

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 18:30 ON MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2023

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed	
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services
Councillor Abdul Malik	Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Abdul Mannan	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Maisha Begum	
Councillor Marc Francis	
Councillor Asma Islam	
Councillor Sabina Khan	

Other Councillors Present in Person:

Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Co-optees Present in Person:

Jahid Ahmed
Halima Islam

Officers Present in Person:

Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
Simon Baxter	(Interim Director of Public Realm)
Raj Mistry	(Interim Corporate Director Communities)
Ashraf Ali	(Group Manager Network Management)
Leah Sykes	(Head of Customer Service)
Raj Chand	(Director of Customer Services)
Dave Tolley	(Head of Environmental Health & Trading Standards)
Tom Lewis	(Team Leader Licensing & Safety)
Anna Murphy	(Strategy and Policy Officer)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Karen Swift	(Director of Housing)
Ayaan Gulaid	(Strategy and Policy Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS

Cllr Islam declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in item 4.1.
The chair declared an interest in item 4.1 as a local ward councillor.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 July 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings. Subject to an update to the committee on housing options concerns.

4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Liveable Streets

4.1 Liveable Streets

The Committee considered the report that is to be considered by the Mayor in Cabinet on the 20 of September 2023. The report was presented by Simon Baxter, Interim Director of Public Realm, Raj Mistry, Interim Corporate Director Communities, Ashraf Ali, Group Manager Network Management presented the report.

Members made the following comments and questions:

- The public consultation made it clear the public has interest in continuing low traffic neighbourhoods. Can officers explain why road closures with mitigations was not explored within the paper, when other options were detailed? Officers stated that the paper is to advise members on the potential options, on what is considered a decisive public issues, not all options could be explored.
- Can officers provide more detail on the air quality data within the report, compared to areas without these measures? Officers confirmed that a number of factors see low air quality, including the type of vehicles used and number of vehicles in the area.
- Please detail the post consultation process with local residents within the target areas? Officers confirmed there was no engagement, as members are still being consulted on the various elements of the plan.
- Has there been engagement with emergency services on consultation? Officers referred to the report, highlighting the impact road closures could have on emergency vehicles.
- As ward councillors, we are not seeing any awareness of the consultation. Did the council ensure there was community engagement

around the consultation, to ensure a diverse background took part? Officers stated that the consultation is flawed and did not use all the communication tools that the council has to engage with the borough on a correct scale.

- It feels like there has been no policy journey to ensure that the proposals bring in those who are supportive of liveable streets and those who are critical.
- The council has taken funding for many liveable street proposals, would it mean if changes were made, we would have to refund the TfL funding? Officers confirmed funding would not need to be refunded.
- The report details that some women who took part in the consultation did not feel safe, due to less traffic on the roads. The council should be acting on this data to make our streets safer.
- Are there any revenue generation schemes around the proposals? Officers stated there are no current plans.

The chair welcomed members to submit in writing further comments on the report.

The chair welcomed residents from Bethnal Green to address the committee to give feedback on the liveable streets scheme and the consultation. Residents highlighted the importance of air quality, the impact changes will have on disabled residents and how responses from the police, the local hospital and other stakeholders should have been taken into account.

Members made the following comments and questions:

- What caused residents to become more interested in supporting the liveable street scheme? Residents stated that it was seeing the benefits it brought to the local area, particularly vulnerable residents. But also, the council should focus on funding other projects, rather than developing something new for the local area, and instead keep the current scheme going.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

4.2 Customer Experience Strategy Post consultation

The Committee considered the report that is to be considered by the Mayor in Cabinet on the 20 of September 2023. The report was presented by Cllr Kabir Ahmed, with Raj Chand, Director of Customer Services and Leah Sykes, Head of Customer Service.

Members made the following comments and questions:

- The permit service is not fit for purpose, more needs to be done to ensure a quicker turn around, both online and in person at idea stores.
- The council needs to be making more of the digital experience, for the young borough that Tower Hamlets is but also bringing older residents more online. The council website needs to be brought closer to what other councils are providing.
- What are the challenges the council is facing in terms of elderly residents in accessing services? Cllr Kabir Ahmed reflected that the council needs to be getting elderly residents in the habit of accessing services online more frequently and making it easier for them to use it.
- What are the disparities that different groups are facing with services? Cllr Kabir Ahmed stated the council is working with partners like the NHS and Health and Wellbeing Board, more groups can be reached and targeted to show them the benefits of using online services, at least as a starting point for training.
- The committee should get annual updates on this proposed strategy.
- Can the targets that have been discussed in the report be elaborated on further? Cllr Kabir Ahmed outlined each departmental lead will be monitoring performance and will be given regular performance reports to relate to. Officers highlighted the measures of success and how the reporting for members will be able to be accessed regularly.
- What support will be offered to the workforce, who will be dealing with all kinds of resident hardships? What mental health support has been considered? Officers outlined the expectations the council will have of staff, but also what will be expected from residents. Staff will have a range of mental health support, from within the council and externally, that they can be referred to.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

5. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

5.1 Review of Statement of Licensing Policy 2023 -2028

The Committee considered the report of Statement of Licensing Policy 2023 – 2028 that the committee is asked to review. The report was presented by Dave Tolley, Head of Environmental Health & Trading Standards and Tom Lewis, Team Leader Licensing & Safety.

Members made the following comments and questions:

- Will the council be considering applying for appropriate awards to show the high level of borough premises? Officers agreed the council should apply for awards in this area and teams like the Violence Against Women is an example of good work that should be publicly regarded.
- What has the council done to ensure venues are ready to meet the regulation around Martin's Law? Officers confirmed that the council is in

the early stages in engagement with venues, but training has been rolled out to stakeholders within the borough.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

6. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Members of the committee agreed to submit pre-decision questions on the Cabinet meeting of 20 September 2023.

7. FINAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

The Chair introduced the Final Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

8. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

9. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Nil Items.

10. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

11. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

Nil Items.

12. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil Items.

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

Committee Members asked about an update on the Scrutiny Lead vacancy. The Chair confirmed that the work program outlines how the committee can take part in resources scrutiny throughout the year.

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. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

16. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 20:37

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee