

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2010

**M71, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Sirajul Islam (Chair)

Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor A A Sardar

Councillor Peter Golds

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr Ahbab Miah – Parent Governor Representative
Mr H. Mueenuddin – Muslim Community Representative

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Ohid Ahmed – Lead Member Resources and Performance
Councillor Marc Francis – Lead Member Housing and Development

Guests Present:

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Officers Present:

Lutfur Ali – (Assistant Chief Executive)
Afazul Hoque – (Scrutiny Policy Manager, Scrutiny & Equalities, Chief Executive's)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community))
Aman Dalvi – (Corporate Director, Development & Renewal)
Chris Naylor – (Corporate Director, Resources)
Alan Finch – (Service Head, Corporate Finance, Resources)
Stephanie Ford – (Interim Performance Manager, Strategy & Performance, Chief Executive's)
Chris Worby – (Service Head, Housing Regeneration, Development & Renewal)
Katie McDonald – Scrutiny Policy Officer
Kelly Powell – (Communications Officer, Communications, Chief

	Executive's)
Sarah Barr	– Management Trainee, Strategy & Performance
Jackie Odunoye	– (Service Head Strategy Regeneration and Sustainability, Development & Renewal)
Matthew Vaughan	– (Political Advisor to the Conservative Group)
Alan Ingram	– (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Tim Archer (for whom Councillor Peter Golds deputised)
- Councillor Abjol Miah
- Councillor Bill Turner
- Councillor Alex Heslop

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor Denise Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Denise Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8.1 “General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/11 to 2012/13”. The declaration was made on the basis that Councillor Jones was a non-executive member of the PCT Board; a Governor of Mulberry School and a Tower Hamlets Homes Board member.

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 12 January 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair, as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

Nil items.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Councillor Marc Francis, Lead Member Housing and Development, gave a detailed presentation on aspects of his portfolio, focusing on areas set out below:-

Local Development Framework Core Strategy

- The Full Council in December 2009 had agreed a Local Development Framework for submission to the Secretary of State. The framework had been adapted so as to relate to particular areas and neighbourhoods of the Borough and as such had been supported by residents. There would be a series of evidential sessions with the public in April and finalisation of the consultation process after the local elections.

Regeneration

- Individual Master plans had been prepared concerning regeneration of specific areas, namely, Aldgate, Whitechapel and Bromley by Bow. A Master plan for the Fish Island area was also in preparation, and aimed to provide community building without driving out local industry.
- The Ocean Estate regeneration project was awaiting a detailed planning application and significant public investment was anticipated. Housing Consortium grant was close to finalisation and the contract with ET Consortium was due to be signed this month. 781 homes were to be refurbished and 819 new homes provided, with maximisation of socially rented homes to some 50%.
- On the Blackwall Reach project, design work for the outline scheme had commenced and the first stage of procurement was underway. Despite previous misgivings about the scheme, regeneration of the estate was considered desirable and the views of residents were being sought to ensure their support.
- At Cottall Street, all squatters had been removed and demolition work was proceeding.

Housing Delivery

- 1064 affordable homes had been completed in 2008/09, of which 186 were three-bed plus. It was forecast that 1817 affordable home would be completed in 2009/10, of which 54 were three-bed plus.

- Overcrowding had been particularly addressed as it affected people's life chances and aspirations. A new allocations policy was under development and due for submission to Cabinet next month. Buy-backs of 63 properties sold under RTB had been achieved and previously overcrowded homes had been let to smaller families.
- The big housing management challenge was to bring Tower Hamlets Homes into a position to achieve two star status and work was ongoing with the new senior management team, who had been in place for the last 6 -12 months. Over the past two years there had been many issues to resolve with individual housing associations but most were now moving in the right direction. There had been particular problems in the Isle of Dogs and Stepney with some improvements. The particular housing associations would be monitored and challenged as appropriate to ensure they delivered satisfactory services.

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee then posed a series of detailed questions to which Councillor Francis responded. The question and answer session was centred on the following points:

- The increasing population in the Borough and the consequent effects on housing requirements for local people, together with the Council's obligations to meet that need.
- The requirement to address issues arising from overcrowding that affected people's aspirations and life choices. The Cabinet aimed to maximise the provision of socially rented homes and break the cycle of deprivation that had existed for many families.
- A new lettings system was being implemented that would enable more transparency and consistency in application. A questionnaire had elicited almost 2,000 responses from the public and these were mostly positive in nature.
- There had been success in obtaining funding from Communities and Local Government for the High Street 2012 (A12/Whitechapel) project; similarly there would be works to the Roman Road/Bethnal Green Road corridor and a significant post-Olympic legacy would be achieved for East London.
- There was recognition of the contribution made by shopkeepers on the Ocean Estate and it was hoped that they could be relocated or return to the locality after regeneration works to the estate were completed. Councillor Francis indicated that he would check the position of the planning application for the redevelopment and inform the Chair accordingly.
- Some 900 affordable homes had been completed, along with about 500 socially rented homes also.

The Chair thanked Councillor Francis for his detailed presentation.

8. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

8.1 General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/11 to 2012/13

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Lead Member Resources & Performance, indicated that he would introduce the report and agenda item 8.2 concurrently. He then presented the reports for the comments of the Committee prior to their submission to Cabinet next day, for consideration of the General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2011/12, a Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/11 to 2012/13 and also the Capital Programme 2010/11 to 2012/13. Cabinet recommendations would then be submitted to the Budget Council for decision on 3 March 2010.

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee then posed a series of detailed questions to which Councillor Ahmed and Mr Chris Naylor, Corporate Director Resources, responded. The question and answer session was centred on the following points:

- A consultation process that had been undertaken with resident and business Council Tax payers, full results of which would be reported to the Cabinet next day.
- Issues that were taken into account when setting appropriate financial reserves, including the position of the property portfolio.
- Means of leveraging BSF funding into schools where PFI contractors were in operation.
- The position with regard to current Directorate overspends and measures to redress this.
- The progress made concerning a waste procurement strategy.

The Committee further considered and discussed Cabinet's budget proposals and noted that the government had announced the final local government settlement for 2010/11 and the certainty this provided for financial planning. The Committee were assured that a healthy reserve had been maintained to ensure proper financial management over the next year. The Council would need to carefully consider any capital projects with grants being reduced significantly over the next few years.

The Committee expressed concerns that five out of six Directorates were over spending in their budget and Members asked that Cabinet monitor this more effectively during the remainder of this financial year and next year. The Committee would consider the budget and strategic monitoring report for quarter three at their next meeting in March 2010.

The Committee commented that it would have been useful to consider the results of budget consultation as part of the reports to ensure residents concerns were fully reflected in the budget proposals. It therefore recommended that the Council improve the budget consultation process and ensure outcomes from this were shared with local residents and all councillors.

The Committee generally supported the budget proposals, in particular the proposal for freezing Council Tax for 2010/11. The Committee also welcomed the proposed efficiency savings and additional investments proposed.

Resolved

That the comments of the Committee, as set out above, be reported to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 10 February 2010.

8.2 Capital Programme 2010/11 to 2012/13

Dealt with in the preceding item.

9. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

9.1 Tower Hamlets Index - October - November 2009

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Lead Member Resources & Performance, introduced the report comprising the third monitoring report for the Tower Hamlets Index for 2009/10. Councillor Ahmed added that 35 indicators had been reported in the current period. In addition, the Council was liaising with the Government Office for London regarding revision of agreed LAA targets for National Indicator 155 – number of affordable homes delivered (gross) in the light of the economic downturn.

Ms Stephanie Ford, (Interim Performance Manager, Strategy & Performance, responded to queries from Members relating to the position regarding amber status indicators; details concerning the percentage of top 5% of Local Authority staff that were women; looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs; percentage of undisputed invoices paid on time.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

10. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

A Prosperous Community – Reducing Worklessness amongst Young Adults 18-24

Councillor A.A. Sardar reported that recommendations were being finalised for the scrutiny review. Members met three weeks ago to discuss the final recommendations and would have until the close of play on 10 February 2010 for comments on the draft report.

The recommendations looked at a number of themes including more information and guidance for young adults, the important role of the third

sector, early intervention and the role of community leaders in reducing worklessness.

Councillor Sardar added that he aimed to have the report available for Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration next month.

A Safe and Supportive Community – Reducing Youth Offending

Councillor Denise Jones indicated that there had been two further review meetings since the last Scrutiny Leads' update.

In December the group looked at:

- The Police's perspective of Youth offending in Tower Hamlets.
- How well the YOT performed compared to the rest of London.
- The links of learning difficulties and young offenders. Realising that learning difficulties were not a cause of crime but instead were very prevalent amongst young offenders.
- The current preventative measures used by the YOT.

In its January meeting, the group:

- Had a long discussion about the provision of housing for homeless young offenders.
- Agreed the Council should sign up to the London Youth Resettlement Pledge.
- Were updated about the use of the Police's stop and search powers.
- Discussed possible recommendations for the review.

Councillor Jones commented that the review was now being drafted and would be considered at the next meeting on 16 February. A final visit for the review was being considered, to comprise a visit to a youth court to see what happened there.

One Tower Hamlets – Strengthening Local Democracy

Councillor Ann Jackson indicated that the final meeting of the review group had been held in January. There had been discussion around the evidence considered so far and also some draft recommendations.

The key issues arising from this review included further developing the CCfA model that had been developed in Tower Hamlets, improving residents' engagement through the partnership; improving residents' participation in local democracy and supporting the development of community leaders. The aim was to finalise the draft report over the next week, for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.

A Healthy Community

On behalf of Councillor Tim Archer, Councillor Peter Golds reported on:

Health Scrutiny Panel – 26 January meeting

The Panel heard from

- East London NHS Foundation Trust on the proposals for redesign of older peoples' services.
- Katharine Marks (Interim Service Head, Disabilities) on "Transition from Under 18 to Adult Autism Services".
- Ms Mabli Jones, Associate Director, Primary Care Commissioning on the GP List Cleansing Process.
- Deb Clarke, Director of Human Resources, NHS Tower Hamlets with a detailed verbal presentation, slide show and video presentation of the PCT workforce.
- Mr Jeremy Gardner, Head of Communications, & Engagement, NHS Tower Hamlets, with details of a consultation programme on the Health for North East London Consultation Plan.
- Mr Andrew Ridley, Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Tower Hamlets providing a report and tabled paper on the preparation of the Commissioning Strategy Plan for the next five years.

Scrutiny Review – Preventing Childhood Obesity

Councillor Golds stated that as part of the review, five focus group sessions were held with external facilitators in January with the following groups:

- Somali mums/carers
- Male carers/dads
- Bangladeshi female carers/mums
- White working class female carers/mums
- Secondary school children age 11 to 16

The review group held a meeting at Toby Lane on 1 February, when:

- Michael Hales, Head of Contract Services, gave a presentation on "School Setting – encouraging Healthy Eating" as well as arranging for the group to test a typical school meal.
- Ann Sutcliffe, Head of Building Schools for the Future and Pat Watson, Head of Building Development, gave a presentation on "Building Schools for the Future and Building Developments – response to childhood obesity".

The next and final review meeting to discuss recommendations would be held on 25 February.

Health 4NEL

Councillor Golds reported that the JOSOC to review Health4North East London Acute Services Review had nearly completed their programme. Tower Hamlets hosted the last INEL JOSOC meeting on 2 February and Members heard presentations from the Inner London North East acute trusts (Newham, Homerton and Barts) on the impact reconfiguration would have on services, as well as updates from H4NEL and Unison.

The next meeting (and last evidence session) would be on 11 February at Newham Town Hall. The Royal Colleges of Nursing, Psychiatrists, General Practitioners and Physicians would be presenting as well as Transport for London and public and patient representative groups. The JOSC were expected to agree the final draft report on 25 March 2010.

A Great Place to Live – Private Rented Sector

On behalf of Councillor Alex Heslop, the Chair reported that the working group had held their final session on the Private Rented Sector about two weeks ago. This session looked at the merits and demerits of Private Sector leasing as well as the increased role of RSLs in the Private Rented Sector. The working group heard evidence from the Group Chief Executive at East Thames Housing, the Director of Strategic Operations at Poplar HARCA and representatives from Look Ahead and Crises.

The final report for the review was being devised, along with recommendations which would be available by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.

Councillor Jones referred to her report and commented that one recommendation her review group was likely to make would be that improvements in literacy were not proceeding quickly enough and should be extended to take on a life long learning approach. The Chair stated that this should be flagged up for consideration when next year's scrutiny reviews were being considered.

11. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET AGENDA

Members referred to the Cabinet report on the Ocean Estate Regeneration Compulsory Purchase Order which had been circulated earlier in the day and made the point that late reports made it very difficult for effective pre-decision scrutiny to be carried out. The Chair stated that any Members' comments should be forwarded by email to Mr Afazul Hoque, Scrutiny Policy Manager, for onward transmission to the Cabinet. He also asked Mr Hoque to convey to Directors, Members' dissatisfaction with important items of business being circulated at such a late stage.

12. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The recommendation was not adopted as there were no items of exempt/confidential business for consideration.

14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

No exempt/confidential minutes were submitted.

15. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

16. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL CABINET AGENDA

Nil items.

17. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

The Chair asked Mr Afazul Hoque, Policy Scrutiny Manager, to note for the next agenda a Member's request for inclusion of a report on luncheon club funding that had been previously agreed for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Sirajul Islam
Overview & Scrutiny Committee