

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2019-20

21/09/2020



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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (OSC) Annual Report for 2019-20. This year has been marked by a number of changes as we aimed to drive improvement in the Council's scrutiny function. As we started the year, I challenged Members to think of ways to strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny and ensure we support the Council to deliver the best outcomes for our residents. In response we delivered the following:

- Adjusted the portfolio areas of Scrutiny Leads to mirror the portfolio areas of Cabinet Leads. This enabled us to be better aligned to the strategic priorities of the Council and aptly placed to respond to residents' concerns.
- Introduced a Children's & Education Sub-Committee to ensure robust scrutiny arrangements were in place to support the continuous improvement in Children's Services following the significant work which was delivered to achieve a 'good' Ofsted rating.
- Delivered a work programme which focused on fewer issues in greater detail and allowed us to add real value to policy development.
- Allocated more time on our agendas for pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet papers which facilitated a greater impact on the decision-making process.
- Nurtured an organisational culture which supports scrutiny to play a key role in the Council's governance and decision making. We worked closely with the Council's Cabinet Leads and Corporate Directors to encourage their buy-in and have open and honest conversations about key issues and identify where scrutiny can add value. We also invited all non-executive councillors to feed into the development of our work programme and invited them to Scrutiny Challenge Sessions and Reviews throughout the year. We recognised that everyone that works in the Council has a role to play in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny; however, it is important that this is led and owned by Members.
- Revised terms of references for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Sub-Committees as part of the Council's review of its Constitution. This helped to bring better focus to the work of our Committees and allowed us to be clear about the outcomes we were trying to achieve and therefore make better recommendations.

As you read through this report, you will hear about the wide ranging and extensive work programme we have delivered. Throughout all of this, reflecting the voice of residents in the Council's decision-making process and policy development has been one of our main aims. As we developed our work programme, we launched an online form for residents to suggest topics for our consideration. We used technology to help us engage seldom heard groups in our Challenge Session on Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels, webcast all our OSC meetings, and held some scrutiny meetings at different locations across the borough.

As we approached the close of the scrutiny year the country was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting unprecedented challenges for the Council and our residents. As the resources of the Council were redirected to support residents, OSC adapted its work programme to support the Council in these efforts and lead on local-led scrutiny of the operational response and recovery plans. I'm very proud of the work we achieved in this challenging time and encourage you to read the findings and recommendations we have put forward in our report: *Review of London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Response to COVID-19*.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the Committee Members and Officers for their contribution at our meetings in the past year. I hope you find this report interesting and informative, and hope that you will be inspired to engage with the OSC next year.



**Cllr James King,
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Overview & Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets 2019-20

Membership

Scrutiny Committees

For 2019-20, OSC remains the main Member-led Body, which holds the executive decision makers to account through scrutinising issues of strategic importance and key topics in detail. To support this arrangement OSC has continued with three sub-committees and two scrutiny leads covering portfolio areas. These include:

Committee	Role
Overview & Scrutiny Committee OSC's terms of reference can be found here: http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s171017/Part%20B%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions%20and%20Decision%20Making%20Procedures.pdf	
Councillor James King	Chair
Councillor Kahar Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Health and Adults
Councillor Sufia Alam	Scrutiny Lead for Children and Education
Councillor Dipa Das	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Tarik Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Finance & Resources
Councillor Bex White	Scrutiny Lead for Environment & Community Safety
Councillor Marc Francis	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Member
Halima Islam	Co-opted Member
James Wilson	Co-opted Member
Health & Adults Sub-Committee Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee's terms of reference can be found here: http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s171017/Part%20B%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions%20and%20Decision%20Making%20Procedures.pdf	
Councillor Kahar Choudhury	Chair
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Denise Jones	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Member

David Burbidge	Co-opted Member
Sue Kenten	Co-opted Member
Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee	
Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee's terms of reference can be found here: http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s171017/Part%20B%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions%20and%20Decision%20Making%20Procedures.pdf	
Councillor Sufia Alam	Chair
Councillor Shah Ameen	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Kyrsten Perry	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Helal Uddin	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Member
Neil Cunningham	Co-opted Member
Joanna Hannan	Co-opted Member
Fatiha Kassouri	Co-opted Member
Dr Phillip Rice	Co-opted Member
Khoyrul Shaheed	Co-opted Member
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee	
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee's terms of reference can be found here: http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s171017/Part%20B%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions%20and%20Decision%20Making%20Procedures.pdf	
Councillor Dipa Das	Chair
Councillor Shah Ameen	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Kyrsten Perry	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Helal Uddin	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Andrew Wood	Scrutiny Member
Councillor Marc Francis	Scrutiny Member
Ann Ambrose	Co-opted Member
Moshin Hamim	Co-opted Member

Work Programme 2019-20

Early in the municipal year, the OSC agreed a work plan for 2019-20:

<http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s152728/Scrutiny%20Work%20Programme%20201920%20Final.pdf>)

However, as the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world in March 2020, the Council was forced to adapt its services and redeploy resources to support the local emergency response to the pandemic. This meant much of the Council's non-essential business was put on hold, including the work and operations of scrutiny. All planned scrutiny meetings and activity were cancelled and postponed.

The OSC adapted its work to consider how Members could support the Council and residents during the pandemic. OSC began its scrutiny of the Council's response to COVID-19 in April 2020, following up with monthly reviews at OSC virtual meetings, and further Sub-Committee reviews on portfolio-specific topics in July and August. All of this work is presented in OSC's report: Review of London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Response to COVID-19, and accompanies this Annual Report.

The following highlights the work of scrutiny pre-COVID-19, starting with that of the OSC, then the Sub-Committees, and finally the work of the scrutiny leads.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Mayors Spotlight

At the start of the Scrutiny year, OSC invited Mayor John Biggs to present his priorities for the year ahead with a view to identifying how scrutiny can best support the delivery of corporate priorities. The Mayor's focus has been on community safety and maximising employment opportunities for local people and businesses. The Mayor's update covered a range of issues as he stressed the importance of carrying out further action in respect of the following:

- The delivery of his manifesto pledges, as set out in the Council's Strategic Plan.
- The next round of budget planning in view of budget pressures and uncertainties around Brexit.
- School placements issues due to demographic changes.
- Regeneration and progress with delivering new homes.
- The continuous improvement of Council services, including the quality of children's services.
- Managing the move to an in-house waste service and meeting recycling targets.
- Community safety through for example action to address ASB and knife crime and initiatives to improve the quality of the street environment.
- Promoting community cohesion, working with partners and maximising opportunities for residents.

OSC resolved to pick up these issues in its subsequent meetings or at the relevant Sub-Committee meetings.

Environment Spotlight

In July 2019, the Committee heard a presentation on the creation of an in-house service for the integrated delivery of the waste, recycling and cleansing functions within Tower Hamlets. OSC considered the financial risk of the process alongside the expected improvements from the in-house delivery. The Committee highlighted that given the proposed changes there

maybe impact in service provision and the transition of employees through the TUPE process.

OSC resolved to:

1. Receive updates on the progress towards ensuring that the waste; recycling and cleansing functions are carbon neutral by 2025;
2. Ensure that updates on missed bin collections are sent every quarter to the Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety & Environment;
3. Receive written assurances from Human Resources on the progress regarding the transfer of the Service back in house (i.e. the TUPE arrangements); and
4. Ensure that the details of the revised waste collection schedule are shared with the Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety & Environment.

Complaints

In September 2019, the Committee received a presentation on the complaints procedure. As a result of discussions on the report the Committee resolved that it wanted to: consider this issue again once the Committee had received the Complaints Annual Report, develop relevant themes into OSC's Work Programme; and, if possible, receive a demographic profile on the complaints received.

In January 2020, the Committee revisited this area and received a presentation on how the Council is responding to complaints and requests for information, as the Information Governance Toolkit had been published. The Committee agreed to maintain a watching brief over how the Council is responding to complaints and requests for information.

In keeping with the focus on complaints, the Committee also considered a report issued by the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman had found fault with the way in which a homeless application was dealt with by LBTH when the applicant had been threatened with homelessness in February 2019 and was made homeless in March 2019.

OSC agreed to allocate this to the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee and resolved that the Sub-Committee consider the following: (i) a review of the Council's implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act legislation; (ii) an update in 3 months of the Housing Options Improvement Business Case; and (iii) an update on the backlog in regards to the Housing Options Service casework.

Annual Residents Survey

Also, in September, the Committee received and noted a report on the Annual Residents Survey which explored residents' views about the Council, services and the local area. OSC indicated that it would have wished to see the Survey results in full in order to see what is happening in the Ward clusters in more depth. As a result of discussions on the report the Committee resolved that it wanted to receive a more detailed report that set out the Survey results in full.

Strengthening our Consultation Process

In October, the Committee received a presentation from the Mayor on Strengthening the Council's Consultation Process. The Committee highlighted the importance of a consistent approach across the Council regarding the consultation process. Therefore, the Council must have a set of consultation principles for officers which gives clear guidance to directorates on conducting consultations and demonstrates the Council's desire to engage more effectively across the Borough. OSC also wish to see more consultations on Green

spaces as they provide a wide variety of environmental, economic and social benefits. As a result of discussions on the report the Committee resolved that it wanted to be notified about all consultations in the future, wished to see paper templates and examples of good consultations in every consultation pack; and want to receive copies of the guidelines for consultation on green spaces.

Transport Strategy and Parking Services

In November, the Committee received and noted a presentation on the Transport Strategy and Parking Services. 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, e.g. river crossing; bus travel; river transport and arterial routes.

Borough Commander Spotlight

Also, in January, the BCU Commander for Hackney and Tower Hamlets gave a presentation to the Committee on the challenges and key areas of work undertaken to tackle community safety.

OSC commented that there are concerns regarding 101 non-emergency number for contacting the police and wanted examples issues so that they can be chased or evidence that the Police Service is working to increase capacity, and that it wanted to see more transparency by the Police Service about what is happening to help build linkages with Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNP) and enable residents to effectively challenge their Safer Neighbourhood Teams. OSC also would like policies on resolution/detection rates on Domestic Violence.

OSC recommended the Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety & Environment to (i) escalate concerns regarding reporting via 101; (ii) share the findings of the Scrutiny Challenge Session (Resident Engagement with Safer Neighbourhood Panels) with the Borough Commander; and (iii) examine the balance of partnership resources within the BCU to see how better we can support Police activities and the development of the SNPs.

Waste Mobilisation update

In January, the Committee received a presentation updating on progress of the creation of an in-house service for the integrated delivery of waste, recycling and cleansing functions for the 29th March 2020. OSC request more information on the environmental impact of the new vehicle fleet and recommended that a scrutiny review of the service take place 6 months after the establishment of the in-house service. The Committee also requested an update after 6 months on the employees' terms and conditions following the formation of the in-house service.

Customer Service - One Stop Closure and Digitalisation

The Committee received an overview of the changes taking place since the closure of One Stop Shops. OSC had significant concerns about the way these changes are being implemented and the way it is impacting on the Borough's residents, for example. 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. OSC also had concerns about the support that is being given to residents and the skillsets of staff in place to support residents. OSC requested that adequate support is put in place for older people and those whose first language is not English. OSC identified the need to ensure that there is a better feedback loop in place for customers using the digital hubs. OSC 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. Finally, OSC requested 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 a comparative analysis of permits issued since the introduction of “virtual’ permits” against the same period in 2019;

Local Community Fund (Call In)

In August 2019, the decision considered and agreed by the Mayor in Cabinet relating to the Local Community Fund (LCF) programme and funding to individual organisations for a period of 42 months from 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2023 was subject to a ‘call-in’. The Committee considered the following objections which formed the basis for the call-in, this included:

- The outcome of the LCF programme is contrary to the Council’s community strategy in that local,
- Small organisations are excluded from funding and bigger organisations with better capability to apply, and go through application process, receive funding.
- It will result in job losses throughout the voluntary and community sector; and that the procurement of the assessment service was flawed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Chair confirmed that the decision should be referred to the Mayor in Cabinet for reconsideration. This should include consideration for alternative course of action set out in the call-in requisition with suggested amended wording. After considering the request The Mayor in Cabinet declined to make this amendment.

Strategic Review of Tower Hamlets Homes (Call In)

Also in August 2019, the decision considered and agreed by the Mayor in Cabinet relating to the Strategic Review of Tower Hamlets Homes’ was subject to a ‘call-in’. The Committee considered the following objections which formed the basis for the call-in, this included:

- That the THH contract is extended for a maximum of two years to undertake a full consultation and resident-led appraisal of option 1: in-house management
- That the Council arranges a peer review for delivery of housing options, assisted by an independent advisor experienced in finance, risk and partnerships to undertake economic and governance modelling of housing options; and informed by a full risk register and comprehensive risk assessments
- Undertake economic modelling of financial implications of housing options that reflects the lifting of the HRA debt cap

The Overview and Scrutiny Chair confirmed that the decision should be referred to the Mayor in Cabinet for reconsideration. This should include consideration for alternative course of action set out in the call-in requisition with suggested amended wording. After considering the request The Mayor in Cabinet declined to make this amendment.

Budget Scrutiny 2019–22

In 2020, we continued building on our work from previous years to provide effective budget scrutiny. The budget scrutiny included formal constitutional arrangements and additional activity to strengthen the role of the Committee in in the development of and scrutinising of the budget. As part of this process we reviewed the Mayors draft budget and prepared a response. Recommendations made had two areas of focus e.g. improving the budget setting process to ensure better alignment with corporate and resident priorities and highlighting concerns with several Medium-Term-Financial Strategy (MTFS) proposals. The full set of

recommendations are set out below to which a written response was received from the Mayor addressing each recommendation made by the Committee:

- Recommendation 1: That the Council restructures its budget setting process so that it has a greater focus on delivering priorities and measuring impact.
- Recommendation 1a: Conduct the Budget Consultation (which gauges public priorities) at the beginning of the municipal year
- Recommendation 1b: Review modelling for income projections and expenditure assumptions to ensure income growth is more accurately reflected.
- Recommendation 1c: Develop a more ambitious income generation strategy in collaboration with partners, businesses and residents.
- Recommendation 1d: That the Council undertake and publish an assessment of the cumulative impact of proposals, including increases in Council Tax and fees and charges to better understand the impact of multiple decisions on particular groups of residents.
- Recommendation 2: That the Mayor consider, review and ratify the following MTFS decisions in Cabinet at milestones along their development and implementation.
- Recommendation 3: That a review of expenditure within the Parks and Culture and Communications Directorates take place to identify new Commercialisation opportunities and potential Savings

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget Planning

As part of our scrutiny of the Council's finances, we received a presentation which outlined the approach for prioritising resources over the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2019-20 to 2020-21. We discussed our concerns by the sizable savings that the Council needs to achieve and we felt that a more robust approach to developing saving proposal and regular updates on delivery of savings was required alongside further validation and timeframes. We also reviewed ways in which the Council can achieve its savings target. We felt that overview and scrutiny should continue to play a key role on the oversight of the Council's recovery plan. We raised concerns and felt that the budget consultation process should have started earlier to allow for better engagement with residents and the scrutiny process itself.

Strategic Plan Performance and Delivery Reporting

The Committee received quarterly performance reports which outlines the process for monitoring the timely and effectively delivery of the Strategic Plan to improve outcomes for residents. The Committee scrutinised how targets have been developed and acknowledged that sustainability was key to Council's improvement journey. The Committee noted that there were only targets for performance indicators and not contextual indicators which are important for prioritising Council Investments and actions and requested that these be included in future reports. Moving forward, OSC will focus on strategic performance indicators to help measure the impact of the recommendations made. In response to the report, OSC agreed to incorporate the following into the work programme: Work Path, Homelessness, Adult Social Care and Housing and Medical Assessments via Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Committee Involvement into development of new Council strategies

The Sub-Committee contributed to the development of key Council strategies including Health and Wellbeing Strategy refresh and the new Physical Activity and Sports Strategy.

We were able to suggest recommendations and help to shape the development of these plans. We will follow up on both strategies with a view to bringing these back next year to examine the progress on suggested recommendations and advice given.

Learning Disability Challenge Session

The Sub-Committee felt that outcomes for adults with a learning disability was not improving at pace. A Challenge Session was held in March 2020 to evaluate services that are supporting adults with learning disabilities and focussed on three areas:

- Physical health management of adults with learning disability
- Level of support provided to get into paid employment
- Level and quality of support provided to enable them to live locally.

The pandemic temporarily paused the progress of this, so that we can focus on the impact of COVID-19 on local services and the wider community. The report is planned with a number of recommendations to inform the development of Learning Disability Strategy 2020-25 refresh and is scheduled for the committee to sign off in October 2020.

Proposed Changes to Welfare Meals

The Sub-Committee examined the plans to remove the 'meals on wheels' service and felt concerned that the decision had been made to discontinue the service without appropriate engagement with the Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Consequently, the follow up discussions enabled an updated report to be taken to Cabinet which allowed the scope to discuss the closure of the service publicly. In addition, the Sub-Committee reviewed the equality impact assessments to ensure that the closure of this service did not have a disproportionate impact on a specific demography.

Review of Homelessness Action Plan

The Sub-Committee carried out further review of the Homelessness Action Plan. This action plan was started by the Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee 18 months ago and the Sub-Committee wanted to check that progress was made in delivering the action plan. The findings of the review highlighted that more work needs to be done to deliver on flagged areas of the action plan and that it was not meeting the milestones. The Sub-Committee had some concerns on certain sheltered accommodation, deemed to be unsafe and the level of demands to identify more pet friendly accommodation. However, overall, the Sub-Committee were satisfied with the progress made on the action plan and thanked officers for their continued commitment to work on the delivery of the recommendations.

Adult Social Care Charging Update

The Sub-Committee scrutinised an updated report on the impact of adult social care charging policy and discussed at some length the findings of the report in order to ensure that the introduction of the policy does not negatively impact on the health and care of residents. The issue was investigated in detail over a few meetings throughout the year with Council officers providing updates. The Sub-Committee strongly recommended that in future consultation exercises there should be an independent and external sense check on impact on service change. To understand this better, the Sub-Committee requested information to be provided on financial data showing the amount being raised from charging and the amount being spent to administer charging since the inception of the charging policy.

Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2018-19

The Sub-Committee reviewed the Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2018-19 with the aim of ensuring that vulnerable people in Tower Hamlets were effectively being safeguarded from harm. The Sub-Committee made key recommendations to the

Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure that all relevant agencies involved are learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews and prevent any future harm or death from taking place. The Sub-Committee emphasised that loneliness was identified as a key issue and that support for isolated and vulnerable people should be prioritised.

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Proposed Closure of Secondary School

The Sub-Committee heard from representatives from the school community who outlined their concerns about the proposed closure. The Divisional Director for Education and Partnerships provided the rationale behind the proposal to close the school and the Cabinet lead for Children, School and Young People identified three key challenges that schools faced

- Cuts to school funding from Central Government meant schools were facing huge financial pressures
- change in financial regulations whereby schools had to demonstrate they were not in deficit for a maximum of three years
- changing demographics of the borough in terms of population and demand means the Council needs to ensure school places are in the right locations within the borough.

The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council needs to reflect on its consultation process to ensure the timings of consultations are done in a sensitive way whilst meeting with statutory requirements and that information should be made accessible to members of the public.

Deep dive on Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) provision

The Sub-Committee undertook a deep dive on SEND provision in the borough and in particular the focus was on preparation for the forthcoming local area inspection of SEND provision. We heard from the Council's SEND Ambassadors (all parents of children with SEND) and from a SEND young person who talked about his experiences and the difficulties he faced. The Divisional Director for Education and Partnerships outlined the approach to improving provision for children with SEND and their families as well as detailing the preparations for the inspection. Four recommendations were drawn out from this

1. Support parents when a child is diagnosed with special needs.
2. Being more inclusive – integrating services in the community and increasing community awareness.
3. Train staff especially teachers and teaching assistants
4. Getting an early diagnosis with intervention.

Secondary School Exclusions

The Sub-Committee also considered the report on Secondary School Exclusions following the scrutiny review into the issue. The report was produced following a series of Sub-Committee meetings where evidence was heard on the issue. In reviewing the report, the Sub-Committee accepted the findings along with its 10 recommendations.

Youth Service Provision for Girls

The Sub-Committee heard from several young people that attended youth service provisions (commissioned and in-house) for girls as well as the importance for providing youth provision that particularly attracted female attendees. A member of the Youth Cabinet outlined how

high-quality youth provision had helped her to attain her role and frame some of the priorities that she had for her term in office.

Primary School Places Review

The Sub-Committee received a presentation about the planning for primary school places in order to reflect projected demand and demographics. The Sub-Committee heard from a number of school representatives who had made decisions to close, merge or federate in order to better reflect the changing demographics. Consequently, the Sub-Committee made a recommendation to the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee to conduct a scrutiny session on the borough's demographic shift and how it affected school places.

Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Transport

The Sub-Committee heard about proposals (consultation on the provision of SEND transport) which would bring provision more in line with statutory obligations. The Sub-Committee also discussed how to increase independence for children and young people with SEND through increased use of independent travel training. Following discussion, it was resolved that scrutiny look at the impact of housing and education as a joint scrutiny challenge session with housing Members.

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee Allocations Policy

The Sub-Committee heard from the Housing Options Services on proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy, including the removal of Band three of the Council's Allocation Register (waiting list). We made the following recommendations

- Housing officers to write to those on Band three to note any change in circumstances
- Share concerns about the medical assessment process with the Health and Adult Scrutiny Sub-Committee and that we receive a copy of the medical assessment criteria policy for further examination.
- Information about the Housing Panel to be put on the council website, including clarification that only landlords could refer to the Panel.

High Street and Town Centres – Supporting New and Existing Businesses

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation for the spotlight on High Street and Town Centres – supporting new and existing businesses. The discussion covered renovations of specific roads, concentration of similar businesses, community cohesion, supporting female entrepreneurs, meeting housing and retail needs of a growing population, London Living wage and exhibition events for Town Centres and Regeneration. Following the discussion, the Sub-Committee put forward recommendations to address the above

- Enterprise team to explore the growth of businesses at Ben Johnson Road
- An update on plans for retail and community infrastructure in the context of high population growth and density in the borough.
- Housing Committee Councillors to provide advice on town centre regeneration engagement events and listed on Members Hub.

Council's Emergency Planning/ Response Procedure

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the Council's Emergency Planning and Response Procedure from the head of Community Safety. The Sub-Committee discussed how incidents were classified as major or low risks; challenges of identifying residents and

vulnerable people who resided in new private own blocks or hotel; how the fire brigade should have an appropriate point of contact for the council and housing associations. Subsequently the Sub-Committee made the following recommendation

- Providing the Council officers with landlord information for emergency purposes and sharing the emergency incident duty rota with elected Councillors.

Housing Supply and Demand

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation on the subject of housing supply and demand. The Sub-Committee discussed buy back scheme and how many were being purchased from private and social landlords. It was highlighted that shared ownership was unfeasible for most working people. The Sub-Committee further examined London borough's setting up social letting agencies. Following the deliberation, recommendations was made to understand:

- A breakdown of Housing Association Supply Side by Section 106 and housing association led development.
- Number of under occupiers on the Housing Register
- The split in acquisitions between ex Council (Right to Buy) and purchases of other housing provider stock.

Resource and Finance Scrutiny Lead

Challenge Session: Premises Charges and Community Benefit Rent Reduction Scheme

The session was chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance Councillor Tarik Khan and attended by council officers, partners and community organisations who contributed to the session. The session aimed to assess the impact of the introduction of premises charges on Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that occupy council buildings in Tower Hamlets. It also aimed to assess how effective the community benefit rent reduction scheme was in mitigating potential impacts and consider if the scheme goes far enough to ensure a thriving voluntary and community sector. The report produced six recommendations which will work to influence change in this area and inform the on-going review of community premises currently being undertaken by the council whilst highlighting the unique and powerful role the Voluntary and Community Sector has within the fabric of the Tower Hamlets community. The recommendations are set out below:

- Recommendation 1: The Council amends the community benefit rent reduction scheme to recognise the value nurseries/playgroups, faith groups and Tenants and Residents Associations bring to the community.
- Recommendation 2: The Council develop a vision and strategy around community buildings that recognises the value these premises brings to residents and VCS organisations alike.
- Recommendation 3: The Council uses its website and other communication channels to set out information around its community buildings including availability, location and how they can be accessed by VCS organisations.
- Recommendation 4: The Council monitors the use of premises leased to VCS organisations to ensure they're being used within the terms of the lease and/or funding agreement.
- Recommendation 5: The Council works with partners to provide capacity building to VCS organisations on matters relating to facilities management of premises.

- Recommendation 6: The Council develops a vision and strategy for community hubs to enable VCS organisations to take a lead role in managing and facilitating affordable access to these premises.

Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny

Challenge Session: Seldom Heard Resident Engagement with Safe Neighbourhood Ward Panels

In Oct 2020, Councillor Bex White chaired a Challenge Session to examine how we can improve the engagement of seldom heard residents with the safer neighbourhood ward panels. The session involved over 15 local residents, the Police, Safer Neighbourhood Board Chair, Council's Community Safety team and ward Councillors. The session allowed for residents to highlight the barriers to engagement and what could be done to improve this. This helped the Committee to identify and shape 11 recommendations including:

- Tower Hamlets ward panels to develop and recruit to vice chair roles, focussed on building representative participation.
- MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Police and Crime) to incentivise learning and development opportunities for ward panel vice chairs e.g. how to promote inclusion and engagement with seldom-heard community
- Establishment of a Youth Council representative on the Safer Neighbourhood Board as part of inclusive and diversity agenda
- A collaborative approach by Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB), ward panels and the Police to publicise ward panels.
- Strengthening trust between the police and the ward's residents e.g. SNTs to lead and implement action-focussed minutes and jointly developing (at ward panels) a cultural framework of co-produced solutions.

Challenge Session: Behavioural change for boosting recycling rates.

A challenge session to examine how the Council applies evidence and best practice to influence behavioural change to boost recycling was scheduled for April 2020. The focus of this session was to consider how research, evidence base, and best practice is applied, how the influence of residents and schools is taken on board and establishing what the insights tell us from communications campaign with resident engagement with recycling. The session was paused because of COVID-19 and social distancing policy and has been scheduled to be conducted in September 2020.