

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2010

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

Members Present:

Councillor Ann Jackson (Chair)

Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer
Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Lesley Pavitt
Councillor Zenith Rahman

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr Mushfique Uddin – (Muslim Community Representative)
Mr Ahabab Miah – (Parent Governor Representative)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Rachael Saunders

Officers Present:

Afazul Hoque – (Scrutiny Policy Manager, Scrutiny & Equalities,
Chief Executive's)
David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community))
Hafsha Ali – (Acting Joint Service Head Scrutiny & Equalities,
Chief Executive's)
Keiko Okawa – Scrutiny Policy Officer
Katie McDonald – Scrutiny Policy Officer
Matthew Vaughan – (Political Advisor to the Conservative Group)
Sarah Gullo – (Communications Officer, Corporate
Communications)
Chris Saunders – (Interim Political Advisor to the Labour Group)
Amanda Thompson – (Team Leader - Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rajib Ahmed.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

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 8 June 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

None.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

None.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section One reports 'called in' from the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 June 2010.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

7.1 Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2009/10 - End of Year Monitoring Report

Councillor Rachel Saunders, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, introduced the end of year monitoring report informing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's progress in implementing its Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) for 2009/10.

The report also included an annual summary of progress against the Council's Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion/Belief, and Sexual Orientation Equality Schemes in 2009/10.

Councillor Saunders advised that the report gave a narrative of each Directorate's achievements on schemes, and although there were a few actions identified as 'red', this was not unreasonable given the total number of actions. She further advised that Tower Hamlets was the second Council nationally to be externally validated as being at the highest level 'Excellent' of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), which had replaced the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG).

Hafsha Ali, Acting Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities, stated that the assessment was a significant achievement following the realisation that many authorities were becoming obsessed with the process itself instead of the outcome that the schemes produced, and this had led to the replacement of the ESLG by the EFLG.

Members of the Committee raised a number of questions in relation to the actual format of the report and how this could be improved, the real cost of implementing the plan and whether or not value for money was being achieved, the use of resources for the 'No Place for Hate' campaign, how particular schemes were chosen by Directorates and how these could be accelerated by Overview and Scrutiny, issues around addressing health inequalities with local partners, and the need to closely monitor the 'green' lights in case these also required further scrutiny.

Councillor Lesley Pavitt also raised a question concerning the consultation process for disabled residents in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme but agreed to follow this up outside of the meeting as Councillor Saunders had not been the portfolio holder when this had taken place.

Councillor Saunders agreed that the document was very comprehensive, but she felt it was important that Members were kept fully informed. She noted the request to incorporate the short précis which was included in papers for the Cabinet, and stated that she was happy to discuss separately ways of making the document more user-friendly.

Councillor Saunders stated that in the light of the urgent budget reductions it was inevitable that the level of service provided for the current schemes would be affected.

Hafsha Ali advised that Equality Scheme actions were all mainstreamed into service plans and delivered through existing budgets. Services that developed and designed services that were tailored to effectively meet the needs of communities reduced waste and would lead to increased cost savings and efficiency. The Single Equality Framework was intended to support services to rethink the effectiveness of our interventions to tackle inequality.

The Chair asked Councillor Tim Archer, Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel, to comment on questions concerning the acceleration of schemes and how health inequalities could be addressed.

Councillor Archer advised that the Health Scrutiny Panel could raise awareness of issues and target particular areas of the NHS.

Councillor Saunders advised that her portfolio also included Health and Wellbeing and she would be able to feed in concerns to the PCT Board on which she sat.

The Chair thanked Councillor Saunders for her participation in the meeting.

The Chair **moved** and it was **RESOLVED**

That the progress in implementing the Council's Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2009/10 be noted.

8. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Councillor Rabina Khan - Scrutiny Lead – Prosperous Communities

Councillor Khan advised that as the impact of the recession was such a large topic she would be reviewing how the Council supported local businesses and created enterprising town centres.

She would also be leading a challenge session on Post 16 attainment, and had been following up the implementation of actions agreed for the previous year's Scrutiny Reviews.

Cllr Lesley Pavitt - Scrutiny Lead – A Safe and Supportive Community

Councillor Pavitt reported that she would be undertaking a Scrutiny Review on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and also a Challenge Session on the impact of the Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs).

The Scrutiny Review on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults would start in September 2010, and the Challenge Session on the THEOs would take place collectively with the Tower Hamlets Partnership on Tuesday 20 July from 6:30pm.

Councillor Zenith Rahman - Scrutiny Lead - A Great Place to Live

Councillor Rahman advised that she would be carrying out a Scrutiny Review into the Council's Parking Service as this was a big concern for local residents, and her Challenge Session would be focusing on housing repairs.

Cllr Ahmed Omar - Scrutiny Lead – One Tower Hamlets

Councillor Omar reported that he would be undertaking a Scrutiny Review on whether public services were catering for the needs of the Somali community and what more could be done to increase participation of this community.

He planned to look at three key areas:

- Community Empowerment and increasing the voice and representation of the Somali community
- Access to services for the Somali community and in particular interpreting services
- Provisions for young people and integration/cohesion work in this area

Councillor Tim Archer - Scrutiny Lead – A Healthy Community

Councillor Archer reported that the Health Scrutiny Panel had held their first meeting towards the end of June.

As well as planning visits to all three NHS trusts and considering a number of items at its regular meetings, the Panel would be looking at two specific issues - Poly systems and the reconfiguration of local services and what this meant for local residents, and the development of preventative services and early diagnosis referral for Cancer.

Councillor Rajib Ahmed - Scrutiny Lead – Excellent Public Services

The Chair advised that Councillor Ahmed would be leading a review of the Citizen Engagement Strategy, and his challenge session would focus on Customer Services.

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

The Chair **moved** and it was **RESOLVED**

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

Agenda Item 6.1 Idea Store Strategy Action Plan Update – Idea Store Metro Watney Market and One Stop Shop (CAB 010/101)

1. What will the new brand offer be on learning in the Idea Stores and what is the provision for older people and adult learning?
2. What will be the cost of closing Cheviot House and what is the plan for this site after its closure?

Agenda Item 6.2 Council Housing Finance Reform Prospectus – Implications for Tower Hamlets and Proposed Response (CAB 011/101)

1. Has the Council any indication on how many other councils may be wishing to stay with the current system on housing revenue? Would this be practicable for some time, as the new method proposed may be overly relying on forecasting that could end up being faulty due to the current volatile economic situation?

Agenda Item 7.1 Contracts Forward Plan (CAB 012/101)

1. How will the temporary accommodation contract (DR3232) consider the new housing rent caps and possible side effects?
2. Medical assessment service (CLC3166) is an area that needs to be closely monitored after the changes in incapacity benefit guidance given to GPs and other health professionals. Do we need to specify a shorter contract term?
3. How will the Cabinet publicise what we are expecting to gain from the High Street 2012 contract (DR3158)?
4. In regards to the contract for Banking Services (R3167) will we be looking to ensure we have facility to pay housing benefit to landlords weekly via bank transfer?

Agenda Item 10.1 Single Equality Framework 2010/11 (CAB 014/101)

1. This report identifies economic inactivity amongst Bangladeshi and Somali women as a key area of priority and given the reduction in public finance how will the Council bring in funding from other sources to address this area of inequality?
2. Following on from last year's Scrutiny Challenge Session on Anti-bullying initiatives in schools, can you tell us what specific work Children, Schools & Families Directorate are doing to deal with Homophobic bullying?

Agenda item 10.3 Petitions Scheme (CAB 016/101)

1. In regards to paragraph 3.2 and the trigger for debate at full Council can we explore the possibility of having a trigger which considers the number of petitions received from different parts of the borough with a lower number of signatures required?

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

The Chair reported that Councillor Rajib Ahmed, who was unable to attend the meeting, had decided to resign his position as Vice-Chair of the Committee, and she asked for further nominations.

Councillor Eaton advised that there had been one other nomination when Councillor Ahmed had previously been appointed and asked that this still stand.

Councillor Stephanie Eaton **MOVED** that Councillor Tim Archer be elected Vice-Chair.

Councillor Lesley Pavitt **MOVED** that Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer be elected Vice-Chair.

Following discussion and a **VOTE** 4 in favour and 2 against it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

The meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Ann Jackson
Overview & Scrutiny Committee