

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2019

MP701 - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

Councillor Dipa Das (Chair)
Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Andrew Wood

Co-opted Members Present:

Anne Ambrose Tenant Representative

Other Councillors Present:

Mayor John Biggs
Councillor Sirajul Islam

Others Present:

Pam Bhamra Chair THHF

Officers Present:

Abidah Kamali	– Policy Manager Housing
Anne Sutcliffe	– Divisional Director Property & Major Programmes
Charles Griggs	– Head of Community Safety
Rushena Miah	– Committee Clerk
Simon Hall	– Interim Head of Growth
Sripriya Sudhakar	– Head of Regeneration
Steve Crawley	– Civil Protection Co-ordinator
Una Bedford	– Strategy and Policy Officer
Vicky Clarke	– Divisional Director Growth & Enterprise

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Co-opted member Moshin Hamim and Councillor Shah Ameen.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None recorded.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED:

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. ACTIONS LOG

RESOLVED:

1. To note the actions log.

5. COUNCIL'S EMERGENCY PLANNING/RESPONSE PROCEDURE

The Committee received a presentation from Charles Griggs (Head of Community Safety).

Following the presentation there was a discussion on how incidents were classified as 'major' or 'low risk'. Officers explained that a 'scale up scale down approach' was used and this meant that all incidents were responded to using the same approach regardless of the severity of the issue.

Members cited the example of a recent gas leak at Limeharbour and explained to officers that the situation was mismanaged with elected councillors prevented from accessing the site and little communication updates regarding the incident.

Officers explained that they had publicised the incident via twitter and sent a briefing note to elected councillors. Local authority officers were also on the ground to provide a briefing to residents. They said it was not considered a major incident and the fire brigade advised people should stay put. Officers said it was an unusual event and acknowledged that lessons were learnt from the incident.

There was a discussion on the challenges of identifying residents and vulnerable people who lived in new private owned blocks or hotels. Officers said the fire brigade were working with landlords to install emergency contact boxes on private premises.

A Member highlighted the importance of landlords being part of the communications strategy to help calm people down and take action jointly with authorities.

There was a discussion on the fire brigade having the appropriate point of contact for the council and housing associations. It was noted that the fire brigade were often given out of hours repair lines and spoke to people who were not trained to deal with major incidents. The Chair of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum said she was willing to work with the council to provide

appropriate emergency contacts for housing associations during emergencies.

Officers said there was a handbook being developed by the GLA which outlined the role of councillors during an incident. The guidance was tabled at the meeting in the form of an A4 document.

It was noted that managing volunteers was a heading under the new standards for dealing with a major incident further to the Grenfell incident.

Officers explained to the committee that vulnerable people could be identified via their care plans and these were looked at during emergencies. With regard to fire safety, officers said the building control team in consultation with the fire brigade determined the design and accessibility of spaces. Where there were issues with narrow roads or parking, the parking services team could be contacted to report issues.

ACTIONS:

1. For Pam Bhamra (Chair of THHF) to provide local authority officers with landlord information for emergency purposes outside of the meeting.
2. For Charles Griggs to share the emergency incident duty rota with elected councillors.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the presentation.

6. APPROACH TO REGENERATION

The Committee received the report and presentation of Mayor John Biggs and Sripriya Sudhaka (Head of Regeneration). In response to the presentation the following discussions took place.

Members asked if the planning and licensing team had been consulted during the project planning. Officers said they had been consulted although the presentation did not go into this in detail.

Members asked why the presentation did not mention the City Fringe or Isle of Dogs projects. Officers explained that those projects had been identified in the boroughs master plan and the outcomes would be identified under a different project.

It was noted the Emerson area was managed by the GLA and was a separate piece of work. The local plan would provide further details.

There was a discussion on how the East of the Borough AAP boundary was selected. Officers said they could provide members with the information.

There was a discussion on identifying and communicating social interest in the borough. Officers said the local plan aimed to deliver community engagement and community cohesion as a collective delivery outcome. Officers said they were looking into how to capture and communicate the good things happening in the borough and positively communicating them.

There was a discussion on delivering housing for those on middle incomes who were not eligible for social housing and could not afford shared-ownership. Officers acknowledged an intermediate housing product was a challenge and housing was out of reach for many on middle incomes. It was noted that housing products were not part of the regeneration work stream presented at the meeting.

ACTION:

1. Sripriya Sudhakar to provide committee members with information on how the East of the Borough AAP boundary was selected.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the report and presentation.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S POLICY ON LONDON LIVING WAGE.

The Committee received the presentation of Vicky Clarke (Divisional Director Growth) and Simon Hall (Interim Director of Growth) on the Development of the Council's Policy on London Living Wage.

Members queried why only 15% of employers were signed up to the scheme. Officers explained that many people could have been working in neighbouring boroughs or canary wharf which could skew the figure as many organisations do pay the rate but do not promote that they do.

It was noted that there appeared to be an error in the presentation. A member pointed out that the Resolution Foundation sets the rate, not the Mayor of London.

In order to encourage employers to take up the LLW Members suggested applying moral pressure on businesses. They said the council could post signs on businesses, similar to food hygiene rating notices, to inform customers whether the business was a LLW employer. Officers agreed it was a helpful idea.

It was noted that Hackney council held a celebration event each year for LLW accredited employers and this was something Tower Hamlets council replicate.

Members promoted the idea of living wage zones similar to the work taking place at Old Kent Road under the Section 106 provision. Officers said it was a good idea although they would have to consult with legal officers to better understand the council's position in such a scenario. It was noted that a

partnership driven initiative was required to promote and support LLW and that work was being done with the Unions on the topic.

Members were asked to email officers directly if they had further questions on the council's LLW policy.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the report.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were asked to provide comment on the draft scoping document for the scrutiny review topic on the Homelessness Reduction Act. Councillors requested more time to review the document. The deadline to provide comment was extended to Friday 29 November 2019, 5pm.

ACTION:

1. For Members to get in touch with Abidah Kamali with comments on the scrutiny review scoping document by 5pm, Friday 29 November 2019.

The meeting ended at 8.28 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Dipa Das
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee