

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2016  
MP701, 7TH FLOOR, MULBERRY PLACE, 5, CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON E14  
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**Members Present:**

Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Chair)

Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed  
Councillor Craig Aston  
Councillor David Edgar  
Councillor Aminur Khan

**Apologies:**

Councillor Ayas Miah

**Officers Present:**

Kevin Miles	– Resources Directorate
Hania Franek	– Children's Services
Mark Norman	– Legal Services, Law, Probity and Governance
Elizabeth Dowuona	– Committee Services, Law, Probity and Governance

**1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were none.

**2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 9 December 2015 and 8 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

**Matters Arising**

With respect to the meeting held on 8 February 2016, Councillor Aminur Khan ask that it be put on record that he had confirmed his attendance, however due to transportation delays, the meeting had just ended on his arrival at the Town Hall.

### **3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **3.1 Annual Canvass 2015, GLA Election 2016 and EU Referendum 2016 preparations Annual Canvass 2016**

Louise Stamp, Head of Service, Electoral Services) introduced the report which outlined the position at the end of the annual canvass 2015 and provided statistics upon publication of the revised Register of Electors 2016; The detailed preparations in place for the Greater London Authority (GLA) election and EU Referendum 2016; and Identified the registration plans and activities in place for the Annual Canvass 2016.

#### **ANNUAL CANVASS FEEDBACK 2015**

She took Members through the details in the report and highlighted a number of points including that, in relation to the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in June 2014 the annual canvass in 2015 under the Individual Electoral Registration (IER) during the transitional period.

She reported on the different stages of the canvass, in particular the trial use of mobile tablet devices to capture the information directly into the software system to assist with completing the reminder household enquiry forms. Members asked a number of questions and made various comments on the report. The following points were noted:

- Members found the high return rate from the use of the tablet devices as compared with the traditional paper forms very interesting, noting the high level of confidence the electorate placed on new technology, particularly the perception that it was professional and safe in terms of personal information.
- Members expressed concern about the requirement for residents to confirm people living at an address, then for any new residents to register individually without the provision of identification. They considered that given the allegations of a high level of fraud in the borough, it was important that requesting identification in the registration process should have been routine. Louise Stamp undertook to take on board that it would be prudent to request identification from the registering electorate in order to safeguard the integrity of the process.
- It was noted that it was legal to request identification in the voter's registration process.
- That residents were contacted by phone or email and data mining with council tax records to ensure that all residents who should be registered at the property were captured before the property could be confirmed as data complete.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE GLA ELECTION – 5 MAY 2016**

It was noted that the elections in Tower Hamlets in May and June 2015 were delivered successfully and without challenge. A joint report was prepared in order to provide a legacy of recommendations for future elections in Tower Hamlets. Preparations were underway and are based on best practice and lessons learnt from the two elections conducted in 2015. A number of successful initiatives piloted in the past would be employed for the polls in 2016 and a number of other enhancements introduced.

It was noted that four London boroughs made up the City and East Constituency for the GLA election, Newham (lead), Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets and The City. The Chief Executive was the Borough Returning Officer responsible for the conduct of the election in Tower Hamlets and reports to the Constituency Returning Officer at Newham.

In response to questions and comments from Councillors, arrangements regarding polling premises, polling equipment such as single polling booths, carousels, pencils and the availability of pens and the recruitment of polling and Count Staff were all in place. The electronic count for the GLA election had been set to take place at ExCeL London on Friday 6 May 2016, commencing at 8am. Feedback from the previous elections had suggested general support for the count being held at the ExCel Centre in Docklands, given that it was a large facility.

Discussions had taken place with the police regarding security and it had been agreed that there would be a police escort for each ballot box.

### **EU REFERENDUM – 23 JUNE 2016**

It was noted that all polling premises used for the GLA election had been secured for the Referendum. Arrangements were in place with respect to setting up and collection of polling equipment and material from each polling place.

The proposal was to use the same staff allocation used for the GLA election. Presiding officers will be asked to identify staff that did not perform well in May 2016 and polling station inspectors will provide a report on presiding officer suitability. The count for the EU Referendum was scheduled to take place at East Wintergarden, Canary Wharf, on Thursday 23 June commencing at 10.00pm.

### **ANNUAL CANVASS PILOT 2016**

It was noted that Tower Hamlets proposed to conduct an annual canvass pilot starting in July 2016. The annual canvass would normally commence in August, however the use of an additional Household Notification Letters (HNL), which had proven to be more successful than the Household Enquiry Form (HEF) used during the annual canvass period would be piloted.

Following the successful use of tablets in the 2015 annual canvass, it was proposed to undertake this alternative method of canvassing by using a combination of Household Notification Letters (HNL), mobile tablet devices for all canvass reminders and also various data matching exercises.

Members thanked Louise Stamp for a concise yet comprehensive report.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

**3.2 Application for Membership on the Standing Advisory Council for Education**

The report was presented by Hania Franek, Head of School Governance & Information. The report set out for Members the details of an application from Zelda Bailey, on behalf of the British Humanist Association (BHA), for the consideration for full membership of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education).

The Committee noted the reasons for the request in a letter dated 17 October 2015, attached at Appendix A of the report. It was underlined that the British Humanist Association wished to be fully involved in discussions and decisions Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

**RESOLVED -**

- ~~1. That the British Humanist Association be granted full membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education in Tower Hamlets.~~
1. That the British Humanist Association continue to be a co-opted member of SACRE and consulted fully by the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).

**3.3 Local Authority Governor Applications**

The report was introduced by Hania Franek, Head of School Governance & Information, who advised that none of the applications before the Committee was contentious.

It was noted that Members had no objections to the applications submitted.

**RESOLVED -**

- (1) That the applicants for re-appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set out in the report be noted.

(2) That the applications for Local Authority Governors as detailed in the report be approved as follows:

- That Rob Crothers be nominated for re-appointed as a governor at Morpeth School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
- That Darren Milgate be nominated for re-appointed as a governor at Cyril Jackson School under the 2012 School Governance Regulations.
- That Mr Mohammed Abdur Rahman be nominated for appointment as a governor at Bow School under the 2012 School Governance Regulations.
- That Ms Catherine Fisher be nominated for appointment as a governor at Harry Gosling School under the 2012 School Governance Regulations.
- That Ms Alexandra Ploussard be nominated for appointment as a governor at St Agnes School under the 2012 School Governance Regulations.

#### **4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

##### **RESOLVED –**

That in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the remaining agenda item contained information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

#### **5. LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS EXEMPT APPENDICES**

The appendices were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Sabina Akhtar  
General Purposes Committee