

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT 6.39 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 23 JULY 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Jahed Choudhury	
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Abdul Mannan	Scrutiny Lead for Children and Education
Councillor Bellal Uddin	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services
Councillor Asma Islam	
Councillor Amy Lee	
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	Scrutiny Lead for Environment and the Climate Emergency

Members In Attendance Virtually:

Councillor Amina Ali

Other Councillors Present in Person:

Councillor Saied Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency

Co-optees Present in Person:

Jahid Ahmed
Halima Islam

Officers Present in Person:

Dave Hughes	(Interim Director Regeneration & Assets)
Ashraf Ali	(Director of Public Realm)
Richard Williams	(Head of Operational Services)
Ayesha Hakim	(Head Of Corporate Strategy And Transformation)
Onyekachi Ajisafe	(Assistant Transformation Project Manager)
Daniel Kerr	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Amina Ali as she joined the meeting online.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received at the meeting.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

6. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

7.1 Recycling Improvement Spotlight

Cllr Shafi Ahmed Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency, Ashraf Ali, Director of Public Realm; and Richard Williams, Head of Operational Services presented Q4 of the Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) 2023-2025.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- The council has fallen behind neighbouring councils on the recycling rate, what is being done to increase the rate of bin collections? Officers reflected that the borough has grown more dense in property in recent years, so it has become a greater challenge to increase the recycling rate. While increasing collection rate is being looked at, a big part of the plan is ensuring the correct bins are with residents across the borough.
- In the communications campaign for this plan, what will the metrics be to ensure it has been successful? Will the campaign include accessible

communications? All faith groups should be engaged with on these campaigns. Officers stated the worst performing areas will be measured to see what positive changes were brought on about due to the campaign. There will be multi-lingual communications across the campaign and there will be an engagement with faith groups.

- Can officers detail why missed collections continue to happen? As this also has an effect of contamination of waste, which does not help the borough to recycle efficiently. Officers detailed how house waste and recycling collection is collected differently to see significant improvement on the recycling and missed collections.
- Members requested that more officers to attend committee meetings when discussing critical issues, like for this item, Corporate Director Communities or senior staff who manage waste sites to get a bigger picture of the issue for scrutiny.
- What is the council doing about food waste collections? Officers detailed that the council is in the early stages of the new food waste collection, including government funding to help with the rollout.
- Residents have complained about lack of access to recycling bags, which makes it hard for trust to be built in new plans like this one.
- It was a disgrace that the frontline waste service workers put in a position to go out on strike in 2023 by the council management. What is being done to ensure that these frontline staff are brought along the policy journey of this plan? Officers detailed what engagement there has been with the unions and how all staff are fully on board with recycling plans.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the presentation.

8. TARGET OPERATING MODEL

Ayesha Hakim, Head Of Corporate Strategy And Transformation with Onyekachi Ajisafe, Assistant Transformation Project Manager presented the council's new draft Target Operating Model.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- Residents have highlighted that disabled advocacy organisations were not engaged with during this process, can officers go out and find who was not previously engaged with and seek feedback? Officers detailed what engagement had been carried out, including accessibility, however officers were open to any suggestions to on where else to consult, but this will be taken onboard for further work.
- How have officers worked to ensure that the council has gone out wider than the usual stakeholders for engagement on this work? What creativity have officers shown to seek further feedback? Officers highlighted the range of methods that have been used including working with the Cornerstone Project and attending the VCS summit.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the report.

9. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

9.1 Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024-29

Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living, with Dave Hughes, Interim Director, Regeneration & Assets, presented the report on the council's Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024-29 for the committee to discuss.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- When the community uses council assets, like buildings, there can be bad communication between the council and the groups who use the asset. Officers detailed the plans to improve asset management through the asset management plan, but for community groups there are service level agreements on how groups should be supported.
- When will the council be able to report fully on the state of all council assets? Officers reported that the council is always reviewing assets for a range of issues, including health and safety, but does not need to report on assets to this extent.
- Groups will be delivering important community projects, but rent from council spaces could price them out, which would be a loss to the community. What is the council doing to ensure this is not the case? Officers detailed how full commercial rent is not always sought and if the community group is delivering in council aims and objectives, agreements can be sought on rent.
- The council has been accused in the past that it is not delivering on its best value objectives on selling assets, what is the council doing to meet these objectives? Cllr Saied Ahmed detailed that the council is not looking to carry out disposals of assets but will look instead at converting to council housing.
- What support does the council need to ensure our assets are retrofitted adequately? Officers detailed how the business case is informed on any potential refurbishments and retrofit, which can often be passed onto national government to help provide more sustainable solutions.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the plan.

10. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Councillor Bodrul Choudhury, Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration gave an update highlighting meeting with officers to review private rent in the borough and homelessness.

Councillor Abdul Mannan, Scrutiny Lead for Children and Education gave an update highlighting that Free School Meals will be the topic of this portfolio's scrutiny review topic.

Councillor Nathalie Bienfait, Scrutiny Lead for Environment and the Climate Emergency gave an update highlighting meeting with the key heads of council departments to help establish this new Scrutiny Lead Portfolio, including developing the scrutiny review topic.

11. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Members agreed to submit questions on 24 July 2024 Cabinet items:

- Item 6.1 Tower Hamlets Council Strategic Plan: Performance Targets for 2024/25 and Annual Delivery Plan
- Item 6.4 Tackling Dog-related Anti-Social Behaviour

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the pre-decision scrutiny questions.

12. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

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

Nil items.

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 9.02 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Jahed Choudhury
Overview & Scrutiny Committee