

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2018

**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 Joshua Peck

Apologies:

Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Helal Uddin

Others Present:

Superintendent Stuart Ryan (Metropolitan Police)

Officers Present:

Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Asmat Hussain	(Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Runa Basit	(Head of School Governance & Information)
Robert Curtis	(Electoral Services Manager)
Heather Daley	(Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Beverley McKenzie	(Head, Members Support, Democratic Services, LPG)
Joel West	(Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Danny Hassell declared a personal interest in Item 4.5, Review of External Appointments – Phase 2, as he was nominated as the Council's representative on the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Councillor Denise Jones declared a personal interest in Item 4.5, Review of External Appointments – Phase 2, as she was nominated as a Council representative on Create London; East London & The City University Mental Health NHS Trust (East London NHS Foundation Trust); East London Nursing Society Trust; Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and V & A Museum of Childhood.

Councillor Abdul Mukit declared a personal interest in Item 4.5, Review of External Appointments – Phase 2, as he was nominated as a Council representative on Rich Mix Cultural Foundation; and Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

Councillor Joshua Peck declared a personal interest in Item 4.5, Review of External Appointments – Phase 2, as he was nominated as the Council's representative on LHC (London Housing Consortium).

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12 October 2017 are agreed as a correct record.

3. WORK PLAN

The Chair noted that there were no substantive items on the work plan for the next meeting on 3 April 2018 and asked officers to consider cancelling this meeting, should this not change in the interim.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee's work plan 2017/18 is noted; and
2. Should no substantive items be identified for the 3 April 2018 meeting, the Monitoring Officer be requested to cancel the meeting.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 LA Governor Appointment Report

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance & Information, introduced the report, which summarised applications from 6 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 6 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 Dr Katy Bennett-Richards be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Harbinger Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations;
 - b. That Kimberley McNeil be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Halley Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
2. That the applications for Local Authority Governors as detailed in the report be approved as follows:
- a. That Beatrice Roberts be nominated for appointment as a governor at Stephen Hawking Special School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations;
 - b. That Clare Lovett be nominated for appointment as a governor at Cherry Trees Special School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations;
 - c. That Sian Acreman be nominated for appointment as a governor at St Saviour's CoE Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations; and
 - d. That Hilary Evenett be nominated for appointment as a governor at Central Foundation Girls' School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
3. That the Committee temporarily delegates authority for the Appointment and revocation of local authority school governors to the Corporate Director Childrens Services in consultation with the Chair of the General Purposes Committee, until the first ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee in the 2018/19 municipal year.
4. That the Committee requests that a report on the exercise of this delegation (if any) by the Corporate Director be submitted to the first ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee in the 2018/19 municipal year.

4.2 Mayor and Local Government Elections 2018 Update

Will Tuckley, Chief Executive and Returning Officer, introduced the report, which provided an update on preparations for the Mayoral and local elections on 3 May 2018.

Mr Tuckley provided more details on the possible postal vote pilot explained at paragraph 3.5 of the report. Mr Tuckley explained the pilot is expected to include three main components: improving advice to electors concerning safety and security of their votes; a sample of voters would be contacted to check they had received their postal vote packs; and a further sample would be contacted when their postal votes were received, to check they were

completed and returned properly. Discussions concerning the specific details of the proposed pilot between the Returning Officer and Cabinet Office are ongoing. The Chair asked that the Committee be provided with a briefing note on the pilot, including the anticipated size of samples and what is being done to make guidance for postal voting as accessible as possible.

Mr Tuckley advised the Committee of a meeting at the Greater London Assembly the previous day where policing for the Tower Hamlets local elections 2018 was discussed by the GLAs Police and Crime Committee. The meeting was attended by Mr Tuckley, Claire Bassett, Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission; Chief Superintendent Sue Williams, Borough Commander, Tower Hamlets, MPS; and Detective Superintendent Stuart Ryan, MPS (who was also in attendance at the Committee).

Mr Tuckley introduced the Committee to the Council's recently appointed Head of Electoral Services, Robert Curtis. Mr Curtis provided further detail on election planning, including:

- Numbers and training of election staff and measures to ensure their impartiality.
- Pre-election planning with the Police and Cabinet Office.
- A recently launched webpage which allows anyone to report concerns of electoral malpractice
https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council_and_democracy/elections_voting/Report_electoral_fraud.aspx
- Security at the count venue including the possibility of a photo ID entry system.

Further to the annual canvass information provided at paragraph 3.8 of the report, Mr Curtis asked the Committee to note that the relatively high number of non-responding properties was due in large part to new and unoccupied developments in the borough. Canvass figures are checked with the council tax and revenues and benefits services to ensure their validity. As a further security measure, all non-responding properties are sent a 'no registered electors' polling card.

The Committee raised a series of questions and concerns about the election, many of which were based on their experience of local elections in 2014 and 2015. Further to the questions and concerns raised by Committee members, Mr Tuckley and Mr Curtis provided information on the following areas:

- Logistics of the count: security, timings, persons permitted to be present at various stages of the verification and count.
- How training for presiding officers was designed to ensure they could deal with various issues which may arise at polling stations including intimidation, voting influence, pressure etc.
- The role of the Returning Officer at the count, including handling pressurised or intimidating situations and interpreting guidance issued by the Electoral Commission on dubious ballot papers.
- Staffing arrangements for the count including contingency plans in case of extended duration, re-counts, etc.

Detective Superintendent Stuart Ryan from the Metropolitan Police was attending the Committee as a guest to provide an update on planning for policing the election. Detective Ryan informed the Committee that his role concerned investigating electoral malpractice allegations for the whole of London. Helen Lewis had been due to attend the Committee to provide information specific to policing at the Tower Hamlets election, but unfortunately could not be present. Detective Ryan informed the Committee that, with regards to the Tower Hamlets election:

- There will be a police presence at every polling place, including Bangladeshi speaking officers where it is felt to be appropriate.
- Officers will have body-worn cameras to record incidents, though will be instructed these should only be in operation outside of polling places, to maintain polling secrecy.
- All police officers will receive a dedicated two-hour election training session. The training is bespoke to Tower Hamlets and has been approved by the Electoral Commission. Count training will also be provided to relevant officers.
- Tower Hamlets police officers will be on service within the count venue, whilst officers from Newham will provide support outside and around the venue.
- The police have been conducting intelligence scanning, including social media scanning.
- A reassurance group has been set up.
- There will be a renewed emphasis on publicising election policing and the outcomes of investigations of electoral malpractice allegations, to improve public confidence. The Chair suggested that the Council could assist with this by publishing outcomes reports on its website, which would complement the Council's communication and engagement strategy for the election.

The Chair thanked Detective Ryan for his contribution and welcomed the joined-up working between the Council and the Metropolitan Police to promote smooth operation of the local elections in 2018.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Notes the report.
2. Asks that a briefing note is provided to Committee members on the possible Postal Vote Pilot referred to in the report.

4.3 Pay Policy Statement

Heather Daley, Divisional Director HR and Transformation introduced the report which presented an updated Pay Policy Statement for the Committee's consideration. Ms Daley briefly highlighted the key changes to the Statement from its previous publication, which are as summarised in the covering report.

The Committee asked for further clarification on paragraph 12.4 of the Statement, 'Negotiated Settlements', particularly whether the term 'senior executive' was appropriate and if so, which roles in the Council's workforce would fall within this definition. The Committee felt resolving this query was particularly important as paragraph 12.4 confirmed that the General Purposes Committee has a direct role in approving negotiated settlements. The Chair recommended that the Statement be amended, if necessary, to resolve this issue prior to the submission of the Statement to full Council and suggested any amendments be agreed by the Chief Executive following consultation with himself, the Divisional Director (HR and Transformation) and the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee expressed some concern with the updated pay multiple calculation (explained at paragraph 3.8 of the covering report) as it confirmed that the multiple has increased on the previous year. The Committee asked that members be provided with a note to explain this increase.

The Committee noted that gender pay information (including the identification of any gender pay gap) did not form part of the Pay Policy Statement. It felt it would be logical to include this information in the Statement. Ms Daley advised she would explore options for combining the Pay Policy Statement with gender pay information.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Notes the draft pay policy statement at Appendix 1 of the report;
2. Delegates authority to make minor changes to the Statement prior to its submission to full Council to the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Divisional Director (HR and Transformation), the Chair of the GP Committee and the Monitoring Officer;
3. Agree that if any minor changes to the 2018/19 pay policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance or an updated Local Government Transparency Code, these amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Divisional Director (HR and Transformation), the Chair of the GP Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Should any fundamental changes be required, then the pay policy statement will be sent back to the GP Committee for consideration.

4.4 Members' Induction

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director Governance and Beverley McKenzie, Head of Members Support, introduced the report which outlined the proposed Member Induction Programme for new and returning Members following the May 2018 Council elections. Ms Hussain encouraged feedback from Members on the proposed suite of learning and development opportunities detailed in the report.

Members asked that learning and development sessions are also offered on the following areas:

- Housing options
- Planning enforcement
- Noise complaints
- Personal safety
- Public speaking
- Time management/caseload management.

Members also suggested e-learning modules would be welcome and asked that afternoon sessions are avoided, to prevent conflicts with Members' work commitments.

The Committee suggested that the Councillor Role description may benefit from revision and/or consideration by the Standards Advisory Committee. For example, the Chair questioned if it was right to expect opposition Councillors to promote the Community Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Agrees the proposed indicative Member Induction Programme for 2018 as set out in Appendix A, subject to inclusion of the additional suggested areas proposed above.
2. Asks Members from each political group to nominate a link Member, who will liaise as necessary regarding member input to the induction programme.
3. Note the work under way in relation to developing the broader package of support services and the Learning and Development Programme for Members.

4.5 Review of external appointments - Phase 2

Joel West, Senior Committee Officer, introduced the report which, further to the Phase 1 report in October 2017, presented additional information on outside bodies for the Committee's consideration and made proposals for how the current list of outside bodies could be amended or refined to ensure having representation on outside bodies is meeting the Council's objectives.

Mr West summarised the findings of the review so far and drew the Committee's attention to the 12 bodies identified in the report for which Council nominations were recommended to be discontinued. Mr West advised that, since the report had been finalised, a comment had been received from a Councillor that strongly supported continuing representation on one of these bodies, the Ricardo Community Trust.

Several members of the Committee indicated concern that, despite being nominated by the Mayor to represent the Council on outside bodies, they had not received any correspondence from those bodies nor been invited to meetings.

Members indicated that it can be challenging to participate in the work of outside bodies and would benefit from access to advice from officers:

- a) managing tensions in what is perceived to be a dual role: both a Council representative and a serving Board member/trustee etc of the outside body; and
- b) in advance of outside body meetings to discuss the agenda/business and receive policy insight or briefings, if required.

Further to (a) Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director Governance, directed Members to the guidance note included as Appendix B of the report and advised this issue would also be covered in Member Induction training. Further to (b) Ms Hussain advised that Directorates would be requested to identify a Lead officer for each outside body who nominees could approach for support and advice.

The Committee noted that the guidance at Appendix B of the report included a requirement for nominees to report back to the Council and lead member or relevant committee as requested or as necessary and suggested this provision is formalised. It suggested a requirement for regular brief reports to the Mayor or Cabinet which could be included in the Mayor's report on nominations to outside bodies, which is made to the Annual Council Meeting.

With regards to the 12 bodies identified in the report for which Council nominations were recommended to be discontinued, The Committee confirmed it would prefer to maintain nominees to the following four outside bodies:

- Docklands Sailing and Water Sports Centre.
- Mudchute Association (Park and Farm)
- Ricardo Community Foundation (St Clements Hospital)
- Women's Environmental Network

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- 1) Notes the further information concerning the current outside bodies included at Appendix A of the report.

- 2) Recommends to the Mayor that the Council should no longer nominate representatives to the following 8 outside bodies:
Billingsgate Market Consultative Advisory Committee; Cultural Industries Development Agency; East London Nursing Society Trust; Greater London Enterprise; Green Candle Dance Company; Merchant Navy Welfare Board; The Henderson Charity; and Women's Library Council.
- 3) Recommends to the Mayor that the process of outside bodies is strengthened by:
 - Provision of guidance and training for nominees on their roles;
 - Identification of a lead officer for each outside body to provide briefings and policy advice to nominees; and
 - Development of a framework for nominees to report back to the Council, Cabinet or lead member on the work they have undertaken.
- 4) Notes the revised Guidance for Members Representing the Council on Outside Bodies at Appendix B.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Danny Hassell
General Purposes Committee