

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 6.34 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2019**

**COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Helal Uddin (Chair)  
Councillor Kevin Brady (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Asma Islam  
Councillor Peter Golds  
Councillor Amina Ali  
Councillor Denise Jones  
Councillor Shad Chowdhury

**Apologies:**

Councillor Faroque Ahmed  
Councillor Rajib Ahmed

**Officers Present:**

Amanda Harcus	– Divisional Director of HR
Asmat Hussain	– (Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Robert Curtis	– (Head of Electoral Services)
Matthew Mannion	– (Head of Democratic Services, Governance)

**AGENDA ORDER**

During the meeting the Chair agreed to change the agenda order following requests from officers. For clarity the minutes have been set out in the order the items appear on the agenda.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

None were declared.

**2. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on Tuesday 8 October 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

### **3. WORK PLAN**

The General Purposes Committee Work Plan was discussed and agreed. It was noted that a report on the Council's financial rules and procedures had been moved from the December to February meeting.

### **4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **4.1 Polling Districts & Polling Places Review 2019**

Robert Curtis, Head of Electoral Services, introduced the latest update report on the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places. He set out the background to the review and highlighted that this was a statutory process which had to be completed by the end of January 2020. The final decision would be taken at Council on 15 January.

This update set out the responses received during the consultation exercise and provided options for amending the current arrangements. Responses had been received from the Acting Returning Officer (Will Tuckley), the local Labour Party and local residents.

The Committee discussed a number of issues highlighted including:

- Responses received following consultation with residents who had mobility and/or accessibility issues.
- How the number of polling places were calculated against total elector numbers with the November electoral register being used for the moment but that this would be updated for the final report to Council.
- Porta cabins would have wheelchair access in all cases.

The Committee looked in detail at a number of specific proposals in relation to the number of districts and polling places, as well as the location of some stations. In particular looking at issues in Canary Wharf, Spitalfields & Banglatown and Island Gardens. It was noted that:

- Some proposals would result in stations having too many electors and so should be rejected.
- The report set out the proposals received during the consultation phase.
- Council was free to agree/amend/reject any of the proposals at its meeting on 15 January 2020.
- When considering the siting of polling stations it was important to think about how residents from across the polling district would be able to access the location. Sometimes there would be no ideal location.
- Officers were looking at replacing Olga Primary School as the current polling place was on an upper floor which caused accessibility issues.
- It was noted that schools did not always like being used as polling places but that the government were encouraging the use of public buildings like schools.

Concluding the discussion it was noted that Members should consider the proposed amendments with their groups and could present amendments at the 15 January Council meeting.

Finally it was noted that officers were proposing to review 20% of polling places each year so that the Council would be fully prepared at the time of the next four year review.

Following discussion of the report, Members requested that officers present a paper to a future General Purposes Committee proposing a review of Ward Names within the borough.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a separate report be prepared for the Committee on the process for reviewing the names of the Borough's Wards.

#### **4.2 LA Governor Appointment Report**

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced her regular report on Local Authority School Governor appointments. The report contained three proposed appointments with a fourth being tabled at the meeting. Members noted the information set out in the exempt appendix.

Members considered the report and agreed the nominations.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To agree the nominated applicants to the positions set out for local authority governors at maintained schools in Tower Hamlets.

#### **4.3 Delegation of Role to London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee (LC TEC)**

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, introduced the report. He explained that the purpose of the report was to allow the General Purposes Committee to comment on two decisions being submitted to Council on 15 January 2020.

He explained that the first proposal was to establish a London-wide partnership to assist boroughs in the management and delivery of electric vehicle charging points whilst the second was to establish a bye-law to help control dockless cycle hire schemes.

The decisions were required as Council had to agree to new bye-laws whilst the management of electric vehicle charging points would be through a

change to the terms of reference for the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee which were set out in the Constitution.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor David Edgar, was in support of these proposals.

The Committee discussed the report and agreed that it should proceed to Council. They also requested that officers provide them with more information on how Members and residents could be better engaged and informed about the decisions and programmes once they were underway.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted and that it be forwarded to Council for decision.

#### **4.4 Council and Committee Meeting Filming Protocol**

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, introduced the report on a proposed filming protocol for Council and Committee meetings. He explained that, whilst the Council welcomed the ability of the press and public to film and otherwise record Council meetings, it was important it was undertaken in a way which did not cause disruption to the meeting and that filming was restricted to those who were actively participating in the meeting.

The Committee welcomed the report and discussed its content, noting a number of issues including:

- The problems caused when members of the press film too close or with bright flashlights.
- The potential for intimidation if too many people are coming up to record meetings.
- The need for officers and chairs to have a set protocol to help guide their decision making, giving confidence and ensuring consistency.
- Whether there was an issue when Members filmed each other.
- The need to learn from parliament and other local authorities as to the content of any protocol.

At the end of the discussion Members agreed to take the draft protocol back to their groups for discussion whilst officers undertook to further their research on options for the protocol content. It was agreed a report would return to a future meeting for final consideration.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted.

#### **4.5 Constitution Review - Directorate Schemes of Delegation Review Update**

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, introduced the update report on the Council's Constitution Review. He reminded Members that Council had

agreed the updated Constitution at its meeting on 17 July 2019. The one large piece of outstanding work was to complete the review of the Directorate Schemes of Delegation.

The Committee hear that some progress had been made but that it had been relatively slow at least in part due to the complexity of the task given the Schemes were last reviewed around ten years ago and so both the structure of the Council and the regulatory framework had both altered significantly.

The Governance Directorate Scheme of Delegation had been published in July and the Committee were pleased to note that the Resources Scheme was also now ready for publication.

Members expressed disappointment that the work was taking so long as the Schemes of Delegation were such an important part of the Council's decision making arrangements. It was requested that a further report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee by which time it was expected that the work would be complete. The Chair asked that the Corporate Directors and other relevant officers be made aware of the Committee's concerns over the lack of progress and their request that the project be completed in time for the next meeting.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted.

#### **4.6 Update on Senior Recruitment**

Amanda Marcus, Divisional Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development, introduced the regular update report on senior officer recruitment.

At the last meeting the Committee had heard updates on recruitment to the posts of Divisional Director Property and Major Programmes and Divisional Director Planning and Building Control and she was pleased to report that both positions had now been filled. This meant that the Place Directorate now had a full management team in place.

The Council were now considering the how best to recruit to the posts of Divisional Director, Finance, Procurement and Audit and Divisional Director Customer Services both within the Resources Directorate. In particular she reported that recruitment efforts in relation to the Finance, Procurement and Audit post had not yet been successful and indications were that the role was too wide at the salary bracket the Council was indicating. Officers were therefore proposing to retain existing temporary arrangements for a few months whilst alternative options were considered.

Members welcomed the completion of recruitment work in the Place Directorate. They discussed the other posts and number a number of points including that:

- Members agreed that it was appropriate to wait to review the Finance, Procurement and Audit post.
- Handover arrangements were in place for the Customer Services project and that the current post holder was contracted to return for up to ten days to cover issues like procurement activity.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted.

**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.

**7. EXEMPT MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the exempt minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on Tuesday 8 October 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

**8. RESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**8.1 Local Authority School Governor Appointments - Restricted Appendices**

The exempt appendix setting out the details of the applicants for the School Governor appointments was noted.

**8.2 Forthcoming Restructures - Staffing Implications**

Ananda Marcus, Divisional Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development, introduced the regular report listing any potential redundancies from forthcoming restructures where the overall severance package was likely to exceed £100,000.

Two roles were listed in the report.

The Committee review the report and agreed the requests as set out.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the two dismissals set out in the report be agreed.
2. To note and approve the severance packages that apply to the dismissals arise as a result of the individual's contractual terms and conditions of employment.

The meeting ended at 7.56 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Helal Uddin  
General Purposes Committee