

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2016**

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

**Members Present:**

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)	
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Vice Chair)	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Mahbub Alam	
Councillor Amina Ali	Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal
Councillor Abdul Asad	Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities & Culture
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services
Councillor Oliur Rahman	
Councillor Helal Uddin	
Councillor Clare Harrisson	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services

**Co-opted Members Present:**

Nozrul Mustafa	– (Parent Governor Representative)
Victoria Ekubia	– (Roman Catholic Church Representative)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

**Apologies:**

Dr Phillip Rice	– (Church of England Representative)
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**Others Present:**

Dr Somen Banerjee	– (Director of Public Health, LBTH)
Robin Beattie	– (Service Head, Strategy & Resources, Communities Localities & Culture)
Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Afazul Hoque	– Interim Service Manager, Strategy,

Kevin Kewin	– Policy & Performance (Interim Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equality)
Denise Radley	– (Director of Adults' Services)
Graham White	– (Interim Service Head, Legal Services, Law, Probity and Governance)
Emily Fieran-Reed	– (Service Manager, Community Cohesion, Engagement and Commissioning, Corporate Strategy and Equality)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Phillip Rice.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

**RESOLVED**

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 were approved and agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

**4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION NOTES 2016 - 2017**

The Committee received and noted an update on the outstanding actions.

**5. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS**

The Committee received and noted the published list of forthcoming decisions that provided the Scrutiny Leads with a list of those issues that they needed to follow up with the Portfolio Lead Members and Directorates.

**6. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS**

Nil items

**7. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil items

## 8. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Committee considered the Cabinet agenda for the 14th June, 2016 and identified the following issues::

### **Item 5.2 Reset of the Commercial Contract with Agilisys for the Provision of ICT Services to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

The Committee:

1. **Agreed** on the need to look at the practical and cultural issues; how ICT Services are focused on the provision of services from a customer perspective; how the services are delivered and where they are delivered from;
2. **Agreed** that it wanted to know how many of the apprentices on the scheme managed by Agilisys had gone into full time employment; and
3. **Agreed** that it wanted in future to receive Cabinet papers in a timely fashion.

## 9. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

Nil items

## 10. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

### 10.1 Appointment of Scrutiny Lead Members, Co-options to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Establishment of Sub-Committees

The Committee noted that it is required, at its first meeting of the municipal year, to confirm its arrangements for Lead Scrutiny Members and Sub-Committees. The main points of the discussion maybe summarised as follows:

The Committee noted that:

- Traditionally it had appointed Scrutiny Lead Members with portfolios aligned to the authority's directorates. However, at its meeting on 18 May 2016, Council approved Special Responsibility Allowances for 5 Scrutiny Lead positions. It had therefore been agreed that for the 2016/17 Municipal Year, the Committee should consider the appointment of Lead Scrutiny Members for those agreed portfolios as set out below:

1. Lead for Adults and Health Services (including Chairing the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee);
2. Lead for Communities, Localities and Culture;
3. Lead for Children's Services;
4. Lead for Development and Renewal (including Chairing the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee); and
5. Lead for Resources (including Vice-Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee).

□

- Consistent with the statutory provisions, the Council's Constitution provides in Part 3 "Responsibility for Functions", for the membership of the overview and scrutiny committee to include a Church of England representative, a Roman Catholic representative and two Parent Governor Representatives. The Constitution also provides for the committee to have a non-voting Muslim faith representative, although it was noted that this is not a statutory requirement.
- It was required to agree the establishment of a:
  - A. Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee to discharge the Council's functions under the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013. Including the co-option of **David Burbidge** and Professor **Tim Oliver** from Healthwatch Tower Hamlets (formerly Tower Hamlets Involvement Network) to the membership of this Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2016/17;
  - B. Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to lead on the scrutiny of the Council's housing functions and local housing provision managed by social and private landlords; and
  - C. Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee to provide the cross-party forum to review officer recommendations prior to their consideration at a Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting as set out in paragraph 3.21 to 3.25 of the report, with terms of references and quorum as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

- It was required to appoint Members and agree Chairs for the above Sub-Committees as set out in Appendix 4 of the report.

Accordingly, as a result of a full and wide ranging discussion the Chair Moved and it was:-

**RESOLVED** that:

**1. It wished to continue to operate with specific portfolios and appoint the following Lead Scrutiny Members:**

- Lead for Adults and Health Services – Councillor Cllr C. Harrison;

- Lead for Communities, Localities and Culture – Councillor A. Asad;
- Lead for Children’s Services – Councillor J. Dockerill;
- Lead for Development and Renewal – Councillor Ali; and
- Lead for Resources – Councillor A. Mukit.

**2. The following Co-Opted Members be appointed**

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| • Church of England Diocese representative     | Dr Phillip Rice         |
| • Roman Catholic Diocese representative        | Victoria Ekubia         |
| • Parent Governor representative               | A nomination is awaited |
| • Parent Governor representative               | Nozrul Mustafa          |
| • Parent Governor representative               | A nomination is awaited |
| • Muslim Community Representative (non-voting) | To be confirmed         |

**3. The Housing; Health and Grants Sub-Committees be established with the Membership as set out in Appendix 4 of the report and that the following Councillors be appointed to Chair these Sub-Committees:**

- Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor A. Ali;
- Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor C. Harrison; and
- Grants Sub-Committee – Councillor A. Mukit.

**4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Vice Chair would be:**

- Councillor A. Mukit

Finally, the Committee was advised that there would be an Induction and Work Planning Session Wednesday, 13 July 2016 at 6.00 p.m. that would reflections on the past year and consider the opportunities and challenges for year ahead.

**10.2 Public Health Savings - Phase 1**

The Committee noted that in 2015/16 and 2016/17 the public health grant allocation from the Department of Health has been reduced. This had resulted in a loss of public health reserves to fund any additional pressures on the budget as well as reduced funding for 2016/17. This has meant that savings of £5m are required in 2016/17 to meet the public health grant allocation of £36.9m. The main points of the discussion maybe summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Was informed that this was a pre-consultation paper regarding the first phase of public health savings. The report followed two previous papers that set out proposed savings of £2.3m. In addition, the Committee was informed that a further paper would be written for subsequent discussion on the remaining £2.7m;
- Was informed that the paper outlined:

- i. Why public health investment is needed;
  - ii. What the public health grant is for;
  - iii. Why the savings are needed;
  - iv. How savings proposals have been prioritised;
  - v. What savings have been proposed and why;
  - vi. Potential risks and mitigations; and
  - vii. Plans for consultation.
- Understood that the core purpose of the paper is to mitigate the risk of overspend whilst seeking to do this in a considered way that mitigates against the risk of destabilising both established and new programmes that are delivering value for the people in Tower Hamlets. Whilst the savings are premised on sign off at the July cabinet - further delay would reduce savings that could be achieved in 16/17;
  - Noted that in general, it was anticipated that implementation of the proposed savings would be relatively straightforward through discussion with providers. Although the saving of £200k proposed for acute GUM may be challenging as it will require robust negotiations through the London Sexual Health Collaborative on price with certain providers in London although initial indications had suggested that the saving was feasible.
  - Recognised that there will be some concern from the public and providers through the consultation exercise. However, based upon previous experience, the greatest likelihood of expressed concern would it was felt be around the proposed cuts to sexual health. Although this risk it was noted was being mitigated by initiating discussion with providers.

Accordingly, as a result of a result of discussions on the proposed savings the Chair Moved and it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee wanted:

- I. More information on the outcomes;
- II. A more targeted person centred approach to delivering services;
- III. Better signposting for services;
- IV. Provision of access to those services outside of traditional health settings;
- V. Consideration given to the opportunities available for the wider use of new technologies;
- VI. The Third Sector; Partner Agencies and other Stake Holder Groups to extend the Council reach into the community;
- VII. To see innovative use of services to mitigate the impact of budget reductions; and
- VIII. To see the encouragement of healthier lifestyles amongst residents.

### 10.3 Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Session Report

The Committee received a report that outlined the findings and recommendations from the scrutiny challenge session on homelessness

which was part of the OSC work programme for 2015/16 municipal year. The main points of the discussion maybe summarised as follows:

The Committee Noted that:

- The challenge session and one to one interviews with service managers in the Housing Options Service (HOS) considered four core issues:
  - i. The use of bed & breakfast accommodation (B&B) by the Council for families with dependent children and pregnant women over the six week statutory period;
  - ii. The long term viability of moving away from B&B placements;
  - iii. The impact of the Council's prevention work as well as the action plan related to the homelessness statement (including the achievements of this action plan, the monitoring arrangements and the lessons learned); and
  - iv. How the customer satisfaction of homeless applicants could be improved further regardless of whether the service owes a statutory duty.
- The panel had discussed the need to consider limiting the use of B&B accommodation for families and the case of Nzolameso v Westminster Council 2015, which considered a new judgement in relation to how authorities place homeless applicants in temporary accommodation. There was a need to consider how this judgement has been implemented in the Council there were questions on whether the policy on allocating temporary accommodation units has been published and made publicly available.
- The panel had noted a pilot that had been undertaken with Poplar Harca on tenant engagement work. It found that one of the main reasons for loss of accommodation leading to potential homelessness problems was due to rent arrears. Furthermore, it was hard to engage some Registered Providers who found evictions a cost effective method by putting up rents and securing new tenants. It was understood that good relationships with housing landlords was crucial to preventing homelessness.
- The panel had noted the partial completion of the homeless action plan which delivers the homelessness statement (the key statutory strategy used by the service to achieve its objectives in this area). It was identified that the original strategy and action plan in 2013 was not taken to Cabinet to be adopted or Full Council. On the action plan there was a lack of an agreed protocol between partners and what they would be responsible for and where they would share information and work to address homelessness related issues. It was essential the service ensured that lessons from this were taken on board when carrying out work on the Housing Strategy.
- Homelessness was a complex problem and requires effective partnership working to address it. The service already engages

with a wide range of partners and has traditionally done so effectively. What is now needed is a review of those arrangements, and the objectives, so that progress achieved since the last plan was drawn up can be sustained, and the service is in a strong position to respond to new threats and demands.

- The panel had noted that there is identified best practice already established in the service which could be used to further improve customer satisfaction of homeless applicants such as building on the customer empathy training received by the Housing Options Singles Team (HOST).
- As part of its work programme for 2015/16, Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that it would hold a challenge session on homelessness which was led by Councillor Helal Uddin (Scrutiny Lead Development & Renewal).
- The challenge session and one to one interviews with service managers in the Housing Options Service (HOS) considered four core issues:
  - i. The use of bed & breakfast accommodation (B&B) by the Council for families with dependent children and pregnant women over the six week statutory period;
  - ii. The long term viability of moving away from B&B placements;
  - iii. The impact of the Council's prevention work as well as the action plan related to the homelessness statement (including the achievements of this action plan, the monitoring arrangements and the lessons learned); and
  - iv. How the customer satisfaction of homeless applicants could be improved further regardless of whether the service owes a statutory duty.
- The panel discussed the need to consider limiting the use of B&B accommodation for families and the case of Nzolameso v Westminster Council 2015, which considered a new judgement in relation to how authorities place homeless applicants in temporary accommodation. There was a need to consider how this judgement has been implemented in the Council there were questions on whether the policy on allocating temporary accommodation units has been published and made publicly available.
- The panel noted a pilot that had been undertaken with Poplar Harca on tenant engagement work. It found that one of the main reasons for loss of accommodation leading to potential homelessness problems was due to rent arrears. Furthermore, it was hard to engage some RPs who found evictions a cost effective method by putting up rents and securing new tenants. It was understood that good relationships with housing landlords is crucial to preventing homelessness.
- The panel noted the partial completion of the homeless action plan which delivers the homelessness statement (the key statutory strategy used by the service to achieve its objectives in this area). It was identified that the original strategy and action plan in 2013 was not taken to Cabinet to be adopted or Full Council. On the



action plan there was a lack of an agreed protocol between partners and what they would be responsible for and where they would share information and work to address homelessness related issues. It was essential the service ensured that lessons from this were taken on board when carrying out work on the Housing Strategy.

- Homelessness is a complex problem and requires effective partnership working to address it. The service already engages with a wide range of partners and has traditionally done so effectively. What is now needed is a review of those arrangements, and the objectives, so that progress achieved since the last plan was drawn up can be sustained, and the service is in a strong position to respond to new threats and demands.
- There was a need to source cheaper accommodation outside of London and that families should have access to regular help and assistance.
- The panel noted that there is identified best practice already established in the service which could be used to further improve customer satisfaction of homeless applicants such as building on the customer empathy training received by the Housing Options Singles Team (HOST).
- Noted the Panel recommendations from the challenge session as set out in Section 3.9 (1-17).

As a result of consideration of the report the  
The Committee:

- Agree the draft report and the recommendations; and
- Authorise the Interim Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead.

#### **10.4 Community Engagement Strategy - Presentation**

The committee received and noted a presentation that outlined the Community Engagement Strategy for 2016-2019. The main points of the discussion on this presentation may be summarised as follows:

The Committee noted:

- That there had been no previous council strategy for community engagement
- Whilst this strategy was being developed in a climate of continuous reductions to public spending it presented an opportunity for communities to take a greater role in shaping and delivering in priority areas *i.e.* Local residents will be effectively informed, engaged, involved and empowered by the Council. They will actively help define

local priorities, design, deliver and evaluate services and inform council decision making in areas that impact on their lives.

- The engagement would utilise a wide range of channels to communicate with the Borough's diverse population e.g. Quarterly Our East End, e-newsletters, website, planned campaigns. It would also embracing Digital Communications in response to the demands for a stronger digital presence. In addition, it was recognised that there was a need to explore potential of social media and other platforms whilst recognising issues of digital exclusion;
- That there were Four key priorities (1) Shaping the borough through a greater say by residents in the design and delivery of local services; (2) Supporting local people by building their skills and confidence to organise themselves at a local level; (3) Make Tower Hamlets digitally active; and (4) Make engagement more meaningful;
- The desire from the Mayor; Cabinet Members and Councillors to play a more direct leadership role within a revised local forum structure
- That any forum solution will not necessarily have to be uniform and it might take account of different needs in different locations;
- The forum solution might not need to be based on geographical boundaries;
- The Community Champion model will need to be the subject of a review; and
- The Council's democratic mandate to make decisions needs to be more confidently stated.

As a result of discussions arising from this presentation the Committee indicated that LBTH will need to carefully consider how engagement is undertaken and the flexibility of the structures to be used.

#### **11. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS**

It was noted that there would be updates from the Scrutiny Leads following on from the planning session scheduled to be held on 13th July, 2013.

#### **12. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

Nil items

#### **13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

#### **14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items

**15. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil items

**16. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS**

Nil items

**17. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

Nil items

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor John Pierce  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**