

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

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Foreword by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

Article 6 Section 6.01 (13) of our constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report annually to Council on its work. This report fulfils that requirement for the municipal year of 2022/2023.

Over the past year, Newham's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has carried out robust scrutiny of the Council's priorities, as identified in the Building a Fairer Corporate Plan and the in-year monitoring of the 2022-23 budget and scrutiny of 2023-24 budget proposals. Overview and Scrutiny Committee had to satisfy itself and report to the Executive and Council on whether it believes that the draft budget of £366m, efficiency savings of £19.4 million, service growth of £28 million and where applicable, delivery plans, are realistic and deliverable in meeting the priorities identified in the Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan. Further, it is its responsibility to ascertain what actions have been taken to identify and address overspending, especially in areas where there have been recurrences, and whether deliverable and realistic strategies are in place to deal with these issues.

There have been challenges. Given some unanticipated events during the 2023 budget scrutiny process, I sadly had to safeguard the reputations and interests of members of the Commission and the Mayor and the integrity of the scrutiny process, by self-referring the Commission and the Mayor to the Council's Standards Committee for an unbiased consideration and investigation of the issues raised. Budget scrutiny was suspended, which resulted in the production of a truncated version of its standard report that was unable to give full assurance that the budget, efficiency savings and service growth, as identified in the draft budget and delivery plans, were realistic and deliverable in meeting the priorities identified in the Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan. Notwithstanding the above, I should posit that the final budget report was rigorously constructive in its narrative and recommendations. The Executive accepted six of the nine recommendations. Two of the three rejected recommendations sought to address concerns about the general fund reserve and the third recommendation sought to address concerns about large project viability in respect of costings, scoping and management.

In addition, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised the Council's performance, the role of on-site home office immigration officers, carried out a review of the implementation of the Newham Legacy Investment (London Stadium) Scrutiny Commission's recommendations and questioned the Executive on its delivery of the manifesto's pledges and priorities as identified in the Building a Fairer Newham corporate plan.

An important power of Overview and Scrutiny is that of calling in decisions of Cabinet – a process that allows for an additional session of review and of reflection. To this end the Overview and Scrutiny Committee upheld a Call-In of a Cabinet Decision on the progression of James Riley Point and made a number of recommendations. These were considered by the Executive but sadly rejected.

Overall, the commissions that operate under the umbrella of Overview and Scrutiny have also done some significant thematic review work. I should spotlight a few areas across the breadth of scrutiny - noting that this was not a comprehensive summary, but just a few highlights. Reviews of the SEND services performance improvement and child and

adolescent mental health and well-being provision were done by Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission. In a similar vein, the Health and Adult Social Care Commission focussed on health inequalities in respect of maternity, mental health, disability and primary care, to name a few. Tackling health inequalities is central not only to the overall work of the Council but also to this Commission and its in-depth scrutiny function. Another important example is the in-depth scrutiny carried out by the Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Scrutiny Commission. The committee investigated the interventions being made to help sex workers, enforcement, and community safety and partnerships, as well as the safety of women and girls in Newham. At its final meeting of the municipal year, the Commission reviewed the Executive interim response to the 'State of the Borough' scrutiny report – scrutiny done by the Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Commission and represented to Cabinet on 8th September 2022.

The Regeneration, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission has scrutinised the significant issues of homelessness and temporary accommodation plans, the delivery of affordable housing, actions for improving air quality and sustainable transport to name but a few areas.

The Task and Finish Commission tasked with looking into the relationship between black boys and the Borough has had its work temporarily halted due to a combination of limited resources and parallel work by the Executive. Given how powerful its findings have been to date and the importance of its work, I hope such issues will be overcome going into the new scrutiny term.

Accountable democracy requires a robust separation of powers. When such a separation is strongly embedded in the governance structures, practices and ethos of national, regional and local governments, those in power will have genuinely placed residents at the heart of decision-making.

In Newham, we have embraced the directly elected Mayor model and with it, the Overview and Scrutiny function. Having an Executive Mayoral model we can continue to be proud of the successes Overview and Scrutiny has had as a conduit for the voice of residents articulated through non-executive Councillors serving on Scrutiny Commissions. Together they act in concert as a collective check and balance on Executive power – as a critical friend. To this extent, both arms of governance – the Executive and Scrutiny – complement each other to form cornerstones of the fabric of our vibrant local democracy.

Effective scrutiny is symbolic of a transparent and confident administration, which is open to challenges and able to work collaboratively with all Members in the interests of Newham residents. The administration, led by a committed Executive, is held to account by an innovative and progressive Scrutiny function.

However, notwithstanding the finalisation and implementation of a solid Scrutiny/Executive protocol which ought to give parity, space and opportunity for both governance arms to flourish and to work together for the benefit of our residents, I should now posit that effective scrutiny is potentially at risk, especially given the events of budget scrutiny and the several breaches of said protocol. Adherence to the protocol is inconsistent and the lack of timely release of information sought can be most frustrating. Arguably, my view might be supported by Newham light touch Scrutiny Improvement Review that was undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in June of 2022. It is one thing to put in place a set of words – but the true test of those words – the protocol - will be in its

systemic translation into value-driven behaviour underpinned by an ethos of collegiate yet appropriately critical accountability in the interest of Newham and its residents.

I should like to thank the Chairs of the Scrutiny Commissions for their support and leadership of their Commissions, as well as all Councillors who have actively participated in the work of the Scrutiny Commissions. The Commissions have amassed a significant body of evidence across a wide range of themes, all translated into impactful recommendations for Executive consideration. None of this would have been possible without the collaborative participation of the Mayor and her Cabinet, for which I express my sincere gratitude. My thanks also go to the officer core as a whole. I also wish to express my deep thanks to the witnesses who came from all walks of life – individuals, voluntary groups, charities and non-profit organisations, as well as Council partners, all of whom participated in the work of the Scrutiny Commissions. It is their voices, often marginalised by wider society, that Scrutiny in particular amplifies through its work. I commend this Scrutiny Annual Report to the Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Tony McAlmont'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Tony' written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname 'McAlmont'.

Councillor Anthony McAlmont
Chair: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Member for Royal Albert

1. Overview and Scrutiny at Newham

- 1.1. Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the local democratic governance arrangements for most local authorities in England and Wales, providing a vehicle through committees for elected councillors who are not members of a local authorities Executive to influence the development of Council policy and service provision and provide accountability to the public.
- 1.2. Overview and Scrutiny was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, which created separate Executive and Overview and Scrutiny functions within local authorities' governance arrangements.
- 1.3. Overview and Scrutiny committees have statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the Executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken or implemented. Through this process, scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in reviewing and developing policy and effective scrutiny can enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented.
- 1.4. Newham Council has established a statutory Overview and Scrutiny Committee to oversee the scrutiny function at Newham, which may also establish scrutiny commissions to undertake work on particular areas delegated to them¹. In 2022-2023 the Committee established four main thematic Scrutiny Commissions, to consider specific issues:
 - Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Scrutiny Commission
 - Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
 - Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission
 - Regeneration, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission.
- 1.5. In addition it also reconvened additional "task and finish" scrutiny commissions;- the Relationship between Black Boys and the Borough Scrutiny Commission and the Removal of Combustible Cladding from Residential Properties Scrutiny Commission. A summary of the progress of the Relationship between Black Boys and the Borough Scrutiny Commission is provided at page 31. The Removal of Combustible Cladding from Residential Properties Scrutiny Commission was paused in 2022-2023.
- 1.6. Newham Council is implementing innovative ways to fulfil its aspiration to become an exemplar in how it engages with local people. As part of the Council's Priority: People powered Newham and widening participation, there is a commitment to:

Extend strategic and long term policy making in Newham through the better use of the scrutiny process to include pre-scrutiny of decisions and policy, joint working with the Executive and the involvement of the residents from the Citizens Assembly, Neighbourhood Assemblies, Youth Citizens Assembly, Adult Social Care Citizens Assembly as well as the voluntary, community and faith sector in Newham.
- 1.7. The Council's overview and scrutiny committees are central to delivering this ambition as key part of the Council's democratic and governance arrangements. The scrutiny

¹ The stated role and terms of reference of the scrutiny committee at Newham Council is set out in Article 6 of the Newham Council Constitution.

committees intend to build further upon the wider use of external witnesses in the scrutiny process and that it is hoped to take this forward next year.

- 1.8. This report profiles the work undertaken by the Council's scrutiny committees throughout 2022-2023 to provide policy review and proposals for policy and service development, to engage with local stakeholders through the democratic governance process and provide greater accountability and help drive improvement to local services for residents.

Call In

- 1.9. The "Call In" procedure provides a mechanism for non-Executive Members of the Council to refer key decisions made but not yet implemented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Once a decision has been called in, the matter must be included on the agenda of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for review.
- 1.10. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the matter and decides whether or not to refer the decisions back to the Executive for re-consideration. If the Committee decides to refer the decision back, the Executive body or person must then reconsider the matter within five clear days and the executive decision cannot be implemented until then.
- 1.11. This year a Cabinet Decision on Progressing James Riley Point was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review through the Council's Call In procedure. The Cabinet had made the decision on 9th March 2023 and this included an increase in the budget for the James Riley Point development project of £24m (plus an additional amount for costs) and approval of a Compulsory Purchase Order to facilitate delivery of the refurbishment of James Riley Point and construction of a new community centre. The consideration of this issue following the Call In, the findings of the Committee and the Cabinet's response is provided in more detail at page 17.

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to oversee the scrutiny function and provide overall scrutiny management and oversight of any scrutiny Commissions it appoints to undertake its work².
- 2.2. The Committee's remit includes legislative powers and responsibilities for local authority scrutiny committees, including health scrutiny, scrutiny of crime and disorder partnerships and flood risk management.
- 2.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may appoint Commissions to carry out its scrutiny functions and to undertake scrutiny inquiries in its work programme and make reports and recommendations back through the Committee.
- 2.4. The Members of the Overview and Committee were:
 - ❖ Councillor Anthony McAlmont (Chair)
 - ❖ Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe
 - ❖ Councillor Elizabeth Booker

² Paragraph 6.02, Article 6 of the Newham Council Constitution, April 2023.

- ❖ Councillor Susan Masters
- ❖ Councillor Rita Chadha
- ❖ Councillor Rohima Rahman
- ❖ Councillor Lester Hudson
- ❖ Councillor Thelma Odoi
- ❖ Councillor Nate Higgins
- ❖ Ellen Kemp - Co-opted Member (Church of England)
- ❖ Paul Underwood - Co-opted Member (Roman Catholic Diocese)
- ❖ Matthew Brooks - Independent Co-optee
- ❖ Paul Leslie - Independent Co-optee.

- 2.5. Whilst much of the Committee's work has been undertaken through the Commissions it established, the Committee itself held a number of meetings throughout the year in which a range of items were considered.

Questions to the Executive

- 2.6. On 29 November 2022 the Committee put questions to Councillor Neil Wilson, Cabinet Member – Health & Adult Social Care and Councillor Mumtaz Khan, Deputy Cabinet Member - Health & Adult Social Care on matters across their portfolio.
- 2.7. The Committee asked about the national changes in the organisation of healthcare and how they were affecting the delivery of health and social care locally. The Cabinet Member provided some examples of how the pan London relationship could improve the response to viruses, such as Monkeypox.
- 2.8. On 16 February 2023 the Committee put questions to Councillor James Asser, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member - Environment & Sustainable Transport on matters across his portfolio.

The Committee put questions on the speed of converting all the Council vehicles to electric, the Emission-Based Charging System, on how the changes to the free parking permits would be communicated to residents, on Restricted Parking Zones (RPZs) and pavement parking and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and whether these were being aligned with the review into RPZs,

Council Performance – Delivering the Council's Priorities

- 2.9. Throughout the year the Committee has reviewed Council Performance and delivery of the Council's Priorities in the the "Building a Fairer Newham" Borough Plan, with questions to Rokhsana Fiaz - Mayor of Newham, Colin Ansell - Chief Executive and James Partis - Director of Change.
- 2.10. It was noted that there was focus on tackling poverty and inequality and that the Executive aimed to drive inward investment into the borough.
- 2.11. The Committee found that key areas for improvement were highlighted by the resident survey, particularly on Community Safety and that residents wanted to see more enforcement and visibility to promote safety in the borough.

- 2.12. The Mayor told the Committee that Lord Kirkdale assesses the Mayor's performance and the performance of the service areas once a month and the Mayor picks up on strategic issues arising.
- 2.13. The Committee questioned whether the general set of KPIs that was being used were all the correct metrics to understand the performance of the Council. It was noted that there was an opportunity at the end of the municipal year to reflect upon whether the current set of performance indicators are the most effective.

Budget Performance

- 2.14. Through 2022-2023 the Committee has maintained oversight of the Council's financial position and budget performance, with questions to Councillor Zulfiqar Ali - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Conrad Hall, Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) Andrew Ward, Deputy S151 Officer.
- 2.15. The Committee noted key issues effecting the budget, population increases leading to an increase in service demand, temporary accommodation costs and staff pay negotiations.
- 2.16. On 29 November 2022 the Committee noted that the Council had reported a £7.8m overspend position at the end of August 2022. It was also noted that £5.2m of the overspend was the provision related to temporary accommodation for households in need and the other £2.6m was made up of net financial pressures across departments.

Newham Legacy Investments (London Stadium) Scrutiny Commission

- 2.17. The Committee reviewed the implementation of the Executive's decisions agreed from the scrutiny inquiry into Newham Legacy Investments (London Stadium). The scrutiny inquiry had been established "in order to identify any lessons to be learned from the experience of investment into the Stadium [and to] examine...decisions taken in relation to the Stadium. This provided a scrutiny report in 2019, with seven recommendations.
- 2.18. The Committee put questions to the Mayor of Newham, Councillor Zulfiqar Ali - Cabinet Member, Finance and Resources and Conrad Hall - Corporate Director of Resources. The Committee was provided with the Executive Responses and a progress report on implementation. The Committee was told that each of the recommendations has now been implemented and built into normal practice.

Newham's Response to Ukraine, Syria and the Crisis in Afghanistan

- 2.19. The Committee reviewed Newham's response to Ukraine, Syria and the crisis in Afghanistan. This was a review of the work being done by the Council and others in the borough to put in place the foundations for those arriving in the borough, to help them to start their new lives in the UK.
- 2.20. In response to questions from the Committee, the Mayor made a commitment to make Newham a place that welcomed everyone and recognised the contribution of refugees, which would be cemented by Newham's commitment to becoming a Borough of Sanctuary.

The Role of On Site Home Office Immigration Officers

- 2.21. The Committee considered the role of On Site Home Office Immigration Officers in the Council and the impact on Newham's families. The Committee noted the reasons for having an On Site Immigration Officer (OSIO) in Newham, the work completed to date, the benefit across the Council and examples of case studies highlighting positive outcomes for families.

Community Assemblies and CIL Spending

- 2.22. The Committee reviewed the Community Assemblies programme and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending, with questions to Councillor Charlene McLean - Cabinet Member Resident Engagement and Resident Experience. The Committee noted the progress on delivery of 2021/22 projects, the progress on the delivery of the current 2022/23 cycle and the approved projects for 2022/23.
- 2.23. The Mayor told the Committee that the approach to the Community Assemblies had been an innovative concept that was introduced in 2018 as part of her first administration's programme and it had assisted residents to participate in the development in their neighbourhoods.
- 2.24. Responding to Committee Members' questions on the budget for CIL spending, Jane Custance - Director of Planning and Development said that the overarching intention of CIL was to support the growth and development of the borough through investment in infrastructure. It was noted that there were a number of projects that were in the pipeline such as the Beckton Dockland Light Railway extension and regeneration of parts of Stratford that may be allocated funding.

Interventions Being Made to Help Sex Workers

- 2.25. On 16th February 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered interventions being made to help sex workers in the borough. This is summarised in detail on page 22.

James Riley Point – The Carpenters Estate

- 2.26. On 29th March 2023 the Committee reviewed a Cabinet Decision on Progressing James Riley Point following a Call In by four members of the Committee. This is summarised in detail on page 17.

3. Education, Children and Young People

The Commission began the municipal year with a new chair and many new members. In order to build a work programme, we held multiple meetings with Cabinet Members, voluntary, community and faith sector organisations and also spoke to a number of individuals working within the education sector, to ensure that the areas of work the Commission focused on had as much input from key stakeholders as possible.

Key areas that were highlighted in this process included; SEND provision; changes to the directorate, including to Brighter Futures; mental health support for children and young people; the use of on-site immigration officers within children's services; school

attendance and children missing in education. Over the year we have had the opportunity to scrutinise these areas as well as others. Highlights include the introduction of an anti-racism policy within the complaints procedures; providing a platform for commission members, the executive and the public to hear directly from young people who use our mental health services; the opportunity to speak to frontline social workers; advocating for higher levels of spending on mental health per child and providing a level of scrutiny through report requests around disproportionality of educational outcomes that will feed into the 2030 Education Vision.

Councillor Elizabeth Booker
– Chair of the Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

- 3.1. The Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th June 2022 to undertake scrutiny of the Education, Children and Young People portfolios and respective Council departments.
- 3.2. The Members of the Scrutiny Commission were:
- ❖ Elizabeth Booker (Chair)
 - ❖ Rachel Tripp
 - ❖ Sasha DasGupta
 - ❖ Shantu Ferdous
 - ❖ Madeleine Sarley Pontin
 - ❖ Mohammed Mazibur Rahman
 - ❖ Simon Rush (February 2023)
 - ❖ John Morris (until April 2023)
 - ❖ Thelma Odoi
 - ❖ John Gray (until January 2023)
 - ❖ Ken Penton.
- 3.3. The Commission has held meetings throughout the year to hold the Executive to account for the delivery of the Council's priorities for children and young people, as well as contribute to policy development and review of Council services. The Commission has also undertaken a number of visits to hear evidence informally outside of the committee, including informal sessions for social worker frontline practice conversations, discussions with Roma Support services and interviews with the pastoral lead at the East London Design and Engineering UTC, on how schools are supporting children with mental health needs.

Children's Services Improvement

- 3.4. The Commission considered the Ofsted re-inspection of Newham Council Children's Services. The Ofsted inspection results for Children's Services in July 2022³, rated the authority as 'Good' overall. Members of the Commission had contributed to the Ofsted investigation, the Chair and previous Chair of the Commission having been interviewed by the Inspector.
- 3.5. It was noted that this was a highly significant result historically and a significant improvement. The Commission noted key points from the Ofsted report and areas for

³ Ofsted report for Newham Council Children Services published on 21 September 2022),

further continued improvement, including the need to secure good outcomes and accommodation for care leavers.

- 3.6. The Commission also noted several areas which still required improvement, including 'return home' interviews, which needed to be completed in a more timely way and to improve relationships with external partners.
- 3.7. The Commission maintains ongoing oversight of the continued improvement journey for Newham's Children's Services.

Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2021/22

- 3.8. The Commission considered the Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2021/22. It was noted that this was the first complaints report that had been compiled by Children's Services and that the Children's Services statutory complaints reports were made either by the child or an advocate. It was noted that there had been a drop in the number of children's service complaints which had been received over the last few years.
- 3.9. The Commission heard in evidence that children's rights were the highest category of Children's Service Complaints. A common category of complaint was a breakdown in relationships with social workers. It was noted that one of the outcomes that had arisen from Complaints Report was improving training for social workers as well as the implementation of new standards for case filing.
- 3.10. Members of the Commission sought to understand how complaints with a racial element are handled internally and questioned how the Council would respond to a Children's Service complaint relating to race or ethnicity and the process for this. As a result of the Commission's inquiry, it was proposed that the policy will be developed to specifically link complaints of this nature to staff conduct via an anti-racism policy.

SEND Services Performance Improvement

- 3.11. The Commission reviewed the services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) performance improvement throughout 2022-2023. Following an OFSTED/CQC inspection result, published in March 2022, which found that there were the key areas of weakness⁴, Newham Council was required to produce a Written Statement of Action detailing how the key areas of weakness would be addressed.
- 3.12. Areas for improvement were noted by the Commission as:
- Poor timeliness and quality of EHC plan assessments and plans.
 - Underdeveloped arrangements for joint commissioning. Agencies do not work together well enough to provide services that children, young people and their families need.
 - Children and young people and their parents and carers are not involved sufficiently in reviewing their needs or setting targets for the future. Co-production is underdeveloped.
 - Transition to post-16 and adult services across education, health and care provision is weak. There is a lack of specialist provision for young people with the most complex needs.

⁴ <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50179297>

- The online local offer is not helpful to parents and carers. Too many parents do not use or understand the support they are entitled to.
- Waiting times for Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy assessments and interventions are too long.

- 3.13. It was found that there was a need to improve service quality and capacity, to ensure that it was fit for purpose, noting that there would be a likely increase in demand, particularly in the need for support for children on the autistic spectrum.
- 3.14. The Commission noted that there was a shortage in school transport staff for SEND which had caused issues for supporting children with SEND who required transport assistance to get to their particular school. It was found that there was a need to improve learning from complaints from service users and it was noted that there was mitigation in place to manage service shortages.
- 3.15. The Commission noted the work that had been undertaken with Newham's improvement partner, Bedford Council, and found that the work that Bedford had done to undertake its own successful improvement journey made it an ideal partner to learn from.
- 3.16. In April the Commission received a six month update on the progress of the Written Statement of Action (WSOA). It was noted that the backlog of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) had been cleared and the rate of timely completion of EHCPs had increased significantly. The Commission questioned the quality of EHCPs as both quality and timeliness had been highlighted as an issue. The Executive informed the Commission that it was necessary to clear the backlog before addressing quality. The Commission have asked for a quality check at the year review mark for a sample of the EHCPs to measure quality.

Social Worker Frontline Practice Conversations

- 3.17 Members of the Commission held an informal session with local front line social workers and managers to discuss the challenges, opportunities and changes that they had faced as social workers in Newham. Members of the Commission were able to gain an enhanced understanding of frontline social work practice, as well as look for areas to potentially help to alleviate some of the problems faced by frontline staff.
- 3.18 Following conversations with the social workers, several key areas were identified. It was noted that there was a great deal of administrative work, some of the burden of which was being placed on social workers and there was a concern that this would reduce the capacity of social workers to undertake work supporting the community. It was noted that the cost of living crisis and lack of affordable housing in the borough had a significant impact.
- 3.19. During discussions it was also clear that there were several encouraging signs of improvement and good practice in the service. The following recommendations were agreed by the Commission:
- That the Commission invite clinical practitioners to provide an assessment of what mental health and social support they offer to social workers, understand the impact this has and assess the cost and benefit to this offer.

- The Commission would like to see evidence of how culture change has embedded in the service; how this has changed ways of working and how this is being made resilient to ensure long term sustainability.
- That the business case for the removal/reallocation of Business Support Officers for Social Workers (BSOs) be shared with the Commission and that the service provides an understanding of what the contribution of BSOs was to reducing administrative strain on social workers.
- That the service establish a practice of regular Member Practice Conversations with scrutiny committees and that the lead Cabinet Member be invited to undertake Member Practice Conversations as well.
- Due to the lack of affordable housing in the borough, the Commission requested that Cabinet members and officers consider possibilities of providing subsidised housing for social workers to alleviate the cost of living issue and ensure retention of good social workers in Newham who may otherwise leave due to lack of affordable housing.

The request from the social workers to have meetings with the Executive were passed on through the Commission and the Executive agreed to consider them.

The Newham Safeguarding Children's Partnership

- 3.20. The Commission reviewed the Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Newham Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report⁵, with questions to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, the Chair of Newham Safeguarding Children's Panel and the Metropolitan Police.
- 3.21. The Newham Safeguarding Children's Partnership includes Newham Council, the NHS, the Metropolitan Police and representatives of Newham primary and secondary schools.
- 3.22. The Commission considered all age exploitation, transition, communication and engagement and the development of good practice. The Commission heard that there had been significant work with families and children to undertake a strengths-based approach to improve outcomes, an approach that had been promoted by the Safeguarding Partnership. There were regular meetings with partners to disseminate information across all partners and share good practice and this was also tracked through regular audit and actions tracking.
- 3.23. It was also noted that there had been significant learning that had been undertaken with Newham's partner authority, Leeds City Council and it was noted that the Newham Children's Services were working with Leeds to understand how to become a "Child Friendly" borough.

Brighter Futures Children's Services Reorganisation

- 3.24. The Commission considered the service restructure of "Brighter Futures". In September 2022 the Council reorganised the way services focused on helping children, families and young people were managed and delivered. The changes included moving Youth Safety to the Public Health remit and moving Children's Health, Early Help and Youth Empowerment to the Children and Young People Service. The Commission heard that

⁵ <https://www.newhamscp.org.uk/annual-reports/>

there had been a range of activity to integrate services into the Children and Young People Service and understand how they are supporting Council aims and objectives.

Educational Outcomes in Newham

- 3.25. The Commission considered educational outcomes in Newham. It found that the impact of COVID-19 had meant that the attainment of pupils in Newham had fallen across all key stages except GCSE where national pass rates are adjusted by Ofqual. It was noted, however, that all available comparative data indicated that Newham has maintained or improved in comparative rank position at every key stage.
- 3.26. The proportion of “good” / “outstanding” primary and secondary schools had risen during 2021-22 from 93% in 2020-21 to now 97% (unpublished). Newham is currently shown as ranking 11th in inner London and 24th nationally with 94.3% of schools shown in Watchsted.com as being good / outstanding.
- 3.27. The Commission requested more data delineated by geography and demography (early years, KS3 and KS4), which was brought to its April meeting. This will be used within the Education Vision for 2030.
- 3.28. At the commissions meeting in April, they considered the educational outcomes with greater detail including race and geography and were keen to get further insight into some of the groups that didn’t perform as well as others. The Commission would like to consider further data at a future meeting, including on gender, as well as on pupils wellbeing.
- 3.29. The Commission found that attainment by ethnicity at KS4 showed “White British” children were 4 attainment points below the second lowest which was “Black Caribbean”. More work is needed to consider how the Council and schools should support this cohort.

Children not in (Mainstream) Education

- 3.30. The Commission considered the issue of children not in mainstream education in Newham, trends over time, support that is available to children and families and plans for service improvement. The Commission noted that attendance was falling in Newham and nationally in 2021/22⁶.
- 3.31. The Commission noted that Newham’s rank position for special schools has consistently been among the lowest performing Local authorities in England between 2016/17 and 2021/22⁷. It was found that this is partly because Newham has fewer special schools and more special educational needs children in mainstream school settings compared to other local authority areas.

⁶ Overall attendance rate in England and Newham between 2015/16 and 2021/22 (reported from schools census data).

⁷ Overall attendance rate in England and Newham between 2015/16 and 2021/22 (reported from schools census data);- Newham’s rank position for PA10 and PA50 in special schools has consistently been among the lowest performing Local authorities in England between 2016/17 and 2021/22.

3.32. The Commission also considered how the Council identified groups that were particularly at risk of missing education, in line with the new Government Guidance issued in May 2022⁸.

3.33. The Commission were pleased to hear of the creation of the new attendance targeted support team and agreed to visit the team once it had been operational for six months to see how it is going.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Well-being Provision

3.34. The Commission considered child and adolescent mental health and well-being provision in Newham. Newham has a growing population of children and young people, with 136,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years in the borough in 2020. This was predicted to increase by 18% to 161,000 by 2030.

3.35. The Commission heard powerful and moving testimony from three young people, who had experience of using related Council and partner agency services. These young people included a year eleven student and sixth form students. The evidence they presented to the Commission provided a powerful realisation of the importance and impact to children and young people's lives from the real life experiences and insight from people who have come into contact with Council and community services.

3.36. The Commission found that, despite its high needs in this area, Newham had a lower level of investment on average across all north east London. It was felt that Newham should at least have parity with those other boroughs given its relatively high needs.

3.37. The Chair of the Education Children and Young People's Commission and the Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission have written a joint letter to the Chief Executive of the North East London Integrated Care System, to request further analysis of the differentials in funding for Newham, along with information on the plans being developed to meet future demand and the growing need for mental health support for children and young people within Newham. The Commission would like to see further analysis of this alongside the plans that the Integrated Care Board and East London Foundation Trust are putting in place to address this historical disparity in funding across the three Boroughs.

4. Regeneration, Housing and Environment

This Commission has taken on some of the big and challenging issues for the borough that will really impact on the local area and on local people's lives. We've been resolute in making sure we properly hold the Executive to account for the delivery of the Council's priorities for regeneration, housing and the environment, as well as putting forward our own recommendations to help improve and develop policy and services.

This year the Commission has reviewed the significant issue of homelessness and temporary accommodation in Newham and the plans and delivery of affordable housing. We've looked into the problem of air quality in parts of the borough and scrutinised of

⁸ Working together to improve school attendance Guidance, DfE issued in May 2022.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

actions for improving air quality, as well as what the Council is doing to improve sustainable transport, with recommendations on prioritising community infrastructure spending on green infrastructure and enforcement, including against cars with running engines, to help combat low air quality.

We've looked closely at the Executive's commitments for delivering improved environmental outcomes from the £40m investment pledge, with recommendations for clearer commitments to improving residents' satisfaction rates for street cleanliness in 2023-2024.

We've reviewed the performance and delivery of the Council's Repairs and Maintenance Service (RMS) and the delivery of the Executive's commitments to improve performance of services to tenants.

We have also kept close oversight of the major regeneration programme James Riley Point – Carpenters Estate, which culminated a Call In of a Cabinet Decision for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recommendations for the Executive to reconsider key aspects of this.

Above all, we have been a force for driving forward improvements to Council programmes that are significant to the people and place of Newham.

Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe

- Chair of the Regeneration, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission

- 4.1. The Regeneration, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th June 2022 to undertake scrutiny of the Regeneration, Housing and Environment portfolios and respective Council departments.
- 4.2. The Members of the Scrutiny Commission were:
 - ❖ Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe (Chair)
 - ❖ Rita Chadha
 - ❖ Zuber Gulamussen
 - ❖ Caroline Adaja (until April 2023)
 - ❖ John Morris (until April 2023)
 - ❖ Lester Hudson
 - ❖ Carolyn Corben
 - ❖ Simon Rush
 - ❖ Lewis Godfrey
 - ❖ Lakmini Shah

Housing in Newham

- 4.3. The Commission reviewed the affordable housing delivery plan and housing delivery in Newham and the strategy to deliver an additional 1,500 homes by May 2026. The Commission heard that the 1,500 additional homes should include homes at social rent levels, to be achieved through starting the Council's own homes in-house team and Populo and that 500 Newham Council acquisitions will provide long-term sustainable rented housing for homeless households and will be let at Local Housing Allowance rent levels as an alternative to temporary accommodation.

- 4.4. The Commission recommended that there should be greater clarity on the average rent level per property type at London Affordable Rent in order to understand affordability and temporary accommodation sustainability and the additional pressures on the general fund that this creates.

Temporary Accommodation

- 4.5. The Commission considered the issue of temporary accommodation, as well as the current homelessness situation in Newham and reviewed the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan and actions taken to prevent homelessness.
- 4.6. The Commission found that the Council is seeing rising numbers of homelessness applications each year, with 5,151 applications in 2022/23; a 26% increase on the 4,083 applications received in 2021/22.

Air Quality Action Plan

- 4.7. The Commission reviewed the performance of the Council's Air Quality Action Plan and the implementation of the actions in the Air Quality Action Plan of 2019 and performance against the targets and considered the initiatives developed to respond to these.
- 4.8. The Council is legally required to review and assess air quality against a set of air quality targets set by the Government and this had been assessed annually since 1998. The 2021 review showed that Newham had exceeded the target set in the Air Quality Standards Regulations for nitrogen dioxide.
- 4.9. Where levels of air pollution exceed the air quality targets the Council must declare an "air quality management area" and implement an Air Quality Action Plan and the action plan must be reviewed periodically. The latest Air Quality Action Plan was adopted by the Council in December 2019. The Council is also required to submit an annual status report to DEFRA and the GLA, which provides information on levels of air pollution in Newham and progress on the Air Quality Action Plan.
- 4.10. The Commission heard that there was a recognised need to improve air quality in Newham to improve the health of residents, particularly children, and that air quality monitors had been placed outside of schools to understand impact on residents.
- 4.11. The Commission heard that the Council had worked to improve air quality by the implementation of Healthy School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which had shown a positive impact in improving air quality.
- 4.12. The Commission found that there was a need to improve relations with schools to further nudge people into sustainable and healthy travel methods.
- 4.13. The Commission would also like to see further clarity on the impact that Newham's Highways have on the air quality of the borough and on what the funding limitations are for the process of finalising the Healthy Route Maps to schools.

Sustainable Transport

- 4.14. The Commission reviewed the Council's electric vehicle strategy and commitment to ensure good infrastructure for electric vehicles in the borough. The Commission noted concerns about the accessibility of charging points for electric vehicles and sought clarity on projected demand and usage. The Commission asked for mapping of the demand for electric vehicle charging points across the borough and an assessment of whether projected demand will be met by new charging infrastructure.
- 4.15. The Commission received evidence on a wide range of sustainable transport issues, including electric vehicle charging points, impact and numbers, the utilisation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on infrastructure projects, healthy transport schemes, and capital expenditure on green schemes.
- 4.16. The Commission recommended higher priority be placed on green infrastructure relating to CIL spending and recommended that this be seriously considered by Cabinet.
- 4.17. The Commission recommended to Cabinet that it consider how other comparable local authorities spent Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on green infrastructure and seek good practice advice and prioritise the capital bids made by the Environment and Sustainable Transport Directorate for CIL funding wherever feasible to procure and build green and active and sustainable travel infrastructure in the borough. This should be evidenced transparently in the CIL bidding process to Cabinet.
- 4.18. The Commission also recommended that officers investigate enforcement powers against cars with running engines, such as those used by the London Borough of Hillingdon (Heathrow Airport) and find out if these could be implemented in Newham.

James Riley Point – The Carpenters Estate

- 4.19. The Commission has maintained oversight of James Riley Point – The Carpenters Estate regeneration and the matter has also been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for in depth consideration of a Cabinet Decision on this issue.
- 4.20. In March 2023 a Cabinet Decision on Progressing James Riley Point was called in for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the Council's Call In procedure⁹. The Cabinet made the decision on 9th March 2023 and the request to Call In the decision was made by four Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe, Councillor Susan Masters, Councillor Elizabeth Booker and Councillor Rita Chadha.
- 4.21. The Cabinet's decision included an increase in the budget for the James Riley Point development project of £24m (plus an additional amount for costs) and approval of a Compulsory Purchase Order to facilitate delivery of the refurbishment of James Riley Point and construction of a new community centre. The full Cabinet Decision can be found here: <https://mgov.newham.gov.uk/documents/g13934/Decisions%2009th-Mar-2023%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=2>

⁹ Rule 15 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4, Newham Council Constitution, March 2023.

4.22. The Cabinet Decision was reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29th March 2023. After thorough questioning and consideration of the issues, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to refer the Cabinet Decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration, along with the Committee's main concerns and recommendations.

4.23. The following eight key concerns and recommendations were submitted to Cabinet:

- (i) That an updated external review be carried out by a suitably qualified accountancy firm on the Carpenters regeneration programme.
- (ii) That CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) arrangements be value for money tested for the public purse. The process should be looked at by a suitably qualified accountancy firm.
- (iii) That viability of Carpenters regeneration programme, excluding JRP (James Riley Point) redevelopment, be reassessed by a suitably qualified accountancy firm using more prudent assumptions.
- (iv) Of the five governance and oversight bodies that relate to the Carpenters programme outlined to the Committee, three are currently chaired by the Mayor, who is also the portfolio holder.

The Committee is concerned that this is a conflict of interest, inconsistent with the Cabinet Accountability Model.

In the interests of greater independence, governance and accountability, we recommend that a Cabinet member be given responsibility for the regeneration portfolio, whom the Mayor can then hold to account. This separation of duties will provide openness, transparency and accountability.

- (v) Review the policy for negotiating settlements with tenants and leaseholders for future programmes, taking into account lessons learnt.
- (vi) Assess the risks of CPOs (Compulsory Purchase Orders) in current and future development schemes and further assess the Council's likely reaction to this challenge.
- (vii) It is the Committee's belief that an additional governance and oversight committee should be set up with an independent chair, as this will further enhance the governance of projects such as Carpenters regeneration programme and other larger regeneration programmes.

4.24. The Cabinet reviewed its original decision, in consideration of the scrutiny committee's main concerns and recommendations. The Cabinet resolved to agree to review the policy for negotiating settlements with tenants and leaseholders for future programmes, taking into account lessons learnt and assess the risks of CPOs (Compulsory Purchase Orders) in current and future development schemes and further assess the Council's likely reaction to this challenge (scrutiny recommendations v and vi). The Cabinet otherwise confirmed the decisions taken at Cabinet on 9 March 2023.

Environment Services Investment and Outcomes

- 4.25. The Commission considered investment on Environment Services and outcomes being delivered for residents. The Council has made a commitment of investment of £40m over four years to keep Newham's streets and neighbourhoods clean and the Commission reviewed the plans and outcomes on the additional investment in Environment services over a four year period¹⁰. This included plans and targets for the investment to ensure street cleanliness will be maintained and to review street cleanliness, quality of streets and current levels of fly tipping in the borough, the benefits of current and planned levels of cleansing and review proposed improvements.
- 4.26. The Commission considered residents' satisfaction with street cleanliness from the Residents Survey. In questions from the Commission, the Cabinet Member expressed a commitment to improving operational performance, but was reluctant to commit to improving residents' perceptions and satisfactions rates.
- 4.27. The Commission recommended clearer commitments to improving residents satisfaction rates for street cleanliness in 2023-2024.

Repairs & Maintenance Service - Performance and Delivery

- 4.28. The Commission reviewed the performance and delivery of the Council's Repairs and Maintenance Service (RMS), the performance and delivery targets of the RMS, the benefits of the current model of delivery other potential models of delivery and the longer term aims for the Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- 4.29. Improving the repairs service would deliver two manifesto commitments:
- Improve our key performance indicators for repairs including first time fixes, appointments kept, and repairs satisfaction to all exceed 90 % within the next 4 years.
 - Implement a full digital repairs offer for our own tenants, giving them the ability to report, track and change repairs online.
- 4.30. The Commission reviewed the Housing Delivery Strategy commitment to ensure that Newham Council homes are safe, well maintained and managed, and energy efficient. The Commission heard about the changes made over the past 12-18 months; the introduction of the damp and mould taskforce, structural changes and increased capacity across the service, as well as more immediate changes to bring the repairs contact centre back into housing.
- 4.31. The Commission recommended further clarity on the performance against key performance indicators and spending over the last few years, including the end of year account for 2022-23.

¹⁰ 4The Borough Plan included a commitment for this in "Actions we have taken in the first 100 days to get stuff done": "Invested £40 million in the coming four years to keep our streets and neighbourhoods clean for our residents, and an action plan to reduce reported fly-tipping by 50 %."

5. Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

Crime and anti-social behaviour is a significant area of public concern and accordingly something that Newham scrutiny committees put a lot of focus on. This year we've looked at some key local issues that concern residents and we've been able to question the police and other members of the local Community Safety Partnership on what they're doing to address these and to further highlight the concerns of residents.

Councillor Anthony McAlmont
- Chair of the Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Commission

5.1. The Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Commission was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th June 2022 to undertake scrutiny of the Crime and Community Safety portfolios and respective Council departments, as well as to discharge the Council's statutory duties for a Crime and Disorder Committee¹¹.

5.2. The Members of the Scrutiny Commission were:

- Anthony McAlmont (Chair)
- Imam Haque
- Simon Rush
- John Morris (until April 2023)
- Shantu Ferdous
- Lewis Godfrey
- Miraj Patel (until April 2023)
- Jennifer Bailey
- Femi Falola
- Pushpa Dipaklal Makwana.

Enforcement and Community Safety

5.3. The Commission considered Enforcement and Community Safety with questions to representatives of the Newham Community Safety Partnership, including the police.

5.4. The Commission asked about the service restructure in 2019. The Commission found that that the resources at the disposal of the Community Safety Service had reduced from 65 members of staff to approximately 30.

5.5. It was noted that it was necessary to commit more resources in this area and the Commission's 'State of the Borough' report had asked the Executive to consider allocating more resources into addressing crime and antisocial behaviour matters in the borough.

The Newham Community Safety Partnership

5.6. The Commission reviewed the Newham Community Safety Partnership, with questions to representatives of the Newham Community Safety Partnership, including the police.

5.7. The Community Safety Partnership Board oversees activities to reduce the incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour in Newham. The Community Safety Partnership brings

¹¹ The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

together partners including the Council, police and probation, health and fire services. The partnership is made up of both statutory agencies and co-operating bodies within the borough (known as the 'responsible authorities').

- 5.8. The Commission considered the latest position on the Community Safety Board Partnership Strategy 2022-25, the roles and responsibilities in the Board, with an update on Newham's current crime data position and actions to support the priorities of the Newham Community Safety Partnership and on key activities of the Partnership in 2022-23. The Commission heard that the Community Safety Partnership Plan was set out over a three-year period over 2022-25.
- 5.9. It was noted that the plan had been developed from the CSP's Strategic Assessment for 2021-22, as well as the priorities set out by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) through the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan 2022-25.
- 5.10. The Commission questioned the Council and police on the increasing girls and women's safety, tackling drugs and knife crime. The Commission noted that some of the key crime and antisocial indicators were showing a downward trajectory, but also current concerns in the borough around knife crime and urged the Community Safety Board to address this.

Safety of Women and Girls in Newham

- 5.11. The Commission considered the Newham's Community Safety Partnership's Women and Girls Strategy and heard evidence on a "zero tolerance" campaign, Women's Safety Night Charter, the Open Spaces Action Plan and the Women's Safety Audit.
- 5.12. The Commission considered some of the engagement work that had been carried out with the local community. The Commission heard about efforts to encourage businesses to sign up to the Women's Safety Night Charter, so that women and girls in Newham were confident that their concerns or experiences of harassment in the places they visit. It was found that this would receive supportive and positive response from the police.
- 5.13. The Commission would like to see further clarity on the programme of engagement with interest groups, residents and local forums (e.g. Community Assemblies) for the Reducing Sex Work Strategy.

Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and Strategy

- 5.14. The Commission reviewed the Council's Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and Strategy. The Commission heard that the Needs Assessment and Strategy had been co-produced and co-designed by a number of partner agencies, including the Adults and Health, Children and Young People and Environment and Sustainable Transport Directorates and external partners.
- 5.15. It was noted that the Strategy would aim to treat people as 'survivors', not "victims" of domestic abuse and ensure that services were responsive to the needs of individuals and their families. The Commission heard that the Strategy would embed the approach of responding across departments as 'One Council'.

5.16. It was noted that the Strategy was launched on the first day of Newham's '16 Days of Action against Domestic Abuse'. Newham had also held a 'Table of Love and Loss' on 4th December 2022 which brought together the public and families to comfort one another, share experiences, and raise awareness about important issues including violence against women and girls, knife crime and homophobia.

Interventions Being Made to Help Sex Workers

5.17. On 16th February 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered interventions being made to help sex workers in the borough. The Committee heard in evidence about the important work the Council and its statutory and non-statutory partners are doing to help people involved in this issue of public concern and of women's safety, which includes some of the most particularly vulnerable people in the community.

5.18. Following the evidence sessions, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wrote to the Mayor of Newham and Cabinet Members for Crime and Community Safety and Health and Adult Social Care, to set out the key concerns that the scrutiny committee has, asking that the Executive consider these findings and provide an Executive Response.

5.19. The Committee's conclusions were:

1. Overall, the committee is concerned that the objectives and delivery outcomes of the support services and objectives for the neighbourhoods effected, lack clarity. The committee is concerned that there seems to be no plan or definition of what 'good' looks like or what the practical outcomes of its policy and interventions on this issue are. There seems to be a need to define more clearly how to measure 'success' and the impact of the work being done.
2. Interrelated to this, the committee is also concerned about how we can evaluate whether the Council is getting value-for-money for its investment in this area.
3. The committee has found that there seem to be challenges in obtaining reliable and measurable data on key aspects of this issue, such as the estimated number of people involved as sex workers in different neighbourhoods and across the borough. The committee suggests that further consideration be given to improving key evidence to measure and evaluate this issue, ensure that support and interventions are being directed accurately and efficiently and that there is a more robust evidence base for the evaluation of key related issues and performance of policies and interventions to deal with them.
4. The committee is also concerned about the environment that residents have to live in around the 'hotspots' for sex work activities and what is being done by the Environment and Sustainable Transport Directorate to mitigate against this. There doesn't seem to be settled position on the application of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The committee suggests that further consideration be given to dealing with these neighbourhood hotspots and clarity about the application of the PSPO.
5. The committee is concerned that the approach to delivery of the polices and services to deal with this issue is not yet fully holistic and suggests that this needs to be reviewed to ensure a holistic approach, both in terms of support to people involved in

sex work activities and the impact on local neighbours affected, with a coordinated approach across the council and external partners.

6. The committee is concerned that learning and previously agreed improvements to the delivery of council policy and services in this area have not been fully embedded. In particular, the findings of the previous scrutiny inquiry into Street Prostitution in Newham carried out in 2012. This report made six recommendations, all of which were agreed by the Mayor and Cabinet and suggested a holistic 'public health approach' to dealing with this issue. I attach the report of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Commission into Street Prostitution in Newham December 2012, along with the Executive Response to the report for your reference.

6. Health and Adult Social Care

The Commissions work programme built upon the previous last two years' work around health inequalities, but took a "Marmot lens" to the rest of our local health system. Areas of focus were set based on conversations with key stakeholders from within the Council and local NHS provider teams, but equally took account of what Healthwatch were hearing from service users and also what we were hearing from residents. Having reached out on social media, it was Newham residents who made sure we looked at plans for Primary Care and dentistry.

Councillor Susan Masters
– **Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission**

- 6.1. The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission is responsible for scrutiny of local health and adult social care services and issues, putting questions to the Council Executive, the Director of Public Health and to executives of local NHS bodies and a wide range of other local organisations and patients.
- 6.2. The Members of the Scrutiny Commission were:
- ❖ Councillor Susan Masters (Chair)
 - ❖ Councillor Harvinder Singh Virdee (Vice-Chair)
 - ❖ Councillor Nur Begum
 - ❖ Councillor Areeq Chowdhury
 - ❖ Councillor Femi Falola
 - ❖ Councillor Mohammed Gani
 - ❖ Councillor Dina Hossain (until December 2022)
 - ❖ Councillor Joy Laguda
 - ❖ Councillor Cecilia Welsh
 - ❖ Councillor John Gray.

Standing Item:- Pressing Matters

- 6.3. Throughout the year the Commission has included on its agenda a Standing Item - Pressing Matters, to question the Cabinet Member, NHS executives and the Director of Public Health on key issues for local health services and adult social care services.

- 6.4. Over the course of the year, concerns were discussed, including the discovery of polio in waste water and immunisation plans to address this. The Commission reviewed how the system was planning to address “winter pressures” that had seen bed occupancy rise to 99% (historically 85% is the ideal), It also considered the hospital’s work to clear elective surgery backlogs arising from the pandemic and industrial action contingency plans.
- 6.5. In March, the East London Foundation Trust highlighted a big increase in requests for ADHD diagnoses, as well as how they are addressing increases in demand for mental health support.

The New Integrated Care System

- 6.6. On 1st July 2022, Newham became part of the North East London Integrated Care System, as one of eight boroughs to do so. The Commission considers this an area of real importance as it could influence local system funding formulae, resources and the balance of power between Newham and the wider system, as well as the role of health scrutiny.
- 6.7. The Commission considered the New Integrated Care System in two sessions which gave Members an understanding of the changes taking place in the NHS in terms of how it was organised in England.
- 6.8. At its October meeting, the Chief Executive of the new Integrated Care System shared system priorities and discussed local challenges. Ed Hammond from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny discussed ways in which the committee could hold the system accountable. In the Committee’s February meeting, Charlotte Pomery – Chief Participation and Place Officer, revealed decisions on a funding formula had been delayed, partly owing to a new requirement to make a 30% cut to its central system running costs.

Health Inequalities

- 6.9 A report on Health Inequalities and Learning from the Marmot Report Review and 13 recommendations had been completed during the previous term. It was presented to the Executive in June 2022 and was responded to in 2022-23. In February the Director of Public Health returned to the committee to discuss the response to recommendations and the evolution of the local ‘50 Steps’ Public Health Strategy in Newham.
- 6.10 While it was accepted by the Commission that the landscape has changed following the pandemic and the cost of living crisis and that much good work has been done, especially around the borough’s food offer, concern was still expressed at a lack of visible KPIs or any dashboard to measure what was and wasn’t working. The Commission also made suggestions round the improvement of the “50 Steps” newsletter communications strategy to target those who most need support. A two-year review and update of the plan is imminent and the Commission looks forward to being involved.
- 6.11 Building upon the Commission’s work from the previous year, it was decided health inequalities and a Marmot focus should be at the heart of the committee’s work programme, only with that lens focused on the wider system. Each meeting featured a deep dive into a particular health area, to consider how the Council and its NHS partners were addressing in the following areas:
- Maternity Care Services
 - Mental Health Services

- Primary Care
- Dentistry in the borough
- Disability Services.

Health Inequalities in Maternity Care

- 6.12. The Commission took a deep dive into health inequalities in maternity care throughout 2022-2023. The Commission was concerned to receive evidence of long-standing inequalities of outcomes affecting women from global majority communities and of mixed patient experiences in our borough. The inappropriate application of charging to women entitled to free care, issues with data and limitations of a sign up process to access services were all discussed alongside ways in which staffing (continuity) challenges can be limited and better partnership working used to support women as they pass through pregnancy.
- 6.13. During the inquiry the Commission considered a national overview of maternity services in England, the local picture in Newham and North East London, racial inequality issues in maternity care, improving of access to services and strengthening of local partnerships.
- 6.14. As one poignant example of health inequalities in maternity care, it was noted that women in the most socially deprived areas were three times more likely to die during or within the year that follows pregnancy than those in the least deprived.
- 6.15. It was also noted that Black British mothers were five times more likely to die in pregnancy or six weeks after childbirth than white women and that women of mixed ethnicity had three times the risk and Asian women twice the risk. Even though maternal mortality was improving, the gap between black and white women had widened.
- 6.16. At the end of the inquiry the Commission agreed a report and put forward twelve scrutiny recommendations to the Council, Newham University Hospital and the North East London Partnership. This will bring a timely Newham dimension to concerns debated at a national level and in a London Assembly report.

Inequalities in Mental Health Services

- 6.17. The Commission considered inequalities in Mental Health Services and improving the experience of marginalised groups. The Commission heard about the measures that were being used to recognise health inequalities and many of the local initiatives to address this.
- 6.18. The Commission noted the over-representation of global majority groups within mental health services. The Commission were concerned about the length of time that the particular inequalities seen in mental health had been known about, without any sign of improvement. Local acute providers, the East London Foundation Trust, updated the Commission on a number of projects they are running to address issues. Evidence was also heard from the police about their role in mental health services.
- 6.19. The Commission also heard evidence from a number of advocacy and VCS organisations, large and small, from in and out of borough (Mind, SWIM, Caribbean African Health Network and ASK), about the projects they are running and what they have seen work.

Health Inequalities in Primary Care

- 6.20. The Commission considered Health Inequalities in Primary Care, with questions to the Cabinet Member, the Director of Public Health and NHS executives. Responding to concerns from residents on accessing appointments and queries regarding quality of service, the Commission heard evidence from leaders of local primary care services. Members were reassured to hear that the quality of local services is improving and 95% of practices now have a good or outstanding rating, although it was concerned that local variation still exists and that that could be reflected in referrals to the borough's extended hours services.
- 6.21. The Commission was disappointed to learn that Newham's practices were under-funded for the work they do. It reviewed the inequalities work being carried out in primary care network based projects on areas such as cancer screening, food poverty and immunisation of vulnerable groups and how this learning is shared, as well as the value of roles such as social prescribers and community pharmacists.
- 6.22. The Commission received evidence on the way surgeries are monitored to ensure they are delivering the services they should be delivering, but were concerned that the 111 service continues to receive widespread negative feedback, despite being at the heart of plans to provide support.

Dentistry

- 6.23. The Commission considered dental services in Newham. This session was also a response to resident concerns about accessing NHS services. The Commission was concerned to hear evidence that access to appointments had been diminishing since 2017, with only 2 of 29 local practises saying they were open to taking on new adult NHS patients.
- 6.24. The limitations of the 2006 contract under which services are offered was considered. This ended the registration process under which patients were offered regular check ups and does not reflect local levels of need in allocating units of dental activity.
- 6.25. The Commission was disappointed to learn that there is nothing to stop dentists insisting patients sign up to insurance contracts, should they wish to continue accessing services with a particular dentist and to learn about the impact of Brexit on numbers of dental nurses.
- 6.26. The Commission learned that, once again, global majority communities are more likely to require access to dentistry services and heard about the links between poor oral health and diabetes, dementia and heart problems. Oral health problems were the second most common cause of admission to hospital for children. While Members heard of good work from Newham Council's public health team in terms of encouraging good oral health habits in younger children.
- 6.27. From 1st April 2023 commissioning of dentistry passed to the local NHS Integrated Care System and the Commission felt that this area should be a priority for further consideration in the next municipal year.

Disability and Health Inequalities

- 6.28. The Commission considered disability and health inequalities and a session was held at the March 2023 meeting to discuss local inequalities and key domains of experience that disproportionately impact people experiencing the full range of disabilities, to understand where the Commission should best focus its attention in the future. The Commission also held a separate session with a local advocacy organisation.
- 6.29. SEND and housing were both identified as key areas of challenge. During the meeting members learned about a number of improvements in the involvement of disabled residents in service and infrastructure co-design. They also heard testimony from local advocates of the transformative impact of employment and gained a general overview of local inequalities.

Social Care Assurance Framework

- 6.30. The Commission considered the changes that were being implemented arising from the Health and Social Care Act 2022 on quality assurance and how that impacted on local government. From April 2023, Adult Social Care teams will be subject to inspection by the CQC. It is important that scrutiny, in its “critical friend” capacity, support Newham’s adult social care team to be ready. At November’s meeting it was established that the key themes of any evaluation would be working with people, providing support, how the local authority ensures safety and leadership with services being rated as “Outstanding”, “Good”, “Requires Improvement” or “Inadequate”. The Commission heard about initial plans of the directorate to work with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to be advised on what this means in practice.
- 6.31. In February, the Commission learned that the service was still waiting for precise details of how evidence would be applied to the different domains or for the government handbook. Exchange reviews were planned with other London authorities, but as the launch would now be a soft one, just looking at key data with a view to benchmarking, it was decided that the next time scrutiny should receive an update was Autumn 2023.

Inner North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 6.32. Newham Council is also represented on the Inner North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (INEL JHOSC), which is a joint committee established to consider regional and sub-regional NHS service developments and changes that impact on local health services.
- 6.33. This scrutiny committee is made up of made up of a delegated number of scrutiny councillors from: the City of London Corporation, the London Borough of Hackney, the London Borough of Newham, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the London Borough Waltham Forest, as well as an Observer Member from London Borough of Redbridge.
- 6.34. Newham Council is represented on the Committee by:
- ❖ Councillor Anthony McAlmont
 - ❖ Councillor Susan Masters
 - ❖ Councillor Harvinder Singh Virdee.

- 6.35. This year the Joint Committee has considered a range of health services issues for the North East London area, including:
- East London Health and Care Partnership reports,
 - strategy and implementation of the NHS North East London Integrated Care System (ICS),
 - the proposed changes to access to fertility treatment for people living in north East London,
 - the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital,
 - NHS North East London Health updates on performance, winter planning and resilience and Vaccinations for monkeypox, polio,
 - acute provider collaborative development plans, improving access, outcomes, experience and equity for children, young people and young adults' mental health,
 - additional hospital discharge funding in North East London,
 - North East London research and Engagement Network funding.

7 Budget Scrutiny

- 7.1. The process for budget scrutiny is set out in the Newham Council Constitution, which requires the Executive to refer its initial budget proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It is the duty of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to satisfy itself and report to the Executive and Council on whether it believes that the draft budget of £366m, efficiency savings of £19.4 million, service growth of £28 million and associated delivery plans, are realistic and deliverable in meeting the priorities identified in the Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan. Further, it is its responsibility to ascertain what actions have been taken to identify and address overspending, especially in areas where there have been recurrences and whether deliverable and realistic strategies are in place to deal with these issues.
- 7.2. The Budget Working Commission was formally reconstituted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2022, however, the work of budget scrutiny was suspended part the way through the process, in order to safeguard the reputations and interests of members of the Commission and Executive and the integrity of the scrutiny process, as I decided to self-refer the Commission and the Mayor to the Council's Standards Committee for an unbiased consideration and investigation of the issues raised. Subsequently, the Commission was unable to conduct the detailed and comprehensive scrutiny that the draft budget warrants and thus felt unable to give assurance that the budget, efficiency savings and service growth, as identified in the draft budget and delivery plans, were realistic and deliverable in meeting the priorities identified in the Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan.
- 7.3. The Commission was made up of the following Members:
- ❖ Councillor Anthony McAlmont – Co-Chair
 - ❖ Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe – Co-Chair
 - ❖ Councillor Elizabeth Booker
 - ❖ Councillor Rita Chadha
 - ❖ Councillor John Gray (until 17 January 2023)¹²

¹² Cllr Gray stood down from the Commission following his appointment as Chair of the Pensions Committee.

- ❖ Councillor Nate Higgins
- ❖ Councillor Lester Hudson
- ❖ Councillor Susan Masters
- ❖ Councillor Terence Paul
- ❖ Councillor Rohima Rahman
- ❖ Councillor Lakmini Shah
- ❖ Councillor Harvinder Singh Virdee.

- 7.4. The key lines of enquiry for the inquiry were to consider:
- key assumptions underlying departmental budgets
 - areas earmarked for savings or efficiencies
 - areas of slippage
 - key areas of risk and mitigating actions
 - areas of potential growth and any present and future strategic considerations
 - changes in corporate culture and how adoption of the Corporate Plan is resulting in tangible cultural change throughout departments as well as how it is translating into real improvement and savings for the Council
 - ability of the budget, Medium-Term Financial Strategy and directorate/service plans to deliver organisational priorities and meet residents' needs.
- 7.5. The Commission questioned members of the Executive and chief officers on the Council's budget position and draft budget proposals for 2023-2024, including questions to the Mayor of Newham, the Chief Executive, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Corporate Director for Finance and Resources on the overall budget, corporate services and reserves.
- 7.5. The Commission focused on six areas it had identified as priorities: the Council's financial sustainability and resilience; temporary accommodation; the Housing Revenue Account; the Dedicated Schools Grant; agency staffing; and budget proposals relating to Newham Sparks.
- 7.6. The Council's Quarter 2 financial position¹³ formed the basis for the first phase of evidence session sessions, along with specific submissions addressing the Commission's key lines of enquiry or requests for particular information.
- 7.7. Following the publication of the provisional draft budget for 2023/24, the Commission heard further oral evidence from the Mayor, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Finance and Resources regarding the executive's provisional budget proposals.
- 7.8. The Commission heard in evidence that the latest financial data available to the Commission (from December 2022) showed the Council was expecting to overspend its budget by £5.9 million in 2022/23. The Commission's view was that overspend would be £16.7 million higher if the Council had not used its reserves to support its expenditure.
- 7.9. At the end of the inquiry a Budget Scrutiny report and ten scrutiny recommendations were made to the Executive. The recommendations were:

¹³ Item 6 Cabinet on 27 October 2022.

<https://mgov.newham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=294&MIId=14090&Ver=4>

Recommendation 1: *beginning in the next financial year, budget monitoring reports should include a table setting out all in-year draws from reserves (both allocated and unallocated) and their purposes, clearly differentiating between draws to meet planned, deferred expenditure and draws to meet in-year pressures. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Recommendation 2: *in the 2023/24 budget, £5 million should be contributed to the General Fund Reserve to close the gap between the value of the Reserve and what was intended at the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year. To enable this, in addition to the planned £4 million contribution, £1 million of new and avoidable expenditure which will not deliver net savings should be redirected to the Reserve. {Rejected by the Executive}*

Recommendation 3: *if 2022/23 General Fund overspending is expected to be met from the General Fund Reserve, an equal sum of new and avoidable expenditure which will not deliver net savings should be redirected to the Reserve in the 2023/24 budget, to offset any further depletion of the Reserve. {Rejected by the Executive}*

Temporary accommodation

Recommendation 4: *by the next municipal year, the Council should share a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound action plan for the Homelessness Response Programme which includes its anticipated impact (including financial impact) with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Recommendation 5: *commitments and decisions with financial implications should be informed by professional assessment and advice and involve the consideration of all of their implications and alternative options. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Agency staffing

Recommendation 6: *beginning in the next financial year, the number, cost and deployment of all indirectly employed council staff should be included in budget monitoring reports and provided, on request, to Overview and Scrutiny. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Recommendation 7: *the Council should set feasible targets for indirectly employed staff and specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound plans to deliver them. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Recommendation 8: *the value for money of the Council delivering the 0-19 Service rather than commissioning it from a NHS provider should be reviewed as soon as practicable; and the findings of that review should be shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. {Accepted by the Executive}*

Newham Sparks

Recommendation 9: *a comprehensive and fully costed programme scope and project/delivery plan – including specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound outcome measures – for Newham Sparks and all of its work-streams be produced and published before any future budget proposals to deliver the programme or its work-streams are brought forward. {Rejected by the Executive}*

- 7.10. The Budget Scrutiny report and recommendations were received by Cabinet on 16th February 2023 and the Cabinet agreed an Executive Response, which agreed to six of the nine scrutiny recommendations, as indicated in brackets beside each scrutiny recommendation listed above.
- 7.11. The budget scrutiny process was to include independent expert witnesses to add further value to the budget scrutiny process and it is hoped to take this approach forward next year.

8. The Relationship Between Black Boys and the Borough

- 8.1. The Relationship between Black Boys and the Borough Scrutiny Commission was established in 2021 to consider how the Council was engaging with and supporting black boys in Newham and the Commission continued to meet in 2022-2023.
- 8.2. The Members of the Scrutiny Commission in 2022-2023 were:
- ❖ Councillor Daniel Lee-Phakoe (Co-Chair)
 - ❖ Councillor Anthony McAlmont (Co-Chair)
 - ❖ Councillor Jennifer Bailey
 - ❖ Councillor Belgica Guaña
 - ❖ Councillor Lester Hudson
 - ❖ Councillor Susan Masters
 - ❖ Councillor Lakmini Shah
 - ❖ Councillor Harvinder Singh Virdee.

Black Boys in College

- 8.3. The Commission considered the theme “black boys in college” with questions to the Mayor of Newham, Councillor Steve Brayshaw- Commissioner for Jobs and the Future of Work, Derek Barret - Our Work Newham Manager, Mandeep Gill - Principal and Chief Executive, NewVic, Paul Stephen- Principal and Chief Executive, Newham College, Robin Landman OBE - Co-Founder and Executive Member of the Black Leadership Group.
- 8.4. It was noted that, generally, black boys did as well as their peers in primary school, began to fall behind their peers by Year 9 and by Year 11, fell behind their peers. Black boys were more likely be excluded and enter the criminal justice system and had worse educational and economic outcomes than their peers.
- 8.5. Robin Landman OBE, Co-Founder and Executive Member of the Black Leadership Group told the Commission in evidence that the Black Leadership Group was established in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, due to concerns regarding the underrepresentation of ethnically diverse people in the further education workforce and poor outcomes for ethnically diverse learners.
- 8.6. The Commission noted that approximately 70% of students at Newham College were from ethnically diverse backgrounds and one in five students were black boys. In each of the past six years, black boys had outperformed their peers. However, for the single year following lockdown, Caribbean boys did considerably less well than other black groups due to disengagement with or withdrawal from education. Key causes included poverty and familial factors and the college had found it highly difficult to reengage those boys.

- 8.7. The Commission suggested there was a need to address cultural issues, which inhibited black boys from forming high aspirations, encouraged underachievement in education, and the viewing of criminal justice system involvement as a badge of honour.
- 8.8. The Mayor, in evidence to the Commission, affirmed the centrality of racial justice and equality to her administration's agenda and the Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan.

9. Evaluation and Development of the Scrutiny Function

- 9.1. Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function can be a useful way to assess and reflect upon how Overview and Scrutiny is working. This can be undertaken by members of the scrutiny committees, assisted by the statutory scrutiny officer and scrutiny officers and in consultation with key stakeholders, including the Executive and senior departmental officers. External invigilators and trainers can also be used to support the process, such as from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).
- 9.2. The Statutory Guidance on overview and scrutiny 2019 provides a useful reference point for the key elements of effective scrutiny. This can be used to guide evaluation and reflection on the key elements of overview and scrutiny for any local authority.
- 9.3. At the end of this 2022-2023 cycle, the intention is to invite the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to undertake a short review of the scrutiny function at Newham Council to help evaluate and guide the development of the function in 2023-2024 in accordance with the Council's aspirations for democratic accountability participation and engagement. The Executive are requested to provide their response to taking forward the improvements arising from the Scrutiny Improvement Review report.
- 9.4. In line with this, it is suggested that a Scrutiny Self-Assessment on Performance and Effectiveness process could be planned at the end of the next municipal year committee cycle. Evaluation of the scrutiny process could include:
- an evaluation as to whether and how the committee is adding value to the Council's governance and decision making processes and include any action plans to address areas for improvement;
 - progress in implementing improvements arising from the Scrutiny Improvement Review;
 - the tracking of scrutiny recommendations to completion and their associated impact; and scrutiny member development requirements.

Acknowledgements

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to thank all of those Cabinet Members, Council Officers, partners and Co-opted Members who have supported the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commissions throughout the 2022/23 municipal year by attending formal scrutiny meetings, acting as witnesses, providing evidence and hosting Scrutiny Members during their visits to departmental services provided by the Council.

