

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.35 P.M. ON MONDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2019

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

Members Present:

Councillor James King (Chair)	
Councillor Sufia Alam (Vice-Chair)	– Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	– Scrutiny Lead for Health & Adults
Councillor Dipa Das	– Scrutiny Lead for Housing & Regeneration
Councillor Marc Francis	
Councillor Tarik Khan	– Scrutiny Lead for Resources & Finance
Councillor Eve McQuillan	– Bethnal Green Ward
Councillor Bex White	– Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety & Environment
Councillor Andrew Wood	

Others Present:

Mayor John Biggs	– (Executive Mayor)
Councillor David Edgar	– (Cabinet Member for Environment)

Officers Present:

Adam Boey	– (Senior Strategy & Policy Manager - Corporate)
Afazul Hoque	– (Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Dan Jones	– (Divisional Director, Public Realm)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
David Tolley	– (Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

The following Councillor declared an interest that must be declared in Agenda Item 7 (Item 6.2 the report on the outcome of the public consultation on the closure of Raine's School and the expansion of Oaklands School:

- Cllr Bex White

2. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on June 24th, 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

2.1 Monday, 23rd September 2019

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

3. TUESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2019

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

5. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

Noted

6. UNRESTRICTED MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Strengthening our Consultation Process - Presentation

The Committee received a presentation from the Mayor on Strengthening the Council's Consultation Process. The main points of the discussion are outlined below:

The Committee:

- Noted that it is important to ensure a consistent approach across the Council regarding the Consultation Process. Therefore, Council has set

of consultation principles for officers which (i) gives clear guidance to directorates on conducting consultations; and (ii) demonstrates the Council's desire to engage more effectively across the Borough;

- Was advised that the Council aims to (i) to consult with as wide a group of the community at the earliest stage in the policy forming process; (ii) make it easier for the public to contribute their views; (iii) to use clear language in consultation documents;
- Noted therefore that (i) the quality of the training to officers is essential and (ii) it is important to recognise some of the results and the outcomes of a consultation exercise may not satisfy everyone;
- Noted that when planning an engagement process officers need to recognise diversity, identify any potential barriers and design the process to minimise barriers where possible e.g. Literacy levels and dominance of oral culture;
- Commented that it wished to see the final versions of any consultation before it goes out;
- Noted that submissions to any consultation need to be in both soft and hard copy formats;
- Noted communication materials should be jargon free and in plain English; available in accessible formats and provided in alternative language(s) as appropriate. Also given the strong oral tradition in many community's events where individuals can discuss the issues first-hand are invaluable.
- Noted it was important to use (i) existing community networks and forms of communication to publicise events; and (ii) opportunities to align or hold combined events for greater impact;
- Noted that from the outset officers are advised to be clear about the scope and purpose of the engagement process e.g. will the aim be to Inform the decision-making or service delivery;
- Noted that for a consultation process to be fair and lawful consultees must have enough information to ensure they understand the issues and can give informed responses;
- Noted that any consultation about policies or implementation plans should be at the formative stage;
- Commented that it would wish to see more consultations on Green spaces as they provide a wide variety of environmental, economic and social benefits;
- Noted that each consultation will feature both an internal and an external evaluation.

As a result of discussions on the report the Committee **RESOLVED** that it:

1. Wanted to be notified about all consultations in the future;
2. Wished to see (i) paper templates; and (ii) examples of good consultations in every consultation pack; and
3. Want copies of the guidelines for consultation on green spaces.

6.2 Transport Strategy and Parking Services - Presentation

The Committee received and noted a presentation on the Transport Strategy and Parking Services. The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Welcomed (i) the involvement of more seldom heard group's; (ii) the level of engagement had been encouraging; and (iii) the fact that the findings had been shared with Cabinet Members;
- Noted on the issue of air quality that Transport for London (TfL) and LBTH have worked together in the development of (i) liveable streets programme and (ii) accessible stations;
- Noted that as there are several major arterial roads running through the Borough, the expansion of the ultra-low emission zone will have a positive impact on air quality;
- Commented that criminal opportunities and risks are influenced by environmental conditions and with improved street lighting and cleanliness being a tangible alteration to the public realm that can bring a change in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of residents and potential offenders **e.g.** Lighting improvements may encourage increased street usage which intensifies natural surveillance;
- Noted that the Public Realm and Community Safety Teams are working to address the issues of Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Commented that the Strategy seems to focus on cycling/walking and not supporting growth in LBTH for next 20 years **e.g.** the proposal by the Canary Wharf Group to build a new underground rail line connecting Euston Station to Canary Wharf and the use of the Thames including improved access across it. In response it was noted that would be part of the consultation between LBTH and TfL;
- Commented that the Strategy does not fully address the creation places where motorized vehicle use is reduced to create an urban environment where most destinations can be reached by (i) walking; (ii) cycling; and (iii) public transport;
- Expressed the view that LBTH needs to apply leverage on TfL to (i) measure; and (ii) justify the impact of TfL's changes to bus services as not everyone can walk or use cycles instead of cars. In response it was noted that these concerns would be raised with TfL;
- Noted that LBTH will be looking to (i) address "rat runs"; (ii) introduce charges for parking permits based on engine sizes; and (iii) expanding "pay to park";
- Noted that LBTH has consulted with those in the community who use cars as a key part of their business;
- Noted that LBTH are working on the street scene to limit driver's ability to drive in a manner that is dangerous;
- Noted that the Strategy will shape parking and include the introduction of new technology to facilitate improvements in this area; and

- Commented that it wished to consider how LBTH should respond to transport demand which is outside of its control e.g. river crossing; bus travel; river transport and arterial routes.

As a result of discussions on the report the Committee **RESOLVED** that it wanted to:

- Receive a report by the end of this year on how the Council should respond to transport demand which is outside of its control.

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6.3 **Gambling policy post consultation**

The Committee noted that, as a Licensing Authority, the Council must review the existing Gambling Policy every three years. Given the current Policy has been in effect since 5 December 2016, it is soon to expire and is now due for a review. The policy sets out in detail how the licensing authority will discharge its licensing functions under the Gambling Act 2005.

Subject to agreement, the Policy will be presented to Full Council for adoption under the provisions set out by the Council's Constitution.

Accordingly, the Policy is before the Committee for comment and the main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows:

- Member's experience in the Licensing Committee is that LBTH is not able to implement the Policy to its fullest extent because of the threat of legal action – there seems to be a limit to LBTH's ability to implement its own Policy?;
- Regarding the location of gambling premises and their proximity to locations where children, young and vulnerable people are located, the Committee noted that the use of the term 'near' is subjective, and could be better/further defined, or quantified to provide greater certainty of what is expected;
- While there has not been any new licenses applications for a number of years, there was comment about measures to stop licenses in poorer areas;
- The Committee wanted to know about the number of risk assessments that were sought from operators – the Policy identifies this as important information for informing the authority about operators' awareness about their local communities; and
- The Committee noted Gamcare's submission recommended that developing a risk map is an important first step in identifying risks in the borough – and that such detailed information on risk is yet not presented in the Policy.

As a result of discussions on the above the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED to note the report and the points raised above.

7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Committee received and noted those questions to be presented at Cabinet by the Chair in relation to unrestricted business on the agenda attached as appendices to these minutes.

8. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Councillor Dipa Das Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration

Noted that Members:

1. Had, had the opportunity to undertake site visits to local markets in order to look at how these could be improved; and
2. Would have the opportunity at the next meeting question the Mayor on the Housing Allocations Policy.

Councillor Tarik Khan Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance

Noted that the Lead Member had, had a series of meetings with Neville Murton (Corporate Director of Resources) and Kevin Bartle (Divisional Director of Finance), Procurement and Audit and spotlight sessions were being planned to consider the (i) Rent Scheme; and (ii) Budget.

Accordingly, it was agreed that the Scrutiny Lead Members should review the "Budget Pressures" with their opposite number within the Cabinet.

Councillor Bex White Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety and Environment

Noted that there had been a session last week focusing on "Resident Engagement with Safer neighbourhood Panels". It was noted that over 20 residents had attended and the use of digital engagement had enabled the active participation by all those in attendance. There would be a report to the 16th December 2019 meeting looking at how to improve engagement.

In addition, the following Councillors were asked to provide a written update for circulation with the minutes:

- (i) Kahar Chowdhury Scrutiny Lead for Health and Adults;
- (ii) Sufia Alam Scrutiny Lead for Children and Education

9. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Noted that (i) there had been a series of interviews with a view to appoint two members of the public to serve as co-opted members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and (ii) subject to the necessary references two new co-opted members should be joining the Committee this year.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As 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.

11. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items

12. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

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

Nil items

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

Nil items

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor James King
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**