

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Annual Report 2017/18

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Forward

I am pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2017-18. This municipal year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has looked at an extensive range of issues to identify how the Council can improve outcomes for local people.

In particular, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its sub-committees have held in-depth scrutiny reviews and challenge sessions to improve the Council's local response to fire safety, gangs and serious youth violence and support for homeless people to access health and social care services in the borough. The committees made a number of recommendations, which will be implemented and monitored in the next municipal year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose to dedicate a significant portion of its time to the Council's improvement work on Children's Services, following Ofsted's rating of 'inadequate' in April 2017. We held a number of sessions with the Mayor, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Corporate Director of Children's Services and other officers. Alongside this, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also heard from independent experts. We are pleased at the progress the Council is making and recognise that scrutiny has an important role to play in providing challenge and support to this process. I am sure the next Committee will focus on the Council's improvement agenda and look at areas where further work is needed, such as embedding a stable workforce and delivering consistent standards across all social care teams.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had an opportunity to be involved in the Council's budget-setting process. I welcome the Council's strategies to support the most vulnerable in our community by continuing free school meals to all primary age pupils and reducing the impact of welfare reforms with the Tackling Poverty Fund. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which enabled the Committee to review the budget more effectively and focus on strategic priorities and outcomes for residents. However, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that scrutiny occurs at the outset of the budget-setting process so the Committee can influence proposals at an earlier stage.

I also reviewed the way in which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee functions and introduced a number of changes. Some of these were a matter for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and some required approval by the Mayor in Cabinet. I commend the following changes to my successor:

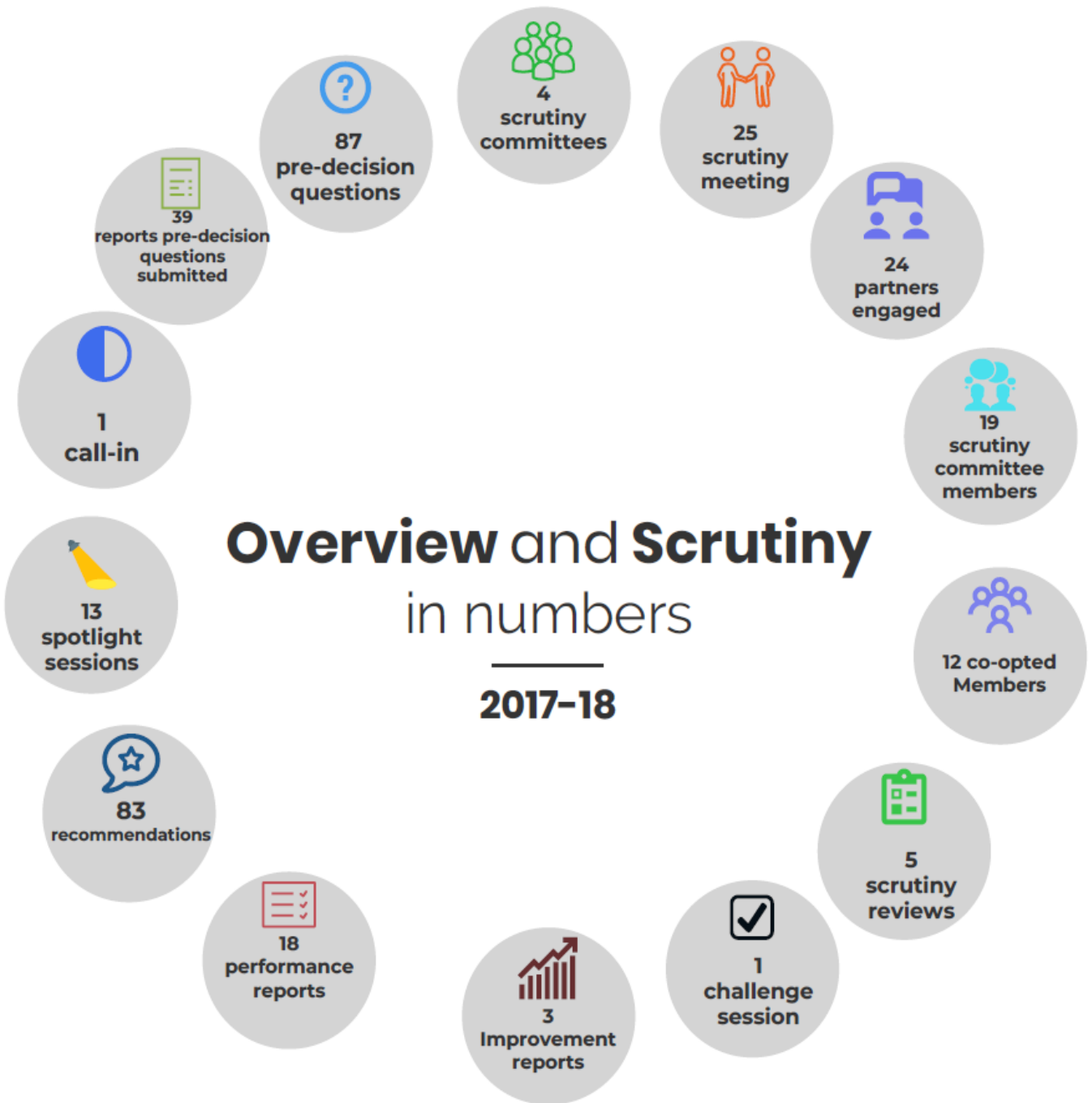
1. defining the role of Scrutiny Leads by assigning the following specific responsibilities to the role:
 - monitoring and raising scrutiny questions on performance and finance reports
 - taking the lead in asking questions on relevant portfolio areas at scrutiny meetings
 - taking the lead in scrutinising budget proposals for relevant portfolio areas.
2. including a 'Chair's Actions' item on the agenda to ensure urgent decisions and other governance matters are reported
3. releasing confidential reports to co-opted scrutiny Members
4. scheduling Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to allow sufficient time for pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet papers
5. circulating key lines of enquiry on each agenda item to support committee Members with strategic questioning.

The Communities and Local Government Committee report on the 'Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees' has highlighted how local authorities can support effective scrutiny. I believe Tower Hamlets is now in a good position to build on its scrutiny arrangements. Accordingly, I hope the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers how to further increase the effectiveness of scrutiny in the next municipal year.

I am grateful to the Scrutiny Leads for supporting this year's ambitious work programme and, in particular, those that chaired a scrutiny sub-committee. My thanks to our partners, Cabinet Members and officers who have attended our meetings and engaged openly to collectively address challenges. Finally, I would like to thank all our co-opted Members, who sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and sub-committees, for their contributions and bringing a different dimension to our discussions and debates.

Cllr Dave Chesterton

Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee



1. Overview and Scrutiny at Tower Hamlets in 2017/18

- 1.1 Overview and scrutiny committees were introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 to hold decision-makers to account by reviewing policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services¹. This includes scrutinising the decisions of the Mayor and Cabinet, proposing new policies, commenting on draft policies and ensuring value for money. The aim is to make the decision-making process more transparent, accountable and inclusive, and improve services for people by being responsive to their needs.
- 1.2 This year, the approach of Tower Hamlets (Tower Hamlets) to overview and scrutiny has been underpinned by the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles for good scrutiny, which are as follows:
 - providing 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-takers
 - enabling the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard
 - carrying out scrutiny by independent-minded Members who lead and own the scrutiny process
 - driving improvement in public services.
- 1.3 To develop skills, scrutiny Members have been supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny through a training, development and support programme focusing on budget scrutiny, children's services scrutiny and effective questioning skills.

Scrutiny Committees

- 1.4 The main, member-led body, which holds executive decision-makers to account in Tower Hamlets, is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Committee). To allow the Committee to scrutinise issues of strategic importance and ensure key areas are scrutinised in detail, Tower Hamlets also introduced the following three sub-committees:
 - Health Scrutiny Sub-committee
 - Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee
 - Grants Scrutiny Sub-committee
- 1.5 The three sub-committees are chaired by elected Members, who have responsibility for leading on the scrutiny of particular portfolios to support the role of the Committee and provide effective challenge to these areas (Scrutiny Leads). There are also Scrutiny Leads for Children's Services and Governance. Their work is covered later in this report.

¹ Mark Sandford, Overview and scrutiny in local government, Briefing Paper No. [06520](#), 20 December 2017

2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2017/8

- 2.1 At the beginning of this municipal year, the Committee agreed a work plan for 2017/18. The Committee identified following themes they would like to focus on throughout the year:
- holding the Executive to account through Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions of Cabinet Members (see paragraph 2.5 below)
 - supporting the Council's improvement agenda, particularly by reviewing the work on Children's Services
 - reviewing and commenting on the Council's budget and policy framework items, including an in-depth review of the budget
 - reviewing and challenging the performance of the Council on delivery of the Strategic Plan, budget and handling of resident complaints.

Membership

- 2.2 The elected councillor membership of the Committee is politically proportionate and representative of the composition of the Council. Accordingly, the Committee membership consisted of nine elected councillors, including the Chair, and six education co-opted representatives. The co-opted representatives are parent governors and faith representatives from the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Muslim communities.
- 2.3 The membership of the Committee was as follows:

Name	Role
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Chair
Councillor Clare Harrison	Vice Chair & Scrutiny Lead for Health, Adults & Community
Councillor Danny Hassell	Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services
Councillor Ayas Miah	Scrutiny Lead for Governance
Councillor Helal Uddin	Scrutiny Lead for Place
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Rabina Khan	Member
Councillor Oliur Rahman	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquim	Member
Shabbir Chowdhury	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor
Christine Trumper	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor
Fatiha Kassouri	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor

Asad M Jaman	Co-opted Member, Muslim Representative
Dr Phillip Rice	Co-opted Member, Church of England Representative
Joanna Hannan	Co-opted Member, Roman Catholic Representative

2.4 Following on from the development of the Council’s scrutiny toolkit last year, the work programme was structured around the following scrutiny categories:

- **Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions:** a Cabinet Member and/or a senior leader from a stakeholder organisation provides an overview of their work, including key risks within their portfolio, and is then questioned by the Committee.
- **Strategic Performance Monitoring:** Strategic monitoring reports are submitted to the Committee for scrutiny to review progress in delivering the Strategic Plan and to flag key risks.
- **Budget and Policy Framework Scrutiny:** The Committee has a mandatory consultation role on all items that are the responsibility of full Council to agree, including the budget.
- **Scrutiny Reviews:** Scrutiny Reviews are led by a Scrutiny Leads to examine a topic over multiple evidence-gathering sessions, followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement.
- **Scrutiny Challenge Sessions:** Challenge Sessions are single ‘deep dive’ evidence-gathering sessions, led by Scrutiny Leads, which are followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement.
- **Tracking Recommendations:** Throughout the year, the Committee reviews progress on the implementation of ‘Action Plans’ from previous reviews and challenge sessions.
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Updates:** These provide an opportunity for Scrutiny Lead to report back to the Committee on the work of sub-committees or any wider work they are involved in, for example Improvement Boards.
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Reports:** These address additional items that are either requested, or referred to the Committee for consideration and input.
- **Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny:** At each meeting, the Committee reviews Cabinet papers and provides a list of recommendations and questions, which the Chair reports at the start of each Cabinet meeting to inform the Cabinet decision making process.

3. Adults, Health and Community Services

3.1 This year, the Committee scrutinised the work of Adults, Health and Community Services by providing 'critical friend' challenge at three Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions on the following:

- Health and Adult Services Portfolio
- Safeguarding Adults
- Community Safety, which included reviewing the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-21.

3.2 In addition, the Committee also monitored the implementation of the Prevent Duty and Safeguarding Action Plan and reviewed the Scrutiny Challenge Session report on Community Cohesion.

Health and Adult Services

3.3 The Scrutiny Spotlight Session highlighted nationally declining social care budgets against a backdrop of increasing demand. The Committee reviewed how the Council ensures the needs of young adults are met as they transition from Children's Services and focuses on safeguarding outcomes, rather than processes. In particular, the Committee queried the level of Council housing support to key workers, actions to recruit, train and retain social care workers.

Safeguarding Adults

3.4 The Committee received a presentation from the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board on its Annual Report 2016/17, which focused on key themes of personalising safeguarding, empowering vulnerable residents and addressing capacity issues. Applying its learning from Children's Services, the Committee challenged whether there are effective safeguarding measures and risk assessments as children transition to adults. The Committee also queried the Council's measures to quality-assure the practice of frontline case workers and whether key partners, such as Police and housing services, are working effectively with case workers.

Community Safety

3.5 The Community Safety Spotlight Session focused on anti-social behaviour, drug related crimes, knife crime, gangs and the need to work in partnership to protect vulnerable residents. The Committee suggested working jointly with other boroughs to tackle crime, which crosses borough boundaries. The Committee also noted the poor engagement and communication between ward panels and the Police. Accordingly, the Committee is following up with the Safer Neighbourhood Team to ensure Councillors are invited to regular ward meetings. The Committee was concerned that levels of domestic violence prosecutions have decreased locally and nationally due to legislative

amendments and has suggested this as a topic for a scrutiny review for the next municipal year.

- 3.6 The Community Safety Partnership Plan has been developed around residents' priorities. The Committee made a number of recommendations around improving responses to reports of low level crime and working with housing partners to promptly remove abandoned vehicles so they do not attract anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. The Committee suggested that workshops should be built into future planning cycles to ensure that the voice of victims is more explicitly incorporated into the Plan.

Prevent Duty and Safeguarding Action Plan

- 3.7 Since July 2015, local authorities have had a duty to prevent terrorism (the Prevent Duty). The Committee reviewed a progress update on the recommendations from the Prevent Duty and Safeguarding Scrutiny Review Report 2016. The Committee noted that Tower Hamlets remains a Tier 1 borough in terms of risk and participated in a Home Office led peer review. The peer review assessed several key areas, including how Tower Hamlets safeguards vulnerable young people from radicalisation and engages with the community. In particular, the Committee reviewed the training delivery plans for Members and staff and queried how the community can champion the Prevent Duty.
- 3.8 The Committee also questioned how partners are fostering cohesion to ensure home-schooled children feel part of an inclusive society and protect the Muslim community against hate crimes. The Prevent Duty and community cohesion also link to the previous Committee's challenge session on Community Cohesion (see paragraph 3.9 below).

Community Cohesion Challenge Session

- 3.9 Following the Casey review of integration in Britain, the Scrutiny Lead for Governance held a Scrutiny Challenge Session on community cohesion in April 2017. The Scrutiny Challenge Session aimed to consider the implications of the Casey review and the integration of isolated and deprived communities in the borough.
- 3.10 The Challenge Session provided the opportunity to review the work that the Council and its partners have undertaken and commissioned to deliver improved cohesion outcomes. The report outlined six recommendations to further enhance cohesion outcomes for Tower Hamlets by mainstreaming cohesion across Council services, developing a reporting and evaluation process for cohesion activities, exploring a common assessment to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs, tackling isolation, reviewing the grant and commissioning policies to ensure a stronger focus on cohesion, promoting cohesion leadership and considering the impact of gentrification on cohesion

in the borough. Implementation of these recommendations will be reviewed in the next municipal year.

4 Education and Children's Services

- 4.1 The Committee has taken a proactive role in providing 'critical friend' challenge to Children's Services, following a report published by Ofsted in April 2017 which rated the service as 'inadequate'. The Committee received three monitoring reports on the Council's improvement progress throughout the year. Two Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions were also held on the Education and Children's Services portfolio and the Annual Report of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

Education and Children's Services Portfolio Spotlight

- 4.2 The Committee received a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, which highlighted work around the risk to children and young people in relation to child sexual exploitation, domestic violence and mental health. The Scrutiny Spotlight Session also reviewed adoption and fostering of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the quality and timeliness of social care assessments and interventions.
- 4.3 On education, the Committee's discussion focused on plans to build parent's confidence to support their children's language and literacy skills at home. The Committee also challenged how the Council would integrate working with schools under the Early Help New Model. To secure appropriate funding for schools, the Committee queried the inclusion of academies and free schools in pupil projections under the new national funding formula for schools. The Committee also raised concerns that the Chief Inspector of Schools had questioned primary pupils wearing the Hijab and received assurances that the Council did not share these views.
- 4.4 The Committee noted the poor reliability of existing IT infrastructure and continues to challenge adequate resourcing of Children's Services IT systems through its budget scrutiny processes. The Committee also raised concerns about the impact of funding cuts on Children's Centres and has since received information confirming the amount of Children's Centres functioning in the borough. The facilities available to children in the borough have been further scrutinised through the Grants Scrutiny Sub-committee's Challenge Session on youth activities and the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee's monitoring of the Children and Young People Mental Health Service action plan. These are considered later in this report.

Local Children's Safeguarding Board's Annual Report Spotlight

- 4.5 The Committee reviewed the Local Children's Safeguarding Board's Annual Report and considered governance arrangements, key safeguarding information and the Board's response to the Ofsted inspection. The

Committee's discussions focused on the improvements around performance datasets to analyse core business, identify priorities and monitor the quality of frontline practice. The Committee also highlighted that, in its role as a corporate parent, the Council should receive regular reports about numbers, school attainment and any criminality concerns of Looked After Children. The Committee was advised that these details, with an account of areas of improvement, will be included in next year's annual report.

Children's Services Improvement Progress Report

- 4.6 Over three sessions, the Committee monitored progress against the Council's Improvement Plan, which aims to implement the 15 recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report and achieve a standard of at least 'good' from April 2019.
- 4.7 The Committee was impressed by the commitment of the Mayor, Members and senior staff to drive improvement. The findings of Ofsted's subsequent monitoring visits and the feedback from the Department of Education confirms that this has translated into significant and necessary changes in service delivery. Accordingly, the Committee has focused its discussions on building and sustaining improvement. In particular, the Committee has scrutinised plans to attract and retain permanent social care staff and mechanisms to reduce high volume case-loads. The Committee now receives updates on the stability of the social care workforce. The Committee has also asked the Cabinet Member for Children's Service to ensure partners in housing better integrate services with social workers to support service delivery. The Committee has been informed that senior officers in housing and social care will meet to review progress and update the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Development and Waste and the Cabinet Member for Housing. The Committee also highlighted the importance of including children's voices in social care workers' analysis and records. The Committee has been reassured that, following the introduction of the New Model of Social Care, children's voices are starting to be captured.
- 4.8 The Committee also invited Sir Alan Wood, Independent Chair of the Children's Services Improvement Board and Debbie Barnes, Improvement Partner from Lincolnshire (appointed by the Department of Education) to provide an independent perspective of the Council's progress. While acknowledging the positive progress highlighted in the January Ofsted reports, both raised the need to focus on the quality of service to sustain progress by recruiting, training and developing a stable, motivated and highly skilled workforce. The Committee was also advised to scrutinise the development of strong partnerships and partner engagement with the delivery of Early Help and closely monitor children in need without a Plan. The

Committee plans to focus on these areas in the next municipal year and has recommended to Cabinet that all Members receive training in scrutiny and Children's Services.

5 Governance

- 5.1 To monitor the Council's performance and scrutinise value for money, the Committee has reviewed quarterly strategic performance reports, quarterly budget monitoring reports, best value improvement plan monitoring reports and the Annual Complaints and Information Governance Report. The Committee also held two spotlight sessions; one with the Chief Executive and one with the Mayor.
- 5.2 When reviewing the strategic performance reports, the Committee highlighted the importance of employment to support local residents out of deprivation. The Council has a key role in working with local partners, including businesses, to reduce the employment disparity between Tower Hamlets and the rest of London and focus on communities with high unemployment rates, particularly among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women. The Committee noted there are discrepancies between confidence levels in national and local survey-based data and the Council should explore other metrics to understand employment rates in the borough. The Committee also suggested that indicators should be incorporated into the new Strategic Plan to monitor the following:
- crime in local neighbourhoods
 - improvements in pupil performance in the primary and secondary sectors to identify where early help is needed.
- 5.3 In the Complaints and Information Governance Annual Report, the Committee highlighted the need to improve response rates and use intelligence from this report to inform development of future scrutiny work programmes.

Chief Executive's Spotlight Session

- 5.4 During this session, the Committee explored how improvements are being delivered to support the work of the Council. The Chief Executive highlighted the Council's progress from a period of distress and the necessary changes implemented, such as an organisational review, new leadership and three year budgeting. The Committee proposed areas of further development such as cultural change, breaking down silos, raising the profile of audit and the need for leadership to be more outward focusing. The Committee also discussed planning around the election to safeguard against fraud and corruption.

Mayor's Spotlight Session

- 5.5 The Committee heard a reflection on the Council's journey since the previous Mayor's removal from office and the reputational and resource challenges of dealing with investigations, commissioners, severe spending cuts and forced savings. Changes have included the introduction of a three year budget, relaunching of job support, developing more homes, addressing poor air quality and investing in police officers, youth projects and adult social care and children's services. The Committee questioned how the Council plans to hold external agencies to account for poor performance and service delivery. Further, the Committee queried the Council's initiatives to make housing more affordable for key workers, young graduates and families in the borough and to support young people's aspirations to go onto university or apprenticeships through support for tutoring or top up learning. The Committee suggested that this was an area for further scrutiny.

6 Place

- 6.1 The Committee held four spotlight sessions looking at Housing, Strategic Development and Waste, Work and Economic Development and the Environment. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Committee also reviewed the Council's Emergency Planning and Civil Contingency Arrangements.

Work and Economic Development

- 6.2 The Committee welcomed the Council's aim of achieving full employment in the borough and supporting residents into long-term sustainable jobs, particularly in the face of skilled staff shortages. The Committee continues to challenge the Council on its plans to tackle high levels of unemployment among BME residents. Further, the Committee suggested that small to medium sized entities are supported through business rate relief and local businesses are protected from competition by larger chains. The Committee supported regeneration projects, such as the Brick Lane Regeneration, and queried how the project would remain sustainable post funding.

Waste and Recycling

- 6.3 The Committee highlighted that the borough has a significant and increasing number of high rise buildings and discussed the pilot scheme for high rise occupants to recycle food waste. The Committee also considered the quality and accessibility of recycling bags for the elderly, disabled and working residents. The Council has agreed to make these more widely available. The Committee noted the importance of reinforcing messages on correct processes and supports the Council's campaigns in schools. The Committee also raised concerns around Veolia's performance and notes that capacity issues around contract management are being addressed.

Housing and response to Grenfell

- 6.4 The Committee received a presentation on the Council's housing services with a focus on temporary accommodation and homelessness resulting from domestic violence. The Committee were concerned that procedures for identifying and supporting victims of domestic violence who need re-housing were not properly followed. A restructure in the Housing Options team is currently underway to help upskill frontline staff on this issue.
- 6.5 The Committee also considered the Council's response to residential fire safety after the Grenfell Tower Tragedy and noted that all fire risk assessments are up to date. The Committee noted that fire safety measures have been put in place for Council buildings managed by Tower Hamlets Homes. Further, the Committee requested that the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee carry out a Scrutiny Review on fire safety in residential high rise buildings in Tower Hamlets. The outcomes of this review are covered later in the report.
- 6.6 The Committee also received a presentation on the Council's emergency planning and civil contingency arrangements. The Committee queried the sufficiency of resources available to the Council for providing emergency support to residents; and noted that there are established mutual aid arrangements across London Local Authorities if these become stretched. The Committee also highlighted the community leadership role of elected Members in reassuring and communicating with residents. The service area noted that elected Members could play a larger role and will be rolling out training to all Members.

Night-time Economy Scrutiny Review Report

- 6.7 The night-time economy (NTE) in London is currently high on the agenda of city leaders and it has been made a priority by the London Mayor with the recent appointment of London's first Night Czar and the introduction of the Night Tube. These developments, together with the rapidly changing demographic and economic make-up of Tower Hamlets, made it an opportune time to review the Council's current approach to the borough's NTE. This review was carried by the Committee in 2016/17 but the final report was presented to the current Committee.
- 6.8 The review held four evidence gathering sessions around planning and economic development, community safety, the Public Health Service and the Metropolitan Police. The review made 11 recommendations around developing a vision, appointing a "Night Czar" to champion a balanced NTE, funding activities from a Late Night Levy, availability of enforcement officers at times of high demand, supporting young people with employment opportunities, providing adequate public toilets and assessing the impact on residents local to NTE zones.

7 Resources

Quarterly Budget Monitoring

- 7.1 The Committee played a key role in scrutinising and challenging the budget for 2017/18 and focused on the delivery of key services, value for money and whether the borough's most vulnerable residents are supported. In particular, the Committee focused on the Council's initiatives to attract and maintain a stable social care workforce for Children's Services' and Adult Social Care. The Committee queried budget planning to deliver the Better Care Fund to support Community Care. The Committee also identified underspending of the Disabled Facilities Grant and will continue to monitor the reasons behind this.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 7.2 The Committee also received a Medium Term Financial Strategy update in October. The Committee asked for progress updates and will continue to monitor plans to move away from short-term cash management towards long-term strategic investment. The Committee also discussed the agreement in principle of the London Business Rates Pilot Pool 2018/19 and highlighted the need for a risk-mapping exercise, which has been reiterated in the Committee's budget scrutiny recommendations.

Budget Scrutiny for 2018/19

- 7.3 The Committee held three sessions in January 2018, including a training session and two Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, to consider and challenge the budget proposals.
- 7.4 The budget scrutiny training session was delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny with the aim of increasing the Committee's skills and capacity to effectively scrutinise the budget proposals. Training focused on questioning techniques, the impact on residents and whether the budget represents value for money. The Centre for Public Scrutiny also developed key lines of enquiry to assist Committee Members provide effective scrutiny.
- 7.5 At the first meeting, the Committee adopted a high level strategic approach, focusing on the links between the proposed budget and the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan. At the second meeting, the Committee reviewed the capital programme, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and feedback from consultation with local residents and businesses.
- 7.6 The Committee made twelve recommendations to the Executive covering the following topics:
- facilitating effective scrutiny by setting earlier timeframes and incorporating budget scrutiny into the scrutiny subcommittee's work programmes throughout the year

- reviewing the risks and opportunities of participating in the London Business Rate Pilot Scheme
- the Council taking a lead role in engaging and helping residents and businesses to mitigate local risks and take advantage of key opportunities of Brexit.
- Improving dialogue and resident engagement in recovering housing benefit overpayments
- Improving in-house resources to procure and manage large contracts
- The Council lobbying the Government for additional capital resources to fund fire safety remediation works and retrofit sprinklers
- The Council working with schools to raise awareness and encourage eligible parents to apply for free school meals.

7.7 In discussions, the Committee noted that parents are not applying for free school meals due to the universal free school meals provision, leading some schools to lose funding (in particular the pupil premium). The Committee has since welcomed the Council's change in policy around free school meals, requiring all parents to complete forms, to ensure schools receive funding.

Workforce Diversity Action Plan

7.8 The Committee also reviewed the Workforce Diversity Action Plan, which implements the recommendations of a challenge session held in 2015/16. The Committee noted that while BME representation had increased, disappointingly disabled representation has decreased at senior management level. Accordingly, the Committee has called for improved methods of identifying existing staff for advancement, adopting and monitoring a BME blind recruitment approach to break down barriers to equality and undertaking secondments with Local Authorities with greater representation.

