

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2007

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

Members Present:

Councillor Simon Rouse
Councillor Shahed Ali
Councillor Clair Hawkins
Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor M. Shahid Ali
Councillor Alexander Heslop

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Abdal Ullah

Co-opted Members Present:

Mr H Mueenuddin – Muslim Community Representative

Officers Present:

Suki Binjal – (Interim Head of Non-Contentious Team, Legal Services)
Alex Cosgrave – (Corporate Director, Environment & Culture)
Michael Keating – (Service Head, Research & Scrutiny)
Maureen McEleney – (Director of Housing Management)
Emma Peters – (Corporate Director, Development & Renewal)
Alan Steward – (Policy Scrutiny Manager)
Sara Williams – (Assistant Chief Executive)

Angus Dixon – (Democratic Services)

ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THIS MEETING

Mr Dixon informed Members that the Chair and Vice Chair had given their apologies for the meeting and therefore sought nominations for Chair for this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Shiria Khatun **Moved**, Councillor Shahid Ali **Seconded**, and there being no other nominations it was

RESOLVED

That in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair that Councillor Clair Hawkins Chair the remainder of the 9th January 2007 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

COUNCILLOR CLAIR HAWKINS IN THE CHAIR

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman, Councillor A A Sardar, Councillor Mohammed Abdus Salique and Councillor Oliur Rahman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair **Moved** and it was

RESOLVED

That the Section 1 Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 7th November, 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them accordingly.

Subject to:

Item 9.1

Replace:

'Queries were raised on the following items:

- SP101 – actions did not appear to be linked to the problems.
- SP204 – there was no tracking of overcrowding measures.
- SP515(b) and (c) – targeting of Somali communities was required.
- Sp405(a) – query relating to the robustness of procedures.'

With:
'Queries were raised on a number of items.'

Item 9.2

Replace:
'Members put questions on:
Page 112 – responsibility for managing the furniture reuse scheme.
Page 113 – further explanation of the Housing Choice programme figures.
Page 113 – rather than using spend as a measure of progress, a better indicator would be works achieved.
Page 118 – concerns over delays to bullying policies due to restructuring.'

With:
'Members put forward a number of questions.'

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

No requests to submit petitions had been received.

5. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

No requests for deputations had been received.

6. SECTION ONE REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

6.1 Award Of Vehicle Removals Contract For Public Highway And Estate Parking Enforcement

Councillor Abjol Miah for the Call-In Members outlined the main problems residents will face under the proposed new parking enforcement contract including inability for residents and their visitors to find parking, difficulties in adhering to religious observance, as well as equality and anti-poverty implications.

Committee Members put detailed questions to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah, Ms Cosgrave, Corporate Director Environment and Culture, and Ms McEleney, Director of Housing Management, on a number of related issues including the wider issue of insufficient parking in the Borough, the revenue raising potential of the proposed new enforcement activities and consultation with residents.

Councillor Ullah, Ms Cosgrave, and Ms McEleney responded on behalf of the Cabinet in detail on the points raised, and stated that the proposed new contract did not change the legal parking hours in the Borough, it only related to changing the hours in which enforcement activities could occur.

The Committee held concerns about the report and decisions by Cabinet. In particular, Members felt that in bringing the contract forward, there needed to be:

- Better understanding of the impacts on residents of the proposed changes, including those in areas surrounding the enforcement zones.
- Further thought given to the issues surrounding religious observance.
- Greater understanding of the costs, and the value delivered to Council, associated with the proposed contract.

The Committee were of the opinion that the Cabinet decisions should be referred back for further consideration. Accordingly, the Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That Cabinet be requested to agree that the awarding of the vehicle removals contract for public highway and estate parking enforcement be delayed in order to give further consideration to their concerns and alternative options.

The Councillors recommend that the Cabinet:

1. Request an impact assessment on the proposed new parking enforcement contract with regard to the potential increases in parking demand that may arise in areas adjacent to the enforcement zones;
2. Consider further the value for money of the proposed parking enforcement contract taking into consideration the decline in Council managed estates and consequent reduced areas from which revenues to mitigate the costs of parking control can be raised; and
3. Request a review of parking in the vicinity of places of worship in the Borough during important periods of worship for the major faith groups, with a view to facilitating religious observance without reducing community safety or increasing congestion.

In view of the fact that the Lead Member for Employment, Equalities and Skills, Councillor Anwara Ali, required to leave the meeting early, the Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the order of business on the agenda be varied to allow consideration of item 8.1 at this point.

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT - CREATING AND SHARING PROSPERITY

Corporate Director Development and Renewal, Ms Peters, introduced her presentation 'Creating and Sharing Prosperity'. Ms Peters' initially discussed the profile of Tower Hamlets highlighting the diverse and polarised aspects of the Borough.

Ms Peters provided an overview of: the performance of the Council on a number of indices; the Council's key policy framework themes; its targets with regard to health, employment and enterprise; and some of the limitations the Council faces in trying to achieve these targets.

Committee Members put detailed questions to Ms Peters and the Lead Member for Regeneration, Localisation, and Community Partnerships, Councillor Ohid Ahmed, on a number of related issues including planning performance and costs, and the key future challenges for Council in this area.

Ms Peters and Councillor Ahmed responded in detail on the points raised. Ms Peters discussed that understanding the underlying factors impacting on employability would be critical in resolving the inherent employment issues in the Borough. Ms Peters informed the Committee that increasing the availability of affordable family homes is another important issue. This however is proving difficult due to increasing land values and a poorly calibrated 'viability test' that is calculating low affordable family housing requirements for new developments.

The Lead Member and Director were thanked for their presentation.

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

8.1 Equalities Action Plan - 2006/07 Six Monthly Monitoring Report

The Lead Member for Employment, Equalities & Skills, Councillor Anwara Ali, introduced the report stating that Tower Hamlets has a strong record on equalities issues however cannot afford to become complacent on this important issue. Councillor Ali described the 'traffic light' system of evaluation and provided an overview of Tower Hamlets performance to the end of September 2006.

Committee Members put detailed questions to Councillor Ali on a number of issues related to the Equalities Action Plan (EAP). Members held concerns over the EAP and Monitoring Report. The report was deemed to be insufficiently critical, whilst it was felt that too little information was contained within the EAP to enable adequate discussion and scrutiny by the Committee.

Additionally Members felt that the report should have been updated prior to the meeting as the information was 3 months old. More current information would have given the Members a more valid indication of the performance of the program.

Councillor Ali and the Head of Research and Scrutiny, Mr Michael Keating, responded on the points raised, and recognised that there were improvements that could be made to the reports in terms of their depth and style.

The Committee felt that given their concerns with the report, they needed an opportunity to view and discuss a revised version before agreeing to any recommendations contained within. Accordingly, the Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the 'Equalities Action Plan – 2006/07 Six Monthly Monitoring Report', however request that an updated report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

9. SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

9.1 Scrutiny Challenge Session - Masterplanning Consultation - Interim Report from Scrutiny Working Group

The Lead Scrutiny for Creating and Sharing Prosperity, Councillor Shiria Khatun, introduced the Masterplanning Report and provided the Committee with an overview of the first phase of the Masterplanning Consultation Scrutiny working group review.

Councillor Khatun informed the Committee of a number of actions identified to take the review forward. These included working group Members helping to publicise consultation events to their constituents, Members being involved with feedback delivered to those involved in the earlier non-statutory consultation, and a meeting to be held to allow Members input into the final evaluation process.

The Chair **Moved** and it was

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the report 'Masterplanning Consultation – Interim Report from Scrutiny Working Group' and agree the recommendations set out.

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

There were no pre-decision questions submitted on the Cabinet reports.

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

There was no urgent business.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Chair, Overview & Scrutiny
Committee