

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 7.15 P.M. ON MONDAY, 18 JANUARY 2016**

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

**Members Present:**

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)	
Councillor Danny Hassell (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Mahbub Alam	
Councillor Amina Ali	Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Peter Golds	Scrutiny Lead for Law Probity and Governance
Councillor Denise Jones	Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities & Culture
Councillor Md. Maium Miah	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Oliur Rahman	
Councillor Helal Uddin	Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal

**Co-opted Members Present:**

Nozrul Mustafa	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Victoria Ekubia	– (Roman Catholic Church Representative)
Dr Phillip Rice	– (Church of England Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun	– (Parent Governor Representative)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Mayor John Biggs  
Councillor David Edgar  
Councillor Shiria Khatun  
Councillor Ayas Miah  
Councillor Rachael Saunders  
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

**Officers Present:**

Stephen Adams	– (Finance and Resources Manager, Communities Localities & Culture)
Simon Baxter	– (Acting Service Head, Public Realm, Communities Localities & Culture)
Kate Bingham	– (Service Head, Children's and Adults

Mark Cairns	Resources) – (Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Stephen Halsey	– (Corporate Director Communities, Localities & Culture)
Chris Holme	– (Service Head, Resources & Economic Development)
Gulam Hussain	– (Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Kevin Kewin	– (Acting Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equality)
Adele Maher	– (Strategic Planning Manager, Development and Renewal)
Nasima Patel	– (Service Head Children's Social Care, Children's Services)
Owen Whalley	– (Service Head Planning and Building Control, Development & Renewal)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests. However, the Members of the Committee were reminded that in regard to the item on the Challenge Session Progress Update - Planning in Conservation Areas if there was any non-pecuniary interest so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon their judgement of the public interest. They should declare that non-pecuniary interest.

#### **3. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS**

No requests to submit petitions were received.

#### **4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil items

#### **5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

##### **5.1 Challenge Session Progress Update - Planning in Conservation Areas: The implications of conservation areas on the extension of family homes**

The Committee received a report that followed up from the scrutiny challenge session on Planning in Conservation Areas: the Implications of Conservation

Areas on the Extension of Family Homes. The report it was noted outlined the progress against the original recommendations. The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows.

The Board heard that:

- The changes will be implemented on an area by area basis;
- That whilst the initial focus will be on 8 of the 58 conservation areas this is part of an ongoing review and applications within the borough will be considered in the light of current guidance.

As a result of discussions on this report the Board noted the report.

## 5.2 Budget Scrutiny

Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report setting out the position regarding the Local Government Finance Settlement, Council Tax, New Homes Bonus and Capital. He highlighted a number of the growth and savings proposals contained in the report. The main points of the full and wide ranging discussion on the Budget may be summarised as follows.

**Review of Day Services for Older People** - The Committee noted that the proposed redesign will focus primarily on service improvement and better outcomes for service users, whilst also achieving cost efficiency and value for money. It was also noted that the proposal included better provision for service users of Mayfield House (which it was noted had 30 places and average daily attendance of 4) by moving these services to more modern facilities in consultation with service users.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted more details on this proposal and Adults Services undertook to outline how the new service will continue to meet the needs of users prior to implementation.

**New funding arrangements for new Belvedere House** – The Committee noted that Veterans' Aid will be securing alternative funding to ensure that they can continue to provide services for their vulnerable clients with no impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted the budget papers to include the source of this new funding stream.

**Undergraduate and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Bursaries** – The Committee noted that over the last 12 years 153 local people have benefited from the bursary, 71% of whom have been black and minority ethnic (BME) and 74% women. This bursary, alongside other initiatives, has helped to increase the proportion of BME teachers in the borough to 30% (November, 2010) and in particular teachers of Bangladeshi heritage (12%).

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted the Mayor reconsider this savings proposal, and ensure that this bursary is more widely publicised and developed so that there can be increased take up from a broader cross section of BME communities.

**Discontinue the Incontinence Laundry Service –** The Committee received a question submitted by Pete Dickenson regarding the impact of ending this service.

The Committee noted that this is a non-statutory service and that the NHS provides free support to residents based on need. Residents that currently receive the service within the borough now also have direct control of their personal care budgets, which enables them to determine the nature of their care support for themselves. Therefore, given that this is a health function and not a statutory requirement of the council and in view of the existence of the above NHS arrangements the discontinuance of the laundry service could be adequately managed as part of the NHS client needs assessment process, and agreed with the savings proposal.

**Review of Enforcement Function – More Generic Working –** Regarding the proposal to delete the 10 Commercial Waste Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEO) posts. The Committee noted that the function of this service is to monitor the commercial waste refuse and provide a first contact service to customers for commercial waste enforcement, and statutory nuisance activities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted more details on this proposal to be included in the budget papers.

**School Crossing Patrols to be delivered by Schools –** The Committee noted the proposal to transfer responsibility for funding for school crossing patrols from the council's General Fund to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted this proposal to be reconsidered and suggested as one potential alternative consideration be given to the third sector providing volunteers who, once trained and having undergone the necessary checks, could help deliver this service.

**Reduce Funding to Local Police Budgets –** The Committee noted that the council had earmarked funds to pay for an additional 20 Police Officers from December 2015. In recognition that it is not the function of the Council to fund the Police Service but that of regional and national government to do so and in view of the continuation of public sector austerity, there was a savings proposal to reduce this funding. The council would still pay for additional police officers and the revised initiative will still deliver a police task force.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it did not wish to see a reduction in this funding, and that therefore this savings proposal should be reconsidered.

**Reduction in Mainstream Grants** – The Committee noted a savings proposal of a three per cent to four per cent reduction on the mainstream grants budget council wide, and a five per cent reduction in the Development and Renewal element of the mainstream grants budget, taking effect from September 2016.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee **agreed** that it wanted these cuts to be reviewed as they would have a significant impact upon the third sector. Therefore this savings proposal should be reconsidered.

**Deletion of Burial Subsidy Scheme** - The Committee noted that LBTH had established a burial subsidy scheme which provides for a payment of £225 to be made to a person responsible for arranging the burial of a deceased Tower Hamlets resident at one of three specified cemeteries. The scheme compensated residents for potential additional costs arising from the lack of any burial facility offered by the Borough. LBTH has now leased a burial ground at Kemnal Park where it offers a subsidised burial facility to local residents. This has provided an opportunity to reconsider what financial support is provided to residents and to discontinue this additional subsidy as there is now alternative subsidised provision.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee agreed that it wanted the Mayor to reconsider this proposal and wanted details on the uptake of the burial subsidy scheme.

**6. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS**

Nil items

**7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS**

Nil items

**8. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

Nil items

**9. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

**10. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items

**11. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil items

**12. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS**

Nil items

**13. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

Nil items

The meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee