

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 6.34 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 3 APRIL 2019
C3 - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

Councillor Helal Uddin (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Brady (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Asma Begum
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain
Councillor Asma Islam
Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Peter Golds

Apologies:

Councillor Faroque Ahmed

Officers Present:

Asmat Hussain	– (Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Matthew Mannion	– (Head of Democratic Services, Governance)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

2. MINUTES

It was noted that the minutes of previous meetings were not normally considered at Extraordinary Meetings but it was considered appropriate to present them in this case as the minutes referred directly to the matters being considered at this meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on Tuesday 26 February 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record or proceedings.

3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Constitution Review Update

Asmat Hussain (Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Matthew Mannion (Head of Democratic Services) took members through the latest report on the ongoing Constitution Review.

It was explained that the Committee had previously considered Parts A (Introduction and Explanation) and B (Responsibility for Functions and Decision Making Procedures). This meeting would be the first time the Committee reviewed a draft of the whole document including Parts C (Codes and Protocols) and D (Supplementary Documents). Everything presented was in draft and was subject to change both following discussion at General Purposes Committee meetings and through work by officers.

Members went through the constitution Part by Part and noted a number of points including:

General Points:

- Officers had reviewed Constitutions from large local authorities from across England to help guide this work. It was suggested that officers include Liverpool and Doncaster in this work as they were both Mayoral Model authorities.
- It was also suggested the Scrutiny processes at Torbay Council be considered.
- The Committee on Standards in Public Life had recently published recommendations for best practice. These were being reviewed and it was possible they would require some consequent changes to the Constitution. These would be reported at a later date.

Part A (Introduction and Explanation)

- Key Decision Threshold – the Committee discussed the draft threshold and referred back to previous discussions on this matter. Members agreed to approve the £1 Million threshold set out in the papers, noting that there would also be a new £250k threshold to publish officer decisions.
- The Annual Library Plan had been removed from the Policy Framework.
- The Officer Structure Chart was being moved into Part A and would be updated following further changes to officer posts.
- There had been a number of technical changes to Section 14 (Finance, Contracts and Legal Matters).

Part B (Responsibility for Functions and Decision Making Procedures)

- The Council Procedure Rules had been updated following discussion at the last meeting.

- A number of further amendments to the Procedure Rules were suggested including; adding 'urgency' to the statement in Paragraph 2.5 (late budget motions), making the ruling on allowing motions without a seconder from ungrouped Councillors clearer, changing the general requirements for motions to be accepted to move away from strict word count limits.
- The Access to Information Procedure Rules had been updated following a review by legal services. It was suggested that the protocol on filming meetings could be included.
- Overview and Scrutiny were undertaking a review of their sections.

Part C (Codes and Protocols)

- The Code of Conduct for Members was being reviewed by the Standards Advisory Committee.
- The Employee Code of Conduct and Officer Employment Procedure Rules were being reviewed by Human Resources.
- Some changes were likely to the Planning Code of Conduct and would be reported to a later meeting.
- Financial Regulations Contract Procurement Rules were under review by the Resources Directorate.

Part D (Supplementary Documents)

- The first Section in Part D set out all the following Sections and confirmed any delegated authorities to make changes to individual Sections.
- Schemes of Delegation were being worked up by the relevant Directorates.
- Procedures for individual Committees and Boards would be amendable by the relevant Committees/Officers.

Following discussion of all Parts of the Constitution, Members agreed that officers continue their work with the intention being to present the final Constitution at the July Council meeting. It was noted that if the reviews of any individual sections were incomplete at that stage, the existing version of that section would be presented to ensure that a full Constitution could be agreed together. Any further amendments could then be agreed as part of the next Constitution review session.

Councillor Peter Golds asked that his thanks to all Members of the Committee for their contributions be recorded. He considered that the engagement and discussion around the Constitution had been excellent and a big improvement on previous reviews.

RESOLVED

1. That officers take into account the comments of the General Purposes Committee and continue to prepare a full Constitution for presentation at July Council for final agreement.

The meeting ended at 7.16 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Helal Uddin
General Purposes Committee