

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE BEST VALUE PROGRAMME REVIEW BOARD QUARTERLY  
MEETING**

**HELD AT 6.05 P.M. ON MONDAY, 10 APRIL 2017**

**ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE  
CRESCENT, LONDON E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs (Chair) (Executive Mayor)  
Councillor Sirajul Islam (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for  
(Member) Housing)  
Councillor Rachael Saunders  
(Member)  
Will Tuckley (Member) (Chief Executive)  
Sharon Godman (Member) (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and  
Partnerships)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor John Pierce (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee)  
(Member)  
Councillor Peter Golds (Leader of the Conservative Group)

**Others Present:**

Heather Wills (Local Government Association)

**Officers Present:**

Debbie Jones – (Corporate Director, Children's)  
Antonella Burgio – (Democratic Services)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Whitelock Gibbs and Alan Wood.

An apology was noted from Councillor Blake and Denise Radley, Corporate Director for Health, Adults and Community.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

## **3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2017 were agreed and approved as a correct record.

## **4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **4.1 Best Value Plan Final Update & Arrangements for 2017-18**

The Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships presented the report which provided information on

- Removal of the Secretary of State's Directions issued in December 2014
- Letter from Mayor Biggs to the Secretary of State responding to proposed new revised, dated March 2017
- Mayor Biggs' letter and progress report to the Secretary of State dated February 2017.

The Board noted:

- The revised directions (March 2017) required a cross-Party board to be established and quarterly reports to continue to be submitted until September 2018
- Exercise of executive functions would no longer require Commissioner oversight
- Functions specified in Annex B to the December 2014 Directions (as amended) are returned to the authority
- The chronology of events leading to the removal of the Directions issued in December 2014

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the Secretary of State's final correspondence detailing the removal of Directions issued in December 2014 and the issue of new Directions until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018 be noted.
2. That the correspondences from Mayor Biggs and Commissioners on the final update on the Best Value Action Plan and proposed arrangements be noted.

### **4.2 Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which set out proposals for the establishment and work of the new body in accordance with the Secretary of State's Directions issued on 28 March 2018. He welcomed Heather Wills of LGA who had been appointed to the Board in accordance with the Directions and who would provide LGA support.

All present noted:

- The constructive input by LGA during the period of the Directions now ended and its influence in the nature of the revised Directions issued in March 2017
- The Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board (THBVIB) will meet and undertake its proceedings in public
- The purpose of the Board as set out in its draft Terms of Reference
- The THBVIB forward plan
- The changes of membership upon inauguration of THBVIB
- A number of items from the previous Best Value Action Plan remained outstanding, these would be addressed via the new Board
- A number of the external appointments directed had yet to be confirmed at this time but would be concluded in time for the next meeting on 14 June 2017
- The OFSTED action plan would be added to the forward plan
- BVIB would undertake an oversight role of other improvement bodies such as CSSB and ASB; this approach was supported by DCLG.
- The proceedings of the Board would be administered via Democratic Services and operate normal committee procedures.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the terms of reference of Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board be approved.
2. That the draft Forward Plan be noted.

## **5. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

### **5.1 Tower Hamlets Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) 2017**

The Chair agreed to receive an urgent report concerning the outcome of a recent OFSTED inspection of Children's Social Care Services.

The Board noted:

- The letter of the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families and the draft Direction issued.
- A Children's Services Improvement Board had been recently established and the Intervention Advisor directed by DfE would be a member of this body.
- The Corporate Director had liaised with DfE in regard to the Council's actions to mitigate the non-compliances identified during the inspection and the Council's proposed approach for mitigation was supported.
- The draft Terms of Reference of the new board including its objectives which aim to address the areas commented on in the OFSTED report.

The Chair noted:

- That the Council must be responsible for the plan and ensure its proper implementation.

- The input of Alan Wood in drafting the terms of reference
- That Mr Wood's role and responsibilities as part of CSIB and THBVIB would be clarified
- That there was a role for the Council's scrutiny bodies in monitoring and challenging the existing strategic governance accountability framework and assess how they contribute to improving children's outcomes. Access to pertinent data would be required in this regard. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that it would also be necessary to consider how Members delivered their role as corporate parent and be involved in the decision making.
- The DfE identified the ongoing development of the Council's Corporate Parenting Board as strength and this would be further developed under the directions.

During discussion Members raised the following matters:

- Since the matter concerned vulnerable children, the work should be undertaken in an apolitical manner
- Whether it would be possible for opposition Members to observe meetings of Corporate Parenting Board
- CSIB reports would be considered by THBVIB Members
- The lines of responsibility and accountability between CSIB and THBVIB, their relationships and those of officers involved should be clarified
- Performance information to be monitored should be clarified
- That Childrens Services should form a standing agenda item

The Board noted the following outline governance framework

- Political lines of responsibility flowed from the Cabinet Member, and Elected Mayor to Chair of CSIB
- Operational lines of responsibility flowed from the Corporate Director, and Chief Executive to Chair of CSIB
- A pattern of informal and formal meetings would be followed in keeping with the Civil Service model
- CSIB should draw up a forward plan in order to plan and monitor delivery of its targets

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the establishment of Tower Hamlets Childrens Services Improvement Board in response to the Minister of States directions be noted.
2. That the discussion of matter be noted.

## **6. TOWER HAMLETS CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

The meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs  
Best Value Programme Review Board Quarterly Meeting