

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

HELD AT 6.05 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2017

**ROOM MP701, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14
2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Sir Steve Bullock	(Independent External Member)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	(Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services)
Councillor Denise Jones	(Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor David Edgar	(Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Heather Wills	(Local Government Association)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Alan Wood	(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)
Councillor Andrew Wood	(Substitute for Councillor Peter Golds)

Officers Present:

Janet Fasan	– (Divisional Director, Legal)
Heather Daley	– (Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Nancy Meehan	– (Interim Improvement Manager, Children's Social Care)
Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Afazul Hoque	– (Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy and Performance)
Zakir Chaudhry	– (Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Antonella Burgio	– (Democratic Services)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Biggs welcomed all to the inaugural meeting of the Board and introduced Sir Steve Bullock who had been invited by the Local Government Association to undertake the role of Board External Member. Sir Steve spoke to the Board about his background expertise and the role he would fulfil to deliver the Board's outcomes.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sirajul Islam and Peter Golds and from Acting Corporate Director for Governance Graham White.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Best Value Review Board Quarterly meeting held on 10th April 2017 were presented and reviewed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair proposed that the order of business should be varied from that published. In accordance with the proposal, item 7 was discussed following item 4; afterwards the remaining agenda items were discussed in the order published.

4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD REVISED TERMS REFERENCE

The revised terms of reference were considered by Board Members and the following were noted:

- The aims of the Board which were to drive sustainable improvement across the organisation by providing oversight support and challenge.
- The proposed structure of the meetings.
- The Council had proposed to DCLG that a similar format should be established to that of the Best Value Review Board Quarterly Meeting which operated under the previous directions.

RESOLVED

That the Terms of Reference which the Mayor has been asked to agreed as an Individual Mayoral Decision be noted.

5. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-18, APRIL-JUNE 2017 UPDATES

The Board heard from the Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy and Performance that this first submission to DCLG contained elements originating in the Secretary of State's previous directions together with a progress summary for each theme reported. These were appended to the report for members to consider and comment upon.

The Board considered and discussed the report and noted the following matters:

- Members were concerned at the number of red-rated data reported in the detailed section of the appendix and asked that this should be kept under review.
- The current Mainstream Grants programme would end in 2018 and therefore it would be necessary to formulate a policy approach to the forthcoming 3-year programme.
- The outcomes of the work undertaken by the 'Clear Up Team' were noted.
- Tower Hamlets was participating in the Pilot Elections ID Registration scheme. However because of the changes in practice that would be required and the short timescales to the snap general election on 8th June 2017, representations had been made to DGLG that there was insufficient time to implement the pilot at this time. However it was anticipated that the process would be embedded in time for the local elections in 2018.
- That progress summary relating to Elections should be 'yellow' rated.
- The role of the Board was to expand on the progress made to date and to enquire how the Council would ensure that performance data demonstrates this and can be externally challenged. Additionally, the role of the LGA, on the Board, was to ensure that this was demonstrated and a culture of continuous improvement and external challenge adopted.

The Board then heard from Officers and noted the following matters:

- Since DCLG would scrutinise RAG ratings, a transparent approach was recommended.
- It would be necessary to demonstrate with evidence that the Council had moved forward and was taking mature decisions post-Commissioners.

The following actions were agreed arising from the discussion of the report:

- Where RAG data was report it was necessary to focus on detail and to report the performance data as the delivery of the plan progresses.
- It was necessary to demonstrate that the Council was able to demonstrate lessons learned therefore learning from Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) should be shared for learning purposes with Adult Services.
- That a paper be brought to the Board on the corporate journey to improvement, focussing on the priorities, how data is measured and how the priorities are interpreted into a culture of improvement.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress reported in the submission to DCLG be noted.
2. That those actions outstanding in the plan be noted.
3. That outstanding actions be added to the Board's forward plan.
4. That learning from Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) should be shared for learning purposes with Adult Services.
5. That the above actions be taken forward.

6. SPOTLIGHT - ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The Corporate Director for Resources and Divisional Director, Legal Services made a presentation to the Board, the details of this are appended to the minutes. The Board considered and discussed the presentation and noted the following matters:

- That the focus of the programme presently was organisational culture and governance.
- Success of the transformation programme would be measured by a number of methods including direct feedback and proxy measures.
- The process was owned by Corporate Leadership Team and respective senior leadership teams. It was acknowledged that strategies to reach remote staff were needed and the staff survey was a key tool in achieving this.
- The wellbeing and resilience of staff was being address via a number of measures including the development of a wellbeing policy and healthy workplace charter.
- A review of the Council's constitution is being delivered in two tranches. The first was approved by Council earlier in 2017 and the second tranche will be presented to Council on 19 July 2017.
- Some elements of the Member Code of Code of Conduct had already been reviewed such as Licensing and Planning Codes. The Member/Officer and Member/Member protocols were also programmed for review and update.
- There has been a review of corporate structures and a programme to make permanent appointments to post that hither to have been filled on an interim basis.
- The Clear Up Project had completed its work and would make a report to Council.

The Board highlighted the following matters of concern arising from the discussion:

- The Member Code of Conduct
- There should be a properly resourced planned and communicated Member induction programme with facility for discussion incorporated.
- Progress on organisational culture should include measurable outcomes.
- The Council should consider how it will assess/evaluate whether it has progressed to become a learning organisation
- The Council should consider how it will identify and how it will track progress towards becoming a learning organisation

RESOLVED

That the presentation and discussion be noted.

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board heard from the Chair of the recently established CSIB that:

- The Council has accepted the result of the Ofsted inspection of children's social care and shown willingness to address the issues identified. However it was necessary to understand why the issues had arisen and this would act as the basis of diagnosing what needed to be addressed.
- A meeting of CSIB had taken place on 12 June 2017.
- Alan Wood was Independent Chair of this body which would undertake to monitor the Council and its Partners and to evidence whether the arrangements for children in the borough are effective. The approach of CSIB would be that each Partner would outline the issues faced and the proposed plans to address them and also assess if these plans are likely to be effective and if there was capacity to deliver them.
- A 3-stage process would be followed to enable the Council to assess the services it wants to deliver, whether the measures offer capacity to improve, whether the service delivery has the full support of the Council and are appropriately prioritised –
 - Assess evidence and identify causes
 - Observe the service(s) in action and its/their aims and Identify any gaps
 - Stress test the plan at CSIB meetings
- The role of Partners would be to assist and contribute in terms of their roles as an agent of delivery. This would be mirrored by the Chair in his role also.

The Board discussed the report and submission from the Chair of CSIB and noted the following matters:

- The council should recognise that a child-friendly approach should be taken throughout the organisation and not confined to the directorate.
- The Draft Summary of the Inspection Improvement Plan (IIP) appended to the report covered the 'assess and observe' elements of the process.
- In producing the IIP, the Council has been tasked to look deeply into the identified key causes – failure of professional leadership, political and corporate focus on other areas and a culture of false assurance -.
- There was cross-party responsibility for corporate parenting by the Council and therefore all political groups were encouraged to engage in acknowledgement of their responsibilities.
- Reports would also be made to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Council.
- It was necessary to learn lessons e.g. how should policy influence decision making.
- In order to assess/measure lessons learned, it was necessary to obtain user feedback as well as other type of assessment.

The Board then heard from Officers and noted the following matters:

- It was necessary to be mindful of the impact of the Ofsted outcome/judgement.
- The IIP provides elements of the causes and will test the assumptions that the Council will make.
- The IIP includes the key improvement plan.
- The Ofsted rating includes the Ofsted mandatory processes of the improvement plan.
- The Department for Education will issue directions and will appoint an Improvement Partner who will comment whether the root causes have been identified and assess whether the IIP is likely to deliver.
- There will be two Ofsted improvement visits in August and December 2017 and a visit every three months thereafter.
- The Local Government Association would also provide support.
- The aim was to evidence an improvement journey and to achieve a good rating in a two-year time frame.
- Root causes were – instability around staff structures which distracted from a focus on the ‘front-line’, insufficient and late intervention and inappropriate intervention thresholds, infrastructure issues, lack of investment, organisational culture and lack of compliance.
- A detailed improvement plan would operate by means of a quality assurance framework to ensure outcomes.
- As improvements progress the framework will change to reflect the progress made.
- Progress will be supported by audit evidence.
- Significant changes had already been made around thresholds and initial referrals.
- A current audit indicates that there was improvement due to changes in ways of working.
- The Chief Executive’s role was to ensure that the service was not isolated from other areas of the Council. The learning would be used to deliver improvements in other areas of the Council.
- To be successful, the approach must be Council-wide and Partner-wide.
- All stakeholders must be engaged and have an understanding of the direction of travel.
- There were capacity implications as a result of the CSIB and therefore Human Resources would be involved to ensure an appropriate capacity, priority and resources.

The following actions were agreed:

- There would be a standing item relating to this matter at future BVIB meetings.
- The issues brought to light should not be approached on a party political basis.
- The challenge of schools forums should be factored into the plan.
- CSIB should discuss how to improve communications.
- The engagement of family and schools partnership should be considered/discussed.

- Elected members should consider/explore what types of questioning would be appropriate to safeguard against false assurance, e.g. information from LSCB, LGA support, expertise from other local authorities and request that information be supported by evidence.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be involved in this matter.
- That CSIB, at its monthly, meetings identify the matters it wishes to examine more deeply and afterwards make a report to BVIB.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report and the submission of the Improvement Plan to the Department for Education by 20th July 2017 be noted.
2. That the actions recommended arising from the discussion of the report be taken forward.

8. FORWARD PLAN

The Board considered the Forward Plan and highlighted the following matters:

- That a summary/paragraph on risk and how its being mitigated should be included in the plan report.
- That a peer-to-peer review be incorporated into the plan in discussion with LGA

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the forward plan be noted.
2. That the additional elements discussed by the Board be incorporated into the plan.

9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board