

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 4 APRIL 2006

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

Members Present:

Councillor Alan Amos (Chair)
Councillor Louise Alexander
Councillor Simon Rouse
Councillor A A Sardar (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Julian Sharpe
Councillor Marian Williams
(none)

Other Councillors Present:

(none)

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr C Iyobhebhe – Parent Governor Representative
Mr H Mueenuddin – Muslim Community Representative
Reverend Prebendary R Swan – Church of England Representative

Guests Present:

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Officers Present:

Suki Binjal – (Acting Head of Standards, Legal Services)
Michael Keating – (Service Head, Research & Scrutiny)
Alan Steward – (Policy Scrutiny Manager)
Sara Williams – (Assistant Chief Executive)

Tim Hogan – (Democratic Services)
Beverley McKenzie – (Members' Services Manager)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Julia Mainwaring and Salim Ullah. Apologies for absence were also submitted on

behalf of Mr D. McLaughlin, the representative of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Westminster. Apologies for lateness were submitted on behalf of Councillor Simon Rouse. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the apologies for absence and lateness be noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

The Chair informed the meeting Reverend Swan was retiring and this was his last meeting as the representative of the Church of England. The Chair thanked him for his attendance and contributions and wished him well for the future. Reverend Swan informed the meeting that he had enjoyed his time on the Committee, he went on to thank the Chair for his sentiments and wished Members all the best for the future.

3. SECTION ONE MINUTES - 7TH MARCH , 2006

The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the Section One Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 7th March 2006 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

There were no requests to submit deputations.

5. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

No requests to submit petitions had been received.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

There were no Section One reports 'Called In' for consideration from the 8th March 2006 Cabinet meeting.

7. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Tower Hamlets Index and Strategic Plan - Monitoring Report

The report was introduced by Sara Williams, Assistant Chief Executive. Ms Williams noted that the overall level of crime was down in the borough,

however there had been a rise in vehicle crime and steps were being taken to address this.

Ms Williams went on to respond to a series of detailed questions put by Members. Disappointment was expressed at the failure to meet the recycling target. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7.2 Members' Enquiries

The report was introduced by Sara Williams, Assistant Chief Executive. Ms Williams confirmed that performance following the introduction of the new software and monitoring mechanisms had much improved. Ms Williams went on to respond to a series of questions put by Members. Councillor Sharpe suggested that future reports should include comparative data on service areas. Ms Williams agreed to circulate this data to all Committee Members and to include it in future in the six monthly monitoring reports to Committee. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

1 That the current support surrounding the Members' Enquiries and the implementation of the new system be noted; and

2 That the improvement in timeliness of responding to Members' Enquiries be noted.

7.3 "Let's Not Wait for 35": Report of the Domestic Violence Scrutiny Working Group

The report was introduced by Councillor A.A Sardar, Scrutiny Lead Living Safely and working group chair, who detailed the process by which the report had been drawn up. He went to acknowledge that domestic violence was an important issue and the report sought to raise awareness. The working group had met service users and providers as well as a number of victims of domestic violence.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sardar and his colleagues for producing a very useful report. Councillor Sharpe suggested that the issue of overcrowding arising from domestic violence was a factor that needed to be addressed in the report. Councillor Williams welcomed the report and suggested that a hotline card for domestic violence should be produced and made widely available. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

1 That the draft report of the Domestic Violence Scrutiny Working Group: 'Let's not wait for 35' be endorsed.

2 That authority be delegated to the Service Head, Research and Scrutiny in consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Living Safely to agree the final report prior to its submission to Cabinet.

7.4 Report of the School Exclusions Scrutiny Working Group

In welcoming the report the Chair stressed the important role played by parents and noted that exclusions had a part to play in the management of pupils. Councillor Louise Alexander, Scrutiny Lead for Learning, Achievement and Leisure, introduced the report and responded to a number of questions put by Members of the Committee and also acknowledged the difficulties created by uncooperative parents. It was suggested that the meaning of the acronym 'THIS' should be explained in full in the text. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

1 That the draft report of the School Exclusions Scrutiny Working Group be endorsed.

2 That authority be delegated to the Service Head, Research and Scrutiny in consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Learning, Achievement and Leisure to agree the final report prior to submission to Cabinet.

7.5 Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2005/2006

The report was introduced by the Chair who went on to suggest a number of topics for inclusion in the Committee's 2006/07 work programme -

- The use of consultants by the Authority
- The operation of the Planning Enforcement Regime
- Consultation by the Authority on planning applications and the Local Development Framework

Mr Steward indicated that if Members had any additional comments on the report they could be forwarded to him. The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

1 That the Committee's comments be noted.

2 That authority be delegated to the Service Head, Research and Scrutiny in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the relevant Scrutiny Leads to agree the final report prior to its submission to full Council.

8. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

This item was subsumed into other existing items on the Committee's agenda.

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

Two questions relating to Item 10.4 - Disposal of Cheviot House (CAB201/056) of the Cabinet meeting to be held on 5th April 2006 were tabled by Councillor Louise Alexander for consideration by the Committee. Following legal advice from Ms Binjal, the Committee agreed to accept the questions as detailed but due to their content requested that they be referred to Cabinet for response in the exempt part of its proceedings.

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

There was no business raised under this heading.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair MOVED and it was:-

RESOLVED

That, under the provisions of Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business as listed in the order of business for the meeting on the grounds that it contained information considered to be exempt as detailed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended.

SUMMARY OF SECTION TWO PROCEEDINGS

12 – Restricted Minutes – 7th March 2006.

Agreed as a correct record

13 –Section Two Reports 'Called In'

There were no Section Two reports 'Called In' from the 8th March 2006 Cabinet meeting.

14 – Pre-decision scrutiny of Section Two Cabinet Papers

There was no business under this heading considered.

15 – Any other Section Two Business that the Chair considers urgent.

There was no business under this heading considered.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.12 pm

Councillor Alan Amos
Chair, Overview and
Scrutiny Committee.

12. RESTRICTED MINUTES

13. SECTION TWO REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

14. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF SECTION TWO (RESTRICTED) CABINET PAPERS

15. ANY OTHER SECTION TWO (RESTRICTED) BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT