

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.33 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 28 JULY 2022

**COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed (Chair)	
Councillor Abdul Mannan (Vice-Chair)	(Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration),
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury (Member)	(Scrutiny Lead for Children's and Education),
Councillor Marc Francis (Member)	
Councillor Asma Islam (Member)	
Councillor Ahmodur Khan (Member)	(Scrutiny Lead for Health and Adults),
Councillor Sabina Khan (Member)	(Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance),
Jahid Ahmed	(Co-Opted Member)
Halima Islam	(Co-Opted Member)

Others Present:

Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
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Officers Present:

Stephen Bramah	– (Corporate Head of Strategy and Improvement)
Sharon Godman	– (Director, Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Afazul Hoque	– (Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Daniel Kerr	– (Strategy and Policy Manager)
David Knight	– (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)
Will Tuckley	– (Chief Executive)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Abdul Malik (Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND
OTHER INTERESTS**

No Member declared a potential interest at the meeting.

3 UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 4th July 2022

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th June 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chair:

1. Reminded Members that following points raised by Councillor Francis the Committee had **Requested**:
 - I. Information on the performance of youth services since the provision has been commissioned had not yet been received (**e.g.**, progress made to date; how the challenges have been managed and moving forward how will this improve provision; and what targets have been set for the provision and how they will be monitored) and
 - II. Information on the actual scale of digital exclusion in the Borough was outstanding (**e.g.**, how digital skills vary for different groups of residents and some of the barriers to digital inclusion).
2. **Thanked** Councillor Mark Francis for raising these issues and requested officers to provide this information.
3. **Reminded** the Committee that Councillor Sabina Khan had accepted the nomination for the Scrutiny Lead for Resources and Finance.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

5. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

The Committee **noted** Cabinet forward plan and that for the most up to date version, Members were recommended to check the Cabinet web pages on the [council's website](#).

6. STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

6.1 Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

The Committee considered a report that presented the Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 which is the Council's main corporate business plan. That embeds the Mayor's vision and the administration's manifesto into a high-level policy framework and demonstrates how they will be delivered alongside the Council's statutory duties. A summary of the discussions on this report is outlined below.

The Committee

- ❖ **Noted** that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in very high levels of public spending and LBTH would have been £34 million pounds over budget if it had not received funding from the Government to cover the spending pressures and income losses due to Covid and had enabled LBTH to have a balanced position of for the last financial year.
- ❖ **Noted** that the Plan sets a framework for performance monitoring and reporting.
- ❖ **Noted** that it is **(i)** supported by and aligned with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and **(ii)** accompanied by an Annual Delivery Plan that sets out how the Plan priorities will be delivered in 2022/23.
- ❖ **Noted** that Annual Delivery Plans will be published each year until 2025/26.
- ❖ **Noted** as mentioned earlier that the plan is based on the Mayor's election manifesto, the Council's statutory duties, and the ambition to keep improving customer service and ways of working.
- ❖ **Noted** that the Councils commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, and community cohesion also runs through the plan.
- ❖ **Agreed** that it is important that LBTH is able to offer a support package to care leavers to provide educational and training opportunities that will improve their vocational and educational profile and open up future employment opportunities. Therefore, Members **wanted** details on how LBTH children in care and care leavers will be supported and prioritised with access to work opportunities.
- ❖ **Agreed** that in regard to the control of rent levels housing providers must have robust systems of internal control in place to ensure that rents are being charged appropriately and therefore **wanted** clarification on socially affordable rents stated at 30-40% of average market rents.
- **Wanted** to know if this is the right time to bring housing services back under the direct management of the Council, as other councils have done (**e.g.**, would the insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) better align housing management and maintenance services to meet resident needs and place the full range of housing services at the heart of the Council's efforts to improve outcomes for all our residents). Accordingly, it was **agreed** that with regard to the Councils investment in public services they should have the details on the consultation

process by bringing outsourced services such as THH back into public hands.

- ❖ **Agreed** that with the Council now has to brace itself for a long recession as energy prices surge to unprecedented levels, leaving many residents at risk of economic hardship. **Accordingly** wanted details on the Council's communication strategy on the cost-of-living crisis and how residents can feedback.
- ❖ **Welcomed** the £2.2 million package to support LBTH residents with the cost-of-living crisis (**e.g.** for example by freezing council tax for four years).
- ❖ **Wanted** assurance on residents' accessibility to resident hubs and idea stores.
- ❖ **Agreed** that it wanted to know how the Strategic Plan will address genuine and growing concerns on the safety of women and girls which is an urgent public safety issue that the Council and its partners need to act on.
- ❖ **Considered** the common issues in regard to the ongoing challenge and level of complaints on waste collection and recycling rates including repeated missed collections, poor complaint handling and monitoring, as well as issues with assisted collections for those with disabilities or mobility problems.
- ❖ **Considered** that given the problems in recruiting and retaining frontline health and social care staff due to burnout from the pandemic and higher pay rates being available elsewhere and therefore, wanted to know how the Council will tackle this shortage and its approach to making free home care sustainable; and
- ❖ Following on discussions how the Council has sought to increase progression of people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds into senior roles in the Council. **Requested** assurances on how the Council plans to improve the diversity of the workforce, especially in regard to senior levels.
- ❖ **Agreed** that they will (i) continue to monitor and review the progression of people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds into senior roles in the Council; and (ii) endeavour to work closely with Cabinet colleagues to ensure LBTH residents receive the best level of support and service.
- ❖ **Proposed** that Members should be involved in scrutinising the setting of targets and measures of the strategic plan, either through a formal committee meeting or via a briefing session.

Accordingly, the Committee **resolved** that having considered the Council's draft strategic plan 2022-26 made the following recommendations on areas for improvement and further consideration.

- a) **How** will children in care and care leavers will be supported and prioritised with access to work opportunities.
- b) **Wanted** clarification on socially affordable rents stated at 30-40% of average market rents.

- c) **Requested** details on the consultation process in relation to the proposed insourcing of THH to consider how the Council is shown that it is one that listens and works for everyone (**e.g.** by carrying out fair and worthwhile consultations on such proposals).
- d) **How** residents can feedback on the Council's communication strategy in regard to the cost-of-living crisis.
- e) **Wanted** assurance on local communities accessibility to resident hubs and idea stores.
- f) **How** will the plan address genuine and growing concerns on women's safety?
- g) **Requested** details on the approach to dealing with the ongoing challenge and level of complaints on waste collection and recycling rates.
- h) **How** will the Council tackle the shortage of health and social care staff and its approach to making free home care sustainable; and
- i) **Wanted** assurances on how the Council intends to progress the diversity of the workforce, especially at senior levels.

7. OSC WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021- 2022

7.1 OSC Work Programme

The Committee's received and noted the Draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The main points of the discussions on the Work Programme is summarised below:

The Committee:

- ❖ Was **informed** that prior to tonight's meeting, all members of the scrutiny sub-committees had been able to use part of their first committee meetings to feed in their suggestions for the work programme.
- ❖ Was **reminded** that there had been a scrutiny awayday on the 16th July to develop the scrutiny work programme and consider how Members might best align the work programme with the Council's strategic priorities, resident's concerns, and key policy issues.
- ❖ **Agreed** that the goal was to produce a co-ordinated and tight work programme between all committees, which would look at fewer issues in more depth to ensure OSC and its sub-committees are adding value and supporting the Council to deliver service improvements.
- ❖ **Noted** that the work programme is intended be robust and covers key areas that will both impact and benefit to residents including:
 1. waste and recycling and public realm issues.
 2. housing regeneration and support to homeless applications.
 3. youth justice, youth provision, young people's education children social care and SEND.
 4. access to GP services, tackling obesity, mental health provision and ICS delivery
 5. customer service strategy and climate emergency; and

- 6. food poverty and women's safety
- ❖ **Noted** that the draft scrutiny work programme would be shared with Members over the next few weeks as part of the development of the Committees plans.
- ❖ **Noted** that the officers supporting the committee will also be engaging officers, services, and partners to help them better understand the Committee's expectations over the course of the year. With the final programme to be signed off at the Committees meeting in September.

8. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SUB COMMITTEES

8.1 Appointment of Co-opted Members to Scrutiny Committee and Sub Committees

The Committee received and noted a report regarding the recruitment process for a number of co-opted member roles and to agree that the selected candidates be appointed to the Committee and to its three sub committees. The main points of the discussion on the report summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Noted** that as was reported to the Committee in June 2022, the Local Government Act 2000 provides that the Committee and its sub committees may include persons who are not members of the Council. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and the terms of reference for the Committee and its three sub committees together provide that scrutiny at LBTH shall include the following 12 co-opted member roles:
 - a) OSC has two co-opted resident representative members.
 - b) Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee has two co-opted members: a leaseholder representative and a tenant representative.
 - c) Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee has two co-opted members – a resident representative and a representative nominated from Healthwatch Tower Hamlets (**see below**).
 - d) Children and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee includes a co-opted representative from the Muslim community.
 - e) Five statutory education co-optees (**see below**).
- ❖ **Noted** that an open recruitment process has been undertaken to select preferred candidates for roles (a) – (d) as detailed above and the report outlines the outcome of this process and asks the Committee to formally appoint the selected preferred candidates.
- ❖ Was **informed** that the Council's scrutiny arrangements provide for the appointment of statutory education co-optees who sit on the Children's and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee. These statutory education co-optees are not chosen through open recruitment and are not considered directly in this report. Statutory education co-optees were appointed at the Committee meeting in June 2022 which also

appointed the Healthwatch Tower Hamlets nominee to the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee.

- ❖ **Noted** that the Council's Code of Conduct for Members applies to scrutiny co-optees. Training will be provided by officers to the co-opted representatives on the Code of Conduct which will include declarations of interest, exempt reports, and data protection.
- ❖ **Noted** that an advert promoting the roles was put on the Council's website and the roles were also advertised through social media. Shortlisting and interviews for each role were undertaken by a dedicated mixed interview panel including the Chair of the Committee or relevant scrutiny subcommittee and officers.
- ❖ **Noted** that (i) as a result of the selection process, the candidates below were selected to serve as co-opted members for the roles shown; and (ii) the Committee is asked to formally appoint the persons listed below to the co-opted roles indicated for the period of the current administration.

Body	Role	Co-optee
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Resident Rep 1	Halima Islam
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Resident Rep 2	Jahid Ahmed
Housing and Regeneration Sub	Tenant Rep	Mahbub Anam
Housing and Regeneration Sub	Leaseholder Rep	Susanna Kow
Children and Education Sub	Muslim community Rep	Shiblu Miah
Health and Adults Sub	Resident Rep	TBC*

The Chair Moved and it was:- **AGREED**

1. That the appointment of the persons listed in the table above to the co-opted positions indicated.

*Recruitment for the resident rep on the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee has been delayed. Once a preferred candidate has been selected for this role, a report will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for formal approval.

9. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Whilst there are no pre-decisions questions the committee requested a response to the questions on both the Recycling Rate and the percentage of completed Education Health Care Plan (**Item 10.2 refers**).

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

10.1 OSC Action Log 2022-23

Noted.

10.2 Annual Strategic Performance Report 2021/22

It was **agreed** that as part of the regular review of the Annual Strategic Performance Report 2021/22 Members should have going forward have time to properly consider the Report.

Accordingly, the Committee raised a number of questions and subsequent to the meeting received the following:

- ❖ **Question:** The Committee requested for the outturn of the recycling rates for 2021/22 as there was no figure shown in the most recent quarter of the performance reporting.
- ❖ **Answer:** Recycling rate for 2021/22 – 19.7%
- ❖ **Question:** The Committee raised concerns on the low percentage of education health care plan assessments completed at 29% and wished to ascertain what and how this was measured.
- ❖ **Answer:**
 - A. The figure of 29% for completed EHCP's relates to those completed within the 20-week timescale. The remaining 71% of EHCP's will have been in progress and will be completed, albeit having taken longer than we would have liked. Q4 was a particularly challenging period, and earlier periods showed increased performance in this area. Additional resources have been put in place which are starting to have an impact. It was **noted** that current cumulative performance is 35% (year to date) and increasing with May (42%), June (45%) and July (45%) demonstrating an improved trajectory. **Noted** that weekly meetings are held with services to monitor the impact of the increasing demand for EHCPs on timeliness of advice requests coming back into the SEN Service.
 - B. This measure is a SEND improvement plan priority and is an inspection risk. It has been suggested as an additional focus measure by the Corporate Director. There is a statutory timescale for the completion of an EHCP assessment and benchmarking data is available. Data is also available for quarterly reporting. The challenge the service may have for this measure is that there is already a lot of focus on this measure. The target for this measure is cumulative. The services are working on a backlog of cases which they plan to clear by the autumn term. In terms of benchmarking, the national figure for EHC timeliness is expected to be around 50% for 2020/21. The targets are based on a modelling of number of monthly assessment requests and an

internal target of 95% completion rate for all new cases Q1 target = 26%; Q2 target=35%; Q3 target =46%; and Q4 and end of year target =53%.

The Chair **thanked** Cllr Saied Ahmed (Cabinet Member for Resources and Cost of Living) and Will Tuckley (Chief Executive) for their attendance and providing responses to the committee's questions.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As the agenda circulated had no exempt/confidential reports and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

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

There were no exempt pre-decisions questions.

13. MEETING CLOSED

As there was no other business the Chair declared the meeting closed and reminded Members that the next meeting is scheduled for [Monday, 26th September 2022, 6.30 p.m.](#)

The meeting ended at 8.17 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**