

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 6.35 P.M. ON MONDAY, 25 MARCH 2019**

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

**Members Present:**

Councillor Abdal Ullah (Chair)  
Councillor Marc Francis (Vice-Chair) – Lead for Resources  
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin  
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury – Lead for Health, Adults and  
Community  
  
Councillor James King  
Councillor Kyrsten Perry  
Councillor Mohammed Pappu  
Councillor Bex White – Lead for Governance  
Councillor Andrew Wood

**Co-opted Members Present:**

Neil Cunningham – Parent Governors  
Joanna Hannan – Representative of Diocese of  
Westminster  
  
Ahmed Hussain – Parent Governors  
Fatiha Kassouri – Parent Governors  
Dr Phillip Rice – Church of England Representative  
Khoyrul Shaheed – Muslim Faith Community

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Danny Hassell – Cabinet Member for Children,  
Schools and Young People

**Apologies:**

Councillor Sufia Alam – Lead for Children's Services  
Councillor Dipa Das – Lead for Place  
Councillor David Edgar – Cabinet Member for Environment

**Officers Present:**

Adam Boey – (Senior Strategy & Policy Manager -  
Corporate)  
Richard Baldwin – (Divisional Director, Children's Social  
Care)

Sharon Godman	– (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)
Fiona Heyland	– (Head of Waste Strategy Policy and Procurement, Public Realm)
Dan Jones	– (Divisional Director, Public Realm)
Debbie Jones	– (Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Tom McCourt	– (Strategic Director)
Sunita Sharma	– Consultant
James Scott	– Communications Officer
Will Tuckley	– (Chief Executive)
Richard Williams	– Business Manager Operational PR
Sir Alan Wood	– (Chair, Children's Improvement Board)

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

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

## **2. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

### **2.1 Minutes - 25th February, 2019**

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings. Copy to sign

## **3. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

### **3.1 Children's Services Improvement - Quarterly Progress Report Quarter 3 2018/19**

The Committee received a report that provided an update on progress in delivering improvements to Children's Services in response to the report published by Ofsted in April 2017 which rated Tower Hamlets services as 'inadequate'. The main points of the discussion maybe summarised as follows.

The Committee noted that:

- The Council's Improvement plan aims to achieve a standard of 'good' in summer 2019, when it is likely to be next inspected. This it was noted was a bold aspiration but it is believed to be what the Borough's children and families deserve;
- The Council have now completed five of the six monitoring visits that Ofsted had scheduled in order to monitor the improvement journey.

The over-arching feedback by Ofsted inspectors from these Monitoring visits it was noted had been positive, with inspectors pleased with the progress made. The visit in August contained a number of specific challenges with regard to performance within the Children Looked After Service. Following this challenge it was agreed that the December monitoring visit would re-consider this area of service to check progress;

- The sixth and final monitoring visit took place on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019. This will then be followed by an independent evaluation visit as requested by the DfE that will be undertaken by the London Borough of Bexley. This learning and improvement visit will take place between 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> April 2019;
- The focus of the final Ofsted Monitoring visit was focussed on the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), Assessment and Intervention teams and Family Support and Protections services. Inspectors also reviewed the practice of these teams in terms of how the Council manages and mitigates concerns of “neglect” within families;
- The independent evaluation is likely to focus across all areas and aspects of practice, with a particular interest on how the Councils performance and quality assurance systems can provide assurance that decision making and planning remain appropriate, consistent and timely;
- Following the completion of the final Monitoring visit in March, the full re-inspection of the whole of Children’s Social Care has to take place within six months of the last monitoring visit. Therefore it is anticipated that the full re- inspection will take place between April and October 2019.
- This inspection will be under the new Ofsted's framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers;
- To minimise any risk of neglect or poor service it is important to have a consistent follow-through, which ensures that every family gets the same quality of response;
- Front line management have a key role in maintaining the Children Services grip on the pace of change at all levels;
- The political and professional leadership of the Council had demonstrated their determination to address the poor performance as highlighted by Ofsted;
- The infrastructure necessary to support a sustained improvement was in place;
- Leadership is about all staff in Children’s Services taking leadership for their roles;
- It is necessary to have consistency of good practice in the delivery of service across all levels of the service
- The Council has strong operational leadership although there is a need to ensure continuity across Children’s Services;
- To ensure they effectively scrutinise the Service improvement.
- The embedding of restorative practice continues at pace, and this is now starting to have wider impact;

- Verbal feedback from the Ofsted monitoring visit in December confirmed that the benefits of the restorative model are now being evidenced within planning and direct interactions with families;
- A visit to Leeds City Council had taken place on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> February. The focus of the visit had been to understand their journey towards embedding Restorative Practice and to identify any learning that would be helpful to support the improvement journey;
- Visit to Leeds comprised a number of staff at all levels of the organisation including the DCS, Lead Member and Divisional Director and was beneficial in supporting the implementation of Restorative Practice as well as learning from their successful improvement journey. One of the key developments from this has been the agreement for Leeds to come and deliver a workshop with the Team Managers on how Restorative Practice is embedded into everyday practice within teams;
- The Service has created a positive environment where staff are valued in what they are doing;
- The positive improvement in Children In Need Meetings (CIN) is significant as engaging with these families is challenging and remains a priority for the Council;
- Regarding the CIN the Council is on track to hit 90% of such visits and the Service is recognised as being tenacious in achieving this target;
- It is not just about arranging the visits but to ensure that when the family/professionals meet to (i) share information; (ii) identify need and (iii) agree the most effective plan. This plan must have measurable outcomes for the child identified within stated timescales;
- The Service is aiming to to achieve “Good” at the next inspection and maintaining that and then the ambition is to move onto “Outstanding”;
- It was important that there was careful scrutiny of private fostering/adoption and this would be reported to the Committee in future;
- It wanted assurances that there was no other data that they needed to undertake a thorough scrutiny of all key issues;
- Recommendations on the case reviews have been adopted as have the London Wide thresholds for Case Protection;
- Service can also provide details on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which has been strengthened and makes a real difference;
- The current detailed safeguarding arrangements were not in place in 2015;
- They needed to see comparative benchmarking data to enable robust scrutiny of the Children's Services Improvement journey. It is likely that the re-inspection will focus strongly on the theme of ‘neglect’ judging from recent Inspection outcomes;
- Service in order to fully prepare for the visit has already begun work to ensure that staff have additional training in recognising neglect, and are provided with tools and resources that will assist them to further strengthen the existing work provided in relation to “neglect”;
- Service has recently launched a pilot project in conjunction with colleagues within the Early Help Service to provide an “Integrated

Offer” for families at risk of neglect; This work it was noted will link dedicated Social Workers, Children’s Centres and schools together to address neglect concerns at an early stage of identification;

- Pilot starts with the cluster of schools in the North-East of the Borough and will then be rolled out into other areas. The Chair indicated that he would wish to see details of the Pilot;
- Numbers of agency staff with the Assessment and Intervention Team have decreased from 49% to 33% which is significant as recruitment to such teams is challenging;
- Major challenge for the Council going forward would be to sustain the level of funding in the years ahead; and
- Chair indicated that he wished to see a report on Education and Aspirations within the Borough.

The Chair Moved and it was:-

### **RESOLVED**

The Committee welcomed the report and looked forward to receiving reports on the

1. “Integrated Offer” for families at risk of “neglect”; and
2. Education and Aspirations within the Borough.

## **4. SPOTLIGHT SESSION**

### **4.1 Street Cleanliness and Waste Collection and Recycling**

The Committee received and noted a presentation from Tom McCourt (Strategic Director) and Dan Jones Divisional Director, Public Realm on Street Cleanliness and Waste Collection and Recycling within Tower Hamlets. The main points of the presentation are outlined below:

The Committee:

- Noted that Councillor Dipa Das the Scrutiny Lead for Place is involved in regular briefings with the Directorate Team on the progress Street Cleanliness and Waste Collection and Recycling within Tower Hamlets;
- Noted that waste reduction is an important issue in terms of both preserving the global environment and alleviating the burden on incinerators and other waste disposal facilities;
- Was advised that the aim is to minimize waste generation, maximize recycling of wastes that are generated, and properly dispose of wastes that cannot be recycled;
- Noted with regards to litter; fly tipping and enforcement in Tower Hamlets it is acknowledge residents all want to enjoy safe clean streets. Therefore, should residents require help with enforcement due

to irresponsible behaviour by others they can contact the Council's Street Care Team;

- Noted that due to the wide diversity of properties within Tower Hamlets it is necessary to have different recycling containers and collection methods (i) Houses or houses converted into flats: recycling is usually collected in clear sacks or from a purple wheelie bins from the kerbside each week; (ii) Estate or block of flats mostly have purple communal bins in the bin store area or within the grounds; and (iii) Flats above shops the recycling is normally collected in clear sacks from the kerbside;
- Noted that it is against the law to allow a dog to foul in a public place and make no attempt to clean up after it. If caught owners can face a Fixed Penalty Fine;
- Noted that that dog fouling is a concern for many residents on housing estates and that whilst there are various means available to housing providers to take action against dog owners who allow their dogs to defecate on estates there is concern that not every provider is robust in their response;
- Was reminded that the Mayor in Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 had agreed that an in-house waste collection, recycling and street cleansing service should be created to "improve services for residents" from 1 April 2020;
- Noted that the Council's existing contract with waste management firm Veolia is due to end at that time;
- Noted that Tower Hamlets' population is projected to increase by almost 60,000 in the next decade to 370,000, almost twice as fast as the London average. Therefore, a growing population means increased demand on waste service and bringing services in-house will deliver a better service to both residents and businesses;
- Noted that there is a need to educate residents, landlords and businesses in regards to what actually constitutes fly-tipping, and many people may be fly-tipping without realising it;
- Was advised that certain fly-tipping behaviours are seen as more socially acceptable by perceptions of 'helping others out', for example leaving an item out for someone else to reuse;
- Noted that there is a lack of understanding by residents, landlords and businesses about the impacts of fly-tipping and many see the behaviour as low impact and low cost;
- Was informed that there is an expectation that some residents, landlords and businesses seem to think that fly-tipped items will be collected quickly and without repercussions; this reinforces perceptions that fly-tipping is 'low impact';
- Noted that the recycling rates from flats can differ and will not be comparable to those for kerbside collections. In addition, there are additional barriers that can prevent people living in flats from easily recycling, such as limited storage space and the ease with which materials can be transported to a collection point;

- Noted that the Council are working with Tower Hamlets Homes and the Peabody Housing Association to address such issues with their tenants and residents;
- Noted that a new recycling improvement and engagement team is being set up to deliver recycling initiatives with schools and support residents to reduce waste, reuse items where possible and recycle more;
- Recognised that effective monitoring of the performance of the waste, recycling and cleansing contract is an essential first step to identifying ways to improve;
- Noted that those staff are responding to the changes in a positive fashion;
- Noted that there will need to be an effective dialogue with residents, landlords and businesses regarding education, advice and enforcement action to deal with environmental offences. In addition action is required with parking to deal with regular obstruction of access for collection crews; and
- Agreed that with regard to the existing contract this needs to be managed very effectively in the months ahead.

The Chair Moved and it was:-

### **RESOLVED**

The Committee welcomed the report and looked forward to receiving updates on the development of Street Cleansing; Waste Collection and Recycling within Tower Hamlets.

## **4.2 Chief Executive**

The Committee received and noted a verbal presentation from Will Tuckley, Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Council on the Council's performance and future direction. The main points of the discussion maybe outlined as follows:

The Committee

- Noted that the appalling terror attack which took place in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15th March 2019, had left the community feeling vulnerable;
- Noted that a number of vigils had been held at mosques, to show support and solidarity to Muslim communities around the world and that the solidarity of the community whilst reassuring cannot be taken for granted;
- Recognised that while many aspects of life for British Muslims have improved in recent years instances of Islamophobia and hate attacks on Muslims remain a continuing issue;
- Acknowledged that whilst the Christchurch attacks targeted Muslims, other minority groups face attack too, at different times and in different ways, but we note that there have been a number of attacks on places of worship of different faiths in recent years;

- Indicated that they supported the multi-agency partnerships intention to facilitate access to the Counter Terrorism Programmes Fund;
- Noted Mayor Biggs has continued to be active in developing a positive dialogue with the community and partners since the terror attack which took place in Christchurch;
- Welcomed the fact that the Council has already in dialogue on protective security arrangements prior to the events in Christchurch, to ensure that they are properly designed;
- Noted that whilst trust by staff on the qualitative and quantitative leadership from management had been questioned by staff, it has now improved at every level based on staff's experience;
- Recognised that many areas where the Council would wish to achieve outcomes are challenging and all targets are achieved there is a need to ensure that these targets are not too low;
- Was reminded that as part of the budget setting report at the beginning of 2018, the Council had adopted a set of eleven new corporate outcomes grouped under three priorities. This was the first step on moving the Council to becoming a much more outcome-based organisation which focuses on making a difference to people's lives;
- Noted that when developing the new plan, the Council had reviewed and revised its set of strategic performance indicators with the aim of measuring the impact of its work on residents' lives. The review had resulted in a set of more outcome focused performance measures;
- Recognised that schools are a vital part of the local community and the Council is aware of pressures and strains upon them;
- Noted that the Council in partnership with local Schools have the collective interest of the Borough in common and will look to address any breakdown in that relationship;
- Indicated that it wished to have the opportunity to carefully review the Councils performance indicators as it was noted that performance 41% of targets agreed had been achieved; (i) 15 red; (ii) 5 amber; and (iii) 17 green;
- Noted with interest the proposals outlined under Tower Rewards including (i) changes to terms and conditions; (ii) benefits to support staff and (iii) rewarding excellence whilst embedding the TOWER values.
- Was informed that it an important discussion for the Council to have regarding Tower Rewards which is a challenging task but management is working to achieve an effective dialogue with the staff;
- Commented that they wished to see that the implementation of changes to terms and conditions in local schools to be undertaken in a consistent fashion;
- In commenting on the recommendations of the Select Committee on the effectiveness of scrutiny committees had indicated that scrutiny members (i) should have access to financial and performance data held by an authority; and (ii) that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity. The Committee wished to have the opportunity to have regular oversight of the implementation of these recommendation;

- Recognised that the Select Committee has provided much food for thought and the Select Committee model does not always fit well in the local government model. However, the Council are happy to refresh the view of the Select Committee and how to use that as a basis to develop scrutiny in Tower Hamlets;
- Noted that whilst sickness absence is gone from 10.5% per year from 10.9% but needs more work to bring this down to local government accepted averages;
- Noted that the sickness is down to stress; depression; and muscular skeletal issues needed them to support staff as, as fit and healthy as they can be;
- Was informed that management is working with the Trades Unions on sickness policy and are considering in putting in place systems so that staff can call on a nurse to talk about their conditions and the struggles that they are facing and address any loss of productivity;
- Agreed that it needs to consider where residents are dissatisfied in service delivery and to critically part on how the Council relates to local people.

The Chair Moved and it was:-

### **RESOLVED**

The Committee

Welcome the presentation from the Chief Executive and look forward to developing the positive dialogue with the Council's Corporate Leadership.

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

### **5.1 Communications Challenge Session Report 2018- 2019**

The Committee received a report on the report recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of the council's communications with residents. The discussions on the report is summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted the Divisional Directors for Strategy Policy and Performance and Communications and Marketing are working together to ensure that the recommendations are taken forward in a joined up fashion; and
- Commented that recommendation 8 should be amended to say that "the Council appoint a named lead Member for communications.

As a result of discussions on the report the Chair moved and it was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Committee welcomed the recommendation's contained within the report and agreed that any specific comments should be referred to the

Chair and Councillor Bex White the Scrutiny Lead for Governance for further consideration.

**6. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS**

The Committee was advised that no requests to submit any petition's had been received for consideration at this meeting.

**7. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG  
2019/20**

Item deferred

**8. CABINET FORWARD PLAN & WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The Committee received and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and agreed that it wish to look at the development of a compliant and transparent Public Space CCTV system in Tower Hamlets.

**9. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

The Committee was advised that no unrestricted reports had been "called in".

**10. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS**

**Councillor Marc Francis Scrutiny Lead for Resources** informed the Committee that there would be a Scrutiny Challenge session on Customer Access /One Stop Shops after the Easter Holidays.

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

Nil items

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

**12.1 Rough Sleeping Initiative 2019/20**

The Chair informed the Committee that the Mayor on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2019 had taken an Individual Mayoral Decision to agree the Local Authority's Rough Sleeping Initiative for 2019/20.

The Chair stated that due to the urgency of this particular decision he had after briefing from officers agreed to this decision being exempt from call-in.

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

As 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.

**14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items

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

Nil items

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

Nil items

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

Nil items

The meeting ended at 9.25 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdal Ullah  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee