

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2020

**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’s & 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 Bex White	– Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety & Environment
Councillor Andrew Wood	

Co-opted Members Present:

Halima Islam	– Co-Optee
James Wilson	– Co-Optee

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Sabina Akhtar	– Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit
Mayor John Biggs	

Apologies:

Councillor Eve McQuillan

Officers Present:

Sharon Godman	– (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)
Janet Fasan	– (Divisional Director, Legal, Governance)
Teresa Heaney	– (Interim Customer Services Programme Director)
Dan Jones	– (Divisional Director, Public Realm)
Daniel Kerr	– (Strategy and Policy Manager)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair indicated that he thought it appropriate that the Order of Business be varied:

Accordingly the Chair Moved the following motion for the consideration of Committee Members, and it was: -

RESOLVED

To vary the order of business to consider Item 8.3, One O'clock Club - Verbal Update as the first item to be considered.

To aid clarity, the minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

Nil items

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

3.1 27th January, 2020

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27th January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

3.2 18th February, 2020

The Chair **Moved** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18th February 2020 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 REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

As detailed in Item 3.2 the Committee noted that the decision made by the Mayor in Cabinet on Wednesday, 29th January 2020 in respect of agenda item 6.2 'Report on the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposal to close Raine's Foundation School' had 'called in' by co-optees of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Dr Phillip Rice and Mr Ahmed Hussain ('Call-in Members').

7. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

7.1 Customer Service - One Stop Closure and Digitalisation

Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit); Dan Jones (Divisional Director, Public Realm); and Teresa Heaney (Interim Customer Services Programme Director) gave an overview of the changes taking place since the closure of One Stop Shops to the Committee. The main points of the discussions on the report may be summarised as follows:
The Committee:

- Was especially interested in (i) how the closure of One Stop Shops had been delivered, (ii) those issues that have arisen; and (iii) the plans that have been put in place to deliver further improvements;
- Noted the most of the popular services can now be accessed online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without having to phone the Council or to visit a Council building;
- Noted that transitional arrangements are now in place, with improved communication, signage and training for staff;
- Was informed that (i) if residents wanted support in the Idea Store's then they can go online with free computers; scanners and wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi); (ii) in the Borough's Idea Stores assistance is also available to help them (do with); and (iii) for those that need more support an appointment service was available at Rushmead (do for);
- Noted that where people 'walk in' they are not turned away but they are advised about the on-line services and encourage to self-service. Whilst those who lack a device or confidence are supported as they would be at an Idea Store;
- Noted that where a 'walk in' needs a higher level of support this is provided although this might change if the appointment service becomes busier;
- Was advised that this transformation has (i) delivered considerable positive changes for residents; and (ii) will continue to improve the way residents interact with Council services;

- Noted that there had apparently been early challenges where staff in Idea Stores had not been providing the correct messages or support. Therefore, additional training had been rolled out and skills have been bolstered by the influx of staff from One Stop Shops;
- Noted that there had been a number of issues with the “virtual permits” system and how it has impacted upon customers. Therefore, paper permits for those who really need them are now available and there will be continued support for colleagues in parking to ensure the customer journey and advice is improved;
- Indicated that they had significant concerns about the way these changes are being implemented and the way it is impacting on the Borough’s residents e.g. service users have apparently been turned away from Rushmead in spite of assurances that every effort is made to accommodate residents who turn up at Rushmead;
- Had concerns about the support that is being given to residents and the skillsets of staff in place to support residents;
- Wanted (i) there to be support for older people and those whose first language is not English; (ii) there to be a feedback loop for customers using the digital hubs; and (iii) statistics on staffing levels at the Idea Stores;
- Expressed concern that some officers seemed unaware of the poor experiences reported to councillors by residents and wanted the service to gather better intelligence from residents;
- Noted that parking permits are now ‘virtual’, paperless permits. This means that residents will no longer receive a paper permit to put in their motor vehicle. Instead, parking officers will be able to check on the system if any vehicle has a valid permit. However, Members expressed concerns about this ‘virtual’ system as it was felt to be a difficult system to use and Members were alarmed at the number of residents who are apparently (i) unaware of this new system; and (ii) are unable to access the ‘virtual’ system to get a permit;
- Indicated that there does not seem to be a clear criterion for who should receive paper or a ‘virtual’ permit;
- Commented on the poor response time for residents’ requests for guidance and support; and
- Observed that it is accepted that this has been one of the key challenges and expressed disappointment that officers had been unable to confirm a timescale of when this issue will be fixed and would like to see a better plan in place to address this.

The Chair Moved and it was:

RESOLVED to:

Request:

1. A report on the Parking Service to include (i) details of the number of older residents who had gone from using the paper scratch cards to “virtual permits”; and (ii) a comparative analysis of permits issued

since the introduction of “virtual’ permits” against the same period in 2019;

2. That (i) there should be support for older people and those whose first language is not English; (ii) there needs to be a feedback loop for customers using the digital hubs; and (iii) statistics on staffing levels at the Idea Stores should be made available to the Committee.

8. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: Premises Charges

The Committee received a report that provided an overview of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Premises Charges and Community Benefit Rent Reduction Scheme undertaken by the Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance and made six recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The main points of the discussions on the report may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Thanked Councillor Candida Ronald (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector) for her attendance at the session;
- Noted that the scrutiny challenge session had aimed to (i) assess the effectiveness of the scheme in mitigating any potential impacts on voluntary and community sector organisations following the introduction of premises charges; and (ii) whether the scheme goes far enough to ensure that there is a thriving voluntary and community sector in Tower Hamlets;
- Was informed that the session had been chaired by Councillor Tarik Khan (Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance) and had been attended by council officers, partners and community organisations who contributed to the session;
- Recognised that the Voluntary and Community Sector play an important role in the Council meeting its duty under the Act through providing among other things employment, key services and community spaces for residents which make a positive impact in the lives of residents through helping eliminate discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people.
- Observed that the report made six recommendations relating to several key areas where the Council can make changes to improve an organisations ability to operate and provide services for residents. The recommendations also aim to improve transparency around community buildings in the Borough and to raise the Council’s recognition of the value these buildings have to voluntary and community sector organisations;
- Noted that it is the role of councillors to consider issues that impact community and its residents; and
- Was informed that this report and recommendations aim to highlight the unique and powerful role of that the VCS in the fabric of the

community which contributes to improving outcomes for local people and reducing dependency on public services.

The Chair Moved and it was:

RESOLVED to agree the report

8.2 Progress update from Children's and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee - Presentation

The Committee received an update on the work of the Children's and Education Sub-Committee. The main points of the discussions on the update may be summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- Noted that the decision to establish the Children's and Education Sub-Committee had been taken in order to improve the alignment of the Councils scrutiny structure with the Council's key strategic priorities;
- Noted that the Children's and Education Sub-Committee also intended to continue to provide effective support and challenge for Children's Services following the achievement of the 'good' Ofsted rating;
- Noted that the decision to create the Children's and Education Sub-Committee has proven to be especially useful as there has been a number of significant issues which have needed the resource of a dedicated committee to ensure that effective scrutiny is carried out;
- Noted that the Children's and Education Sub-Committee has focused on the (i) on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory proposal to close Raines Church of England Foundation School, school exclusions; (ii) Special educational needs and disability (SEND); (iii) School improvement and the role of Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP); (iv) Youth service provision for girls; (v) Children's social care improvement – 6 months post Ofsted; and (vi) The decision to close the Victoria Park One O'clock club.
- Noted that in the final meetings of this municipal year, the Sub-Committee will consider

- (i) SEND Transport Review;
- (ii) Primary School review; and
- (iii) A challenge session on cyberbullying.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:

RESOLVED to agree the update

8.3 One O'clock Club - Verbal Update

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Following due consideration and receipt of legal advice the decision was taken to exclude the public from the meeting for a short period of time. This

was to facilitate the discussion of the information in the report that could prejudice the commercial interests of a third party. Due consideration was given to the impact on the Council should such information be released into the public domain and therefore it was considered that the public interest in knowing the information was outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption.

The Committee agreed to adopt the following motion

“That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from part of the Presentation on the grounds that it contains information defined as Exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972.”

The Committee reviewed the decision to close the One O'clock club in Victoria Park. This had been initially considered by the Children's Sub-Committee in December and had then been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether this should have been a 'key decision'.

The Chair Moved and it was:

RESOLVED that on the basis of the information reviewed there was no reason to believe that the position taken was incorrect

9. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

The Committee received and noted a report that provided an update of recent and upcoming Overview & Scrutiny Committee activity.

10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

As per attached appendices

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

Nil items

12. 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.

13. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items

14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

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

Nil items

16. 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**

Item 6.1 - Liveable Streets Wapping consultation outcome report	
Questions	Response
<p>1. In the report on the Wapping Liveable Streets Consultation (Appendix D), opposition is higher than elsewhere for 4b, 5a and 5b, particularly for residents within the immediate area. What analysis has been done of the difference in support for these elements of the scheme compared to the other elements, and has the proposed scheme been amended to take these into account?</p>	<p>Question 4b is in relation to footway widening and parking changes. From within the consultation area responses, only 13% were unsupportive of the proposals. Comments received in relation to being unsupportive were because of the reduction in parking and the bus gate (which is not part of this scheme).</p> <p>As part of the design we have included an additional loading bay on Wapping High Street.</p> <p>Question 5a and 5b are in relation to the school initiatives. Of the respondents who answered 'neutral or don't know', there was an increase to 34% and 30% respectively. Comments received in relation to this answer were that they didn't have children attending these schools. Those who were unsupportive were very low at 13% and 9% respectively.</p> <p>As part of the scheme we will continue to work with the schools to ensure works help to improve safety outside the school and encourage sustainable travel.</p>

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Gender break-down of young people by Youth Hut

Youth Hubs - In-house:	Address:
Columbia Youth Centre	27 Columbia Road, E2 7QB
Collingwood Youth Centre	Collingwood Street, E1 5RT
Haileybury Youth Centre	2 Ben Johnson Road, E1 3FQ
Tramshed	Digby Street, E2 0LS
Wapping Youth Centre	Tench Street, E1W 2QD
Christian Street	30 Challoner Walk, E1 1AZ
Limehouse Youth Centre	Limehouse Causeway, E14 8BN
St Andrews Wharf	Masthouse Terrace, Britannia Road, E14 3RW
Commissioned Providers	Address
Osmani Youth Centre	58 Underwood Road, E1 5AW
Newark Youth Centre	Exmouth Community Hall, Cornwood Drive, E1 0PW
Society Links	80 John Fisher Street, E1 8JX
Poplar Harca	Eastside Youth Centre, 6 Parnell Road, Bow, E3 2RB
	Linc Youth Centre, 70 Fern Street, E3 3PR
	Ian Mikardo Youth Centre, 60 William Guy Gardens, E3 3LF
	St Paul's Way Youth Centre, 83 St Pauls Way, E3 4AJ
	Detached Pilot - Spotlight Youth Centre, 30 Hay Currie Street, E14 6GB S&D
Poplar Harca	Spotlight Youth Centre, 30 Hay Currie Street, E14 6GB
	The Workhouse, 116 Polar High Street, E14 0AF

In-house services breakdown

Gender	Contacts
Male	1833
Female	370
Total	2203

Commissioned services breakdown

Gender	Contacts
Male	3083
Female	1603
Total	4686

Service Wide

Gender	Contacts
Male	4916
Female	1973
Total	6889

› (April 2019 to January 2020)

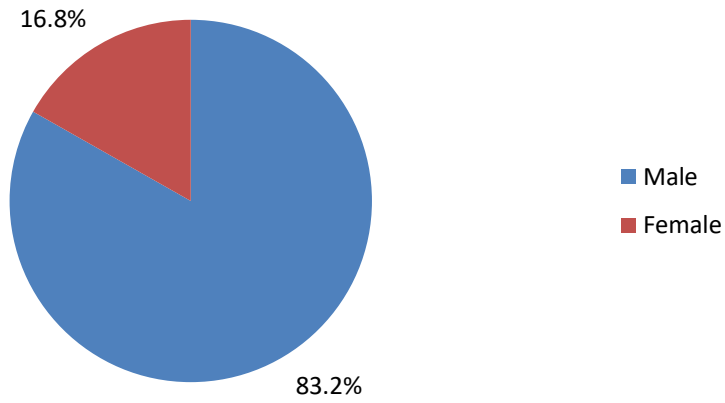
Ward	Male	%	Female	%
Weavers	272	87	40	13
Bethnal Green	281	92	22	7
Stepney Green	573	86	91	14
Bethnal Green	193	92	15	7
Wapping	80	82	17	18
Whitechapel	258	82	54	17
Limehouse	92	61	58	39
Island Gardens	84	53	73	46
Spitalfields & Banglatown	162	70	69	30
Stepney Green	187	75	58	23
Shadwell	227	61	140	38
Bow East	337	70	141	29
Bromley North	350	69	148	29
Bromley South	262	59	177	40
Mile End	385	78	104	21
Bow West	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lansbury	878	55	706	44
Poplar	295	82	60	17

Percentage
83.2%
16.8%
100%

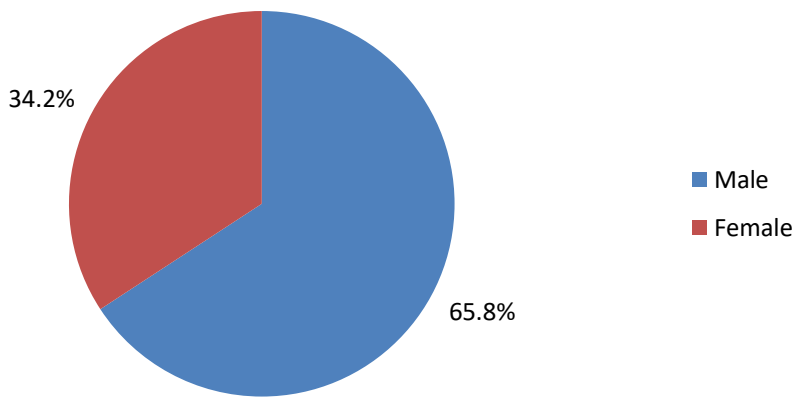
Percentage
65.8%
34.2%
100%

Percentage
71.4%
28.6%
100%

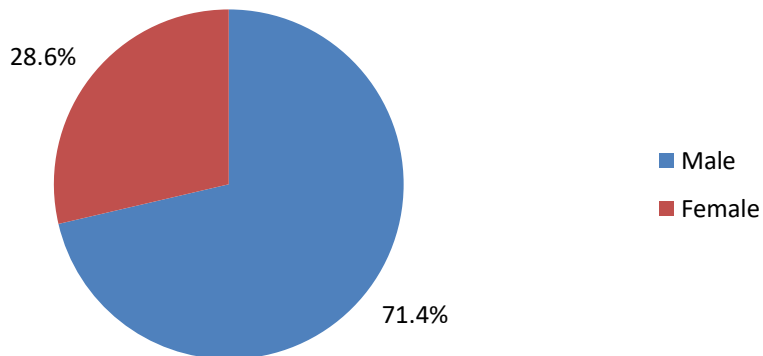
In-house services breakdwon



Commissioned services breakdown



Service Wide breakdown



Youth Service Performance April 20

Contracted Provision	Contacts			Participants	
	Full year target	January 80%		Full year target	January
		Actual	%		
Newark Youth London	267	248	93	160	196
Osmani Trust	267	231	86	160	123
Society Links	267	370	138	160	164
Poplar Harca St Pauls Way	267	496	186	160	179
Poplar Harca Workhouse	267	358	134	160	204
Poplar Harca Spotlight	267	1608	602	160	654
Poplar Harca Ian Mikardo	267	506	189	160	271
Poplar Harca Linc	267	447	167	160	180
Poplar Harca Eastside	267	481	180	160	175
Tower Project	100	71	71	50	49
Sub- Total	2505	4816	192	1443	2195
In-house Provision					
Columba Road	323	335	104	194	204
Collingwood	323	304	94	194	221
Haileybury	647	665	103	388	305
Limehouse	485	153	32	291	74
St Andrews Wharf	323	166	51	194	52
Wapping	323	97	30	194	45
Christian Street	485	314	65	291	289
Tramshed	323	212	66	194	120
A Team Arts	334	161	48	200	85
Participation Team	267	95	36	160	59
Sub-Total	3835	2502	65	2301	1454
Total	6340	7318	115	3744	3649

2019 to January 2020

y 80%	Recorded outcomes			Accredited outcomes		
	Full year target	January 80%		Full year target	January 80%	
	%	Actual	%	%	Actual	%
122	96	62	64	48	34	71
77	96	75	78	48	22	46
102	96	95	99	48	82	170
112	96	137	142	48	33	69
127	96	92	96	48	39	81
408	96	269	280	48	66	137
169	96	137	142	48	51	106
112	96	179	186	48	49	102
109	96	137	142	48	48	100
98	36	34	94	18	15	83
152	866	1217	141	433	439	101
105	116	182	156	58	54	93
114	116	129	111	58	95	163
79	233	207	89	116	165	142
25	175	21	12	87	14	16
27	116	6	5	58	30	52
23	116	22	19	58	0	0
99	175	8	5	87	0	0
62	116	139	119	58	79	136
42	120	28	23	60	29	48
37	96	33	34	48	14	29
63	1381	775	56	690	480	70
97	2246	1992	89	1123	919	82

Gender breakdown of Youth Workers April 2019 to January 2020)

Staff List	Male	%	Female	%
Saw	3	75	1	25
Limehouse	4	66	2	33
Tramshed	4	100	0	0
Haileybury	5	56	4	44
Wapping	5	71	2	29
christian st	3	75	1	25
Collingwood	3	60	2	40
Columbia	3	75	1	25
Total	30		13	

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Item 6.3 - Determination of School Admission Arrangements for 2021/22	
Questions	Response
<p>1. How are TH parents living on the Boroughs boundaries informed about school choices in neighbouring Boroughs?</p>	<p>The Council’s website, school admissions booklet and its online application system provides families with access to information about schools in Tower Hamlets, neighbouring boroughs and across London.</p> <p>Tower Hamlets is also part of the Pan London School Admissions System that enables families to apply for schools in any of the 33 London boroughs through a single online portal. Applications and decisions are then co-ordinated across the 33 London boroughs. This removes the potential for multiple offers and ensures that as many children as possible secure a place at a preferred school at the earliest opportunity.</p>
<p>2. How do we work with neighbouring Boroughs on school place planning like this?</p>	<p>The Council works very closely with its neighbours and other boroughs across London on school place planning. It has joined together with other London boroughs to commission its pupil (school roll) projections through the GLA, providing access to data on all pupils in London. This enables the modelling of population movements across borough boundaries and ensures more accurate information for planning purposes.</p> <p>The Council is also a member of the School Roll Projections Liaison Group, which brings London LAs together, to gather intelligence, share ideas and develop practice on dealing with the various school place planning and development challenges.</p>

3. Some parents point out that those living on the edge of catchment areas are disadvantaged by a low priority ranking for schools that may be close but over a catchment boundary. Other boroughs do not have catchment areas and instead rely on the closest school principle across the entire borough, which disadvantages fewer parents. Has any consideration been given to this approach in Tower Hamlets?

The Council previously operated the 'nearest school' system prior to moving to 'catchment areas' in 2013.

The catchment area system was introduced in recognition of the fact that, with its changing demographic, primary school provision in Tower Hamlets was not uniform or adequately matched to the demand across the borough. The aim was to achieve the following objectives:

- Create a pattern in pupil admissions that ensures a more even distribution across the available borough's school place provision;
- Use geographical boundaries/obstacles as area boundaries to allow for safe walking journeys;
- Reduce the necessity for families who do not get a place at their preferred schools to have to attend a school more than the statutory distance (two miles) from their home.

Since its introduction the catchment area system has proven very successful. Tower Hamlets has amongst the best outcomes for children applying to schools in London. This is detailed in paras. 3.11 – 3.12 of the cabinet report.

Item 6.5 - Quarterly Performance & Improvement Monitoring – Q3 2019/20	
Questions	Response
<p>1. For the Percentage of 16-17 year olds in education, employment or training there is no explanation as to why they are below target (other than the numbers are below the target). Does the service have an understanding of why they are below target?</p>	<p>The service has been concentrating efforts on its statutory obligation to track the destinations of all young people in the cohort (activity survey). The deadline to submit the results of the activity survey to 15billionebp (the company who calculate the official annual NEET results) is the end of February.</p> <p>Provisional statistics from the service show that the 2019-20 annual outturn for the percentage of young people in education, employment and training is now above target, having risen to 94.1 per cent.</p> <p>The service is tracking the drivers behind the number of young people in the NEET and unknown categories including any specific sub-categories, such as the high proportion of young people with Special Educational Needs (5.5 per cent).</p>
<p>2. For the Households prevented from becoming homeless, the reason given for being off target is that the service has 56 days to assess an application, and therefore some applications received in the last quarter are still going through the process. The same reason was given in the Q2 report. Was the target met for Q2 after the 56 day threshold was taken into account, and if not, what are the reasons?</p>	<p>The 56 days target wasn't met for many of the cases that approached the service but it should be noted that a blanket policy should not be applied, because work to prevent homeless could continue even after the 56 days e.g. if household can</p>

	<p>remain in their existing accommodation pending a resolution of their housing situation. The target is a guide.</p> <p>We are currently not meeting the target primarily due to backlog of work that the service is dealing with. Measures and additional staffing resources have been put in place to tackle the backlog. The aim is to clear the backlog of assessments within the next 9-12 months.</p>														
<p>3. Page 115 Council staff turnover rate? Do we have a breakdown of staff turnover rates by directorate/department?</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1346 730 1525 762">Directorate</th> <th data-bbox="1771 730 1995 802">Staff Turnover (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 807 1435 839">Place</td> <td data-bbox="1827 807 1939 839">18.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 844 1525 876">Governance</td> <td data-bbox="1827 844 1939 876">14.44%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 880 1648 912">Children and Culture</td> <td data-bbox="1827 880 1939 912">10.12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 917 1469 949">Services</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 954 1503 986">Resources</td> <td data-bbox="1827 954 1939 986">9.77%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1346 991 1615 1061">Health, Adults and Community</td> <td data-bbox="1827 991 1939 1023">9.73%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Directorate	Staff Turnover (%)	Place	18.07%	Governance	14.44%	Children and Culture	10.12%	Services		Resources	9.77%	Health, Adults and Community	9.73%
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