

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.45 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2024****COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL****Members Present in Person:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

Officers Present in Person:

Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Ashraf Ali	(Acting Director of Public Realm)
Yasmin Ali	(Development Project Manager, Place)
Simon Baxter	(Interim Director Public Realm)
Sam Harney	(Mayor's Political Advisor)
Fiona Heyland	(Head of Waste Strategy Policy and Procurement, Public Realm)
Louise Houston	(Environmental Services Improvement Team Leader)
Kamran Rashid	Interim Project Manager
Steve Reddy	(Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Karen Swift	(Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))
Richard Williams	Business Manager Operational PR

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

John Harrison	Interim Director of Finance, Procurement and Audit
Richard Ward	(Interim Head of Contracts and Procurement)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were none.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 31 January 2024 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, announced that:

- The Council's transformation joinery continued apace, and it continued to perform well. It had been shortlisted for 3 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards. Results and further details would be circulated.
- The Transformation Advisory Board (TAB) had met earlier this week. It had reviewed the proposed Action Plan following the recent LGA Peer Review report.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions**

None.

5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

None.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**6.1 Planning for School Places 2024/25 Review and Recommendations**

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) introduced the report that presented the annual review of the council's planning for school places. It informed Cabinet on the latest position and key factors influencing the borough's pupil population change and the impact on projected pupil numbers for Tower Hamlets schools. Councillor Talukdar explained the steps being taken to manage the sufficiency and sustainability of mainstream school places,

alongside the medium to longer term delivery of places for children and young people with SEND.

Steve Reddy, Interim Corporate Director - Children's Services provided further detail. Steve explained how the plans for the Institute of Academic Excellence aligned with ongoing work to plan for school places.

The Mayor and Cabinet members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet notes:

1. the factors influencing pupil population change in Tower Hamlets;
2. the current position on the provision of school places in the borough;
3. the projected demand for school places in future years;
4. the steps being taken to manage the sufficiency and sustainability of school places in accordance with the council's school organisation strategy.
5. latest position on SEND, current provision and sufficiency planning;
6. the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 5.

6.2 Determination of Admissions Arrangements for 2025/26

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) introduced the report that presented recommendations for the Mayor in Cabinet to agree the Local Authority's school admission arrangements for Tower Hamlets Community Schools and those schools for whom the Local Authority acts as the admission authority. He explained the proposed arrangements included a change to Year 7 admissions, with introduction of a new testing method for schools that use people ability banding. Councillor Talukdar also provided detail on the public consultation between October 2023 and January 2024. He stressed the need for a new approach to public engagement to secure more responses from parents and schools in future consultation exercises.

Steve Reddy, Interim Corporate Director Childrens Services provided further detail and explained that consultation responses were overwhelmingly positive to the proposed changes.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the report and proposed new arrangements. They briefly discussed the appeal arrangements currently in place and expressed dissatisfaction with reported cases of parents not being offered one of their preferred schools. The Lead Member welcomed the comments and offered to provide a briefing to any Cabinet members who wished to know more about the application and appeal process for school admissions.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agree the Local Authority Relevant Area (geographical area) for admissions purposes.
2. Agree the admission policy for admission to Community Nursery Schools/Classes in 2025/26, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
3. Agree the admission policy for admission to Community Primary Schools in 2025/26, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
4. Agree the admission policy for admission to Community Secondary Schools in 2025/26 as set out in Appendix C to the report.
5. Agree the schemes for co-ordinating admissions to the Reception Year and Year 7 for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix D to the report.
6. Agree the scheme for co-ordinating 'In-Year' Admissions for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix E to the report.
7. Agree the planned admission number (PAN) for each school in Tower Hamlets in 2026/26, as set out in Appendix F to the report.
8. Note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report.

6.3 Reduction and Recycling Plan Progress Report - Quarter 3, 2023

Councillor Kabir Hussain (Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency) introduced the report that reported progress on the Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) 2023-2025 approved by Cabinet in September 2023. Councillor Hussain explained how the cross-cutting action plan drawn from the Council's Strategic Plan and Tower Hamlets Waste Management Strategy was helping to deliver changes. Finally, Councillor Hussain summarised some of the recent communication and engagement activity which it was hoped would help to reverse a slight decline in the recycling rate from the previous quarter.

Simon Baxter, Corporate Director Communities, provided further detail. Simon asked the Mayor to recognise that recycling is a challenging area, but an improvement plan was in place and he was confident it would secure improvements. Simon explained how the nature of the borough presented unique challenges to recycling performance. He stressed there was much the Council could do to target recycling infrastructure and behaviour among residents in its own properties, but that much of the influence for this rested with social landlords, so he was drafting a letter on behalf of the Mayor to the Secretary of State, inviting them into the borough to see the unique challenges and also requesting that the government consider introducing a statutory instrument to require all landlords (RSLs and private) and land owners to provide infrastructure for recycling and to include recycling provisions within their tenancy and lease agreements. He indicated should this be unsuccessful, the Council could consider introducing bylaws to achieve the same outcome.

Ashraf Ali (Head of Highways & Transportation), Richard Williams, (Head of Operations), Fiona Heyland, (Head of Waste Strategy Policy and Procurement, Public Realm) and Louise Houston, (Environmental Services Improvement Team Leader) provided further details on the work undertaken, planned and being considered to improve recycling performance in the borough.

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, welcomed the proposed action plan and drew the Mayor and Cabinet's attention to proposed action #5, which officers explained was a proposed options paper on policy changes and introduction of new powers to enforce against undesirable behaviour. Stephen asked that this work be expedited and its timescale reviewed.

Following a wide-ranging discussion on matters relating to recycling and waste, the following potential solutions were voiced by Cabinet members:

- A focus on quick wins to realise the additional investment to be agreed as part of the 24/25 budget, is preferred.
- Communications – continue work with partners including schools and faith groups to promote good behaviours. It was noted young people play a key role to influence recycling behaviour in households, but measuring the impact of communications work with schools was very challenging. A children-focussed online information resource could assist with this.
- More emphasis on BAME media outlets could provide additional value.
- Garden waste – many individual house residents had yet to opt-in to the collections. Options were being explored for ground floor flats collections.
- Improvements to the Council's online waste and recycling information, which Cabinet members noted was very good.
- Smarter joined-up working between the Council and front line roles on estates such as caretaking services in council-managed homes.
- Incentivisation or reward schemes.
- Greater use of recycling champions.
- Food redistribution schemes, perhaps including app-based technology.
- Working with housing partners and RSLs and leveraging influence from Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF) to create synergies.

The Mayor welcomed the report and the innovative suggestions from officers and Cabinet members. He stressed that cleanliness of the borough was a major concern of residents and a key priority for his administration. He expressed hope that following the action plan and accompanying additional investment to be agreed at the Budget Council meeting, recycling rates would quickly improve.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025, Quarter 3 2023 Progress Report.

6.4 Beatrice Tate School Expansion - 41 Southern Grove, London E3 4PX

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) introduced the report that requested approval for budgetary increase and award of contract to enable a permanent extension to the Beatrice Tate school to provide additional places for disabled pupils.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the report and proposals, which they indicated would provide much-needed educational facilities as well as housing provision on the Southern Grove site.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves an increase in budget from £4,050,000 to £6,498,047 from the Higher Needs Capital Provision Allocations (HNCPA) grant and Education funding sources as set out in the details of the report.
2. Approves the contract award to Alexander James Limited for the construction of the extension for the tendered contract sum of £5,503,122 as recommended by the Employers Agent and set out in the Commercial Price Evaluation Report (Appendix 1 to the report).
3. Notes the Equalities Impact Assessment as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

A motion to exclude the press and public was not required.

9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business

Nil items.

10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nil items.

11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items.

12. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 6.45 p.m.

Mayor Lutfur Rahman