

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

Monday, 9 January 2023 7.00 p.m.
**Committee Room One - Town Hall, Mulberry
Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG**

Members:

Chair: Councillor Musthak Ahmed

Vice Chair: Councillor Abdul Mannan

Councillor Maisha Begum, Councillor Bodrul Choudhury, Councillor Marc Francis,
Councillor Asma Islam, Councillor Ahmodur Khan, Councillor Sabina Khan and
Councillor Abdul Malik

Co-opted Members:

Jahid Ahmed and Halima Islam

Deputies: Councillor Faroque Ahmed, Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury, Councillor
Saif Uddin Khaled, Councillor Kamrul Hussain, Councillor Abdul Wahid and Councillor
Leelu Ahmed

[The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members]

Contact for further enquiries:

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



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A Guide to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Local Government Act 2000 established the overview and scrutiny function for every council, with the key roles of:

- Scrutinising decisions before or after they are made or implemented
- Proposing new policies and commenting on draft policies, and
- Ensuring customer satisfaction and value for money.

The aim is to make the decision-making process more transparent, accountable and inclusive, and improve services for people by being responsive to their needs. Overview & Scrutiny membership is required to reflect the proportional political makeup of the council and, as well as council services, there are statutory powers to examine the impact of work undertaken by partnerships and outside bodies, including the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and local health bodies.

In Tower Hamlets, the function is exercised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The OSC considers issues from across the council and partnership remit. The Committee has 3 Sub-Committees which focus on health, housing and grants.

Public Engagement

OSC usually meets once per month (a few days before Cabinet, to allow scrutiny of decisions scheduled to be made there). These meetings are open to the public to attend, and a timetable for meeting dates and deadlines can be found [here](#). The committee's quorum is three voting members.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 9 January 2023

7.00 p.m.

SECTION ONE

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS (PAGES 7 - 8)

Members are reminded to consider the categories of interest 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, please see the attached note from the Monitoring Officer.

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

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

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES (PAGES 9 - 14)

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 November 2022.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

To receive any petitions (to be notified at the meeting).

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 The Council's 2023-24 Budget Report and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-26



The Committee is asked to review the Council's 2023-24 Budget Report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-26

Members are asked to refer to the report included in the [Tower Hamlets Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday 4th January 2023](#)

5.2 Fees and Charges 2023-24

To review the proposed changes to fees and charges across the Council for the financial year 2023-24.

Members are asked to refer to the report included in the [Tower Hamlets Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday 4th January 2023](#)

6. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

All items for the upcoming Cabinet meeting on 4 January 2023 are included at Item 4

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

To consider any other unrestricted business that the Chair considers to be urgent.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

In view of the contents of the remaining items on the agenda the Committee is recommended to adopt the following motion:

“That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business on the grounds that it contains information defined as Exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972.”

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL SECTION (Pink Papers)

The exempt committee papers in the agenda will contain information, which is commercially, legally or personally sensitive and should not be divulged to third parties. If you do not wish to retain these papers after the meeting, please hand them to the Committee Officer present.



SECTION TWO

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

To consider any other exempt/ confidential business that the Chair considers to be urgent.

Next Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 23 January 2023 at 6.30 p.m. to be held in Committee Room One - Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG



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: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance 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 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 18:30 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 (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury (Member)
Councillor Marc Francis (Member)
Councillor Asma Islam (Member)
Councillor Ahmodur Khan (Member)
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

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.

The Chair agreed to these changes and the Chair Moved and it was:-

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.

4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

5. ACTION LOG

The committee noted the updated Action Log and the Committee.

6. 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.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

7.1 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.

- What is being done to ensure that complaints are being dealt with and not ignored? Raj Chand stated that feedback and data is generated about how complaints are dealt with and currently around 80 per cent of complaints are dealt with, within the target time. Further work is being done to ensure that this is improved on, along with feedback to services on lessons being learnt from complaints.
- What is the council doing to ensure our services are benchmarked against other councils? Raj Chand detailed that while the council has learnt from what other councils are doing, it was also important to put on a local service that was personal to the borough.
- How does the council capture unanswered calls, currently there are reported 25,000 calls have gone unanswered? Raj Chand detailed how the council measures calls which are classified as abandoned. While reporting can see where services need to improve, the current issue is the hunt system for calling around services, which the council is seeking to fix and improve. A new system would allow for calling residents back and resolving outstanding issues.
- What is collected on different services and their response rate to calls? Raj Chand stated that many services are reviewed based on their response rate and the benefits team are particularly under a great deal of pressure right now. Customer feedback will be presented back to members on a quarterly basis, but the new strategy will increase this to detail and breakdown data on different parts of the council
- There have been complaints about the Love Your Neighbourhood app. Raj Chand agreed to look into issues with the app. But the council is growing its online engagement with how young people are able to access services on smart phones, along with the council website.
- Improvements to how residents are able to upload documents needs to be included in the new digital infrastructure, but also ensuring the paper forms are still accessible, like medical forms. Councillor Kabir Ahmed stated that as the council has moved towards being paperless, paper forms are less commonly stocked. But while the council is still working out what will be stocked at the new residents' hubs, residents will have the ability to have forms printed in some way.
- Will there be more intelligent design based on how residents wish to access council services? Will there be long term plans built in to ensure the service changes as residents engage with the council? Raj Chand agreed that services should be built around the need of residents and that is where the new strategy is heading. The current pathways of support for different residents is always evolving and will continue to grow around residents. Councillor Kabir Ahmed stated that after Covid-19 and currently in the cost-of-living crisis right now, demands are always shifting. But the council is always learning and improving to build better services.
- How can we ensure that residents be met with dignity and understanding when they approach the council with a sensitive issue? Councillor Kabir Ahmed agreed that dignity was important and that training for those in customer service

roles will be given to ensure they are engaging with residents correctly in these situations.

- 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

1. The presentation be noted.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

8.1 OSC WORK PROGRAMME

The committee noted scrutiny work programme.

9. 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.

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

Nil items.

10.1 UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

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

11. 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

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

Nil items.

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

13.1 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO SUB COMMITTEES

Joel West, Committee Services Team Leader presented the urgent report on the co-opted parent governor role for Children and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Healthwatch Tower Hamlets' nominee to the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee.

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed to:

1. Agreed the appointment of Nasifa Ahmed to the position of Parent Governor representative on the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period of the current administration.
2. Agreed the appointment of Matthew Adrien to the position of Healthwatch Tower Hamlets representative to the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period of the current administration or until Healthwatch advises the Council of a change to its nominee, whichever is sooner.

The meeting ended at 8.43 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee