

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



TOWER HAMLETS

DRAFT
**Annual Report
2017/18**

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Forward

I am pleased to present the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2017-18 which sets out the range of work the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Sub-Committees and Scrutiny Leads have undertaken during the municipal year. Scrutiny has undertaken in-depth work on important issues for the borough such as our local response on fire safety, what we are doing about gangs in the borough, and how homeless people are supported to access health and social care services.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose to dedicate a significant portion of its time and attention to the Council's improvement work on Children's Services given the inadequate Ofsted rating in April 2017. We have held a number of sessions with the Mayor, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Corporate Director of Children's Services and other officers on the Council's work to address the Ofsted Report's recommendations. Alongside this, the Committee also heard from the Independent Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Board, Independent Chair of the Children's Services Improvement Board and an Improvement Partner appointed by the Department of Education. We are pleased at the progress the Council is making and recognise that scrutiny has an important role to play in providing challenge and support to this process. I am sure the next Committee will again have this as a focus of their work and in particular looking at areas where further work is needed for example embedding a stable workforce and delivering consistent standards across all children's social care teams.

I was pleased that the Committee had an opportunity to be involved in the Council's budget-setting process. Also, the work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny has enabled the Committee to undertake this role more effectively. The Committee welcomed the strategies to support the most vulnerable in our community by continuing free school meals to all primary age pupils and reducing the impact of welfare reforms with the tackling poverty fund. We are however keen to ensure in future the budget setting process is started earlier and scrutiny is engaged in this process to ensure we are able to influence the proposals at an earlier stage.

I reviewed the way in which aspects of the Committee functioned and introduced a number of changes. Some of these were a matter for the Committee, some required approval by the Mayor in Cabinet. I have listed these below and commend them to my successor:

1. To define the role of Scrutiny Leads by assigning the following specific responsibilities to the role:
 - a. Monitoring and raising scrutiny questions on Performance and Finance Reports;
 - b. Taking the lead in asking questions at scrutiny meetings;
 - c. Taking the lead in scrutinising budget proposals.
2. The introduction of Chair's Actions to the agenda to ensure urgency decisions and other governance matters are reported;

3. To release confidential reports to co-opted scrutiny members.
4. To move the dates of Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings to allow sufficient time for the scrutiny of Cabinet papers.
5. To introduce key lines of enquiry on each agenda item to support committee members with strategic questioning.

I am grateful to the Scrutiny Leads for their work and in particular those that chaired a Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Across the board, scrutiny has looked at an extensive range of issues and looked to identify how we can improve outcomes for local people. The Department of Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into scrutiny has highlighted how Local Authorities can support effective scrutiny. I believe Tower Hamlets is now in a good position to further strengthen the role of scrutiny and I hope the new Committee considers this.

My thanks to our partners, Cabinet Members and officers who have attended our meetings and engaged openly about our challenges and how we can collectively address these. Finally, I would like to thank all our co-opted members who sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and sub-committees for their contribution which has brought a different dimension to our discussions and debates.

Cllr Dave Chesterton
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee



1. Overview and Scrutiny at Tower Hamlets in 2017/18

- 1.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000, the role of Overview and Scrutiny is to scrutinise the decisions of the Mayor and Cabinet, propose new policies and comment on draft policies and ensure resident satisfaction and value for money. The aim is to make the decision-making process more transparent, accountable and inclusive, and improve services for people by being responsive to their needs.
- 1.2 This year, Tower Hamlets approach to overview and scrutiny has been underpinned by the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles for good scrutiny, which are
- providing 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision takers
 - enabling the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard
 - carrying out scrutiny by independent minded Members who lead and own the scrutiny process
 - driving improvement in public services.
- 1.3 To develop skills, scrutiny members have been supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny through a training, development and support programme focusing on budget scrutiny, children's services scrutiny and effective questioning skills.

Scrutiny Committees

- 1.4 In Tower Hamlets, the main, member-led body that holds executive decision-makers to account is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.5 In addition to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there are three subcommittees, which focus on key areas. This allows the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise issues of strategic importance to the Council and residents of Tower Hamlets, such as supporting the Children's Services Improvement progress. The three Scrutiny Sub-committees in Tower Hamlets are:
- Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee
 - Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee
 - Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- 1.6 Also, there are two Scrutiny Leads for Children's Services and Governance to support the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and provide effective challenge to these areas. Their work is covered later in this report.

2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2017/8

- 2.1 At the beginning of this municipal year, members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed a work plan for the 2017/18 Municipal Year based on reflections of achievements and challenges in delivering the scrutiny work programme in 2016-17.
- 2.2 The Committee identified areas they would like to focus on throughout the year. The following specific themes run throughout the work programme:
- Holding the Executive to account with spotlight sessions of all Cabinet members,

- Supporting the Council’s improvement agenda through review of the work on children’s services and best value;
- Reviewing and commenting on the Council’s budget and policy framework items including in-depth review of the budget;
- Review and challenge the performance of the Council on delivery of the strategic plan, budget and resident complaints.

Membership

2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership consists of nine elected councillors, including the Chair, and six education co-opted representatives. The elected councillor membership of the Committee is politically proportionate and representative of the composition of the Council. The co-opted representatives are parent governors and faith representatives from the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Muslim communities.

2.4 The membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is as follows:

Name	Role
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Chair
Councillor Clare Harrison	Vice Chair & Scrutiny Lead for Health, Adults & Community
Councillor Danny Hassell	Scrutiny Lead for Children’s Services
Councillor Ayas Miah	Scrutiny Lead for Governance
Councillor Helal Uddin	Scrutiny Lead for Place
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Rabina Khan	Member
Councillor Oliur Rahman	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquim	Member
Shabbir Chowdhury	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor
Christine Trumper	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor
Fatiha Kassouri	Co-opted Member, Parent Governor
Asad M Jaman	Co-opted Member, Muslim Representative
Dr Phillip Rice	Co-opted Member, Church of England Representative
Joanna Hannan	Co-opted Member, Roman Catholic Representative

2.5 Following on from the development of the Council’s scrutiny toolkit last year, the work programme has been structured around the following scrutiny categories:

- **Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions:** In spotlight sessions a Cabinet Member and/or a senior leader from a stakeholder organisation provides an overview of their work, including key risks within their portfolio, and is then questioned by members of the Committee.
- **Strategic Performance Monitoring:** Strategic monitoring reports are submitted to the Committee for scrutiny to ensure progress in delivering the Strategic Plan and to flag risks.
- **Budget & Policy Framework Scrutiny:** The Committee has a mandatory consultation role on all items that are the responsibility of full Council to agree rather than the Executive, including the budget.

- **Tracking Recommendations:** Throughout the year the Committee reviewed progress on the implementation of 'Action Plans' from previous reviews and challenge sessions.
- **Scrutiny Reviews:** Scrutiny Reviews are led by a scrutiny lead member to examine a topic over multiple evidence gathering sessions, followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement.
- **Scrutiny Challenge Sessions:** Challenge Sessions are single 'deep dive' evidence gathering sessions, led by a scrutiny lead member, which are followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement.
- **OSC Updates:** These provide an opportunity for scrutiny lead members to report back to OSC on the work of the Sub-Committees or any wider work they are involved in, for example Improvement Boards.
- **OSC Reports:** additional items that are either requested, or referred to the OSC for consideration and input.
- **Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny:** At each meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews Cabinet papers and provides a list of recommendations and questions which the Chair reports at the start of each Cabinet meeting, thereby informing the Cabinet decision making process.

3. Adults, Health and Community Services

3.1 This year the Committee scrutinised the work of the Adults, Health and Community Services by providing 'critical friend' challenge at three Scrutiny spotlight sessions, reviewing the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-21, monitoring the implementation of the Prevent Duty and Safeguarding Action Plan and receiving the Scrutiny Challenge Session report on Community Cohesion.

Safeguarding Adults

3.2 The Committee received a presentation from the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board on the Annual Report 2016/17, which focused on key themes of personalising safeguarding, empowering the vulnerable and addressing capacity issues. Applying its learnings from Children's Services, the Committee challenged whether there are effective safeguarding measures and risk assessments as children transition to adults. The Committee also queried whether key partners, such as Police and housing services, are working effectively with case workers and the Council's measures to quality assure practice of front line case workers.

Community Safety

3.3 The Community Safety Spotlight session focused on key focus areas of anti-social behaviour, drug related crimes, knife crime, gangs and the need to work in partnership to protect vulnerable residents. The Committee suggested working jointly with other boroughs to tackle cross borough boundary crime. The Committee also noted the poor engagement and communication between ward panels and the Police and is following up on ensuring Councillors are invited to regular Safer Neighbourhood Team ward meetings. The Committee was concerned that levels of domestic violence prosecutions have decreased locally and nationally following legislative amendments and has suggested this as a Scrutiny Review Session for the next municipal year.

3.4 The Community Safety Partnership Plan has been developed around residents' priorities. The Committee endorsed the new Plan, but made a number of recommendations around improving responses to reports of low level crime through the 101 number and working with

housing partners to promptly removed abandoned vehicles so they did not attract anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. The Committee suggested that workshops should be held at future planning cycles to ensure that the voice of victims is more explicitly incorporated into the plan.

Community Cohesion

3.5 Following the Casey review of integration in Britain, the Scrutiny Lead for Governance held a Scrutiny Challenge Session on community cohesion in April 2017. The Challenge Session aimed to consider the implications of the Casey review and the integration of isolated and deprived communities in the borough.

3.6 The Challenge Session offered the opportunity to review the effective work that the Council and its partners have undertaken and commissioned to deliver improved cohesion outcomes. The report outlined six recommendations to further enhance cohesion outcomes for Tower Hamlets by mainstreaming cohesion across Council services, developing a reporting and evaluation process for cohesion activities, exploring a common assessment to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs, tackling isolation, reviewing the grant and commissioning policies to ensure a stronger focus on cohesion, promoting cohesion leadership and considering the impact of gentrification on cohesion in the borough.

4. Place

4.1 This year the Committee has held four spotlight sessions looking at Housing, Strategic Development and Waste, Work and Economic Development and Environment. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Committee has also reviewed the Council's Emergency Planning and Civil Contingency Arrangements.

Work & Economic Development

4.2 The Committee welcomes the Council's aim of achieving full employment in the borough and supporting residents into long term sustainable jobs, particularly in the face of skilled staff shortages. The Committee continues to challenge the Council on its plans to tackle high levels of BME unemployment, targeting business rate relief to supports small to medium entities and supporting local businesses and protect them against competition from larger chains and encourage projects, such as the Brick Lane Regeneration to be sustainable post funding.

Waste and Recycling

4.3 The Committee highlighted that borough has a significant and increasing number of high rises and discussed the work in place to pilot a scheme for high rise occupants to recycle food waste. The Committee also considered the quality and accessibility of recycling bags so these are as accessible as possible for all residents, including the elderly, disabled and working residents. The Council has agreed to make these more widely available. The Committee noted the importance of reinforcing messages around correct processes face to face and supports the Council's work in campaigning in schools. The Committee also raised concerns around Veoila's performance and notes that capacity issues around contract management are being addressed.

Housing and response to Grenfell

4.4 The Committee received a presentation on the Council's housing services with a focus on temporary accommodation and homelessness resulting from domestic violence. The Committee were concerned that procedures for identifying and supporting victims of domestic violence who need re-housing were not properly followed. A restructure in Housing options is currently underway to help upskill frontline staff on this issue.

- 4.5 The Committee also considered the Council's response to Grenfell around residential fire safety and noted that all fire risk assessments are up to date. The Committee noted that fire safety measures had been put in place for Council buildings and housing managed by Tower Hamlets Homes. The Committee requested that the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee carry out a Scrutiny Review on fire safety in residential high rises. The outcomes of this review are covered later in the report.
- 4.6 The Committee also received a presentation on the Council's emergency planning & civil contingency arrangements. The Committee queried the sufficiency of the resources available to the Council for providing emergency support to residents; and noted that there are established mutual aid arrangements across London Local Authorities should these become stretched. The Committee also highlighted the community leadership role of elected members in reassuring and communicating with residents. The service area noted that elected members could play a larger role and will be rolling out training to all members.

Night-time Economy Scrutiny Review Report

- 4.7 The night-time economy in London is currently high on the agenda of city leaders, and has been made a top-priority by the London Mayor with the recent appointment of London's first Night Czar, the introduction of the Night Tube. These developments, together with the rapidly changing demographic and economic make-up of Tower Hamlets, made it an opportune time to review the Council's current approach to the borough's NTE. This review was carried by the Committee in 2016-17 but the final report was presented to the current Committee.
- 4.8 The review held four evidence gathering sessions around planning and economic development, community safety, the Public Health Service and the Metropolitan Police. The review made 11 recommendations around developing a vision, appointing a "Night Czar" to champion a balanced NTE, funding activities from a Late Night Levy, availability of enforcement officers at times of high demand, supporting young people with employment opportunities, providing adequate public toilets and assessing the impact on residents local to NTE zones.

5. Education and Children's Services

- 5.1 The Committee has taken a proactive role in providing 'critical friend' challenge to Children's Services, following a report published by Ofsted in April 2017 which rated the service as 'inadequate'. The Committee received three monitoring reports on the Council's improvement progress throughout the year. Two spotlight sessions were also held on the Cabinet member's portfolio and the Annual Report of Tower Hamlets Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Education & Children's Services Portfolio Spotlight

- 5.2 The Committee received a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, which highlighted work around the risk to children and young people in relation to child sexual exploitation, domestic violence and mental health, unaccompanied asylum seeking children adoption and fostering, quality and timeliness of social care assessments and interventions.

- 5.3 On education, the Committee's discussion focused on plans to build parent's confidence to support their children's language and literacy skills at home. The Committee also challenged how the Council would integrate working with schools under the Early Help New Model. To secure appropriate funding for schools, the Committee queried the inclusion of academies and free schools in pupil projections under the new national funding formula for schools. The Committee also raised concerns that the Chief Inspector of Schools had made a number of comments about primary school children wearing the Hijab and received assurances that the Council did not share these views.
- 5.4 On social care services, the Committee noted the poor reliability of existing IT infrastructure and continues to challenge adequate resourcing of Children's Services IT systems through its budget scrutiny processes. The Committee also raised concerns about the impact of funding cuts on children's centres, particularly given the important prevention role that centres' services can deliver. The Committee has since received information confirming the amount and of Children's Centres functioning in the borough. The facilities available to children in the borough have been further scrutinised through the Grants Scrutiny Sub-committee's Challenge Session on youth activities and the Health Scrutiny Sub-committee's monitoring of the Children & Young People Mental Health Service action plan. These are considered later in this report.

Local Children's Safeguarding Board's Annual Report Spotlight

- 5.5 The Committee reviewed the Local Children's Safeguarding Board's Annual Report and considered governance arrangements, key safeguarding information and the Board's response to the Ofsted Inspection. The Committee's discussions focused on the improvements around performance datasets to analyse core business, identify priorities and monitor the quality of front line practice. The Committee also highlighted that, in its role as a corporate parent, the Council should receive regular reports about numbers, school attainment and any criminality concerns of Looked After Children. The Committee was advised that these details with a detailed account of the areas of improvement will be included in next year's annual report.

Children's Services Improvement Progress Report

- 5.6 Over three sessions, the Committee has monitored the progress against the Council's improvement plan, which aims to implement the 15 recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report and achieve a standard of at least 'good' from April 2019.
- 5.7 The Committee was impressed by the commitment of the Mayor, Members and senior staff to drive improvement. The findings of Ofsted's subsequent monitoring visits and the feedback from the Department of Education confirms that this has translated into embedding significant and necessary changes in service delivery. Accordingly, the Committee has focused its discussions on building and sustaining improvement. In particular, the Committee has scrutinised plans to attract and retain permanent social care staff and mechanisms to reduce high volumes of case-loads. The Committee now receives updates on the stability of the social care workforce. The Committee has also asked the Cabinet member for Children's Service to ensure partners in housing better integrate services with social workers to support service delivery. The Committee has been informed that senior officers in housing and social care will meet to review progress and feed back to the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste and the Cabinet Member for Housing. The Committee also highlighted the importance of including children's voices in social care workers' analysis and records. The Committee has been reassured that, following the introduction of the New Model of Social Care, children's voices are starting to be captured.
- 5.8 The Committee also invited Sir Alan Wood, Independent Chair of the Children's Services Improvement Board and Debbie Barnes, Improvement Partner from Lincolnshire

(appointed by the Department of Education) to provide an independent perspective of the Council's progress. While acknowledging the positive progress highlighted in the January Ofsted reports, both raised the need to focus on the quality of service to sustain progress by recruiting, training and developing a stable, motivated and highly skilled workforce. The Committee was also advised to focus on developing stronger partnerships, improving partner engagement with the delivery of Early Help and closely monitor children in need who do not have a plan. The Committee plans to focus on these areas in the next municipal year and has recommended to Cabinet that all members receive training in scrutiny and Children's Services.

6. Governance

- 6.1 To monitor the Council's performance and scrutinise value for money, the Committee has reviewed quarterly strategic performance reports, quarterly budget monitoring reports, biannually it looked at best value improvement plan monitoring reports and Annual Complaints and Information Governance Report. The Committee also held a spotlight session with the Chief Executive to explore how improvements are being delivered and changes made to the organisational culture.
- 6.2 On the strategic performance report, the Committee has highlighted the importance of employment in supporting local residents out of deprivation. The Council has a key role in working with local partners including businesses to reduce the employment between London and Tower Hamlets and in particular for communities with high unemployment such as BME and women. The Committee noted there are issues with confidence intervals of national survey based data and the Council should explore use of other metrics to understand employment rates in the borough.
- 6.3 With the Complaints and Information Governance Annual Report, the Committee highlighted the need to improve response rates and how intelligence from this report should be used to inform development of future scrutiny work programmes.
- 6.4 At the Chief Executive's spotlight session he highlighted the progress of the Council from a period of distress to an improvement trajectory of being an excellent Council by implementing necessary changes, such as an organisational review, new leadership and three year budgeting. The Committee raised areas of development such as cultural change, breaking down silos, raising the profile of audit and the need for leadership to be more outward focusing. The Committee also discussed planning around the election to safeguard against fraud and corruption

7. Resources

Quarterly Budget Monitoring

- 7.1 The Committee played a key role in scrutinising and challenging the budget for 2017/18 throughout the year through quarterly budget monitoring reports. In reviewing the budget, the Committee has focused on the delivery of key services, value for money and whether the borough's most vulnerable residents are supported. In particular, the Committee has focused on the spending on Children's Services and supports the Council's initiatives to attract and maintain a stable social care workforce. The Committee also queried budget planning to mitigate against increasing pressures to adult services delivery and how the Better Care Fund can be used to support Community Care. The Committee also identified

underspending of the Disabled Facilities Grant and will continue to monitor the reasons behind this.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

7.2 In October, the Committee also received a Medium Term Financial Strategy update. The Committee asked for progress updates on plans to move away from short term cash management towards long term strategic investment and will continue to monitor this. The Committee also discussed the agreement in principle of the London Business Rates Pilot Pool 2018/1 and highlighted the need for a risk mapping exercise, which has been reiterated in the Committee's Budget Scrutiny recommendations.

Budget Scrutiny for 2018/19

7.3 The Committee held three sessions in January 2018, including a training session and two Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, to consider and challenge the budget proposals.

7.4 The Budget Scrutiny training session was delivered by Centre for Public Scrutiny with the aim of increasing the Committee's skills and capacity to effectively scrutinise the budget proposals. Training focused on questioning techniques, focusing on the impact on residents and whether the budget represents value for money. The Centre for Public Scrutiny also developed key lines of enquiry to assist Committee members provide effective scrutiny.

7.5 At the first meeting, the Committee adopted a high level strategic approach, focusing on the links between the proposed budget and the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan. At the second meeting, the Committee reviewed the capital programme, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and feedback from consultation with local residents and businesses.

7.6 The Committee made 12 recommendations to the executive covering the following topics:

- Facilitating effective scrutiny by earlier timeframes and incorporating budget scrutiny into the scrutiny subcommittee's work programmes throughout the year
- Reviewing the risks and opportunities of participating in the London Business Rate Pilot Scheme
- The Council taking a lead role in engaging and helping residents and businesses to mitigate local risks and take advantage of key opportunities of Brexit.
- Improving dialogue and resident engagement in recovering housing benefit overpayments
- Improving in-house resources to procure and manage large contracts
- The Council lobbying the Government for additional capital resources to fund:
 - fire safety remediation works and
 - retrofit sprinklers
- The Council working with schools to raise awareness and encourage eligible parents to apply for Free School Meals.

7.7 In discussions, the Committee noted that parents are not applying for free school meals due to universal free school meals provision, leading some schools to lose funding (in particular the pupil premium). The Committee has since welcomed the Council's change in policy around Free school meals, requiring all parents to complete forms, to ensure schools receive funding.

Workforce Diversity Action Plan

7.8 The Committee also reviewed the Workforce Diversity Action Plan, which implements the recommendations of a challenge session held in 2015/16. The Committee noted that while Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representation had increased, disappointingly disabled representation has decreased at senior management level. Accordingly, the Committee has called for improved methods of identifying existing staff for advancement, adopting and monitoring a BME blind recruitment approach to break down barriers to equality and undertaking secondments with high performing Local Authorities.

8. Petitions, call-ins and pre-decision scrutiny

8.1 The Committee received no petitions this year.

8.2 One Mayoral Executive Decision was called in this year on the £119m Acquisition of Affordable Homes. The Committee was concerned whether this acquisition was best value for money and requested further information on the age and condition of the properties and confirmation that the alternative options and the financial implications had been considered in full. In recognition of the need for affordable housing in the borough, the Committee voted to confirm this decision.

8.3 Throughout the year, the Committee submitted pre-decision questions across a range of areas. The Committee raised concerns that a number of Cabinet papers were submitted as urgent matters, reducing the Committee's time to scrutinise issues thoroughly. Accordingly, the timing of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings will be rescheduled in the next Municipal Year.

9. Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services - Councillor Danny Hassell

Role in Children's Service Improvement Board

9.1 This year, the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services has attended the Children's Services Improvement Board's meetings and Operational Sub-Group meetings as an ex officio member. These meetings monitor and review performance and progress against the Council's Children's Service Improvement Plan and provide regular reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Lead has also participated in a number of 'Practice Days', which has involved meeting front line social workers, observing case conferences and attending home visits to families.

Gangs and Youth Violence Scrutiny Review

9.2 This Scrutiny Review was set up in response to the recommendation in the 2017 Ofsted Children's Services inspection report to:

- urgently improve the quality and timeliness of services for children who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs and serious youth violence
- ensure the alignment of those services with those for children who go missing and those who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- ensure that comprehensive and accurate intelligence and data inform service developments.

9.3 The review looked to identify and understand the scale and impact of gangs and youth violence issues within the borough, examine the Council's current approach, priorities and

resources and identify evidence and best practice examples to learn from, adopt and build upon when planning and delivering services going forward.

- 9.4 Two sessions were scheduled for January and February 2018 and were attended by councillors and officers with key representatives from education and the police and other service delivery partners as well as the Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayor.
- 9.5 The January session focussed on key issues identified locally as well as evidenced through previous studies held by other authorities and organisations. Presentations were made by the authority's Ending Gang, Group & Serious Youth Violence Co-ordinator and the Interim Head of Youth Services on how work is currently delivered and ongoing plans. The Community Safety and Partnership Manager from the London Borough of Hackney presented on how they have shaped and delivered their Integrated Gangs Unit and discussions were held regarding matters raised including supporting the role of community mediation and intervention, perceived issues for young people and examining the causes for gang involvement.
- 9.6 The February session was held off-site at the Spotlight Centre where a lot of positive outreach and involvement work is delivered. This session focussed on feedback and experiences of young people involved with or affected by gangs and youth violence, adding greater context and impact to the discussions and findings from the first session.
- 9.7 The review has made 20 recommendations covering themes of resourcing, communications and engagement, analysis and understanding, training and capacity building and developing the focus and approach of work going forward.

10. Scrutiny Lead for Governance - Councillor Ayas Miah

Brexit Scrutiny Challenge Session

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Lead for Governance chaired a Scrutiny Challenge Session to improve the Committee's understanding of Brexit and its likely impact on the Council. The Session was held in December 2017 and attended by 3 Members, 2 Co-opted Members and officers.
- 10.2 The Challenges Session made a total of 10 recommendations on following themes:
- Further work to understand the impact on Council's workforces and also those it commissions to supply services;
 - Being proactive in understanding the impact on Tower Hamlets and engaging in regional and national discussions;
 - Undertaking a Scrutiny review in 2018-19 looking at the impact on businesses, statutory agencies and local voluntary and community sector;
 - Understanding impact on local labour market based on future needs;
- 10.3 The Scrutiny Lead in consultation with cross party members and co-opted members has also developed a draft scope for the scrutiny review on Brexit to be undertaken by the new Committee in 2018-19.

11. Scrutiny Lead Health, Adults & Community and Chair of Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor Clare Harrisson

Overview

- 11.1 The Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee is the primary way in which the democratically elected councillors of Tower Hamlets are able to voice the views of their residents and hold the relevant NHS and social care bodies to account. By doing this, the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee acts as a lever to improve the health of the local population by ensuring their needs are considered as part of the commissioning, delivery and development of health and social care services in the borough.
- 11.2 To develop the 2017/18 Health Scrutiny work programme, the Sub-Committee carried out extensive consultation with key stakeholders including: Barts Health Trust, LBTH Adults Commissioning, Social Care, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, GP Care Group, Public Health, East London Foundation Trust, and Tower Hamlets CGG.
- 11.3 Following this consultation the Committee generated a list of significant issues, challenges and projects across health and social care in 2017/18. The Committee decided to adopt a deep dive approach to its work programme, focusing on one issue per meeting in depth. The deep dive items included; self-care & prevention, loneliness, and the sustainability of social care services in Tower Hamlets.
- 11.4 In addition to the deep dive items, the Sub-Committee continued to receive occasional and statutory reports relating to the performance of the local health and social care system.
- 11.5 The Sub-Committee held four meetings in 2017/18. In addition to the Committee meetings the Sub-Committee also undertook a Scrutiny Review which inspected the provision of health and social care services for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets.

11.6 Membership

Name	Role
Councillor Clare Harrisson	Chair
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Member
Councillor Abdul Asad	Member
Councillor Peter Golds	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim	Member
Councillor Rachael Saunders	Member
David Burbidge	Co-Optee (Healthwatch Tower Hamlets)
Tim Oliver	Co-Optee (Healthwatch Tower Hamlets)

Highlights

Self-care and Prevention

- 11.7 The Sub-Committee carried out a deep dive of self-care and prevention to improve understanding of the self-care and prevention agenda and how it is implemented in Tower Hamlets. The Sub-Committee aimed to gauge residents' understanding of self-care and prevention and consider what degree of behaviour change is required for residents to make an impact on health and social care sustainability.

- 11.8 Self-Care can be defined as what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental factors, socio-economic factors and self-medication. The Sub-Committee were informed that promoting self-care and prevention is at the centre of the East London Health and Care Partnership vision of the future health and care system in East London.
- 11.9 The Committee were informed that there needs to be a flexible approach to supporting self-care and there is a need to encourage and develop a culture that supports adventure and risk taking to ensure residents are open to using self-care assets. There is still significant work required to provide the community with accessible information on how to access assets and help in the community and encourage them to access services this way. There needs to be a system wide change in the health and social care system so that it enables people to self-care better, however increased integration and the development of Tower Hamlets Together presents the opportunity to drive through the changes which need to be made.

Loneliness

- 11.10 The Sub-Committee reviewed the work which has been undertaken in the borough to tackle the issue of loneliness and social isolation. Addressing issues of loneliness was identified in Mental Health Strategy 2013-2019, and was included as one of 10 key themes in the Ageing Well strategy. It is estimated that in Tower Hamlets 16% of over 65s (2,500 residents) are likely to be lonely all or most of the time (referred to as chronic loneliness).
- 11.11 The Sub-Committee received a presentation from Public Health, who informed them that they have delivered two projects in the borough to address issues of loneliness. The first looked at community perspectives on loneliness. Twenty volunteers were trained in community research techniques to find out the thoughts and experiences of loneliness of 600 residents from a wide range of backgrounds and ages. The project identified 8 themes as having an impact on loneliness; mental health and wellbeing, physical health, feeling safe, housing conditions, family, relationships and life experiences, community activities and social networks, culture, faith and cohesion, environment and infrastructure.
- 11.12 The second project looked at loneliness in care homes. This was a befriending scheme based on mutual interests. The Sub-Committee was informed that this project was a success and greatly valued by the care homes, however due to specialist knowledge and time and cost related to supporting volunteers it was not continued beyond the project end date.
- 11.13 In November 2017, a borough-wide stakeholder event was held to feedback the findings from both projects and made a number of recommendations to tackle the issue of loneliness and social isolation further. It was concluded that the logical next step was to embed tackling loneliness throughout Council wide strategies.
- 11.14 The Sub-Committee recommended that identifying loneliness could be incorporated into the social prescribing project and that the Council should follow the outcomes on the London wide strategy on loneliness and explore opportunities to get involved with it. The Sub-Committee would like to be updated on the developments in this area and have requested that it be included on 2018/19 Health Scrutiny work programme.

Maternity Services; Scrutiny Review (progress update)

- 11.15 The Sub-Committee reviewed the progress made on the action plan produced in response to the Maternity Services scrutiny review undertaken in 2016. The scrutiny review brought together representatives from the Council, Tower Hamlets CCG, Barts Health NHS Trust, and community organisations to explore the quality of provision and the

performance of Maternity Services in Tower Hamlets. Through listening to patient feedback the review explored the extent to which women are involved in monitoring and planning services and how accessible and responsive services are for people from different social backgrounds. The Sub-Committee made a number of recommendations to improve Maternity Services in Tower Hamlets.

- 11.16 The Sub-Committee heard a presentation from Alwen Williams, CEO Bart's Health Trust and Kelly Jupp, Maternity Management Team at Bart's Health. Following the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Committee in 2016, a Maternity Partnership Board was set up to address the challenges. The success of the Partnership Board was evidenced in a recent CQC inspection which concluded that there were improvements in five key areas, these were: safety, workforce, staff, partnership and staff wellbeing. As a result of the review the hospital has implemented an abduction policy and has installed 10 secure doors and an electronic baby tag monitoring system. Moreover, the recruitment web page has been revised to include direct contact details of the management team and list live vacancies.
- 11.17 There is a 94% fill rate, one midwife to twenty-eight patients and two labour ward co-ordinators have been recruited. Staff members are required to sign up to both day and night shifts. The hospital has also introduced overnight stays for partners. Finally, staff wellbeing initiatives have been introduced for the midwifery team and wider support staff including administrative workers.

Children & Young People Mental Health Service; Scrutiny Challenge Session (progress update)

- 11.18 The Sub-Committee reviewed the progress made on the action plan produced in response to the Children & Young People Mental Health Service (CAMHS) scrutiny challenge session undertaken in 2016. The challenge session brought together representatives from the council, Tower Hamlets CCG, Tower Hamlets CAMHS, and community organisations to explore the level of provision and the performance of children and young peoples' mental health services in Tower Hamlets. The session focused on how accessible mental health services are for service users from a wide range of backgrounds, how effectively services are promoted and engage with a diverse range of services users, and what gaps exist in the current service provision. The Sub-Committee made fourteen recommendations to improve CAMHS in Tower Hamlet's.
- 11.19 The Sub-Committee were informed that in response the action plan the Council are working with Tower Hamlets CCG and the voluntary sector to strengthen early intervention services. Parent and infant emotion health and wellbeing training was delivered in 2016/17 as part of the Tower Hamlets Together training. A new integrated young people's health and wellbeing service will begin in 2018 and will target young care leavers. Moreover, a co-commissioned specialist Community Adult Mental Health Service was launched to support young people experiencing mental health issues who have been in contact with the youth justice system. Additionally, a pilot has been delivered by Tree4Life, which trained local women in delivering mental health first aid and aims to improve cultural awareness of mental health issues. The 'Flourishing Minds' pilot was also delivered to breakdown cultural barriers and reduce the stigma in mental health. The Children and Families team delivered training sessions for parents at schools to improve engagement with children and families in mental health awareness. Finally, the Council and Tower Hamlets CCG are raising awareness of mental health and available support services to all staff.

NHS Cyber Attack

- 11.20 Jackie Sullivan, Director at Royal London Hospital at Barts Health, together with Sarah Jenson – Chief Information Officer at Barts Health, provided a presentation on the cyber-attack which took place on 12 May 2017 at the NHS Trust.
- 11.21 The Sub-Committee heard that the NHS Trust was vulnerable to the cyber-attack due to a Microsoft Windows vulnerability as all medical equipment ran on a Windows operating system. The virus was initially discovered in the x-ray machine, followed by more calls received indicating that PCs were also defective. Newham was the first site, within Barts Health, to be affected. A decision was made to shut down all technology to protect neighbouring providers and NHS systems. Work undertaken to segregate networks and to schedule engineer visits. Service areas within Barts Health were prioritised, for example, restoring the stroke and heart centres were first priority. Systems were largely restored by 24 May 2017. Since that date significant work was undertaken on recovery plans. The fact that the cyber-attack was treated as a London-wide major incident, as when trauma centres were closed, increased pressure was put on other trauma centres. There were 120 in-patient cancellations, which all would be re-booked and seen before the end of July 2017.

Scrutiny Review; Health and social care provision for Homeless Residents

- 11.22 The Sub-Committee performed a scrutiny review which looked at the provision of health and social care services for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets. Homelessness is a growing and complex problem which reaches right across health, public health, and social care. Homelessness has been a historical problem in Tower Hamlets and continues to be a pressing issue due to reforms to the welfare system, the austerity measures of the current government, rising house prices, rent and fees, and the national housing shortage leading to unaffordability of homes.
- 11.23 The review aimed to develop a clear understanding of the health and social care issues experienced by homeless households in terms of outcomes and service provision with a view to informing the future commissioning and provision of health and social care services for these groups of people.
- 11.24 Specifically the review wanted to answer the following questions:
- What are the main barriers in providing effective health and social care for homeless residents?
 - How do health outcomes for homeless residents differ from the wider population?
 - What is the response to addressing the health and social care issues for these groups from local health and social care commissioners and providers?
 - What more can health and social care providers do to address inequality in access and outcomes for homeless residents?
- 11.25 The Sub-Committee held two meetings as part of this review. The first meeting invited commissioners and providers of health and social care services from the NHS and London Borough of Tower Hamlets to inform the committee of the current services in place to support homeless households. Public Health introduced the Homeless Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which formed the context for the review. This was followed by a presentation from the CCG, East London Foundation Trust, and Barts Health Trust who provided an overview of the different health services and access points in place for homeless residents. Particular attention was given to the role of Health E1 and the Pathways Homeless Team at the Royal London Hospital. The LBTH Commissioning Team and Adult Social Care Team then followed and provided a joint presentation of the social care services available for homeless residents in Tower Hamlets. They were

supported in their presentation from colleagues from Providence Row Housing Association and Lookahead who provide hostel services for LBTH.

- 11.26 The second meeting invited homeless residents and their advocates to share their experiences of accessing and using health and social care services. Presentations were received from Shelter, St Mungos, Groundswell, and homeless residents.

12. Inner North East London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Overview

- 12.1 For 2016/17 and 2017/18 the London Borough of Tower Hamlets held the rotating Chair on the Inner North East London (INEL) Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). This body comprises of London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Hackney, London Borough of Newham and the City of London Corporation (together with LB Waltham Forest as observers).
- 12.2 The JHOSC is tasked with scrutinising health and social care plans and/or decisions that may affect one or more member authority. In accordance with s.245 of the NHS Act 2006 and the Local Authority (Overview and Scrutiny Committees Health Scrutiny Functions) Regulations 2002, the JHOSC is able to refer certain decisions (formal ‘cases for change’) to the Secretary of State if it is felt they have been taken without due consultation and engagement. The JHOSC has jurisdiction over the scrutiny of sub-regional health care planning such as the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs).
- 12.3 During 2017/18 the JHOSC met four times. The committee continued to scrutinise the North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) which represents a significant transformation to NHS healthcare provision at a multi-borough and sub regional level.
- 12.4 Additionally, the JHOSC reviewed proposals for the reconfiguration of North East London Clinical Commissioning Groups (NEL CCG) as they appointed a Single Accountable Officer (SAO) across the seven NEL CCGs. Both of these plans include re-configurations of services that could have an impact on Tower Hamlet’s residents and it is therefore important that JHOSC provides democratic oversight.

12.5 Membership

Name	London Borough
Councillor Clare Harrisson (Chair)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Councillor Susan Masters (Vice-Chair)	London Borough of Newham
Councilman Christopher Boden (Member)	City of London Corporation
Councillor Ann Munn (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Ben Hayhurst (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Yvonne Maxwell (Member)	London Borough of Hackney
Councillor Anthony McAlmont (Member)	London Borough of Newham
Councillor James Beckles (Member)	London Borough of Newham
Councillor Shiria Khatun (Member)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim (Member)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Highlights

Single Accountable Officer

- 12.6 The JHOSC scrutinised proposals for the creation of a SAO across the seven NEL CCGs. The proposed new commissioning arrangements composed of two key aspects; the appointment of a Single Accountable Officer who will also take the STP lead role, and the establishment of new shared governance arrangements to support commissioning across the North East London footprint and at an individual borough level.
- 12.7 The proposals were presented to the JHOSC by Dr Sam Everington (Chair of NHS Tower Hamlets CCG), Dr Clare Highton (Chair of NHS City & Hackney CCG) and Dr Prakash Chandra (Chair of NHS Newham CCG). Following scrutiny of the proposals members of the JHOSC voted against endorsing the appointment of an SAO. The committee sent a letter to the CCG governing bodies which detailed their refusal to endorse the proposals.
- 12.8 The committee were concerned that this reorganisation represented a weakening of local accountability structures. The proposal to appoint a SA was ratified by the CCG governing bodies however the JHOSC was provided with assurances that local accountability would not be lost in the new structure and that wider consultation with key stakeholders would be carried out to test the new commissioning arrangements.

North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan

- 12.9 The JHOSC performed a number of scrutiny reviews on specific elements of the STP, including; digital enablement, mental health and workforce.
- 12.10 The JHOSC considered the role of digital technology in supporting the delivery of the STP. The committee were informed that NEL STP would make better use of Information Technology to help support health and social and community care providers, in order to meet the needs of local people. Digital technology would enable the development of new, sustainable models of care to achieve better outcomes for patients, with a focus on prevention and out of hospital care. Specifically, as part of the STP four work streams have been created to; address server issues at Barts Health Trust, improve how data is shared and utilised across different pathways, improve how data is pooled together with real time data, and enable patients to have access their own medical records and information.
- 12.11 The JHOSC scrutinised the work being undertaken to develop mental health services as part of the North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan. Officers from East London Health and Care partnership (ELHCP) outlined that mental health is a national priority and that investment in this area is as essential as it is in acute illnesses. The STP must deliver the access and quality standards outlined in the mental health Five Year Forward View. Significantly, inner North East London has the highest level of mental illness in the country and there is an increasing demand for mental health services. The STP will allow local partners to develop solutions to the range of issues and provides an opportunity to make mental health an integral part of all the health and social care interventions provided across East London. The Committee were informed that delivery groups have been established to deliver the following areas of work; improve population mental health and wellbeing, improve access to service provision and quality, ensure services have the right capacity to match increasing demand, mental health supporting improved system outcomes and values, commissioning and delivering new models of care.
- 12.12 The JHOSC reviewed the issues surrounding the NHS workforce and asked for assurances that that the recruitment and retention challenges are being met and that

progress is being made in transforming the out of hospital workforce. Given the population growth, there are significant gaps in supply and demand of the NHS workforce. There are pockets in east London which are under doctored. In addition to this the nursing workforce is migrating away due to affordable housing issues. The committee were informed that workforce retention is included as one ELHCPs four core priorities. Health Education England (HEE) established a Local Workforce Action Boards (LWAB) for ELHCP to coordinate and support the workforce requirements of the STP. The national target for increasing the number of GPs is 500. North East London has a target of employing 19 additional GPs. Given the population demand, new roles are to be introduced into primary care including physician associates and care navigators. In secondary care a nursing associate role will be introduced. It was noted that there has been little joined up working with the health service and local authorities on key worker housing. The JHOSC suggested offering workers a suite of benefits such as nursery places, housing, and training to encourage people into entering the profession.

- 12.13 In addition to deep dive reviews the JHOSC also scrutinised the governance arrangements of the STP, the financial strategy and challenges of the STP, the development of Accountable Care Systems, and planned changes to maternity services as part of the STP.

13. Scrutiny Lead for Resources & Chair of Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Councillor Andrew Wood

Overview

- 13.1 This year, the Members of the Grants Sub-Committee focused on ensuring that the overall objectives of the grant scheme were being met based on identified need, that a fair geographical distribution of funding is being proposed, and that the full range of community needs are being met. It aims to support an objective, fair, transparent and co-ordinated approach to grant funding across the Council.
- 13.2 The Sub-Committee held six meetings and focussed on pre-decision scrutiny of the reports being presented to the Grants Determination Sub-Committee. These include reports on grants awards, monitoring of grants performance, grants policy development reports and other reports requested by the Committee.
- 13.3 A further meeting was on held to look at the grants monitoring GIFT system to give members an opportunity to provide feedback and gain insight into the new system.
- 13.4 As articulated in the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, the Council is moving towards a commissioning approach. To this end, the Sub-Committee wanted to look at the arrangements being put in place to support local organisations. The Sub-Committee received a report outlining the co-production support to the voluntary sector to date for commissioned projects relating to Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience, and the Sub-Committee have asked receive another update further into the co-production programme.

13.5 Membership

Name	Role
Councillor Andrew Wood	Chair
Councillor Clare Harrison	Member
Councillor Candida Ronald	Member
Councillor Ayas Miah	Member
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim	Member
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Member
Margherita De Cristofano	Co-opted Member
Sirajul Islam	Co-opted Member

Tower Hamlets Mayor's Air Quality Fund

13.6 This year, the Council implemented the Tower Hamlets Mayor's Air Quality Fund (THMAQF). The Sub-committee supported the recommendation to award £200,000 bid to cover a two year period (17/18 and 18/19). A significant proportion of funds will go into raising awareness about the need to improve Air Quality.

Renewal of Service Agreement with Mudchute Farm and Friends of TH Cemetery Park

13.7 These two facilities are an important part of the community and, although they are owned by the Council, they are managed by a charity organisation. Moreover, they fit within all the Mayoral strategic priorities.

13.8 Members commended the work carried out by the management of those facilities, and stressed how much they improve the community's quality of life.

Royal London Hospital Meanwhile Use Community Garden

13.9 The Committee raised concerns that the selected location for the "Meanwhile use Community Gardens" will be located in an area which has very bad air quality and high air pollution.

13.10 It was noted that after the 2 year lease there is no requirement to continue this as a community garden as that area is part of the life sciences development by the Trust. It was felt that the Council needed to consider what was in the local plan for the life sciences development and find a way to ensure that the Trust continues to keep this running as a community garden so that the Council's original investment is not wasted.

13.11 The report had a lot of details in relation to the relocation but was lacking information on how the garden will be maintained in future and how the Council will establish whether the garden achieved objectives over the 2 year period. It was only mentioned that the organisation that will take over had experience of running such projects and that they work with GP for referrals and schools and that they have a dynamic projects which engages different audiences.

Brick Lane Regeneration Programme Phase 2- Shopfront Programme Grant Payment

13.12 £270,000 had been identified within Brick Lane Regeneration Programme for the shopfront regeneration programme. This programme would be part funded by s106 and part funded by the shopkeepers.

13.13 Members noted that Brick lane is already an area that generates high foot walk and that S106 money should be spent on other projects. However, they were made aware that more revenue would only benefit the area. Moreover, there is discussion to insert this area in the Business Improvement District, which again will increase the revenue area.

Mainstream Grants (MSG) Performance Monitoring Reports

13.14 The Committee received quarterly monitoring reports of project delivery by organisations in receipt of MSG Programme. This included projects that were rated 'red' and 'amber'. The Committee sought assurance on work taking place to support these organisations and ensure targets were being met. The Committee also supported the extension of the current programme until March 2019 to enable co-production and move to a commissioning process.

Recreation activities for young people - Scrutiny Review

13.15 The Committee undertook an in-depth review on opportunities offered by the Council for young people to stay active in the borough. The review links to the strategic aim of reducing childhood obesity and also the development of the Council's Physical Activity and Sports Strategy, which is currently being developed.

13.16 The Committee noted from the outset that there are limited grants available for this but there a range of projects through being delivered by the MSG Programme. The review therefore focused on activities being delivered by the Council and other partner agencies. They also heard about regional best practices from London Sports.

13.17 The draft report outlines recommendations around maximising the use of facilities, which will be further developed by the new Committee.

14. Scrutiny Lead for Place & Chair of Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee – Councillor Helal Uddin

Overview

14.1 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises housing matters impacting on residents or the borough, which includes reviewing the Council's decisions or actions, monitoring performance of service providers and holding them to account, making evidence based recommendations for service improvements.

14.2 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee also considers matters brought to its attention by resident associations or members of the general public and is working to improve this engagement.

Work programme

14.3 This year, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee developed its annual programme, based on discussions with the Chair, members and key stakeholders. In determining the work programme, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee considered priorities of the Council and registered providers and important national and local developments. In particular, the Grenfell tragedy highlighted the need for our residents to enjoy quality housing, which meets fire safety standards. The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee therefore carried out a Fire Safety Scrutiny Review.

Membership

14.4 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee has 6 elected members and 2 co-opted members. These are as follows:

Name	Role
Councillor Helal Uddin	Chair
Councillor John Pierce	Vice Chair
Councillor Andrew Wood	Member
Councillor Gulam Robbani	Member
Councillor Rabina Khan	Member
Councillor Shiria Khatun	Member
Anne Ambrose	Co-opted member, Tenant Representative
Moshin Hamim	Co-opted member, Leaseholder Representative

Highlights

14.5 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee met quarterly and received a quarterly performance reports to monitor the performance of Registered Housing Providers. The Committee members have focused on resident satisfaction levels as a guide to the level service provided.

14.6 The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee also received three spotlights sessions:

- Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance
- Cabinet Member for Development & Renewal
- Impact of short-term lets (eg Air BnB) in the borough.

14.7 The Sub-committee also considered how the Council is meeting the needs for temporary accommodation through its acquisition programme. In terms of new legislation, the Sub-committee also considered the Council's readiness to comply with the Homeless Reduction Act, which comes into force in April 2018. The Sub-committee welcomed the preparation in place, particularly around training frontline staff and will continue to monitor the Council's activities to comply with statutory requirements and residents' needs. The Committee also considered the draft London Plan, to raise issues around local housing targets, environmental considerations and feedback via Housing Options' response into the public consultation.

14.8 A significant focus of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee this year has been fire safety and received a presentation in July outlining the Council's response to reviewing its housing stock.

Fire Safety Scrutiny Review

14.9 Following the Grenfell tragedy, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee has carried out a review of fire safety issues in residential high rises to identify gaps in current policies or practices. The Review aimed to:

- Drive improvement in fire safety policies, practices and compliance in existing and new developments
- Clarify roles and responsibilities across the public and private owned high rises
- Amplify the voice and concerns of the resident tenants.

14.10 The Committee held 3 evidence gathering sessions, which were based around the following themes:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Preventions Measures
- Emergency Responses

- Resident engagement

14.11 The Review received evidence from Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Providers, the London Fire Brigade, a private developer and officers from Housing Options, Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health and Legal. The Review also considered the residents reviews through written evidence from tenants associations, petitions, complaints, member's enquiries and freedom of information requests.

14.12 The Review has made 20 recommendations covering areas around how the Council can work better with private developers and building owners, improve communication to local people, lobby government for additional funding for retrofitting sprinkler systems and develop and review performance measures in relation to fire safety.

15. Looking ahead

15.1 Scrutiny plays an important role in challenging performance and driving improvement and needs to be as effective as possible. Therefore, the Committee has formally requested a response from the executive on the Department of Community & Local Government Select Committee review of local authorities scrutiny function. The report will be presented at the first Overview and Scrutiny Meeting of the next municipal year. This report presents an opportunity to improve how scrutiny operates in Tower Hamlets recognising good practices and improving on these.

16. How to get involved

16.1 Residents can play a key role in challenging service delivery and helping to shape improvements. There are four main ways you can get involved with Tower Hamlet's Overview and scrutiny processes:

- attending Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings (or one of its subcommittees). These all public meetings and therefore open to any local resident who wishes to attend. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are now live cast through the Council website.
- giving evidence to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or one of its sub-committees, or a review or challenge session established by one of these committees, on any issue or matter that appears on an agenda or that is being scrutinised;
- applying to join the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or one of its subcommittees as a co-opted member when a vacancy arises.
- proposing topics for scrutiny by one of the committees.

16.2 In terms of proposing topics for scrutiny, the Council actively seeks greater public participation in proposing topics for scrutiny through the Council's website. These topics will be considered alongside proposals from councillors to develop the work programme for the next municipal year.