

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 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 Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Shad Chowdhury

Other Councillors Present:

Apologies:

Councillor Faroque Ahmed
Councillor Amina Ali
Councillor Denise Jones

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Officers Present:

Runa Basit	– (Head of School Governance & Information)
Asmat Hussain	– (Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Matthew Mannion	– (Head of Democratic Services, Governance)
Amanda Harcus	– (Divisional Director of HR)
Simmi Yesmin	– (Democratic Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest.

2. MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25th June 2019, were agreed as a correct record.

3. WORK PLAN

The work plan of future agenda items was received and noted by the Committee.

It was noted that there had been some additions to the work plan since the publication of the agenda, and the following reports would be added to the agenda for 10 December meeting;

- Director Schemes of Delegations
- Financial Regulations and Procedure Rules
- Draft Filming Protocol

RESOLVED

1. That the Work Plan be noted.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

The order of business for the meeting was varied for procedural convenience but all items are shown in their original agenda, for ease of reference.

4.1 Polling Districts and Polling Places Review

Mathew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services introduced the report and explained that all local authorities had to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every four years and this time round the review for Tower Hamlets had to be completed by 31 January 2020.

It was noted that the Council was seeking views on any changes that relevant stakeholders considered were required to the existing polling districts and polling places to ensure that these continue to reflect local requirements. It was further

noted that the electorate in some of the polling districts in Tower Hamlets had changed significantly in recent years and was likely to change in the future.

Mr Mannion highlighted the consultation work to date and the engagement work that continues until the end of the consultation period. The timetable for the review was noted and The Committee was informed that the Head of Electoral Services had received requests from Councillors requesting visits around the Borough to review district areas. It was noted that the Head of Electoral Services welcomed this initiative and was happy to accompany Councillors on walkabouts to review district areas.

It noted that a further report on the review would be brought to the next General Purposes Committee meeting in December 2019 and it was **AGREED** that the report would include a comparison between the findings

and outcomes from the previous polling districts and polling places review compared to the consultation process this time round.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the ongoing review of the polling districts and polling places in Tower Hamlets be noted.
2. The equalities consideration as set out in the report be noted.

4.2 Post Election Review

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director Governance and Monitoring Officer, introduced the report, which detailed the post-election review following the European Parliamentary Elections held on 23 May 2019.

It was noted that despite the late announcement, the Council was able to secure a venue, recruit staff and run a successful election. She highlighted the challenges that were faced, in particular the large ballot papers and overseas postal votes and the time it took them to be delivered and returned. A RAG rating review was undertaken for every polling place and a police officer was only stationed in those premises where it was considered necessary. Following the Poll it was considered that this had worked but this would not set a precedent with higher profile national elections. The specific issues and the lessons learnt in relation to Tower Hamlets were highlighted and the measures and controls that had been implemented to address these were noted.

Ms Hussain made reference to the report on the European Parliamentary Elections published by The Electoral Commission which supported all local authorities for their work during the elections. It noted that the web-link to the report would be circulated to all Members of the Committee for information.

Members welcomed the report.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.

4.3 Local Authority Governor Applications

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the report, which detailed applications for Local Authority Governor appointments for five Tower Hamlets maintained schools.

It was noted that the applicant for Guardian Angel's RC Primary School already served on three other governing boards but the department recognised that there were people who had the skills and time to serve effectively on a number of boards and did not want to restrict the ability to do so.

The Committee considered the report, and agreed to nominate the applicants for the school governor positions.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the following applicants for appointment to Local Authority School Governor positions as set below be approved;

Harbinger Primary School- John Bradshaw
Wellington Primary School – Clifford Akins
Marion Richardson Primary School – Mark Own Lloyd
George Green School – James Kilmartin
Guardian Angel's RC Primary School – Martin Tune

4.4 Report on Equality Breakdown of LA Governors

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the report, which summarised the breakdown of equality information and demographic of Local Authority Governors currently in the borough. She explained that the current data held by the Local Authority did not include all equality information for governors as some governors had opted not to provide this information to Governor Services.

Ms Basit explained that Governor Services was working on promoting diversity on Governing Boards in Tower Hamlets, however this was a national issue and according to recent surveys, only 4% of school governors and trustees were from an ethnic minority. Ms Basit highlighted the upcoming planned activities and events to support Local Authority Governors.

In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- That more needs to be done to promote diversity and increase a wider representation of the community.
- Further work was planned to promote diversity on Boards and Governor Services would be working with National Governance Association and Inspiring Governance to support this work.
- That following the work undertaken to collate ethnicity data – only 25% of the forms were returned and there was also one complaint, as there had been a general resistance to provide personal data.

- Governor Services were currently working on training, retaining and building skills sets for new and existing governors.

It was Agreed that further update report would be brought to a future GP Committee meeting (February 2020 meeting).

Members extended their thanks to Mr Basit for her continued work on this. .

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the equality information be noted.
2. That the next steps to further improve diversity on Governing Boards across the borough be noted.
3. That it be noted that the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 states that Local Authority governor is —
 - (a) nominated by the local authority; and
 - (b) appointed as a governor by the governing body having, in the opinion of the governing body, met any eligibility criteria that they have set.

4.5 Revised Constitution - Update

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services introduced the report and explained that following the agreement of Full Council in 17 July the updated Constitution had been published. Council had agreed the revised constitution and agreed that officers report any small changes made during that process to General Purposes Committee for noting or agreement as required. Mr Mannion briefly took members through the minor amendments to the Council's Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules.

It was noted that a detailed report on the Financial Regulations and Procedure Rules and Director Schemes of Delegations would be brought to the next GP Committee meeting.

Members extended their thanks to Mr Mannion for his continued work on the Constitution Review

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED:

1. The report be noted.

2. The minor amendments undertaken by officers whilst publishing the Constitution be noted.
3. The proposed updates to the Council Procedure Rules and Finance Procedure Rules be noted.

4.6 Senior Recruitment Update

Amanda Harcus, Divisional Director, HR, presented the report which provided an update on recent senior recruitment activity.

The Committee noted:

- That the Divisional Director, Housing, Place Directorate, had started their post.
- That there were three Divisional Director posts to be recruited to over the next three months.
- Concerns that the post for Divisional Director Planning and Building Control had been vacant for a considerable amount of time – it was noted that not enough candidates had applied during the first recruitment process and therefore the post had to be re-advertised.
- Members extended their thanks to Amanda Harcus and the HR Team for all their work on the recruitment process.

Accordingly, the Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED to:

1. Note the current position on the recruitment to senior management vacancies in the Council structure.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

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

The exempt minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 31 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

8. RESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Local Authority Governor Applications - Restricted Appendices

The appendices for Local Authority Governor Applications were considered during item 4.4 on the unrestricted part of the agenda.

8.2 Forthcoming Restructures - Staffing Implications

The Chair Moved and it was:-

RESOLVED to

1. Agree and approve the recommendations in the report.

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Helal Uddin
General Purposes Committee