

Scrutiny Action Log 2020-21

Overview and Scrutiny Committee outstanding actions from 2020-21

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
14/12 Meeting	<p><u>Covid -19 Update</u></p> <p>1. The committee requested clarification as to why E1 Health Centre and White Chapel Health Centre were exempt or not participating in the Vaccination 1st Wave Site for Tower Hamlets</p>	Somen Banerjee & Denise Radley	OSC Chair		<p>As these two practices had at that time submitted an application to run a PCN vaccine centre in Cable Street, they were not part of the overall Tower Hamlets collaborative. In early January the two practices joined the collaborative and set up the Cable Street vaccination street site as part of that, participating in the programme.</p>
01/03 Meeting	<p><u>Budget Monitoring Report as at 31.12.2020 (period 9)</u></p> <p>1. The Committee wants more detail information on delivery target for Legal (as part of the savings tracker) and what this means</p>	Janet Fasan	OSC Chair	Response received 28.06.2021	<p>The 100k savings target for 21/22 is being achieved through a number of avenues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Team reducing their reliance on Case Lines by being early adopters of the Family Public Law Project starting in April 2021, £15k saving. Cancellation of the DX postal service during the 1st quarter of the year, £9k saving. Numerous small cuts in spend on several items such as printing, courier services, advertising and stationery, totalling £21k. The deletion of one post in the enforcement team resulting in £55K saving. <p>As well as reducing spend the department is looking to increase income in respect to external legal costs. No LBTH services will be affected with the proposed increase.</p> <p>In line with the corporate ICT strategy of moving to cloud hosted systems the department will be further developing its use of digital solutions to further increase productivity and reduce staff downtime with IT issues. These include a review of the departments aging case management system.</p>

					Finally, to reduce pressures on salary budgets savings will be delivered through not recruiting to a vacant role, unless statutory or if the post has the potential to be self-funding.
22/03 Meeting	<u>New Town Hall</u> 1. To provide the Committee with further details on the updated financial business case for the New Town Hall.	Ann Sutcliffe & Yasmin Ali	OSC Chair	Latest update received on 21.06.2021	The review is progressing and is currently with the council's finance team. Officers will aim to confirm the final draft by the end of July 2021 through discussion with New Town Hall Board. Once the business case is approved via the governance process, Officers will agree the timeline to share with the O&S committee (Aug/Sep 2021).
22/03 Meeting	<u>Budget Monitoring as at 31.12.2020 (period 9) follow up:</u> 1. The Committee wants more information on HRA Approve Capital Programme -projected overspend - full breakdown of budget against each capital programme projects for consideration	Ann Sutcliffe & Jane Abraham	OSC Chair & SL for H&ASSC		Information has been published within June 2021 Cabinet Papers item 6.4 titled Additions to the Approved Capital Programme 2021-22 to 2023-24 See Cabinet papers for full information.
	2. A copy of the Savills Report (Cited in the MTFS)	Rupert Brandon	OSC Chair & SL for H&ASSC	Response received on 25.06.2021	Discussions have been taking place between senior officers about the best way to present the Savills information to O&S Committee. There are two main challenges in presenting the information out of context. Firstly, the report was received as a working paper last June as a means to assist the S.151 Officer set the HRA's borrowing capacity and its reserve and from this to help us develop a strategy . Since then there have been dozens of tweaks and recasting of assumptions for the HRA Business Plan that were not in the report. The position has moved on since we received it. As such there is no final report ready to be released as it's a work in progress.

Scrutiny Action Log 2021-22

					<p>Secondly, we feel that it would aid members if officers took them through the report to explain it. We have a slides presentation, which itself has changed many times over the last year and been shared in various iterations with Cabinet Members at a number of meetings to illustrate the HRA's financial position. This reflects the current position that is not evident in the report.</p> <p>As a result, we suggest that officers attend a closed session with O&S to guide them through the report as it is and slides and importantly explain the implication of investment decisions and the challenges that the HRA faces.</p>
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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
24/05 Meeting	1. <u>BAME inequalities Commission Report</u> Note to be provided to O&S Committee on details of any allegations (individual claims of discrimination) presented to the Commission and how this has been taken forward.	Sharon Godman	OSC Chair	28/06	See attached appendix 1 for response
	2. <u>Air Quality Action Plan Report</u> Add an air quality monitoring station for the Council's Blackwall Depo due to Euro 6 Vehicle emission standards in the area (as part of Air Quality Report Recommendation)	Dan Jones & Dave Tolley	OSC Chair	28/06	Set up an air quality monitoring station for the Council's Blackwall Depot due to Euro 6 Vehicle emission standards in the area. This to take the form of an additional NOx tube to be included near the depot site. Completion date: 31 Aug 2021

Tower Hamlets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Commission Call-in**Briefing for OSC****1. Introduction**

- 1.1. At the OSC meeting on 24th May 2021 and in response to a call-in on the BAME Inequality Commission the Committee requested a written briefing on the second alternative course of action proposed by the call-in members which stated that:

'For an Independent panel to be formed to investigate the allegations of racial discrimination made to the Commission. And for the Panel to report its findings to the full council'.

- 1.2. The Commission was set up in September 2020 to hear the lived experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. The Commission organised 6 focus groups which were attended by 87 local people and included the following:

- Focus group with teachers
- Focus group with school governors
- Focus group with young people
- Focus group with health and social care users
- Focus group with employees from a range of sectors
- Focus group with BAME Women

- 1.3 It is understood that call-in proposal relates to the focus group held with schoolteachers and details of this is set out below.

2. Schoolteachers Focus Group

Thanks for this. I think we should be clearer on the allegations made in the schools meeting. Firstly, I would reiterate that this wasn't a forum with powers to look into allegations, however if allegations were made and we knew who the individuals are we ensured that it went to the relevant places. Other than that, I think its fine.

- 2.1. The Commission held a focus group meeting with 11 BAME schoolteachers. Participants commented that they were uncomfortable revealing their identity and asked to remain anonymous. They did not switch their cameras on for the meeting, provided alias name names and did not mention which school they worked in. As the meeting was convened to hear the lived experience it did not have power to investigate individual allegations. However, if allegations were made and the identity of individuals were known the Commission would have ensured it went to the relevant places. At the focus group the participants raised a number of points:

- Many teachers commented this was first time they were able to speak openly about race equality and appreciated the work of the Commission to create this space;
- lack of representation of BAME schoolteachers at a senior level to match the ethnic profile of pupils.
- There are schools in Tower Hamlets who have predominately White, upper middle-class leadership team for years and have refused to become more diverse.
- Teachers provided Commissioners with a number of statistics (attached), namely:
 - 92.9% Headteachers are white
 - 89.7% of deputies and assistant headteachers are white (*School teacher workforce – Official govt. statistics*)
- *In Tower Hamlets:*
 - 66.8% of students from British Bangladeshi background
 - 48% of teachers from minority ethnic groups (*School Census*)
 - BAME leaders e.g. head of year, are often told to go down the pastoral route which makes it more complicated to get promoted.

Appendix 1

- They are also told to ‘give it a few more years, you’re not ready yet, go and do a bit more training’.
- At the same time, new teachers, who are often White and less experienced, are brought in and they get promoted into deputy and assistant head roles within a couple of years of teaching.
- Ethnic stereotyping was identified as a prevalent barrier. BAME teachers have similar aspirations and qualifications but experience workplace discrimination and stereotyping acts as a barrier.
- One reported that when she started to wear a headscarf, she overheard colleagues saying ‘there goes her job prospects’.
- There are informal networks which are interfering with recruitment decisions and restricting BAME people from being promoted.
- Recruitment panels are often made up of White men, and even the Governing bodies made up of White people, which also acts as a barrier. It was felt that many school governors are handpicked for being pro headteacher and the process needs to be more transparent.
- These issues have impacted teacher retention. Demotivated and disgruntled BAME staff are looking for opportunities outside the borough. It was felt that this will result in the borough losing out on talented BAME staff who have helped improve schools and education outcomes across the borough.

2.2 Page 51 of the Commission’s report sets out a summary of some of the issues raised with the Commission and teachers experience in Tower Hamlets.

3. School Governors

- 3.1. The Commission also held a focus group meeting with 24 school governors to discuss their pathways into their position and the challenges they face.
- 3.2. Some Governors reported that there is a clear lack of equal support and recognition compared to their White counterparts. People from BAME communities need greater support and encouragement to engage as some consider themselves as parents and not black leaders. Many also reported that parents are not aware of the importance of being a school governor or indeed what this entails. There are also poor institutional practices which can be difficult to recognise because they can be subtle and manipulative. Some governing boards are run with a leadership style which excludes BAME people and where there are BAME governors they are only seen as a ‘tokenistic’ voice.
- 3.3. It was felt that further work is needed to encourage greater diversity in school governors, and people need to be empowered to become allies and create effective networks with these communities. It was felt that it is more difficult for BAME people to be recruited to the governing boards of secondary schools. The lack of representation in school governors and amongst teacher has an impact on children’s aspirations. Many people disengage from education system because they do not see themselves in the curriculum often enough.

4. Action taken with these feedback

- 4.1 As noted in paragraph 2.1 all teachers that participated in the online ‘Teams’ event chose to do so by keeping their cameras turned off and without revealing either their identity or that of the school they taught at. This made it difficult to follow-up directly with either specific individuals or their schools.
- 4.2 A summary of the issues raised during this session has been shared with the Council’s Corporate Director of Children’s and Families. The council is working with schools to develop a jointly owned action plan to improve BAME representation amongst school leadership and governors across the borough. A draft action plan will be discussed at the Heads Executive meeting on 23 June, and we anticipate it will be endorsed by all schools at the Schools Consultative meeting on 30 June. Current proposals incorporate building robust baseline data, senior leadership programmes for BAME staff, support for anti-racist approaches to teaching and learning, and a recruitment drive and rollout of best practice guidance in governor recruitment to attract skilled governors from BAME backgrounds.

Scrutiny Action Log 2021-22

- 4.2 The Commission's report has also been discussed with the Children's and Families and Partnership Board setting out the findings. Discussions are also underway with school's representative on how they can take forward the Commission's recommendations including signing-up to the pledge to be an anti-racist organisation.