

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 8 MARCH 2017

**MP701, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG.**

Members Present:

Councillor Danny Hassell (Chair)
Councillor Denise Jones (Vice-Chair)
Councillor David Edgar
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Peter Golds (Substitute for Councillor Craig Aston)

Apologies:

Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed
Councillor Craig Aston

Officers Present:

Graham White	(Acting Corporate Director, Governance)
Stuart Young	(Interim Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Runa Basit	(Head of School Governance & Information)
Paul Greeno	(Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services)
Joel West	(Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Zoe Folley	(Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None were declared.

Councillor Denise Jones declared a personal interest in Item 3.5, Local Authority Governor Applications, as she knew applicant Kathy Darby.

2. MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising

Further to Minute 3.3 - The Committee was provided with a hard copy of the previously requested updated management chart. Electronic versions will be emailed to members of the Committee.

Further to Minute 3.5 – The Committee requested an update on the feasibility and/or implementation of its suggested electoral improvements.

3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Senior Management Recruitment Update

Stuart Young, Interim Divisional Director, HR and Transformation, provided a verbal update on the exercise to recruit to a number of posts resulting from the Council restructure previously agreed by the Committee. The key points were:

1. Applications for all posts have now closed.
2. There has been an overall good response to advertised vacancies.
3. Longlisting meetings have now been held for both vacant Corporate Director Posts:
 - a. 8 applications were received for the Corporate Director of Governance, which have been longlisted down to 5 candidates.
 - b. 19 applications were received for the Corporate Director of Place, which have been longlisted down to 7 candidates.

Mr Young reminded the Committee that appointment to a number of the posts would be via member-led Appointment Sub Committees (ASCs). Dates of all ASCs have been arranged and details circulated to group leaders, though several ASCs are still awaiting Councillor appointments. Members of the Committee were asked to liaise with their respective group leaders to ensure ASC memberships were confirmed in good time for the upcoming meetings. The Chair indicated he would be happy to write to group leaders to encourage nominations.

Further to a question for the Chair, Mr Young agreed to confirm in due course whether all paperwork for ASCs would be made available to ASC members in advance of meetings.

Resolved that the Committee:

1. Notes the verbal report.

3.2 Sickness Absence Management

Stuart Young, Interim Divisional Director, HR and Transformation, introduced the report which outlined a suite of measures the Council is taking to address the rise in sickness absence. Mr Young further explained that, of the top four

causes for sickness absence as identified at paragraph 3.3 of the report, stress and anxiety related absence had increased disproportionately compared to other causes.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Young:

- Provided more detail on the training to be provided to managers mentioned in paragraph 3.7 of the report. The training will include e-training modules, provision of a management 'toolkit' and will ensure managers know how to balance of employee's needs with the needs of the Council.
- Advised he feels the Council's record system to be robust and does not believe the recent rise in sickness absence to be a result of improvements in reporting/recording.
- Briefly explained a proposal to carry out a new initiative: a stress audit, amongst the Council's workforce,
- Explained the context of the Mayor of London's Healthy Workplace Charter. The Council is a signatory of the Charter and has achieved 'Commitment' recognition under it. It is hoped to achieve higher levels of recognition in future.

The Committee welcomed the proposal of a new workforce Wellbeing Strategy and plan to be brought back in the summer, but asked that an update on progress be delivered at its June 2017 meeting.

RESOLVED that the General Purposes Committee:

1. Notes the report and the actions being taken to address sickness absence in the immediate and longer term.
2. Will receive an update on progress with the new workforce Wellbeing Strategy and plan at its June 2017 meeting.
3. Will receive the draft workforce Wellbeing Strategy and plan in the Autumn cycle.

3.3 Tower Hamlets Constitution - Part 1 Summary and Explanation and Part 2 Articles – Proposed Changes

Graham White, Acting Corporate Director, Governance and Interim Monitoring Officer, introduced the report, which proposed a number of changes to Parts 1 and 2 of the Council's Constitution. Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, provided further detail on some of the proposed changes. The Committee heard:

- Proposals to clarify the roles of the Chief Executive and Mayor arise in part from requirements of the DCLG Commissioners, outlined in the Best Value Action Plan. The proposed wording reflects current practice.

- A reduction in the number of policies in the Council's Policy Framework has been proposed to reduce the burden on Full Council and reflect best practice.
- The Council's Monitoring Officer currently has power to make minor revisions to the Constitution to reflect decisions taken by the Council or changes in legislation or to correct matters of fact. Any changes made under this delegated power will be reported to Councillors.

Mr Greeno alerted the Committee to several technical errors within the circulated report and appendices, which he explained would be corrected prior to the report's submission to Full Council.

Officers agreed to investigate whether wording on paragraph (d) on page 90 of the report could be amended, as some members felt the paragraph was unclear.

RESOLVED that the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the spreadsheet in Appendix 1 setting out the revisions and the reasons;
2. Agreed that all the proposed revisions are non-material;
3. Agreed the revised Part 1 Summary and Explanation of the Constitution in Appendix 2 with the revisions shown as tracked changes, subject to rectification of any technical errors;
4. Agreed the revised Part 2 Articles of the Tower Hamlets Constitution in Appendix 3 with the revisions shown as tracked changes, subject to rectification of any technical errors; and
5. Noted that the revisions to the Constitution will go to Council for approval.

3.4 Tower Hamlets Constitution - Part 3 Responsibility for Functions – Proposed Changes

Graham White, Acting Corporate Director, Governance and Interim Monitoring Officer, introduced the report, which proposed a number of changes to Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, provided further detail on some of the proposed changes. Mr White informed the Committee that the Council's Monitoring Officer currently has power to make minor revisions to the Constitution to reflect decisions taken by the Council or changes in legislation or to correct matters of fact. Any changes made under this delegated power will be reported to Councillors.

Mr Greeno alerted the Committee to several technical errors within the circulated report and appendices, which he explained would be corrected prior to the report's submission to Full Council.

Officers agreed to investigate whether the Overview and Scrutiny Membership paragraph on page 90 of the report could be amended, to clarify voting rights of all co-opted members of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the General Purposes Committee:

1. Noted the spreadsheet in Appendix 1 setting out the revisions and the reasons;
2. Agreed the revised Part 3 Responsibility for Functions of the Constitution as set out in Appendices 2 through to 10, subject to rectification of any technical errors; and
3. Noted that the revisions to the Constitution will go to Council for approval.

3.5 Local Authority Governor Applications

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance & Information, introduced the report, which summarised applications from five 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 five 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 Kathy Darby be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Virginia Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - b. That John Edwards be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Globe Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - c. That Dr Ray Hall be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Ben Johnson School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
 - d. That Peter Sherratt be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Stebon 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 Valentine Phillips be nominated for appointment as a governor at St. Luke's C.E. Primary School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.

4. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

None.

5.1 Exempt Appendices for Local Authority Governor Applications

Noted.

The meeting ended at 8.33 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Danny Hassell
General Purposes Committee