

Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>  22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Robin Beattie, Director of Strategy, Transformation, and Improvement	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Scrutiny Challenge Session on Supporting Markets and Traders</b>	

**URGENT** last meeting of OSC for this municipal year is on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 and report will need to be agreed by the committee.

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

	Step [Delete as applicable]	Date
Decision (Tier Four)	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22.04.2024

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities Zaid Islam, Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate Strategy and Communities
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards

**Executive Summary**

This scrutiny report establishes the findings and recommendations arising from the scrutiny challenge session on the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets. The report presents eight recommendations for agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenge session report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response to the recommendations;

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets for consideration and agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides recommendations on enhancing the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets, acknowledging their crucial role in serving diverse communities and contributing to the local economy.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 Supporting Markets and Traders is an objective under the Council's Strategic Plan priority to 'Boost Culture, Business, Jobs, and Leisure':

*Support small businesses, start-ups, and markets including Whitechapel Market, Petticoat Lane Market, Bethnal Green Market, Roman Road Market, Columbia Road Market, Columbia Road Market, Watney Market, Chrisp Street Market, Brick Lane Market, and put traders at the heart of their management.*

- 3.2 Markets serve as focal points of attraction in the community, drawing people into town centres and driving footfall to support local businesses. They serve diverse communities, facilitate cultural exchange, and offer a range of commodities at good value. However, as public spaces, the success of Markets in the borough is largely contingent upon the upkeep of infrastructure, trader facilities, waste management, and community safety. It is through this lens that the subject of Street Markets intersects with some of the broader issues that sit under the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Lead's portfolio.
- 3.3 Nationally, the Market industry faces significant challenges due to changes in purchasing habits and an ageing population. Fewer Markets across the country are operating with a financial surplus and there has been a reduction in the number of traders overall.
- 3.4 The scrutiny challenge session was chaired by Cllr Abdul Malik (Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member) and included:
- The Scrutiny Lead and Committee members undertaking site visits to Whitechapel Market, Petticoat Lane Food Court, and Ridley Road Market across February 2024 to gather evidence on best practice both

in Tower Hamlets and a neighbouring borough (Hackney), while also identifying areas for improvement. These visits facilitated engagement between Scrutiny and local traders, associations, and market managers.

- A Scrutiny Challenge Session focusing on the support provided to Markets and Traders on 6 March 2024 to gather evidence from the Council and external key witnesses. Following the session, Scrutiny developed recommendations aimed at enhancing the support provided to Markets and Traders in Tower Hamlets.

3.5 To ensure the ongoing sustainability of Markets in Tower Hamlets for both traders and customers, the scrutiny challenge session was underpinned by three core questions:

- What recent improvements have been made to Markets in the borough?
- What support mechanisms can the Council employ to ensure that Traders are thriving and at the heart of their management?
- How can the Council attract new and exciting entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses to trade in our Markets?

3.6 The Scrutiny Challenge Session involved a range of stakeholders including:

- Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills, and Growth
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members
- Council Officers
- Chief Executive of the National Association for British Market Authorities (NABMA)
- Chair of the London Street Traders Benchmarking Group (LSTBG) and Market Manager at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Traders including the Whitechapel Traders Association
- Market Manager at London Borough of Hackney and Board Member on the Mayor of London's Market Board.
- Co-Opted Member of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

3.7 The challenge session resulted in Scrutiny making the following recommendations:

### **Theme: Market Infrastructure and Trader Facilities**

**Recommendation 1:** That the Street Trading and Market Service produces a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covering the status of all Street Markets, including land ownership updates and infrastructure gaps, along with corresponding work plans, to enable Scrutiny to track progress.

**Recommendation 2:** That the Council allocates resources and works with landowners to prioritise the provision of toilets, storage spaces, and free Wi-Fi

in Street Markets, ensuring traders are supported and enhancing the functionality and maintenance of these vital community spaces.

### **Theme: Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime: Deterrence and Reporting**

**Recommendation 3:** That the Council's Community Safety Service works with the Street Trading and Markets Service to enhance crime deterrence in Street Markets. This includes increasing the presence of Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers on Markets, equipping traders with radios to better exchange intelligence and establishing a Police Partnership Taskforce based at the Town Hall for rapid response to crime incidents in Whitechapel Market.

**Recommendation 4:** That the Council's Community Safety Service and Street Trading and Markets Service consistently document incidents of ASB and crime in Street Markets, whilst also enhancing the public's ability to report crimes in Street Markets by strategically placing public signage and integrating QR codes for streamlined reporting.

### **Theme: Waste Management and Enforcement**

**Recommendation 5:** That the Council strengthens waste management on Street Markets by ensuring the separation of Commercial and Market Waste and integrating a unified enforcement approach as part of the ongoing review of THEOs to address dumping practices in Markets.

### **Theme: Attracting Younger Traders and Retaining Current Traders**

**Recommendation 6:** That the Council's Career Service and Street Trading and Markets Service work in partnership with local schools and young adults to organise pop-up events and training sessions to attract young people to the entrepreneurial opportunities available in Market trading.

**Recommendation 7:** That the Street Trading and Market Service produces and distributes a Traders Handbook aimed at supporting existing traders and retaining new ones.

### **Theme: Improving Communication between Portfolio Areas**

**Recommendation 8:** That the Cabinet Leads for the Jobs, Skills, and Growth Portfolio and the Environment and Climate Emergency Portfolio implement an effective and ongoing communication mechanism, to enhance coordination and address Market challenges more holistically. This should incorporate an effective feedback loop involving officers and traders.

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The report considers anti-social behaviour and theft in Street Markets and the likely disproportionate targeting of women and girls based upon evidence provided by traders. The report also considers the likely underrepresentation of

younger Market traders in Tower Hamlets, aligning with national trends highlighting an ageing trader population.

## **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.
- 5.2 The actions in the attached report are made as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the Council, as required under its Best Value duty. The report includes actions aimed at supporting Crime Reduction in Markets in response to evidence gathered during the Challenge Session.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 The report asks that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenge session recommendations are agreed.
- 6.2 No costings have been worked up for the recommendations and therefore any financial implications are unquantified at this stage. Any costing will need to be verified and where more than existing resources/activity will need to be approved through the appropriate governance processes or additional funding obtained (e.g. grants).

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The report asks for the eight recommendations from the challenge session to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Further legal considerations may arise through the implementation of the recommendations but these are not known at this stage.

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Scrutiny Report on Supporting Markets and Traders

#### **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:**

Zaid Islam, Strategy and Policy Officer