

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2017

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

Members Present:

Councillor Danny Hassell (Chair)
Councillor Denise Jones (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Helal Uddin

Officers Present:

Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Asmat Hussain	(Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Runa Basit	(Head of School Governance & Information)
Holly Bell	(Trainee Solicitor)
Heather Daley	(Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Paul Greeno	(Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services)
Hannah Ismail	(Trainee Solicitor)
Louise Stamp	(Head of Electoral Services)
Matthew Mannion	(Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services, Governance)
Beverley McKenzie	(Head, Members Support, Democratic Services, LPG)
Joel West	(Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

Councillor Denise Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4.2 – Local Authority Governor Applications – as she knew applicant Richard Tyndall.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 July 2017 are agreed as a correct record; and
2. That the unrestricted minutes of the Extraordinary General Purposes Committee meeting held on 13 September 2017 are agreed as a correct record.

3. WORK PLAN

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee's work plan 2017/18 is noted.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Update of preparations for the Mayor and Local elections 2018

Will Tuckley, Chief Executive and Louise Stamp, Head of Electoral Services, introduced the report, which outlined preparations in place for the Mayor and Local Government elections 2018.. Mr Tuckley and Ms Stamp provided additional detail on the election preparations.

- Following feedback from recent elections, a greater number of Polling Station Inspectors will be deployed in May 2018.
- East Wintergarden, Canary Wharf, remains the currently proposed count venue, though the Council is continuing to explore possible alternatives. Several members of the Committee expressed concerns with the security of East Wintergarden.
- Further to the postal voting pilot outlined in the report, the Committee stressed that the proposed leaflet to inform electors who to inform if they suspect fraudulent activity, needed careful consideration of its design to maximise its clarity and effectiveness. Committee members asked that they be provided with an advance copy of the leaflet.
- Further to questions on the rate of postal vote rejections, Mr Tuckley advised that the percentage of rejects had decreased overall in recent years. Ms Stamp advised that a video guide to completing postal votes will be produced, which it is hoped will further reduce the rate of rejected postal votes. The Committee welcomed this initiative, but asked that this be coupled with outreach work. The Committee discussed the risks associated with delivering postal votes to homes in multiple occupation. Ms Stamp advised that measures would be put in place to mitigate this risk, including full briefing of delivery staff.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Notes the content of the report.

4.2 LA Governor Appointment Report

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance & Information, introduced the report, which summarised applications from eight persons who had applied to be nominated for appointment or reappointment as a local authority governor at Tower Hamlets maintained schools.

Following consideration of the information supplied, including both unrestricted and restricted reports, the Committee agreed to nominate all eight applicants to the school governor position each had applied for.

RESOLVED -

1. That the applicants for re-appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set out in the report be approved as follows.
 - a. That Alesha De-Freitas be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Arnhem Wharf Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - b. That Melian Mansfield be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at St Elizabeth RC Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - c. That Penny Grimwood be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Cubitt Town Infant School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - d. That Shelagh Taylor be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Osmani Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - e. That Sophie Fanning-Tichborne be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Swanlea Secondary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
2. That the new applications for Local Authority Governors as detailed in the report be approved as follows:
 - a. That Andrew Barton be nominated for appointment as a governor at Harry Roberts School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - b. That Harry Fletcher be nominated for appointment as a governor at St Matthias CofE Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.

- c. That Richard Tyndall be nominated for appointment as a governor at Raines Foundation School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.

4.3 Employment Appeals Against Dismissal - Update

Heather Daley, Divisional Director HR and Transformation, introduced the report, which updated Members on progress towards hearing outstanding employment appeals.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the conclusion since 30 August 2017 of 4 outstanding employment appeal hearings; and the 3 still to convene based on the current employment procedures.
2. Noted the arrangements agreed for a schedule of 3 further employment appeal panels for the municipal year 2017/18 and nominate Members to attend.
3. Agreed that a further 4 meetings be held by 31 March 2018 to consider future appeals and ensure there is no further backlog.

4.4 HR Policies and Procedures - diagnostic

Heather Daley, Divisional Director HR and Transformation, introduced the report, which provided a briefing on the conclusions of a 2016 Industrial Relation Review and a Phase 1 review of a number of key HR policies and procedures.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the briefing within the report.

4.5 Member Learning & Development

Beverley McKenzie, Head of Members Support introduced the report.

Members of the Committee made the following observations on the current learning and development offer to Members:

1. It would be helpful if the list of upcoming Member Development Sessions could clearly distinguish those sessions which are 'Members' skills development' from those which are 'policy engagement'.
2. Members would welcome greater clarity on whether the Council would fund their participation in external training courses.

3. Mandatory training session organisation is not sufficiently sensitive to Members' availability as often only a single date/session is offered. It would be preferable if Members were first consulted on their preferred dates and sessions arranged accordingly.
4. The Chair felt the Council's ambition should be undertake a skills audit of its Members, which could then inform development of a targeted learning and development programme. The programme would be complemented by a comprehensive brochure of learning opportunities accessible to all Members.
5. Members would especially welcome opportunities which resulted in recognised qualifications, certificates etc.

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance, welcomed Members' comments on the report. Ms Hussain asked that the matter of learning and development is raised at respective political group meetings to encourage Member attendance, which has been disappointing of late.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the current Member learning and development conducted in 2017/18;
2. Noted the upcoming sessions to be provided for Members;
3. Noted the offer of sessions that can be made available to the Members, if sufficient demand exists; and
4. Noted that induction plans for new and returning Members are being developed and agrees to receive an update on this at their meeting in January 2018.

4.6 Review of external appointments

The Chair introduced the report, which provided an overview of the Council's process for appointing representatives to outside bodies and information on the bodies to which the Council nominates representatives.

Members of the Committee offered comments on the report as follows:

1. Members would welcome advice on their role and duties when nominated to outside bodies. It would be helpful if a lead officer were identified for each body who could be approached for advice if needed.
2. Further to the proposal to request each outside body to provide further information for Phase 2 of the review, the Committee asked that Members also be offered the opportunity to feed-in.
3. Members asked that the listed appointees (as indicated in Appendix A) to Tower Hamlets Homes Board and Tower Hamlets Community Housing be checked, as they felt the list may not be accurate for these bodies.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the process for the nomination of representatives to outside bodies, for both executive and non-executive functions as set out in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6.
2. Noted the roles and responsibilities for outside body appointments as detailed in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.9 and agree that these continue to be communicated to all parties via appropriate channels.
3. Agreed that outside bodies be asked to provide the Council with updated information on their purpose, status and operating structure to inform Phase 2 of the review, which will seek to develop a picture of the skills and accountabilities needed of appointees to each outside body.
4. Agreed to receive a Phase 2 report at the January 2018 meeting, providing:
 - a. A further list of outside bodies, incorporating any changes or new information obtained as a result of (3); and
 - b. Revised Guidance for Members Representing the Council on External Bodies.

4.7 Constitution Review – Council Procedure Rules

Hannah Ismail, Trainee Solicitor and Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, introduced the report which, following the Committee's consideration in July 2017, presented a revised set of Council Procedure Rules for recommendation to Council. Ms Ismail and Mr Greeno advised that the revised Procedure Rules included several important changes from current rules, including:

- Deletion of the public questions rule;
- State of the Borough Debate rule amendments;
- A new rule providing for administration and opposition motion debates at ordinary meetings;
- Amendments to petition rules and a revised Petition Scheme; and
- Stronger powers for the Speaker regarding Members' conduct and public disturbance.

Ms Ismail advised of a minor error in the report. The final line of Rule 11.5 (g) from Appendix 1 should read "...other amendments received by noon the day before the meeting". Ms Ismail advised that this would be corrected before submission to full Council.

The Committee noted that the revised Council Procedure Rules would be discussed by full Council at the 22 November 2017 meeting. The Committee indicated that its preference is that the new Rules (subject to agreement by full Council) would then be applied from the start of the following ordinary Council meeting, scheduled for 17 January 2018.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Recommends to Council the changes to Part 4.1 of the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 to enable these changes to come into effect; and
2. Noted that a further review of the Petition Scheme is planned for next year.

4.8 Constitution Review – Member/ Officer Relations’ Protocol

Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer introduced the report which presented a revised Member/Officer Relations’ Protocol for recommendation to Council and addressed the Best Value Programme Review Board consideration for a Member to Member protocol.

Members of the Committee indicated they would appreciate feedback on the SOLACE Programme referred to within the report.

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance outlined a number of ways the new Protocol will be promoted to Council officers and Members, including the Council’s Intranet and staff newsletter.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Recommends to Council for approval the revised draft Member/ Officer Relations’ Protocol at Appendix 1; and
2. Noted that revised draft Member/ Officer Relations’ Protocol will also be reviewed at the Standards Advisory Committee on 19th October 2017.

4.9 Whistleblowing – New policy, processes and the work of Grant Thornton

Holly Bell, Trainee Solicitor and Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, introduced the report which outlined the findings and recommendations made by Grant Thornton UK LLP following their review of Council’s whistleblowing arrangements.

The Committee noted that the Corporate Director, Governance has indicated the role for monitoring the Council’s whistleblowing will be transferred from Standards Advisory Committee to the Audit Committee, which may require minor amendments to the terms of reference of the latter body.

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance informed the committee that the number of whistleblowing reports had increased from 31 in 2016 to 79 in 2017. Ms Hussain also advised that an e-learning module is being produced to accompany the roll-out of the new arrangements and she will arrange for Members to have access to it.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the revised Whistleblowing Policy and recommends to the Audit Committee for approval at Appendix 1;
2. Noted the Whistleblowing Procedure and recommends to the Audit Committee for approval at Appendix 2;
3. Noted the Whistleblowing Guidance for Managers at Appendix 3;
4. Noted the Whistleblowing Guidance for Investigators at Appendix 4; and
5. Noted the Council's response to the Grant Thornton Action Plan at Appendix 5.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

6. RESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Senior Recruitment Update

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance advised the Committee that the report accompanying this item was initially identified as being exempt from publication, due to it containing sensitive information. It was accordingly listed in the 'exempt' section of the agenda and restricted from publication. Since the agenda was published, the Corporate Director has determined the report is not exempt. Following Ms Hussain's advice, the Committee agreed that this report be considered in open session.

Will Tuckley, Chief Executive introduced the report, which updated Members on recent senior recruitment activity. In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Tuckley confirmed:

- The interim arrangements for the Corporate Director, Place, as outlined in paragraph 3.3. of the report, are expected to last until June 2018.
- The appointment of Divisional Director Sports, Leisure and Culture has now been made and Judith St John has been appointed.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted progress on the recruitment to senior management vacancies following the implementation of a revised Council structure; and
2. Confirmed the arrangements for the interim cover for the post of Corporate Director, Place as set out in paragraph 3.3. of the report.

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Danny Hassell
General Purposes Committee