

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT ON MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2022

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

Members Present:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed (Chair)	
Councillor Abdul Mannan (Member)	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury (Member)	Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education
Councillor Marc Francis (Member)	
Councillor Asma Islam (Member)	
Councillor Ahmodur Khan (Member)	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services
Jahid Ahmed (Co-Optee)	(Co-optee)
Halima Islam (Co-Optee)	Scrutiny Co-Optee

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding
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Officers Present:

Raj Chand	(Director of Customer Services)
Daniel Kerr	(Strategy and Policy Manager)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Abdul Malik.

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

Nil Items.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

Councillor Marc Francis raised two issues with the minutes of 26 September 2022 1. Follow up report on the Gill Street Scheme on Item 5 2. To correct the request on performance data on Item 6.

4. MINUTES OF THE 26TH SEPTEMBER 2022.

RESOLVED That the unrestricted minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 September 2022 and 24 October 2022 approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

5. MINUTES OF THE 24TH OCTOBER 2022.

RESOLVED That the unrestricted minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 September 2022 and 24 October 2022 approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

7. ACTION LOG

The committee noted the updated Action Log and the Committee.

8. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

The Committee noted:

1. The most recent editions of the Forward Plan.
2. The Forthcoming Decisions Plan (or 'Forward Plan') is published at least 28 days before each Cabinet meeting setting out information on all the Key Decisions that are expected to be taken at that meeting, along with other Cabinet decisions where known.
3. Publication dates for 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 will be published as they are known and these are listed as New Issues.

9. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

9.1 CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATES AND IMPROVEMENTS

The committee considered a presentation Customer Service, presented by Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding and Lead for Customer Services and Raj Chand, Director of Customer Services. A copy of the presentation can be found in the agenda pack.

The committee made the following comments and questions:

- With the new Town Hall being used as a main residents' hub, how has this been communicated to residents and what can members of the committee do to better promote this? Councillor Kabir Ahmed stated that while there will be a large resident's hub within the new town hall, there will also be five more across the borough still for residents to access. The residents' hubs will have increased services than the previous one stop shops and will be in place of the current ideas' stores. Raj Chand recommended that members talk to residents, especially vulnerable residents about the new residents' hubs and the services that they run.
- How will staffing work in the new residents' hubs? Councillor Kabir Ahmed stated that there will be investment in staff and based on the expected services at the hubs, the staffing will be moulded based on this. There will also be space for partner organisations, who will also be there to support residents.
- Only 26 per cent of enquiries are dealt with first time, can you explain why this is low? Raj Chand agreed that it was low, but there will be improvement on this and as the pathways are more formalised, allowing for more partners to be involved, more issues can be dealt with, first time.
- For those who are trying to access services digitally but are finding they are now getting a positive outcome, what can the council do to improve on this? Raj Chand acknowledged some of the issues that can be found accessing services online. There are around 40,000 forms that residents can potentially access, and some of these are not as prompt in ensuring a response is generated.
- Will the potential of Tower Hamlets Homes coming inhouse, has this been factored into customer service demand? Councillor Kabir Ahmed explained the current process of bringing this service inhouse but stated that many of the customer service systems are shared, many residents will not see the difference to how their customer service works.
- It is important to see improvements in customer services and especially after years of cost saving exercises across the council. But this is also in a climate where many lessons this committee has previously tried to make the council learn, have been ignored.
- It would be helpful to be able to see the abandoned phone call data, on a monthly basis. Further to this, it would be helpful to see what other matrix the council measures against. Raj Chand detailed how the council works on the feedback it gets, including quality assurance that currently happens and is planned going forward. Raj Chand agreed to provide abandoned call data and other data collection to the committee.
- What are the extra resources that will be put into the new resident hubs to ensure residents are supported to access council services? How will this be funded? Councillor Kabir Ahmed stated that in the residents' hubs there will be staff there to support residents in person. The council is currently identifying how much resource each residents' hub will need, and it will be done on a location by location basis.

- How does the council contact those who are not able to have their enquiry answered? Raj Chand explained the process of getting back to residents, highlighting how the call back time has fallen and how quick responses are provided on social media.
- The council social media has been very positive and helped members with enquiries.
- Does the council keep a log of a resident's issues, so when issues are followed up, the council can see all their history to avoid the resident repeating their concerns? Raj Chand agreed that it would be helpful to have this function, however the council runs many services and often use different IT system, that do not work together. Some integration is possible, and it is an area the council is working on to improve as systems improve.

The chair thanked Raj Chand and Councillor Kabir Ahmed for attending and presenting. The chair summed up the main themes of the discussion.

1. There are concerns with the support residents are getting from customer service
2. The Council currently and through the new strategy are trying to improve the positive experience of residents
3. The local picture is important when looking at how resources should be used
4. The shortcomings of the hunt system and how a new system is needed
5. There is zero tolerance in compromising the standard of service for residents.
6. The publicity and promotion of the new residents' hubs.

RESOLVED

The presentation be noted

10. WORK PROGRAMME

10.1 OSC WORK PROGRAMME

The committee noted scrutiny work programme.

11. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Chair asked that members inform him of any particular questions that they wanted to be raised with the Mayor in Cabinet on the 30 November 2022.

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

Nil items.

12.1 Appointment of Co-opted Members to Sub Committees

13. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

The Committee received and noted the updates that had been received from Scrutiny Leads in regard to their portfolio's.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

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

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

17. MEETING CLOSED

As there was no other business the Chair declared the meeting closed and reminded Members that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 24th October 2022, 6.30 p.m.

The meeting ended at 8.43 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee