

Overview and Scrutiny Portfolios – 2008/09

1. Context

Since May 2004 the Overview Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has been the standing committee with the aim of being a more credible political arm of the Council by complementing and balancing the work of the Cabinet, at the same time contributing to our service improvement agenda.

The Committee's membership has comprised a Chair, five Scrutiny Leads (one for each of the Community Plan themes) and a lead for Health, who chairs the Health Scrutiny Panel, as well as two backbench members and five co-opted members (representing the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Dioceses, the Muslim community and two Parent Governors). The existing Standing Panels were disbanded, apart from establishing a Health Scrutiny Panel, allowing a more flexible approach to investigative work through creating specific working groups.

The scrutiny lead portfolios have been based on Community Plan themes rather than directly matching each of the Executive Lead Members to create more strategic cross cutting work. It also helps articulate how scrutiny contributes towards the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

2. Scrutiny Leads Portfolio – New Community Plan Themes

Feedback from Members and the initial comments following the recent CPA Inspection have highlighted that the current scrutiny arrangements do provide a productive challenge to Cabinet, the organisation and where appropriate, our partners. With this in mind, it is proposed that the Scrutiny lead portfolios should continue to be based on the Community Plan themes and will therefore, in the light of the current refresh, need to be renamed as follows:

- A Place to Live
- A Prosperous Community
- A Safe and Supportive Community
- A Healthy Community
- One Tower Hamlets

This would continue to provide a focus for Overview and Scrutiny that is distinct from the decision-making role of Cabinet with effective scrutiny being based for example on local priorities or areas facing performance challenges. An issue arising out of this is that with the theme of 'A Healthy Community', having a separate Scrutiny Lead for Health is no longer necessary.

The Committee would not wish to reduce the number of Scrutiny Lead positions. Indeed during evaluation sessions and discussions with the CPA inspectors Members highlighted the need for clearer roles for the two backbench members on the Committee. This obviously raises other implications. However, based on initial soundings of officers and Members, it is proposed that the Scrutiny Lead responsibility for 'Excellent Public Services'

is retained. This would incorporate issues in the current portfolio focusing on improving public services to make sure they represent good value for money and meet local needs. Overview and Scrutiny has a key performance monitoring role which could be enhanced further through this portfolio. With a number of performance monitoring reports being presented to the Committee each year, the Scrutiny Lead for Excellent Public Services would take an active role in ensuring the Council and its partners are setting ambitious targets and are working hard to achieve them.

Over the coming months we are expecting clearer guidance about the implementation of a number of new procedures, for example the Councillor Call for Action and petitions, which will have an impact on our Overview and Scrutiny procedures. Alongside anything else arising from the CPA inspection this will necessitate more reflection about roles and responsibilities in the longer term.

In the meantime the table below outlines the proposed portfolios for the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the six Scrutiny Leads:

Portfolio	Key Service Areas	Issues / Comments
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic leadership • Community Plan/Strategic Plan/LAA / THP • Overall policy development and implementation • Joined up working 	Broadly mirrors Cabinet Lead Member role
Scrutiny Lead One Tower Hamlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Democracy/citizens / member development • Equalities and workforce to reflect the community • Consultation and involvement • Community cohesion • Preventing Violent Extremism • Local management • Community empowerment 	Given the priority of One TH as an overarching vision it merits a lead role within scrutiny.
Scrutiny Lead A Healthy Community and Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health / health promotion • Health inequalities • Access to health services 	Takes a strategic role in health / although connected this portfolio does not

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Sport • Leisure • Health Partnerships • Joint Commissioning / Integrated services • LINKs 	<p>directly link to Adult Health and Wellbeing / Children's Services health priorities, which are covered by the other scrutiny lead portfolios</p>
<p>Scrutiny Lead A Great Place to Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing management • Decent homes • LDF • Housing development/strategy • Waste and recycling • Strategic Transport and parking • Street scene • Parks and open spaces • Environmental Sustainability • Museums and heritage • Idea Stores / Libraries • Arts and events • Cultural aspects of the Olympics • Public Realm Strategy 	<p>Split of Housing and Development from Regeneration has been highlighted as problematic within Cabinet – could be addressed through joint scrutiny lead reviews</p> <p>The CP refers to the Public Realm Strategy which could be added to this portfolio, taking out the LDF but providing a link between development and investment in the environment and access to cultural services?</p>
<p>Scrutiny Lead Excellent Public Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Procurement • IT and e-government • Performance • Asset Management • Value for money • Risk management • Customer access • Human resources • Audit 	<p>Tackling climate change is a top priority within CP 2020 - EPS scrutiny lead allows this to be prioritised here.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability 	
Scrutiny Lead A Prosperous Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years and play • Children looked after • School improvement • Children’s centres • Youth services • Lifelong learning • Business liaison and partnership • Business tourism • Development • Regeneration Strategy • Skills improvement • Economic development • Employment initiatives • Voluntary / Third sector • Business support 	Voluntary / Third Sector should be seen as important part of prosperous communities theme – Though volunteering and participation is reflected in CP – the needs and benefits of the wider sector are not picked up.
Scrutiny Lead A Safe and Supportive Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community safety – Crime prevention / ASB • SNTs • Youth offending and youth justice • Adults with physical disability • Learning disabled adults • Children with disabilities and special needs • Child protection • Older people • Supporting people • Carers • Homelessness 	Covering CLC and AHWB & Children’s Services. Question about the feasibility of such a wide ranging portfolio?

It is important to note that in any one year Scrutiny Lead members would not be expected to undertake work covering every element of their portfolio but to prioritise what needs doing in any particular year. Having said this however it is evident that further thinking is required about ensuring that the remit of Scrutiny Lead roles fits with the current requirements of our work as well as new statutory responsibilities for Overview and Scrutiny. This will be undertaken during the coming municipal year.