

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 18:34 ON MONDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed	
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services
Councillor Abdul Malik	Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Abdul Mannan	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Asma Islam	
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury	

Other Councillors Present in Person:

Councillor Abu Chowdhury (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)

Co-optees Present in Person:

Jahid Ahmed

Co-optees In Attendance Virtually:

Halima Islam

Officers Present in Person:

Ann Corbett	(Director of Community Safety)
Keith Stanger	(Head of Neighbourhood Operations)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
Daniel Kerr	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Bodrul Choudhury, Marc Francis and Sabina Khan. Councillor Sabina Ahkter was in attendance as a substitute. Halima Islam gave apologies as she was joining online.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received at the meeting. Cllr Ahmodur Khan stated a family relationship with a London Metropolitan Police Officer.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

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

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 and 29 January 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. BOROUGH COMMANDER SPOTLIGHT

Councillor Abu Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Ann Corbett, Director of Community Safety, Keith Stanger, Head of Neighbourhood Operations, introduced the item, highlighting the council's work on community safety, the council and the police, and the Violence Against Women and Girls campaign.

Local residents provided testimony on their lived experiences of community policing and women's experiences within the borough. They highlighted the importance of access to safe, well lit roads, self-defence classes, building up trust with women across different communities and how the police need to continue to listen to women when issues are brought up.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- What does accessible access to police mean to you? Residents highlighted how important it is to know where women can go to ensure they will be heard and be safe. The women's inclusive team has done a lot of work around this and supported many women where English is not a first language.
- What current issues can you report to the committee on safety on the streets and how can the council work with the police to ensure there is a more community facing approach? Residents reflected that there has been a decline in police patrolling the streets and a lot of areas are not well lit, with reporting about street lighting taking a lot of time to be fixed. Parks and larger outdoor areas feel unsafe due to a lack of lighting and CCTV.
- What do you think is the council's role in building trust in the community with policing? Residents stated that trust is a big issue, even when you put yourself in a position of going forward to report. However, a bigger issue even before a woman will come forward to report, is the lack of awareness of what domestic violence is. The council needs to help with raising awareness of this in different communities, along with the police.

Borough Commander Detective Chief Superintendent James Conway presented to the committee, highlighting A New Met for London, the two year plan on how the Met will deliver more trust, less crime, and high standards.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- A year on since the Borough Commander visited the committee, where do you think police are in dealing with issues residents have with the police? James Conway stated that building up trust is vital with ensuring that the residents feel confident coming forward to report crime. How residents are treated when they do come forward to report a crime, not just by the police but across the whole service. If a resident is coming forward to an issue like domestic violence, then they need to be believed and an environment is created where they feel supported throughout the reporting.
- What is the police doing to tackle rising violent crime within the borough? And what is the police doing to build trust within communities who are more vulnerable to violent crime? How will work against drug related crime be dealt with? James Conway highlighted the serious crime strategy the Metropolitan Police is developing, but more locally local police are working on tailoring police response to different boroughs, on the big issues in each ward. The police is dealing with drug related crime as a police force, but also as a stakeholder with the council, who also have a role in its own services.
- Car theft is an increasing concern across the borough, what is the police response to this? James Conway stated that localised teams are dealing with local issues, with Hackney Wick recently seeing more work to look into car related crimes.
- A lot of concerns in the borough is that residents do not see a fixed familiar ward team tackling crime in their area, will there be an increase in police presence that stays within the local area? It would do a lot of building trust in the community to see ward officers of a more diverse background, so residents can see themselves in the local police. James Conway reported on the dedicated ward officers and efforts recently to be recruiting more in this area and hopefully the next round of budget will support further recruitment. Generally, the Metropolitan Police are working to build more engagement teams, so officers can go into communities, with an experience of that community.
- For a lot of young people, the police inappropriately using stop and search powers is their first interaction with the police. What are the police doing to ensure officers are correctly trained in this area? James Conway reflected on stop and search, stating that while it is an effective method with dealing with reducing weapons and drug issues on the street, it is also seen as being used in negative ways, and more can be done to ensure it is being used in a more critical and targeted way.

The chair thanked the Borough Commander for his presentation and for residents attending and sharing their lived experiences with the committee.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

RESOLVED:

Members noted the action log.

6. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

7. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the Update.

8. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

9. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Nil items.

10. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items.

11. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

13. 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.

14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

15. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 20:42

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee