

Meeting of the

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 November 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

A G E N D A

VENUE

M71, 7th Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London,
E14 2BG

Members:	Deputies (if any):
Chair: Councillor Ann Jackson	
Vice-Chair: Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer	
Councillor Tim Archer	Councillor Peter Golds, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Tim Archer)
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	
Councillor Lesley Pavitt	Councillor David Snowdon, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Tim Archer)
Councillor Zenith Rahman	
3 Vacancies	

[Note: The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members].

Co-opted Members:

Jake Kemp	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Mr Mushfique Uddin	– (Muslim Community Representative)
Vacancy	– Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster Representative
Canon Michael Ainsworth	– (Church of England Representative)
Mr Ahbab Miah	– (Parent Governor Representative)

If you require any further information relating to this meeting, would like to request a large print, Braille or audio version of this document, or would like to discuss access arrangements or any other special requirements, please contact:

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 November 2010

7.00 p.m.

SECTION ONE

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note any declarations of interest made by Members, including those restricting Members from voting on the questions detailed in Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992. See attached note from the Chief Executive.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

3 - 14

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2010.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

To be notified at the meeting.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

To be notified at the meeting.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section One reports 'called in' from the meeting of Cabinet held on 6 October 2010.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

The Chief Executive, Kevan Collins, will be attending the meeting.

(Time allocated – 30 minutes)

8. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Scrutiny Challenge Session - Raising Participation in Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets

15 - 24

(Time allocated – 15 minutes)

9. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

(Time allocated – 5 minutes each)

10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED) CABINET PAPERS

(Time allocated – 15 minutes).

11. ANY OTHER SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED) BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

12. 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.

13. ANY OTHER SECTION TWO (RESTRICTED) BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Agenda Item 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS - NOTE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This note is guidance only. Members should consult the Council's Code of Conduct for further details. Note: Only Members can decide if they have an interest therefore they must make their own decision. If in doubt as to the nature of an interest it is advisable to seek advice **prior** to attending at a meeting.

Declaration of interests for Members

Where Members have a personal interest in any business of the authority as described in paragraph 4 of the Council's Code of Conduct (contained in part 5 of the Council's Constitution) then s/he must disclose this personal interest as in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Code. Members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest at the start of the meeting and certainly no later than the commencement of the item or where the interest becomes apparent.

You have a **personal interest** in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- (a) An interest that you must **register**
- (b) An interest that is not on the register, but where the well-being or financial position of you, members of your family, or people with whom you have a close association, is likely to be affected by the business of your authority more than it would affect the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision.

Where a personal interest is declared a Member may stay and take part in the debate and decision on that item.

What constitutes a prejudicial interest? - Please refer to paragraph 6 of the adopted Code of Conduct.

Your personal interest will also be a prejudicial interest in a matter if (a), (b) and either (c) or (d) below apply:-

- (a) A member of the public, who knows the relevant facts, would reasonably think that your personal interests are so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgment of the public interests; AND
- (b) The matter does not fall within one of the exempt categories of decision listed in paragraph 6.2 of the Code; AND EITHER
- (c) The matter affects your financial position or the financial interest of a body with which you are associated; or
- (d) The matter relates to the determination of a licensing or regulatory application

The key points to remember if you have a prejudicial interest in a matter being discussed at a meeting:-

- i. You must declare that you have a prejudicial interest, and the nature of that interest, as soon as that interest becomes apparent to you; and
- ii. You must leave the room for the duration of consideration and decision on the item and not seek to influence the debate or decision unless (iv) below applies; and

- iii. You must not seek to improperly influence a decision in which you have a prejudicial interest.
- iv. If Members of the public are allowed to speak or make representations at the meeting, give evidence or answer questions about the matter, by statutory right or otherwise (e.g. planning or licensing committees), you can declare your prejudicial interest but make representations. However, you must immediately leave the room once you have finished your representations and answered questions (if any). You cannot remain in the meeting or in the public gallery during the debate or decision on the matter.

There are particular rules relating to a prejudicial interest arising in relation to Overview and Scrutiny Committees

- You will have a prejudicial interest in any business before an Overview & Scrutiny Committee or sub committee meeting where both of the following requirements are met:-
 - (i) That business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Council's Executive (Cabinet) or another of the Council's committees, sub committees, joint committees or joint sub committees
 - (ii) You were a Member of that decision making body at the time and you were present at the time the decision was made or action taken.
- If the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is conducting a review of the decision which you were involved in making or if there is a 'call-in' you may be invited by the Committee to attend that meeting to answer questions on the matter in which case you must attend the meeting to answer questions and then leave the room before the debate or decision.
- If you are not called to attend you should not attend the meeting in relation to the matter in which you participated in the decision unless the authority's constitution allows members of the public to attend the Overview & Scrutiny for the same purpose. If you do attend then you must declare a prejudicial interest even if you are not called to speak on the matter and you must leave the debate before the decision.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2010

**M72, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Ann Jackson (Chair)
Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Lesley Pavitt

Co-opted Members Present:

Jake Kemp – (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun – (Parent Governor Representative)
Mr Mushfique Uddin – (Muslim Community Representative)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor David Edgar

Officers Present:

Afazul Hoque – (Scrutiny Policy Manager, Scrutiny & Equalities, Chief Executive's)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community), Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
Hafsha Ali – (Acting Joint Service Head Scrutiny & Equalities, Chief Executive's)
Alan Finch – (Service Head, Corporate Finance, Resources)
Aman Dalvi – (Corporate Director, Development & Renewal)
Stephanie Ford – (Interim Performance Manager, Strategy & Performance, Chief Executive's)
Keiko Okawa – Scrutiny Policy Officer
Chris Saunders – (Interim Political Advisor to the Labour Group, Chief Executive's)
Amanda Thompson – (Team Leader - Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rabina Khan and Harun Miah, and from Co-opted Members, Canon Michael Ainsworth and Ahbab Miah.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Marc Francis and Joshua Peck both declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6.1 on the basis that they were Members of the Cabinet when the original decision was taken, and both left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

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

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 7 September be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

None.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

None.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

6.1 Report Called In - Enforcement Policy and RIPA

Further to their respective declarations of a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillors Marc Francis and Joshua Peck and left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Snowden for the Call-In Members referred to the reasons in their requisition and highlighted the main issues that they held with the Cabinet's provisionally agreed decision that the Council adopts an umbrella enforcement policy to govern its regulatory functions, and

that oversight of any enforcement action be exercised by the Standards Committee.

Councillor Snowden advised that the objection was not to the adoption of the policy itself, but to the delegation of the oversight role to the Standards Committee, as it was felt that this should be a function undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Call-in Members considered that the role of the Standards Committee was more to do with maintaining high levels of conduct for Council Members, while the role of Overview and Scrutiny was to scrutinise policy issues.

Councillor Snowden then responded to questions from the Committee concerning the benefit of having a majority independent membership on the Standards Committee, and also the fact that it would still be possible for Overview and Scrutiny to play a role in monitoring the process.

Councillor Josh Peck, Deputy Leader of the Council, supported by Mr David Galpin, Head of Legal Services (Community), then addressed the Committee on behalf of the Cabinet in response to the Call-in and made the following points:

The Enforcement Policy would provide broad sound principles for enforcement, and would also provide guidance to officers when selecting from the enforcement options available to the Authority in individual cases.

The oversight of enforcement action was considered to sit appropriately with the ethical governance remit of the Standards Committee, which had a majority of independent members, and in any event the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could still scrutinise the process.

Committee Members then put detailed questions to Councillor Peck on a number of issues concerning the need for transparency when exercising such powers, what comprised 'effective oversight' of an action, and the request for an assurance that due regard for fairness would be applied to individual cases.

Following the debate the Committee voted on whether to refer the item back to the Cabinet for further consideration and it was

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the alternative course of action proposed in the Call-in be not pursued and the decision of the cabinet be confirmed; and
- 2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee maintain a supporting role and include the item in the Annual Work Programme to be reviewed on a regular basis.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

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

Achievements during 2009/10 included:

- Launch of the Borough's Housing Strategy
- Development of Overcrowding Reduction Strategy for Tower Hamlets
- Agreement of new allocations policy, that would deliver greater transparency, efficiency and opportunity to those on the housing register.
- Buy back of 75 ex-council RTB family sized properties as part of the Overcrowding strategy
- Secured £2.5 million from the HCA to start building Council Housing.
- Procured auditors for Leasehold service audit
- Delivered the Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- The Homeless and Housing Advice Service gained the Customer Service Excellence accreditation, providing external recognition of the work done to date on improving the service provided to residents
- Month-on-month reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation, with numbers heading towards 2,000 by year's end, in comparison to approximately 3,000 in 2006
- Delivery of 1916 affordable homes in 09/10, of which 44% were family homes, in addition to bringing back 27 non-decent empty properties back into use.
- The council's Carbon Management Plan was approved by Cabinet in April 09, committing Council to 60% CO2 emissions reduction (on 2007 levels) by 2020
- Delivery of 137 adaptations to enable disabled occupants to remain living independently in their own homes
- Ocean Estate - Successful procurement and appointment of RSL/Developer Partner to deliver major refurbishment of 1200 homes, environmental improvements, a vibrant new shopping area, new community facility and the development of 819 new homes, including 400 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership. Commencement

of pilot refurbishment scheme in selected blocks: refurbishment works to 120 homes on route to completing 180 homes by May 2010.

- Blackwall Reach: In a difficult economic climate, negotiating with project partner the HCA to proceed with the regeneration project. The projected scheme will deliver a minimum of 1,600 new homes, additional education and community facilities, improved open space and new commercial space.

Challenges in relation to planning and building control would include:

- Managing the impacts of new or amended legislation. e.g. Localism: What will it mean for Planning? Will the Community Infrastructure Levy replace s106 for infrastructure?
- Continuing to deliver a high quality service with fewer resources e.g. next generation of planning documents lead the way on major projects
- Building control remaining competitive in a trading environment
- Viability v Expectations. Will we be able to continue to deliver affordable housing and infrastructure?
- Managing the demands of growing population in an historic environment

Opportunities in this area would include:

- Aiming to maximise opportunities from the huge investment on our doorstep with the Olympics, Crossrail and Wood Wharf
- Development Opportunities at Blackwall Reach circa 1600 – 2000 homes
- The Marsh Wall Development corridor and hundreds of new homes
- Creation of a new Town Centre at Bromely by Bow with a new anchor store, primary school, hundreds of new homes
- Starting the regeneration of Fish Island within a conserved environment to include new employment, new housing and improved connections to the Olympic Park and Stratford City

Challenges for housing would include:

- Reduced funding
- Increase affordable housing numbers especially family homes
- Improve access to private rented sector
- Further enhancements to lettings procedure to increase transparency

- Changes to housing benefit regulations
- Ocean Estate - The successful completion of the refurbishment of the Councils retained housing on the Estate, together with the delivery of over 350 new affordable rented and intermediate homes through the Partnership with East Thames HA and Bellway Homes“
- Successful delivery of Blackwall Reach
- Tower Hamlets Homes - attainment of two Stars and attraction of Decent Homes funding

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.
- The devastating effects of the cuts in housing benefit.
- The need to put pressure on RSLs to keep rents down and not to increase in line with inflation
- Whether RSLs were still the best way to provide housing and were there any future stock transfers planned
- The expectation that a 2 star rating would be achieved and what would happen if not

The Chair thanked Councillor Francis for his detailed presentation.

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

8.1 Strategic Performance and Corporate Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 1)

Councillor David Edgar, Lead Member for Resources, presented the Council's first combined service and financial performance monitoring report for 1010/11, which included an update on progress against the Strategic Indicator set, the 'You Decide!' participatory budgeting programme and its financial position.

Members noted the projected General Fund revenue overspend of £890,000, a forecast overspend of £877,000 on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the actions that Corporate Directors were taking to contain expenditure within budget.

Councillor Edgar reported that 61% of the Strategic Indicators were on target, and 39% had improved performance since the same time in the previous year.

Members raised a number of questions expressing concern in connection with the following issues, to which Officers made the responses shown:

- The overspend on the Communications had been badly affected by the costs associated with East End Life and work was currently being undertaken to try and renegotiate the existing five year distribution contract.
- Budgets that were underspent in the early part of the year and overspent by the end of the year were not an indication of poor budget control, for example Building Schools ForThe Future projects were dictated by the need to schedule work during school holidays and often carried over into the following year.
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) monies had not all been spent but the schools themselves had a say in how this was spent and the projects often involved complex works and improvements which took several terms to complete.
- Incidents of rape were not recorded within the performance indicators as victims were very reluctant to give information and therefore were never reported accurately.
- Remedial action had been put in place for the 'at risk' projects which were currently not expected to meet their targets.

The Chair thanked Councillor Edgar for attending and for his responses to questions.

RESOLVED

That the Quarter 1 2010/11 performance and financial position be noted.

8.2 Councillor Call for Action Performance Digest Update

Stephanie Ford, Interim Performance Manager, presented the report which detailed progress made in developing the Performance Digest Report which was intended to inform the Councillor Call to Action (CCfA) process.

The Committee were informed that the Performance Digest report was proposed as a means of providing the necessary evidence and context to Overview and Scrutiny so that it could properly evaluate issues brought to its attention, and currently included complaints and Members Enquiries information. Work was ongoing to improve and expand the report so that other

information sources, such as Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and petitions, could be included.

The Committee noted that there were limitations on what the data could be used for, and it was really intended as a management level tool to identify how things could be improved as opposed to providing sophisticated resident perception and satisfaction information.

During the discussion that followed Members expressed concern that there was no mention of anti-social behaviour, crime rates or school admissions which were all high on the list of concerns for residents.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted and the Performance Digest Report be reviewed quarterly.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

9.1 Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation Tracking Update

The Chair presented the first six monthly tracking report which monitored the progress of implementing past recommendations of scrutiny reviews.

The Chair considered that the report was very positive and indicated that both Council and Partner agencies were implementing the majority of the recommendations and outcomes suggested.

The Chair informed the meeting that during 2010 all the Scrutiny Lead Members had revisited a review within their portfolio area, either by meeting the service lead officer or actually visiting a service area, and she asked each of them to provide an update following her own regarding the Licensing Strip Clubs.

The Chair advised that her review on Licensing Strip Clubs was undertaken in 2007/08, following a cross party motion from Full Council for scrutiny to undertake this piece of work. The spirit of this review's recommendations had been captured by S27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 which reclassified strip clubs as sexual entertainment venues and gave local authorities the powers to regulate them, and also gave local people a greater say over where and how many strip clubs opened and operated in their neighbourhoods.

The Council was currently drafting a policy around licensing of strip clubs which would be fully consulted on and finalised in March 2011.

Councillor Lesley Pavitt, Lead Member for Safe and Supportive Communities, had revisited the Tackling Anti Social Behaviour review and reported that all 13 recommendations had either been completed or were ongoing. The

Council continued to identify anti-social behaviour (ASB) as a key priority which was being reflected through funding decisions such as the introduction of the Tower Hamlets Enforcement officers. 12 of the largest Registered Social Landlords in the Borough had also signed up to ASB minimum standards.

Councillor Ahmed Omer, Lead Member for One Tower Hamlets, reported that his focus had been on a previous challenge session on Interpreting and Translation provisions within the Council. Significant progress had been made on all the recommendations which included:

- An Accessible Communications review being undertaken intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's approach to accessible communication in response to changing business and community needs
- Alternative resources found for ESOL classes through the Council's "You Decide" participatory Budgeting programme
- The option of joining shared interpreting and translation services with neighbouring Boroughs was being explored.

Councillor Rajib Ahmed, Lead Member for Excellent Public Services, reported that he had revisited the review on the Use of Consultants. There had been progress with all of the recommendations and a policy had been developed regarding procurement of consultants.

In general, use of consultants had significantly reduced in the Council and in-house staff were now trained so that skills could be retained.

Councillor Tim Archer, Lead Member for A Healthy Community, had revisited two reviews in the tracking report – Tobacco Cessation and Young Peoples Participation in Sports leading up to the Olympics.

The work done on Tobacco Cessation had been a valuable contribution to the Tobacco Control Alliance Strategy set up by the Council and the PCT, and had included a large programme of activities which had positive results.

The majority of the recommendations from the Young People's Participation in Sports leading up to the Olympics review had now been completed despite many challenges to budget availability and following the announcement that some of the Olympic focus was being taken away from East London. Unfortunately it had also been made clear that there would be no free tickets for young people.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9.2 Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers - Scrutiny Challenge Session Report

The report was introduced by Councillor Pavitt, who had chaired the challenge session in July 2010.

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the outcomes of the Scrutiny Challenge Session be noted and agreed.

10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED) CABINET PAPERS

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

RESOLVED

That the following Section 1 pre-decision questions be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:

6.1 Conservation Strategy (CAB 042/101)

1. In paragraph 9.5 it states that current statutory List of Listed Buildings was identified as poor. With this in mind have we identified the best way on keeping this List updated?
2. The report says we have one of the highest tallies of new listings of buildings in London, what is included in here and what percentage of it are Historical updates that needed to be done, and what percentage are 'new' decisions?
3. With reference to paragraph 10.7 what is the anticipated enforcement measures that we expect to be taken to protect the heritage and will this extend to Conservation areas?
4. Given the current workload of TH planning staff is there going to be extra pressures brought to bear on them to extend their area of responsibility, with this perhaps leading to a lack of rigour in applying these new guidelines?

6.2 Neighbourhood Shops Policy (CAB 043/101)

1. Last year's scrutiny review on reducing childhood obesity also recommended that the Council should work with Tower Hamlets Homes and RSLs to review the way they lease their properties, ensuring that encouraging healthy eating is a pre-requisite for any new food business.

Can you clarify what work has been undertaken with Tower Hamlets Homes and RSLs in this regard?

6.3 Future Contracting Approach for Waste and Public Realm Services (CAB 044/101)

1. Can you outline how you will ensure that tenders for contract of both Public Realm and Waste Disposal Contract ensure we have documented proof on competency in all needed areas, with penalty clauses for non compliance to Council standards or loss of service?

7.1 Contracts Forward Plan (CAB 045/101)

1. In light of the fact that we have changed telephony suppliers a number of times over the last 5 years can you provide a breakdown of costs of the network changes during that period and also explain if we are making the right choices?
2. With reference to the £350k contract for materials recycling facility can you clarify if this will require the tender to meet energy efficiency objectives or will this be considered in the Contracting strategy currently being developed?

7.3 Mainstream Grants Advice Services and Corporate Match Funding Programmes – Arrangements for 2011 and Beyond (CAB 047/101)

1. With reference to paragraph 6.24 and the reduction in the Corporate Match Funding (CMF) Budget and Working Neighbourhood Fund Programme coming to an end, can you outline if any further resources have been identified to support third sector organisations? In addition to financial support can the Cabinet outline what other support will be available to third sector organisations?
2. Can you explain how much external funding has been secured by third sector organisations for the borough through the CMF Programme in the last year?
3. Can you provide a list of third sector BME organisations that have received CMF and how much they have received?
4. Can you outline what will be the future priority for allocation of CMF?

8.1 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2010-2011 (CAB 048/101)

1. The report mentions food imports being on the rise, with worries about ingredients and hygiene. Do we have any kind of figures on the rises seen here?

**11. ANY OTHER SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED) BUSINESS WHICH THE
CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

None.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Ann Jackson
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 8.1

Committee Overview and Scrutiny	Date 9 November 2010	Classification Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No. 8.1
Report of: Acting Joint Service Head, Scrutiny & Equalities Originating Officer(s): Keiko Okawa Scrutiny Policy Officer		Title: Scrutiny Challenge Session - Raising Participation in Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Raising Participation in Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets held on 23 September 2010.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and agree the outcomes of the scrutiny challenge session.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background papers

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

None

N/A

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides a summary of the scrutiny challenge session on Raising Participation in Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets. This session examined issues around educational participation of 16-18 year olds in Tower Hamlets and the effectiveness of local strategies to raise post 16 participation.
- 3.2 The session was attended by 29 stakeholders, including residents, representatives from schools and Tower Hamlets College, Third Sector organisations that work with young people. Councillors who attended the session were Cllr Rabina Khan (Chair), Cllr Sirajul Islam (Lead Member Regeneration & Employment), Cllr Judith Gardiner, Cllr Anwar Khan, Cllr Kabir Ahmed, Cllr Ahmed Omer and Cllr Shelina Aktar.

4. Purpose

- 4.1 Challenge sessions are designed as a quick way for a group of members to get to grips with key policy issues and to make recommendations for the further development of the policy.

The objectives of this scrutiny challenge session were to:

- Increase understanding of the national and local post 16 participation policies;
- Develop understanding of barriers to certain 16-18 year olds remaining at education, and;
- Make recommendations for the further development of the policy and full engagement in learning as a preparation for adult independence and success.

- 4.2 The challenge session was structured as follows:

- Chaired by Cllr Rabina Khan (Scrutiny Lead – Prosperous Community);
- Wendy Forrest (Director, the Hub) introduced issues around Participation in Post 16 Learning and four main activity strands in Tower Hamlets;
- Shah Hydar (Deputy Young Mayor) presented on the barriers to 16-18 year olds remaining in education;
- Break away sessions - Attendants split into four groups. First, each discussed priorities of each strand below. Then, the groups looked at other groups' priorities and agreed top priorities across all the four strands:
 1. Improve early educational experience
 2. Offer new qualifications and routes to success
 3. Offer personalised and integrated support
 4. Effective LA leadership
- Group feedback of the discussion outcomes.

5. Background

- 5.1 Ensuring all young people stay in education and training is crucial to their development and employability in the future, which could help mitigate and break the cycle of poverty. Evidence shows that people leaving learning at the age of 16 are disproportionately from poor families and there is a strong correlation between becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and engaging in risky behaviours, having poor health and low income. In a fast changing global economy, by 2020, there will be three million fewer low skilled jobs in Britain than there are today. Responding to this, the Government established the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) policy, which is that all young people will continue in education or training to the age of 17 from 2013 and to the age of 18 from 2015.¹
- 5.2 Local authorities have responsibility for the planning and strategic commissioning of provision for 16-19 year olds and young people up to the age of 25 where a learning difficulty assessment is in place. The Coalition government has promised flexibility of 14-19 provision but recent announcements remove the funding of 16-19 learning from local authorities and so potential leverage to improve educational participation of young people.
- 5.3 Tower Hamlets has a strong record of educational improvement; however, youth unemployment continues to be amongst the highest in London and this educational success is not matched by success in the labour market. At 18, young people in Tower Hamlets appear to have a higher chance of claiming benefits than they do of progressing to university.
- 5.4 There are groups in the borough whose participation is of greater concern. In Tower Hamlets, boys are less likely to remain in learning than girls² and white young people participate less than Bangladeshi youngsters and are over-represented in the NEET cohort. Vulnerable young people – those with learning difficulties, involvement with the youth justice system or with caring responsibilities – are all at greater risk on becoming NEET.
- 5.5 In Tower Hamlets, schools identify the Year 11s most at risk at dropping into NEET and these young people receive special transition mentoring to bridge the move from compulsory to post-compulsory learning. In 2009, 144 Year 11s received this support and $\frac{3}{4}$ progressed successfully. These young people were far more likely than their peers to move on to college rather than school, vocational rather than academic programmes and to foundation or Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) rather than Level 3 (A level equivalent) study. The same level and type of provision is needed in order to address the learning needs of the most challenged young people at 17 and 18.

6. Key discussion points

- 6.1 At the meeting participants were given presentations by Wendy Forrest (Director, the Hub – Tower Hamlets 14-19 Partnership) and Shah Hydar (Deputy Young Mayor). The participants were introduced to the four main activity strands (see 6.6) to improve participation in post 16 learning and training in Tower Hamlets.

¹ See <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=547&ctype=none&pptype=contents>

² This is also a national trend. See, for example, *Policy that works: widening participation for higher education – Working class boys into higher education* (2006) by Action on Access.

- 6.2 It was highlighted that participation in learning and attainment of 16-18 year olds in Tower Hamlets had been considerably improved. Participation in learning of 16 year olds has increased from 84% (2004/05) to 92.6% (2008), and; NEET has decreased from 13% (2004/05) to 6% (2008/09). The increase in participation has improved educational attainment of young people – 19 year olds who attained Level 2 have increased 54% (2004/05) to 70.5% (2008/09).
- 6.3 However, challenges still remain. First, between the ages of 16 and 17, many young people drop out of learning in the borough, even though they continue to participate in learning at the age of 16. In 2008/09, while 92.6% of 16 year olds were in learning, 17 year olds in learning were 86.6%. Second, there is a need to increase post 16 participation in learning further. In 2013 all young people in England will be required to continue in education or training to the age of 17. Tower Hamlets aims to increase 16 year olds participation rate to 98.5% by 2011/12.
- 6.4 The Deputy Young Mayor gave a presentation on barriers for 16-18 year olds remaining in education from young people's point of view. He highlighted financial burden that young people are likely to owe during university education and lack of aspiration for learning and development as the key barriers. He added some young people are more interested in satisfying their desire quickly, such as getting a job to buy a car, rather than studying in university for three years.
- 6.5 He suggested ways to overcome these barriers were to widen course options, support parents and provide varied apprenticeship schemes. Widening course options will help young people choose suitable courses. Parents, once they know the importance and advantages of education, can encourage children to participate in learning further. Various apprenticeship schemes also widen possibilities for young people to succeed in their future development.
- 6.6 The Hub, a partnership of all organisations that offer 14-19 learning in Tower Hamlets, has delivered a shared local learning offer that gives all young people a choice of relevant and stimulating routes to successful and fulfilling lives. For example, the Hub supported the establishment of the Cambridge Heath Sixth Form, the Barnardo's and Old Ford Construction Centres and a wider range of options in school sixth forms to ensure more learners can make a local choice. The Hub has also increased the number of employer-led apprenticeships available to 16-19 year olds, ensuring that more young people are appropriately recruited and supported to succeed. Some of the Hub's key successes on the four activity strands are listed below:
- 1. Improve early educational success**
 - Supported 130 disaffected learners on the Engagement Programme two days per week to progress into post 16 learning.
 - Engaged 10 schools in the Passport to Employability programme. Consequently, 710 learners gain the Work Skills GCSE equivalent qualification.
 - 2. Offer new qualifications and routes to success**

- Increased apprenticeships for 16-19 year olds and managed a borough-wide recruitment drive. Five hundred young people will take up apprentice places this year.
- Launched new Foundation Learning provision in three sixth forms, the Tower Hamlets College and five work-based learning providers.

3. Offer personalised and integrated support

- Piloted intensive progression support in five schools, supporting 450 learners at risk and provided a transition mentor for more than 150 students.
- Supported 400 NEET young people into learning through the 14-19 Working Neighbourhood Fund programme.

4. Effective local authority's leadership

- Developing local priorities for 16-19 learning based on a thorough needs analysis and planned with all providers.
- Improved the ways in which young people, their families and advisers can explore their opinions and make the right choice.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 All groups strongly agreed the importance of parents and carers' supporting role in young people's decision on their future. Parents and carers need relevant information on young people's future routes, including information on financial support for learning. Such information may be provided through information events such as career evenings for young people and their parents and carers.
- 7.2 It was mentioned that some parents need to become aware of positive outcomes that education can bring to their children. For example, some parents may need to understand young people's social mobility and relocation for study is to be encouraged. Once parents understand the value of learning and training, they can help young people make informed choices when they decide their directions.
- 7.3 Participants also suggested a possibility that parents who received the information could share it with their peer parents and carers. The Council and its partners, including parent support teams, could help parents create forum to discuss and support each other to develop their children's future opportunities. This may help parents continue to support their children for longer term.

Recommendation 1 – That the borough review and revise their parental engagement policy and develop a more innovative and effective approach to engaging parents in their children's post 16 education.

- 7.4 Participants touched upon the issues of worklessness in the borough and the effectiveness of Level 3 apprenticeships. The Hub has successfully increased apprenticeships for 16-19 year olds and 500 young people will take up places this year. However, some participants mentioned the lack of Level 3 apprenticeship places in the borough and agreed these should be of high quality and provide clear progression routes to employment.

- 7.5 It was discussed that there is a need to bridge the gap between obtaining qualifications and getting a job for young people. Working more closely with employers may make Level 3 apprenticeships employment opportunity oriented.

Recommendation 2 – That all partners continue to work with employers to develop and deliver a range of Level 3 apprenticeships, providing young people with clear progression routes and increasing employment opportunities by involving more employers through a more effective partnership.

- 7.6 In this current financial climate, resources need to be targeted to maximise its effectiveness. Participants stated that it was important to target the resources to those who are most at risk, including those involved with the criminal justice system and those with learning difficulties and caring responsibilities. It was also stated that financial support for learning need to be maintained despite this financial climate. Early interventions and support to those at the most risk will reduce the cost to the state in the long term. To prevent children with those issues from becoming more vulnerable, it is important to find their problems and effectively supported as early as possible.
- 7.7 It is important to engage proactively with the most vulnerable young people, including those who dropped out of learning. Engagement allows local authorities to identify their individual needs and to provide support and advice effectively. It was noted that highlighting and promoting the success of vulnerable young people will provide motivation for other young people.
- 7.8 It was stated that ‘hard to reach’ communities and/or families need to have equal access to services. However, such communities may be left out, because some parents may not have the skills or understanding to access appropriate services to support their child. To help young people of the communities from becoming vulnerable, special attention need to be given to the ‘hard to reach’ groups in the borough and break down barriers to such groups.

Recommendation 3 – That the borough target resources to the most vulnerable learners, which needs to ensure proactive engagement with those young people and identify their needs to provide integrated effective support.

- 7.9 The Hub piloted intensive progression support in five schools. Participants stressed the need of personalised road map to progression of young people, which enables local authorities to provide them with timely support. Many participants emphasised that not only academic routes but vocational options should be widely recognised and accepted as progression routes among young people and their parents and carers. To broaden their choices, wider curriculum – both academic and vocational – need to be available, and young people and their parents/carers should be aware of all the possibilities. Participants also felt that there was a need to revitalise vocational experience at Key Stage 4.
- 7.10 Development of personalised road maps to success requires robust and appropriate information. For example, clear and honest guidance about young people themselves and their choices of courses helps them and their parents/carers make

informed choices. Some students drop out of courses soon after their enrolments because of the gap between their expectations and the reality of the courses. Participants noted that there might be a gap between their original course choices and offers they receive. Introducing robust 'sample' weeks and more taster courses prior to starting post 16 courses, including at Key Stage 2, will help young people have reasonable expectations of the courses and prevent them from dropping out.

- 7.11 Participants noted that it was necessary to make accurate labour market information, such as oversupply of labour in a particular industry, available to young people when they decide courses. Such information is useful for young people to choose their routes more appropriately and to avoid mismatching between their skills and market demand.
- 7.12 It was stated that there was a need to develop integrated plan, especially for NEET young people. The integrated plan can follow the idea of the 'Care Plan' approach for elderly people. This integrated plan links together services covering issues young people face, including school, health and housing. This close collaboration of services enables different services to share a common information management system and support young people effectively.

Recommendation 4 – That the borough and Hub partners consider further developing personalised progression support, which help young people develop personalised 'road maps' to progression.

Recommendation 5 – That the borough examine the effectiveness of the integrated plan for young people with a view to developing it further in consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

- 7.13 Participants argued that services for young people should focus on long-term effectiveness, rather than short-term outcomes. The most important outcome for young people is that they become able to be independent and seek success in the future, rather than local authorities achieving short-term targets. This is particularly important in the current climate to ensure maximum impact from reduced resources.

Recommendation 6 – That the borough identify services that provide long-term effectiveness and consider shifting resources to such services.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The Challenge Session was an opportunity for Councillors and other stakeholders to understand issues around post 16 learning participation. It was noted that through the education partnership, the Hub, Post 16 participation and achievement had improved considerably in the borough. In particular the range of offer available to young people means more young have an option to continue in education or training. The key achievements are highlighted in paragraph 6.6 of this report.
- 8.2 However, it was agreed that further work was needed to ensure more young people were accessing and remaining in post 16 education and in particular to achieve the government's Raising the Participation Age Policy. The recommendations from this session focused on the important role of parents, link between education and

employment, developing personalised services, advice and guidance for young people and supporting the most vulnerable young people in the borough. The Scrutiny Members hope this session will help the Hub continue their good work in supporting young people to access and remain in education and training.

9. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 9.1. The Council is required by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the executive to provide a response.
- 9.2. The report makes recommendations concerning work by the Council to raise post-16 participation. The Council has broad statutory functions in relation to provision of such education. The Council has a duty under section 13 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that sufficient primary, secondary and further education is available to meet the needs of the population of Tower Hamlets. Under section 15ZA of the 1996 Act, the Council must secure that enough suitable education and training is provided to meet the reasonable needs of persons in Tower Hamlets who are over compulsory school age but under 19 and persons subject to learning difficulty assessment who are aged 19 or over but under 25. The Council must, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, co-operate with other authorities to promote the well-being of children in Tower Hamlets. Section 85 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 makes it clear that the duty to co-operate under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 extends to the provision of 14-19 education or training Tower Hamlets. Accordingly, these recommendations appear capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions. If the executive were minded to accept the recommendations, then it would be for officers to ensure that they are carried out lawfully.

10. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 10.1 This report describes the outcome of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Raising Participation in Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets held on 23 September 2010.
- 10.2 Recent government announcements about funding reductions to the Council in 2010-11 and for the next four years will affect any recommendations agreed and any additional costs that arise from the recommendations must be contained within directorate revenue budgets. Also, officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

11. One Tower Hamlets Considerations

- 11.1 Ensuring all young people stay in education and training after Year 11 and reducing NEET 16-18 help alleviate poverty. Considering that people leaving learning at the age of 16 are disproportionately white young boys, vulnerable young people and

from poor families, examination of post 16 learning policies will contribute to mitigate inequalities in the borough.

- 11.2 Recommendations of this Challenge Session included support of the most vulnerable young people, breaking down barriers to 'hard to reach' groups, making personalised road maps to young people and considering integrated service plan for especially NEET young people. Outcomes from these recommendations will contribute to reduce inequalities in the borough.

12. Risk Management

- 12.1 There are no direct risk management actions arising from this report.

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