

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2015  
MP701, 7TH FLOOR, MULBERRY PLACE, 5, CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON E14  
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**Members Present:**

Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Chair)  
Councillor David Edgar (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Craig Aston  
Councillor Aminur Khan  
Councillor Ayas Miah

**Apologies:**

Councillor Abjol Miah  
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed

**Officers Present:**

Debbie Jones	– Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services
Sarah Williams	– Senior Lawyer, Legal Services, Law, Probity and Governance
Hania Franek	– Head of School Governance and Information, Education Social Care & Wellbeing
Elizabeth Dowuona	– Committee Officer (Democratic Services)

**NOTE – AGENDA ORDER**

During the meeting the Committee agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Abjol Miah and Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

In the interest of transparency, the Chair, Councillor Sabina Aktar declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 on the grounds that a number of the

schools applied for were in her ward, Stepney Green Ward. She however stated that she was not acquainted with any of the applicants and was able to consider the applications with an open mind.

### **3. MINUTES**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

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

The report was introduced by Hania Franek, Head of School Governance and Information, who advised that this report and future reports would be unrestricted. She explained that the Director of Law, Probity and Governance, Melanie Clay, had directed that in the drive for greater openness and transparency in decision making, the report, setting out the relevant information from individuals' application would in future be published in the unrestricted part of the agenda. She had asked that Ms Franek investigate the possibility of reviewing the application process so that relevant information from individuals' applications currently in the exempt appendix, might also be published in the unrestricted agenda for future meetings.

Members expressed concerns about the possibility of good candidates being deterred by the public nature of the recruitment process and asked a number of questions in relation to the impact of information being in the public domain during the recruitment process.

Ms Franek in response stated that all personal information about applicants would remain confidential. The contents of the application forms were made known to governing bodies and following their appointment, their names were in the public domain.. She agreed that there was a need for further discussions with the Director of Law and Probity and the relevant officers, als and the Council's education partners to review the process.

Ms Franek tabled an updated report. In her presentation the following points were noted:

#### **Applications to be nominated for re-appointment – 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations**

1. Juliana Iwobi had applied to continue serving as the LA governor at Columbia School. The governing body had discussed the skills sets needed and expressed the wish to reappoint Ms Iwobi because of her extensive experience in HR, in schools and the excellent commitment that she had demonstrated throughout her time as governor to the school. She had undertaken her additional link role of Safeguarding Governor at Columbia diligently and regularly. Her application was attached at Appendix 1 of the restricted part of the agenda.

2. Paul Bargery, a former pupil, had been a local authority governor at Langdon Park School since at least 2002. He was vice-chair of governors, chair of the Behaviour and Safeguarding panel and a SENCo (special educational needs co-ordinator) at a school in south east London. He had skills in SEND (special educational needs and disability) and safeguarding which nobody else on the Governing Body had and also had experience of dealing with disciplinary matters and exclusions, both as a committee member and as chair of a committee. The governing body nominated him for re-appointment because of his specialist knowledge. Mr Bargery had attended Prevent training and was a key member of the Governing Body. The application was attached at Appendix 2 of the restricted part of the agenda.
3. Nicholas Paul MBE was the Chair of Governors at Cayley School where he was completing a four-year term of office as the local authority governor. He had applied to continue to serve on the governing body. The application was supported by the governors. His form was attached at Appendix 3 of the restricted part of the agenda.

#### **Applications to be nominated**

1. Caroline Rani Trabasas had applied to be a governor at Bishop Challoner School. She lived locally and was keen to contribute to her former secondary school. The Chair and Vice Chair advised that they would welcome this appointment. As a former pupil Ms Trabasas was aware of the aims and ethos of the school, and could be a role model for current pupils. Her application was attached at Appendix 4 of the restricted part of the agenda.
2. Adam Atkinson, the vicar of St Peter's church in Bethnal Green, had applied to be nominated for the LA governor vacancy at Oaklands School. The Chair and Head, on behalf of the governing body, had advised that his application was supported and it was hoped that he would join the governing body in the near future. The application form was attached at Appendix 5 of the restricted part of the agenda.
3. Curtis Stanier was interested in joining the governing body of Harry Gosling School. Mr Stanier had visited the school and met with the Chair of governors and Headteacher. He had project management skills and was a trainee accountant which would be helpful in the strategic overview of school's finances. Mr Stanier also had the experience of working with children. In the meeting he attended at the school he showed a lot of interest in the work of the school and the Chair and Head were very keen for him to join the Governing Body. The application form was at Appendix 6 of the restricted part of the agenda.
4. Yonatan Raz-Fridman had applied to be the local authority governor at St Saviour's School. The application was welcomed by governors as

he would bring IT skills, which the Governing Body did not currently have. It was noted that he would also provide ethnic diversity to the Governing Body. He had visited the school on a number of occasions, had met with the Chair and other governors and had observed a governing body meeting. His application form was at Appendix 7 of the restricted part of the agenda.

**RESOLVED -**

(1) That the applicants for re-appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set out in the report be noted.

(2) That the applications for re-nomination as Local Authority Governors as detailed in the report be approved as follows:

- That Juliana Iwobi be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Columbia School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
- That Paul Bargery be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Langdon Park School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.
- That Nicholas Paul be nominated for re-appointment as a governor at Cayely School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.

(3) That the nominations for the appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set out in the report be noted.

- That Caroline Trabasas be nominated for appointment as a governor at Bishop Challoner School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution)\_Regulations.
- That Adam Atkinson be nominated for appointment as a governor at Oaklands School under the 2007 School Governance Regulations.
- That Curtis Stainer be nominated for appointment as a governor at Harry Gosling School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution)\_Regulations.
- That Yonatan Raz-Fridman be nominated for appointment as a governor at St Saviour's School under the 2012 School Governance (Constitution) Regulations.

## **4.2 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

### **RESOLVED –**

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.

## **4.3 LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS EXEMPT APPENDICES**

The appendices were noted.

## **4.4 PREVENT WORK WITH CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS**

The report was introduced by Debbie Jones, Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services and Sarah Williams, Senior Lawyer, Legal Services who outlined the range of work undertaken with schools through the curriculum to challenge radical and extreme views and to promote community cohesion and positive values. Ms Jones described the range of safeguarding work undertaken with children and young people identified as being vulnerable to radicalisation or extremist views. The report also highlighted some of the challenges facing this work.

The main points in the report were outlined as follows:

- That the Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) placed Tower Hamlets as a high risk area and as a result the Council had to respond to a number of incidents under the Terrorism Act, increasing concern about radicalisation and the implementation of the "Prevent Duty" July 2015.
- The Council's work on preventing violent extremism developed out of existing partnerships, approaches and programmes and worked on the principle that "Safeguarding vulnerable people from radicalisation was no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm."
- work on preventing violent extremism was delivered through a multi-agency "Triangle of Intervention" which provided three tiers of intervention: namely preventative teaching approaches, targeted early interventions and specialist responses.
- There had been ongoing development work in schools over a long period of time using a range of teaching resources and support materials as part of its ongoing commitment to all schools. A mapping tool has also been designed to support schools in identifying which

aspects of the curriculum could support PREVENT and Community Cohesion aims in each year group.

- Guidance and training had been provided for schools on their role in preventing extremism, amending their safeguarding policies and highlighting vulnerable young people. The guidance included sections on:
  - Safeguarding policy
  - Staff training and awareness raising
  - Reporting
  - Interventions with individuals
  - Prevention through the curriculum and pastoral work
  - Visitors policies and use of school premises
  - Commissioning practice
  - Responsibilities, including governors
  - Internet security
  - Triangle of intervention
- There had also been an ongoing programme of central training for school safeguarding governors and designated Child Protection leads and tailor made training is available for all schools including independent schools. This included the Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent programme (WRAP) and sessions on policy guidance and referrals. These types of training sessions had created opportunities for discussions leading to practical solutions to difficult issues. An example was the dangers of online radicalisation which resulted in schools running assemblies highlighting the risks of on-line grooming.
- Head teachers were briefed regularly about PREVENT issues through Heads Bulletins and in the Director's meetings which led to follow up support to Heads and a checklist for all schools to ensure that their safeguarding policies now met the Prevent guidance and the new "Prevent Duty" (July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015)
- There had been targeted work with individuals and schools through the Social Inclusion Panel (SIP), a senior level multi-agency panel to support vulnerable children and families requiring early intervention, through referrals of young people under the age of 18, and families thought to be at risk of radicalisation and extremism. This included those being managed through Social Care interventions and referrals from both schools and health services.
- Targeted work had also been undertaken with schools where concerns had been raised by teachers. For example, following the flight of three girls to Syria in February 2015, a multi-agency action plan was designed with the school where the girls attended, which included social mapping and risk assessment to identify those children thought to be most at risk of flight, and those vulnerable in other ways. Different tiers of intervention were put in place including assemblies, Question and Answer sessions, group discussions and individual support

programmes, with input from Children's Social Care, the Police and Channel religious intervention providers where appropriate. This created opportunities to develop innovative work such as widening the remit of Channel intervention providers to facilitate group sessions in targeted schools and working with staff to help them discuss 'difficult questions' and contentious issues. This initiative was to empower staff to handle situations rather than rely on outside interventions.

- A Multi-Agency, Partnership Approach and work with Parents, had been undertaken, enabling partners such as schools, mosques, health services, the police, social care and other agencies to work collaboratively and provide a swift response to the challenges encountered by PREVENT work. For example:
  - A pamphlet was issued through schools and mosques at Friday Prayers, providing coherent safeguarding messages to parents. It was well received locally and had been picked up by police and other boroughs as a model of good practice.
  - Parent support sessions including cyber safety and the risks of radicalisation were available to all schools from the Parental Engagement Team (PET). PREVENT messages had been embedded into the parenting courses with training for Parent Support Partners and school based Parent / Family Support Practitioners (The Home Office recently agreed to extend funding for parenting work.)
  - Over the summer holidays PET provided a helpline for parents seeking support and Targeted Youth Support offered to provide case work with young people vulnerable to radicalisation on leaving school.
  - Given that those who leave to travel to Syria show few signs of vulnerability and that the online grooming process was thought to be effective, the importance of promoting an alternative narrative and resilience through the curriculum was key. An education conference was provided showcasing good practice and specific work had been developed with 6<sup>th</sup> form students for their age group. A further conference to share the results of the curriculum working party had been planned for March 2016.
  - The Humanities Education Centre had provided guidance on British Values and how these can be approached from a Global Learning perspective.
  - The Attendance Welfare Service provided packs to all the Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools and Free Schools annually, containing all the national and local guidance and procedures on safeguarding and referral procedures /contacts for non-attendance and for children missing from education.
  - There was close work with police officers from PREVENT, Channel and Counter Terrorism who are involved in both training and interventions. Channel intervention providers have undertaken creative and high quality de-radicalisation work, working with individuals and groups.

- The SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) lead had raised awareness of the Prevent agenda and explored how spirituality and Social, Moral, and Cultural Development could support the Prevent agenda;
- Phase two of the Troubled Families Programme (2015-20) also had an emphasis on radicalisation and extremism.
- Prevent work was also now linked into the Council's first partnership strategy on Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence: a three year strategy reporting to the Community Safety Partnership Board.
- PREVENT work was reported to the PREVENT Programme Board, a cross borough multi-agency group looking at work within both adults and children's services.

The Committee noted that the Home Office provided project support funding for Prevent to work on the core objectives of the national Prevent Strategy 2011. These objectives were noted as follows:

- 1) Undermining extremist ideology
- 2) Supporting vulnerable individuals
- 3) Strengthening institutions

The Home Office also funded a number of workshop opportunities for schools from an approved list of providers and they were currently funding the following posts: Education Officer, Parental Engagement Officer, Community Engagement Officer and Project Manager. This funding was currently secured until March 2016.

Members welcomed and thanked officers for the report which was considered to be thorough and reflected well the key issues. They asked a number of questions and made various comments including the following:

- how the Council measured the success of the various programmes and projects to address the risk of radicalisation and extremism of children;
- the security of Home Office funding for Prevent work in future years;
- the provision of training for parents in the monitoring of children being tutored at home;
- the provision of training for school governors in the tackling of the risk of radicalisation and extremism of children;
- the mode of advertising of parents support on the tackling of risk of radicalisation and extremism of children;
- the interaction between the Council and the Police;
- lessons learnt from the incident relating to the three girls from Bethnal Green Academy who fled to join the Islamic State Group in Syria and the impact on the Prevent Work by the Council;
- how incidents are monitored; and
- the mode of advertising information of risk of radicalisation and extremism at youth centres.

In response to their questions, the Committee noted that:



- Success was measured by the impact of referrals and work with young people under the age of 18 thought to be at risk of radicalisation and extremism. The Authority had monitored a number of families in which the views of the parents were the source of concern for the children, for example families where a parent has already been convicted of terrorist offences. Two years ago Prevent referrals were low and the Police data suggested that there should be more referrals than we were receiving: There had currently been an increase in referrals for early intervention casework to support children who might be vulnerable to extremist messages.

There were currently 40 active cases under active monitoring at any one time compared to 4-5 cases two years ago. Referrals came predominantly from schools but they currently also come from Social Care and Health Services. In addition, schools now felt sufficiently confident to regularly send concerns to Council officers for advice and guidance.

Whilst referrals did include those children at risk of radicalisation from far right groups or white supremacist views, most current referrals related to extreme Islamic views and the risk of flights to Syria, because this was a real, present and immediate threat. A significant proportion of those referred were children or young people who because of their special needs, were extremely vulnerable to manipulation and required protective programmes. A growing proportion was noted as children of convicted TACT offenders who may have been subjected to ongoing radicalisation throughout their upbringing.

A wide variety of agencies now actively supported the plans: schools, parenting services, youth support, information technology advisor, Special Educational Needs and Behaviour Support services, anti-bullying advisor, police teams (Channel and Prevent), CAMHS, school health, Youth Offending, Social Care. Outcomes for individuals were monitored until the cases were no longer a concern. Where more active engagement was required, children were promptly placed on protection plans or made wards of court to ensure their protection. Overall a robust approach had been taken at all tiers of intervention with open and frank discussions with parent groups about the safeguarding issues.

The Committee heard that the level of awareness, preparedness and standard, in terms of efficiency and effective action taken by the joint working of the variety of agencies in the voluntary and public sector was a testament to a partnership success story.

The Committee further heard that Tower Hamlets had become a leader in the preventing of violent extremism, with other Councils looking to taking advice, guidance and training from its specialist teams in Social

Services and Children's Services and Legal Services. The Council had received commendation from the Home Office, having been impressed by the quality of information material produced by the Council and the indirect work with the young.

On 13 November 2015, Tower Hamlets' legal department organised a national conference, 'Radicalisation: safeguarding and the family courts' which was sponsored by the Home Office and attended by over 60 local authorities, as well as police, CAFCASS officers and other agencies from around the country, to share good practice. This included well received presentations from Tower Hamlets' CSC, education and legal teams.

- The Committee noted officers' assurances that Home Office funding was expected to continue in view of ongoing risks of terrorism and the need for interventions on this regard.
- It was noted that given that the Council remained responsible for safeguarding of all children whether they are in the independent or maintained sector or not, guidance in respect of Prevent and Safeguarding was now sent to all sectors; independent schools had been included in invitations to training and conferences on Safeguarding and Prevent as well as to participate in the Prevent curriculum development work. This included families who Home Educated (and tuition agencies that support them). The Home Education Steering group regularly assessed the vulnerability of families and intervened more proactively with those cases where there were reasons for concern. There had been a rigorous approach to intervention when concerns had been identified, including supporting the closure of inappropriate tuition services where necessary. At the same time the Parental Engagement Team had started a support group for Home Educators to enable the Council to share good practice in areas of concern such as cyber safety and curriculum work.
- On the question of how parents support was advertised, the Committee noted that Parent support sessions and programmes including cyber safety and the risks of radicalisation have been provided for Cass and BGA by the Parental Engagement Team (PET) and were available to all schools. Prevent messages had been embedded into the parenting courses running in the Borough and training had been provided for Parent Support Partners and school based Parent / Family Support Practitioners. The Home Office recently agreed to extend funding for parenting work. The PET provided a helpline for parents alongside Parenting Discussion Groups for parents seeking support over the summer holidays and Targeted Youth Support were offering to take on case work with young people at risk of radicalisation on leaving school or in transition to 6<sup>th</sup> form after schools close, which may be a particularly vulnerable time. These support programmes were advertised through leaflets, posters, information packs mosques, community centres and schools.

- On the issue of the interaction between the Council and the Police, it was noted that the strategy of enabling partners such as schools, mosques, health services, the police, social care and other agencies to work collaboratively meant that effective engagement was critical to ensure a swift response to the challenges encountered by PREVENT work. The sharing of information was equally important and relevant information had been picked up through criminal investigation although the key challenges were in safeguarding work, the professional network and the issue of the extent to which information on case management, learning and analysis could be shared :
  - Where the views or information gathered by professionals without sufficient evidence, may cause unwarranted police involvement;
  - The evidence may be soft intelligence or may not be able to be shared on the direction of the Police or Courts, the probability of extremism may be low but the impact on children and others was extremely high.

It was noted that Tower Hamlets had developed a layered strategic plan where there were high level strategic meetings, national intelligence strategic meetings to share information to ensure co-ordinated approach, to ensure that schools were involved, that the right level of information was sent or shared with the right people at the right time and that the Council could be trusted with sensitive information disclosed by the police and not to sabotage the security of people or operations.

- The Committee noted there was a duty on all Heads and Governing Bodies with regard to Safeguarding and Prevent policies and to therefore participate in the development work in all cases. Albeit not a requirement at present to take up training in this area, all governing bodies recognise the need to do so to assist them in their roles and duties. Specific training had been targeted at Governors who held the safeguarding responsibility.
- With respect to lessons learnt from the incident relating to the three girls from Bethnal Green Academy who fled to join the Islamic State Group in Syria and the impact on the Prevent Work by the Council, the Committee noted that given that those who leave to travel to Syria showed few signs of vulnerability and that the online grooming process was thought to be effective:
  - the importance of promoting an alternative narrative and resilience through the curriculum and training was key.
  - It was important for the police and all partners to kept abreast of information on the internet to extremists and police intelligence on guidance on the internet such as online grooming process, how to travel without drawing attention to oneself, clothing and behaviours to avoid police suspicion or detection.
  - Partners had learnt about things to look out for, not to expect any surprises and not to take anything for granted but be vigilant

and be robust in their approach, cross checking of facts constantly.

- The Council had learnt the need for clear communication between partnerships and friendship groups.
- That the Council had learnt to ensure that the above points were made clear in training.
- That the Council had learnt to ensure that good practice was shared by all.

Following discussion, it was:-

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Sabina Akhtar  
General Purposes Committee