8 Petitions, call-ins and pre-decision scrutiny

8.1 The Committee received no petitions this year.

8.2 One Mayoral Executive Decision was called in this year on the £119m Acquisition of Affordable Homes. The Committee was concerned whether this acquisition was the best value for money, Accordingly, the Committee requested further information on the age and condition of the properties and confirmation that the alternative options and the financial implications had been considered in full. In recognition of the need for affordable housing in the borough, the Committee voted to confirm this decision.

8.3 Throughout the year, the Committee submitted pre-decision questions across a range of areas. The Committee raised concerns that a number of Cabinet papers were submitted as urgent matters, reducing the Committee's time to scrutinise issues thoroughly. Accordingly, the timing of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings will be rescheduled in the next municipal year.

9 Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services - Councillor Danny Hassell

Role in Children's Service Improvement Board

9.1 This year, the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services attended the Children's Services Improvement Board's meetings and operational sub-group meetings as an ex officio member. These meetings monitor and review performance and progress against the Council's Children's Service Improvement Plan and provide regular reports to the Committee. The Scrutiny Lead also participated in a number of 'Practice Days', which involved meeting frontline social workers, observing case conferences and attending home visits to families.

Gangs and Youth Violence Scrutiny Review

9.2 This Scrutiny Review was set up in response to the recommendation in the 2017 Ofsted Children's Services inspection report to:

- urgently improve the quality and timeliness of services for children who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs and serious youth violence
- ensure the alignment of those services with those for children who go missing and those who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and radicalisation
- ensure that comprehensive and accurate intelligence and data inform service developments.

9.3 The review looked to identify and understand the scale and impact of gangs and youth violence issues within the borough, examine the Council's current approach, priorities and resources and identify evidence and best practice examples to learn from, adopt and build on when planning and delivering services going forward.

9.4 Two evidence gathering sessions were held in early 2018, which were attended by Councillors and officers with key representatives from education and the police and other service delivery partners as well as the Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayor.

9.5 The first session focussed on key issues identified locally as well as evidenced through previous studies held by other authorities and organisations. Presentations were made by the authority's Ending Gang, Group & Serious Youth Violence Co-ordinator and the Interim Head of Youth Services about how work is currently delivered and ongoing plans. The Community Safety and Partnership Manager from the London Borough of Hackney presented on how they have shaped and delivered their Integrated Gangs Unit. The discussions covered supporting the role of community mediation and intervention, perceived issues for young people and examining the causes for gang involvement.

- 9.6 The February session was held at the Spotlight Centre, where much of the outreach and involvement work is delivered. This session focussed on feedback from the experiences of young people involved with or affected by gangs and youth violence, adding greater context and impact to the discussions and findings from the first session.
- 9.7 The review has made 20 recommendations covering themes of resourcing, communications and engagement, analysis and understanding, training and capacity building and developing the focus and approach of work going forward.

10 Scrutiny Lead for Governance - Councillor Ayas Miah

Brexit Scrutiny Challenge Session

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Lead for Governance chaired a Scrutiny Challenge Session to improve the Committee's understanding of Brexit and its likely impact on the Council. The Session was held in December 2017 and attended by three Members, two co-opted Members and officers.
- 10.2 The Challenges Session made a total of ten recommendations on the following themes:
- further work to understand the impact on Council's workforces and also those it commissions to supply services
 - being proactive in understanding the impact on Tower Hamlets and engaging in regional and national discussions
 - undertaking a Scrutiny Review in 2018/19 of the impact on businesses, statutory agencies and local voluntary and community sector
 - understanding the impact on the local labour market, based on future needs.
- 10.3 The Scrutiny Lead, in consultation with Committee Members, has developed a draft scope for a further Scrutiny Review on Brexit in 2018/19, which sets out the following areas:
- the Council and its statutory and local partners (including the impact on schools)
 - big businesses and key sectors of the local economy (including the impact of national economy activities).
 - small to medium size businesses
 - the voluntary sector.

11 Scrutiny Lead Health, Adults & Community and Chair of Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor Clare Harrison

Overview

- 11.1 The Health Scrutiny Sub-committee is the primary way in which the democratically elected councillors of Tower Hamlets are able to voice the views of their residents and hold the relevant NHS and social care bodies to account. By doing this, the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee acts as a lever to improve the health of the local population by ensuring their needs are considered as part of the commissioning, delivery and development of health and social care services in the borough.
- 11.2 To develop the 2017/18 Health Scrutiny work programme, the Sub-committee carried out extensive consultation with key stakeholders including: Barts Health NHS Trust (Barts Health), LBTH Adults Commissioning, Social Care, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, GP Care Group, Public Health, East London Foundation Trust, and Tower Hamlets CGG.
- 11.3 Following this consultation the Committee generated a list of significant issues, challenges and projects across health and social care in 2017/18. The Committee decided to adopt a deep-dive approach to its work programme, focusing on one issue per meeting. The issues included; self-care and prevention, loneliness, and the sustainability of social care services in Tower Hamlets.
- 11.4 In addition to the deep-dive items, the Sub-committee continued to receive occasional and statutory reports relating to the performance of the local health and social care system.
- 11.5 The Sub-committee held four meetings in 2017/18. In addition to the Committee meetings the Sub-committee also undertook a Scrutiny Review which inspected the provision of health and social care services for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets.

Membership

Name	Role
Councillor Clare Harrison	Chair
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed	Member
Councillor Abdul Asad	Member
Councillor Peter Golds	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquim	Member
Councillor Rachael Saunders	Member
David Burbidge	Co-Optee (Healthwatch Tower Hamlets)
Tim Oliver	Co-Optee (Healthwatch Tower Hamlets)

Self-care and Prevention

- 11.6 This session aimed to improve understanding of the self-care and prevention agenda, its implementation in Tower Hamlets and residents' understanding. The Sub-committee also considered the required degree of behaviour change for residents to make an impact on health and social care sustainability.
- 11.7 Self-care can be defined as the actions residents take to address their health needs, including preventing and dealing with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental factors, socio-economic factors and self-medication. The Sub-committee was informed that promoting self-care and prevention is at the centre of the East London Health and Care Partnership vision of the future health and care system in East London.
- 11.8 The Committee was informed that there needs to be a flexible approach to supporting self-care and encouraging residents to use self-care assets. There is still significant work required to provide the community with accessible information on how to access services and help in the community. There needs to be a system-wide change in the health and social care system to promote self-care. Increased integration and the development of Tower Hamlets Together present an opportunity to drive through necessary changes.

Loneliness

- 11.9 The Sub-committee reviewed the Council's work on tackling loneliness and social isolation. Addressing loneliness was identified in the Mental Health Strategy 2013-2019 and was included as one of ten key themes in the Ageing Well strategy. It is estimated that in Tower Hamlets 16% of over 65s (2,500 residents) are likely to be lonely all or most of the time (referred to as chronic loneliness).
- 11.10 The Sub-committee received a presentation from Public Health about two projects they have delivered in the borough to address issues of loneliness. The first looked at community perspectives on loneliness. Twenty volunteers were trained in community research techniques to find out the thoughts and experiences on loneliness of six hundred residents from a wide range of backgrounds and ages. The project identified eight themes, which have an impact on loneliness, including mental health and wellbeing, physical health, feeling safe, housing conditions, family, relationships and life experiences, community activities and social networks, culture, faith and cohesion, environment and infrastructure.
- 11.11 The second project looked at loneliness in care homes. This was a befriending scheme based on mutual interests. The Sub-committee heard that this project was greatly valued by the care homes. However, due to the

need for specialist knowledge and the time and cost-related support to volunteers, it was not continued beyond the project end date.

- 11.12 In November 2017, a borough-wide stakeholder event was held to feedback the findings from both projects and made a number of recommendations to tackle the issue of loneliness and social isolation. The findings recommended that tackling loneliness should be embedded throughout Council-wide strategies.
- 11.13 The Sub-committee recommended that identifying loneliness could be incorporated into the social prescribing project and that the Council should follow the outcomes on the London-wide strategy of loneliness and explore opportunities to get involved with it. The Sub-committee would like to be updated on the developments in this area and have requested that it be included in the 2018/19 health scrutiny work programme.

Maternity Services; Scrutiny Review (progress update)

- 11.14 The Sub-committee reviewed the progress made in response to the Maternity Services scrutiny review undertaken in 2016. The scrutiny review brought together representatives from the Council, Tower Hamlets CCG, Barts Health, and community organisations to explore the quality of provision and the performance of Maternity Services in Tower Hamlets. Through listening to patient feedback the review explored the extent to which women are involved in monitoring and planning services and how accessible and responsive services are for people from different social backgrounds. The Sub-committee made a number of recommendations to improve Maternity Services in Tower Hamlets.
- 11.15 The Sub-committee heard a presentation from Alwen Williams, Chief Executive Officer of Bart's Health Trust and Kelly Jupp of the Maternity Management Team at Bart's Health. Following the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Committee in 2016, a Maternity Partnership Board was set up to address the challenges. The success of the Partnership Board was evidenced in a recent Care Quality Commission inspection, which found improvements in the following five key areas:
- safety
 - workforce
 - staff
 - partnership
 - staff wellbeing.
- 11.16 As a result of the review, the hospital has implemented an abduction policy and has installed ten secure doors and an electronic baby tag monitoring system. Moreover, the recruitment web page has been revised to include

direct contact details of the management team and list live vacancies. With regard to vacancies, there is a 94% fill rate. One midwife to twenty-eight patients and two labour ward co-ordinators have been recruited. Staff members are required to sign up to both day and night shifts. The hospital has also introduced overnight stays for partners. Finally, staff wellbeing initiatives have been introduced for the midwifery team and wider support staff including administrative workers.

Children & Young People Mental Health Service; Scrutiny Challenge Session

- 11.16 The Sub-committee reviewed the progress made on the response to the Children & Young People Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Scrutiny Challenge Session undertaken in 2016. The Challenge Session brought together representatives from the Council, Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Tower Hamlets CAMHS, and community organisations to explore the provision and performance of children and young peoples' mental health services in Tower Hamlets. The session focused on access to mental health services for service users from a wide range of backgrounds, promotion of services and gaps in current service provision. The Sub-committee made fourteen recommendations to improve CAMHS in Tower Hamlets.
- 11.17 The Council are working with Tower Hamlets CCG and the voluntary sector to strengthen early intervention services. Parent and infant emotion health and wellbeing training was delivered in 2016/17 as part of the Tower Hamlets Together training. A new integrated young people's health and wellbeing service will begin in 2018 and will target young care leavers. Moreover, a co-commissioned specialist Community Adult Mental Health Service was launched to support young people experiencing mental health issues who have been in contact with the youth justice system. Additionally, a pilot delivered by Tree4Life, trained local women in delivering mental health first aid and aims to improve cultural awareness of mental health issues. The 'Flourishing Minds' pilot was also delivered to breakdown cultural barriers and reduce stigma around mental health. The Children and Families team delivered training sessions for parents at schools to improve engagement with children and families in mental health awareness. Finally, the Council and Tower Hamlets CCG are raising awareness of mental health and available support services to all staff.

NHS Cyber Attack

- 11.18 Jackie Sullivan, Director at Royal London Hospital at Barts Health, together with Sarah Jenson, Chief Information Officer at Barts Health, provided a presentation on the cyber-attack, which took place on 12 May 2017 at the NHS Trust.

11.19 The Sub-committee heard that the NHS Trust was vulnerable to the cyber-attack due to a Microsoft Windows vulnerability as all medical equipment ran on a Windows operating system. The virus was initially discovered in the x-ray machine, followed by more calls indicating that PCs were also defective. Newham was the first site, within Barts Health, to be affected. A decision was made to shut down all technology to protect neighbouring providers and NHS systems. Work was undertaken to segregate networks and to schedule engineer visits. Service areas within Barts Health were prioritised, for example, restoring the stroke and heart centres. Systems were largely restored by 24 May 2017. Since that date, significant work has been undertaken on recovery plans. The London-wide cyber-attack increased pressure on other trauma centres, leading to 120 in-patient cancellations needing to be re-booked and seen before the end of July 2017.

Scrutiny Review; Health and Social Care Provision for Homeless Residents

11.20 The Sub-committee undertook a scrutiny review of the provision of health and social care services for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets. Homelessness is a growing and complex problem, which reaches right across health, public health, and social care. Homelessness has been a historical problem in Tower Hamlets and continues to be a pressing issue due to reforms to the welfare system, the austerity measures of the current government, rising house prices, rent and fees, and the national housing shortage leading to the unaffordability of homes.

11.21 The review aimed to develop a clear understanding of the health and social care issues experienced by homeless households in terms of outcomes and service provision with a view to informing the future commissioning and provision of health and social care services for these groups of people.

11.22 Specifically the review wanted to answer the following questions:

- What are the main barriers in providing effective health and social care for homeless residents?
- How do health outcomes for homeless residents differ from the wider population?
- What is the response to addressing the health and social care issues for these groups from local health and social care commissioners and providers?
- What more can health and social care providers do to address inequality in access and outcomes for homeless residents?

11.23 The Sub-committee held two meetings as part of this review. The first meeting invited commissioners and health and social care service providers from the NHS and the Council to inform the Sub-committee of the current services in place to support homeless households. Public Health introduced the Homeless Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which formed the context for the review. This was followed by a presentation from the CCG, East

London Foundation Trust, and Barts Health who provided an overview of the different health services and access points in place for homeless residents. Particular attention was given to the role of Health E1 and the Pathways Homeless Team at the Royal London Hospital. Tower Hamlets' Commissioning and Adult Social Care Teams then followed and provided a joint presentation of the social care services available for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets. They were supported by colleagues from Providence Row Housing Association and Lookahead, who provide hostel services for the Council.

- 11.24 The second meeting invited homeless residents and their advocates to share their experiences of accessing and using health and social care services. Presentations were received from Shelter, St Mungos, Groundswell, and homeless residents.

12. Inner North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview

- 12.1 For 2016/17 and 2017/18 Tower Hamlets held the rotating Chair of the Inner North East London (INEL) Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). This body comprises of Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Hackney, London Borough of Newham and the City of London Corporation (together with the London Borough of Waltham Forest as observers).
- 12.2 The JHOSC is tasked with scrutinising health and social care plans and/or decisions that may affect one or more member authority. Under the s.245 of the NHS Act 2006 and the Local Authority (Overview and Scrutiny Committees Health Scrutiny Functions) Regulations 2002, the JHOSC is able to refer decisions called formal 'cases for change' to the Secretary of State if taken without due consultation and engagement. The JHOSC has jurisdiction over the scrutiny of sub-regional health care planning such as the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP).
- 12.3 During 2017/18, the JHOSC met four times to scrutinise the North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), which represents a significant transformation to NHS healthcare provision at a multi-borough and sub-regional level.
- 12.4 Additionally, the JHOSC reviewed proposals for the appointment of a Single Accountable Officer (SAO) across the North East London Clinical Commissioning Groups (NEL CCG). These proposals included re-configurations of services that could have an impact on Tower Hamlets' residents and it is therefore important that JHOSC provides democratic oversight.

Membership

Name	London Borough
Councillor Clare Harrison (Chair)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Councillor Susan Masters (Vice-Chair)	London Borough of Newham
Councilman Christopher Boden (Member)	City of London Corporation
Councillor Ann Munn (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Ben Hayhurst (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Yvonne Maxwell (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Anthony McAlmont (Member)	London Borough of Newham
Councillor James Beckles (Member)	London Borough of Newham
Councillor Shiria Khatun (Member)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquim (Member)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Single Accountable Officer (SAO)

- 12.5 The JHOSC scrutinised proposals for the creation of a SAO across the seven NEL CCGs. The proposed new commissioning arrangements comprised two key aspects; the appointment of a Single Accountable Officer who will also take the STP lead role and the establishment of new shared governance arrangements to support commissioning across the North East London footprint and at an individual borough level.
- 12.6 The proposals were presented to the JHOSC by Dr Sam Everington (Chair of NHS Tower Hamlets CCG), Dr Clare Highton (Chair of NHS City & Hackney CCG) and Dr Prakash Chandra (Chair of NHS Newham CCG). Following scrutiny of the proposals, the JHOSC Members voted against endorsing the appointment of an SAO and wrote a letter to the CCG governing bodies detailing the reasons for their decision.
- 12.7 The JHOSC were concerned that this reorganisation represented a weakening of local accountability structures. While the proposal to appoint a SAO was ratified by the CCG governing bodies, the JHOSC was provided with assurances that local accountability would not be lost in the new structure and that wider consultation with key stakeholders would be carried out to test the new commissioning arrangements.

North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan

- 12.8 The JHOSC performed a number of scrutiny reviews on specific elements of the STP, including; digital enablement, mental health and workforce.
- 12.9 The JHOSC were informed that NEL STP would make better use of Information Technology to help support health and social and community care providers and meet the needs of local people. Digital technology would

enable the development of new, sustainable models of care to achieve better outcomes for patients, with a focus on prevention and out of hospital care. Specifically, as part of the STP, four work streams have been created to; address server issues at Barts Health Trust, improve how data is shared and utilised across different pathways, improve how data is pooled together with real time data, and enable patients to have access their own medical records and information.

12.10 The JHOSC scrutinised the work being undertaken to develop mental health services as part of the North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan. Officers from East London Health and Care Partnership (ELHCP) outlined that mental health is a national priority and that investment in this area is as essential as it is in acute illnesses. The STP must deliver the access and quality standards outlined in the mental health Five Year Forward View. Significantly, inner North East London has the highest level of mental illness in the country and there is an increasing demand for mental health services. The STP will allow local partners to develop solutions to the range of issues and provides an opportunity to make mental health an integral part of all the health and social care interventions provided across East London. The JHOSC were informed that delivery groups have been established for the following areas of work:

- improve population mental health and wellbeing,
- improve access to service provision and quality,
- ensure services have the right capacity to:
 - match increasing demand
 - improve mental health system outcomes and values
 - improve commissioning and delivering new models of care.

12.11 The JHOSC reviewed issues about the NHS workforce and asked for assurances that the recruitment and retention challenges and transforming the out-of-hospital workforce are being addressed. Given the population growth, there are significant gaps in supply and demand in the NHS workforce, including pockets in East London with too few doctors. In addition, the nursing workforce is migrating away due to affordable housing issues. The JHOSC were informed that workforce retention is one of ELHCPs four core priorities. Health Education England (HEE) established a Local Workforce Action Board (LWAB) for ELHCP to co-ordinate and support the workforce requirements of the STP. The national target for increasing the number of GPs is 500. Given the population demand, new roles are to be introduced into primary care including physician associates and care navigators. In secondary care, a nursing associate role will be introduced. It was noted that there has been little joined-up working with the health service

and local authorities on key worker housing. The JHOSC suggested offering workers a suite of benefits such as nursery places, housing, and training to encourage people to enter the profession.

- 12.12 In addition to deep-dive reviews, the JHOSC also scrutinised the governance arrangements of the STP, its financial strategy and challenges of the STP, the development of Accountable Care Systems, and planned changes to maternity services as part of the STP.

13. Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Chair of Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor Andrew Wood

Overview

- 13.1 This year, the Members of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-committee focused on whether the overall objectives of the grant scheme were met, based on identified need, fair geographical distribution of funding, and the range of community needs. The grant scheme aims to support an objective, fair, transparent and co-ordinated approach to grant funding across the Council.
- 13.2 The Sub-committee held six meetings and focussed on pre-decision scrutiny of the reports being presented to the Grants Determination Sub-committee. These included reports on grants awards, monitoring of grants performance, grants policy development reports and other reports requested by the Sub-committee.
- 13.3 An additional meeting was held to look at the grants monitoring GIFT system to give Members an opportunity to provide feedback and gain insight into the new system.
- 13.4 As articulated in the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, the Council is moving towards a commissioning approach. Accordingly, the Sub-committee reviewed the arrangements in place to support local organisations. The Sub-committee received a report outlining the co-production support to the voluntary sector to date for commissioned projects relating to community engagement, cohesion and resilience, and the Sub-committee have asked to receive another update further into the co-production programme.

Membership

Name	Role
Councillor Andrew Wood	Chair
Councillor Clare Harrisson	Member
Councillor Candida Ronald	Member
Councillor Ayas Miah	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquim	Member
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Member
Margherita De Cristofano	Co-opted Member
Sirajul Islam	Co-opted Member

Tower Hamlets Mayor's Air Quality Fund

13.5 This year, the Council implemented the Tower Hamlets Mayor's Air Quality Fund (THMAQF). The Sub-committee supported the recommendation to award £200,000 bid for the two year period (2017/18 and 2018/19). A significant proportion of funds will go into raising awareness about the need to improve air quality.

Renewal of Service Agreement with Mudchute Farm and Friends of TH Cemetery Park

13.6 These two facilities are an important part of the community and, although they are owned by the Council, they are managed by a charity organisation. Moreover, they fit within all the Mayoral strategic priorities.

13.7 Members commended the work carried out by the management of those facilities, and stressed how much they improve the community's quality of life.

Royal London Hospital Meanwhile Use Community Garden

13.8 The Sub-committee raised concerns that the selected location for the "Meanwhile Use Community Garden" will be located in an area which has very bad air quality and high air pollution.

13.9 It was noted that after the two year lease, there is no requirement to continue this as a community garden. The Sub-committee suggested that the Council consider life sciences development in the local plan and extend use as a community garden so that the Council's original investment is not wasted.

13.10 The report lacked information on future use of the community garden and the Council's evaluation methodology to determine whether the garden met its objectives over the two year period.

Brick Lane Regeneration Programme Phase 2- Shopfront Programme Grant Payment

13.11 The sum of £270,000 had been allocated to the Brick Lane Regeneration Programme for the shopfront regeneration to be part-funded by s106 funds and part-funded by the shopkeepers.

13.12 Members noted that Brick Lane is already an area that generates high footfall and that S106 money might be better spent on other projects but noted that more revenue was likely to benefit the area. Moreover, consideration is being given to include this area in the Business Improvement District, which could drive up revenue.

Mainstream Grants (MSG) Performance Monitoring Reports

13.13 The Sub-committee received quarterly monitoring reports of project delivery by organisations in receipt of MSG Programme funds. This included projects that were not meeting targets (rated 'red' or 'amber'). The Sub-committee sought assurance on work taking place to support these organisations and ensure targets were met. The Sub-committee also supported the extension of the current programme until March 2019 to enable co-production and move to a commissioning process.

Recreation Activities for Young People - Scrutiny Review

13.14 The Sub-committee undertook an in-depth review on opportunities offered by the Council for young people to stay active in the borough. The review links to the strategic aim of reducing childhood obesity and also the development of the Council's Physical Activity and Sports Strategy, which is currently being developed.

13.15 The Sub-committee noted from the outset that there are limited grants available for this but there are a range of projects through being delivered by the MSG Programme. The review therefore focused on activities delivered by the Council and other partner agencies and recommended maximising the use of facilities.

14. Scrutiny Lead for Place and Chair of Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee – Councillor Helal Uddin

Overview

14.1 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises housing matters impacting on residents or the borough. This includes reviewing the Council's decisions or actions, monitoring performance of service providers and holding them to account and making evidence-based recommendations for service improvements.

14.2 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee also considers matters brought to its attention by resident associations or members of the general public and is working to improve this engagement.

Work programme

14.3 This year, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee developed its annual programme, based on discussions with the Chair, Members and key

stakeholders. In determining the work programme, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee considered the priorities of the Council and registered providers and important national and local developments. In particular, the Grenfell tragedy highlighted the need for Tower Hamlets' residents to enjoy quality housing, which meets fire safety standards. The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee therefore carried out a Fire Safety Scrutiny Review.

Membership

14.4 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee has six elected Members and two co-opted Members. These are as follows:

Name	Role
Councillor Helal Uddin	Chair
Councillor John Pierce	Vice Chair
Councillor Andrew Wood	Member
Councillor Gulam Robbani	Member
Councillor Rabina Khan	Member
Councillor Shiria Khatun	Member
Anne Ambrose	Co-opted member, Tenant Representative
Moshin Hamim	Co-opted member, Leaseholder Representative

14.5 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee met quarterly and received quarterly performance reports to monitor the performance of Registered Housing Providers. The Committee Members have focused on resident satisfaction levels as a guide to the level of service provided.

14.6 The Sub-committee also conducted the following three spotlights sessions:

- Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance
- Cabinet Member for Development and Renewal
- Impact of short-term lets (eg Air BnB) in the borough.

14.7 The Sub-committee also considered how the Council is meeting the needs for temporary accommodation through its acquisition programme. In terms of new legislation, the Sub-committee also considered the Council's readiness to comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force in April 2018. The Sub-committee welcomed the preparation in place, particularly around training frontline staff and will continue to monitor the Council's activities to comply with statutory requirements and residents' needs. The Committee also considered the draft London Plan and agreed to raise issues around local housing targets, environmental considerations and feedback into the public consultation via the Housing Options' response.

14.8 A significant focus of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee this year has been fire safety. It received a presentation in July outlining the Council's response to reviewing its housing stock.

Fire Safety Scrutiny Review

14.9 Following the Grenfell tragedy, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee carried out a review of fire safety issues in residential high rises to identify gaps in current policies or practices. The review aimed to:

- Drive improvement in fire safety policies, practices and compliance in existing and new developments
- Clarify roles and responsibilities across the public and private owned high rises
- Amplify the voice and concerns of the resident tenants.

14.10 The Sub-committee held three evidence gathering sessions, which were based around the following themes:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Preventions measures
- Emergency responses
- Resident engagement.

14.11 The Review received evidence from Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Providers, the London Fire Brigade, a private developer and officers from Housing Options, Planning and Building Control, Environmental Health and Legal teams. The Review also considered residents views through written evidence from tenants associations, petitions, complaints, member's enquiries and freedom of information requests.

14.12 The Review has made fourteen recommendations around improving rapport with private developers and building owners, improving communication to local residents, lobbying Government for additional funding for retrofitting sprinkler systems and developing and reviewing performance measures in relation to fire safety.

15. Looking ahead

15.1 Scrutiny plays an important role in challenging performance and driving improvement and needs to be as effective as possible. Therefore, the Committee has formally requested a response from the Executive on the Department of Community and Local Government Select Committee review of local authorities scrutiny function. The report will be presented at the first Overview and Scrutiny Meeting of the next municipal year. This report presents an opportunity to improve how scrutiny operates in Tower Hamlets, recognising good practices and improving on these.

16. How to get involved

- 16.1 Residents can play a key role in challenging service delivery and helping to shape improvements. There are four main ways you can get involved with Tower Hamlet's overview and scrutiny processes:
- **attending Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings (or one of its sub-committees):** these are all public meetings and therefore open to any local resident who wishes to attend. Also, the Committee meetings are now live cast through the Council website.
 - **giving evidence** to the Committee or one of its sub-committees, or a review or challenge session established by one of these committees, on any issue or matter that appears on an agenda or that is being scrutinised
 - **applying to join the Overview and Scrutiny Committee** or one of its subcommittees as a co-opted member when a vacancy arises
 - **proposing topics** for scrutiny by one of the committees.
- 16.2 The Council actively seeks greater public participation in proposing topics for scrutiny through the Council's website. These topics will be considered alongside proposals from councillors to develop the work programme for the next municipal year.