

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Agenda

Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 6.30 p.m.
**Committee Room One - Town Hall, Mulberry
Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG**

Members:

Chair: Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

Vice Chair: Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

Councillor Abdul Wahid, Councillor Ana Miah, Councillor Amina Ali, Councillor Shubo Hussain and Councillor Leelu Ahmed

Co-opted Members:

Shiblu Miah (Muslim Community Representative), Dr Phillip Rice (Church of England Representative), Joanna Hannan (Representative of Diocese of Westminster), Abena Adeji (Parent Governor), Ashraf Zaman (Parent Governor) and Parent Governor (Vacant)

Substitutes: Councillor Harun Miah, Councillor Kamrul Hussain, Councillor Amin Rahman, Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Councillor Asma Islam and Councillor Amy Lee

[The quorum for the Sub-Committee is 3 voting Members]

Contact for further enquiries:

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<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk>



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A Guide to Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee has been established to scrutinise the provision, planning and management of children and young people's services – including children's social care; safeguarding children; children in care; SEN and education inclusion, troubled families and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) education, learning and schools; youth services; early years; education capital estate and youth & play services.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee will discharge the Council's statutory functions to undertake overview and scrutiny, insofar as these pertain to Children's and Education matters. This will include:

- a) Reviewing and/or scrutinising decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's children social care and education functions;
- b) Advising the Mayor or Cabinet of key issues/questions arising in relation to children and education reports due to be considered by the Mayor or Cabinet;
- c) Making reports and/or recommendations to the Council and/or Mayor or Cabinet in connection with the discharge of children and education functions;
- d) Delivering (c) by organising an annual work programme, drawing on the knowledge and priorities of the Council, registered providers and other stakeholders, that will identify relevant topics or issues that can be properly scrutinised;
- e) Holding service providers to account, where recent performance fails to meet the recognised standard, by looking at relevant evidence and make recommendations for service improvements;
- f) Considering children and education matters affecting the area or its inhabitants, including where these matters have been brought to the attention of the sub-committee by tenant and resident associations, or members of the general public; and
- g) The sub-committee will report annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work.

Public Engagement

Meetings of the committee are open to the public to attend, and a timetable for meeting dates and deadlines can be found on the council's website.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Thursday, 13 October 2022

6.30 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (PAGES 7 - 8)

Members are reminded to consider the categories of interest, identified in the Code of Conduct for Members to determine: whether they have an interest in any agenda item and any action they should take. For further details, see the attached note from the Monitoring Officer.

Members are also reminded to declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and the agenda item it relates to. Please note that ultimately it is the Members' responsibility to identify any interests and also update their register of interest form as required by the Code.

If in doubt as to the nature of an interest, you are advised to seek advice prior the meeting by contacting the Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (PAGES 9 - 16)

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the held on 12th July 2022.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Spotlight on Youth Justice

To review the performance of the youth justice service, focusing specifically on drugs, grooming of young people, and county lines.

4.2 HM Inspection of Probation report

Inspection of youth offending services in Tower Hamlets - To understand the findings from the inspection report and review the plans for improvement.



5. **ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Next Meeting of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Thursday, 8 December 2022 at 6.30 p.m. to be held in Committee Room One - Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG



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Agenda Item 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AT MEETINGS– NOTE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Code of Conduct for Members at Part C, Section 31 of the Council's Constitution

(i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)

You have a DPI in any item of business on the agenda where it relates to the categories listed in **Appendix A** to this guidance. Please note that a DPI includes: (i) Your own relevant interests; (ii) Those of your spouse or civil partner; (iii) A person with whom the Member is living as husband/wife/civil partners. Other individuals, e.g. Children, siblings and flatmates do not need to be considered. Failure to disclose or register a DPI (within 28 days) is a criminal offence.

Members with a DPI, (unless granted a dispensation) must not seek to improperly influence the decision, must declare the nature of the interest and leave the meeting room (including the public gallery) during the consideration and decision on the item – unless exercising their right to address the Committee.

DPI Dispensations and Sensitive Interests. In certain circumstances, Members may make a request to the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation or for an interest to be treated as sensitive.

(ii) Non - DPI Interests that the Council has decided should be registered – (Non - DPIs)

You will have 'Non DPI Interest' in any item on the agenda, where it relates to (i) the offer of gifts or hospitality, (with an estimated value of at least £25) (ii) Council Appointments or nominations to bodies (iii) Membership of any body exercising a function of a public nature, a charitable purpose or aimed at influencing public opinion.

Members must declare the nature of the interest, but may stay in the meeting room and participate in the consideration of the matter and vote on it **unless:**

- A reasonable person would think that your interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair your judgement of the public interest. **If so, you must withdraw and take no part in the consideration or discussion of the matter.**

(iii) Declarations of Interests not included in the Register of Members' Interest.

Occasions may arise where a matter under consideration would, or would be likely to, **affect the wellbeing of you, your family, or close associate(s) more than it would anyone else living in the local area** but which is not required to be included in the Register of Members' Interests. In such matters, Members must consider the information set out in paragraph (ii) above regarding Non DPI - interests and apply the test, set out in this paragraph.

Guidance on Predetermination and Bias

Member's attention is drawn to the guidance on predetermination and bias, particularly the need to consider the merits of the case with an open mind, as set out in the Planning and Licensing Codes of Conduct, (Part C, Section 34 and 35 of the Constitution). For further advice on the possibility of bias or predetermination, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting.

Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 - Declarations which restrict Members in Council Tax arrears, for at least a two months from voting

In such circumstances the member may not vote on any reports and motions with respect to the matter.

Further Advice contact: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer, Tel: 0207 364 4800.

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 12 JULY 2022

**COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Chair
Councillor Ahmodul Kabir	Vice-Chair
Councillor Ana Miah	
Councillor Shubo Hussain	
Councillor Leelu Ahmed	

Co-optees Present in Person:

Dr Phillip Rice	Church of England Representative
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Co-optees In Attendance Virtually:

Joanna Hannan	Representative of Diocese of Westminster
Abena Adeji	Parent Governor
Ashraf Zaman	Parent Governor

Apologies:

Councillor Abdul Wahid
Councillor Amina Ali

Others Present in Person:

Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
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Officers Present in Person:

Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
Jaber Khan	(Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate Strategy and Communities Team Strategy)
Sam Nair	Principal Social Worker - Children with Disabilities Team
Steve Nyakatawa	(Director of Education)
James Thomas	(Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Farhana Zia	(Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Layla Richards (Head of Strategy and Policy – Children and Culture)
Judith St John (Director, Commissioning and Culture, Children’s Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Amina Ali and from Councillor Abdul Wahid.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made by the members.

3. CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, QUORUM, MEMBERSHIP AND DATES OF MEETINGS 2022/23

Ms Farhana Zia, Democratic Services Officer asked members to note the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee’s terms of reference, membership, quorum and dates of meeting for the municipal year 2022/23.

She informed members the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed the terms of reference at its meeting of 7th June 2022.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note its Terms of reference, Quorum, Membership and Dates of future meetings as set out in Appendices 1,2 and 3 in the report; and
2. AGREED to hold scheduled meetings of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee at 6:30 p.m.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Ana Miah nominated Councillor Ahmodul Kabir for the position of vice-chair. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Bodrul Choudhury.

No further nominations were made.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee **RESOVLED** to:

1. Elect Councillor Ahmodul Kabir as the Vice-Chair of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2022-23.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of 28th February 2022 were agreed and approved to be an accurate record of the meeting and were approved by the Sub-Committee.

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Overview of Children & Education

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning introduced the item stating the Mayor had made important pledges in relation to the safeguarding of children as well as a commitment to Education in his manifesto. Councillor Talukdar said he was working alongside officers to ensure the pledges made were turned into policy, in order to find working solutions for the residents of Tower Hamlets. He said it was important for scrutiny to scrutinise the policies of the Executive and as such he was happy to attend the meetings of the sub-committee.

Mr James Thomas, Corporate Director for Children and Culture made a presentation providing an overview of the structure of the Directorate, the vision and key priorities for the Directorate. He said that although deprivation in the borough was improving, Tower Hamlets had one of the highest levels of child poverty; with high levels of need for children with special education needs and disability (SEND) and mental health. Mr Thomas said that despite this educational attainment was amongst the best and secondary schools had played a huge role in delivering good outcomes for children. Mr Thomas said that the offer provided by the Council was effective in that there were low levels of children in care.

Mr Thomas went on to explain that some areas of work undertaken by the Directorate was governed by statutory legislation and National policy, such as children safeguarding and education, where services were regulated and inspected. Whereas other areas such as parks, leisure, youth centres the provision was a universal offer. Mr Thomas said at the heart of their work they had a policy of being person-centred and co-production of services.

In response to comments and questions from members the following was noted:

- Mr Thomas said the overarching objective of the Children's Safeguarding partnership was to protect children from harm.
- Mr Thomas explained children services had been judged as 'inadequate' by Ofsted five years ago however through the improvement plan and investment, the service had been judged as 'good' two years later.
- Mr Thomas said a further inspection of the service was imminent and as such they had strived to quality assure their work, audit it and conduct peer reviews to scrutinise their services. Mr Thomas said he

believed they were making good progress however the service could not be complacent.

- Regarding anti-terrorism work, Mr Thomas said the Council was a key partner in the Prevent programme. He said the board was working to identify early and effectively, individuals that had been groomed and vulnerable to exploitation.
- Mr Thomas said the partnership had put in place a new strategy to tackle the risks associated with drug dealing gangs and the sexual exploitation of girls.
- In response to census data and changes in demography, especially in relation to school closures, Mr Thomas reassured the sub-committee no school closures were planned. He said they were working with schools with falling school rolls and identifying ways to best support them, such as making structural changes and creating federated schools.
 - **ACTION:** The Strategy and Policy Officer to provide a link to the Council website in relation to the latest census data.
- Councillor Talukdar said the aspirations of the Executive was to deliver the pledges made in the manifesto; to ensure every child does well in school right through to achieving good employment. Councillor Talukdar said tackling anti-social behaviour and providing youth clubs were also part of the plan, however the biggest challenge were budgets and finances.

The Chair thanked Councillor Talukdar and Mr James Thomas for their presentation.

6.2 Introduction to Education

Mr Steve Nyakatawa, Director for Education provided the Sub-Committee an overview of his area of responsibility. He explained the structure of his department and the key educational attainment figures that had been achieved, giving a breakdown on attendance, ethnicity and the number of children in school.

The Sub-Committee also heard from Ms Tracy Smith, Director of the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP). Ms Smith explained the purpose of the partnership and how it worked with schools and their leadership teams, to provide challenge, support and analytic data, with the aim to lead on improvements.

Mr Nyakatawa stated that some of the challenges and priorities for the Education service was to deliver SEND improvements and manage increasing levels of demand. He said they also had work to do to improve outcomes for children post 16.

In response to comments and questions from member the following was noted:

- The Council has an online admission's process for parents applying for primary and secondary school places. The objective is to provide parents with their 1st preference and most parents do get this. There may be instances when this is not possible especially with 'in-year' admissions.
- The local area inspection for SEND identified 4 areas of weakness. The written statement of action was agreed in the 1st round and lead officers are leading working groups to drive the improvements needed. The lead officers meet monthly and report to the SEND Improvement Board. The DfE and NHS England also monitor the progress made.
- The 'Let's talk sessions' have led to parents being involved in shaping the 'local offer' and design of services. Social media is being used to communicate with parents.
- Mr Nyakatawa explained the local authority had much more influence over the education of 5–16-year-olds due to their statutory duties but post 16, this was not the case. He said they tried to use their influence and work in partnership however progress was slow. He said some 6th forms are too small and therefore lack the expertise needed to improve attainment for this cohort of students.
- In response to diversity in the school workforce, Ms Smith stated they were attracting and keeping leaders and said the profile of leaders was reflective of the community. She said change was happening, with up-and-coming leaders from diverse backgrounds.

The Chair thanked Mr Steve Nyakatawa and Ms Tracy Smith for their presentation.

6.3 Introduction to Supporting Families

Mr Sam Nair, Head of the Learning Academy and Principal Social Worker gave a presentation on the work of the Supporting Families department, on behalf of Ms Susannah Beasley-Murray.

Mr Nair explained the structure of the department and the areas it covered. He said the department provided a wide range of services from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which identified children at risk to the Justice and Young People's Service. Mr Nair explained the priorities of the department and the key principles that underpin the work of the department. He provided facts and figures showing the number of children in care, the number in need and the number offered early help. He said it was vital to support families early, to prevent them needing statutory services.

Mr Nair said demand was back at pre-covid levels and as such they continued to focus on key challenges and risks ensuring they had a skilled workforce,

which focussed on prevention work as well as ensuring support was there for families who needed it.

In response to comments and questions from members the following was noted:

- Mr Sam Nair stated that children and young people experiencing a mental health crisis would be referred to the CAMHS service for assessment, help and support.
- In answer to why and how the reoffending rate of 25.5% had been achieved, Mr James Thomas said this was due to three factors. He said their assessment process was consistently strong and their relationship-based practice meant they understood the individual needs of each young person. Mr Thomas said they provided quality multi-agency working, with different agencies working together as well as individualised relationship-based casework. Social and youth workers get to know the young person really well and tailor interventions accordingly.

The Chair thanked Mr Nair for his presentation.

6.4 Introduction to Integrated Commissioning and Culture

Ms Judith St John, Director for Commissioning and Culture made the final presentation. She outlined the areas covered by her department and said that whilst her department did not have statutory obligations, they provided an important outlet for people. She said the arts, parks and events held and enjoyed played a pivotal role during the pandemic and lockdown, especially the physical and mental wellbeing of people.

Ms St John said they provided high quality support to services across the Children's Directorate from commissioning and contracting external support to supporting people to stay fit and healthy. She said there was a report going the Cabinet about the seven leisure centres within the borough and how they can be redeveloped. She said her department worked closely to provide support to SEND and mental health needs.

In response to comments and questions from members the following was noted.

- Councillor Shubo Hussain commented that the Grime scene in Tower Hamlets ought to be promoted especially as it was the originator for this music genre. Ms St John agreed and said the Council's Arts and Events Team did promote and celebrate success. She said the council had run a successful programme of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh Independence and said they would continue to work to do this. She said it was heartening to see a pledge in the manifesto to invest more in promoting culture and said this was a great opportunity for young people to get involved. She said Tower Hamlets had a very rich cultural history.

The Chair thanked Ms Judith St John for her presentation.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 PLANNING

Mr Afazul Hoque, Head of Strategy and Communities stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were holding a workshop on the 16th July to formulate its work programme and that of the sub-committees. Mr Hoque asked members of the sub-committee if there were areas and/or topics that the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee wanted to scrutinise as part of their work programme.

Mr Hoque explained that with four more meetings scheduled in the municipal year, the proposal was to have thematic meetings looking at different aspects of the sub-committee's terms of reference and responsibility. He asked if members had a view on this.

In response to comments and questions the following was noted:

- Dr Phillip Rice proposed the sub-committee look at admission catchment areas and why there was an east/west split, in the borough. Mr Hoque thanked Dr Rice for his suggestion and said a briefing session could be provided on this subject.
- Ms Joanna Hannan suggested school budgets relating to SEND ought to be considered as a topic, especially has schools are losing SEND places. She said the sub-committee ought to consider if specialist units were needed.
- Mr Ashraf Zaman suggested the schools PSHE curriculum be scrutinised as many parents felt uneasy about the lack of consultation and collaboration with parents.

The Chair thanked the members of their suggestions.

8. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

There was no other business to be discussed.

The meeting ended at 8.27 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Bodrul Choudhury
Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

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