

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.31 P.M. ON MONDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2021

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

Members Present:

Councillor Mohammed Pappu (Chair)*
Councillor Bex White (Vice-Chair) – Scrutiny Lead Children’s and Education
Councillor Marc Francis*
Councillor Denise Jones*
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan – Scrutiny Lead for Health and Adults
Councillor Andrew Wood*

Co-opted Members Present:

Halima Islam – Co-Optee
James Wilson – Co-Optee

Other Councillors Present:

Mayor John Biggs
Councillor Asma Islam – (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)
Councillor Candida Ronald – (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)

Apologies:

Councillor Faroque Ahmed – Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Ehtasham Haque – Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Leema Qureshi – Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance
Sharon Godman – (Director, Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Will Tuckley – Chief Executive

Officers Present:

Kevin Bartle – (Interim Corporate Director, Resources and Section 151 Officer)
Catherine Cooke – (Contract Development Manager)
Thorsten Dreyer – (Head of Intelligence and Performance)
Afazul Hoque – (Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Dan Jones – (Director, Public Realm)
Oli Kapopo – (Access to Employment (Skills match))

Daniel Kerr	– (Strategy and Policy Manager)
David Knight	– (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)
Denise Radley	– (Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community)
James Thomas f	– (Corporate Director for Children & Culture)
Nisar Visram	– (Director of Finance, Procurement & Audit)
Richard Williams	– Business Manager Operational PR

*Councillors present in person in the Committee Room. (Remaining Councillors attended from remote locations).

1. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS**

The following Members for transparency declared a potential interest in relation to:

1. **Item 9 Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions** Councillor Marc Francis due to his wife Councillor Rachel Blake being the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing; and
2. **Item 8.1 Waste and Recycling Report** Councillor Denise Jones due to her being the owner a property in Brick Lane.

2. **UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October 2021 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

3. **CHAIRS UPDATE**

Councillor Mohammed Pappu (Chair) provided the Committee with the following update:

The Chair:

- ❖ Informed the Committee that the latest COVID update information from public health had been circulated today.
- ❖ Advised the Committee that (i) he had posted a short video on Twitter to thank the residents for the contribution to the Spotlight session on liveable streets programme at the last meeting; (ii) indicated that it had been a useful and productive discussion and will look forward to reviewing the progress at a future date; (iii) had also written to Mayor Biggs on this subject putting forward the Committee's recommendations on the Liveable Streets Programme and shared these recommendations with Lead Member and Council officers; (iv)

had asked Mayor Biggs to provide a written response to the recommendation which would be circulated to the Committee.

- ❖ Advised Members that written advice had been provided as to how they can raise an issue with regard to a licensed premises to instigate a review because of potentially dangerous or irresponsible activities harming individuals, businesses, and communities.

4. ACTION LOG

- ❖ Noted that the Committee had requested further information on what the Council is planning to do with their physical assets and what the costs of these are either (i) direct; or (ii) income forgone. The Committee expressed concern that this issue had remained outstanding now for over a month and noted that officers had been instructed to pursue this issue for a response.

5. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

6. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

The Committee **noted**:

1. The most recent edition of the Forward Plan that had been published setting out information on all the Key Decisions that are expected to be taken at the next meeting; and
2. That future Forthcoming Decision Plans are available on the Cabinet web pages. In advance of being published on the new Plan, individual notices of new Key Decisions are published as soon as they are known and these are listed as New Issues.

7. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

8. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

8.1 Waste and Recycling

The Committee received a presentation on the waste and recycling covering service initiatives; current priorities and the priorities going forward. The protection of the environment and the health of the population is a key issue for the Borough's residential and businesses communities. The main points raised as a result of questioning maybe summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Indicated** that it wished to know (i) how waste and recycling is performing since the Service came back in-house; (ii) how the Service

is responding to resident complaints (e.g. missed bin collections; fly-tipping contamination of recycling and issues with the underground waste storage systems over the more traditional wheeled bin system).

- ❖ **Noted** with regard to underground refuse service there have been issues with the specially adapted collection vehicles breaking down and to ensure that collections are made at every site, operatives have at times had to mix the general household waste and recycling collections which makes it difficult to segregate the general household waste from the recycling.
- ❖ In **response** it was noted that the report were in relation to general household waste and recycling collections and not the underground refuse service. The Committee was advised that that was not normal practice and would need the details of any report so that it could be investigated and resolved. Notwithstanding the indicated that the perception amongst some residents is that at times recycling is being taken away as general household waste.
- ❖ **Noted** that LBTH takes a zero-tolerance approach with those who illegally dump waste whether it is a business or an individual, it is unacceptable behaviour. The Strategy to address illegal waste is supported by an effective programme of communication on the deterrent and enforcement.
- ❖ **Noted** that wherever possible contaminated waste is marked up by the crews very clearly so that residents know this is contaminated recycling and will be picked within a 24-hour frame.
- ❖ **Noted** that LBTH has recently launched a new scheme entitled “Champions [Recycling Champions](#)” it is aimed at anyone over 18 who lives in Tower Hamlets or works for a housing provider or community organisation in Tower Hamlets and is interested in improving recycling and reducing waste. The Recycling Champions help to spread the word about reducing, reusing, and recycling in Tower Hamlets! They are intended to make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood, help the environment, meet new people, and learn new things. The Champions remit therefore is really to encourage their peers and neighbours to recycle and reduce waste. There is also information on the [website](#) and those who want to take ownership of their neighbourhood and want to be involved can complete an [online form](#), also LBTH is keen to be interactive and are looking at ways to communicate the message regarding waste and recycling.
- ❖ Was also **advised** that LBTH hold regular meetings with Borough’s Housing Association’s which helps to maintain a dialogue and the specific issue of additional charges has been raised and LBTH are working closely with housing providers on an individual basis to address any situations and challenges.
- ❖ **Questioned** the effectiveness of the Love Your Neighbourhood (LYN) app and noted that work is being undertaken to improve the app to ensure that it is fully functional alongside the website.
- ❖ **Noted** that the removal and disposal of illegally dumped waste is a growing problem in the Borough due to an apparent irresponsible behaviour by householders and business, which seems to indicate a general lack of understanding amongst the perpetrators that getting rid

of these items properly can be time consuming and costly, and this kind of misconceived inconvenience often leads to waste crimes which is also costly to the Borough, wasting precious funds that could be beneficial to the local community.

- ❖ **Noted** the importance of the condition of any on street could be contributing to fly-tipping problems such as simply having more bins especially where there is a heavy footfall helps with the litter issue (**e.g.** the introduction of “smart bins” across the Borough that notifies the Public Realm Team when it’s full, enabling it to be emptied it before it overflows).
- ❖ **Welcomed** the intention by LBTH to be more interactive with residents and businesses on issues such where would be a good location to install put “smart bins”.
- ❖ **Agreed** that it is really important that LBTH continues to promote the right messages regarding recycling (**e.g.** residents can put their recycling into communal recycling bins **LOOSE**; put their recycling in the bin in **ANY CLEAR** plastic bag or that Idea Stores will now take **SMALL ELECTRICAL** items).
- ❖ **Noted** that as part of the Council’s commitment to reduce single-use plastic, improve the quality of recycling and save money, LBTH plans to introduce reusable recycling bags to replace single use plastic bags for recycling collections. These new bags will reduce the amount of single use plastic in use, therefore lessening the impact on the local environment and the recycling market prefers to receive the material loose, so removing single use plastic bags should reduce processing cost.
- ❖ **Noted** that given the number of URS bins becoming inoperable across Tower Hamlets LBTH have been liaising with the managing agents and advised them that they need to put in arrangements for their maintenance and repair of the URS bins.
- ❖ **Noted** that the managing agents do recognize that it is their responsibility to manage and maintain the URS bins.
- ❖ **Noted** that the incidents of fly-tipping is persistent across the Boroughs estates which is time consuming and expensive for us as on a daily basis LBTH is collecting three truckloads of dumped waste every single day Monday to Friday.
- ❖ **Noted** that fly tipping by businesses costs LBTH about £1.5 million a year in lost revenue.
- ❖ **Noted** that it is difficult for LBTH as a local authority to pick up waste on private land, although LBTH are in an ongoing dialogue with the managing agents on how best they can deal with the waste that has been dumped on their estates. However, that is something that needs continuous dialogue with managing agents, because it is their responsibility to pick up the waste that is being dumped around the URS bins. Which if it is not removed then as with other things that affect local environment quality, those areas subject to repeated fly-damages the environment, and impact on the quality of life on local estates.
- ❖ Was **informed** that in terms of resilience the Service currently has two URS Vehicles that are 68 plates, so they are just about two years old

and these vehicles have got cranes on top of them to lift up the URS units. These cranes are very specialists with many moving parts and they have to lift 30 bins every single day per vehicle which means that there is bound to be a lot of stress on each crane. Therefore, the Service has increased the frequency from a three month to a monthly regime of maintenance. In addition, there is a fitter based at the depot who inspects the URS vehicles and their cranes on a daily basis to ensure that that they can have these vehicles deployed on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the Service has an older vehicle which has been taken out of service for refurbishment and the crane has also been made compliant and is scheduled to be back in service in the next few weeks.

- ❖ **Noted** that the Service has purchased a new vehicle but it takes approximately about a year and a half to put such vehicles together. As the body are obtained from a company in the Netherlands and the crane is source from another manufacture. The vehicle should be in service by January 2022 and the Service will have a full complement of vehicles so the Service should run without too challenges and situations.
- ❖ **Expressed** concern regarding the apparent poor maintenance of the Underground Refuse System [URS].
- ❖ **Indicated** that they supported LBTH working with the various managing agents to put robust maintenance agreements in place and then making sure that the repairs and maintenance regime is being followed.
- ❖ **Noted** that the URS bins are owned by the managing agents of a particular estate (**e.g.** Tower Hamlets Community Housing) who have to have in place a maintenance regime for the URS bins to address any damage that naturally and inevitably occurs as a result of normal wear or aging. Whilst damage as a result of crews from public realm will be addressed by LBTH. The assessment of any damage is undertaken by the supplier of the URS to indicate who is liable for the repairs.
- ❖ **Noted** that the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum have indicated that they have seen an immense improvement in the way that LBTH are dealing with. The URS bins and surface waste collections including any contingency arrangements should one of the current URS vehicles have been taken out of service for repair and maintenance.
- ❖ **Observed** that LBTH accepts that there are some issues with street cleansing and the Service is looking at those issues in terms of what they might be addressed.
- ❖ **Noted** that one of the one of the key issues that needs to be addressed is whether the Service has got the frequency of cleaning and enforcement right especially in those areas of the Borough with a vibrant night-time economy and after the Christmas period. In addition, the Service is not only looking at the route optimization but whether or not additional vehicles are needed on those routes, or whether the Service has the right resources in the right places, or what additional resources are needed to be put in place (**e.g.** there is a need for really

good supervision in place to make sure that people are doing what they are paid to do and to do it to a good standard).

- ❖ **Understood** that whilst LBTH has some very good team members who are doing a great job in very difficult conditions all year round there are some staff who require closer supervision.
- ❖ **Expressed** concern regarding the impact on the local community of the Reuse and Recycling Centre (RRC) in Yabsley St and the waste transfer station at Northumberland Wharf and wanted to know what LBTH are doing in terms of mitigating the concerns of residents (**e.g.** vehicles leaking fluids onto the highway; noise; or queueing traffic).
- ❖ **Noted** that these concerns are addressed but then are raised again in a few months' time. Therefore, LBTH need to make sure that there is proper and robust contract management right of those who manage the site to make sure they are on the case in terms of what they should be doing to minimize impact in that area (**e.g.** managing traffic; street cleansing and street washing in the summer).
- ❖ **Noted** that consideration also needs to be given to a longer-term solution (**i.e.** Is Yabsley Street still fit for purpose in terms of the Borough's growing population; do we need another site or do we need to relocate the site).

Following a full and wide-ranging discussion, the Chair thanked all those Committee Members in attendance together with (i) Councillor Asma Islam (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning); (ii) Dan Jones (Director, Public Realm); (iii) Catherine Cooke (Contract Development Manager); (iv) Oli Kapopo (Access to Employment (Skillsmatch)); and (v) Richard Williams Business Manager Operational PR for their contributions to what had been a really positive discussion on this critical issue.

Accordingly, the Committee **resolved** that:

1. contamination of waste and recycling needs to be investigated as impact on residents confidence.
2. there is a need to increase profile of Recycling Champions as no one seems to have heard of the new programme. It was also felt that it is important that Members are engaging in promoting this scheme given their wide reach to local communities and can support engagement from residents.
3. it was important to get clarity on what additional costs housing providers are incurring on waste removal and are being charged to leaseholders.
4. it needs to be communicated to residents that idea stores can drop off small electrical items.
5. whilst they welcomed the investment in the URS vehicles fleet to increase capacity they wanted to continue to receive updates on the operation of the URS fleet as it continues to cause significant issues on local estates.
6. given the Boroughs growing population and the programme of regeneration it was important to ensure that LBTH are planning for now and future needs.

7. in regard to street cleansing there is a need to need to prioritize including reviewing if the frequency of street cleaning is right and if LBTH have the right resources at the right place and if additional resources is needed.
8. need to look at the (i) impact of Reuse and Recycling Centre (RRC) in Yabsley St and waste transfer station at Northumberland Wharf on local residents; (ii) contract with the sites management; (iii) future mitigations as well and if this is still the right location to have that such facilities and should LBTH relocate these facilities.
9. Officers should be commended on having delivered food waste recycling into the Bow and is a really positive first step in the roll out of further food waste recycling.
10. LBTH needs to improve performance in regard to contaminated recycling.
11. Missed collections are then being followed up within 24 hours and to receive more data on that that shows is being achieved.
12. LBTH and the Housing Providers look at the appropriate placement of bins, (i.e. not simply place them in front of residents front doors).
13. The whole collection process in relation to the URS bins is the subject of regular scrutiny.
14. With regard to enforcement LBTH should be willing to be more robust than in the past (e.g. LBTH should publicise any successful court cases so people know that there are real penalties) ; and
15. On housing development where paladins are used for recycling the housing management need to know that there will be penalties if the paladins are contaminated and that they need to ensure that their tenants and leaseholders know that.

9. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

9.1 Strategic delivery and performance reporting - Q2 2021/22

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the Council's performance against the performance indicators included in the Councils Strategic Plan in quarter 2 of 2021/22. The main points of the discussion and answers to questions raised may be summarised as follows.

The Committee:

- ❖ **Noted** that since the meeting in September 2021 the Chair had received a further update from the Service on the Committees requests for the strategic target measures and performance information. However, the requested format does not seem to meet the legal requirements in terms of the current internet accessibility standards for online publications. Accordingly, the Chair has requested that the Service provide the Committee with a separate copy of the quarterly performance report in the requested format.
- ❖ **Noted** that the Service has confirmed that they will provide a separate copy to the Committee with the indicator tables scaled onto one page

and this has been circulate offline so Members should have received a reformatted copy to the one that in under public domain.

