

Briefing for Scrutiny Lead Member

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| Directorate Portfolio | Law, Probity & Governance |
| Scrutiny Lead | Cllr Peter Golds |

This briefing note is intended to provide the Scrutiny lead member with an overview of their portfolio. It will be used to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2014/15. The issues highlighted in the note will be further discussed in a meeting between the Scrutiny lead member and relevant senior manager.

Section One: Overview of areas covered within the portfolio

The Directorate of Law, Probity and Governance ensures that the council is managed strategically, coherently, efficiently and effectively. The over-arching purpose of the directorate is to build One Tower Hamlets.

Its main customers are the other directorates of the council, elected members and local residents. The directorate performs a number of key roles for the council. These include:

- Assisting the Mayor and directorates in setting and delivering on priorities
- Providing leadership, knowledge and expertise
- Supporting democracy, transparency and accountability
- Facilitating improvement and innovation
- Promoting understanding of and engagement with the council's policies, services, vision and values
- Overseeing the governance and performance frameworks of the council
- Promoting equality, cohesion and community leadership

The Directorate contains the following services and teams:

- **Democratic Services** provides support to the Mayor and elected Councillors that is efficient and open, together with procedural and constitutional advice and clerking services to enable an accountable decision-making process. The service is also responsible for delivering the council's statutory Registration Service for births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships. The Service is split into four teams: Committee Services; Members Support; Mayor's Office; Registration Service
- **Legal Services** ensures compliance with corporate governance, legal and statutory requirements in the conduct and delivery of the council's business and services. The service includes the Corporate Complaints and Information Team. The following teams also operate from within the service: Social Care; Housing; Property; Planning; Employment & Education; Contracts; Enforcement & Litigation and Business Support
- **Communications** manages the reputation of the council and facilitates communication between the council and local people, media, opinion formers, partners and peers and publication of East End Life. There are three teams within the service: Internal Communications; Media; Marketing & Tower Design
- **Corporate Strategy and Equality** oversees performance improvement and business planning, leads on strategy and policy development and provides research support to the council. The service also directs and co-ordinates the delivery of the overview and scrutiny, diversity and equality, and community cohesion agendas across the council. There are three teams within the service: Strategy & Performance, One Tower Hamlets, Corporate Research Unit

Section Two: Key national legislative and policy developments

- Ongoing welfare reform
- Care Act
- Helping people to find and stay in work
- Improving opportunities for older people
- Cohabitation Rights Bill
- Ending violence against women and girls
- Voter Registration Bill
- Voting Age Bill

The directorate has a key role in identifying legislative and policy proposals and ensuring colleagues around the council are briefed on them as appropriate.

Section Three: Key local challenges and opportunities

The key challenges and opportunities for the directorate in the coming year will be:

- Devise and deliver plans to consult and engage with residents, staff and other stakeholders over the future delivery of services
- Develop the Strategic Plan for 2015 and the new Community Plan on behalf of the Partnership
- Support the service and resource planning process
- Produce the Single Equality Framework for 2014-15 and embed in the Strategic Plan to influence service and strategic planning
- Drive the ongoing partnership-wide programme around welfare reform, including preparing for and mitigating its impact
- Deliver the Mayor's One Tower Hamlets Fund, including completing an evaluation of the Fund awarding funding for the current year
- Support the embedding of the commissioned Healthwatch service
- Align the Public Health Outcomes Framework with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, to help reduce health inequalities across the community
- Coordinate and support the implementation of the recommendations from the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission
- Support the Local Voices mechanism for engaging local disabled people in design, delivery and scrutiny of local services
- Review the Registrars business model to achieve a self-financing service, responsive to local need and introducing new services
- Support members' IT development
- Review the council's constitution
- Improve public engagement in the decision-making process, including developing use of online and social media tools, and engagement with local groups and schools
- Review of Legal Services
- External audit by Information Commissioner's Office
- Roll out new individual elector registration process to replacing household registrations
- Review East End Life, including responding to any direction from Secretary of State
- Complete the Community Infrastructure Levy inquiry and provide legal support for its implementation
- Support implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014
- In conjunction with Procurement and Public Health staff, redesign and procure replacements for the transferred Public Health Contracts

Section Four: Progress against key performance indicators

Most of the directorate's work is to facilitate other directorates in delivering their services and improving outcomes – the Directorate leads, and supports, the Council's Performance Management Framework.

The directorate leads on two specific strategic measures, based on the Annual Residents Survey, and these are detailed below.

The directorate's business measures are also strong: this includes the lowest sickness absence rate in the Council in 2013/14.

| Strategic measure | Latest Outturn | Direction of travel from previous year | Commentary |
|--|------------------------|--|---|
| Percentage of residents agreeing that the Council is doing a good job. | 76% (2012/13) GREEN | Performance is improving | The Council has exceeded its target. Our performance is above the London average. |
| The percentage of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area | 81% (2012/13) GREEN | Performance is improving | The Council has achieved a year-on-year improvement on this measure. |

Section Five: Customer perception and satisfaction

The table below details residents and service users' satisfaction with services. The information is taken from the Annual Residents Survey. The latest available data is for 2012/13. 2013/14 data will be available in August 2014.

| Annual Residents Survey Measure | 2012/13 | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | Comparison with London 2012/13 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|--|
| % satisfied with the way the Council runs things | 64 | 64 | 63 | N/A |
| % agreeing that the Council is efficient and well run | 66 | 67 | 65 | At London average |
| % agreeing that the Council keeps residents informed | 73 | 76 | 71 | +5 Significantly better than London |
| % agreeing that the Council involves residents | 49 | 49 | 53 | At London average |

Section Six: Cabinet Forward Plan items

Strategic and Resource Planning 2014/15 – 9th July 2014 (Cabinet)
Resident Engagement in the Budget Process (O&S challenge session report) – 23rd July 2014 (Cabinet)
Tackling the School Places Gap (O&S challenge session report) – 23rd July 2014 (Cabinet)
Tower Hamlets Council's Approach to Supporting Staff with Specific Learning Difficulties (O&S challenge session report) – 23rd July 2014 (Cabinet)
Youth Services (O&S challenge session report) – 23rd July 2014 (Cabinet)

Section Seven: Suggested topics for O&S reviews