

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 30 JUNE 2009

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

Members Present:

Councillor Sirajul Islam (Chair)
Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Alexander Heslop
Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor A A Sardar
Councillor Bill Turner (Vice-Chair)

Officers Present:

Mohammed Ahad	– (Scrutiny Policy Officer)
Lutfur Ali	– (Assistant Chief Executive)
Michael Keating	– (Service Head, Scrutiny & Equalities)
Afazul Hoque	– (Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager)
David Galpin	– (Head of Legal Services (Community))
Amanda Thompson	– (Team Leader, Democratic Services)

1. CHAIR'S RESOLUTION

The Chair reported that the agenda had been unavailable for public inspection within the standard timescales set out in the Council's Constitution due to an electronic failure which had prevented the agenda from being published.

The Chair moved and it was

RESOLVED

That in accordance with paragraph 6.3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules detailed in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, the business of the meeting should proceed on an urgent basis

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ann Jackson and Abjol Miah.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made in relation to agenda item 10 – Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Section One Cabinet Papers:

Councillor Tim Archer – 6.1 Blackwell Reach – Personal interest

Councillor Alex Heslop – 6.2 Ocean Estate – Personal interest

Councillor Denise Jones – 6.2 Ocean Estate – Personal interest

Councillor Bill Turner – 6.2 Ocean Estate – Personal interest

Councillor Sirajul Islam – 6.1 Blackwell Reach – Personal interest

4. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

5. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

None.

6. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

None.

7. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section One reports 'called in' from the meeting of Cabinet held on 10 June 2009.

8. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Diversity and Equality Action Plan – 2009/2010

Mr Michael Keating, Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities, introduced the Council's draft Diversity and Equality Action Plan for 2009/10.

He advised that the Council had placed Diversity and Equality at the core of the Strategic Plan and had developed an effective approach to equality action planning and monitoring. This year's Diversity and Equality Action Plan therefore drew together a programme of strategic level actions to drive forward work in three areas:

- The delivery of the Council's six **Equality Schemes** in relation to Race, Disability, Gender, Religion/Belief, Age and Sexual Orientation
- Work towards meeting the requirements of the proposed new Equality Bill, including the production of a **Single Equality Duty** in 2010
- Work to improve the capacity of the organisation to tackle inequality through the use of the **Equality Framework for Local Government**

Arising from the discussion a number of points were made which it was agreed should be referred to Cabinet for consideration as set out below:

RESOLVED

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the continuous focus on driving equalities through the organisation and achieving real changes for local residents, and also the commitment to deliver on the six equalities strands and meeting the requirements of the proposed new Equality Bill and using the Equality Framework for Local Government to tackle inequality both internally and in the wider community;

The Committee did raise concerns about a number of performance indicators contained within the report, and about recent data not being available on some targets, changes to some targets and what they mean and how they will be measured. The Committee will be monitoring these in the performance reports received throughout the year;

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to use the Members' Diversity and Equality Working Group to undertake detailed work around the six strands in order to develop Members' awareness of how some of the actions identified will be implemented, and also to bring in issues of concerns from local constituents to the forefront of the Council's agenda;

The Committee also raised concerns that the Action Plan did not address the issue of Living Wage which does have an impact on residents' ability to access services equally; and

Members also felt that officers should continue to explore improvements to the accessibility of the report and making more explicit the links between the performance indicators, the priority areas of inequality and the action plan itself.

9. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Scrutiny Lead – Prosperous Communities

Councillor Sardar reported that he would be leading a review on worklessness amongst young people between the ages of 16-24 as this was an issue highlighted by the Council and Cabinet as a priority.

Areas for review would possibly include the range of policies the Council and external partners had in place to reduce worklessness, the impact of the recession, and potential opportunities available from the Olympics.

Scrutiny Lead – Excellent Public Services

Councillor Bill Turner reported that the Early Intervention report action plan had been sent to relevant Council services, and officers were expected to respond to the recommendations within the next few weeks before the report went to Cabinet.

He would also be leading a Dangerous Dogs challenge session in response to the concerns of local residents which would seek to investigate the Council's approach to tackling the growing number of dogs bred for violent sports and intimidation/gang fighting.

Preliminary thoughts on review topics included the recruitment and retention of social workers, reviewing home social care for adults and dealing with bridges and other street furniture that was classified unsafe.

Scrutiny Lead – A Safe and Supportive Community

Councillor Denise Jones reported that she was hoping to look at ways of reducing youth offending in the Borough, and was considering holding a challenge session in relation to bullying in schools.

Scrutiny Lead - A Great Place to Live

Councillor Alex Heslop reported that his review would be looking at the Private Rented Sector, in particular the support given to private tenants, and the ever growing number of private tenants of Council leaseholders and how the Council or RSLs should interact with private tenants. In addition to this he would also be looking at the merits/demerits of the Council promoting Private Sector Leasing.

There would also be a challenge session which would look at the Council's relationship with RSLs, in particular ways of ensuring how RSLs would be able to fulfil their obligations as outlined in the transfer document.

Scrutiny Lead – One Tower Hamlets

The Committee noted that Councillor Anne Jackson would be undertaking a review on Community Leadership.

Scrutiny Lead – Healthy Communities

Councillor Tim Archer reported that the Health Scrutiny Panel would be looking to build on the 05/06 scrutiny review 'Obesity in Young People' and the 07/08 review 'Young people's participation in sports leading up to the Olympics', in particular the planning application process in relation to fast food restaurants, and a number of wider issues including education, promoting healthy eating and outdoor activities.

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

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

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

Agenda Item 6.1 Blackwall Reach Regeneration (CAB 007/090)

1. Since the government has now indicated that they would be prepared to see a resumption of Council built homes will the Cabinet consider the Council directly building replacement homes in Blackwall Reach area?
2. Can the Cabinet explain why tenants will lose their secure tenancies if the buildings are refurbished or demolished?
3. We understand the Blackwell Reach Regeneration is going to take place soon, therefore can residents get decant status now so they can start making decisions on what to do?
4. It is not clear what will happen to other adult family members beyond husband and wife who hold the tenancy when decant status is granted. Written confirmation will be needed before anyone makes a decision to move. When will the situation be clarified with written confirmation?
5. When will a written guarantee of the right to return to the estate be given to residents?
6. If the Regeneration partners and the residents of Robin Hood Gardens do not come to an agreement and cannot agree the Charter, what would happen then? How will the Council fulfil its duty to bring Robin Hood Gardens up to the decent homes standard?
7. What steps will be put in place to ensure that Robin Hood Gardens does not become a hot-spot for squatters once residents begin to move to alternative accommodation?

8. With 20% of residents being leaseholders, how will they be treated and can the Cabinet assure us that CPO will only be used as a last resort?
9. The smaller blocks in the area (Anderson House, Mackrow Walk and on Woolmore Street) don't suffer from the same problems as Robin Hood Gardens so why are they in the regeneration programme?

Agenda Item 6.2 Ocean Estate Regeneration (CAB 008/090)

1. In reference to paragraph 4.4.3 can the Cabinet clarify how many more people will be recruited, timetable for recruitment, outline the process for recruitment and if the individuals to be recruited need to have any kind of specialist skills?

Agenda Item 7.2 Outcome of the tendering process for the Youth Service in LAPS 1,2 and 3 (CAB 012/090)

1. Can the Cabinet explain how third sector organisations and young people have been consulted regarding the tendering process and the outcome from the process?
2. How many years is the service being tendered out for and can the Cabinet clarify how local young people and community leaders can hold these organisations to account for the services provided by them?
3. Since the JAR Inspectors were particularly impressed with the work of the Youth Service will the Cabinet re-consider its decision to tender the service out for these three LAPs and therefore ensuring the consistency in services provided and further building on the relationships with young people?

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

None.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

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 were excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business on the grounds that it contained information defined as Exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972.

13. SECTION TWO REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section Two reports 'called in' from the meeting of Cabinet held on 10 June 2009.

14. RESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the restricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 June 2009.