- ❖ **Noted** that there are eight regeneration outcomes which are set out in the Local Plan and the Council is scoring strategic planning permissions out of eight. In this quarter three strategic planning applications had been permitted which meant that LBTH had exceeded the target of achieving 5 of the 8 regeneration outcomes.
- ❖ **Noted** that regeneration benefits from strategic planning permissions can often take several years to realise due to the length of time it can take to complete these developments.
- ❖ **Noted** that corporately these highly complex applications having been discussed for many months or in some cases possibly for several years on major development sites and the view had been taken that overall the benefits as against the disbenefits in terms of regeneration outcomes had meant that they were viable. In addition, the developers when submitting any proposals know not to include any element that would be considered as a fundamental objection.
- ❖ **Noted** that in regard to Long term looked after children who are in stable placements (**Measure No. 14**) the Authority is assured that no children had been put at risk put additional risk and the performance on this measure is just below the minimum target and has improved in the last month and is moving from Red to Amber.
- ❖ **Noted** that there has been a significant increase in demand for long-term fostering matches which has increased pressure on the Service. Accordingly, agreement has been given for an additional number of social work posts to be recruited to help manage that pressure on a time limited basis although it is proving very difficult to find locum social workers of the right calibre.
- ❖ Was **advised** that almost every child subject to protection plan is residing within the Borough whilst there are a very small number that have just moved outside of Tower Hamlets, although if they are moving to another local authority area, then there's a well-established process to transfer responsibility to that local authority.
- ❖ Was **informed** concerning (**Measure 15**) Young people engaging with the youth offer who achieve a recorded outcome that whilst not all of the provider contracts that LBTH expected to be using at this point are set up yet the majority of the new contracts have been awarded and the new providers with contracts are currently in place.
- ❖ **Noted** that concerning the specialists youth provision in respect of children with special educational needs and disabilities, LGBTQI and those in transition between primary and secondary schools. There has been a legal challenge that has prevented awarding two contracts but the Service is confident that it will be in a position to make those awards within three weeks from now.
- ❖ **Understood** that in respect of development and the stability of our social work workforce LBTH continues to be in a better position year on year we now are down to 14% of the social work workforce being locum social workers. Which is better than the national average by some considerable margin and better than the London average.

- ❖ **Noted** that neighbouring boroughs are all having more severe pressures and difficulty in recruitment and retention than LBTH. Although it is important to keep that momentum going and the Service target is to get below 10% of locum social workers which really would indicate that LBTH is the employer of choice for this area of London.
- ❖ Was **advised** that in terms of foster carers there has been a slightly improving position through the course of this year and LBTH now has more in-house foster carers now than back in April 2021.
- ❖ **Understood** that it is a highly competitive field between fostering agencies and this is a real challenge for all inner London Boroughs, in particular because of housing costs and the need for foster carers to have additional space although the Service works well with housing colleagues to give larger properties to foster carers and there is where LBTH cannot meet the needs of a particular child through an inhouse foster, carer.
- ❖ **Observed** that with regard to **Measure 53** (Victims of violence against women and girls who feel safer after engaging with victim support) the primary reason for a drop in performance is a direct result of not having sufficient satisfaction surveys returned.

- ❖ **Agreed** that it was important to look at the longer-term sense of safety and that it is about aftercare and can the Service do better in terms of following up with these victims of violence through casework.

Following a full and wide-ranging discussion, the Chair thanked all those Committee Members in attendance together with (i) John Biggs, Executive Mayor; (ii) Denise Radley (Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community) (iii) James Thomas, (Corporate Director for Children & Culture) (iv) Thorsten Dreyer, Head of Intelligence and Performance for their contributions to the discussions on this critical issue.

In addition, the Chair indicated that this scrutiny session had been most informative with the questions asked and the responses received in particular the challenges in regard to: (i) the recruitment and retention of social workers; and (ii) young people engaging with the youth offer.

9.2 Budget Monitoring Report 2021-22 Period 6

This report presents the budget monitoring report 2021-22 as of 30th September 2021 (period 6) for the General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget (DSB), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) progress made against savings targets and the Council's capital programme. It also provided projections on General Fund earmarked reserves and the forecast impacts of Covid on the Council's finances in 2021-22. A summary of the discussions and questions raised is set out below:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Noted** that they were to have reviewed the MTFs refresh and Fees and Charges items this month, however these have now been delayed

and subsequently moved to the January 2022 Budget meeting which adds further time constraints on the Committee to be able to effectively scrutinise the Budget process.

- ❖ Was **reminded** that addressing the Budget process early has been an issue for the Committee throughout the years and **noted** the Chairs disappointment that it has now had to be moved to January 2022. However, the Committees work programme has been revised to accommodate this change.
- ❖ **Observed** that this is the half year budget monitoring report setting out how the Council is managing its Budget within the impact of Covid.
- ❖ **Noted** that the overall position on the general Fund after the application of reserves is a forecast deficit on the year of £300,000, although there are some worrying variances and that position is supported by £19.6 million of extra funding. Whilst the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is forecasting a small underspend on the year and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) an overspend of £1.4 million. The Directorate positions are that Housing is forecasting an overspend of £2.3 million; Children's an overspend of £1.6 million; Resources and Governance a net overspend of £1 million and Place an underspend of 1.5 million.
- ❖ **Observed** that regarding the reserves position is £20 million is the required minimum for the general fund and in addition £98 million in earmarked funds with restrictions, although a significant percentage of that is the collection fund smoothing reserve, which includes grants received in advance. We have another £75 million in earmarked funds, reducing to 70 million by year end. That sounds like a lot, but I remind you that expenditure is running at £19 million over budget, and in that context £70 million does not sound like such a significant cushion. The HRA position will see a call upon reserves of £1.4 million, leaving £50.9 million at year end. With regard to savings, the Budget was originally £28.9 million and this has been revised down to £20 million with £7.5 million forecasts to slip into future years and £1.4 million unachievable.
- ❖ **Noted** that every year, but it becomes progressively more difficult to deliver savings and capital expenditure also foresees a certain amount of slippage into future years. However, despite some slippage, LBTH is transforming the Borough through the capital programme the high streets and town centres, environmental projects, new Council homes, public realm improvements, Whitechapel is the gateway to the Borough, new schools, new medical centres, and new parks.
- ❖ **Noted** that through the Capital Strategy Board LBTH is looking at outlay on leisure centres through the capital approval process and proposals are being put forward for significant investment in the LBTH leisure estate.
- ❖ **Commented** that as the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) has seen a significant increase in 2020/21 and it is now at 3.8% the highest for 10 years. Therefore, how has this been factored into the forecasts and what the impact might be going forward? **In response** based on the current forecasts the increase is set to continue into the first quarter of the next financial year and then kind of stabilize this has been built into the medium-term financial strategy although that it is not expected to

have a substantial adverse effects in terms of LBTH budgets for this particular financial year.

- ❖ **Noted** that the breakdown of the Government's most recent spending decision announcements until the 14th of December, so there is still uncertainty around what the funding levels will actually be. However, LBTH has been able to make some assumptions that are based on the overall national position that has been announced which gives LBTH a greater degree of certainty.
- ❖ **Commented** that the report states it is important to note that the reserves position of the Council is uncertain pending the closure of this statement of accounts for the period 2016 to 21. In **response** it was **noted** that whilst the accounts are with the Councils auditors the latest forecast position is a relatively neutral impact on the general fund position although that could be subject to change.

In conclusion, the Chair **thanked** all those Committee Members in attendance together with (i) Councillor Candida Ronald (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector); (ii) Nisar Visram Director of Finance, Procurement and Audit, Finance; and (iii) Kevin Bartle (Interim Corporate Director, Resources and Section 151 Officer) for their contributions to the deliberations prior to the Budget Consultation on 13th December 2021.

10. SCRUTINY CHALLENGE SESSION

10.1 Swimming Provision In the Borough

The Committee received a report sets out the findings and seven recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on swimming provision in the Borough. A summary of the discussion including the points raised by Members questions may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Noted** that Covid-19 Pandemic has highlighted the challenges that residents face with accessing local swimming pools. It also magnified local health inequalities with children in Tower Hamlets more likely to be overweight or obese at year 6 than in London or England. Compliance with Covid-19 safety measure such as shielding or self-isolating has acted as a catalyst to an increase in loneliness, sedentary lifestyle and a lack of regular physical activity and exercise.
- ❖ **Observed** that Swim England suggests that a single 25 metre pool can generate £7.2 million in social value in community savings and also save the NHS and social care more than £1.2 million. They have also warned that nationally 90% of 7- to 11- year-olds are failing to meet minimum standards that have been brought in for swimming lessons outside of school. Swimming is considered as an essential life skill that, in extreme circumstances, can make the difference between life and death and moreover, it provides a means to rehabilitate people who have been injured aiding their recovery.

- ❖ **Noted** that some of the Leisure Centres are over 40 years old the costs had escalated because of the lack of investment in refurbishment over the years and the local resident felt that the local pools are not properly managed or maintained. Whilst ongoing reductions in the Council budget has impacted further on the sports and physical activity service. Therefore, the report asks that the Mayor reviews the budget so that swimming provisions can be accommodated and some of the key barriers faced by schools is addressed e.g. headteachers commented that accessing swimming includes travel time and it's very important that swimming pools are near to schools so that pupils actually do not lose learning time e.g. it can take about three to four hours for children from Wapping to go to Poplar and back which is far too long.
- ❖ **Noted** that the report recommends that: (i) the Council develops a long-term capital investment strategy for leisure centres to ensure that they can be maintained to good standard, including where major refurbishments are needed; (ii) Greenwich Leisure should look at how currently schools could be helped to without travel. Oh provision at the moment and you know whilst they're going to, the two pools are open.
- ❖ **Noted** with disappointment the Scrutiny Panel had not been provided with the Leisure Centre review on assets that had been conducted and it is very hard to comment on that review at the moment.
- ❖ **Concerned** that that each time it was recommended that urgent repairs should be carried out at a leisure centres they had not been undertaken. Therefore is this the same at all the Boroughs other leisure centres?
- ❖ **Concerned** to learn that the Scrutiny Panel was not involved in the consultation on the procurement of new leisure contract.
- ❖ **Wanted** to know how the Council engage with residents who do not go online and look at the Council website.
- ❖ **Concerned** that there had been a lack of investment in the leisure centres accept if there had been an emergency.
- ❖ **Noted** that some of the swimming teachers working at the Borough's leisure centres are absolutely brilliant at what they do, they work hard to encourage children to learn and they are fully engaged and instil enthusiasm in their pupils. However, during the scrutiny session there were some issues raised about cleanliness of the changing rooms in leisure centres and the temperature of the pools.
- ❖ **Commented** that the Council's own monitoring of the performance around cleanliness is something that (i) councillors need to scrutinise; (ii) officers responsible should be alive to; and (iii) GLL need to explain why they are apparently underperforming.
- ❖ Agreed that whilst it was happy to sign off on this report the conversation on performance needs to continue alongside the Scrutiny Challenge Session report

Accordingly the Overview and Scrutiny Committee formally::

1. **noted** the Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and agree the recommendations contained within the report; and

2. **agreed** to submit the report to the Mayor and Cabinet for an executive response to the recommendations.

11. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

The Committee received and noted the updates submitted and also received the following verbal update from the Chair on behalf of Councillor Faroque Ahmed on the recent parking challenge session which explored the impact of specific influences such as Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expansion, car free developments, Permit Transfer Scheme, hotspot areas and the switch to electric vehicles as we try to tackle the climate emergency. This challenge session provided an opportunity to scrutinise the sustainability of the council's approach to parking and traffic management. It is clear from the evidence heard that parking is an integral element of not only the transport strategy but also many of the other council's priorities and aspirations. The Committee has made seven recommendations and hopes that the Mayor and Cabinet take these forward and work with Overview and Scrutiny to ensure that the council has a robust parking and traffic management policy for years to come.

12. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Following comments by the Committee the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions (PDSQ) Members **agreed** the particular questions/recommendations that they wanted to raise with Cabinet on the 24th of October 2021 (**See attached appendix**).

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

Councillor Francis raised the following:

Victoria Park

Further to minute No. 13 (25th October 2021 refers) regarding the commercial contracts for events in Victoria Park Councillor Francis indicated that this decision has had a significant impact on communities living or working in that area and therefore should have been a key decision and not made under delegated authority. Therefore, it would be helpful if the Committee could have a note explaining why this was not deemed to be a key decision.

With no other business to discuss the Chair called this meeting to a close; thanked all those attending for their contributions and informed the Committee that the next meeting would be on Monday, 13th of December 2021.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As the agenda circulated contained no exempt/confidential reports and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

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

Nil items

The meeting ended at 9.13 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Mohammed Pappu
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Questions	Response
Item 6.1 Tower Hamlets Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan	
<p>1. What happened to the plan to have extra trained staff in Ideas Stores using hubs etc to help people access Council services?</p>	<p>Idea Store frontline staff are trained to assist customers who use Digital Hubs in Idea Stores to access online Council services. In most cases customers just need minimal assistance and the transaction is completed within a few minutes. When staff interact with customers in the Digital Hub they take the opportunity to make them aware that the same online services can also be accessed through people’s own smart devices, the advantage being that the transaction can be done 24/7 and from the comfort of one’s home, but if residents say they prefer to come to an Idea Store, staff reassure them that they are still very welcome to do so.</p> <p>Occasionally customers using the Digital Hubs have very limited or no IT skills, which means they need additional support - in this case they are referred to a telephone line, where a Customer Service Advisor will help them with their query. In most cases the transaction is completed over the telephone, but on the rare occasions when this is not possible, the customer is offered a face-to-face appointment with a Customer Service Advisor at their nearest Idea Store, where a specially trained member of staff will attend to assist or carry out the transaction on behalf of the customer.</p> <p>“There are 3 types of visits to the Digital Hubs at the Idea Stores.</p> <p>(1) General visits: Customers sometimes walk in and ask general question (e.g. how I register to vote or how can I apply for a permit). Idea Store colleagues give general advice based on our website. For</p>

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those kind of visits, no appointments necessary.

(2) Visits to use one of the Digital Hub computers: Customers need to book the PCs and that can be done on the spot, subject to availability.

(3) Customers who are unable to use a computer at all: We have been able to support most customers remotely. We do see customers at the Idea Stores where necessary (e.g. where someone is unable to fill a paper form or needs documents to be copied). This is on an appointment basis. So, we receive the referral, assess, and then make appointments where necessary.

(4) There are also 2 web links that can be followed to submit a referral to request support:

Tower Hamlets Website: [Digital Hubs \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Idea Store Website: [Idea Store - Save Time Go Online](#) “

Idea Stores and Idea Stores learning work collaboratively with the Work Path teams to ensure receive information and support with regards to accessing learning to help with digital skill also.

2. Noting the census results - do we have any data on wider families access to the Internet? For example how many households without internet access have family members in the area who do it for them - therefore overstating those without internet access?

The census did not collect data on the use of family members or proxies to access the internet, nor does the Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey. Without commissioning specific research, it is difficult to get detailed data on digital exclusion at a very local level.

Ofcom undertake a UK-wide annual Adults' Media Use and Attitudes report. The results of their most recent research, undertaken in autumn 2020 and winter 2020/21, reports the emergence of 'proxy internet' users. They state 6% of household, around 1.5m homes, remain offline.

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	<p>Of those not using the internet at home, 60% have asked someone to do something for them online in the past year. The most common request was help in buying something (57%).</p>															
<p>Item 6.2 Liveable Streets Brick Lane review outcome report</p>																
<p>1. Where is the air quality analysis of the scheme?</p>	<p>There are no air quality sensors on Brick Lane. No air quality analysis was undertaken for this scheme.</p>															
<p>2. How many FPN were issued via the ANPR cameras, can we have some analysis of what type of vehicles drove through, where registered, how much income was raised?</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 19</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Camera location</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Total PCNs issued</th> <th style="text-align: center;">income</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Brick Lane (Hanbury to Quaker)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">43</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1300.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brick Lane(Quaker to Bethnal Gn Rd)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£585.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brick Lane(Wentworth to Hanbury)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">929</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£34,775.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td style="text-align: center;">984</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£36,660.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The above figures are based on PCN's issued before the 1 October, which was the date that the Mayor announced the restrictions would be lifted from.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we are unable to give an analysis of vehicle types and where they are registered, as this would require a large amount of officer time having to review each individual PCN information.</p> <p>Currently there is 406 outstanding tickets that are going through the statutory process. There have been 64 cancelled upon appeal and 73 whereby there are not keeper details registered with DVLA, therefore these will not progress any further.</p>	Camera location	Total PCNs issued	income	Brick Lane (Hanbury to Quaker)	43	£1300.00	Brick Lane(Quaker to Bethnal Gn Rd)	12	£585.00	Brick Lane(Wentworth to Hanbury)	929	£34,775.00	Grand Total	984	£36,660.00
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Grand Total	984	£36,660.00														
<p>3. Where is the vehicle count data on the affected roads and surrounding roads during and outside of the road closures?</p>	<p>Data for traffic counts for roads on or surrounding Brick Lane is available on request from the Liveable Streets team. Please email</p>															

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	<p>Liveablestreets@towerhamlets.gov.uk to request this data.</p>
<p>4. At what time of day were the onsite surveys done on Saturday 9th October and Friday 15th October - did the surveyors ask people whether they lived locally or were visitors?</p>	<p>They were held between 12:30pm and 3:30pm. They were asked a stakeholder type question to determine if they lived or worked in Brick Lane. 38 respondents were residents and 43 were visitors.</p>
<p>Item 6.3 Strategic delivery and performance reporting – Q2 2021/22</p>	
<p>1. 47 percentage of annual infrastructure target expenditure achieved - what would these results be without the Town Hall as building a replacement town hall would not be considered by many residents as infrastructure?</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 20</p>	<p>General fund total budget at the start of the year was £199.0m, of which £51.7m was allocated to the new Town Hall (NTH).</p> <p>GF spend to end of Q2 was £40.9m, of which £20.8m was on the NTH.</p> <p>Against a budget of £147.3m (excluding NTH), the £20.1m spend (excluding NTH) represents 13.6%</p>
<p>2. 73 Percentage of top 5 % of earners from black and minority ethnic communities - what % of staff earning more than £60k per annum are BAME?</p>	<p>% of staff paid over £60k that are BAME (Sept 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30.7 percent of staff earning £60k+ are BAME • FTE: just under 49 full time equivalent staff. <p>For comparison</p> <p>Top 5% of staff that are BAME (Sept 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48.8 percent of staff in the top 5% of earners are BAME • FTE: 70 full time equivalent staff. • Top 5% salary: ca. £55k. Top 5% can vary slightly over the course of the year and from year to year. <p>Note - the percentage figure uses a denominator of all BAME and non-BAME employees and excludes those where records are missing, or an employee has declined to state their ethnicity (215 missing records out</p>

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	of 4,748). (same methodology as Q1 response).
<p>Outcome 3 – Measure No 16:</p> <p>People who are more independent after being supported through reablement services.</p> <p>The service seems to have been effected by covid-19 and therefore what measures have been put in place to clear the backlog of cases?</p>	<p>During the peaks of the pandemic, we were unable to offer a full reablement service of up to 6 weeks however the service is now back to providing this.</p> <p>Some staff shortages were experienced during the pandemic which resulted in some contingency responses, including utilising commissioned care providers if necessary. Reablement Services only have a very small waiting list at this time, with the longest wait being 2 weeks. This is a significant improvement in position and enables us to ensure we meet the needs of residents, promoting prevention and independence.</p>
<p>Outcome 3 – Measure 22</p> <p>Number of people who are signposted to find appropriate advice and support in the wider community that helps them to maintain their independence</p> <p>When do we expect the data for the above measurement to be available?</p>	<p>The new Tower Connect service started in late July and performance data for this indicator will be available from Quarter 3 which is the first complete quarter during which the service has been fully operational.</p>
<p>Outcome 4 – Measure 25</p> <p>Residents’ self-reported level of health for groups experiencing health inequalities - BAME residents</p> <p>The measurement has been affected by the lack of normal annual residents’ surveys, however, considering how important this indicator is, could any further details regarding the results of the mid-pandemic residents’ survey or comments around the outcome be shared with the report?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of 1,108 residents, 825 or 74% of respondents indicated they have ‘good’ health - Of 523 BAME residents, 399 or 76% of respondents indicated they have ‘good’ health - Of 566 White residents, 416 or 76% of respondents indicated they have ‘good’ health <p>Confidence intervals for full survey response (1,108) and BAME only (523) are included below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full survey All responders 1,108 CI = +/-2.6% result between

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	<p>71.4% and 76.6% mid-level = 74%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White only 566 CI = +/- 3.7% result between 72.3% and 79.7% mid-level = 76% • BAME only 523 CI = +/- 3.7% result between 69.3% and 79.6% mid-level = 76%
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Item 6.4 Additions to the Approved Capital Programme 2021-22 to 2023-24

<p>1. What is the Flat Recycling Package?</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 22</p>	<p>This project is intended to improve resident access to sufficient, appropriate and standardised recycling and waste infrastructure in existing purpose-built flats across the borough, through joint working with landlords and managing agents. It includes the following intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate recycling and refuse capacity. Extra bins or collections were needed. • appropriate apertures on recycling bins big enough to accept plastic bags of recycling and with locked reverse lids • ensuring clear and visible signage on and above all bins • convenient location of recycling bins for residents and clean and well-maintained bins and bin areas • annual recycling leaflet • posters highlighting recycling messages displayed in a central location (where possible) • residents informed of what they should do with bulky waste items (via signage) <p>The benefits of this project are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in recycling quantity and quality
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Better partnership working and better facilities 3. Improved service and resident experience with a similar standard provided for all reducing inequality 4. Reduction in carbon emissions which will contribute to tackling the climate emergency. By managing waste further up the waste hierarchy e.g., sending packaging for recycling rather than to incineration, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced 5. Improvements to the quality of recycling collected through a decrease in contamination 6. Helping to build the green economy and make waste a resource <p>Improved neighbourhood cleanliness with better managed waste and less fly-tipping to the benefit of the entire community</p>
<p>2. Regarding the statement on page 176 'Whilst the market should level out in time, in the medium to long term, the cost of capital projects are expected to increase over the period of the next three-year capital programme' how has the risk of the market levelling out been assessed and can this be shared as part of the report to Cabinet?</p>	<p>This statement is based on market intelligence and is expected to be beyond the capital programme period.</p>
<p>Item 6.5 Budget monitoring report 2021-22 as at 30th September 2021 (period 6)</p>	
<p>1. Income Position total return on the entire portfolio was 1.70%. Given that CPI-H is now 3.8% as at October what is the estimated loss in our reserves this year?</p>	<p>1.70% was the return on the investment portfolio and one key factor influencing the rate of return is the prevalent interest rate in the economy. The Bank of England interest rate remains unchanged, despite the level of inflation having increased. If market expectations view that high inflation is to persist in the economy, the Bank of England may raise interest rates as some point in future, and rates of return across investments would likely rise as a result. Any shortfall in investment returns would form a budgetary pressure that feeds into the</p>

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	<p>overall council's budget monitoring position.</p> <p>In-year impacts and movements in revenue reserves are forecasted within Section 5 of the Period 6 Budget Monitoring Report where no additional loss is anticipated as a result of the inflationary increase.</p>
<p>Item 6.7 Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan – Validation of Submission</p>	
<p>1. How will the council ensure any campaign by those for and against the Roman Road Neighbourhood Plan is factually accurate?</p>	<p>Under Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012, the Council is able to publish press notices during the referendum where the sole notice of the publication is to refute or correct any inaccuracy in material published by another person. However, this needs to be in response to a direct factual error in a statement and cannot be used to dispute different interpretations of the impact of a neighbourhood plan. Beyond this, the conduct of election campaigns is regulated by law, and violation of the election rules would be a matter for the police</p>
<p>Item 6.9 Planning for School Places 2021/22 Review and Recommendations</p>	
<p>1. Given that the closing date for applications for the operator for the new Wood Wharf primary school was on the 24 May 2021 and that it opens in just over 9 months' time why has there been no update on the process either to the public or to the relevant scrutiny committee given that this will be the first new school to be opened by LBTH in over a decade and the first using the free school process?</p>	<p>Following the closing date for applications in May, the council concluded its competition for the appointment of the new school provider in September. It then provided its assessment and scoring of each application to the Secretary of State, who is still in the process of making the final decision. The Secretary of State's decision is expected to be received by the end of November, following which we will publicise the decision through the council website.</p> <p>The process for the appointment of the new school provider is a matter for the consideration and decision-making powers of the Secretary of State. It is therefore not subject to local scrutiny procedures.</p>
<p>2. Why is no budget nor mention in Appendix 5 of the Westferry Printworks secondary school site?</p>	<p>The main cabinet reports states that the council has now transferred its interest in Westferry Printworks to the Department for Education (DfE), who will develop the site to provide permanent accommodation for</p>

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	<p>Canary Wharf College 3 Secondary School. The DfE will therefore meet the full cost for the project, which is estimated to be £50m. Appendix 5 sets out the developments costs for school capital projects that are to be delivered by the council.</p>
<p>3. Will the Council or the Department of Education now compulsory purchase the Westferry Printworks site given that the planning permission is over 5 years old and that it looks unlikely that Richard Desmond will sign the lease?</p>	<p>The DfE has identified Westferry Printworks as the site to provide permanent accommodation for Canary Wharf College Free School. Securing permanent accommodation for an open free school is the responsibility of the DfE. The council therefore looks forward to receiving an update from the DfE in respect of its plans for the Westferry Printworks site.</p>

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