabric of this borough and serve different people in different ways. Whitechapel, Watney Market, Roman Road, and Bethnal Green Market play a key role in serving local immigrant communities, offering affordable goods, and lending a helping hand to residents through the current cost of living crisis. Columbia Road attracts visitors from across the region and beyond to its weekly flower market. Crisp Street is deeply connected to the rich history of the East End. Brick Lane and Petticoat Lane Food Court reflect the changing and dynamic fusion of communities in the new East End, catering to the surrounding workforce, tourists, and younger demographics.

Traders have made it clear to me how important the provision of storage spaces, toilets, free WiFi and enhanced public realm facilities for customers are to support them. We must continue to prioritise the support and protection of our existing street markets and spaces for traders. Opportunities to improve the infrastructure of these essential spaces should actively be sought to ensure they can continue to serve our local communities and businesses while evolving alongside the ongoing redevelopment of the borough for future generations to inherit.

It is also important that entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses view market trading as a viable career. Markets can act as incubation spaces for new ideas and small-to-medium enterprises. Both nationally and locally, there is an ageing trader population and a reduction in the number of traders. We must continue to promote the benefits and entrepreneurial skills associated with being a trader. This will support us to keep our markets sustainable and ensure that they continue to evolve with changing demographics.

Although there is a lot of positive activity at our markets, this report makes practical recommendations for the council aimed at improving the supportive ecosystem for street markets and traders, whilst attracting and retaining traders. The recommendations focus on upgrading the provision of trader facilities, addressing anti-social behaviour and waste at markets to improve the market scene, working with schools and young adults to bring exposure to a career in trading, publishing a trader's handbook, and improving communication between the portfolio areas responsible for markets to ensure stronger leadership and oversight.

I would like to thank all of the council officers, traders, and external key witnesses who gave their valuable time and effort to support this challenge session. I am also grateful to Scrutiny members for their input and shared passion.

**Councillor Abdul Malik**  
**Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety**



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## Summary of Recommendations

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### Market Infrastructure and Trader Facilities

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#### Recommendation 1

That the Street Trading and Markets Service produces a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covering the status of all Street Markets, including land ownership updates and infrastructure gaps, along with corresponding work plans, to enable Scrutiny to track progress.

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#### Recommendation 2

That the Council allocates resources and works with landowners to prioritise the provision of toilets, storage spaces, and free Wi-Fi in Street Markets, ensuring traders are supported and enhancing the functionality and maintenance of these vital community spaces.

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### Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime: Deterrence and Reporting

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#### Recommendation 3

That the Council's Community Safety Service works with the Street Trading and Markets Service to enhance crime deterrence in Street Markets. This includes increasing the presence of THEOs on Markets, equipping traders with radios to better exchange intelligence, and establishing a Police Partnership Taskforce based at the Town Hall for rapid response to crime incidents in Whitechapel Market.

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#### Recommendation 4

That the Council's Community Safety Service and Street Trading and Markets Service consistently document incidents of ASB and crime in Street Markets, whilst also enhancing the public's ability to report crimes in Street Markets by strategically placing public signage and integrating QR codes for streamlined reporting.

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### Waste Management and Enforcement

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#### Recommendation 5

That the Council strengthens waste management on Street Markets by ensuring the separation of Commercial and Market Waste and integrating a unified enforcement approach as part of the ongoing review of THEOs to address dumping practices in Markets.

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### Attracting Younger Traders and Retaining Current Traders

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#### Recommendation 6

That the Council's Careers Service and Street Trading and Markets Service work in partnership with local schools and young adults to organise pop-up events and training sessions to attract young people to the entrepreneurial opportunities available in market trading.

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#### Recommendation 7

That the Street Trading and Markets Service produces and distributes a Traders Handbook aimed at supporting existing traders and retaining new ones.

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### Improving Communication between Portfolio Areas

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#### Recommendation 8

That the Cabinet Leads for the Jobs, Skills, and Growth Portfolio and the Environment and Climate Emergency Portfolio implement an effective and

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ongoing communication mechanism, to enhance coordination and address market challenges more holistically. This should incorporate an effective feedback loop involving officers and traders.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets for consideration and agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

*Support small businesses, start-ups, and markets including Whitechapel Market, Petticoat Lane Market, Bethnal Green Market, Roman Road Market, Columbia Road Market, Watney Market, Crisp Street Market, Brick Lane Market, and put traders at the heart of their management.*

- 1.2 Street Markets serve as focal points of attraction in the community, drawing people into town centres and driving footfall to support surrounding businesses. They serve diverse communities, facilitate cultural exchange, and offer a range of commodities at good value. However, as public spaces, the success of our Street Markets is largely contingent upon the upkeep of infrastructure, trader facilities, waste management, and community safety. It is through this lens that the subject of Street Markets intersects with some of the broader issues that sit under the Environment and Community Safety portfolio.

- 1.3 Nationally the Market industry faces significant challenges due to changes in purchasing habits and an ageing population. Fewer Markets across the country are operating with a financial surplus and there has been a reduction in the number of traders overall. To ensure the ongoing sustainability of our markets for both traders and customers, this challenge session is underpinned by three core questions:

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- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b>What recent improvements have been made to Markets in the borough?</b>   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>What support mechanisms can the Council employ to ensure that Traders are thriving and at the heart of their management?</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>How can the Council attract new and exciting entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses to trade in our Markets?</b>     |
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## Approach

- 1.4 The Challenge Session was chaired by Councillor Abdul Malik, Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety.

Before the challenge session, three scrutiny site visits to select markets were undertaken, as agreed by the Scrutiny Lead and the Street Trading and Markets Team to gather evidence. These included:

### 1.5 Whitechapel Market– 22nd February 2024

The Scrutiny Lead engaged with the representatives from the Whitechapel Traders Association to gather intelligence on examples of good practice in Markets, and areas for improvement. The recent emergence and growth of food stalls in Whitechapel was viewed as a positive change due to their popularity among

customers, and it was felt that a greater variety of food stall offers, including vegetarian and healthy eating offers would further enhance the Market offer, particularly to the large workforce that surrounds the Market.

Traders identified anti-social behaviour and theft as one of the key issues facing the Market. They highlighted that pickpockets regularly focus their criminal activity in the Markets and disproportionately target women and children. Traders also felt that in recent times, the market has shifted to catering towards a single community and advocated for greater diversity among the traders to appeal to different demographics who frequent the markets, such as the surrounding workforce and students. Whilst they maintained the importance of catering to regulars who rely on the Markets for affordable goods, traders also underscored the importance of bringing the innovation of younger traders into the markets to offer different merchandising techniques and a wider range of commodities to customers.

### **1.6 Petticoat Lane Food Court – 28th February 2024**

The second evidence-gathering session was conducted at Petticoat Lane Food Court. The Scrutiny Lead was impressed with the wide variety of cuisines on offer and the bustling queues. The specialist food court mostly serves office workers, predominantly in their 20-30s. It operates at full occupancy throughout its five-day trading week, with a long waiting list for available pitches. Food traders are also using recyclable and compostable packaging to reduce the presence of single-use plastics. The Scrutiny Lead was informed about the potential development of an app which could help expedite the long queues at the food court.

However, access to facilities at Petticoat Lane Food Court should be improved. There are currently no toilet facilities available to traders and the Council has no oversight over storage facilities as they are not owned by the Council. Additionally, bike theft was cited as another concern in the area. The general merchandise stalls also include commodities which may not appeal to the demographic groups which visit the Market. Commodities which have the potential to better suit needs include crafts, souvenirs, electrical, and cosmetics.

### **1.7 Ridley Road Market – 29th February 2024**

The conclusive phase of evidence gathering was conducted at Ridley Road Market to review practices in a neighbouring borough. A tour of the Market was led by Daniel O’Sullivan, Markets Manager at Hackney, and Board Member on the Mayor of London’s Markets Board.

Scrutiny members were impressed by the high quality of merchandising observed at Ridley Road, especially noting the presentation of fruit and vegetable stalls. Improvements in merchandising have been driven by the council’s ‘Trading Places’ training package, developed through collaboration with experts in various fields such as the Institute of Independent Retailers, NMTF, NABMA, and Barclays. Leveraging corporate social responsibility, they offered courses that covered aspects of merchandising. For fruit and vegetable traders, education included techniques like colour blocking, while fashion traders learned how to create bundled outfit deals. Additionally, they engage prospective traders in discussions about their merchandising plans, focusing on aesthetics and their potential impact on the Market scene.

At Ridley Road, accessible public conveniences are available to both customers and traders. There are plans to also introduce an indoor commercial space with toilets

exclusively for traders. Scrutiny noted that traders benefit from discounted parking rates nearby, with one permit allocated per trader, reducing vehicle journeys. The Market Service allocates space in its office for Police Officers and Parking Enforcement Officers to work out of, ensuring a continuous presence of law enforcement which supports the reduction of criminal activity in the Market and improves response times. To address illegal dumping, coloured bags with barcodes are distributed to businesses, allowing the council to identify businesses that dump. The Market has also transitioned away from single-use plastics by purchasing biodegradable bags in bulk, sold to association leads or senior traders.

Scrutiny members concluded the visit by reviewing the Traders Handbook, which contained essential information on legislation and best practice tips to support traders

### 1.8 Challenge Session on Supporting Markets and Traders – 6th March 2024

The Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee gathered evidence from the Council and external key witnesses. They subsequently developed recommendations.

#### Members in attendance

Councillor Abdul Malik	Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety
Councillor Musthak Ahmed	Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Chair of the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Councillor Abdul Mannan	Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Councillor Sabina Khan	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member
Councillor Asma Islam	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member
Halima Islam	Co-Opted Member (Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
Dr. Philip Rice	Co-Opted Member (Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee)
Councillor Kabir Hussain	Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency
Councillor Abdul Wahid	Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills, and Growth

#### Officers in attendance

Simon Baxter	Corporate Director, Communities
Michael Darby	Head of Parking, Mobility, and Market Services
Damian Patchell	Street Trading and Markets Manager
Naomi Agyekum	Business Development Officer
Jenny Fisher	Policy Analyst
Daniel Kerr	Strategy and Policy Lead

Anna Murphy	Senior Strategy and Policy Officer
Zaid Islam	Strategy and Policy Officer

### External key witnesses in attendance

David Preston	Chief Executive, National Association for British Market Authorities (NABMA)
Nick Kasic	Chair of the London Street Traders Benchmarking Group (LSTBG) and Market Manager at RBKC
Sunil Khosla	Chairman of the Whitechapel Traders Association (WTA)

## 2. National Context

- 2.1 In December 2022, the National Association for British Market Authorities (NABMA) published the findings of its most recent comprehensive national survey of UK Markets<sup>1</sup>, encompassing insights from 241 markets. While street markets, which are solely managed by the Council made up 14% of the types of markets surveyed, the findings highlighted significant challenges affecting the entire market industry:
- 2.2 **Falling stock occupancy** – The percentage of stalls rented out to traders fell from an average of 77% in 2018 to 72% in 2022. This decline coincides with many markets across the country reducing their overall capacity over this period too, highlighting a reduction in the overall number of traders active in markets.
- 2.3 **Reduction in the number of traders on markets** – In 2009, the estimated number of market traders was 46,000. However, by 2018, this figure declined to approximately 32,000. According to the 2022 occupancy data, it is estimated that there has been a further decrease, potentially bringing the number of traders down to as low as 17,000. The survey highlighted a growing number of market traders standing at market events, rather than at traditional markets, and traders more likely to work only on a part-time basis. These trends raise concerns about the retention of traders. The survey also revealed that 73% of NABMA members had no formal consultation method with their traders, highlighting that effective communication channels between traders and Local Authorities is another area of concern.
- 2.4 **Ageing trader population** – Concerningly, the age profile of traders remains high. The survey revealed that only 8% of traders are under 40. A previous survey in 2017/18 highlighted that 70% of traders were aged 50 or over, highlighting a continuation of the trend. Attracting new and younger traders to markets presents a key industry challenge and poses a threat to the future sustainability of markets, potentially limiting the representation of diverse demographic groups and commodities.
- 2.5 **Fewer markets operating with a financial surplus** – The financial sustainability of market operations is another key concern encountered by Local Authorities in the UK. The survey found that only 40% of markets were operating with an annual surplus, 6% lower than in 2018. NABMA highlighted that 84% of markets are operated by Local Authorities, but less than half of these are profitable, with markets

<sup>1</sup> [NABMA-Survey-2022.pdf](#)



in deficit having risen by 6%. Issues with local Finance Settlements and S114 notices further compound financial strains on Local Authorities, showcasing the vulnerability of markets as discretionary services, prone to potential budget cuts.

- 2.6 Despite these challenges, markets possess significant historical and ongoing importance for local communities as spaces for social interaction, cultural heritage, and identity expression.

*“What is important now is the recognition of markets as a community asset, and how they can influence and help local and national issues. They can help create shopper and place loyalty, local pride, and well-being, and what we’re finding now is that markets are much more than retail...*

*...markets are filling the gaps in local service delivery up and down the country. Markets are the home to NHS Services, Safer Community Teams, Cooking Schools, Information Support and Start-up businesses”. – David Preston, CEO of NABMA (LBTH Challenge Session)*

### **Markets First Campaign**

- 2.7 In response to these findings, NABMA launched the National ‘Markets First Campaign’<sup>2</sup>, outlining five key priorities to be addressed over two years, through engagement with its members, government, traders, and the media. This includes attracting and retaining new traders through the promotion of market trading and start-up business opportunities. It also aims to tackle economic challenges facing markets, particularly those related to VAT and Business Rates, where Local Authorities are unable to grant themselves dispensation due to provisions in the Finance Act. Business Rates relief has not been extended to Local Authority operated markets, resulting in a significant financial burden of approximately £23 million nationally.
- 2.8 Furthermore, the campaign aims to showcase the wider value of markets by working with government and high-street partners to profile the benefits of markets and secure project funding. The fourth priority includes approaching markets management more professional through the delivery of extensive training and professional development programmes and qualifications. Lastly, the campaign focuses on improving relationships with traders, emphasising the need for effective communication and consultation between traders and operators to foster trader retention and attraction.

## **3. Local Context**

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets Council is responsible for ten street Markets across the Borough and all footways licensing for businesses.
- 3.2 The Markets in Tower Hamlets are managed under the London Local Authorities Act 1990 (LLAA) and operate a ring-fenced account. The LLAA limits what the Council can charge, and only costs associated with the market operation can be charged back as part of the trader’s license fee. This includes the management of street trading operations, enforcement, street cleaning around trading, waste collection and disposal, and administration.

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<sup>2</sup> [Markets-First-2023.pdf \(nabma.com\)](https://www.nabma.com/Markets-First-2023.pdf)

- 3.3 Street Markets locations include - Bethnal Green, Brick Lane, Columbia Road, Crisp Street, Petticoat Lane, Scatler Street, Roman Road, Roman Road Square, Watney Street, and Whitechapel Road.
- 3.4 The Council also has markets outside of the LLA to allow third-party operators to run markets, for example through the Arts, Parks, and Events Service, such as Victoria Park Market. Operators of these Markets are allowed to have a more flexible approach to their management. They do not fall under the scope of this challenge session.
- 3.5 The borough has always been home to a rich array of markets, each with its unique character and offer to the public. Markets like Whitechapel, Roman Road, Bethnal Green, and Watney Market have historically catered towards the borough's diverse immigrant communities. Columbia Road is famously recognised for its weekly flower market, whilst Brick Lane Market and Petticoat Lane Food Court reflect the dynamic and evolving spirit of the new East End.
- 3.6 With recent developments such as the opening of Crossrail/Elizabeth Line in 2022, the successful relocation of the Town Hall to the former Royal London Hospital building in early 2023 and plans to develop a new life science campus at Barts NHS and Queen Mary University, the Whitechapel Road Improvement Plan has commenced delivering improvements to Whitechapel Market, which sits in the heart of such transformation.
- 3.7 Despite it being a few years since the public consultation in 2021 which informed the Council's first Markets Improvement Plan in 2022<sup>3</sup>, this scrutiny challenge session revealed that many of the priorities identified then, particularly around business support and enterprise, commodities, enforcement, and operation persist today. However, it also highlights the need for a refreshed Markets Strategy to ensure that these priorities are actively pursued under a renewed vision for Markets in a post-pandemic world.
- 3.8 The Mayor of London produced a report entitled 'Understanding London's Markets'<sup>4</sup> in 2017 which outlined opportunities for markets to thrive. Many of the recommendations on how markets can adapt and respond to regional challenges remain relevant today and provide a useful framework through which current market initiatives and strategies can be enhanced to meet the evolving needs of communities.

## 4. Recent Market Improvements in Tower Hamlets

- 4.1 Through the evidence-gathering process, scrutiny noted a series of recent market improvements. These include:
- 4.2 **Pilot of social media** – Through an assisted employment scheme, the council employed an apprentice to work with the market service for three months to set up social media accounts for the markets, primarily on Instagram and Facebook. This temporary investment led to increased exposure for the street markets across London.
- 4.3 **Delivered training course on market trading** – In October 2023, the Market Service hosted Rebel Business School to deliver a free five-day training course on market trading. The course focused on giving participants the knowledge and skills necessary

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<sup>3</sup> [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s199317/LBTH Markets Improvement Plan 2022-2027.pdf](https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s199317/LBTH_Markets_Improvement_Plan_2022-2027.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [gla\\_markets\\_report\\_short\\_web.pdf](https://gla_markets_report_short_web.pdf) (london.gov.uk)

to launch and expand a business in the borough. As an incentive, upon completion of the course, participants were offered an opportunity to participate in a Christmas Market, a free market license and discounted rates for pitches. The course attracted over 50 participants a day and within 6 weeks of completion, 12 individuals began trading. Additionally, the training instilled confidence and skills in an additional 30 participants, who expressed an interest in pursuing careers as a market trader.

- 4.4 **Improved waste management at Whitechapel** – The Markets Service has started an improvement in the way that waste is managed and collected at Whitechapel. Operatives on the street are overseeing the disposal of waste from market traders into bins, though the separation of commercial, market, and residential waste remains a concern.
- 4.5 **Introduction of pilot stall at Whitechapel** – In Summer 2023, a pilot stall was introduced and tested by traders in Whitechapel, but feedback from traders indicated that it was ‘too tall and too small’. A new version is currently being designed, using learning from the pilot phase to inform the revised design. The Market Service plans to convene an awayday with traders to assess the suitability of the revised stall.
- 4.6 **New trader policy at Whitechapel** – The Markets Service introduced a new trader policy in Whitechapel to restrict the duplication of commodities sold. This policy was developed in response to feedback from a public consultation on markets in 2021, which showed that the products on offer were a key factor preventing respondents from shopping at markets in the borough.
- 4.7 **Consulted on changes at Markets** – The Market Service consulted on changes to Whitechapel pitch sizes which will recognise the larger pitch size to the red lines, and at Columbia Road for the designation of an additional parked street to continue with the revised and improved layout that was rolled out through Covid.
- 4.8 **Creation of reusable food containers** – Reusable food containers have been created for Petticoat Lane Food Court, although its rollout is pending. However, following from legislation in October 2023, which prohibited businesses from providing certain single-use plastic items, all food traders have transitioned to recyclable or compostable packaging, eliminating plastic containers and cutlery. Despite this, plans to roll out reusable food containers persist to continue promoting sustainable practices.
- 4.9 **Award for Petticoat Lane Food Court** – Petticoat Lane Food Court won the Best Small Speciality Market Award at the Great British Market Awards 2024. The success of Petticoat, from its humble beginnings to winning the award, highlights the great potential of food stalls in Tower Hamlets; there should be encouragement and support for the expansion of exciting food offers across the borough.

*Case Study for Success: “Petticoat Food Court is a specialist food market that started in 2018 with just 3 traders. Now it has 20 traders on its 5 days a week of trading with 100% occupancy and a long waiting list. It is described as a go-to place to visit that has changed the dynamics of the area, saved the long-established local market and offers affordable prices, friendly traders, meticulous management and quality food. The street markets are full of office workers, locals, and visitors experiencing food from around the world. The operator has worked with the local BID to run place promotions and events to boast dwell time. The market is also attractive to younger food traders who use social media to show live food preparation, cooking, and serving, with one trader having over 24,000 followers on TikTok.”*

**-NABMA**

- 4.10 Whilst scrutiny acknowledges these improvements, evidence gathered from the site visits and external witnesses still highlights that there are a series of challenges facing Street Markets. These include challenges around trader facilities, antisocial behaviour, waste management, and an ageing trader population. It is recognised that Markets Service operates within a ring-fenced account, and long-term investment and phased programs will need to be recognised to pursue improvements and activities that sit outside of the market's core operation. This will better enable the service to build upon some of the improvements covered in this section.
- 4.11 The following section covers the key findings and recommendations of scrutiny in response to the challenge session. In addition to creating an action plan response to the recommendations, scrutiny advises the Council to develop a renewed long-term vision and strategy for markets in Tower Hamlets.

## 5. Key Findings and Recommendations

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### Theme 1: Market Infrastructure and Trader Facilities

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**R1 That the Street Trading and Markets Service produce a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covering the status of all Street Markets, including land ownership updates and infrastructure gaps, along with corresponding work plans, to enable Scrutiny to track progress.**

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- 5.1 Tower Hamlets has experienced significant levels of regeneration in recent years, particularly driven by the significant need for housing. Consequently, the Council has lost pockets of land that was used by the traders to third parties like Housing Associations.
- 5.2 Following changes in land ownership, Scrutiny seeks further clarity on the status of all Street Markets. This report should provide updates on land ownership and outline what infrastructure improvements are needed at each Street Market, along with any work plans to address them. This would support Scrutiny to monitor progress and have stronger oversight over how Street Markets can be improved to benefit the community. This report should clarify where the Council has direct authority to deliver improvements, whilst identifying the stakeholders and landowners the Council must collaborate with to ensure infrastructure improvements are implemented and spaces for traders are protected. It would also be useful to include any identified future development proposals in the vicinity of markets that can be used to seek out opportunities for improvements, as per the Local Plan policy. The Committee would like to review this as part of their work programme next year.

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### Theme 1: Market Infrastructure and Trader Facilities

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**R2 That the Council allocates resources and works with landowners to prioritise the provision of toilets, storage spaces, and free Wi-Fi in street markets, ensuring traders are supported and enhancing the functionality and maintenance of these vital community spaces.**

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- 5.3 There is a clear need for improved trader facilities like access to toilets, improved storage space, and free Wi-Fi in Street Markets. This would support the sustainability of Street Markets as they contribute to the welfare and operational efficiency of traders.

- 5.4 The Chairman of the WTA highlighted the absence of accessible toilet facilities for traders within Whitechapel Market. This causes a real inconvenience to traders and their support networks, and exacerbates safety concerns, as traders are often forced to leave their stalls to attend to their basic needs, increasing the likelihood of theft. Another example raised by Scrutiny was the absence of accessible toilet facilities in Chrisp Street Market and Petticoat Lane, which too is affecting the welfare of traders and raises concerns around the overall provision of toilet facilities in the borough.
- 5.5 Scrutiny recommends that facilities be identified for toilets in surrounding infrastructure adjacent to the existing Street Markets. The Street Trading and Markets Service should be supported by Asset Management to review potential arrangements that could be established to provide further access to toilet facilities. There should also be continuous engagement with other landowners and landlords to explore opportunities for bringing or returning additional toilet facilities for trader use, such as the facilities at Chrisp Street. The traders should also continue to liaise with adjacent businesses to acquire trader passes for toilet access.
- 5.6 Access to storage was raised as another key concern for traders. For example, at Whitechapel Market, traders are currently using private storage and are required to push their trolleys across the main road. As the current facility has no ramp, trolleys must physically be pushed in. The storage is also located near a school, creating further health and safety concerns. It was also noted that the Asset Management team manages storage around Roman Road and Watney, and they are underutilised as they have been poorly maintained. This not only undermines traders' confidence in the market environment but also results in increased vehicle journeys, increased operational costs and environmental impact. The inaccessibility of local storage also serves as a barrier to entry for new traders.
- 5.7 Scrutiny noted that due to the high volume of development in Tower Hamlets across the years, the Council has lost lots of little pockets of land that had been used for traders' storage. The Council should support traders by bringing storage the Council already owns back into optimal use, by, for example, working with Asset Management to improve the condition of storage facilities. Additionally, the Council should be engaging with local landlords to secure additional storage spaces tailored to traders' needs. Policy TC4 Markets, in the Council's new Draft Planning Policy Framework<sup>5</sup> aims to support and protect existing Markets, whilst pursuing opportunities for adjacent development proposals in the vicinity of Markets to provide spaces that support traders, such as storage and toilets. This policy should be used to secure additional storage units, for example through S106 agreements.
- 5.8 Lastly, Market facilities should be further upgraded by providing free WiFi access to support businesses. The ability to take card payments is important to traders and it would provide convenience for shoppers. Members also felt it could be used to increase footfall by assisting customers to purchase tickets online for parking in locations adjacent to the Street Markets. In line with data protection legislation, organisations may collect and process the online browsing habits, activities, and behaviours of those who consent to the terms and conditions of the free WiFi, which could provide some useful information on the preferences and interests of those who visit our markets.
- 5.9 As the Street Trading and Markets Service is a ringfenced service, any improvement works, or additional provision would need to be linked to a phased programme and wider sources of funding.

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<sup>5</sup> [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s225344/Appendix.1 Tower Hamlets Regulation 18 Draft New Local Plan.pdf](https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s225344/Appendix.1TowerHamletsRegulation18DraftNewLocalPlan.pdf)

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## Theme 2: Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime: Deterrence and Reporting

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### **R3 That the Council's Community Safety Service works with the Street Trading and Markets Service to enhance crime deterrence in Street Markets. This includes increasing the presence of THEOs on Markets, equipping traders with radios to better exchange intelligence, and establishing a Police Partnership Taskforce based at the Town Hall for rapid response to crime incidents in Whitechapel Market.**

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- 5.10 Traders identified anti-social behaviour as a significant concern in Street Markets, particularly in Whitechapel Market, attributed to its dense layout and heavy footfall. Traders from the WTA raised concerns over criminal activities in the Market, including drug dealing, public urination, defecation, and vomiting on pitches. Scrutiny further noted the disproportionate targeting of women and children by pickpockets, creating an intimidating atmosphere for them. Traders shared their intelligence on the methods employed by pickpockets, such as disguising themselves by wearing Hijabs to blend into the crowd, thereby making it significantly harder for traders to apprehend them. The Chair of the LSTBG highlighted that Markets across London frequently encounter the same group of pickpocket gangs, who regularly use the trains to coordinate their activities. These findings are concerning, highlighting the pressing need for interventions to ensure a safer shopping experience for all visitors.
- 5.11 Traders also reported inadequate Police response times, highlighting that by the time the Police arrive, criminals have often dispersed. Scrutiny would like to see a more permanent presence of THEOs in Street Markets, particularly Whitechapel Market. It was noted that the Council are recruiting 76 new THEOs. In light of this increased resource, Scrutiny recommends establishing a Police Partnership Taskforce based at the Town Hall to provide rapid responses to criminal activity in Whitechapel Market and deter criminals by creating the presence of heavy enforcement activity. In the site visit to Ridley Road, Scrutiny members saw the impact this could have - Hackney's Market Service have allocated vacant space in their office for Met Police Officers and Parking Enforcement Officers to work from. Frontline Market officers also wear similar uniforms to create further suspicion and doubt among criminals. The volume of uniformed officers entering and leaving the building has had success in deterring and displacing crime from the Market.
- 5.12 Scrutiny would also like to see improved intelligence sharing between THEOs, traders, and retailers to facilitate a collective response to crime and anti-social behaviour. The Chairman of the WTA raised concerns over the gap in communication between traders and THEOs, emphasising that THEOs are currently not patrolling at times when criminal activity is most prevalent. He proposed a more effective use of THEOs time, suggesting that THEOs should actively engage traders to exchange intelligence and identify peak times for patrolling. By identifying peak times of criminal activity, resources can be strategically allocated to times and hotspots where they are most needed, maximising impact in deterring crime.
- 5.13 To facilitate better intelligence exchange, Scrutiny recommends that the Council pilot the distribution of a handful of radios to senior traders and association leads who can identify regular criminals, establishing a direct link between them, the THEOs services, and CCTV operators. The select few traders who are loaned radios would require training and support to ensure they can effectively balance reporting any crimes with managing their trade duties. Done correctly, this can offer an additional layer of surveillance, empowering traders to report incidents that may not be immediately

visible to CCTV cameras or patrolling THEOs. Traders being equipped with radios has the potential to act as a psychological deterrent to criminals, showcasing that the Council is sharing responsibility with traders to maintain safety and security, particularly for women and children. Scrutiny noted that the Street Trading and Market Service attempted to get resources for in the past and recommends revisiting this initiative in collaboration with the Community Safety Service.

- 5.14 During the challenge session, Scrutiny noted that traders and retailers in RBKC exchange intelligence on a WhatsApp group chat. Traders and retailers on the High Street in Tower Hamlets should also be empowered to better exchange information on criminal activity.

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## **Theme 2: Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime: Deterrence and Reporting**

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### **R4 That the Council's Community Safety Service and Street Trading and Markets Service consistently document incidents of ASB and crime in Street Markets, whilst also enhancing the public's ability to report crimes in Street Markets by strategically placing public signage and integrating QR codes for streamlined reporting.**

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- 5.15 Whilst the incidence of theft and anti-social behaviour in Street Markets is a source of concern for traders and customers alike, scrutiny was informed by traders and the Chairman of the WTA that a significant amount of crime goes unreported by customers. This may be attributed to language barriers or a lack of awareness regarding the process of reporting a crime. Consequently, data may not accurately reflect the true prevalence and patterns of crime in Street Markets, making it significantly harder to present the issue effectively to the police and demand additional resources to address crime.
- 5.16 Scrutiny underscores the need for establishing a streamlined mechanism for traders and the public to communicate crimes to the Council to ensure resources are allocated where crime is the greatest. In the challenge session, it was highlighted that the Markets Service in RBKC streamlines crime reporting by providing QR codes to traders and the public due to the importance of ensuring incidents are logged online. Scrutiny recommends that a similar approach should be employed in Tower Hamlets to support reporting. The Council should also provide support to traders in signposting members of the public to report crimes. Scrutiny also noted a potential idea for the Council to develop a smartphone app aimed at enhancing reporting for safer communities. They hope that they can revisit progress on this in the future.
- 5.17 Additionally, enforcement officers should be regularly documenting information and actions they have taken in response to incidents, such as issuing a fixed penalty notice. This would allow the council to build data on the prevalence of crime across all Street Markets. During the site visit to Ridley Road, Scrutiny members learnt that enforcement officers in Hackney regularly completed ASB forms to log incidents and regularly reviewed this at Task Scheme meetings with the Police and other enforcement agencies, resulting in the deployment of additional Police resources to combat crime hotspots and displace it out of the Markets.
- 5.18 Increased reporting mechanisms should be complemented by strategically placing public signage in Street Markets and laminated posters in stalls, to act as a psychological deterrent for criminals and shoplifter gangs, whilst also promoting increased vigilance and collective responsibility among the public and traders. Across all Markets, Street Trading and Markets Service should consult traders to determine ideal locations for public signage.

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### Theme 3: Waste Management and Enforcement

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**R5 That the Council's Communities Directorate strengthens waste management on Street Markets by ensuring the separation of Commercial and Market Waste and integrating a unified enforcement approach as part of the ongoing review of THEOs to address dumping practices in Markets.**

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- 5.19 Scrutiny members and traders raised concerns about waste collection in Street Markets. Numerous residents and visitors frequent our iconic Street Markets daily, and it's crucial that they are clean and well-maintained to reflect positively on the borough's image and to ensure a pleasant experience for all.
- 5.20 Scrutiny raised concerns about the health and safety hazards posed to the public by uncollected waste on markets, such as those passing through on bicycles in Whitechapel, particularly during windy conditions. The Chairman of the WTA raised traders' concerns around the separation of commercial, Market, and Residential waste. Traders want more transparency regarding the use of their license fees to ensure the effective collection and disposal of waste.
- 5.21 Scrutiny was informed that a commercial waste vehicle would be introduced to exclusively collect commercial waste. This is designed to ensure the separation of commercial and market waste. Residential waste is collected at night separately. Waste enforcement on Street Markets was identified as an area which needed improvement. Scrutiny recommends stronger and more efficient enforcement and monitoring measures for businesses that are incorrectly disposing of their waste. As part of the ongoing review of THEOs in Housing, Safer Communities, and the Public Realm, Scrutiny recommends the introduction of one streamlined course for strengthened enforcement to address incorrect dumping practices - particularly in hotspots like Markets which are situated within residential and commercial settings. This would ensure that resources are used effectively to better manage and separate waste.
- 5.22 During the site visit to Ridley Road Market, Scrutiny members noted a waste management practice employed by Hackney Council. As well as using CCTV cameras around known dumping hotspots, they address the issue of commercial waste being dumped into Markets by providing bags fitted with barcodes to businesses. These bags are a different colour to the ones used for Market waste. These bags are scanned upon distribution to businesses so that if they are dumped onto Markets, the Council can directly establish which businesses have dumped the waste and either encourage them to remove it or issue a fixed penalty notice. It would be helpful to explore the feasibility of this.
- 5.23 The Council must offer ongoing guidance and education to traders on effective waste management and sustainability practices. Traders keeping waste costs minimal enables the Council to make savings and charge lower fees or reinvest into other areas of need. Guidance and support around the management of Waste should be included in the creation of a Traders Handbook or Welcome Pack (See Recommendation 7).

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### Theme 4: Attracting Younger Traders and Retaining Current Traders

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**R6 That the Council's Careers Service and Street Trading and Markets Service work in partnership with local schools and young adults to organise pop-up events and training sessions to attract young people to the entrepreneurial opportunities available in market trading.**

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- 5.24 According to the Street Trading and Markets Service, the majority of traders in the borough are in their late 40s to early 50s, indicating an underrepresentation of young traders. This trend aligns with national trends, as indicated by NABMA's 2022 survey which reported that only 8% of traders were under the age of 40. As the youngest borough by median age in England and Wales, the ageing trader population raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of our Markets and its ability to attract a diverse range of demographic groups in the borough.
- 5.25 Attracting younger people into Market Trading would necessitate additional funding support for training initiatives, given that this activity sits outside of the core operational activities of markets, but it has potential for a return on investment through potential improvements within the market scene. One of the key challenges identified by scrutiny was that markets in the borough were generally not changing with demographics. The Chairman of the WTA, who has been trading on the market since 1988 highlighted the notable shift in market dynamics, claiming that in recent years, there has been a noticeable transition towards catering predominantly towards a single community. This has resulted in a duplication of goods, and customers not often getting the variety they need. Bringing younger traders into the market scene has the potential to diversify the range of commodities available and introduce more innovative merchandising techniques to reinvigorate the Market scene. The Markets Manger in KBKC observed that existing traders in their markets often learn from the methods employed by younger traders, especially in skills such as marketing and merchandising. This dynamic has the potential to address the common reluctance among traders to engage in formal training programmes.
- 5.26 Younger traders may also be more inclined to promote their offer on social media – something that scrutiny noted existing traders in the borough were not sufficiently using, or regularly supported to do so by the council, in contrast to traders in neighbouring boroughs. An example of the power social media has on footfall is evident in 'Tikka Express in Petticoat Lane Food Court. The account, managed by a younger trader who regularly livestreams food preparation has over 24,000 followers on TikTok. The Scrutiny Lead saw firsthand the popularity and buzz surrounding the stall during a visit to the food court and attracting more younger traders has the potential to bring in individuals who are willing to market themselves in less traditional ways.
- 5.27 The Council's Careers Service and Street Trading and Market Service should work in partnership with local schools and colleges to attract young people to the entrepreneurial opportunities available in market trading through pop-ups and training opportunities. Not enough young people view trading as a career and as part of this engagement, there needs to be a focus on what a market trader can be and what it can offer to young people –
- “Markets are the original business incubators; as accessible open workspace, they offer a unique, low-risk opportunity for people to test business ideas and learn new skills. For many people, they provide the initial step into employment and open up routes to different types of work”.*<sup>6</sup>
- 5.28 Scrutiny heard from the Chair of the LSTBG on RBKC's approach to attracting younger traders. They run the 'New Youthquake Markets' which is promoted on Instagram. It encourages 18-30-year-olds to engage in interactive training sessions and use the public market for networking and promoting their work. As an incentive, a discounted rate of £15 a day is offered for a pitch, with further reductions available for those with

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<sup>6</sup> Understanding London's Markets Report, Greater London Authority

care experience. In comparison, a normal fee for Saturday is £47. This initiative has given many young people the skills and confidence to begin trading at other markets and builds upon the success of the National Market Traders Federation's 'Young Trader Markets' which is aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs in the markets industry.

- 5.29 In the site visit to Ridley Road, Members learnt about the Trading Places programme delivered by Hackney Council. It is a training package put together by working with experts in different fields, like Barclays, and using their Corporate Social Responsibility to deliver courses on trading. They deliver a Trading Places light version with young people who have shown entrepreneurial skills and have a teenage market process where they can sign up for a license, produce their products, and retail them in Markets. Many of the programmes' alumni have gone on to win highly commendable awards, for example at the NMTF National Young Traders Award.
- 5.30 However, infrastructure improvements will also need to be made to attract younger people into the trade. Market Managers noted that that younger traders place greater importance on a strong infrastructure offer for trading on markets, highlighting the need to drive continual improvements to infrastructure for the next generation of traders to inherit.

