

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 10 JANUARY 2006

**COMMITTEE ROOM, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Alan Amos (Chair)
Councillor Julian Sharpe
Councillor Louise Alexander
Councillor Simon Rouse
Councillor Marian Williams
(none)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Janet Ludlow
Councillor John Griffiths
Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Timothy O'Flaherty

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr C Iyobhebhe	–	Parent Governor Representative
Ms F Simmons	–	Parent Governor Representative
Reverend Prebendary R Swan	–	Church of England Representative
Mr D McLaughlin	–	Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster Representative

Guests Present:

Mr L. Forman
H. Forman & Son

Officers Present:

Sara Williams	–	(Assistant Chief Executive)
Kevan Collins	–	(Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Emma Peters	–	(Corporate Director, Development & Renewal)
Owen Whalley	–	(Development Manager, Major Project Development)
Alex Cosgrave	–	(Corporate Director, Environment & Culture)
Martin Smith	–	(Director of Resources)
Oscar Ford	–	(Environment and Culture Directorate)
Ros Brewer	–	(Environment and Culture Directorate)
Michael Keating	–	(Service Head, Research & Scrutiny)

Alan Steward	- (Policy Scrutiny Manager)
Suki Binjal	- (Acting Head of Standards, Legal Services)
Kairen Zonena	- (Democratic Services Manager)
Tim Hogan	- (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Khaled Reza Khan, A.A Sardar, and Salim Ullah. Apologies for absence were also submitted on behalf of Mr Hasan Muennuddin, Co-opted Muslim Community Faith representative. The Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the apologies for absence be noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor Marian Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Scrutiny Spotlight – Education. The declaration was made on the basis that Councillor Williams was chair of governors at Old Ford School.

Councillor Simon Rouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Scrutiny Spotlight – Education. The declaration was made on the basis that Councillor Rouse was a governor of a primary school in the Borough.

Councillor Rouse also declared a prejudicial and personal interest in agenda item 12 - Bow Lock Site. The declaration was made on the basis that his brother-in-law had a business relationship with the H.Formam and Son, a director of which had requested a deputation. Councillor Rouse decided to leave the meeting before this item was considered.

Councillor Julian Sharpe declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Scrutiny Spotlight – Education. The declaration was made on the basis that Councillor Sharpe was a governor of a primary school in the Borough.

3. SECTION ONE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 6TH DECEMBER , 2005.

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

RESOLVED

That the Section One Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 6th December, 2005 be confirmed as a correct of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

There were no requests to submit petitions.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

Mr Hogan informed the Committee that a request for a deputation had been received from Mr Lance Forman, a director of H.Forman & Son, a salmon smokery located in Marshgate Lane E15 which was likely to be adversely affected by the redevelopment of the area in preparation of the 2012 Olympic Games. It was noted that the deputation request related to a Section Two Cabinet report which had been "Called In" for further consideration. Mr Hogan outlined the procedures for the consideration of the deputation.

Ms Binjal, the Committee's Legal Adviser emphasised that any comments by the deputation would have to be confined to land use issues, and that any discussion of exempt issues relating to the Section Two report which had been "Called In" would have to be reserved for when the Committee was in Section Two of the meeting. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the deputation be heard.

Mr Forman thanked the Chair for the opportunity of addressing the Committee and drew attention to information pack which he had tabled. Mr Forman went on to outline the history of his discussions with the Authority regarding the possible relocation of his business to new premises. He also drew attention to his proposal to relocate his business to the Bow Lock Site as well as his plans for its overall redevelopment, and also referred to his proposal for a land swap with the London Development Agency.

Following his presentation Mr Forman went on to respond to questions put by Members of the Committee.

Ms Peters, Corporate Director Development and Renewal, then responded to the issues raised by Mr Forman and by Committee Members. Ms Peters confirmed that the Authority was statutorily obliged to competitively seek the best price when disposing of land. If Mr Forman were to submit a planning application it would be considered on its merits under the provisions of the Area Action Plan. Ms Peters also detailed the rationale for a Master Plan for the Bromley-by-Bow site which was supported by the GLA, the LDA, and the LTGDC. Ms Peters concluded by emphasising that the report which had been "Called In" was concerned with land disposal rather than the planning process.

The Chair thanked Mr Forman and Ms Peters for their comments and **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the deputation's comments be noted.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

The Chair informed the meeting that only one report arising from the Cabinet's 7th December, 2005 meeting had been 'Called In' for consideration.

6.1 REPORT CALLED IN - OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

The Chair outlined the procedures and the timings to be followed for the consideration of the "Call In". At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor John Griffiths addressed the Committee on behalf of the "Call In" Members. He began by acknowledging that the Lead Member for Culture had arranged for a comprehensive response to the detailed points raised in the "Call In" requisition to be tabled which he noted responded to a number of the concerns which had been raised. He continued by informing the Committee that that he welcomed and supported the strategy, but suggested that it needed to be strengthened in four major areas namely – budget and resources, maintenance, consultation and the net loss of open space.

Councillor Griffiths then went on to respond to a series of questions put by Members of the Committee including the need to make explicit the interrelationship between the Council's Third Sector Strategy, its Asset Base Strategy and the Open Space Strategy.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Denise Jones, Lead Member for Culture, responded on behalf of the Cabinet to the points raised by Councillor Griffiths. The Lead Member welcomed his support for the Strategy and responded in detail to the issues raised by him.

The Lead Member responded to a series of questions by Members of the Committee.

Ms Alex Cosgrave, Corporate Director, Environment and Culture, responded to various points raised by Members regarding the interrelationship of various strategies. She confirmed that the implementation of the new maintenance contract had been drawn up to ensure good value for money. Ms Cosgrave also outlined plans for enhanced links with the Third Sector.

It was noted that any proposals involving change of use would be subject to consideration under the planning process.

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

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet's provisional decisions in respect of the report "Called in" – Open Spaces Strategy be endorsed and that Cabinet be requested to consider strengthening the Strategy by taking account of the points raised in the "Call In" requisition and during the debate.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT - EDUCATION

Mr Kevan Collins, Corporate Director of Children's Services, provided a presentation to the Committee about current education issues and priorities for the Borough. A copy of the presentation was tabled, to which he spoke. The Corporate Director also drew attention to an information pack which had been circulated under separate cover.

It was noted that the Lead Member for Education and Youth was unable to be present as he was in Bangladesh attending a relative's funeral.

The Corporate Director informed the meeting that the Education Service was working in partnership with schools and other agencies to improve the life chances of pupils. Particular attention was being paid to the needs of vulnerable children and he also detailed the steps being taken to improve academic performance in respect of Maths and English at GCSE level, for which new challenging targets had been set.

Following his presentation the Corporate Director responded to a series of questions put by Members of the Committee, including questions relating to the impact of vacancies on the effectiveness and efficiency of governing bodies, on-going work with vulnerable children, the Schools PFI projects, the role of the Authority and of the Borough Schools Forum in managing current PFI Projects and the steps being taken to improve academic performance particularly at GCSE level. The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for his informative presentation and **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

8. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

The Chair informed the meeting that five reports had been submitted for consideration.

8.1 SCRUTINY CHALLENGE SESSION - TOWER HAMLETS STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

The report was introduced by Alan Steward, Scrutiny Policy Manager.

Councillor Alexander, who chaired the Scrutiny Challenge session, said it had been well attended and there had been a good level of engagement by all participants. A useful discussion had taken place on the role of SACRE and the LEA representatives in attendance had responded positively to the questions put by SACRE Members. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the recommendations arising from the Tower Hamlets Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Scrutiny Challenge Session as detailed in the report, be endorsed.

8.2 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2006/2007

Mr Martin Smith, Director of Resources, introduced the report and updated the Committee regarding the provisional local government finance settlement for 2006/2007 and the implications for the authority. Mr Smith went on to outline the implications of the newly introduced Dedicated Schools Grant.

Mr Smith responded to questions from Members relating to Gershon efficiency savings; the budgetary implications of the Housing Choice process, the funding of the newly created Directorate of Children's Services, natural levels of growth and the GLA precept. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8.3 MEMBERS' ENQUIRIES

The report was introduced by Sara Williams, Assistant Chief Executive, who drew attention to additional information which had been forwarded to Members in a supplemental agenda despatch. Ms Williams went on to respond to a series of questions put by Committee Members and following which she agreed to discuss with officers the issues raised by Committee Members. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That Committee receive bi-annual reports on the progress of the Members' Inquiry System, with a further report being submitted to the Committee's April 2006 meeting.

8.4 SCRUTINY CHALLENGE SESSION OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

The report was introduced by Alan Steward Scrutiny Policy Manager. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the outcome of the Older People's Commissioning Strategy Scrutiny Challenge Session be noted.

8.5 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2005/2006 UPDATE

The report was introduced by Alan Steward Scrutiny Policy Manager. Those Scrutiny Leads present updated the meeting in respect of reviews and other

work being carried out within their respective portfolio areas. The Chair **MOVED** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

**9. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED)
CABINET PAPERS - CABINET 11TH JANUARY 2006**

There were no Section One Pre - Decision Scrutiny Questions arising from the Cabinet's 11th January 2006 meeting submitted for consideration.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

RESOLVED

That, under the provisions of Section 100 (A) 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 as listed in the order of business on the grounds that they contained information considered to be Exempt as detailed in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

SUMMARY OF SECTION TWO PROCEEDINGS

During Section Two of the proceedings the Committee considered the Section Two Minutes arising from the meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 6th December 2005, the 'Call In' of the Cabinet's provisional decisions in respect of the disposal of Bow Lock Site and the Pre-decision Scrutiny of Section Two Papers arising from the Cabinet's 11th January , 2005 meeting.

CLOSE OF MEETING

THE Chair closed the meeting at 10.22 pm.

COUNCILLOR ALAN AMOS,
CHAIR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE