

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23



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I am pleased to introduce this year's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) annual report 2022-23. This provides a summary of the activities undertaken by OSC and its Sub-Committees.

With a new political administration in place since May 2022, who began the year by setting new strategic goals and ambitions for the council, such as tackling the cost-of-living crisis as many residents continue to face a squeeze on living standards and high inflation and high energy costs, OSC and its Sub-Committees focused its scrutiny on areas of strategic priority to ensure resident concerns were reflected.

Significantly, we reviewed the council's proposed budget 2023-24 that sets out an ambitious plan to protect residents in time of hardship, fund the delivery of key services and introduce investments to support social and local economic change.

OSC held key scrutiny spotlights on issues such as the challenges around waste services and level of recycling in the borough. We held a spotlight with the new borough commander, and examined his priorities focussing on some of the issues that residents have raised such as women's safety and seeking reassurance how the police

Chair's Foreword

intends to rebuild the relationship with the community.

OSC reviewed budget and policy items and fed into policy development, including Youth Justice Annual Plan and council's statutory responsibility on Gambling Policy.

We also held spotlights on Customer Services, reviewing the progress and improvements made to date.

We focussed on the environment and held a spotlight Climate Emergency and Street and Parks Cleanliness. As part of ongoing governance, we reviewed the progress of service action plans on air quality, swimming provision in the borough and parking.

Our committee has developed a short film to present some of the highlights that the OSC and its scrutiny Sub-Committees focused on. I encourage you all to view this film and find out more about our work and how you can get involved in Scrutiny.

<https://tinyurl.com/Scrutiny-Annual-Report-2022-23>

Finally, I'd like to thank my committee Members, officers and partners who have contributed and supported scrutiny during the year. I hope this report helps you to understand the work and value of scrutiny.



**Cllr Musthak Ahmed, Chair of
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**





Highlights

- 25 Scrutiny Meetings (including Sub-Committees)
- 24 Scrutiny Spotlights
- 3 Scrutiny Reviews and 2 Challenge Sessions
- 2 Call ins
- 28 OSC Action requests
- 37 Recommendations across all Committees
- 3 Tracking recommendations reports
- Site visits included Bywaters Materials Recycling Facility, Food Banks in Tower Hamlets, Refuge for Domestic Violence Victims, Care leavers Through Care Services and Foster Carers, GP practices and Royal London Hospital,

Scrutiny of Council's Budget

OSC made the following recommendations to the Mayor In Cabinet consideration:

Recommendation 1 Devise a financial strategy that delivers a sustainable budget without the need to rely on reserves

Recommendation 2 Provide the pro formas detailing growth and saving proposals in sufficient time for OSC to review as part of its budget scrutiny

Recommendation 3 Explore increasing Education Maintenance Allowance for those children above the threshold – even if only temporary during the cost-of-living crisis

Recommendation 4 Review funding arrangements for Resident Support Scheme.

For more details on the scrutiny of the council's budget and to read the full report please see below:

[OSC budget scrutiny report 2023-24](#)





Key Activities

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CESSC) held several spotlights focusing on improvements for Youth Justice Service, plans to help increase educational attainment, and reviewed the council's progress against the statement of action for the SEND Inspection in 2021

The Sub-Committee also reviewed the performance of Youth Provision and increasing capacity for girls.

The Sub-Committee also undertook a number of site visits through the year to better understand the key issues and challenges of the borough. This included visiting local schools, meeting care leavers, foster carers for social care demand and SEND young people.

The Sub-Committee held a scrutiny challenge session which considered how the council and its partners can improve

women and girls' access and participation with sports and physical activities in the borough.

The committee made the six following recommendations on community engagement, affordability, campaign and publicity, female friendly infrastructure, quality monitoring and intelligence capture and audit and women and girls' safe routes to sports provision and physical Activities.

For more details on the scrutiny of the scrutiny challenge session see below:

[CESSC Report on Increasing Women and Girls' Access and Participation with Sports and Physical Activities in the Borough](#)

Committee



**Cllr Bodrul Choudhury,
Chair of Children and
Education Scrutiny Sub-**





Key Activities

The Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee (HASSC) held several spotlights including Integrated Care Systems delivery plans, improving access to GP services, and the performance of Adult Oral and Dental Health. Reviewing Black Asian Multi-Ethnic inequalities on access to mental health services.

The Sub-Committee also undertook a scrutiny review examining the issues around work force shortages across the health and care workforce sector in the borough and identified several issues including:

- The impact of cost of living and the pressures on doctors, nurses and other health professionals
- Recruitment processes often being bureaucratic Ageing workforce and the perceptual challenges of the sector not having parity particularly in social care
- A lack of clear data on workforce

projections required to meet the demand

- Lack of collaboration between the health and local education establishments to promote careers with the health sector
- Communications campaigns used to drive recruitment and engage the community with opportunities

The Sub-Committee also undertook a number of visits to GP services to understand the issues with access to appointments. Members also engaged with ASC practice week to understand hospital discharging services.

The Sub-Committee was also represented at

quarterly Inner Northeast London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (INEL JHOSC), reviewing some of the regional issues faced

including ones that impact Tower Hamlets such as the workings of the Integrated Care System and its decision making.

For more details on scrutiny review:

[HASSC Scrutiny Review on Workforce Shortages Across the Health and Care Sector](#)



**Cllr Ahmodur Khan,
Chair of Health and
Adults Scrutiny Sub-
Committee**





Key Activities

The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee (HRSSC) focussed their attention on reviewing the approach and support for homeless applications, and held spotlights covering topics such as parking on estates, approach to regeneration, Change in Private Sector Tenants rights and Developing a new local plan

The HRSSC held a scrutiny challenge session which considered the proposed consultation to bring housing management service back in house.

The challenge session help to identify the following recommendations:

The term ' tenancy' be added before conditions to make It clear to residents that there will be no change to their

tenancy conditions

All questions to be asked of residents should include the options of a third possible response either: ' Don't know' Not sure or 'Undecided'

That the Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) should emphasise the accountability for continuous improvement of service delivery in the new proposals,

that consultation with the staff of THH will need to be part of this process and to get the most out of the consultation, the council should consider using telephone surveys to garner residents' views.

More details on the challenge session report findings is below: [THH Consultation Challenge Session](#)

Clr Abdul Mannan Chair of Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee





Scrutiny Lead for Finance and Resources

Key Activities

The economic downturn had a profound impact on residents already impacted by rising energy prices, inflation and cost of living crisis.

As scrutiny lead for Finance and Resources, I held a scrutiny review on food insecurity in the borough.

The review focussed on understanding the extent to which food poverty is affecting residents and contributing factors,

Also considered current food model provisions and accessibility, and how sustainable the council's plans to tackle the issues are. The review led, itself to engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, including those who received support from food banks. It also offered opportunity to undertake site visits to understand the context and demand.

The scrutiny review led to the following

themes for recommendations:

- Improving communication on support provisions, developing an up to date, directory of accessible services
- Make longer term funding commitment for LBTH food hubs.
- Support growth and sustainability of independent food aid networks
- Develop dignified approaches to access food
- Opening up food aid provisions in evening and weekends
- Improving quality of secondary school food provision
- Work with foodbanks to improve nutritional value
- Improving residents' employment opportunities to better employment
- Develop relations to private sector

to secure funding to tackle food insecurity

More details on the Scrutiny review report:

[Scrutiny Review: Understanding the impact of food insecurity on residents and review whether the council and its partners response to tackling food poverty is effective and sustainable](#)



Cllr Sabina Khan
Scrutiny Lead for
Finance and Resources





Key Activities

As the scrutiny lead for Environment and Community Safety, I carried out a number of estate walkabouts with the cabinet lead member and local police to understand some of the key issues on community safety

Over the last few years women safety has come to light becoming a significant issue for the borough

I held a scrutiny review, examining the level of provision and support for women safety, this included undertaking a site visit to one of the main women's refuge to better understand some of the challenges and barriers that victims of domestic abuse and violence (DV) face

The scrutiny review considered the level of support for DV victims as this was significantly reported to the police in Tower Hamlets

The review also considered some of the challenges women face in feeling safe in public spaces and with the night-time economy

The review led to a few recommendations and include areas such as:

- Increasing school' capacity on raising DV awareness and available support
- Review current funding arrangements and increase capacity to support women's group
- Greater collaboration to improve women awareness programmes and support available for street safety
- Improve provision for women self defence
- Police to target its recruitment and retention focusing on representation

- Council and RSL to collaborate on women safety issues on RSL estates
- Councillors supporting and promoting and championing 'more male allies' agenda



Cllr Abdul Malik
Scrutiny Lead for
Environment and
Community Safety

