

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT 18:33 ON MONDAY, 22 APRIL 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed	
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education
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 Maisha Begum	
Councillor Marc Francis	
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury	

Other Councillors Present in Person:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

Co-optees Present in Person:

Jahid Ahmed
Halima Islam

Officers Present in Person:

Robin Beattie	(Director of Strategy, Transformation, and Improvement)
Keith Townsend	(Insourcing Leisure Project Director)
Simon Jones	(Head of Leisure Operations)
Jahur Ali	(Director of Leisure and Culture)
Michael Darby	(Head of Parking, Mobility & Market Services)
Ashraf Ali	(Director of Public Realm)
Daniel Kerr	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Asma Islam and Sabina Khan. Cllrs Sabina Akhtar and Mohammad Chowdhury.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received at the meeting.

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 25 March 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO SUB-COMMITTEES

Thomas French, Democratic Service Officer, introduced the report, for the committee to note the selection process for two co-opted members and appoint them to the two respective Scrutiny Sub Committees.

RESOLVED

- Members agreed the appointment of Hasan Chowdhury to the position of Parent Governor representative on the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period of the current administration.
- Members agreed the appointment of Jessic Chiu to the position of Healthwatch representative on the Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period of the current administration.

5. MAYOR'S SPOTLIGHT

The Chair reported that the Mayor had given apologies for the meeting and will present the spotlight item at the next meeting of committee.

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

6.1 LGA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan

Robin Beattie, Director of Strategy, Transformation, and Improvement, with Cllr Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, presented the action plan, seeking feedback from the committee.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- What engagement was there between scrutiny members and drafting this Action Plan? Officers stated that the Chief Executive made himself available to any member of the council to feed into the action plan. The Action Plan is a living document and can be updated based on member feedback.
- How has the action plan been amended since members provided feedback? Officers stated that many suggestions were found to be useful. Officers would welcome any further suggestions. Meetings with women councillors has been sought to ensure their lived experience is considered in the action plan.
- Do Officers feel that this action plan has the views of opposition members within it, or is it what the administration consider actions? Officers stated that the action plan comes from LGA feedback, which have been turned into actions. There has been no barrier for any member to give feedback to the action plan. Members could do this in writing.
- If the LGA peer review stated that the council needs to listen more to all member voices within the council and while the council is under Government Inspection, should there not been more member engagement between officers and members on this action plan? Cllr Kabir Ahmed stated that many issues that been brought up have been taken into consideration, particularly women's safety, which the council is rolling out new safety campaigns to address concerns.
- When developing long term strategic vision in this action plan, what engagement has been made with residents? Officers confirmed that a lot of consultation material has been drilled down on to help to create this action plan, but after this draft stage more engagement will be sought.
- What measures have been taken to ensure accountability in reporting in the council? Officers detailed the range of activity around internal governance, highlighting a multi-layered approach to how audit is reported.
- What changes have been made to the Mayor's Office since the Action Plan has been drafted and has this led to better working relationships with the rest of the council? Officers stated that the Mayor's Office is under review, with the relationship between the Mayor's and Council has been streamlined, ensuring that duplication of work being minimalised.

RESOLVED

Members noted the action plan.

6.2 Leisure insourcing update

Keith Townsend (Insourcing Leisure Project Director), Simon Jones (Head of Leisure Operations), Jahur Ali (Director of Leisure and Culture) and Cllr Kabir

Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, presented the Leisure insource update.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- Members raised concerns about male staff members supervising women only sessions, which has had negative feedback from residents. Officers confirmed that there will be initial recruitment of new lifeguards and other staff to allow for full support for women only sessions.
- With the insourcing of leisure centres how will you ensure it will be financially sustainable? Cllr Kabir Ahmed stated that while there will be an initial investment, within the first four years, the council is expecting to see financial return on the insourcing.
- How will the new leisure centres insourcing help deal with the health inequality within the borough? Officers stated that the new health offer will be increased to allow for residents to take part in a range of services across the borough's centres. Cllr Kabir Ahmed stated that there will be an increase in children from different backgrounds having new access and referrals to use the centres.
- What engagement is being done with residents to inform them of the benefits of insourcing? Officers shared best practice that has been shared from other London Council's that have undertaken similar processes. Overall, the communications campaign will involve developing a new website and smartphone app.
- Will there be an increase in price for using existing services? Will the booking system be updated? Officers confirmed that there will be no increase in price to services to ensure business continuity. The booking system will be updated to an industry standard software, and will be more accessible.
- How many members of staff should be working at the leisure centres? And how many staff are subject to TUPE? Officers stated around 220 staff are coming in under TUPE, officers do not think the gap in staffing is significant and will be supported by recruitment.
- Members requested for the KPIs being used by LBTH to measure the performance of the insourced Leisure Services and the comparative data for recent years.

RESOLVED

Members noted the update.

6.3 Parking Spotlight

Michael Darby (Head of Parking, Mobility & Market Services), Ashraf Ali (Director of Public Realm) with Cllr Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development gave a presentation on the update on parking within the borough.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- What is the council doing to control parking in big events. Officers confirmed that there will be introducing new event parking which will come into effect for football games, events in Victoria park and other large events. Enforcement will be looking at double yellow lines and parking near junctions during large events.
- Residents have expressed concern with customer service in parking permits. New systems seem to be put in place and residents have not been informed? Officers confirmed that it is not a new system, but it has been updated. Residents will find that their accounts have expired, as they have not used it within the year, for security reasons.
- Members expressed concern that residents are not informed about expiring accounts and better communication needs to be delivered to residents.
- Have the council done any analysis in the cancellation rate on parking tickets? Are there any patterns that have been found? Officers stated that work has been done to ensure that detailed parking tickets are issued, so residents are less likely to appeal as they understand why they have received a ticket. Patterns appear to come from bad signage and worn markings. Work has been done to ensure that blue badge holders are better supported in cancellations.
- Are there plans on electric vehicle charging points? What will underpin the layout of the new points to ensure residents have the best access? Officers reported that over the next 3 years, there will be over 2,000 charging points to be installed across the borough. Points will partly be dictated by where permits have been issued, to see where demand is.
- Members raised concerns about GP and other front line staff not having access to parking permits when they are in the community. Cllr Kabir Ahmed discussed having space on estate parking for front line staff to allow for community visits.

RESOLVED

Members noted the update.

7. MARKETS CHALLENGE SESSION

Cllr Abdul Wahid, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth introduced the report, praising the work undertaken by members and stating work will be carried forward to cabinet.

Cllr Abdul Malik, scrutiny lead for Environment and Community Safety presented the report on the recent markets challenge scrutiny session and asked members for any comments.

The committee raised the following comments and questions:

- Previously the council developed individual market plans and it would be helpful to see what progress has been made against those plans, to go along with this report.
- The council should be supporting local markets with financial support for pitch fees and other ongoing costs. Markets do not need to be cost neutral for community benefit.

RESOLVED:

- Members noted the Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenge session report.
- Members agreed the recommendations and for the reported to be submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response.

8. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Nil items.

9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

Members asked for an update on the number of incentive payments that have been made to landlords within the borough.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the action log.

10. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

11. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items

12. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

13. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

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

The Chair thanked members for their hard work across 2023/24 as members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

15. 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.

16. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

17. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 21:05

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee