

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 30 November 2015 at 7.15 p.m., Room C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

## SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

This meeting is open to the public to attend.

**Contact for further enquiries:**

David Knight, Democratic Services  
1st Floor, Town Hall, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent,  
London, E14 2BG  
Tel: 020 7364 4878  
E-mail: [david.knight@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:david.knight@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
Web: <http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee>

Scan this code for  
the electronic  
agenda:



For further information including the Membership of this body and public information, see the main agenda.

**This page is intentionally left blank**

## **Evidence for the Transparency Commission**

### **How the Council's Corporate Communications function can support the transparency agenda**

#### **Communications activity which already supports transparency:**

- We build good relationships with local, regional and national journalists by briefing them either over the phone, at events or face to face about key policies and initiatives;
- We commit to meet journalists' deadlines when dealing with their media enquiries;
- We keep our web and intranet pages updated regularly and we are currently improving the council's website to make it more accessible and mobile friendly;
- We host regular Local Media Briefings where the media can ask the mayor questions on any topic and have the opportunity to do one to one interviews (we have done two since Mayor Biggs was elected on June 11);
- We have active social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook where people can engage with us in real time and receive responses to their queries in a timely manner;
- We advertise public meetings in East End Life, which is delivered to 83,000 households in the borough each week;
- We promote public consultation via all of our communications channels;
- We host roadshows, stalls, engagement events (open days, community fun days) to shape and promote council services;
- We promote opportunities to train, empower, build resilience and upskill our residents, such as Budget Roadshows, NEET Jobs Fairs, Skillsmatch;
- We have one of the busiest press desks in London and we respond accurately, fairly and in a timely manner. We inform our senior managers about all high profile enquiries and operate a 24/7 media line, 365 days a year. We also provide a media headlines service for senior managers and members;
- We publicise the work of the council via our press releases which are all uploaded onto the website for the public to read.

#### **Planned Communications activity to further improve transparency:**

- In addition to issuing press releases we also plan to produce short videos at photocalls/launches with sound bites from key officers/members. This will make our news more engaging and accessible;
- We can produce short videos illustrating an executive summary for reports so they are much easier to digest;
- We would like to live tweet from council meetings to give residents immediate access to decisions;
- We have held one successful Q&A session on Twitter and plan to hold more with senior staff about issues which matter most to residents such as rubbish collection and parking.
- We could have a section on the council's website which demystifies how council decisions are made, such as what is the process from when a proposal is made through to implementation, how do all of the different statutory meetings work, what do they do and how is membership decided, how does a submission for a grant then actually make it to fruition – maybe a flow chart would work best for this.
- We plan to have more infographics to explain complex policy on our website;

- We would like to be more active in Public Affairs and lobbying the government on changes to benefit the borough. We are part of the London Councils' Parliamentary and Public Affairs Group;
- We can commission independent surveys on our services to tie in with national news to achieve a higher uptake of regional, national or trade coverage.

The council is reviewing its communications activity during October 2015 and a key part of this work will be to explore how we engage with residents in an effective and open way, especially in light of the proposed changes to East End Life.

As part of this process, we will be seeking feedback from partners and stakeholders within the council and externally, with a view to building a communications approach that is fit for purpose and meets the needs of local people.

**Communications  
October 2015**

## **Corporate FOI Board Terms of Reference**

---

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council receives information requests from a variety of sources. These include requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and enquiries from elected members.
- 1.2 There are risks associated with the provision of information such that the corporate management team would like a board to oversee the handling of requests.
- 1.3 The Board is driving greater momentum behind the need to improve transparency and improving the consistency and quality of our FOI responses.

### **2. Membership**

- 2.1 There will be a Corporate FOI Board with the following membership –
  - Corporate Director Development and Renewal (Chair)
  - Senior Information Risk Officer (currently the Corporate Director Resources) or nominee
  - Corporate Director Education Social Care & Wellbeing
  - Head of Legal Services
  - Service Head – Strategy and Resources (CLC)
  - Service Head – Resources (ESCW)
  - Head of Communications

### **3. Frequency of meetings and other arrangements**

- 3.1 The Board will meet weekly or at such other frequency as may be determined by the Chair.
- 3.2 The Service Head – Strategy and Resources (CLC) will schedule the meetings and circulate the agenda.
- 3.3 The Head of Legal Services will arrange for minutes to be taken.
- 3.4 At the first meeting of the Board the Chair will appoint a Deputy Chair from the Board as cover for absence as and when required.
- 3.5 The importance of the Board is such that all Board Members will be expected to attend. Substitute attendees will only be accepted by prior arrangement with the Chair and only as an exception.

#### **4. Board role and purpose**

- 4.1 The Board will undertake the work set out below.
- 4.2 Corporate management and oversight of the Council's systems for responding to information requests, particularly the identification of, and responses to, sensitive information requests.
- 4.3 Corporate management and oversight of complaints about responses to information requests, whether made internally or externally, and the application of lessons learned from any findings.
- 4.4 Strategic development and oversight of initiatives designed to reduce the operational burden and staff costs associated with responding to information requests.
- 4.5 Strategic development and oversight of communications related to information requests and the systems ensuring consistency of response.
- 4.6 Provide momentum to improve proactive transparency publication.
- 4.7 To receive reports from the Chair of the Information Governance Group on the work of the group specific to FOI issues and to advise on matters of priority and approach.
- 4.8 To be the main corporate reporting Board for the Information Governance Group. This includes:
  - 4.8.1 Data Protection and Information Security policy matters (including security incidents)
  - 4.8.2 Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act (and the Council's performance)
  - 4.8.3 Records Management
  - 4.8.4 Risk Management in relation to Information Governance Matters, and
  - 4.8.5 Staff training and awareness around Information Governance
- 4.9 The Board will also review Members' Enquiry responses as required.

#### **5. Accountability and relationship with other groups**

- 5.1 In respect of all decisions made by the Board and subject to the arrangements set out in these terms of reference the Chair's decision is final and binding on other directorates.
- 5.2 The Chair will report from time to time to the corporate management team.

- 5.3 The Council's Information Governance Group (IGG) will make reports to the Board on the work that the IGG carries out in areas falling within the Board's terms of reference.
- 5.4 Board requests for work to be undertaken by the IGG on its behalf to be actioned by the IGG chair subject to
- resource availability as determined by the IGG chair
  - or to be referred to the Line manager of the IGG Chair either at the direction of the Chair of the Board or at the IGG group Chairs discretion.
- 5.5 Board Members representing the Directorates will be expected to liaise directly with their DMT's and Directors on actions and decisions of the Board specific to their Division to secure compliance, organise actions and otherwise implement the decisions of the Board reporting back as required.

**This page is intentionally left blank**



## **ONS Transparency Commission – Response to Unison Presentation**

### **Public Consultation**

Unison raised a number of issues about how the public consultation exercise with regards to the last round of budget savings was managed. Consideration has been given to the issues raised in response to the last consultation exercise. Trade Union involvement in meetings that management have with staff around the latest public consultation is now covered in the guidance that has been circulated to managers. This has been welcomed by Unison.

With regards to the specific issues raised in relation to Children's Social Care and public consultation, the Corporate Director of Children's Services has met with Unison, GMB and Unite to discuss the proposals that relate to their services in more detail. The service is happy to engage in discussion about ways to improve the process and ensure any lessons learnt from the last round are considered.

In addition, a separate meeting has been held by the Corporate Director Children's Services with Unison to discuss the issues raised in their presentation that are specific to Social Care.

### **Whistleblowing**

The Council take any whistle blows seriously and aims to ensure any issues or concerns raised are investigated and dealt with as timely and effectively as appropriate. Social Care manages any whistle blowing concern in line with the Council's processes. It has been recognised that there are areas that can be improved in relation to current processes and a piece of work is being undertaken corporately to look at this. In addition, staff in Children's Social Care have been encouraged to raise issues directly with managers in order to create a culture of openness. This will mean that problems are resolved jointly and not allowed to fester. Such a culture sits alongside the Council's Whistleblowing policies. We welcome the opportunity to work with the unions in this respect.

Social Work Health Check 2014 was a detailed report with a number of findings for both Children and Adult services across a range of issues. Within Children's Social Care the new Service Head is working with her team on implementing the recommendations which were taken seriously. There will be a follow up check in 2015 to see how this is being received by staff.

To avoid duplication of work, the corporate review of current processes will pick up the issues raised in the Health Check that relate to whistleblowing. All directorates will have an input into this work, as will the Trade Unions.

In their presentation, Unison stated that the Council lost an employment tribunal case as the tribunal found the individual in question had been targeted due to supporting a whistle blower and was sacked as a result.

The tribunal found that an agency worker had their contract terminated by the Council and that the reasons the Council gave for having done this were valid, but they found that they were not the only reasons for dismissal. The potential grievance that was threatened against the agency worker and the response the agency worker would have given, did have an influence on the decision to bring the contract to an end, in the view of the tribunal. However, the award for injury to feelings was in the lowest of bands in that it was a single act of detriment with no aggravating factors. The tribunal did not find that the Council's conduct in terminating the contract or conducting the proceedings was anything other than appropriate.

The fact that Unison remain open and willing to work with management is welcomed and reciprocated. As stated above, the Trade Unions will be a key stakeholder in the work being undertaken with regards to whistle blowing and will continue to contribute towards the work of Social Care.