

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 18:34 ON TUESDAY, 9 JULY 2024**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL**

**Members Present in Person:**

Councillor Jahed Choudhury	
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Resources
Councillor Abdul Mannan	Scrutiny Lead for Children and Education
Councillor Bellal Uddin	
Councillor Asma Islam	
Councillor Amy Lee	
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	Scrutiny Lead for Environment and the Climate Emergency

**Members In Attendance Virtually:**

Councillor Amina Ali

**Other Councillors Present in Person:**

Mayor Luftur Raham	
Councillor Saied Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

**Co-optees Present in Person:**

Halima Islam

**Officers Present in Person:**

Stephen Halsey	Chief Executive
Julie Lorriane	Corporate Director for Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
John Ainsworth	Senior Performance Improvement Analyst
Richard Williams	Head of Operational Services
Simon Baxter	Corporate Director Communities
Dr Somen Banerjee	Director of Public Health
Simon Smith	Head of Community Safety
Menara Ahmed	Senior VAWG, Domestic Abuse & Hate Crime Manager
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
Filuck Miah	(Senior Strategy and Policy Officer)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

**Officers In Attendance Virtually:**

Pauline Maddison  
Leo Major  
Kelly Duggan

Director of Education  
Head of Service - LAC & Through Care  
Head of Youth Justice Service

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Jahed Ahmed and Cllr Amina Ali, who joined the meeting online.

**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 21 May 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

**4. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG**

**RESOLVED:**

Members noted the action log.

**5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil items.

**6. REQUESTS TO HEAR PETITIONS**

Nil items.

**7. REVISED SCRUTINY LEAD PORTFOLIO AREAS**

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed the Scrutiny Lead Portfolio Areas

## **8. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT**

### **8.1 Corporate Restructure**

Mayor Lutfur Raham, Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director for Resources and Deputy Chief Executive presented the report on the progress on the council's 'People First' transformation journey so far.

The committee raised the following comments and questions

- The restructure places a lot of additional responsibilities on the resource's directorate, how will this be managed? Officers highlighted that legal, HR and other corporate functions are being moved, in line with other local authorities.
- Can officers give further detail on the proposed roles reporting to Chief Executive, with both a Deputy Chief Executive and an Assistant Chief Executive? Officers confirmed that the Deputy Chief Executive is a role to stand in when the Chief Executive is away and is currently being staffed by Julie Lorraine. The Assistant Chief Executive is a different role that is being developed to include communications and will be placed in December 2024, but it is still being looked into to see if its appropriate.
- Will there be any compulsory redundancies, to follow the current round of voluntary? Officers confirmed that there are no plans for compulsory redundancies as the council has committed to a 3 year financial plan that does not require any compulsory redundancies to happen. Voluntary redundancies will be open annually and this allows the council to assess the level of staffing each year.
- Where does the Mayor's Office sit within the new structure? Officers confirmed that majority of the office will be under the resources directorate, with other areas moving to other appropriate services, like the residents hub.
- Committee members requested the chair to allow for more time in committee meetings to scrutinise items. This meeting has seen many big items, including this restructure item, which has not been given enough time nor have members been allowed to ask enough questions.

#### **RESOLVED:**

Members noted the report.

## **9. WOMEN'S SAFETY ACTION PLAN RESPONSE PROGRESS (UPDATE)**

Cllr Abu Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, with Simon Smith, Head of Community Safety, Menara Ahmed Senior VAWG, Domestic Abuse & Hate Crime Manager presented an update on the Women's Safety Action Plan.

The committee raised the following comments and questions

- Members expressed concerns about inclusion of self-defence initiatives within the action plan, rather than actions to stop men undertaking violent crime.
- How will the council ensure the actions pledged by the Metropolitan Police will be scrutinised and held accountable. Officers highlighted that Community Safety Partnerships ensure ownership of actions in the action plan.
- What has been the community interest in self-defence classes? Officers stated that there has been limited take up to the classes, but this is due to who could take part in the classes. But with increased budget and greater awareness in the community, there has been greater take up.
- Members expressed their concerns about being women in public life and the potential danger they can feel in being councillors. The council needs to ensure that it creates a safe space for current members, officers and candidates. Cllr Abu Chowdhury agreed that members of the council should feel safe to undertake their roles, as well as those who work for the council. Officers highlighted the recent work of the Council's Women's Network and its work for staff. Training for members on support for the VAWG campaign is to be scheduled.

**RESOLVED:**

Members noted the update.

**10. WORK PLAN AND SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The chair introduced the Overview and Scrutiny workplan and improvement plan, the workplan will be agreed by committee in September 2024.

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed the report.

**11. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Nil items.

**12. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS**

Nil Items.

**13. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS**

The Chair agreed to add items 6.1 Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Provisional Outturn and 6.4 Annual Strategic Delivery & Performance Report 23/24 from 10 July 2024 meeting of Cabinet for member discussion.

Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living, with Julie Lorriane, Corporate Director for Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, presented the report on Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Provisional Outturn

The committee raised the following comments and questions

- Within Housing and Housing Options, will there be more investment to deal with greater financial burdens? Officers commented on the areas of financial pressure that affect the council, including insurance and housing revenue overspend outside of capital works. There will be continued pressures with homelessness. Cabinet have recently looked at further investment within housing.
- Can officers provide more detail about the debts of the council and how this affects interest rates? Officers detailed how the interest rates available to the council have a huge impact on the budget, but with interest rates forecast to fall, the council is remaining cautious.
- Has the overall budget outturn affecting communities and vulnerable groups? Officers reported that effects would be the council not delivering on the spending to services that have not be promised. There is no concern that the council has not allocated enough to these groups, but committee members are closer to these communities and officers always welcome feedback on where the council is delivering.

#### **RESOLVED:**

Members noted the report

Mayor Lutfur Raham, Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living, with Julie Lorriane, Corporate Director for Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, John Ainsworth, Senior Performance Improvement Analyst, Richard Williams, Head of Operational Services, Simon Baxter, Corporate Director Communities presented the report on Annual Strategic Delivery & Performance Report 23/24.

The committee raised the following comments and questions

- The reporting on the school cycling scheme seems to be reduced, can officers provide further detail on this? Cllr Saied Ahmed detailed that building up of cycling instructors to take part in the scheme was an initial issue, but the scheme now is fully supported, so this will improve.
- Members highlighted concerns about the performance of waste and recycling. Officers agreed that further sessions of committee can be held to scrutinise waste and recycling performance.
- The level of Care Home admissions is concerning, what is causing this to perform so poorly? Adult social care in the borough is a growing issue for the council. Officers detailed the demand for adult social care, with both under and over 65 care has been an increase in the complexity of care needs. The council has a home first policy to ensure that residents remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
- When will the council see significant improvement in educational health assessments? Officers detailed how the council is above the national

average and within the line of the London average. Additional funding for caseworkers has been provided, which is helping towards an ambitious target for any authority in London. The Mayor stated that he feels the investment that council has put into this target will see stronger results soon.

**RESOLVED:**

Members noted the report

**14. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS**

**RESOLVED:**

Members noted the forward plan

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

Nil Items.

**16. 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.

**17. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil Items.

**18. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'**

Nil Items

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

Nil Items.

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

Nil Items.

The meeting ended at 21:00

Chair, Councillor Jahed Choudhury  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee