

Meeting of the

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 May 2011 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 Rajib Ahmed Councillor Lesley Pavitt Councillor Zenith Rahman Councillor Rachael Saunders Councillor Stephanie Eaton Councillor Fozol Miah	Councillor Peter Golds, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Tim Archer) Councillor David Snowdon, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Tim Archer) Councillor Harun Miah, (Designated Deputy representing Councillor Fozol Miah)
[Note: The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members].	

Co-opted Members:	
1 Vacancy	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Mr Mushfique Uddin	– (Muslim Community Representative)
Vacancy	– Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster Representative
Canon Michael Ainsworth	– (Church of England Diocese Representative)
Jake Kemp	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun	– (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:

Amanda Thompson, Democratic Services,

Tel: 020 7364 4651, E-mail: amanda.thompson@towerhamlets.gov.uk

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 May 2011

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 - 12

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 5 April 2011.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

To be notified at the meeting.

5. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

5.1 Report Called In - Disposal of 63a Sewardstone Road (The Stables) 13 - 24

(Time allocated – 30 minutes)

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Mayor Lutfur Rahman has been invited to attend the meeting.

(Time allocated – 30 minutes)

7. PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Mr Paul Ricketts, Borough Commander, has been invited to attend the meeting.

(Time allocated – 30 minutes)

8. SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

- 8 .1 Scrutiny Challenge Session: Customer Care - Tower Hamlets Homes Housing Repairs Service 25 - 34**

(Time allocated – 10 minutes)

- 8 .2 Public Perceptions of Parking - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group 35 - 58**

(Time allocated – 10 minutes)

- 8 .3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2010/2011 59 - 82**

(Time allocated – 10 minutes)

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

(Time allocated – 5 minutes).

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

11. 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.

12. SECTION TWO REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section Two reports 'called in' from the meeting of Cabinet held on 6 April 2011.

**13. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION TWO
(RESTRICTED) CABINET PAPERS**

(Time allocated - 5 minutes).

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

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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 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 5 APRIL 2011

**C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Ann Jackson (Chair)

Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Lesley Pavitt
Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Stephanie Eaton

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr Mushfique Uddin – (Muslim Community Representative)
Canon Michael Ainsworth – (Church of England Diocese Representative)
Jake Kemp – (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun – (Parent Governor Representative)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Ohid Ahmed
Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Carlo Gibbs
Councillor Amy Whitelock
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor Rabina Khan

Guests Present:

Officers Present:

Afazul Hoque – (Scrutiny Policy Manager, Scrutiny & Equalities,
Chief Executive's)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community), Legal
Services, Chief Executive's)
Jackie Odunoye – (Service Head Strategy, Innovation and
Sustainability, Development & Renewal)
Colin Cormack – (Service Head Housing Options, Development &
Renewal)

Jebin Syeda	– (Scrutiny Policy Officer)
Nick Smales	– (Service Head 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games, Development & Renewal)
Heather Bonfield	– (Interim Service Head Cultural Services , Communities Localities & Culture)
Michael Keating	– (Service Head, One Tower Hamlets)
Amanda Thompson	– (Team Leader - Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed Omer and Fozol Miah.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Alibor Choudhury, Rabina Khan and Rania Khan declared personal and prejudicial interests in agenda item 6.1 on the basis that they were Members of the Cabinet when the original decision was taken, and all 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 on 7 March 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

There were no petitions formally received under this item however Councillor Marc Francis submitted a petition containing 400 signatories as part of the Call-in requisition detailed at 5.1 on the agenda.

5. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

5.1 Report Called In - Commercial Activities in Victoria Park

Further to their respective declarations of personal and prejudicial interests, Councillors Alibor Choudhury, Rabina Khan and Rania Khan left the room during the Committee's decision making and voting on this item.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed who had not been present for the previous agenda item also left the room during this time.

The Committee considered a presentation of the Call-in by Councillors Marc Francis and Amy Whitelock who detailed the reasons for the Call-in and the alternative courses of action proposed. Councillor Francis also submitted a petition on behalf of four hundred local residents.

Committee Members put detailed questions to both Councillors on a number of issues including the historical use of the site, the growth of annual events, whether or not the London Borough of Hackney had been approached regarding a financial contribution, the amount of income Tower Hamlets actually received, whether or not consultation had taken place with residents adjacent to the four proposed new sites, and why alternate methods of funding had not been sought for Paradise Gardens.

The Lead Member for Regeneration, Councillor Rania Khan, and Heather Bonfield, Interim Service Head - Cultural Services, responded on behalf of the Cabinet commenting that the policy sought to achieve a careful balance between the needs of the local community and that of the Council to generate income, with the number of commercial and non commercial events proposed making this viable.

The Council was required to find savings of £72 million over the next 3 years and to achieve this income needed to be generated. It was not possible to hold all the free community events as well as reducing the number of commercial events.

After the 'Radiohead' event the Council had commissioned a specialist external review of the Park to determine the optimum location of the infrastructure for events, the maximum sound levels that should be permitted, a risk assessment relating to the number of events that should be permitted and arrangements to ensure that robust controls were in place during events to ensure that sound limits were not exceeded. These had operated successfully and in 2010 an average of less than ten complaints per event had been received.

The noise in parks was monitored by sound specialists at specific points throughout the event season and a report prepared suggesting any improvements which could be made for the following year. Victoria Park was 218 acres whereas the shielded site was around 39 acres, which is only 18% of the park.

Approval for 'Lovebox' had not been granted primarily to fund the Fireworks event. One of the benefits of the programme was that it had enabled the promotion of community events including the annual Fireworks event, but the

two were not inextricably linked. One of the problems with the Fireworks event was that its attendance has grown exponentially over the past three years – from 45,000 in 2008, to over 60,000 in 2009 and over 90,000 in 2010, and there was no way to control attendances which had resulted in spiralling costs.

“Paradise Gardens” was much enjoyed by the community and the loss of the event was regrettable, however it was one of two free events that attracted 150,000 people over 3 event days resulting in considerable disruption for the local community.

In response to questions the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Council was currently committed to four events and could be liable for any costs already incurred by the event organisers if these were now cancelled.

Consultation would need to be not only with residents living next to the park as the benefits were enjoyed by a much wider group of people. The historically low level of complaints about events indicated that there was only a relatively small number of people who felt strongly about this issue.

If the events were reduced to six the firework display would not be feasible. The cost was high because of the large number of people and the measures needed to ensure their safety.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the lack of consultation with residents, and the fact that a serious approach to Hackney Council regarding a financial contribution to the cost of the firework display had not been made. The options for further funding provision to secure the future of Paradise Gardens also needed to be explored.

After considering the views and comments made by the Members presenting the call-in, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration - Councillor Rania Khan, and Mrs Heather Bonfield, Interim Service Head, Cultural Services, the Committee:

RESOLVED

not to endorse the Cabinet’s provisional decisions but instead ask the Cabinet to give further consideration to the alternative course of action proposed by the call-in Members as follows:

- 1) That the Mayor restrict the number of commercial events in Victoria Park during the summer of 2011 to a maximum of six days/nights.
- 2) That the Mayor publish details of the income generated from the commercial events in 2010.

- 3) That the Mayor undertake consultation with residents of those wards surrounding Victoria Park about the maximum number of events that should be held in future years.
- 4) That the Mayor continue the Victoria Park fireworks display, and formally ask LBH to contribute to the cost of this event.
- 5) That the Mayor to continue the popular Paradise Gardens event, exploring ways to reduce the cost.

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Councillor Rabina Khan, Lead Member for Housing, had circulated a detailed presentation on aspects of her portfolio prior to the meeting which focused on areas set out below:-

Achievements

- Tower Hamlets Homes awarded 2 stars and £94.5m Decent Home Funding secured.
- Awarded £96.8m in 10/11 delivering over 600 affordable homes in Tower Hamlets.
- Progress on Ocean and Blackwall Reach Regeneration Schemes.
- Over 230 overcrowded households re-housed through RTB Buy Back.
- New Lettings Policy Implemented.
- Number of Households in T.A. dropped below 1,800.
- 190 DFGs approved and 137 delivered.
- Cost of T.A. re-negotiated saving £1.5M and £0.9M savings made from the Lean Programme.

Priorities

- New Housing Strategy to reflect Localism Bill.
- Delivering Decent Homes.
- Options Appraisal for Housing Management.
- Reduce Overcrowding.
- Develop an affordable housing product for Tower Hamlets.
- Continue to deliver 1000 units of affordable units per year.
- Implement changes to Leaseholder Services.
- Oceans Estate refurbishment works.

Challenges

- Welfare Reform.
- Delivery of Decent Homes.
- Continue Supply of New and Affordable Housing.
- Manage Demand for Housing.
- Reduce Carbon Emissions.
- Improve Health and Reduce Inequality for Elderly and Children.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee then posed a series of questions to which Councillor Khan, supported by Ms Jackie Odunoye, Service Head Strategy, Regeneration and Sustainability, and Mr Colin Cormack, Head of Homeless and Housing Advice Services responded. The question and answer session was centred on the following points:

- The future of the Right To Buy Scheme, particularly in relation to properties transferred to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- A request for more information on overcrowding and the number of children sharing bedrooms
- The need to reduce CO2 emissions
- Relationship and contract management with major regeneration RSL partners
- Clarification of the housing options for residents with medical needs, including those in private rented accommodation as well as those on the Council's waiting list.
- The importance of retaining young people in the area and exploring what would be affordable to local residents
- The impact of the planned changes to Housing Benefit
- The availability and provision of incentives to move for residents and families currently under-occupying their homes
- Pan-Mobility and whether the Council could limit the number of people who were not from Tower Hamlets registering on the housing waiting list

The Chair thanked Councillor Khan and officers for the presentation and their responses to questions.

7. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Draft Employment Strategy

Councillor Rania Khan, Lead Member for Regeneration, and Mr Nick Smales, Service Head, 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, had been invited to the meeting at the request of the Chair to enable the Committee to comment on the Council's draft Employment Strategy which had recently been out for consultation.

Mr Smales gave a detailed presentation in addition to the written report setting out how the Council would attempt to meet its strategic aim of increasing the employment rate of residents in the Borough over the next five years.

The question and answer session focused on the following points:

- As well as matching to existing jobs it was also important to try and shape the future job market and encourage more businesses into the area.
- The importance of raising aspirations and considering how the strategy linked up with schools, local colleges and universities
- Specific actions on how to continue developing more sophisticated understanding of barriers to employment specifically for hard to reach communities and different equalities groups, and test the accuracy of perceived barriers, for example that there may be cultural reasons why some sections of communities are prevented from working
- Lack of English language skills remained a significant problem amongst those not working and it was essential that tackling this particular barrier was given the priority it deserved.
- 'Skillsmatch' did not feature in the strategy as this was a delivery mechanism, not something that would help ensure delivery.
- The requirement to use local labour and supplies was often written into S106 agreements and maintenance contracts for Registered Social Landlords.
- Details of the consultation outcomes would be made available once they had been considered by the Mayor's Advisory Board.
- More basic skills training and apprenticeships were needed.
- How geographical boundaries can be broken down to support residents access jobs across London.
- Although no figures for those undertaking voluntary work had been included, the relevance of this had been acknowledged and would possibly be considered later at a later date.

Members of the Committee thanked Councillor Khan and Mr Smales for providing a clear and concise report which had given an excellent snapshot of the challenges ahead.

RESOLVED

That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

8.1 Strategic Plan 2011/12: Outline Plan and Year 1 Action Plan

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Lead Member for Resources, and Michael Keating, Service Head One Tower Hamlets, presented the report detailing the Council's overall aims and objectives, the outcomes intended for people living and working in the Borough, and the actions to be taken in 2011/12 to deliver those outcomes.

The Outline Plan was accompanied by an Action Plan of key activities and milestones which had been created in line with the Mayor's priorities and following consultation with residents, third sector organisations and partner agencies.

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- While it was right to place the emphasis on moving the bottom up it was also important to promote higher aspirations and excellence for all
- In addition to improving the educational aspirations of young people it was also important to encourage entrepreneurship and apprenticeships which a lot of young people wanted to pursue.
- The transformation programme was citizen centred and therefore consultation with residents was crucial to the delivery of the strategy. This would also require conveying the real meaning of the strategy so it was not seen as just another example of bureaucracy.
- In monitoring the implementation of the Strategy it will be crucial for the Committee to help deliver more fully the community leadership role of councillors, particularly how they continue to drive improvement against a context of reduced resources.

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

9.1 Safeguarding Adults at Risk - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group

The report was presented by Councillor Pavitt, who had acted as Chair of the working group.

She advised the Committee that the recommendations focused on the users themselves whom it was felt needed to be more involved in service planning and be part of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

The need to preserve advocacy work in the current period of public sector cuts was also acknowledged, and also given the low number of self referrals it was recommended that an independent point of contact be set up for adults who found it difficult to disclose abuse. Finally that greater training be given to adults at risk on what actually constitutes abuse so they are aware and recognise it.

Councillor Pavitt additionally took the opportunity to thank all the Council officers who contributed to undertaking the review.

After further discussion, the Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be agreed.
- (2) That the Service Head for One Tower Hamlets be authorised to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Safe and Supportive Communities.

9.2 Scrutiny challenge session - Cancer - Development of Early Diagnosis and Preventative Services

Councillor Tim Archer introduced the report detailing the outcome of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on the Development of early diagnosis and preventative service held on 18 January 2011.

The session had taken place at the Mile End Hospital to enable local residents and patients to attend, and was structured to enable an exchange of information about the local approach to addressing cancer issues and an opportunity to hear stories from residents and patients about their experience of using local health services.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the recommendations contained within the report be agreed, and
- 2) That, in addition to the Cabinet, the recommendations be given to Barts and the London NHS Trust and NHS Tower Hamlets, and a written response be requested from each.

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 on 6 April 2011 for consideration:

8.1 Supporting People Strategy 2011-16 (CAB 106/101)

With regards to the spending on domestic violence services, could we have more information about what services are being decommissioned and the proposed replacements, and the equality impact of these changes?

10.1 Strategic Plan 2011/12: Outline Plan and year 1 Action Plan(CAB 108/101)

With targets around educational attainment being focussed on minimum standards and tackling underachievement, why are there not targets around excellence and achieving the greatest possible number of the highest grades?

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Ann Jackson
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 5.1

Committee: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY	Date: 10 May 2011	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No. 5.1
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive Originating Officer(s): Amanda Thompson Team Leader, Democratic Services			Title: Cabinet Decision Called-in: Disposal of 63a Sewardstone Road (The Stables) Wards: Bethnal Green North	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The attached report of the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal, was considered by the Cabinet on 6 April 2011 and has been "Called In" by Councillors Stephanie Eaton, Marc Francis, Peter Golds, Ahmed Omer and Gloria Thienel for further consideration. This is in accordance with the provisions of Part Four of the Council's Constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the contents of the attached report and the comments made by the members presenting the call-in, and review the Cabinet's provisional decisions arising and decide whether to accept them or refer the matter back to Cabinet with proposals.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

Brief description of "background paper"

Cabinet report - 6 April 2011

Name and telephone number of holder
and address where open to inspection

Amanda Thompson
02073644651

3. THE CABINET'S PROVISIONAL DECISION

3.1 The Cabinet after considering the attached report provisionally agreed:-

1. That the property known as 63a Sewardstone Road, The Stables be declared surplus to the Council's operational requirements;
2. That it be agreed to dispose of 63a Sewardstone Road, The Stables on the open market by auction, and that the resources generated from the open market sales be used for further affordable housing or regeneration schemes within the borough;
3. That officers be authorised to proceed with the disposal, and to delegate decisions on the details of the disposal to the Corporate Director of Development & Renewal in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services);
4. That the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) be authorised to enter into all necessary documents to implement the resolutions of the report (CAB104/101); and
5. That Grand Union Housing Cooperation be reimbursed the £13,500 they have spent on maintaining the property since 2001.

4. REASONS FOR THE 'CALL IN'

4.1 The Call-in requisition signed by the five Councillors listed above gives the following reasons for the Call-in:

1. ' To consider the best value of the disposal of the property for the Council.
2. To consider the proposal to the Council from GUC which provides nomination rights to a wheelchair accessible, 2-3 bedroom family house with private garden. This property is currently under-occupied and would be immediately available upon GUC accessing 63a Sewardstone Road to use as office accommodation. This offer provides that the sale of the property to GUC will provide mutual benefits to GUC and the Council and makes good business sense for both parties.
3. To recognise that any other options for GUC to resolve this matter with the council are likely to involve legal costs for both sides and a negotiated settlement is preferable.
4. To recognise that selling a long leasehold to GUC as proposed below is a considerable concession from GUC and indicates their willingness to negotiate with the council despite their disappointment that the original decision of 2001 has not been implemented.

5. To enable the Mayor and Lead Member to clarify with officers the circumstances of the delays and inaction in this case and to investigate the failure of the Council to implement a decision taken in 2001 (under previous administrations).
6. To obtain a complete account of the history of the decision to ascertain the appropriate level of remedy that is due to GUC.'

5. ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION PROPOSED:

- 5.1** The Councillors submitting the Call-in requisition have proposed the following alternative course of action:

To sell a long leasehold interest in the property at 63a Sewardstone Road to Grand Union Cooperative based on market value at current designation taking into account their reasonable costs for maintenance and expenditure on the property, with nomination rights to the social tenancy of a 2/3 bedroom property

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE "CALL IN"

- 6.1** The following procedure is to be followed for consideration of the "Call In":

- (a) Presentation of the "Call In" by one of the "Call In" Members followed by questions.
- (b) Response from the Lead Member/officers followed by questions.
- (c) General debate followed by decision.

N.B. – In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Protocols and Guidance adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 5 June, 2007, any Member(s) who presents the "Call In" is not eligible to participate in the general debate.

- 6.2** It is open to the Committee to either resolve to take no action which would have the effect of endorsing the original Cabinet decisions, or the Committee could refer the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration setting out the nature of its concerns and possibly recommending an alternative course of action.

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Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 6 th April 2011	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:
Report of: Corporate Director: Development & Renewal Originating officer(s) Jackie Odunoye Services Head Strategy, Regeneration & Sustainability		Title: Disposal of 63a Sewardstone Road (The Stables) Wards Affected: Bethnal Green North	

Lead Member	Cllr Rabina Khan
Community Plan Theme	A Great Place to Live
Strategic Priority	Value for Money (Disposal)

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 **63a Sewardstone Road**, also known as Stables is currently registered in the ownership of the Council. The Stables is situated adjacent to accommodation currently being managed by Grand Union Co-operative (GUC), a registered provider working in the borough. 63a Sewardstone Road has been unused for some time, which has resulted in its current state of disrepair.
- 1.2 A decision was taken by the Council in 2001 to dispose of Sewardstone Road to GUC for a nominal sum of £1 (see Appendix 1 & 2 attached). The original decision to dispose of the property for a nominal sum was arrived at on the basis that GUC would use 63a Sewardstone Road as office accommodation, and nominations would be provided to the council from a number of other properties made available through refurbishments resulting from the sale.
- 1.3 This report seeks to review the original 2001 decision to dispose of the property for a nominal sum. The review is required due to the length of time since the previous decision was agreed, the significant adverse changes in the prevailing economic climate since the original decision, the reduction in funding from central government, and various other policy changes.
- 1.4 Given also that 63a Sewardstone Road is in a very poor state of disrepair (a virtual shell only remains), and would cost the Council significant funds to renovate (some £13,500 having already been spent by GUC to ensure the property remains weathertight), it is recommended that agreement is given to dispose of the property as a market sale. It is proposed that Grand Union

Housing Co-operative will be re-imbursed for their costs to date from the sale of the property.

2 DECISION REQUIRED

The Mayor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree to declare the property known as **63a Sewardstone Road**, The Stables surplus to the Council's operational requirements;
- 2.2 Agree to dispose of **63a Sewardstone Road**, The Stables on the open market by auction, and to use the resources generated from the open market sales for further affordable housing or regeneration schemes within the borough.
- 2.3 Authorise officers to proceed with the disposal, and to delegate decisions on the details of the disposal to the Corporate Director of Development & Renewal in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)
- 2.4 Authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) to enter into all necessary documents to implement the recommendations of this report.
- 2.5 Agree to reimburse GUC the £13,500 they have spent on maintaining the property since 2001

3 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 3.1 The 2001 decision to dispose of the property to a local registered housing provider (GUC) a nominal sum of £1, in exchange for nominations to tenancies in the co-op was a common decision for the period. However, councils are now entering into more sophisticated land deals for example providing profit share and overage, as these provide much better value. In the current adverse economic climate the Council need to ensure that there is appropriate use of its resources and that the disposal achieves a measure of value for money. The latest financial settlement from central government has placed significant pressures on the council and its financial arrangements.
- 3.2 The council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is also under similar pressure and although the review proposed by Government has not been concluded, the proposals outlined will ensure a self financed model for the HRA going forward. The proposals made in the Localism Bill now moving through Parliament also impact on HRA resources indirectly, as the new Affordable Rent model is likely to be unaffordable for the majority of Tower Hamlets tenants, the council will need to look at driving cost to tenants down yet maintaining the much needed development pipeline required to meet its strategic objectives. Part of that solution will be to maximise the use of its property assets which allow the council to maximise the use of its assets.

- 3.3 A combination of exceptional factors such as the property being squatted, the development of the ALMO, lengthy court delays in gaining possession, meant it had become impossible to implement the original disposal decision.
- 3.4 The loss of this unit from the pool of available council property should be balanced by the use of the open market sale receipt for provision of alternative affordable housing or regeneration initiatives to be carried out in the borough.
- 3.5 63A Sewardstone Road has been assessed as being too expensive to convert or repair within the current budget. It is not beneficial to the Council for this property to remain void because of the loss of rent, the costs arising from security and the dangers of vandalism and squatting. GUC has already spent £13,500 for the upkeep of this property.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The site or property identified for disposal has been the subject of a previous committee report in 2001 where there was a decision to dispose of the site at nil value to Grand Union Housing Co-operative. Since that time the Disposal Consents which give authority for sales at undervalue have changed and the Council does not have as much discretion.
- 4.2 Grand Union Co-operative officially approached the Council in January 1999 expressing their desire to acquire this property at less than market value and an offer of additional nomination rights to a Grand Union property. The Co-operative sought to convert the property into a fully accessible office for their members. Grand Union Co-operative confirmed that the property would not be used for profit and that the accessible offices would be of benefit to its residents and the wider local community.
- 4.3 A report was agreed by committee on 10th January 2001, agreeing to dispose of the property to Grand Union Co-op for a nominal sum provided the Council could acquire a nomination to the next 2/3 bed house / maisonette that became available. The report also stated that Grand Union would vacate their then existing office unit on 101a Bishops Way, and expand it into 101b Bishops Way to create a large family unit.
- 4.4 Approval of the Policy Implementation Committee was granted on 10th January 2001 to dispose to of the property to Grand Union Co-operative at nil value.
- 4.5 Although there was a contract drafted, various changes in personnel within the Council and the development of the ALMO all contributed towards the delay of the actual disposal to GUC. However, it was then discovered that the property was illegally occupied which inevitably led to further lengthy delays as a result of the Council having to take court action to get possession.
- 4.6 More recent discussions with GUC indicate that they are still keen to acquire the site 63a Sewardstone road under the original agreement.

- 4.7 The property is not a listed building. However earlier records indicate that the Historic Buildings Officer wrote to the Council in an attempt to ensure that any redevelopment of this historically interesting building would be undertaken with considerable care.
- 4.8 GUC have never occupied the property so although they have spent moneys on its maintenance they have not derived any benefit from it.

5. OPTION FOR DISPOSAL

- 5.1 The option of the Council continuing the original process of disposal to GUC for the nominal sum of £1 is no longer legally possible as the Disposal Consents have been changed since that original decision. The consents apply at the date of the disposal not at the date of the decision.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the council sells the property in the open market at auction, as the preferred option for disposal.
- 5.3 The property has already generated interest from two separate private individuals in recent months, as well as the long term interest shown by GUC. Property held in the HRA must be shown to achieve best value, and an open market sale will additionally provide transparency to the process of disposal.
- 5.4 The Service Head, Asset Management considers that the most appropriate method of disposal in this case will be by auction. . As part of the auction process, the auctioneers will be required to agree a reserve price with the Head of Valuation & Estates. This will ensure that the Council complies with its obligation to receive market value.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are a number of alternative options for disposal which are outlined below:-

- 6.1 The Council carries out improvement works on the property and brings it back into use or develops the plot. The council would incur considerable expenditure to bring back this property that has been classified as uneconomical void back into use as it would require refurbishment costs in the excess of £40K. Developing the asset into alternative accommodation would be even more expensive. These options place huge pressures to already constrained council housing budgets.
- 6.2 To sell a long leasehold interest in the property to Grand Union Co-operative based on market value taking into account their maintenance expenditure on the property, and nomination rights to their next 2/3 bedroom properties .

7 DISPOSAL CONDITIONS

- 7.1 The property **63a Sewardstone Road** proposed for sale on the open market was previously used as stables and latterly as a workshop and in line with the council's Disposals Policy, it would be sold on a long lease, which will enable terms and conditions to be attached to the sale.
- 7.2 Local residents have expressed considerable concern over the length of time that the council has left this property empty and in a semi-derelict state, and over the possibility of future crime and anti-social behaviour if the property continues to remain empty. It is therefore proposed that a covenant be attached to each sale (whether market sale or sale to an RP) to require that the property is brought back into constructive use within 18 months of the sale. Failure to comply with the conditions attached to the sale requiring the property to be brought back into reasonable beneficial use would result in financial penalties to the purchaser and the potential of the property being re-possessed by the Council

8. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 8.1 It is recommended that the property be sold on the open market via means of auction. This will replace the previous nominal value disposal, approved by Cabinet in 2001.
- 8.2 Officers consider that it will not be cost effective for the Authority to renovate the property (paragraph 3.5), and that future costs of securing the site make disposal the preferred solution. Grand Union Housing Co-operative has already invested sums totalling approximately £13,500 to maintain and secure this property, and will be re-imbursed for these expenses from the sale proceeds.
- 8.3 This property is not held within the Housing Revenue Account for dwelling purposes, so any capital receipt accruing from its disposal will be 100% usable if used for regeneration purposes.

9. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL SERVICES)

- 9.1 The proposal before members is now to sell this property on the open market under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the Council to dispose of land. This requires any disposal to achieve the best consideration reasonably obtainable unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal. This means that the Council must openly market the site to establish a competitive value. A sale by auction would demonstrate that best consideration had been achieved. If bids are sought then these will need to be assessed against the valuation and tender criteria that have been identified prior to bids being sought.

9.2 If the sale is not to be for best consideration then consent to the disposal must be obtained. Depending on the terms of the sale this could be by one of the General Consents or where no general consent exists for the particular terms of sale by a specific consent from the Secretary of State

10. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

The equalities implications of the actions recommended here have been considered. The report explains why the economic repair of this property is not possible and suggests that the effects of the sale can be mitigated by ensuring that the sale receipts are ring-fenced to facilitate the construction of other new affordable housing units in the borough.

11. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

63a Sewardstone Road has had no major works to improve its condition for a very long time and are currently very poorly insulated and have deficient heating systems. Refurbishment of the properties, whether carried out by an RP or by a private purchaser, will bring them up to modern standards and contribute to a more sustainable neighbourhood.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk of not being able to sell 63a Sewardstone Road (The Stables) in the current economic climate but this risk will be mitigated by close management of the disposal process.

If the unit remain empty there is ongoing risk of further squatting, vandalism and anti social behaviour. It is possible that even after the disposal the Stables, it may not be brought back into residential use in a reasonable time scale, but this will be mitigated by inserting clear requirements in the terms of the leasehold disposal.

13. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

It is evident from a number of complaints from local residents that the presence of these semi-derelict properties contributes either to actual crime, evidenced by the number of instances of unauthorised occupation by squatters, or the fear of crime. Speedy action by the council to arrange for these houses to be refurbished by their new owners will assist in reducing the negative impact of these houses and will contribute to a regeneration of this part of the borough.

14. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

The housing resource represented by this property is currently much under-utilised. The open market sale of this property will generate a receipt which can be used to contribute towards the provision of new affordable housing,

built to a modern standard and let to people on the Common Housing Register.

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Agenda Item 8.1

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 th May 2011	Unrestricted		8.1
Report of: Service Head One Tower Hamlets Originating Officer(s): Jebin Syeda, Scrutiny Policy Officer and Daniel Kerr, Graduate Intern		Title: Scrutiny challenge session: Customer Care – Tower Hamlets Homes housing repairs service 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 the repairs service offered by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the outcomes of the scrutiny challenge session and agree the recommendations in the report.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides a summary of the scrutiny challenge session exploring the performance of THH repairs service, held on 29th March 2011 at the Toby Club, Whitechapel. The session provided councillors and residents the opportunity to consider the performance of the repairs service in the context of how previous service problems were being addressed through a new contract taking affect from 1st April 2011. Complaints and resident engagement were also focus areas for the working group.
- 3.2 Councillors as community leaders highlighted issues presented to them by residents which challenged THH's understanding of their repairs performance. The residents who attended further informed this discussion. The session allowed space for a discussion on how the issues raised by this challenge might be addressed and put forward a number of recommendations. As challenge sessions are limited in time, some of the recommendations are about further exploration of issues raised.
- 3.3 The session was attended by 21 people and was chaired by Councillor Zenith Rahman, Scrutiny Lead for A Great to Live. Cllr Lesley Pavitt, Cllr Shelina Aktar, Cllr Anna Lynch, Cllr Judith Gardiner and Cllr Sirajul Islam were all in attendance. It was also attended by employees of THH, a representative from

THH new repairs contractor Mears, and local tenants who have first hand experience with the repairs service; some were also involved in the procurement of the new repairs contract.

- 3.4 The challenge session took place at the Toby Club to allow local residents to attend. The session was structured to allow for dialogue between those who were raising concerns and those providing the repairs service. THH gave a presentation detailing their approach to repairs, customer satisfaction and service improvement. The working group were given the opportunity to consider this and how THH is planning to improve the service under a new organisational structure and a new repairs contract. Residents and councillors used the time to discuss their concerns and made suggestions for addressing these.

4. Purpose

- 4.1 Scrutiny challenge sessions are designed as a quick way for Members to perform a robust check of key policy issues and make recommendations for amendment and/or introduction of policy. Housing repairs is central to the community plan theme of A Great Place to Live and has an impact on multiple aspects of the lives of local residents.
- 4.2 The purpose of this challenge session was to review the performance of THH housing repairs service and identify how repairs can be improved to deliver a better service which is accessible and meets residents' expectation.
- 4.3 In developing the 2010/11 overview and scrutiny work programme, it was gleaned from performance reports that there were a high number of complaints and Members enquiries about housing repairs. Members were keen to undertake scrutiny of THH housing repairs because a significant volume of complaints are presented to them during surgery. Disrepair affects the quality of a home and can impact negatively on the quality of life for residents. Members felt that it was the right time to scrutinise this service as it was about to go forward with a new contract to ensure the new approach addressed problems with the old contract.
- 4.4 **The key objectives of the challenge session were to:**
- To consider the approach to housing repairs taken by THH, in particular the new contract with Mears;
 - To explore tenant concerns with regards to THH housing repairs and how they can be addressed through the new arrangements;
 - To help facilitate better communication between THH and tenants on the subject of housing repairs.
- 4.5 The challenge session was structured as follows:
- Welcome and Introduction by Chair (Cllr Zenith Rahmen, Scrutiny Lead – A Great Place To Live)
 - Tower Hamlets Homes presentation (briefing paper attached)
 - Working group discussion
 - Customer satisfaction monitoring arrangements/ communication
 - Next Steps

5. Background

- 5.1 THH is the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) attached to Tower Hamlets Council. ALMOs were established in 2002, transforming the management of council housing with 68 ALMOs managing more than one million council homes across 64 local authorities. The council owns 22,000 homes while THH manages tenancies and leases on their behalf, with responsibility for delivering day to day housing services for tenants. THH is governed by 15 board members, comprising of 5 councillors, 5 residents and 5 independent members with expertise in housing, finance and community development.
- 5.2 The importance of the repairs service for residents can be seen in the THH 2008 Status survey where 81% of its participants regarded repairs as one of the three most important areas that needed to be improved. THH is ranked 6th out of 13 London ALMOs with regard to housing repairs completed, and is ranked 8th with regard to housing repairs completed on time for 2009/10. The service therefore needs to review its performance to reflect tenant expectations and to strive to improve their ranking. More recently THH has been awarded 2 stars by the Audit Commission.
- 5.3 The 2010 STATUS survey demonstrated that 56% of people found it easy to contact THH and once they did only 72% found them to be helpful. Clear and effective modes of communication between THH and its tenants is fundamental in order to facilitate the reporting of repairs and ensure that they are fixed in a timely and efficient fashion. Delays in fixing repairs could potentially cause problems to deteriorate and become more expensive to fix. Housing repairs is one of the most visible services provided and impacts on the quality of life of tenants and is the basis for which many tenants will judge the competence of THH.
- 5.4 THH statistics show 98% of housing repairs are completed within the target timeframe. However, the corporate complaints half year report 2009/10 shows a significant number of complaints concerned with housing repairs with a total of 267 complaints. Members were concerned about the volume of complaints for a service which has 2 star audit commission rating. This prompted a discussion about customer satisfaction monitoring and access to complaints.
- 5.5 The Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2008/09 discusses a number of cases. One case highlighted talks about taking three and a half years to resolve a problem of leaking windows due to bad communication and management. A case more relevant to Tower Hamlets might be the case of confusion caused to non-English speaking residents following three unannounced visits. The same review scrutinising the work of THH in 2009/10 reported problems with repairs to continue to be a pressing issue, with water penetration a key area of complaint. The delays in fixing repairs have caused “real inconvenience and misery for the complainants who lived in unsatisfactory housing conditions for longer than necessary.” The case of a tenant who “suffered from a serious illness” but had to forgo the use of his bedroom where a repair was left untouched, and slept on the living room floor in its place is one of many examples cited in the review. The number of repairs fixed first time, without delay or complication needs to improve, especially considering that in a time of public sector cuts, value for money is crucial.

6 The repairs contract

6.1 Morrison and Mite managed THH repairs, on 1st April 2011 the new contract with Mears came into effect. This contract is for 5 years with the option to extend for a further 5 years. Depending on performance there is a caveat in the contract to terminate with 6 months notice. The contract covers projects worth up to £150,000 and has been signed with an input from tenants. A group of tenants oversaw the procurement of the new contract including marking contractors at interview stage. It was clear to residents that they wanted:

- Repairs fixed during the first visit;
- Appointments to be kept on time;
- More flexible approach to appointment times;
- Local employment/apprenticeships.

6.2 The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulation (TUPE) has resulted in employees working for Morrison and Mite being transferred to Mears, the new contractor. A new service structure is also being implemented at the same time as the contract with Mears. THH is moving from an asset management service to introducing a more holistic approach, setting up a neighbourhood team. This means that representatives from Mears will be situated in the same office as housing officers and contracts and performance officers. This will allow for a more collaborative approach to every repair from the moment it is reported through to its completion, avoiding potential communication problems and accumulation of problems related to repairs.

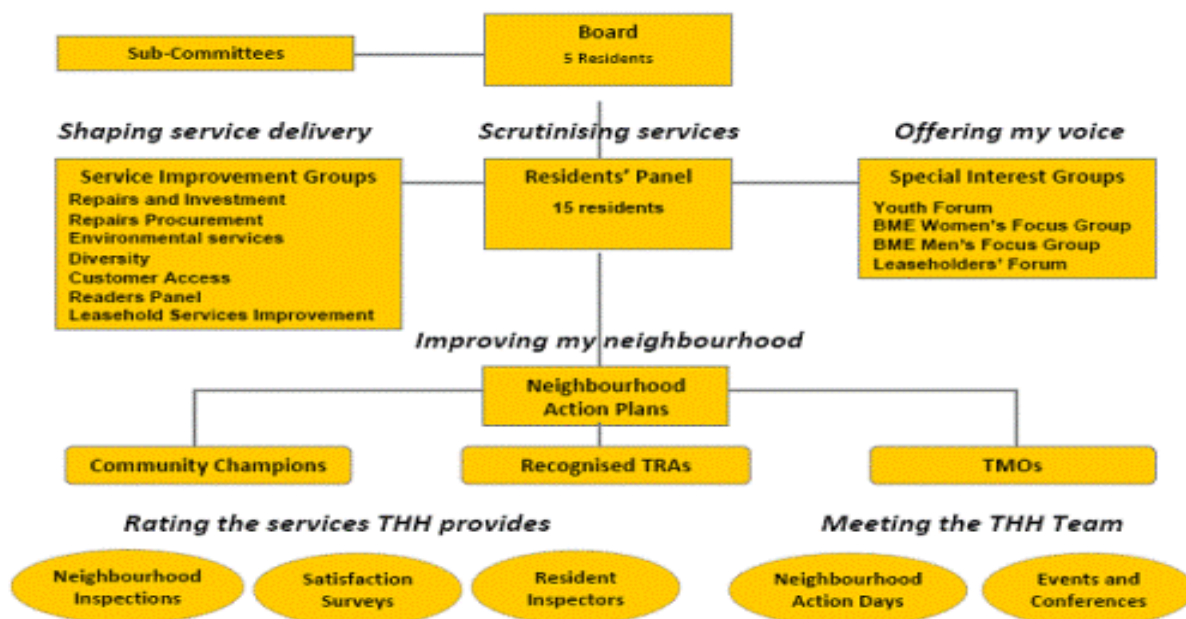
6.3 The new contract has enabled the introduction of improved IT such as the use of hand-held devices to track jobs from the central office and to book appointments. The contractors are also able to send text reminders to tenants to better manage appointments.

7 Communication with residents and access to the service

7.1 Resident engagement

Housing providers are expected to engage residents in the way they design and deliver services. The diagram below shows the level of resident engagement built into the structure of THH. This illustrates that residents are engaged through a number of different channels and at different levels of the organisation. The governance board has 5 resident members contributing to strategic decisions. For the repairs element of resident engagement, two service improvement groups were set up. These groups help establish priorities and review the performance of a specific area or service. The repairs procurement group has been heavily involved in selecting the contract with Mears. The ongoing repairs and investment group will now continue to review the performance of the contract with Mears. The members of these groups may also be active members on the Residents' Panel and will often be members of local TRAs.

Tower Hamlets Homes – resident engagement structure



7.2 Reporting and communication during repair process

A repair can be reported to THH through a number of different channels. It can be reported online, through email, a letter, by telephone or reported in person at local neighbourhood offices. The repairs telephone helpline can also be used for advice on a repair and to change appointments. Once the repair is reported it is logged and an appointment is booked as agreed with the tenant. A text message is sent out 24 hours before an appointment as a reminder and this will be followed up by a further text message when the operative is en route with an estimated time of arrival. This will be to a mobile or to a landline. Texts sent to landlines cost the receiver. Each operative is required to fully understand the requirements of the repair and to ensure that the tenant is aware of what will happen next. If a operative turns up to fix a repair and the tenant is not present they will call the tenant and make further arrangements with one of the options being to wait for a short period of time for the tenant to arrive. If they can not make contact with the tenant the neighbourhood office will attempt to call them. Only after exhausting these attempts a missed appointment card is issued.

7.3 Customer satisfaction monitoring

THH uses Kwest to conduct satisfaction surveys to monitor satisfaction with repairs completion. The old contract interviewed a statistically significant number of residents who received repair work. The new monitoring arrangements are to interview by telephone all residents who have had internal repair. This should produce a more representative and accurate reflection of tenant satisfaction. This approach also enables the referral of cases where tenants are dissatisfied to be addressed proactively. Mears and THH will undertake some post inspection of works to ensure work has been undertaken to a high standard and that residents are satisfied.

7.4 Complaints

A complaint can be reported to THH through a number of different channels. It can be reported online, through email, in a written letter, and by telephone through a complaints line or at a local neighbourhood centre. The website contains information on making complaints and provides an online link for reporting complaints. It sets out what will happen if a complaint is received. A leaflet is also available setting out the channels available for making a complaint.

8 Summary of key discussion points

8.1 Contracts and organisational structure

The change over to the new contract and changes to the new structure has been challenging for residents and for THH to manage. Once a decision had been made to terminate the contract with Morrison and Mite, THH felt performance issues resulted in a rise in the number of complaints from residents. The working group welcomed the approach to having local housing staff, performance and monitoring staff and repairs contractors physically based together because it should result in better management of repairs. Complaints from residents in the past has been that reported repairs have not been acted upon, many are lost in the process from the point a repair is reported to the point it is passed onto the repairs contractor. A number of cases were highlighted where the breakdown of communication has resulted in a very negative impact on tenants. The placement of all staff involved in the repairs process at a neighbourhood level should begin to address some of these issues.

8.2 This challenge session gave Members and residents the confidence that the service recognises some of the problems of the previous contract and that it has began to address these through the new contract. A future scrutiny challenge session considering progress made against the recommendations would give Members and residents an opportunity to consider how far reaching progress has been and establish confidence in the delivery of the service with the new contract. A range of issues were highlighted by the working group, some of which could not be fully considered due to time constraints. Also, the lack of information on customer satisfaction monitoring and complaints left the working group with a number of questions.

8.3 Morrison and Mite were driven to meet targets, often a repairs appointment would be attended to meet the target but the repair did not actually get fixed. The working group were concerned that old employees will be working under the new contract and their behaviour patterns and attitudes would remain unchanged, resulting in continued bad customer service. There were concerns that the negative impact of this would be felt more by older people and non-English speaking tenants. The introduction of handheld devices allows for tracking operative movement for better monitoring of repairs but residents feel will not be enough to challenge the behaviour of operatives. The linking of staff performance to customer satisfaction monitoring is seen as a positive move, and should include monitoring of the attitude of operatives. Paragraph 11.3 also highlights complaints as showing there are some differences in services received between different diversity groups. The working group welcome the use of improved IT and ask that a report be presented to the Scrutiny Lead for A Great Place to Live setting out complaints and customer satisfaction data, including on the attitude of

operatives with a breakdown by diversity attaching an action plan for mitigating any issues highlighted during 2011/12.

Recommendation 1: That THH undertake complaints and customer satisfaction monitoring including the attitude of operatives and report on this with diversity breakdown with an action plan to OSC Lead for A Great Place to Live in 2011/12.

9 Resident engagement

- 9.1 The review session was well attended by tenants who were part of the repairs procurement group involved in procuring the new contract. THH will support a service improvement group looking at investment and repairs and residents can lead on this by developing a work plan for issues they want to consider. The working group felt that the group was not diverse enough to reflect the diversity of the borough. In the context of this and a discussion on better use of notice boards and engagement techniques which have been successful such as 'You Decide', (an event where residents decided on priorities for the budget) they suggest that THH review its approach to resident engagement and develop innovative ways of engaging residents which would encourage a response which is reflective of the borough.

Recommendation 2: That THH reviews its approach to resident engagement to develop innovative ways of engaging residents which encourages a more diverse response, including reviewing the diversity of the repairs groups.

- 9.2 Texting to a landline costs the recipient; residents felt this was more likely to impact older residents more than other groups and that consideration be given to how this negative impact might be addressed. Suggestions were that where there is no mobile number provided, whether it is possible to call residents directly to remind them of the appointment. Another option may be that tenants might agree to the use of a mobile number of a family member as an option available to them.

Recommendation 3: That THH consider asking tenants who use landline only to use the mobile number of a family member to receive service reminders or that THH considers calling residents directly to remind them of appointments.

10 Satisfaction monitoring

- 10.1 One of the key drivers for Members wanting to undertake this challenge session was the significantly large number of complaints they receive at councillor surgeries on THH repairs issues. The working group feel that this is not in line with the expectations of a 2 star organisation. They welcome the move to interview all tenants who have a repair undertaken as it creates an opportunity to pick up problematic cases and address them before they escalate to a complaint. Residents expressed the view that they were unaware of how satisfaction rating was achieved and data analysed. Transparency and confidence in the data would be strengthened if residents can be involved in considering how statistics are put together and reported, involving Kwest in doing this with residents would establish confidence in the use of Kwest for the purposes of reporting on customer satisfaction.

Recommendations 4: That THH works with tenants and Kwest to improve transparency and to establish confidence in customer satisfaction monitoring, analysis and reporting.

11 Complaints

11.1 The channels available for making a complaint are online, in person at a neighbourhood office, through email or through a repairs telephone line. The channels open do give residents a range of options to get access. The repairs service performance data illustrates that the service is on target, the working group were concerned that a significantly large number of complaints is coming forward for a service which is meeting targets for satisfaction with repairs and repairs right first time. A discussion on the complaints procedure followed, the following observations are raised:

- A leaflet has been produced outlining the options available for making a complaint;
- Residents were not aware of the complaints telephone line;
- Residents experienced difficulties with getting through to the complaints telephone line.

11.2 The working group stated that the complaints telephone line needed to be much more widely advertised with clear referencing to it as a complaints line, including updating the website. There was some discussion on the use of a single telephone line for reporting repairs, making enquiries and for making complaints; this might address the problems of not being able to get through to the complaints line. The introduction of a 0800 number would be particularly useful for older residents but may be more expensive for the increasing number of people who now use mobile phones. The working group agreed that the single most important action was wider advertising of the complaints line with clear reference to it as a complaints line. The time limits of a challenge session did not allow for a full discussion, and this may be an issue THH resident groups can explore.

11.3 The complaints Members received demonstrates that there is some difference in service received between different diversity strands. A diversity analysis of satisfaction surveys and complaints has been done and plans developed to address any inconsistencies by THH. The working group felt that this information should have been made available as part of the discussion on customer satisfaction and complaints. It would have been useful in the context of either developing or testing the action plan with the involvement of residents and Members as community leaders. The availability of this information would have reassured the working group of transparency. Going forward, access to complaints can be an issue for the repairs and investment group and the customer access group to consider and develop an action plan for as part of their work for 2011/12.

Recommendation 5: That THH undertake wider advertising of the complaints line with clear referencing to it as a complaints line.

Recommendation 6: That THH support the resident groups for repairs and investment and customer access to consider access to complaints as part of its work for 2011/12.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 This area of scrutiny challenge has been a key concern for Members because they are dealing with a high volume of complaints from residents. Repairs impacts on many aspects of the lives of local residents and this challenge session has given Members the assurance that some of the old problems can be addressed through the new contract. Considering this issue again next year will tell whether the new measures have worked and if performance has improved and a recommendation has been put forward to further engage scrutiny. The key area of focus in considering the challenge presented by the large volume of complaints for a 2 star organisation has been the arrangements for analysing and reporting on customer satisfaction and complaints. A number of recommendations have been put forward to address this issue. As the challenge session is time limited and did not allow for a full discussion on all the issues raised a number of recommendations have been put forward to engage the resident groups in considering the issues as part of their work programme.
- 12.2 There was some discussion about the appropriateness of the timing of this review given the new contract was agreed and about to commence. The working group agreed that timing has been good because it gave them the opportunity to raise concerns about how some of the problems with the old contractor were going to be addressed through the new contractor with their involvement.
- 12.3 A more general discussion on transparency emerged from the discussion on customer satisfaction and complaints. This challenge session has been a starting point in exploring transparency and involving residents in the monitoring and reporting arrangements will continue to encourage this.

13 Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 13.1 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. The Executive can liaise with THH regarding its view on implementation of the Committee's recommendations.
- 13.2 As set out in the report, a number of the Council's management functions in relation to its social housing have been delegated to Tower Hamlets Homes Ltd. The recommendations relate to the exercise of the management functions relating to disrepair, although care will need to be taken in relation to recommendation 6 that implementation does not lead to contravention of the Data Protection Act 1998.

14. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 14.1 This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the scrutiny challenge session on the customer care of Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) housing repairs service. THH is the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) established by the Council for the purpose of managing the Council's housing stock. The costs of the housing repairs service are met from funding within the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is managed by Development & Renewal Directorate as the Council's client for dealing with THH.
- 14.2 The report contains recommendations for both THH and Development and Renewal directorate to agree and take; each of these may have financial implications for the Council at a time when the Council faces significant reductions to funding over the next four years.
- 14.3 Consequently, any recommendations agreed which require additional costs must be contained within the funding available either within the HRA budget or directorate revenue budgets. Also, officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

15. One Tower Hamlets Considerations

- 15.1 Members were pleased to have had a chance to discuss issues highlighted to them by residents on housing repairs. The timing of the challenge session allowed space to give Members and residents reassurance that measures were in place to address problems with the old contractor through the new one. Through their role as community leaders and recognition of the impact of disrepair they were able to bring together partners and local residents to form a number of recommendations to address this pressing issue.
- 15.2 A number of recommendations in this report have One Tower Hamlets implications as issues highlighted show that particular groups are affected. In view of concerns about the attitude of operatives and complaints data highlighting that there is some difference in services received between different diversity strands, recommendation 1 suggests reporting on complaints and customer satisfaction monitoring by diversity strands to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Recommendation 2 seeks to encourage more diversity in resident engagement. Recommendation 3 in particular suggests considering other ways of reminding residents of appointments as the working group felt that the costs of texting to a landline would impact negatively on older people more than other groups.

16. Risk Management

- 16.1 There are no direct risk management issues to arise from this report.

Agenda Item 8.2

Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date 10 th May 2011	Classification Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No. 8.2
Report of: Service Head, One Tower Hamlets Originating Officer(s): Robert Driver Scrutiny Policy Officer		Title: Public Perceptions of Parking - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the public perceptions of parking Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Agree the draft report and the recommendations contained in it.
- 2.2 Authorise the Service Head, One Tower Hamlets, to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for A Great Place to Live.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 (AS AMENDED) SECTION 100D

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

Background paper	Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection
None	N/A

3. Background

- 3.1 The Working Group was established in November 2010 to investigate how the Council could improve the public's perception of parking.
- 3.2 The aim of the review was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of residents concerns about parking issues. The objectives of the Review were to:
- Develop an understanding of how the Parking Service considers and deals with residents' and customers' parking concerns.
 - Support residents understanding of the Borough's Transport and Parking Policies.
 - Develop recommendations that help change the image of the Parking Service in the Borough through a better understanding of the service or by making changes to the way in which services are provided to better reflect the needs of residents.
 - Add value to the consultation process carried out as part of the preparation of the 2010/11 Local Implementation Plan (LIP).
- 3.3 The Working Group undertook various meetings with Islington Council, Westminster Council, TFL, London Councils, Friends of the Earth, the British Parking Association, Sustrans and the Department for Transport. They also undertook a site visit to the Parking Depot and went out on the 'beat' with parking Enforcement Officers,
- 3.4 The Review made a number of recommendations around the issue of communication. This communication ranges from signage on the streets, the Council's website or the interaction of our Civil Enforcement Officers with the public. It was acknowledged that changes need to be made with the way the Council communicates with residents on parking issues.
- 3.5 The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.6 Once agreed, the Working Groups report will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations.

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

- 4.1. 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.

- 4.2. Pursuant to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Council is the traffic authority for all roads in Tower Hamlets that are not the responsibility of the GLA or the Secretary of State. The Council is required to exercise its functions under that Act so far as practicable having due regard to securing the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. Pursuant to the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Council has a network management duty to keep traffic flowing and to co-operate with other authorities working to the same end. The 2004 Act also establishes a framework for civil traffic enforcement by local authorities. Some of the recommendations invoke others of the Council's statutory functions such as those related to building and planning control.
- 4.3. The report makes a number of recommendations concerning how the Council approaches the exercise of its parking functions in the borough. These are directed to how the Council is perceived. The recommendations appear capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions, but much will depend on the detail of how they are implemented and care will need to be taken that statutory requirements are complied with.

5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 This report describes the work and recommendations from the Parking Working group of the public perceptions of parking in the Borough.
- 5.2 The report contains recommendations for Communities, Localities and Culture and Development and Renewal directorates to take, together with partners, and each of these may have financial implications for the Council. Consequently, a detailed financial analysis of the recommendations will need to be done and included in the later report to Cabinet.
- 5.3 Recommendation R7 is consistent with the growing trend for transparency in public finances and would help raise public awareness of the operation of the Parking Service. The proposed statement should be coupled with a statement on the benefits brought to the Council by the operation of the parking service.

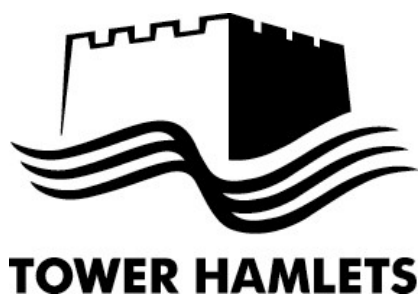
6. One Tower Hamlets consideration

- 6.1 This review makes a number of recommendations to improve communication and engagement with our diverse residents. The review has helped councillors as local community leaders to better understand the challenges facing our parking services and the public involvement session was a useful forum for councillors to discuss this issue with local residents.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the Working Group's report or recommendations.

Report of the Scrutiny Review on the Public Perceptions of Parking



**London Borough of Tower Hamlets
May 2011**

DRAFT

Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to thank all the officers and partners that supported this Review. Most importantly we would like to thank all of the residents who offered their input to the Review. These views and perspectives have been fundamental in shaping the final recommendations of this Report.

Working Group Chair:

Councillor Zenith Rahman

Working Group Members:

Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Peter Golds

London Borough of Tower Hamlets:

John Chilton	Head of Parking Service
Bryan Jones	Service Head Environmental Control
Richard Finch	Strategic Transport Team Leader
Sam Margolis	Travel Awareness Officer
John Stewart	Parking Development Manager
Mark Jenner	Parking Policy and Enhancement Officer
Robert Wingate	Deputy Corporate Complaints Manager
Ruth Dowden	Corporate Complaints Manager
Edmund Wildish	Service Development Officer
Sandra Gallagher	Parking Enforcement Manager
Azad Miah	Civil Enforcement Officer
Siddiqur Osmani	Civil Enforcement Officer
Mick Darby	Deputy Enforcement Manager
Jenny Gray	Supervisor – Representations and Appeals

Scrutiny and Equalities:

Afazul Hoque Scrutiny	Scrutiny Policy Manager
Robert Driver Scrutiny	Scrutiny Policy Officer

External:

Sean Conroy	Transport for London
Nick Lester	London Councils
Steve Shaw	Islington Council
John Galsworthy	Islington Council
Joe Turner	Islington Council
Councillor Wally Burgess	Islington Council
Councillor Jonathan Glanz	Westminster Council
Kate Hand	Friends of the Earth
Tom Sharland	Sustrans
Patrick Troy	British Parking Association
Stewart Russell	Royal London Hospital
Jeaur Rahman	Department for Transport

Chair's Forward

Tower Hamlets is a borough that has a large population inhabiting a relatively small space. This poses a multitude of challenges to the Council – especially parking enforcement.

We welcomed the opportunity to review this important area which is consistently brought to our attention by our local residents. We also felt that the Review was very appropriate due to the future projections of the Borough showing that an ever increasing amount of people will be living, working and visiting the Borough and the fact that more people are likely to own a car in the future. Through improving the perceptions of parking we will continue to make Tower Hamlets a great place to live and visit in the future.

The major theme running throughout this Report has been that communication is the key factor in shaping public perceptions. This communication ranges from signage on the streets, the Council's website or the interaction of our Civil Enforcement Officers with the public. This Review acknowledges that changes need to be made to the way the Council communicates with residents.

The Working Group's evidence gathering involved many individuals and organisations to reflect the complexity of the issues we were dealing with. Our recommendations are based on the evidence given by residents, Council officers, Islington Council, Westminster Council, Transport for London (TFL), London Councils, Friends of the Earth, the British Parking Association, Sustrans and the Department for Transport.

Finally, I would like to thank all those residents, organisations and individuals that contributed their time and effort to this Review.

Councillor Zenith Rahman
Chair, Scrutiny Lead, A Great Place to Live

Recommendations

- R 1.** That the Sustainable Transport Team liaises with the top five most visited venues in the Borough and work in partnership with them to promote alternative forms of transport to their visitors.
- R 2.** That the Parking Services work closely with the Development and Renewal Directorate to develop a strategy that minimises negative implications on residents near new Car Free Developments.
- R 3.** That Parking Services develop a communication strategy to inform residents about the Council's policy on parking surrounding places of worship. They should also continuously Review any concerns raised by local residents. This investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and transparency to ensure that any policy change is not seen as favouring any particular faith.
- R 4.** That Parking Services improve communication with customers by ensuring payments and complaints are processed within a set deadline and any reimbursements and replies are given within these deadlines.
- R 5.** That Parking Service develops a 'Citizens Parking Charter' in partnership with the Resident Parking Forum.
- R 6.** That the Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture commission a comprehensive review of parking controls in the Borough.
- R7.** That the Parking Service produce a short Annual Report which details breakdown of revenue income, costs and expenditure on local projects. This report should be publicised widely.
- R 8.** The Working Group noted the importance of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) as a key agent for improving perceptions and resident involvement in parking services. It is recommended that the Parking Services place a greater focus on customer relations and resident engagement in the training of their CEOs.
- R 9.** That the Parking Service should continue with the beat average system and this should not be replaced by target driven system for parking enforcement.
- R 10.** That the Parking Service works closely with health service providers in the Borough to consider parking and accessibility implications of new and current building projects.
- R 11.** That Parking Service work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Providers of Social Housing and other local landowners with the aim of harmonising parking policy in the Borough. They should

also clearly communicate the demarcation parameters and differing areas of responsibility.

- R 12.** That a Sustainable Transport page is added to the Council's website and that it is interlinked to Parking Service web pages.
- R 13.** That Parking Service produce a document called 'Ten simple rules to avoid a ticket' which is publicised through all available forms of communication by the Council.
- R 14.** That the Parking Service offers a more customer focused web content on the Council's website, and adopt more diverse and innovative forms of communication to engage with residents.
- R 15.** That Parking Services develop a Resident Parking Forum that utilises different communication tools to engage with residents.

Introduction

1. During the 2010 election campaign, residents raised parking as one of the most important issues in Tower Hamlets. Internal reporting would support this with parking consistently having the lowest satisfaction rate amongst residents in the Council's Annual Residents survey. However, the number of Stage 1 complaints involving parking has only increased very marginally during the period 2009/2010. This would suggest that the dissatisfaction with parking has more to do with the public perception of parking management in the Borough rather than the actual performance of the service itself.
2. In 2005 the London Assembly undertook an investigation into parking enforcement in the Capital, concluding that the boroughs need to do more to improve public perception of their parking services and demonstrate that the way they carry out enforcement is fair and proportionate.
3. This Scrutiny Review offered the opportunity to consider residents concerns about parking as well as utilising Members community leadership role to broker discussion on this important issue. Our aim was to change the image of parking and provide residents with an understanding of parking enforcement in the Borough.

Purpose

4. The purpose of this Review was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of residents concerns about parking issues to improve the public perception of parking services in Tower Hamlets.
5. The objectives were to:
 - Develop an understanding of how the Parking Service considers and deals with residents' and customers' parking concerns.
 - Support residents understanding of the Borough's Transport and Parking Policies.
 - Develop recommendations that help change the image of the Parking Service in the Borough through a better understanding of the service or by making changes to the way in which services are provided to better reflect the needs of residents.
 - Add value to the consultation process carried out as part of the preparation of the 2010/11 Local Implementation Plan (LIP).
6. This Review aimed to place a renewed focus on the Parking Service and service delivery by the Council. The process provided Members and stakeholder partners along with residents the opportunity to gain knowledge of parking services and the impact of parking policy on local residents, businesses and visitors. This report has been compiled from the review findings.

Methodology

7. The following methodology for the Review was agreed by the Working Group:

Introductory Review Meeting

- The Working Group heard evidence on current London wide parking issues from London Councils, Transport for London (TFL) and LBTH Parking Service.

Visit to Sutton Street depot

- The Working Group had discussions with parking managers the Parking Depot and went 'on the beat' with Civil Enforcement Officers to see how parking services are delivered on the front line.

Comparison with Islington and Westminster Council

- The Working Group visited the London Borough of Islington Council parking team to discuss common challenges in tackling negative perceptions of parking.
- Cabinet Members with a parking remit from Westminster and Islington Council gave evidence to the Working Group.

Car culture in Tower Hamlets

- Presentations were received from the Strategic Transport Team to discuss local issues surrounding parking, including 'Car aspiration' and alternative forms of transport.
- Evidence was also considered from a sustainable transport charity Sustrans and environmental group Friends of the Earth.

Resident Involvement

- A Focus Group was held with local residents on how communication can be improved for local residents.
- Residents were encouraged to offer their input to the Review by post or email. This was communicated through an advertisement in East End Life.

Background

The London Context

8. It is nearly 20 years since the 1991 Road Traffic Act decriminalised parking enforcement, which passed the responsibility from the Metropolitan and City police forces to the London Boroughs on 4 July 1994. This led to a widespread change in the approach to parking enforcement as local authority parking attendants were employed and authorised to issue penalty charge notices (PCNs) and the clamping or removal of vehicles.
9. The London Local Authorities Act 1996 added bus lanes to the Council's enforcement responsibilities and the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2003 added further moving traffic infringements to the enforcement already carried out by Councils. The 2003 legislation enabled London Boroughs to enforce a variety of moving traffic contraventions, such as yellow box junctions and banned turns. Local Authorities, through the Local Government Association (LGA), reasoned that Councils should (be able to take this further and) give the more minor driving offences greater priority and attention than police enforcement had been able to achieve previously. While these infringements may appear minor, they are important to Councils in terms of public transport efficiency and reliability through improved operation of the network, the legal duty to protect the free flow of traffic and access by emergency vehicles, traffic calming and road safety.
10. Local Authorities are obliged to produce their own Local Implementation Plan and adopt the eight main objectives of the London Mayor's Transport Strategy (2010) which are:
 - Improving road safety
 - Improving bus journey times and reliability
 - Relieving traffic congestion
 - Improving parking and loading arrangements
 - Improving accessibility and social inclusion
 - Encouraging walking
 - Encouraging cycling
 - Bringing transport infrastructure to a state of good repair
11. Parking enforcement can impact on all of the above objectives, which goes some way to explaining the complexity of parking management.

The Local Context

12. The need for parking controls in Tower Hamlets is self evident; it is one of the smallest boroughs in London but also one of the most densely populated. It is also a thriving residential and commercial area, and as in

other London Boroughs, traffic has increased significantly over the years which have also increased the demand on parking spaces.

13. Within the Borough, approximately 200 kilometres of public highway are subject to parking control (and enforcement) by way of designated parking bays or yellow line waiting restrictions. There are compelling road safety and traffic reasons for enforcing parking restrictions in Tower Hamlets, without regulation there is little doubt that the many parts of Tower Hamlets would grind to a halt.

14. As part of the Council's Local implementation Plan, a Parking and Enforcement Plan is in place to manage and control parking. Basic parking policy is about achieving a balance between supply and demand where that demand exceeds supply. Priority is also given to those groups that the Council wishes to recognise (disabled, residents, businesses, visitors, key public service workers etc). All of these proceedings must be done in a way that enhances road safety. However parking management can also be used to support a number of other Council objectives:

- To assist in reducing car borne journeys by rationing parking at the place of destination by time and cost.
- Reduce CO2 emissions – permit prices to be linked to vehicle emissions
- To facilitate regeneration through free short term parking or free parking around weekend markets.
- Achieve higher density residential development by supporting car free agreements.

15. The main objectives for Parking Services as outlined in the Local Implementation Plan 2005/6 - 2010/11 are:

- To balance parking priorities within local areas, by managing supply and demand.
- To effectively manage on-street parking activity and in doing so improve road safety and the general street scene
- To protect local residents parking needs from non-local parking demands, (e.g. commuters), provide parking facilities for local businesses and visitors, reduce traffic congestion and accidents.

16. The Parking Service responds positively to requests for changes to the layout of parking places and waiting and loading restrictions when problems are notified by residents and businesses. Any changes are subject to local consultation and there is a defined legal process which, as a minimum, must be followed. Consultation can often result in the identification of a compromise. This must be practical in terms of being legal, capable of being signed in a way that motorists will understand what they are expected to do, and can be enforced.

17. The Parking Service in Tower Hamlets consists of several different elements. The provision of enforcement services is carried out by Council

employed Civil Enforcement Officers, who patrol on foot or in vehicles or via Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras.

18. The processing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is also handled in-house and this is the industry norm, given the high degree of public interface involved. The regulations require that some elements must be handled only by Council staff and to provide an integrated service all elements of processing are handled in-house.
19. The elements that make up the parking service in Tower Hamlets include:
 - Enforcement on street and by use of CCTV
 - Installation and maintenance of pay and display machines
 - Issue and management of permits
 - Processing of PCNs
 - Handling correspondence and complaints
 - Cash collection and banking services (pay and display machines)
 - Vehicle removals and management of car pound
 - Management of an integrated parking IT system
 - Reviewing restrictions and making Orders
20. Council Civil Enforcement Officers receive comprehensive training to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. There is an enforcement protocol in place, at present its main principals are:
 - To deliver a high quality parking service to all road users in a fair and consistent manner, and
 - To ensure there is clarity of the enforcement requirements for the contraventions and policy for all Parking Service officers and Civil Enforcement Officers.

Key Findings

The Public's Perception

21. As noted in the introduction, an advert was placed in East End Life in February 2011, giving a short background to the Review and asking residents for their contributions to the process. The advert generated a lot of interest and evidence was collected through mail, email, telephone and through a resident involvement session.
22. The majority of the correspondence felt that there were inadequacies in the Council's Parking Service, and these were causing negative perceptions. Some of the predominant and reoccurring issues were:
- Lack of clarity on regulations and restrictions around parking permits
 - Concern about the effectiveness of Car Free Developments
 - That the scratch card system in some cases is too generous and is open to abuse
 - That increased enforcement is needed in problem areas
 - A perceived lack of flexibility for parking enforcement for Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs)
 - Confusion over 'Faith' parking, and the regulations and restrictions for parking surrounding places of worship
 - Fraudulent use of parking permits
23. The Working Group received correspondence from residents regarding the exercising of discretion by the Parking Service and the consequences this has on public perceptions. It was raised that when considering mitigating circumstances for penalty charges, the process should be transparent and inclusive. Members agreed that the public need to be aware that a Council can waive their penalty and this process should be more accessible.
24. The Working Group received correspondence from residents stating that they have previously written to the Council regarding a parking issue and not received a satisfactory reply from the Parking Service. Members acknowledged that a large volume of correspondence from residents is received by the Parking Service and that it is not always feasible to ensure that all correspondence is replied to promptly. However, the Working Group noted that any form of un-replied communications will be damaging to public perceptions.
25. The Working Group received correspondence from Mile End Housing Cooperative regarding the poor satisfaction of parking in the area surrounding the Troxy Centre. This was due to visitors to the venue taking parking spaces of local residents. The Working Group acknowledged that the Troxy case was typical of other popular venues in the Borough. It was discussed that popular venues across the Borough could do more to encourage visitors to use alternative forms of transport to alleviate the strain on surrounding residential areas.

R1. That the Sustainable Transport Team liaises with the top five most visited venues in the Borough and work in partnership with them to promote alternative forms of transport to their visitors.

26. The Resident Involvement Session allowed residents and officers to partake in a wide range of discussions with the main themes being:

- Car free developments
- Business parking
- Parking around places of worship
- Communication
- Sustainability

27. Many residents agreed that car free developments were not working as residents who resided in them still owned cars but removing them during the enforcement period. It was also noted that residents were not aware of the benefits and reasoning behind car free developments.

28. Many residents were angry about the apparent lack of enforcement around the car free developments, whereby occupiers still owned cars. It was suggested that the Council could do more to promote the reasoning behind, and benefits of, the developments to discourage car use. It was agreed that a consistent approach should also be applied to ensure that the car free policy is enforced.

R2. That the Parking Service work closely with the Development and Renewal Directorate to develop a strategy that minimises negative implications on residents near new Car Free Developments.

29. During the resident involvement session, it was noted that residents felt the Council had a lack of understanding towards the parking requirements of business owners. It was discussed how those who owned businesses were often penalised for loading and unloading, or did not have the space to park near their business. It was also raised to Members how businesses that rely on travelling around the Borough often could not do so due to tight enforcement. Many traders felt their customers could not park to use their shop which has a detrimental effect on their business. Residents and officers discussed the issues and it was noted that residents and businesses need to be made more aware of the reasoning behind the enforcement. This includes issues such as the necessary restrictions due to potential parking demand being much greater than the supply of safe spaces in the Borough.

30. This issue has also been highlighted by this year's Scrutiny Review on Supporting Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) which recommended a comprehensive review be undertaken on how the Council can support SMEs through our Parking Policy.

31. The issue of 'Faith' parking was raised by a number of residents during the public consultation process, as well as being raised as an issue by external partners. During the resident involvement session it was raised that there is a confusion regarding who can park in these bays on worship days. There was a perception that you had to belong to a particular faith to park in these bays which had in some cases caused animosity. It was confirmed that this is not Council policy. It was agreed that this misconception could be damaging to community cohesion, and that the Parking Service need to communicate the regulations around faith parking better.
32. During the resident consultation process a wide range of issues surrounding communication were discussed, with the issues of unclear enforcement being most prominent. These issues ranged from unclear signage to the poor responsiveness of the Council to problems that have been raised by residents. A resident discussed a particular case where they were penalised incorrectly yet it took 40 days for their penalty to be reimbursed to them. It was acknowledged that cases like this are unacceptable and that such examples of Council conduct are extremely damaging to public perceptions.
33. A wide ranging discussion on sustainable transport was held at the resident involvement session. Members and residents discussed how one of the ways to combat negative perceptions of parking is through the tackling of car culture in the Borough. Even though the Borough is served well by public transport, and alternative forms of transport are available, it was felt that residents have not fully 'bought in' to the car alternatives. It was agreed that the Council could more effectively promote the use of sustainable forms of transport and the benefits to the environment and personal health that it brings.

R3. That Parking Services develop a communication strategy to inform residents about the Council's policy on parking surrounding places of worship. They should also continuously review any concerns raised by local residents. This investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and transparency to ensure that any policy change is not seen as favouring any particular faith.

R4. That Parking Services improve communication with customers by ensuring payments and complaints are processed within a set deadline and any reimbursements and replies are given within these deadlines.

R5. That Parking Services develop a 'Citizens Parking Charter' in partnership with the Resident Parking Forum.

R6. That the Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture commission a comprehensive review of parking controls in the Borough.

R7. That the Parking Service produce a short Annual Report which details breakdown of revenue income, costs and expenditure on local projects. This report should be publicised widely.

Local Partners

34. The Review received correspondence from residents and evidence from the School Travel Service regarding parking around schools. A common theme running through the evidence was the impact of parents or carers dropping off children within Controlled Parking Zones. It was also raised the issue that enforcement varies from different areas and schools, and that problems in enforcement were creating negative perceptions of residents near schools. It was agreed that parking within these areas, and lack of enforcement of any infringements, compromised the safety of children coming to and from school.
35. During a site visit to the Parking Depot and walk about with CEOs, Councillors recognised the difficult task facing CEOs in the Borough. They saw first hand some excellent conduct and practices from the whole parking team. For example, the use of digital cameras by CEOs to ensure that conflicting accounts of issued parking tickets are avoided. The Working Group acknowledged that CEOs were the type of frontline service ambassadors that the Council would want the public to have contact with.
36. They welcomed the fact that the Parking Service had ceased clamping and acknowledged that this has led to an improvement in the public perception of parking in the Borough.
37. It was noted that the Parking Service takes pride in their service which has been 'in house' for 24 years and it has developed a strong relationship with the community it serves. The success of the service is evident through the vast difference in results between 'in house' services and private contractors. Members heard of one such example from the Enforcement Manager that there are fewer assaults on staff for 'in house' services. The Working Group acknowledges that one of the core reasons for the excellent conduct of the Parking Service is due to CEOs (Civil Enforcement Officers) being BTEC (Business and Technician Education Council) trained and being given monthly assessments (with criteria including dress, quality of ticketing).
38. The Working Group noted that PCN (Penalty Charge Notice) targets defeat the object of parking policy and would be detrimental to public perceptions of parking. The Working Group also acknowledged that recent press coverage of Tower Hamlets Parking Service had been inaccurate through claiming that the Council Parking Service is target driven. It was

acknowledged that this type of coverage plays a large part to formulating negative perceptions of parking in the Borough.

39. During the visit to the Parking Depot it was drawn to the attention of the Working Group that the Parking Service team can survey a particular area at request of residents to identify whether an area can be used for parking. It was noted that provisions for residents to undertake this were not well publicised.
40. The Working Group had a detailed discussion with the Head of the Parking Service about the contradictions that the Council faces when enforcing parking policies, and the effect this has on public perceptions. It was agreed that the Council must acknowledge the dilemma posed to the Parking Service through having conflicting objectives. It can facilitate car borne journeys which promote the perception of convenience through recognising what residents and businesses want. Conversely, the Council can discourage use of the car through highlighting consequential effects such as traffic congestion, poor air quality, noise, CO2 emissions, reduction in air quality and decrease in road safety. It was agreed that there needs to be a balance between these conflicting objectives and this conflict needs to be better communicated to residents.

R8. The Working Group noted the importance of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) as a key agent for improving perceptions and resident involvement in parking services. It is recommended that the Parking Service place a greater focus on customer relations and resident engagement in the training of their CEOs.

R9. That the Parking Service should continue with the beat average system and this should not be replaced by target driven system for parking enforcement.

41. The Parking and Facilities Team at the Royal London Hospital (Bart's and the Royal London NHS Trust) gave evidence to the Working Group on the issue of growing parking pressure surrounding the hospital. These pressures will only be exacerbated by the new hospital that is due to open later in 2011 that will add additional 1000 beds. One key issue raised by the team was that vulnerable people visiting the hospital were unable to easily be driven to or from the hospital as there is no public parking at the hospital itself. It was noted that there is no disabled parking at the hospital, and that drivers who are registered disabled and have a blue badge have found the parking around the hospital inadequate. The Working Group were concerned about the perception effects of pregnant, injured, elderly or disabled patients being unable to travel in dignity or comfort to and from the hospital.

42. With the concerns surrounding the expansion of the hospital, it was also acknowledged that these negative perceptions could have less obvious knock on effects. The NHS policy on Hospital Choice states that:

“You can choose a hospital according to what matters most to you, whether it's location, waiting times, reputation, clinical performance, visiting policies, parking facilities or patients' comments”.

43. Members acknowledged that parking plays an important role in the choice process, and it is vital that the current and future parking issues are addressed. It was noted that negative perceptions could overshadow the clinical excellence that the new hospital facilities will bring. There is a danger that the public will dismiss The Royal London Hospital in their choices due to poor perceptions of parking.

44. The issue of demarcation around the hospital was identified, with confusion arising over responsibility for specific streets. According to the Hospital's Parking Service, it is commonly perceived that the streets which run through the hospital (Stepney Way, Ravens Row, Turner Street, Varden Street, Ashfield Street, Walden Street) belong to the hospital and therefore patients and visitors park with the perception of immunity. However, these streets are actually controlled via either TfL or Tower Hamlets Council. Therefore, individuals often raise complaints and concerns to the trust around penalty charge notices. It was suggested that there should be a single point of contact with clear signage demonstrating who owns and manages specific areas. The Working Group acknowledged that demarcation was an issue in a number of locations across the borough.

R10. That the Parking Service works closely with health service providers in the Borough to consider parking and accessibility implications of new and current building projects.

R11. That Parking Service work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Social Landlords and other local landowners with the aim of harmonising parking policy in the Borough. They should also clearly communicate the demarcation parameters and differing areas of responsibility.

45. The Working Group received a presentation from the Council's Strategic Transport Planning Manager on car culture. The presentation gave the issue of car culture a policy framework and elucidated the key challenges that the borough faced to tackle it. There was a discussion on past and current key interventions and achievements such as the congestion charging zone and promotion of public transport. It was agreed that the Council was actually taking a very sensible and proactive approach to tackling car culture. However, it was agreed that there could be further developments on current or past borough wide schemes such as 'walking buses' and cheaper parking permits for environmentally conscious businesses. The key flaw in the delivery was through the communication of policies and schemes and not tackling the perception that universal car use in the borough as a possibility.

R12. That a Sustainable Transport page is added to the Council's website and that it is interlinked to Parking Service web pages.

The External View

46. The Working Group heard from Islington and Westminster City Council Councils regarding their communication strategy to improve public perceptions of parking services. One such scheme is the parking enforcement protocol being published, which detailed every parking contravention enforced and a parking policy statement which was available to all residents through leaflets and the website.
47. The Working Group considered evidence from the British Parking Association (BPA). The organisation suggested to the Working Group that Local Authorities should adopt BPA practices through taking a more proactive approach to developing communications and relationships with media on parking matters. The BPA confirmed that in the past Local Authorities have had very successful responses to forging these relationships. The Working Group discussed this view and it was noted that parking services have a strong relationship with the Council's Communications Team, and that all enquiries are dealt with comprehensively and swiftly. It was raised by Members that as the recommendations of the Review are enforced; there should be an increase in positive media coverage on parking services. It was suggested that the communication team could lead on promoting the Review's work to local and national media.
48. Officers and Councillors from Islington and Westminster City Council informed the Working Group that faith based parking is a big issue in their respective Boroughs. It was acknowledged that in Tower Hamlets there is a multitude of different faiths that collectively pose a sporadic stress on parking in certain areas.
49. The Working Group noted the findings of the research published by The Commission for Local Administration in England on Parking Enforcement by Local Authorities. The most relevant findings of the Report for this Review being that Local Authorities face a difficult task in enforcing parking controls effectively in an environment of ever increasing traffic. The Working Group also acknowledged that the above task is being made more difficult by the perception of some motorists that the imposition and pursuit of penalty charges is inherently unfair.
50. Public perceptions of TfL and traffic enforcement were presented by a TfL representative to the Working Group. The below results from a recent survey were discussed:
- Think TfL is good at explaining why road rules are important 21%
 - Feel TfL is supportive of Drivers: 14%

(1,258 adults aged 17 and over with a full drivers licence)

51. Members discussed how the above results correlated to local poor perceptions of parking, with the concepts of drivers being victimised and poor communication for car users being particularly prominent. Members agreed that the most relevant issue raised in the presentation was the confusion over TfL and Borough responsibility of certain roads which can lead to blame being directed at the wrong party.
52. The Working Group considered the common sense approach as elucidated in the Driver's Charter which formed part of a wider research project that helped TfL understand drivers' attitudes and motivations. These included:
- The issuing of a Plain English leaflet with each penalty explaining what steps you need to take to pay or challenge the penalty.
 - Making it as easy as possible to pay or challenge your penalty
 - Reviewing enforcement at locations where a high level of penalties were issued and where drivers can claim that the signs are confusing.
53. London Councils presented to the Working Group how uncertainty and double standards leads to complaints. Members agreed that there must be greater clarity for residents in dispute scenarios. They also discussed how a limited amount of discretion on street leads to an inflexible and unworkable service. However, higher levels of discretion lead to a less transparent service. The Working Group acknowledged the inherent complexity associated with applying discretion to parking enforcement.
54. The Working Group heard evidence from a local representative from Friends of the Earth about car culture in the Borough. Members were alarmed to hear that parts of the Borough have some of the worst air quality in the country. Friends of the Earth suggested to the Working Group that the solutions to the current car related problems in the Borough lay in the promotion of alternative forms of transport. Members acknowledged that better promotion is needed for alternatives to car use, such as promoting home working and making shops and amenities more accessible.
55. The British Parking Association, Islington Council and Westminster City Council recommended the formation and use of a Resident Parking Forum. Members suggested that this could be incorporated, or developed from, the previous resident committees on transport. It was suggested from Members that the strong interest from residents in the Review should be utilised to help form such a Forum. It was agreed that CEOs should play a central role in these Forums.

R13. That Parking Service produce a document called 'Ten simple rules to avoid a ticket' which is publicised through all available forms of communication by the Council.

R14. That the Parking Service offers a more customer focused web content on the Council's website, and adopt more diverse and innovative forms of communication to engage with residents.

R15. That Parking Service develops a Resident Parking Forum that utilises different communication tools to engage with residents.

Conclusions

56. The Working Group welcomed the opportunity to investigate the public perceptions of parking, with a view to improving resident satisfaction for the Council's parking services.
57. This Review has focused on issues of communication, and it is hoped that the adoption of the proposed recommendations will improve how residents perceive the parking in the borough.
58. Members wanted to have a broad evidence base to formulate recommendations to reflect the complexity of parking policy. The Working Group feels that through incorporating a diverse range of partners in the Review process relevant solutions have been offered to the challenging issue of the public perceptions of parking.
59. The Working Group hopes that the recommendations will be considered and adopted by the Mayor and his Cabinet, and that the actions will lead to further improvements in parking services and the overall wellbeing of residents.

Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

To find out more about Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets:

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Agenda Item 8.3

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny	10th May 2011	Unrestricted		8.3
Report of: Service Head, One Tower Hamlets		Title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2010/2011		
Originating Officer(s): Afazul Hoque, Scrutiny Policy Manager		Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary by Scrutiny Lead Members of their Overview and Scrutiny work during the civic year 2010/2011. It forms the basis of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report that will be reported to full Council and circulated more widely early in the new municipal year.

2. Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the draft annual scrutiny report to Council
- 2.2 Authorise the Acting Service Head, One Tower Hamlets, to agree the final report before its submission to Council, after consultation with the Chair and relevant Scrutiny Leads.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

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

Background paper

Annual Scrutiny Report File in Scrutiny Policy Team

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

Afazul Hoque
020 7364 4636

3 Report

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee co-ordinates all of the scrutiny activity within the Council. As well as the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there are six Scrutiny Leads: one each for the five Community Plan themes, with a further Lead for Excellent Public Services. Under the Council's Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny must submit an annual report of its work to Council. This is attached as a draft at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Annual Report outlines the work both of the Committee and of the Scrutiny Leads and their working groups over the last year. This highlights the constructive policy development role that scrutiny undertakes through its reviews. It also outlines the ongoing progress that has been made in embedding overview and scrutiny within the Council. Pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet reports continues to encourage greater debate around key issues, while call-ins have been debated in a robust and rigorous manner at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The majority of the work programme agreed at the start of the year has been delivered.
- 3.3 The Annual Scrutiny report will be submitted to the first full meeting of Council in the new Municipal Year. Following the report to Council, it will be circulated widely within the Council and across to its partners. A summary article will also be placed in Eastend Life.

4 Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)

- 4.1 Article 6.03 (d) of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must report annually to full Council on its work. The report submitted to Council following this consideration will fulfil that obligation.

5 Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 One Tower Hamlets Consideration

- 6.1 Equal opportunities are central to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A number of reports and reviews have specific equalities themes including the reviews on Supporting New Communities, Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Citizen Engagement Strategy and the Challenge Session on Raising Participation in post learning.

7 Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

- 7.1 There are no direct implications.

8 Risk Management

- 8.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

Appendix 1 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to Council

**Overview and Scrutiny
Annual Report**

**Tower Hamlets Council
May 2011**

Overview and Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets

Overview and Scrutiny
Cllr Ann Jackson, Chair

Excellent Public Services
Cllr Rajib Ahmed

Prosperous Community
Cllr Rachael Saunders (November 2010 – May 2011), Cllr Rabina Khan (May 2010
– October 2010)

Great Place to Live
Cllr Zenith Rahman

Safe and Supportive
Cllr Lesley Pavitt

One Tower Hamlets
Cllr Ahmed Omer, Vice Chair

Health Scrutiny Panel
Cllr Tim Archer

Overview and Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets

Overview and Scrutiny looks at how the Council and its partners deliver services so that they meet local needs and contribute to the overall vision in the borough's Community Plan. It also monitors and evaluates the decisions made by the Council's Mayor and his Cabinet to make sure that they are robust and provide good value for money.

Overview and Scrutiny has statutory powers to review and scrutinise local health services and make recommendations to NHS bodies. It also considers other issues of concern to local people, including services provided by other organisations, and advises the Mayor and Cabinet, Council and other partners, on how those policies and services can be improved.

In Tower Hamlets, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee coordinates all scrutiny work. It appoints the vice chair and six scrutiny leads. The scrutiny leads actively promote the work of Overview and Scrutiny with residents, partners and other stakeholders. They also pick up any relevant issues on behalf of the Committee as a whole and lead the working groups within their theme.

Membership

Reflecting the overall political balance of the Council during 2010/11 the Committee's membership comprised six Labour councillors and one councillor from the Conservative, Respect and Liberal Democrat Parties.

As well as the councillors, there are six education co-optee positions on the Committee, including three positions for parent governors. The other representatives were from the Church of England Diocese, the Roman Catholic Diocese and the Muslim Community. In 2010/11, all positions, except a representative from Roman Catholic Diocese, were filled. Each of these representatives could contribute to any matters discussed by the Committee, but they could only vote on education issues. The representative of the Muslim community was made available locally, in recognition of the large Muslim community in the borough.

Scrutiny Chair and Leads

In 2010/11, the Chair of the Committee was Councillor Ann Jackson. The Chair oversaw the work programme of the committee as well as taking lead on monitoring the Council's budget.

Apart from Excellent Public Services, the other five themes which each Scrutiny Lead is responsible for are pillars of the borough's Community Plan. The Scrutiny Leads were:

- Cllr Rajib Ahmed (Labour) for "Excellent Public Services-" focusing on improving public services to make sure they represent good value for money and meet local needs.
- Cllr Rachael Saunders (Labour)¹ for "Prosperous Community-" focusing on raising educational aspirations, expectations and achievement, and bringing investment into the borough and ensuring residents and businesses benefit from growing economic prosperity.
- Cllr Zenith Rahman (Labour) for "Great Place to Live-" focusing on improving housing and the environment and providing a wide range of arts and leisure services.
- Cllr Lesley Pavitt (Labour) for "Safe and Supportive-" focusing on reducing crime, making people feel safer and providing excellent services to the borough's most vulnerable communities.

¹ Cllr Saunders succeeded Cllr Rabina Khan as the Scrutiny Lead in November 2010.
Overview and Scrutiny – Annual Report
April 2011

- Cllr Ahmed Omer (Labour) for “One Tower Hamlets-” focusing on reducing inequalities and improving community cohesion through community leadership. He was also the vice chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Cllr Tim Archer (Conservative) for “Healthy Community-” through the Health Scrutiny Panel, focusing on improving local health services and the co-ordination of different health service providers within the borough.

Scrutiny Leads actively promote the work of Overview and Scrutiny with residents, partners and other stakeholders by conducting in-depth ‘Scrutiny Reviews’, which usually involve several meetings and visits to gather evidence on particular services or issues which impact on the local community. ‘Scrutiny Challenge Sessions’ are also undertaken by some Scrutiny Leads. This is one-off meeting looking at a specific area of concern within the community. They are designed as a quick way for Councillors to get a grip on key policy issues and to make recommendations for further development of the policy.

In 2010/11, there were two other non-executive Members who served on the Committee:

Cllr Stephanie Eaton

Cllr Harun Miah - May 2010 – October 2010

Cllr Fozol Miah – March 2011 – May 2011

They have contributed to the work of the Committee. In particular, their contribution in the areas of budget scrutiny, call-ins, scrutiny spotlights and performance monitoring was very useful in holding the Executive to account and ensuring that our services meet our residents’ needs.

What does Overview and Scrutiny do?

The Committee:

- Looks at how the Council is performing by monitoring key strategies and plans
- Looks at the Council’s budget and how it uses its resources
- Sets up time-limited working groups to look at issues in depth and make proposals for change. Suggestions for topics may come from elected Members, full Council, the Cabinet or from local organisations and residents
- Considers decisions made by the Cabinet that are ‘called in.’ This happens if there is concern about the decision or what information was considered
- Reviews briefly the reports that are going to Cabinet for decision and raises any concerns.

As the Committee has such a broad responsibility, it focuses on a number of key priorities each year. These make up an annual work programme for each of the Scrutiny Leads. For each area there is usually one in-depth review, as well as other shorter pieces of work.

Health Scrutiny

The Health Scrutiny Panel undertakes the Council’s functions under the Health and Social Care Act, 2001. This gives local councils the power to scrutinise health services. The Scrutiny Panel was set up to undertake this role, scrutinising health service matters in Tower Hamlets due to the high health inequalities that exist locally. This can include the provision of hospital and GP services and health promotion and prevention work. It can scrutinise how services are planned and provided and how the views of local people are built into the provision.

Health is currently going through a rapid pace of change, not only has the health budget been subject to financial tightening, there are proposals in place for radical change which places local control at the heart of the new approach. Health Scrutiny should continue to have a

stronger role in holding decision makers to account and will continue to ensure the needs and views of local people are considered.

Annual Report

This report provides a brief summary of the work of Overview and Scrutiny in 2010/11. Below, each member of the Committee outlines the work that they have led.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillor Ann Jackson, Chair

The Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in Tower Hamlets include:

- A single co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Five Scrutiny Leads scrutinising the Community Plan themes and one for Excellent Public Services
- Pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet reports
- Performance monitoring by considering the Quarterly Strategic Plan & Budget Monitoring report, the Diversity and Equality Action Plan, Corporate Complaints and Members' Enquiries
- A robust call-in procedure
- Holding the Executive to account through Scrutiny Spotlight for Cabinet Members
- A Health Scrutiny Panel to respond to consultation from NHS Trusts

In order to develop a comprehensive work programme for the year we held an Away Day in June 2010 which enabled us to prioritise our work for the year. We agreed a challenging and extensive work programme in July 2010 and I believe we have delivered on the majority of it. Over the year, we regularly monitored our progress to make sure we remained on track to complete our work.

This year, we have improved significantly the engagement with Lead Members at Committee. They have presented the majority of reports within their portfolio that the Committee considered, as well as responding to call-ins. This is really important in making sure we hold the Executive directly to account and encouraging more discussion and debate amongst councillors.

There has also been a good level of engagement with the public. Firstly, the majority of our reviews sought the views and experiences of local people through visits and focus groups. And secondly, a number of deputations were made by members of the public at Committee, usually related to a call-in that was being considered.

Performance Monitoring

We monitor the Strategic Plan and Corporate Revenue Monitoring report every quarter and twice a year we monitor the Single Equality Framework. We are the only formal councillor forum that does this and it's important in making sure that our services are performing well. I believe this worked effectively and helped Overview and Scrutiny understand and comment on the wider performance of services - a key part of improving the quality of life of local people.

We also had monthly Scrutiny Spotlights at our Committee meetings for the Cabinet Members including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. At all the sessions Cabinet Members discussed the performance and challenges facing services in their area of responsibility. This was particularly useful for us to discuss issues of concern and suggest ways performance could be improved. It also helped involve Cabinet Members more in the scrutiny process and several of them commented how useful they found the opportunity to discuss policy and performance issues with non-executive councillors at Committee. We also held our first Scrutiny Spotlight with the Chief Executive and this was a great opportunity to raise a number of issues with him.

The Committee consistently challenged Cabinet Members on areas of underperformance, including anti-social behaviour, provisions for young people and perhaps most importantly on employment. This last area has been subject to a number of full-scale scrutiny reviews the past few years as well as consideration at an early stage of the Draft Employment Strategy

where the Committee made a number of recommendations for improvements. The committee was determined that the Council continues to explore opportunities to support our residents into employment in the current economic climate.

We also considered the Council's annual Corporate and Social Care Complaints report. All councillors were pleased to see the improved performance in responding to complaints. Councillors take up many complaints each year, and getting a quick and full response is an essential part of that work. We welcomed the on-going work the Council was doing with local Registered Social Landlords and other partners to improve their performance and quality of response.

Policy Framework

Within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework there are a number of key policy documents that set out how the Council will act. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider these before Council agrees them and this year we discussed the following:

- **Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy**

The committee welcomed the strategy and raised a number of issues for Cabinet to consider including the development of the borough fringe areas, particularly the Bethnal Green/Hackney border needed more attention to improve quality of the environment and also encourage businesses to this area. There was a need to identify a waste site for the borough and further develop our saturation policy of fast food outlets particularly near schools and consideration of our recommendations from last year's review on childhood obesity. Finally, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet consider how the subsequent developments plan arising from the Core Strategy should engage local residents at a level they can easily understand.

- **Local Implementation Plan 2**

The Committee considered the Local Implementation Plan and offered a number of comments for Cabinet's consideration. The Mayor of Tower Hamlets was requested to lobby Transport for London and the Mayor of London to bring forward the upgrade of Whitechapel Underground Station to coincide with the opening of the new Royal London Hospital and also against proposals to reduce the operating hours of the Thames Clipper to 8pm daily. The Committee also suggested measures that could be taken to improve the reliability of the bus service and the promotion of pedestrian walkway routes through the borough. We also expressed concerns about the proposed reductions in grants and budgets and the possible impact on St Paul's Way Transformation Scheme and Shoreditch Station works at Braithwaite Street.

Other Policy Work

The committee also considered a number of other policy area as part of its work and offered comments and recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

- **Car Free Development**

In the last municipal year the Committee considered local concerns around car free development and the availability of street parking permits. Following that discussion the Cabinet Member agreed to provide an update to the Committee which was considered at the November meeting. We noted the detailed work on the creation of an improved and more robust administration system for car free homes through the planning application determination process. A Car Free Review Group has also been established to resolve the issues identified. In addition, work was underway with car club providers and the Tower Hamlets cycle scheme to develop other options. However, the Committee raised a number of questions on related issues including:

- Identifying the definitive number of instances of similar errors and the properties/individuals affected
- The consistency of approach to resolving such errors
- Clarification of the term “car free” development
- Notification to prospective tenants/buyers of any restrictions on parking permits.

The Committee agreed that this may be an issue for future scrutiny review if the problem persists.

- **Draft Employment Strategy**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft Employment Strategy during the consultation period. It was noted that Strategy provided a sophisticated analysis of unemployment in the borough including how it was impacting our diverse communities. The Committee raised a number of points with the Cabinet Member and Officer around shaping the future job market, the importance of raising aspirations and linking up with local schools, colleges and universities, continuing developing our understanding of the barriers to employment for hard to reach communities and different equalities group and how geographical boundaries can be broken down to support residents access jobs across London. We hope that our comments recommendations are incorporated by the Mayor in the final Strategy.

- **Strategic Plan – Year 1 Action Plan 2011/12**

The Committee considered the Outline Plan and Action Plan of next year’s Strategic Plan which outlined the key activities and milestones that had been created in line with the Mayor’s priorities and following consultation with residents, third sector organisations and partner agencies. We highlighted the importance of building higher aspirations and excellence on our education targets and also encouraging entrepreneurship and apprenticeships which a number of young people wanted to pursue. We also recommended that engagement with residents was crucial in delivering our transformation programme and this should take an approach that is easily understood by local residents.

- **Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Review**

The Action Plan arising from last year’s Scrutiny Review on reducing Childhood Obesity included two recommendations to report back to the Committee on the evaluation of the Healthy Borough Programme and the programme of work being undertaken by the Building Schools for Future (BSF) Programme to create more sports spaces and better dining facilities. The Committee noted that the Public Health White Paper provided an opportunity to continue with some of the work undertaken by the Healthy Borough Programme and once all the evaluation work had been completed the intention was to produce a comprehensive report pulling together all the highlights and evidence of learning with a set of recommendations to influence future strategic direction. As the BSF Programme was in its infancy it was too early to fully realise the benefits as many projects had only recently been completed but the aspirations set in the design and delivery will certainly help encourage a healthier lifestyle approach within the school environment.

Scrutiny of the Budget

The scrutiny of the budget proposals this year became crucial with the public sector facing the most severe and probably the most prolonged period of real term reductions for public spending for many decades. We considered the budget at three of our meetings and also held a specific budget scrutiny session with the Cabinet Member for Resources, the Corporate Director for Resources and a number of other Corporate Directors.

Following our discussions we made a number of recommendations to the Mayor and his Cabinet for their consideration. We highlighted the importance of informing and engaging residents about the budget proposals to ensure they better understood our decisions and have also had an opportunity to contribute to it. It was also suggested that the Mayor review the Council's accommodation strategy to enable us to achieve value for money from our existing facilities and develop a strategy which reflects the current and future challenges facing the Council. We held detailed discussion about the impact on local residents from the budget reductions and have recommended that the Mayor work with the Committee next year to start developing a more sophisticated understating of this. We were particularly concerned about the impact of stopping some services such as Housing Link and the transfer of other services to third sector or private providers. The Committee welcomed the work undertaken by the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Resources to find transition support for these services catering for our most vulnerable residents. Finally, the Committee agreed that a Budget Scrutiny Working Group be set up next year which looks at the impact of the budget and future budget proposals.

The Committee's work on the budget this year has had a significant impact on the final budget agreed by Full Council. This has been based on a constructive working relationship with the Cabinet and Officers. This relationship and work will need to continue next year to ensure the budget is put through a robust scrutiny process before the Cabinet consider their final budget.

Pre-decision scrutiny

The Committee can submit questions about Cabinet reports before a decision is taken. I feel we have strengthened this over the year and commented on 37 Cabinet reports (compared to 23 last year). Among these were:

- Lettings Policy & Plan
- Council Housing Finance Reforms – Implications for Tower Hamlets
- LBTH Housing Strategy
- Poplar Bath Procurement Route
- Conservation Strategy
- Neighbourhood Shops Policy
- Determination of School Admission Arrangements
- Local Development Framework
- Local Implementation Plan 2
- Borough Wide Drinking Control Zones
- Supporting People Strategy

Our questions and concerns provided further information at Cabinet and clarified some uncertainties thus improving the decision-making process. The responses also inform councillors' decisions over call-ins.

Call-ins

The Committee has considered five call-ins this year. This was consistent to the last two years and is a significant decrease from previous years.

Report Called-in	O&S Decision
Idea Store Strategy Action Plan Update - Idea Store Watney Market and One Stop Shop	Referred back to Cabinet
Enforcement Policy & RIPA	Confirmed

Children, Schools & Families - Contract Awards	Confirmed
Leasehold Policy Review	Referred back to Cabinet
Commercial Activities in Victoria Park	Referred back to Cabinet

Debate of the call-ins was robust and rigorous and on a number of these the Lead Members gave assurances that they would take some of the concerns raised on board. For example, on the Commercial Activities in Victoria Park, Cabinet agreed to sustainably change their original decision including looking to further limit the number of commercial and non-commercial event days in Victoria Park, further reduce closing time, replace a dance event with a more family orientated event and officers to continue monitoring levels of disturbance to local residents. This change in decision will significantly reduce the impact on local residents and address some of their concerns.

It is also worth highlighting that because of the items called in, attendance by local people and other councillors has increased substantially at the Committee meetings. This helps increase the profile of scrutiny and highlight the important role it has within the borough.

Co-opted and Appointed Representatives

For the first time nearly all the statutory co-opted members have been appointed to the Committee. They received an Induction Session which also included presentation from our Children, Schools and Families Directorate and we have supported them throughout the year to develop their role and help them be more effective. The Parent Governors also have a slot at the quarterly Director of Children, Schools & Families briefing for all school governors to brief them on the work of the Committee and also to bring back issues for the Committee to consider. We also welcomed a number of local residents (Local Area Partnership Steering Group Members) onto many of the Scrutiny Working Groups. This has been particularly useful in bringing local residents views into our scrutiny reviews and also the development of a number of recommendations of the Working Groups.

We intend to build on this further next year to enable co-opted Members to help us further engage more local residents in the scrutiny process and ensure that more of their concerns come to the Committee's attention.

Checking our own progress

Twice a year we monitor the recommendations we have made, not just those at committee but also those from our reviews and other investigations. Services are asked to provide an update so we can see whether progress is being made. The latest monitoring indicates that nearly all of our recommendations since July 2007 are being acted on or achieved.

In developing the first monitoring report all the Scrutiny Lead Members revisited a review within their portfolio area. This was undertaken through 1-2-1 meetings with Lead Officers from the service area of the review. This provided Members a useful way of monitoring the implementation of recommendations, identify key outcomes as a result of the review and also consider any difficulties around implementing the recommendations. The reviews that were revisited are:

- Interpreting and Translation Services – Cllr Ahmed Omer
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour – Cllr Lesley Pavitt
- Choice Based Lettings Scheme - Cllr Zenith Rahman
- Young Peoples Participation in Olympics leading up to Olympics – Cllr Tim Archer
- Evaluation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund – Cllr Rabina Khan

- Use of Consultants – Cllr Rajib Ahmed

Raising the Profile

We continue to improve how and when we communicate with Members, Officers and the public. We used the weekly Members' Bulletin regularly. The Manager's Briefing and the staff newsletter, Tower Hamlets Now, were also used to promote scrutiny work, so that council officers are well informed about the scrutiny work programme, upcoming reviews, review findings, and how they can be involved.

East End Life and our Scrutiny web pages are also vehicles to keep residents informed about the work scrutiny was undertaking. A number of the reviews attracted significant interest from local people; particularly the Public Perception of Parking and Supporting New Communities. More detail of these is included in the reports by the Scrutiny Leads.

The Role of Scrutiny under an Executive Mayor – Scrutiny Review

In addition to the scrutiny reviews undertaken by the Scrutiny Leads this year, I also led one on the role of scrutiny under an Executive Mayor. The election of the borough's first directly elected Mayor provided an opportune time to consider the role of scrutiny in strengthening accountability and the community leadership role of non-executive councillors.

The Working Group held sessions with officers from the Council, local residents, former councillors (Chairs of their Overview and Scrutiny Committee) from Newham and Lewisham, Officers from Hackney and Greater London Assembly. We also considered evidence – best practice, case studies from other Mayoral authorities across the country in order to come to our conclusions and recommendations.

A number of issues have emerged from our discussion with one over-arching message around 'developing a borough with a strong culture of accountability. The evidence we heard outlined that under an Executive Mayor effective and robust accountability is crucial. In addition, with change in national performance management framework and the demise of Comprehensive Area Assessment, strengthens the need for a robust local form of accountability. This is more than systems, structures and legislation rather focused around the culture of accountability that exists within public sector organisations. We have identified three key themes that influence this culture of accountability. Firstly in regards to Members we have made recommendations around developing Members as champions for challenging the Mayor, developing their community leadership and increasing their participation in the scrutiny process. In regards to public sector organisations we have focused on developing the role of scrutiny in the borough, ensuring there is a greater balance between reviews and challenging key decisions by bringing an alternative course of action and increasing the profile of scrutiny. Finally, we proposed a number of recommendations on enabling local residents to hold the Mayor to account and influence key decisions and policies.

I see this review as the beginning of our work on local governance and strengthening scrutiny in an era of significant national policy change and reduction in resources. I have held discussion with the Mayor about the draft recommendations and the scrutiny team have also been exploring these issues with a variety of officers across the Council. A number of 1-2-1 interviews have been held with Members from the different parties and all of this information will be used to supplement the report. We are also in discussion with the Centre for Public Scrutiny about becoming a pilot for their 'Accountability Works For You Model'. The final report along with these pieces of work will be reported to the new Committee in the municipal year.

Conclusion

Overall, I believe the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has made considerable progress this year. In particular, having Lead Members attend the Committee to present reports and outline the reasons for decisions has significantly enhanced the role and value of scrutiny. We are holding the Executive to account - particularly around performance monitoring and through considering call-ins – and influencing Cabinet decisions. The reviews have also made an important contribution to addressing local people’s concerns – for example, around safeguarding adults at risks, parking, housing repairs and health issues. This is an exciting time to be part of scrutiny with the emphasis the government has placed on strengthening local community leadership, increasing the involvement of local residents in the decision making process and the whole transparency agenda. I believe our work this year has equipped us to strengthen the impact of the committee in the future.

Excellent Public Services

Cllr Rajib Ahmed

As the Scrutiny Lead for the Excellent Public Services, I examined two topics on how the Council communicates, engages and provides services to our residents. Residents responded well to the opportunities to share their views alongside the Councillors, and actively participated in discussions at meetings. I believe that these scrutiny reviews will make a difference to the Council's policies.

Citizen Engagement Strategy

This review aimed to examine the development of the Citizen Engagement Strategy and to help ensure that the strategy became a robust tool for engaging local residents in our and the partnership's work. The aim of the strategy is to set out how the partnership can create a more 'powerful public' and how citizens can participate and engage with the decision-making process that impact on their lives and local communities and take greater control over the issues. Citizen engagement in this strategy means not only the sharing power, information and mutual respect between the government and residents, but also letting residents take the initiative in public service delivery by redistributing power to them.

The review involved presentations on the Big Society, a visit to the community champions workshop and a challenge session. Twenty-two stakeholders, including Third Sector organisations and residents and Councillors, attended the challenge session. The discussion in the challenge session can be categorised into: 1) issues that the Citizen Engagement Strategy needs to cover and; 2) the 'goal' of the strategy – what would a 'powerful public' look like.

The working group made seven recommendations, including clearly outlining the purpose, vision of a powerful public, scope, pathways to the goal of the strategy, involving all residents including communities of interest and 'hard to reach' communities in the strategy, identifying key stakeholders and their roles in the strategy, and clearly outlining the role of elected members as local community leaders.

Developing efficient customer services

A challenge session was arranged to consider efficient and effective access to customer services for all our residents. The session was attended by 12 stakeholders, including residents and Councillors.

Keeping customer access channels including telephone, online and in person available and easy to access is important for customer satisfaction with Council services. The challenge we face is to continue delivering effective customer services in light of the need to make significant efficiency savings. The session explored ways to reduce the cost of access and yet maintain customer satisfaction.

The recommendations included offering more online services, encouraging customers to use efficient means of accessing services, continuing to find solutions to customers' problems and publicising the Council's role to manage customer expectations.

Conclusion

The recommendations from these reviews will improve dialogue between the Council (and partners) and residents/customers. This will enhance understanding of their needs and the Council and partners' service delivery. I would also like to thank all those who participated in the sessions and shared their invaluable views and experiences.

I was appointed to the position of the Scrutiny Lead for Prosperous Community in November 2010. My portfolio covers a range of issues including education, employment and skills, economic development and reducing poverty in the borough. I led a scrutiny review on empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), considering the sector's important contribution to the borough's economy. My predecessor, Cllr Rabina Khan, conducted a scrutiny challenge session on raising participation in post 16 learning in Tower Hamlets.

Empowering Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute to the vibrant economy of the borough through employment and economic growth. This scrutiny review considered the issue of empowering SMEs in the context of the Council's Enterprise Strategy, identify what support local SMEs receive and make recommendations to help them flourish further in the borough.

The working group not only collected evidence from officers but also arranged a public meeting to hear from local stakeholders. About 20 stakeholders, including residents, business holders, and representatives from organisations supporting SMEs and the Third Sector, attended. The participants discussed the needs and barriers to the SMEs flourishing and the roles of the Council and the partners to support the sector. The public meeting showed that there was a general feeling that the Council and the partners did not understand the needs and diversity of businesses. The role of large enterprises – how large enterprises and SMEs relate each other to benefit both – was also highlighted.

We have made a number of recommendations around strengthening the link between large enterprises and SMEs in the areas of supply chain, professional advice and lending and engaging the business community further.

Raising participation in post 16 learning in Tower Hamlets

This challenge 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. About 30 stakeholders attended, including residents, representatives from schools and Tower Hamlets College, Third Sector organisations that work with young people and Councillors.

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. Ensuring all young people stay in education and training after the age of 16 is crucial to their development and employability in the future, which could help break the cycle of poverty and mitigate poverty.

As a result of the discussion, six recommendations were made. They included further parental engagement in post 16 education, delivering a range of Level 3 apprenticeships and targeting resources to the most vulnerable learners.

Conclusion

My review and the challenge session undertaken by my predecessor have received significant contribution from local residents. I hope our recommendations support the development of the Enterprise Strategy and also help raise educational achievements post 16.

My portfolio covers housing, environment, arts and leisure. This year I decided to focus on parking and customer care of housing repairs. Parking has been a major issue for residents for some time, with the issue being constantly raised with councillors, and I was keen to explore ways of improving public perceptions on this matter. I was also keen to undertake a scrutiny challenge session on Housing Repairs Service provided by Tower Hamlets Homes because of the significant number of complaints and Members Enquires we receive on this topic.

Customer Care – Tower Hamlets Homes housing repairs service

Disrepair affects the quality of a home and can impact negatively on the quality of life for residents, as community leaders we need to ensure that it doesn't continue to be the case. It was the right time to scrutinise the service as it was about to go forward with a new contract and I wanted to give Members and residents a chance to ensure the new approach addressed the old problems and also that residents were satisfied that they were involved in the procurement of the contract and the delivery of the service.

What emerged from the discussion is a need to work with Members and residents on customer satisfaction and complaints monitoring to improve transparency and to give them confidence in the use of the data. The negative attitude of operatives who undertake repairs has been an underlying concern for residents and continues to be a concern because they have transferred over to be employed under the new contract. Performance measures, IT improvements and structural changes have been put in place to address this. There is a recognition that the new contract needs time to embed and a recommendation has been put forward to report on complaints and customer satisfaction to the Scrutiny Lead for A Great Place to Live as I would like to see this continue to be considered. Many issues were highlighted through the session but were not fully explored due to time constraints. We have recommended that Tower Hamlets Homes continues to explore these with local residents.

The Public Perceptions of Parking

The main aim of the Review was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of residents concerns about parking issues, and use this as a foundation to improve the public perceptions of parking. The Working Group heard evidence from a range of regional and national organisations including the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service, the British Parking Association, Transport for London, London Councils, Westminster Council and Islington Council. In addition, a number of Council services presented evidence on aspects of parking and sustainable forms of transport. To complement this evidence, the Working Group also heard evidence from residents through a resident involvement session and through post and email. The Working Group feels that through incorporating a diverse range of partners in the Review process, the recommendations offer solutions to the complex challenges posed by public perceptions of parking.

The Review made a number of recommendations around the issue of communication which ranges from signage on the streets, the Council's website or the interaction of our Civil Enforcement Officers with the public. It was acknowledged that we need to undertake more work with local residents to change 'car culture' that exists in the borough and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

Conclusion

I believe that both pieces of work will make a positive impact on the service delivery to our residents. The challenge session on Tower Hamlets Homes housing repairs gave Members and residents the confidence that the service recognises some of the problems of the previous contract and that it has begun to address these through the new contract. I believe the recommendations put forward will continue to show that residents and Members concerns are being addressed and further work on areas of concern should produce better results that are much more in line with their expectation.

The public perception of parking is a very important issue, and one that affects all residents regardless of age or whether they drive. We hope that the Review and recommendations will aid the Council in comprehending the way residents understand parking policies. It is through this better understanding that the Council can provide services that best reflect the requirements of the borough.

The aim of the safe and supportive theme is to create a borough where crime is rare and where everyone has equal access to choices, chances and power. With this in mind, I have used this year's work programme to focus on ways the Council and its partners can safeguard adults at risk of abuse. I also decided to undertake a challenge session to see how we can strengthen the role of the Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) in tackling low level crime which can be a nuisance to the lives of our residents.

Scrutiny Review: Safeguarding Adults at Risk

Our Adults Health & Well Being Services has been rated as 'excellent' for the past six consecutive years. However, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection in November 2009 highlighted safeguarding adults as an area of concern. I was keen to review this to see how we could improve this especially in a period of reduced resources for the public sector. The review looked at the current policies that the Council has and in particular how we could improve the areas of access to services, commissioning and partnership working.

We made visits to Toynbee Hall and Sonali Gardens in order to assess some of the work that was being delivered in the borough. We also held meetings with MIND, Disability Coalition Tower Hamlets, the Metropolitan Police and the Independent Chair of the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Adults Board.

Our recommendations centre on the importance of advocacy working and ensuring that those at risk of abuse are aware of what actually constituted abuse. With self referrals being very low in the borough we also recommended the need to set up a free phone number as an independent point of contact. The Working Group felt that service users should be involved more in service planning rather than being consulted on already written draft policies and in turn should be represented, along with more third sector organisations, on the Safeguarding Adults Board. Finally we noted that not all sections of the community that are at risk may be engaged so a gap analysis should be undertaken to see what hard to reach communities are not being engaged and devising methods of how we can engage with them.

Challenge Session: Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs)

The THEOs were set up to tackle low level anti-social behaviour which blights our community. I spent a morning on the streets with the THEOs to experience first hand the work being delivered. The Challenge Session gave an opportunity to Members and residents to further understand the role of the THEOs in the borough and to identify areas for improvement.

We identified the need for the THEOs to raise their profile and visibility through the publications in local media of the work that they have carried out with a statistical breakdown of their achievements as well as publishing how they differentiate from other local enforcement agencies. Further recommendations included the need to strengthening the THEOs community engagement strategy, particularly to engage Schools and Youth/Community Centres in order to deliver joined up working to resolve local issues. Also recommended was the need for the THEOs to work closer with the Local Area Partnership areas and in particular sharing joint intelligence reports in order to tackle local issues.

Conclusion

I have thoroughly enjoyed being the Scrutiny Lead for Safe and Supportive communities as it has allowed me to explore two key areas which are important for our communities – how we safeguard adults at risk and how we tackle low level anti social behaviour. I believe improving

on the already good work that we've delivered in these areas can support us in developing a safe and supportive community.

My remit focused on ensuring Tower Hamlets is a place people feel a part of and are able to freely live in. Our borough is one of the most diverse in the country and historically was a settling ground for new migrants with the Huguenots, Irish, Jews, Bangladeshis and, more recently, Somalis making the borough their home. It is still a settling ground for new communities and that's why I was keen to look at how we can continue to support new and small communities.

Scrutiny Review: Supporting New Communities, Case Study of the Somali Community

I used the Somali Community as a case study to see how we can continue to support new and small communities considering a period of reduction in resources to the public sector. The key aims of the review included increasing access to services for new communities, increasing voice and representation and also how we can identify the needs of these communities.

I was keen to get residents involved as much as possible in the review and undertook focus groups with older people at luncheon clubs, women at a local community centre, young people from across the borough at the Town Hall and also third sector organisations. I also held meetings with representatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority, Praxis and the Migrants Rights Network to see what was happening across London and the UK.

As part of the recommendations I felt that we needed to strengthen our understanding of new and small communities and we therefore suggested that we develop sophisticated data gathering techniques on the demographics of our communities and use this when we plan services for residents. In terms of access to services and in a period where councils have less money to spend we need to make sure that our mainstream services are inclusive as much as possible and meet the needs of all communities but I also acknowledge that some services still need cater for specific communities. The Council also needs to refresh how we communicate with new communities, particularly those who are hardest to reach. Our upcoming Citizen Engagement Strategy should clearly state how we will do this.

On a final note, community cohesion was an area that many of our residents had concerns about. We need to encourage different communities to engage and work with each other rather than in parallel and isolation to one another. The Working Group has recommended that we promote consortiums of third sector organisations to bid together for funding.

Conclusion

This is an area which I feel very passionate about and it was great to have an opportunity to undertake this review which I feel is very important considering the borough being a settling ground for new communities. I do feel that if these recommendations are met we can have a more cohesive community which all our residents, regardless of whether they are an existing or new, can feel a part of.

The Health Scrutiny Panel undertakes the Council's functions under the Health and Social Care Act, 2001. The Panel includes members who are co-opted from the Tower Hamlets Involvement Network (THINK) to represent patient views as well as our health partners at NHS Tower Hamlets, East London NHS Foundation Trust and Barts and the London NHS Trust (BLT).

This year the Panel looked at maternity services at Barts and the London Trust, complaints, access to GP services, transformation of adult social care and the personalisation agenda, commissioning strategy plan, dementia and the BLT excellence in quality strategy report, all of which are ways of addressing access and improvements in health. Another issue which has been brought to the fore is the health needs of new residents and refugees and we discussed how we can find solutions for improving legitimate access rights for new communities.

Tower Hamlets Involvement Network

This year THINK presented work looking at the views and comments of patients and made a number of improvement recommendations to BLT. Its members serving on the Panel continue to be involved and make a valuable contribution to health scrutiny.

Independent Health Scrutiny Evaluation

Health Scrutiny undertook an independent evaluation in January and February 2010. This evaluation recognised the Health Scrutiny Panel as having a powerful role to play for health issues in Tower Hamlets. Whilst recognising the effective work of the Panel, the evaluation put forward a number of suggestions for improving what we do already and these have been considered in the development of this year's work programme.

Scrutiny challenge session: Cancer- development of early diagnosis and preventative services

In addition to the devastating human impact, cancer also has a significant financial impact on the NHS and the wider economy. Despite the medical advances, health inequalities continue to persist in Tower Hamlets, it has one of the lowest cancer survival rates in the country. Someone living in Tower Hamlets is twice as likely to die prematurely from cancer as someone living in Kensington and Chelsea. The Health Scrutiny Panel felt it was vital to address prevention and diagnosis because of this pressing health inequality.

The Health Scrutiny Panel brought together health colleagues, cancer patients and their carers to explore what can be done to improve survival rates through improving prevention and early diagnosis.

In the challenge session, the Panel considered prevalence of cancer in Tower Hamlets, survival rates and public awareness of cancer in the context of current initiatives to address local issues. They discussed and framed recommendations to improve early diagnosis and intervention, appointments booking system, GP-patient relationship, raising awareness and information and support for patients and their families.

Scrutiny challenge session: Polysystems

In the context of The North East London Case for Change document, (published March 2009) NHS Tower Hamlets set about working with local stakeholders to change the way in which

healthcare is provided. The idea behind the concept of polysystems or consortia, is a group of general practices working together to better meet local needs. Clinical networks (polysystems) include all the people and organisations that can support a patient in the community at every stage of their health journey. Tower Hamlets is a step ahead of other London boroughs, in that its GP practices are already arranged into eight networks.

The Panel considered the development of primary care in Tower Hamlets and the future role of clinical networks and integrated care. Information was presented on the vision for the future, key areas of success already established, clinical networks and care packages, the future role of networks and what would be happening in the year ahead.

The key areas for improvement which were identified included the need for clear and consistent engagement with residents and patients from the Council and the NHS, with Councillors and 3rd Sector Organisations helping to steer understanding and raise the concerns of residents with the correct bodies.

Healthy Lives Healthy People and the NHS White paper – our responses

In our responses to the Government's White papers we have supported the move to increase the potential power local people can have over their health service. We highlighted the importance of the role of scrutiny through local elected members and the importance of identifying local needs and finding local solutions. Whilst we will respond positively, at the same time we think that people need to have confidence in commissioning and the decisions that are made about Tower Hamlets. This can only happen if local people hold decision makers to account through locally elected members. We think that the role of health scrutiny should be further strengthened and look forward to further work on driving improvements in health.

Conclusion

It has been another active year for Health Scrutiny Panel. We have considered a number of key reports through the formal Panel meetings and will continue to develop the Work Programme.

Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

If you want to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets, please contact the Scrutiny Policy Team:

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