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#### **Theme 4: Attracting Younger Traders and Retaining Current Traders**

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##### **R7 That the Street Trading and Markets Service produce and distributes a Traders Handbook aimed at supporting existing traders and retaining new ones.**

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- 5.31 The 2022 National Survey of Markets highlighted a reduction in the number of traders on markets and a growing transient trader population, many of whom work part-time. New traders may experience a difficult time navigating some of the complex challenges associated with trading, particularly when operating alongside more established and experienced traders. Providing a trader handbook or welcome pack that outlines the Council's Street Trading and Market Service, the support available to traders, best practice trading guidelines, and clarifies expectations of traders to ensure they are not in breach of regulations would support newer traders to settle into the Market and make the most of their pitch. The diverse background of our trader population highlights the importance of ensuring accessibility in terms of language for any information materials.
- 5.32 Hackney Markets 'Market and Street Trading Handbook', available to traders in both digital and print format is an example of good practice. Following the site visit to Ridley Road Market, scrutiny members recommended that a similar offer should be provided to traders in Tower Hamlets.

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#### **Theme 5: Improving Communication between Portfolio Areas**

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##### **R8 That the Cabinet Leads for the Jobs, Skills, and Growth Portfolio and the Environment and Climate Emergency Portfolio implement an effective and ongoing communication mechanism, to enhance coordination and address market challenges more holistically. This should incorporate an effective feedback loop involving officers and traders.**

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- 5.33 NABMA emphasised the fundamental importance of elected members to Markets, particularly the role they play in empowering and making sure markets are at the heart of service delivery, regeneration, investment, and local strategies.

- 5.34 The Lead Members for Job, Skills, and Growth and Environment and Climate Emergency have an area of responsibility for Markets in Tower Hamlets within their respective portfolios. Having considered the views of both Lead Members, scrutiny found that one of the key issues is the gap in communication between both portfolio areas due to the crossover in responsibilities.
- 5.35 Scrutiny recommends the implementation of an effective and ongoing communication mechanism between both Lead Members to facilitate consistent exchange of information and collaboration on market-related issues. This would support the Cabinet Leads to improve coordination and ensure a more holistic approach to decision-making, budget, and planning preparation, and the implementation and monitoring of all economic and public realm activities in relation to Markets. Having also gathered evidence on concerns around anti-social behaviour and crime in Markets, it would also be useful to ensure that the Cabinet Lead for Safer Communities is also engaged where necessary as part of a more uniform approach to driving improvements in Markets.
- 5.36 An effective communication mechanism between both Lead Members should also incorporate a feedback loop that would ensure that intelligence and input from officers and traders who are on the frontline navigating Market challenges are integrated into decision-making processes.

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Name of Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Municipal Year: 2023-24

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
19.06.2023	1. OSC requests the service to provide clarity on the £24 million being sent to GLA from the right to buy receipts and provide the committee with the source of this claim.	Karen Swift Rupert Brandon	OSC Chair	24.07.2023	In terms of financials, the council physically returned the below amount to DLUHC (MHCLG at the time):  (includes 24 Million plus Interest) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018/19 - £2.2m</li> <li>• 2019/20 - £18.7m</li> <li>• 2020/21 - £5.5m</li> </ul>
	2. OSC requests action being taken by LBTH to support businesses and traders in Roman Road Market	Simon Baxter Ellie Kershaw	OSC Chair	24.07.2023	We have a borough-wide training/grants programme, which isn't aimed specifically at Roman Road, but businesses and market traders located there are able to participate.  <i>Any business or market trader located in one of our high streets, including Roman Road, can benefit from a support programme aimed at supporting high street businesses and market traders to establish new income streams and improve their performance. The programme is managed by the High Streets Team and involves businesses participating in a tailored training programme, a combination of 1-2-1 bespoke support and online training, followed by an opportunity to apply for a small grant upon completion of the training. The programme is currently in delivery, and to date 22 businesses have participated in the training programme, of a target of 65. The target number of grants to be distributed is 55.</i>  In addition, we have a planned weeklong training course for new Market Traders in October. Once the traders are trained

					and ready to start with will launch a cohort of them at one of our Markets with Roman Road being one of those offered.
24.07.2023	1. OSC requested a note on 25% recycling was stated a previous achievement but 2017 that figure was identified and considered not accurate. OSC recollects that there was 5% drop so wants clarification what went on and what led to this happening.	Simon Baxter Director of Public Realm	OSC Chair	16.08.2023	See appendix 1
	2. OSC requested a note on the details of financial support available for business traders and market traders in roman road and details on uptake	Ellie Kershaw Simon Baxter	OSC Chair	16.08.2023	<p>Of the 22 businesses who have participated in the business training and grant program to date, 6 are located in Roman Road East town centre.</p> <p>In addition, The High Streets Team ran a food hygiene training programme. Since May 2022, 1 business located in Roman Road East town centre has benefitted from the support.</p> <p><u>Eligibility Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business must be a registered UK business or sole trader with a high street business with a retail frontage (i.e., not an office-based or online business located within a high streets) within the borough's designated high street locations, or a council market trader trading at one of the borough's 10 street markets.</li> <li>• The business must have been trading for a minimum of 6 months.</li> <li>• The business must have less than 50 employees.</li> <li>• The business must not exceed Subsidy Control Allowance (formerly State Aid) threshold of £335,000 over 3-years.</li> </ul>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business cannot be in difficulty i.e., in administration, insolvent or subject to striking off notice.</li> <li>• The business cannot use the grant to support existing business as usual activity. E.g., buying stock</li> <li>• The business must commit to completing the tailored business support programme and take part in evaluation of the programme in advance of receiving the grant.</li> </ul> <p><u>Award Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants will be distributed in line with Mayoral manifesto and strategic plan 2022 – 2026 Priority 4 and it is planned the award criteria and appraisal of businesses addresses the following points (including but not limited to):             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The distribution of grants will take a ‘whole borough’ approach and reflect the size and makeup of each high street location. The number of grants awarded in each high street location will reflect the total number of retail units, as well as the type of businesses to avoid a concentration of funding for one sector or in one high street.</li> <li>○ The grant will enable the business to adapt their business model by developing an existing or establishing a new income stream. Examples of this may include:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To purchase or upgrade equipment. E.g., purchase a new coffee machine.</li> <li>• To upskill and gain accreditation to authenticate the service offered. E.g., Barista training for staff.</li> <li>• To deliver a new healthy or sustainable product line.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• The grant appraisal will account for the impact of Covid-19 on the businesses i.e., previous access to Government or Council support or the sectoral impact on the business.</li> <li>• The grant’s impact will be assessed over 6-12 months with a preference for measuring additionality i.e., new jobs</li> </ul>
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					<p>created or saved, new healthy products, increase in income, business continuity and confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An EIA will be completed to assess the impact of the grants and ensure the number and type of beneficiaries reflect the borough profile.</li> </ul> <p>A marketing campaign will be carried out to ensure there is awareness of the programme and businesses have equal opportunity to participate. The marketing campaign includes proactive recruitment to every business on the 9 key high streets, and all council market traders. The campaign will include a mix of online and in-person communication methods to ensure the beneficiaries are reflective of the borough's high streets and the impact of the funding is maximised. Underrepresented groups in our business community i.e female traders will be specifically targeted. Application will be via a simple online form and support to overcome language and accessibility barriers will be provided by the Council.</p>
18.09.2023	1. The committee requested an update on the homelessness services and the 1 or 2 on-going investigations into housing options.	Karen Swift Director of Housing	OSC Chair	17.10.2023	Circulated to Members offline
	<p>Agenda Item 6.1 – Q1 Performance Report</p> <p>2. There are a number of measures in the Q1 report which do not have performance data. Can you explain why that is and when this will be provided?</p>	Stephen Bramah Head of Corporate Strategy and Improvement	OSC Chair	19.10.2023	See Appendix 2



09.10.2023	<p>Mayor's Community Grants Programme</p> <p>1. The committee requested information on advice and ask of the Kings Counsel and if the response can be shared with the Committee.</p>	Janet Fasan	OSC chair	19.10.2023	The information requested is subject to legal professional privilege and is therefore considered to be exempt from disclosure at the present time.
	The OSC requests update on NCIL budget monitoring reports	Jennifer Peters	OSC chair		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on the breakdown of grant approvals by NCIL area – Ready by mid-November</li> <li>• Report on the allocations made affordable housing and capital projects. Will be made through the next Capital Programme scheduled for Jan/ Feb Cabinet</li> </ul>
23.10.2023	<p>Missed Bins</p> <p>1. Why are we changing missed collections metric?</p>	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	<p><u>Response from Communities Directorate</u></p> <p>The service is still unable to report on the measure and have a provided a briefing note about this. The service will update the lead member about performance directly.</p>
	2. Assurance there will be data in Q2 (and can the Q1 data be reported at this stage too?)	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	Not able to report on this measure possibly until the next financial year. We can provide alternative data on performance in the narrative
	3. Can you come back with this information please?	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	A response will be provided following a meeting with the service this month.
	<p>Recycling</p> <p>1. This was the information provided in the (updated) Q2 reporting, which addresses the issues around recycling</p>	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	<p><u>What the data shows?</u></p> <p>a. The overall recycling rate as of Quarter 2 2023-24 is 15.64% (provisional). This is a downturn in our rate in Q2 2022-23 (19.0%). The target for 2023-24 is 22%. 22,562 tonnes of household waste was collected, and 3,529.13 of this was recycled, reused, or composted. This shows a 3%</p>

					<p>decrease in the total household waste collected and a 19.99% decrease in the recycling collected compared to Q2 2022/23.</p> <p>BENCHMARKING DATA: This is work in progress to find up to date info.</p> <p><u>Why is this below target?</u></p> <p>b. The main aspects affecting our recycling rate are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strike action taken by the staff in waste the waste operations team between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. This caused severe delays in the collection of residual waste and a decrease in the collection of dry recycling and organic waste. We are expecting higher tonnages of residual waste in October as part of the catch-up plan after the strike action.</li><li>2. The overall contamination rate in our dry recycling was 27.27% compared to 22.32% in 2022-23.</li><li>3. Increase in overall dwellings in the Borough has a direct impact on the amount of household residual waste generated. The total number of dwellings given by WasteDataFlow in 2023-24 is 144,240, whereas, in 2022-23 this number was 140,210. This represents a 2.87% increase from last year.</li><li>4. Infrastructure for recycling services has not kept pace with the rate of property growth and growth in waste arisings. This affects the amount of recycling collected which has led to some properties being under capacity for recycling.</li><li>5. Government regulations for the disposal of upholstered seating containing POPs (Persistent Organic</li></ol>
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					<p>Pollutants) has established that these items cannot be recycled and must be disposed of by incineration. Estimated loss of 115 tonnes per month diverted from recycling to the residual waste stream.</p> <p>6. Since June 2022, street litter collected from parks has been deemed unsuitable for recycling due to high levels of dog excrement (Estimated 65 tonnes per month diverted from recycling to residual stream).</p> <p><u>Actions taken?</u> The main projects that the service is working on that will help increase the recycling rate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will carry out targeted communication to encourage participation in the kerbside food and garden waste service and encourage kerbside properties (with storage) to order wheeled recycling bins.</li><li>• Route optimisation for the dry recycling collections: This project aims to create more efficient collection routes that will help crews to improve their performance. This will reduce current contamination problems and is expected to increase the amount of dry recycling collected.</li><li>• Flats project: This project aims to improve infrastructure at blocks of flats and on estates (e.g. the number of bins, location of the bins, signage etc) and provide educational information for the residents. Site surveys have been taking place at several blocks, and conversations are in progress with relevant managing agents. New infrastructure is rolling out and will continue to do so over the course of the year. We expect that this will encourage residents to recycle more and reduce contamination.</li></ul>
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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new contamination campaign was launched in January 2023. The main purpose is to encourage residents to recycle more and contaminate less. Communication messages from the campaign will continue to be used in 2023/24</li> <li>• We will continue to encourage recycling and waste minimisation through a programme of engagement activities and events throughout the year.</li> </ul> <p>The current measures will take some time to effect change and we forecast that the recycling rate will remain low for the rest of 2023/24. However, we anticipate that the actions taken will improve performance and positive results will start to show in 2024/25.'</p>
	Street Cleanliness Measures 2. Why is the street cleanliness measure not reported? I understand this was reported previously	Communities Directorate	OSC Chair	23.11.2023	Response from Communities Directorate  This measure was last reported on two years ago. We had a contract with an external provider grading streets as the data source for this measure. We no longer have this contract and street grading is undertaken by the service. This measure is reported in the PR operational performance report. Not sure what we can do about this in Q3. Will pick this up for reporting in the next financial year.
27.11.2023					
11.12.2023	<u>Strategic Performance Delivery Report Q2 2023/24</u> 1. What are the current stats on recycling cross contamination? 2. Has there been any improvements, if not what is	Simon Baxter			Up to and including October 2023 the average rate of contamination in the dry mixed recycling for the year to date was 28.4%. Assessment of the report for November has yet to be finalised.  Since the start of the financial year there has been a small decrease in the contamination rate in the dry mixed recycling as April and May figures were approx. 30%.

<p>the strategy to improve results?</p> <p>3. What is being done to educate residents on proper disposal of recycling waste?</p>				<p>There are many causes of contamination in the dry mixed recycling, and we are developing and implementing a comprehensive action plan that will target the main causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with landlords and managing agents to ensure recycling bins are not abused or used for the disposal of non-recyclable waste.</li> <li>• Working with managing agents to improve the quality of the recycling facilities at blocks of flats so there is enough recycling capacity and good signage.</li> <li>• Providing Caretaker training to ensure Caretakers know what items can and can't be recycled and how to manage the recycling bins better.</li> <li>• Working with community and faith groups to continue to assist residents to understand what items can and can't be recycled.</li> </ul> <p>Using social media platforms to push out recycling messages to residents. These social media messages include short clips showing how to recycle correctly.</p>
<p><u>Strategic Performance Delivery Report Q2 2023/24</u></p> <p>1. How many URS trucks are there and how many are in reserves?</p> <p>2. What is the contract for URS trucks maintenance?</p> <p>3. Has there been a new URS truck ordered if not when is it that expected?</p> <p>4. Where is the route optimisation process at?</p>				<p>See Appendix 3 for response</p>

	<p>5. What are the current strategies to improve recycling?</p> <p>6. What is the total tonnage of recycling contaminated during the waste strike?</p>				
	<p><u>Budget Monitoring Q2 2023-24</u></p> <p>7. Why did they make the decision of reviewing the attendance threshold and not explore extending it out to those children who are not eligible because of their household family income and attend school regularly and meet the 95 percent attendance criteria.</p> <p>This way the council can still spend the available funding instead of rewarding those who do not attend regularly.</p> <p>8. Will the council consider reviewing this further and award those children in the above category as there is some remaining funding available?</p>	Lisa Fraser			<p>For EMA, the attendance threshold reduction option opened a significantly higher number of potential applicants to be awarded the scheme and was the quickest way to capture more applicants. This grant is to support those applicants from low-income households, hence why the threshold was set at £25k.</p> <p>The revised attendance target was in place for application round 2022/23 which is now closed.</p>
	<p><u>Budget Monitoring Q2 2023-24</u></p> <p>9. How much of the £7 million variance could be attributed to the staffing issues there have</p>				<p>The overspend within the Housing Options service is not related to staffing. The forecast spend on staff is in line with budgets and no over or under spend is being projected. The budget pressure relates to the increase in T.A. numbers,</p>

	been in the Housing Options Service over the past few months?				increasing the use of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation and commercial hotels. This results in a large Housing Benefit Subsidy loss.																						
	10. What is the overspend on the Temporary Accommodation, and what proportion of the overspend is due to Temporary Accommodation?				<p>An adverse variance of £2.7m is forecast for Temporary Accommodation after budgeted reserve drawdowns and the use of one-off homelessness prevention top up grant. The overspend relates to increasing numbers in T.A. and the lack of move on options within the Private Rented market. This is resulting in an increased use of bed and breakfast and commercial hotel accommodation at greater cost. A high-level breakdown of the budget position is shown below.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Subjective Analysis</b></th> <th><b>Variance – Adverse / (Favourable) £m</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Staffing Costs</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accommodation Costs</td> <td>4.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bad Debt Provision</td> <td>1.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HB Income on Placements</td> <td>(6.6)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Variance from Core Activity</b></td> <td><b>(0.6)</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing Benefit Subsidy Loss</td> <td>7.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Variance before Reserve Drawdowns &amp; Unbudgeted Grant</b></td> <td><b>6.7</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Homeless Prevention Top Up Grant</td> <td>(1.5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Drawdown from Reserves</td> <td>(2.5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Variance after Reserve Drawdowns</b></td> <td><b>2.7</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Council incurs a Housing Benefit Subsidy loss on each placement in T.A. as the rents in Tower Hamlets and</p>	<b>Subjective Analysis</b>	<b>Variance – Adverse / (Favourable) £m</b>	Staffing Costs	-	Accommodation Costs	4.5	Bad Debt Provision	1.5	HB Income on Placements	(6.6)	<b>Variance from Core Activity</b>	<b>(0.6)</b>	Housing Benefit Subsidy Loss	7.3	<b>Variance before Reserve Drawdowns &amp; Unbudgeted Grant</b>	<b>6.7</b>	Homeless Prevention Top Up Grant	(1.5)	Drawdown from Reserves	(2.5)	<b>Variance after Reserve Drawdowns</b>	<b>2.7</b>
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					<p>neighbouring boroughs are above LHA rates. However, the Council can only claim back Housing Benefit Subsidy levels at 90% January 2011 LHA rates. Therefore the Council is spending more than it receives back from the Government on each placement. This is resulting in a pressure of £7.3m, which the service are partially mitigating within their core activities and also using additional grant and reserves.</p> <p>The more people in TA the higher the subsidy loss will be. Staff in the service work incredibly hard to prevent homelessness and avoid residents having to stay in T.A. This work has become harder to achieve due to landlords wanting properties back and terminating tenancies and shortage in the supply of move on accommodation from T.A.</p> <p>A future review of business processes and staffing structures will assist in making sure that our working methods and practices are maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness and avoid costly temporary accommodation.</p>
	11. What % of our income comes from CT and from the 70% of the Business rate collection. Has the Business rate income gone down from last years?				See attached funding summary
08.01.2024	1. How many officers and advisors in Mayor's office are employed under fixed term contract and how many are on temporary/ consultant or agency contracts?				Circulated to Members offline



	2. Did any of the mayor's office officers have had an increase in their yearly salaries? If yes how was this justified against their responsibilities?				Circulated to Members offline
Page 41	3. Mayors Advisors are on contracts that requires them to hand in time sheets and we would like a monthly pay amount for each month since they have been employed				Circulated to Members offline
	4. We would like a job description for each advisor when recruitment was happening and what are their responsibilities currently.				Circulated to Members offline
	5. What is the total amount of public money spent on mayor's advisors for year May 2022-23 and May 2023- January 2024?				Circulated to Members offline
	6. What is the total amount of expense claimed back from the council for the mayor's office for year May 2022-23 and May 2023- January 2024?				Circulated to Members offline
23.01.2024	<p>Parking Services</p> <p>1. In relation to the Management of Variable Costs, why are all costs considered fixed, and are there any potential risks or</p>	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	If this question is relating to the drawdowns from the parking reserve these 2 costs are set. These are based on the budget savings proposals approved for highways maintenance and school crossing patrol.

	challenges associated with this approach?				<p>The PMIS and TMO projects have been allocated a budget and we expect these will be delivered within set budget.</p> <p><i>In relation to the reversal of the Liveable Streets the costs, this is detailed in Cabinet report provided back in Sep 2023, please use the link for further details on Items: 6.4 &amp; 6.5 - <a href="https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/agenda-for-cabinet-on-wednesday-20th-september-2023">Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 20th September, 2023, 5.30 p.m. (towerhamlets.gov.uk)</a></i></p> <p>If this question is referring to the parking revenue account, then these would be variable costs.</p>
	2. Do you have any data on how much revenue is being generated from the school streets initiative?	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	<p>The revenue generated for school street initiative from Nov 20 (inception) to Jan 24 is approximately £1.4M.</p> <p>All reserve drawdowns are reviewed, including supporting evidence and signed off by the Head of Strategic before being considered for approval by the s151 officer.</p>
	3. In the context of the proposed drawdowns, what measures are in place to ensure transparency and accountability in the allocation of parking reserves for specific projects or commitments?	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	<p>The parking reserve is the responsibility of the Divisional Director of Public Realm. The proposed drawdowns have been approved by the Head of Parking, Mobility and Markets service as there is no budget provisions for these one-off projects.</p> <p>i.e. The TMO project involves implementing Traffic Management Orders on estate land and therefore creating both on and off-street parking enforceable under the TMA 2004.</p>
	Waste Service 1. Does the route optimisation need financial support going forward for the forth coming year?	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	<p>The municipal element of route optimisation has never had a dedicated budget that I am aware of. It may need "wrap up" funding to complete the digitalisation element of it.</p> <p>The commercial part of optimisation will require funding. The one-year funding from the Mayor's £5m Improvement plan has dedicated £130,000 for this purpose.</p>

2. How many years does the historic £500,000 of bad debt go back to?	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	According to my records, the aged debt goes back to 2012. This may need to be verified by our Internal Revenues Team										
3. Clarity on the Recruitment of staff and whether this should be from the base budget such as year 2?	Simon Baxter Corporate Director Communities	OSC Chair	31.01.2024	Recruitment to deliver the project will have to be from the £5m funding. The project will be delivered using temporary staff as it is only for one year.										
<p>Housing Options Services</p> <p>1. Number of Incentive payments to landlords in each of the last 3-4 years and how successful that has been.</p>	Paul Patterson (Interim) Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration	OSC Chair		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rent Incentives</th> <th>Amount £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2023-24 (spend to date)</td> <td>384, 671</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>483,436</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>963,092</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>906,274</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rent Incentives	Amount £	2023-24 (spend to date)	384, 671	2022-23	483,436	2021-22	963,092	2020-21	906,274
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2. Number of incentive payments to landlords to continue PRS by year.	Paul Patterson (Interim) Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration	OSC Chair		<p>The actual spend this year is £384,617. There remains an allocation of approximately £400k for this year. It is estimated that £200k will be spent. Giving an expenditure for 2023/24 short of £600k.</p> <p>Incentives will continue to be a key part of the strategy going forward to reduce bed and breakfast placements.</p>										
3. How many of the 2500 in TA are getting housing benefit and quantify the impact of	Paul Patterson	OSC Chair		<p><u>As of week 43, 29/1/24</u></p> <p>1. <b>2915</b> in TA</p>										

	those that are not on the variant from the existing budget.	(Interim) Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration			<p>2. <b>2437</b> on HB 3. <b>37</b> on UC</p> <p><b>441 are</b> not in receipt of benefit due to delays in collating and processing claims. Dedicated resources have been set aside to ensure these claims are made and processed. Weekly meetings with Housing Benefit track the progress of competed claims. To avoid applicants being placed in TA without a HB claim, applicants are required to complete a HB form before leaving the Residents Hub. This money will be reimbursed to the council once the claims are collated and processed. The variant from the existing budget is difficult to quantify as the variant is related to HB subsidy which will only be determined once the outstanding HB applications have been assessed and the total subsidy loss calculated.</p>			
Page 44	09.01.2024							
	05.02.2024							
	26.03.2024	OSC has requested more info on incentive payments to Landlords specifically on the number grants that were paid out			<p>The figures provided previously captured ALL expenditure on the cost centre for incentives to landlords. These costs included payments to individual landlords as well as payments made to Capital Letters, and costs for our annual landlord campaign.</p> <p>Tower Hamlets was a member of Capital Letters, they procured private rented accommodation to enable the council to discharge its homelessness duty, by offering settled, long-term accommodation.</p> <p>The number of <b>incentives</b> paid to <u>individual landlords</u> for the years requested is set out below alongside the total value of those <b>incentives</b>.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>FY</th> <th>Number of grants</th> <th>Value of grants</th> </tr> </thead> </table>	FY	Number of grants	Value of grants
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## Appendix 1

### Background

This briefing provides an explanation of the drop (approx. 4%) in household recycling performance between 2016/17 (27.6%) and 2018/19 (23.2%).

Up until the end of September 2017 the council's waste disposal services were provided by Veolia. As part of the contract arrangement, some residual waste streams were delivered to a "dirty MRF" in Barking (run by McGraths) in order that recyclable material could be extracted and contribute to the overall recycling performance. Under the Veolia contract, the Council was provided with monthly reports that provided all of the relevant tonnage, compositional, recycling and energy recovery and end destination information in order that the WasteDataFlow reporting could be undertaken, and the Council's recycling performance calculated.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 a new waste disposal contract commenced with Cory Environmental, through which the same residual waste streams were delivered to the dirt MRF in Barking in order to continue recovering recyclable materials from the same residual waste streams as had been the case under the Veolia contract.

At the beginning of November 2017 Cory flagged up an issue in relation to the first monthly report that they were obliged to provide. Cory's report for the first month of the contract, October 2017, indicated that the amount of waste calculated as recovered for recycling from the residual waste streams amounted to approx. 10.3% (against the baseline figure of 16.2% at the end of the Veolia contract).

### Information

As a result of this issue being flagged, a detailed analysis undertaken by Officers highlighted the causes for this drop were linked to changes in reported composition and tonnage of waste handled as part of the Waste Disposal Contract with Cory.

When combined with other issues experienced at that time, including poor recycling service delivery, lack of easy access to recycling facilities, increased property growth, increased waste growth and reduced levels of recycling participation there was a significant impact on recycling performance in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The key reasons for the change in recycling performance are set out below.

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 Key reasons for change
 

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<b>Impact of new waste disposal contract</b>	The Cory waste treatment and disposal contract deals with residual waste and operation of Yabsley Street Re-Use and Recycling Centre (RRC). The majority of residual waste is transferred via river to the Belvedere Energy from Waste (Efw) plant in Bexley. However waste from street cleansing, fly tipping, bulky waste, market waste and contaminated recycling is taken to the McGraths “dirty” Material Recycling Facility (MRF) in Barking.
<b>Changes at the “Dirty” MRF</b>	The McGraths “dirty” MRF recovers recycling from residual waste and whilst total residual waste inputs have remained constant, the level of reported recycling capture has reduced compared to when Veolia were using this facility.
<b>Changes in Waste Composition</b>	Detailed analysis and evaluation highlighted changes in the composition and reporting of recycling captured by the McGrath MRF. These changes, which had not previously been expected, have a significant impact on our reported performance.
<b>More properties &amp; waste but less recycling</b>	The impact of increased housing growth, increased waste growth, limitations on current Veolia recycling contract performance, limitation to our recycling service offer and reduced levels of actual resident participation at the time all contributed to this drop in performance.
<b>Change at Yabsley Street RRC</b>	Tighter site controls introduced by Cory reduced the tonnage of non-household waste being accepted at this site from businesses. This led to a reduction in overall residual waste and recycling tonnage compared to when Veolia operated the site.

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 Impact on recycling performance
 

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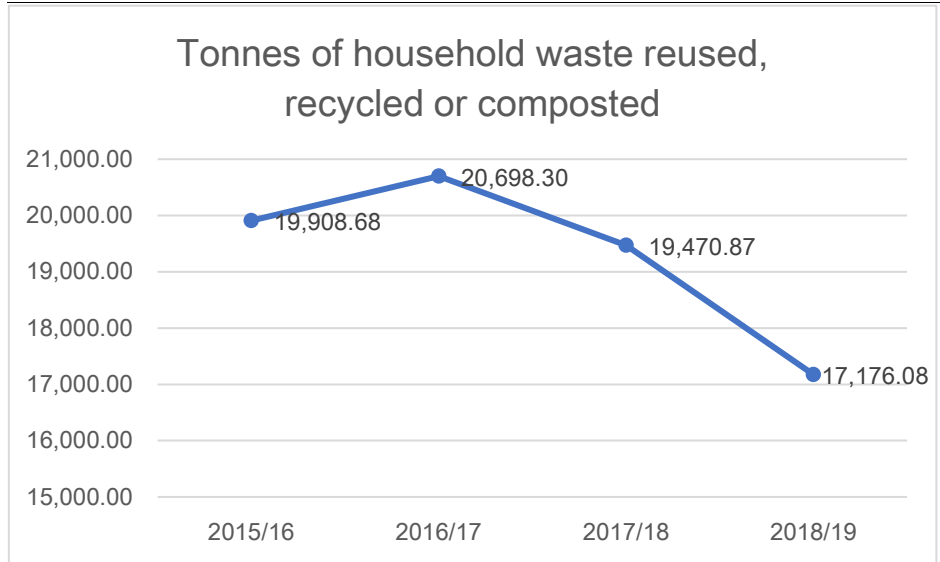
<b>23% household recycling rate in 2018/19</b>	The recycling rate of approx. 23% in 2018/19 reflected the full year impact of the changes, including the previously unexpected impacts of changes to tonnage and composition of waste collected, processed and recycled as part of our new waste disposal contract. It set a revised baseline linked to delivery of service improvement and behaviour change initiatives starting in 2018/19
<b>Less recovered via McGraths MRF</b>	Whilst the overall tonnage of waste processed via the MRF has increased the tonnage of recycling recovered from street cleansing, fly tipping, market waste, bulky waste and contaminated recycling reduced from second half of 2017/18.
<b>Change in waste composition to “Dirty” MRF inputs</b>	Cory identified this change in early 2018, highlighting differences in composition of waste compared to previously reported data from Veolia. Following investigation and review action was taken to engage independent waste consultants to carry out composition analysis of inputs.
<b>Results of composition analysis</b>	Analysis of MRF inputs by Resource Futures highlighted reductions in the amount of recyclable content across all residual waste inputs from cleansing, fly tipping, market waste and contaminated recycling. This included significant reduction in the level of paper, card and cardboard in addition to an increase in food waste and non-recyclable waste.
<b>Auditing and verification of results</b>	Detailed analysis and auditing of waste data flow inputs was carried out to validate the changes in our 2017/18 performance. This led to a re-evaluation of expected performance in 2018/19 against the original forecast.
<b>Revised recycling rate reflects reality</b>	Our revised recycling rate of approx. 23% household recycling in 2018/19 reflected the reality of the position at that time. With increasing housing growth, increased waste growth, limitations on current Veolia recycling contract performance, limitation to our potential recycling service offer,



reduced levels of resident participation and increasing levels of contamination.

Recycling tonnage data

**Total household recycling tonnage data from 2015/16 to 2018/19 shows impact on recycling performance**



The table above shows the effect of the impacts described above on the annual tonnage figures of waste that was sent for reuse, recycling and composting.

Officers provided the Cabinet Member at the time with a Briefing Paper which set out the commentary given above.

**Appendix 2**

These are the 7 measures with missing data in the Q1 performance report along with comments from services as to the reason why and when the data is likely to be available.

Reference	Measure	Directorate	Q1 Outturn	Q1 Performance Commentary
KPI 003	Percentage of homelessness cases prevented or relieved	Housing & Regeneration	No data currently	This figure is reported in arrears as validated data for Q1 is set to be published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in Q3.

## Scrutiny Action Log 23-24

KPI 012	Number of primary school pupils in KS2 receiving council-funded FSM	Children's Services	No data currently	This figure is delayed for reasons that include staff absence (illness and training). It is anticipated that the data will be available by the end of September (29/09) at the latest.
KPI 013	% of primary school pupils in KS2 receiving council-funded FSM	Children's Services	No data currently	This figure is delayed for reasons that include staff absence (illness and training). It is anticipated that the data will be available by the end of September (29/09) at the latest.
KPI 025	Rate of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice system	Children's Services	No data currently	This data is published nationally by the Youth Justice Board and will not be available until end September 2023.
KPI 026	% of young people that re-offend	Children's Services	No data currently	This data is published nationally by the Youth Justice Board and will not be available until end September 2023.
KPI 044	Adults with substance misuse treatment need who successfully engage in community-based structured treatment following release from prison	Health and Social Care	No data currently	Not yet published by National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) yet for Q1 2023-24. The reports are due to be published on the 28th of September 2023.
KPI 034	Number of missed collections per 100,000 households	Communities	No data currently	The waste service are not able to report on the missed collections per 1000,00 measure due to issues with Whitespace. Whilst our advice is that we revert back to the number of missed collections measure used in 2022/23 as it was previously approved by Cabinet, the service are of the view that this does not give an accurate reflection of performance.

Appendix 3

**1. How many URS trucks are there and how many are in reserves?**

We have a total of four URS vehicles. We operate two rounds from Monday to Friday, using two vehicles, while keeping the other two as reserves. It should be noted that the newest of these vehicles is 3 years old, two are 6 years old and the fourth is 12 years old. We expect to start procurement for 4 new vehicles in Jan 2024, with expected delivery by April 2025.

**2. What is the contract for URS trucks maintenance?**

We have a contract with Dennis Eagle who are a specialised waste vehicle manufacturer and maintenance provider. We conduct daily monitoring to ensure that waste operations have two vehicles available every day. In recent months, this has been successfully achieved.

Dennis Eagle also employs specialised crane contractors, who inspect the cranes more frequently than usual. This proactive approach helps us to promptly address any defects or damages.

**3. Has there been a new URS truck ordered if not when is it that expected?**

We are in the process of securing funding for four new URS vehicles. If successful, we can commence procurement in January 2024. We expect the new vehicles to arrive by the start of the 2025/26 financial year.

#### 4. **Where is the route optimisation process at?**

All routes have been checked and reviewed by the service and sent to an external partner to make the changes to frequencies, provide draft outputs for the new routes (maps) and edit this data in a format which can be uploaded onto Whitespace. The final draft of the route optimisation plan is being drafted for early January with a phased rollout of new routes; completion is expected at the end of this financial year.

#### 5. **What are the current strategies to improve recycling?**

At the Cabinet meeting in September 2023 the council's latest Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) was approved for the period 2023 to 2025. This document sets out the first phase of ambitious plans to deliver a clean and green future for Tower Hamlets. We are committed to delivering improvements over the next 5 years, with initial investment in service re-design, service delivery and community engagement.

Key elements focused on improving recycling from the RRP are listed below:

- We are investing £2.1M CIL to implement the flats recycling package of measures at blocks of flats and estates using best practise recommendations from ReLondon studies to improve infrastructure and communication across the borough.

The project will improve recycling bin provision at properties with shared recycling bins; and improve residents access to recycling facilities. It will also reduce contamination, by upgrading existing recycling bins to ones with lockable reverse aperture lids. Communications will be improved, with instructional signage going up around recycling and refuse bins, improved bin stickers, leaflets going out to residents, reusable recycling bags being made available and engagement with TRAs, crew, caretaking staff and managing agents.

- We are making other improvements to services including delivering recycling sacks to flats above shops and low-rise properties, and we have recently partnered with the charity TRAIID to offer on-request collection of textiles direct from residents' homes.

- Communication about recycling and waste reduction is continuous and content is regularly reviewed and refreshed. The “Let’s rethink it!” recycling campaign has been running during 2023, focussing on behaviour change to increase recycling and reduce contamination.

Tower Hamlets has also been taking part in the pan-London sustainable food campaign, which has a focus on minimising food waste and food waste recycling. We are also preparing to re-promote the kerbside food waste collection service in 2024, to drive up participation rates.

- We are delivering a programme of recycling and waste reduction engagement work which includes education sessions, community stalls, workshops and events. We are working with ReLondon to organise a managing agent (MA) engagement event in Quarter 4, with the aim of encouraging MAs to take more responsibility for improving recycling performance at the properties they manage.

We are working closely with schools in Tower Hamlets to ensure they have sufficient recycling bins to recycle as much as possible. In addition to providing a comprehensive package of education sessions to engage with pupils to educate them on the importance of reducing waste and recycling.

We are committed to working with community groups to further develop our recycling offer and waste minimisation offer. This includes working with a community group to deliver a community composting pilot.

Our Recycling Champions scheme has been running for two years and is a steadily growing a network of residents who help support objectives and bring an authentic community voice to recycling messages.

### **6. What is the total tonnage of recycling contaminated during the waste strike?**

The waste services strike commenced on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September and lasted through until 26<sup>th</sup> September inclusive.

Up to the point at which the strike commenced, the average tonnage of dry mixed recycling collected was approximately 270 tonnes per week.

During the strike only 5.42 tonnes of dry mixed recycling waste delivered to the Materials Recovery Facility.

The average monthly dry mixed recycling tonnage for the months April to August 2023 was 1158.25 tonnes. The following table sets out the total dry mixed recycling tonnage for September and October 2023.

Dry mixed recycling tonnage September	885.56 tonnes
Dry mixed recycling tonnage October	1296.42 tonnes

- September tonnage was short of the monthly average by 272.69 tonnes whereas,
- October tonnage was 138.17 tonnes above the monthly average.

As such, there appears to have been a net loss of 134.52 tonnes of dry mixed recycling across the two-month period.

The proportion of tonnage of dry mixed recycling across the 5 MRF gate fee bands for the months of September and October (shown as a percentage):

Month	Sep 2023	Oct 2023
Level 1: 0% to 5%	1.7%	0.5%
Level 2: 6% to 15%	24.5%	23.5%
Level 3: 16% to 25%	65.7%	65.2%
Level 4: 26% to 50%	5.6%	9.0%
Level 5: over 50%, rejected loads	2.5%	1.7%

<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
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The profiles for the two months are similar but higher proportion in level 4 in October than in September.

The average monthly contamination rates for September and October are as follows:

September 2023	26.53%
October 2023	29.52%

It is difficult to attribute a particular increase in the rate of contamination to the strike action, but it can be seen that October average contamination level is three percentage points higher than the level for September. The net loss of tonnage suggests that a quantity of recycling may have been too contaminated to be delivered to the MRF and was disposed of as residual waste or may have been placed in residual waste bins (by caretakers/residents) and therefore lost into the residual waste stream.