

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2012

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

Members Present:

Councillor Ann Jackson (Chair)
Councillor Rachael Saunders (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Helal Uddin

Co-opted Members Present:

Rev James Olanipekun – (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers Present:

David Galpin – (Head of Legal Services (Community), Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
Michael Keating – (Service Head, One Tower Hamlets)
Andy Bamber – (Service Head Safer Communities, Communities, Localities & Culture)
Peter Hayday – (Interim Service Head, Financial Services, Risk and Accountability)
Antonella Burgio – (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Amy Whitelock.

The Committee noted, Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Choudhury's apologies and his invitation to the Chair to meet informally to respond to any further questions.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interests were made.

3. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 General Fund Capital and Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012-15 (Revised Proposals)

The Committee received a summary of the amended budget proposals 2012-13 based on the decisions of Cabinet at its meeting on 8 February 2012.

The Committee noted Councillor Choudhury's apologies and his invitation to the Chair to meet informally to respond to any further questions.

Funding for Proposed Alternative Options:

Funding for Alternative Options (a) to (f) agreed by Cabinet was based on the resources identified by the Corporate Director, Resources. Details were circulated at Appendix 1 of the report.

Peter Hayday, the Service Head, Financial Services, Risk and Accountability, explained the decisions made by Cabinet on 8 February.

There was a difference between the sum published for proposal (e) which was due to a rounding up of the sum for the delivery of ESOL classes; actual funding for this proposal was £245,000.

Further clarity was provided on proposal (f) as follows:

- £1.3 million from Area Based Grant reserves which were currently unallocated and could be used for other matters
- £100,000 from Partnership monies previously earmarked to fund redundancies but no longer required for this purpose.
- £280,000 of monies earmarked for employment initiatives in last year's budget which had yet to be allocated.
- £350,000 from a saving in the Authority's staffing budget resulting from the industrial action on 30 November 2011.

An update of the list of earmarked reserves at Appendix 6.3 "Projected Movement in Reserves March 2011 to March 2015" on p. 188 of the budget papers would be provided to the Committee after the meeting.

Committee's Areas of Enquiry:

The Committee was informed that:

- Selected alternative options were identified by the Mayor and funding sources agreed through the Chief Executive.
- Earmarked Area Based Grant reserves - monies identified in the category of other corporate earmarked reserves listed at appendix 6.3 of the budget document pack 2012 – 13 (8th February) totalling £1.3 million are unused monies from the previous year. The original purpose of funds was not outlined in the budget proposal.
- Projected future reserves - sums shown at Appendix 6.3 of the Budget 2012/13 Document Pack (Cabinet 8 February) are indicative therefore the profile of the data will change as reserves are drawn down.
- The composition of the £151.8 million reserves at 31 March 2011 are published in the Council's final audited accounts and have been available since September 2011.

Proposal to Fund 17 Police Officers for 3 Years:

Collaborating with the Borough Commander, additional police officers have been secured. £1.485 million is to be allocated to fund 17 the officers over the next three years. Officers would be subject to joint tasking by the Borough Commander and the Council's Community Safety Team and focus on drug related crime, organised crime and antisocial behaviour.

Committee's Areas of Enquiry:

- The use of these additional officers would be covered by existing partnership arrangements. Through the existing biweekly joint tasking meetings with the Metropolitan Police; the Council will have influence on how officers are deployed.
- The Partnership Taskforce was monitored on a fortnightly basis and presently comprised one inspector, two sergeants and thirteen constables. Five new constables would be added to this.
- The Taskforce was funded under the terms of the Section 92 agreement from July 2011 to July 2013.
- The Metropolitan Police remained committed to maintaining the SNTs. The additional Police officers should enhance existing work.
- The Council and Police must consider how the additional resources will provide added value. By using the additional constables in specific areas or to deal with a particularly difficult problem, they could deliver more effective outcomes.
- A London policing plan has been prepared for the Olympics period.

Local officers will be on duty and additional resources from across the country also deployed. In the period prior to the Olympics a programme of work will be developed to ensure the Council's enforcement officers will complement the work of the Police.

- The Borough Commander had not indicated that the borough would be affected by any reduction in staffing levels.
- The Chair noted with concern that the additional police officers were partly being funded by £280,000 of monies earmarked for employment initiatives which are important for local residents.

Proposal for After-school Patrols & Victim Support:

Andy Bamber, the Service Head, Safer Communities, had researched victim support and after-school patrol services available. In the past the after-school patrols had been resourced by the Communities Fund but this was being reviewed. The patrols would deal with incidents of after-school crime.

The alternative options proposal (d) (i) includes funding for two dedicated borough-based victim support officers for the next three years,

Committee's Areas of Enquiry:

- Whether other types victim support could be explored such as working jointly with RSLs to see if better value for money could be obtained

Proposal for Development of Energy Co-operative:

Proposals had not yet fully been developed.

Committee's Areas of Enquiry:

- Whether many residents will benefit from the £30,000 allocated to support the development of an energy co-operative to help council tenants and residents in fuel poverty.

Committee's General Comments:

The Committee found that, upon enquiring, a number of the proposals were found not to be supported by definite plans which outlined clearly an understanding of the potential benefits to residents. The Committee was also concerned as to numbers of Police funded by the Metropolitan Police Service, and those funded by the borough, and how they would be tasked.

RESOLVED

That the above comments of the Committee concerning the revised budget proposals be referred to Mayor Rahman and then to Council.

4.2 Treasury Management Strategy statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2012-13 (Revised Proposals)

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.35 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Ann Jackson
Overview & Scrutiny Committee