

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 7 MAY 2019

COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

Councillor Helal Uddin (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Brady (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Asma Begum
Councillor Asma Islam
Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Peter Golds

Apologies:

Councillor Faroque Ahmed
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Officers Present:

Runa Basit	– (Head of School Governance & Information)
Robert Curtis	– (Head of Electoral Services)
Amanda Harcus	– Divisional Director of HR
Asmat Hussain	– (Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Simmi Yesmin	– (Democratic Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 3rd April 2019, were agreed as a correct record.

3. WORK PLAN

The work plan of future agenda items was received and noted by the Committee.

RESOLVED

1. That the Work Plan be noted

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 European Union Elections Update

Robert Curtis, Head of Electoral Services, presented a verbal update on the preparations for the European Union Elections 2019. Mr Curtis informed the Committee that confirmation had been received this very afternoon that the Elections would be going ahead on Thursday 23 May 2019. Members were given a detailed summary of the time line of events leading up to the Elections, the processes that have been followed and the preparations to date. The following salient points were also noted;

- That Lewisham were the London Lead Authority for the EU Elections 2019, the Regional Returning Officer was Janet Senior and Will Tuckley, Chief Executive, was the Local Returning Officer for Tower Hamlets.
- That there were eight MEPs to elect.
- The count would take place on Sunday 29th May 2019 for all local authorities and the count for Tower Hamlets would be held in East Winter Gardens in Canary Wharf.
- The results would be declared at 10pm on the Sunday.
- That Police Officers would not be based in all Polling Stations, the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating had been reviewed and 11 stations had been identified as stations where there could be potential problems of intimidation and congregation and it had therefore been agreed that those 11 polling stations would have a Police Officer present at the station.
- That there would be mobile police units patrolling around all stations throughout the day.
- All European Union citizens (26,133) registered in LBTH were written to explaining that should they register to vote here, they would be disenfranchised and unable to vote in their country if a Brexit agreement is made and therefore this would be to their detriment.
- That 75 polling stations in the borough had been pre-booked and 1500 staff had been contacted to work on the Elections.
- The Notice of Election had been published on 15 April 2019.
- That 18,731 EU citizens were emailed directly with the form and link to register to vote in the UK.
- That there were 21 parties/candidates and the ballot paper was 2 ½ feet long.
- Polling cards had been sent out last week, and postal vote packs were ready and would be posted out Friday 10 May.

- That the Communications Team would be using twitter, Facebook, Council's website and press releases to keep everyone informed and updated.
- That the verification of the ballot boxes would be done on Friday 24 May in the Town Hall, the introduction of this process would make the count on Sunday more effective and robust.
- The ballot boxes would then be transferred to East Winter Gardens on the Sunday for the actual count.

In response to questions from The Committee the following was noted;

- That systems were now in place to make the count more robust, proactive and faster than in previous years.
- That the count should start early on the Sunday to avoid any delays in declaring the result.
- That the start time of the Count would be confirmed by the Chief Executive and Corporate Director Governance and Monitoring Officer, however, the verification of ballot boxes on the Friday would help fasten the process.
- That there would be 20 teams of 6 counters and 20 trained supervisors working on the count.
- Officers had been working on ways to strengthen the count process.
- Presiding Officers will be given clear advice and guidance on how to seek help when and if needed – that five police mobile units will be patrolling all polling stations throughout the day and there would be dedicated phone lines available for Presiding Officer to call if any issues arise on the day.
- Communications will be providing up-to date information on twitter, Facebook, and the Council's website during the Election period.
- It was **Agreed** the Councillors would receive email updates with turn out figures, progress updates on the count and etc.

The Chair welcomed the update and noted that all preparations were going well, he thanked Mr Curtis for all his work and wished the whole team luck with the Elections.

4.2 Local Authority School Governor Applications

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the report, which summarised applications from three persons who had applied to be nominated for appointment as a Local Authority Governor at Tower Hamlets maintained schools.

The Committee considered the report, and agreed to the reasons for restricting the appendices. The types of candidates approved for submission was noted as well as the different ways that people can become governors. It was noted that that all candidates meet with the Head Teachers and Governors before an application is supported and nominated to be considered for a Local Authority Governor position. It was further noted that once an

appointment is made by the Local Authority, further checks and measures are undertaken in order to confirm a Local Authority Governor appointment.

The Committee considered the information supplied, including both the unrestricted and restricted reports. Following a detailed discussion the Committee raised concerns about the applicant nominated for George Green School. The Committee were of a unanimous view that appointing the applicant may bring the Council into disrepute. In reaching this decision reference was made to paragraph 469 of the Election Court Hearing delivered on the 23 April 2015 by Commissioner Richard Mawrey QC in which there were comments about the applicant.

Therefore, the Committee decided to refuse the nomination/application for appointment of Local Authority Governor for George Green School. The Committee asked the Corporate Director Governance and Monitoring Officer to carry out the relevant due diligence checks and report back to the Committee with advice.

Members agreed to nominate two of the applicants for the school governor positions and refuse the application for the nomination for George Green School.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the following applicants for appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set below be approved;

Thomas Buxton Primary School- Mr Sajjid Miah
Alice Model Nursery School – Deirdre Dixon

2. The Head of School Governance and Information to review how governor appointments/nominations are made and processed, and what due diligence checks are undertaken before an application is brought to the Committee.

4.3 Equality Breakdown of Local Authority Governors

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the report, which summarised the breakdown of equality information and demographic of Local Authority Governors currently in the borough and included a breakdown of equality information for governors overall.

It was noted that the current data held by the Local Authority did not include all equality information for governors as some governors had opted not to provide this information to Governor Services.

Ms Basit explained that the information provided was subject to the current information on the database. The reasons for the unknown figures were based on a number of factors such as governors not returning forms, data missing on the system or forms being incomplete.

In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- That Governor Services would be carrying out work to obtain equality information from all governors – where information was missing.
- The planned next steps to further improve diversity on Governing Boards across the borough and Governor Services would be working with Inspiring Governance to support this work.
- That the table for the breakdown of ethnicity should include governors of Somalian origin and other groups which are underrepresented.
- That equality information on forms were not mandatory and therefore this was often hard to collate.
- That the equality form was now electronic, and the forms were included as part of the welcome pack and given out at training sessions.
- That Governor Services are not informed of all governor appointments – and this was an area of communication that needed to be worked on.
- That the current priority was to target the 59% that ethnicity was unknown for, Officers had been in the process of sending emails and letters to extract that information.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a full summary of the findings and a detailed analysis from the works currently being undertaken is produced at a future meeting of the GP Committee.
3. The Head of School Governance and Information, to work with the Divisional Director, HR, to share best practices on how to collect and collate data.

4.4 Update on Senior Recruitment

Amanda Marcus, Divisional Director, HR, presented the report which provided an update on recent senior recruitment activity.

The Committee noted:

- The successful recruitment to the position of the Corporate Director of Resources; Corporate Director Place; and Divisional Director Adult Social Care.

- That the recruitment process was underway for Divisional Director Housing and Divisional Director Planning and Building Control (shortlisting meeting on 8th May 2019 and final interviews on 16 May 2019).
- That a recruitment agency had been successfully appointed for the post of Divisional Director Finance, Procurement and Audit and that a full time table of the recruitment process would be reported at the next meeting.
- That this was the first time in three years that all senior management posts had been permanent.
- Members extended their thanks to Amanda Harcus and the HR Team for all their work on the recruitment process.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED to:

1. Note the current position on the recruitment to senior management vacancies in the Council structure.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

1. 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.

6.1 Local Authority School Governor Appointments - Exempt Appendices

The appendices for Local Authority Governor Applications were considered during item 4.2 on the unrestricted part of the agenda.

6.2 Forthcoming Restructures - Staffing Implications

Amanda Harcus, Divisional Director, HR, presented the report and sought approval for the dismissal of six employees on the grounds of redundancy, where severance packages exceeded the £99,999 threshold set out within the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011. It was noted that these dismissals were the result of two

separate reviews conducted under the Council's Handling Organisation Change Policy.

The Committee considered the report.

The Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED to

1. Approve the dismissal of those employees as detailed in the report through redundancy.
2. Noted the severance packages that apply to the dismissals arise as a result of the individual's contractual terms and conditions of service.

The meeting ended at 6.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Helal Uddin
General Purposes Committee