


<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Overview & Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>26 July 2021</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Sharon Godman Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: Empowering Communities – Engaging Our Diverse Community at a Locality Level</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Filuck Miah Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate
Wards affected	All (All Wards);

Executive Summary

This report submits the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Challenge Session which examined how the council can improve its engagement with the borough's diverse community at a locality level.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and agree the recommendations; and
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the for OSC chair for consideration by O&S Committee

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides recommendations on the council's engagement with the borough's diverse communities at a locality level for the council to take forward.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Community engagement is the active participation of local residents and community groups in the decisions that affect their lives. Neighbourhoods can act as the catalyst for developing social connections, satisfying basic needs and place-based policy.
- 3.2 In Tower Hamlets, Neighbourhood Planning Forums (NPF) is one of structure that enable residents and communities to feed into their local infrastructure, capital and investment spend programmes via the Neighbourhood Plan. These forums empower residents and communities to play a key role in influencing how development will occur at a neighbourhood level.
- 3.3 Resident raised with members about the council's approach to local engagement and some of the challenges to these and how it sometimes does not engage those seldom heard. They also raised how their views does not lead to changes which has an impact on future engagement with the council. They informed members that it is difficult for active residents to find engagement avenues to improve their communities with the council.
- 3.4 The OSC Chair, Cllr James King agreed to hold a scrutiny challenge session on 21 April 2021 focusing on empowering communities – how the council can improve its engagement with the borough's diverse community at a locality level.
- 3.5 The challenge session was underpinned by the further core questions:
- How do current structures enable a diverse range of residents to engage at a locality level?
 - Should TH consider establishing local governance structures to enable residents to shape their area?
 - What would the resource implications of this be?
 - What works well in other boroughs?
 - What would the scope of these structures be?
- 3.6 The session structure included:
- Chair's overview and rationale for the enquiry;
 - presentation from the by Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion and supported by council officers;
 - Witness engagement with Centre for London (think tank) and Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services; and
 - Representations from London Borough of Waltham Forest and London Borough of Haringey.

- 3.7 The challenge session resulted in the committee making four recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The council uses the South Poplar and Isle of Dogs Community Development Panel as a potential model for engagement in other areas of the borough with a focus on facilitating place-based priorities for regeneration and local investment in the local area.

Recommendation 2

The council strengthens the feedback loops (for regular dialogue with residents) into existing programme delivery including the Local Infrastructure Fund, the Capital Programme, regeneration schemes.

Recommendation 3

The council surveys / engages residents to determine local COVID-19 recovery priorities, for example: regenerating local highstreets, active business to the area or advocating the use of parks and open spaces to promote community benefit of public health.

Recommendation 4

The council develops a geography-based partnership approach that brings collaboration from the council, public and private partners, VCS and others to pick up local priorities.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The challenge session examined the level of representation of the pilot community design panels and suggested how this could be strengthened to ensure seldom heard groups participation on place shaping priorities.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained within the report

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council has included within its structure an overview and scrutiny committee in accordance with section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 7.2 Accordingly, the overview and scrutiny committee is entitled under the law to make recommendations to the Executive of the nature detailed in this report and to which the Executive is required to make a response. Therefore, this report complies with the law.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- List any linked reports
- State NONE if none.

Appendices

- Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: Empowering Communities - Engaging Our Diverse Community at a Locality Level

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

Officer contact details for documents:

Filuck Miah - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate