

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**HELD AT 2.30 P.M. ON MONDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2024**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL**

**Members Present in Person:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	(Chair)
Richard Penn	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Steve Bullock DL	(Independent non-executive member)
Martin Esom	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Mahera Ruby	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Kathleen McCarthy	(Independent non-executive member)
Alison Griffin	(Independent non-executive member)
Kate Herbert	(Independent non-executive member)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)

**Officers Present in Person:**

Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
Amy Jackson	(Head of Mayor's Office)
Kirsty Roberts	(Strategy & Policy Lead)
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services)

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Sir Steve Bullock took the Chair for the introductory items and noted apologies from:

- Sir George Iacobescu (Independent Non-Executive Board Member)
- Hira Islam (Independent Non-Executive Board Member)
- Stephen O'Brien (Independent Non-Executive Board Member)
- Denise Radley (Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Health and Adult Social Care)
- Robin Beattie (Acting Director of Strategy, Transformation and Improvement)

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 11 December 2023 were agreed.

Matters Arising:

It was reported that the Partnership Executive had set up a task and finish group which will report to the Board at the next meeting on a proposed new structure for partnership working across the borough.

Richard Penn reported that he had now met with almost all Board Members and was looking to provide a paper on the outcome of those meetings. There had been some very useful discussions on how the Board could develop over time.

### **3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action plan**

The item was initially introduced by Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, who highlighted that the Peer Review team would be returning in August and the intention was to have delivered most of the actions on the plan by then.

The Action Plan was a living document which would be regularly updated.

Kirsty Roberts, Strategy and Improvement Lead, then took Members through the Action Plan in more detail using the presentation set out in the agenda pack.

In particular, she highlighted:

- That the review had been a wide-ranging and rigorous process.
- In relation to the Action Plan some significant actions had already been completed such as those around the accounts and the Annual Governance Statement and initiating a review of the Mayor's Office structure.
- There were four key longer-term findings around the Medium Term Financial Strategy, a workforce strategy, relations with partners and accelerating the People First Transformation programme.

Finally, the Board were asked to consider which items it would like to have more detail on as future agenda items in particular where the specific expertise of Board Members could be valuable.

The Board then discussed the report noting a number of issues/suggestions including:

- Good progress had already been made and so it was important that the Action Plan remained a live document to monitor progress over time.
- The action plan had been to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and officers were exploring which other Committees could be relevant/useful (including Council).
- The Women's Commission action point was welcome.
- The Board had an opportunity to be a useful discussion space for some of the areas of work.

- It was important for the Council to think about which areas to prioritise and what longer-term strategies would need to be developed. Think about an overarching vision.
- Housing, homelessness and the Housing Revenue Account was an important area for the Board to review.

Actions:

- Board Members to feedback which areas of work they would like to see in more detail at a future Board meeting (especially where they have specific skills/knowledge that could help). Officers to use these to help plan future agendas.
- Officers to explore how to best present Housing/HRA/homelessness as an area for review by the Board.

### **3.2 Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director of Resources, took the Board through the presentation on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Board noted:

- The headlines at the start of the presentation including the balanced budget position, protection of statutory services and risk mitigation measures.
- The Council had a full three-year plan MTFS.
- Significant savings of around £43million had been identified. Contracts with third parties in particular was seen as a potential area of significant savings.
- Income generation was an important focus for the Council, but significant risk weighting mechanisms had been introduced to balance opportunities against the risk of under delivery.
- Budgeted use of £20million reserves in the current financial year had been reduced to £1million.
- Investing to save was an important opportunity.
- There must be a clear thread to the Mayor's priorities.
- The three key risk areas were commercial income; delivering the plan and agreed savings; and housing/homelessness.

The Mayor noted that there had been 9 months of hard work to prepare this year's budget and he thanks officers and Members for their hard work on creating a solid report. He welcomed any comments from the Board.

The Board then discussed the presentation and noted a number of points including:

- The Council had yet to look at its technology strategy which could potentially be transformational.
- There are normal political restrictions on how and when to make changes to services.
- The Board suggested caution be shown on the level to which income generation will be successful and that the Council had to ensure it had

the right capacity to support such initiatives. It was noted that this area would be regularly monitored.

Action:

- That updates on the Medium Term Financial Strategy be brought back to the Board as appropriate and that these should look particularly at any identified high-risk areas.

### **3.3 Income Generation**

The Board were then taken through the presentation set out in the agenda on Income Generation.

The update highlighted a number of points including:

- Increasing income generation was a key priority in relation to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- It was hoped that the specific expertise of Board Members could be really valuable in helping the Council achieve these goals.
- The Council would implement a commercialisation strategy.
- Early focus including on venues (such as the Registrars at St George's); Idea Stores; better use of the town hall and other property assets; and on arts, parks and events.

The Board were particularly asked to consider what advice they could provide based on their own experiences.

The Board discussed the report and highlighted a number of issues to consider including:

- It would be helpful to see a list of ideas considered high risk (or low risk).
- Leisure centres should be a particular focus as ensuring they offered the right facilities and programmes could create a significant income stream. A lot of work was needed to ensure leisure insourcing would be a success.
- Drive best value for the community – it isn't just about 'profit'.
- Make sure that the Council's support services are set up to quickly support new income generation ideas. It was too easy for delays to be caused by administration and processes.
- Speak to local organisations about what would work for them.
- Make income generation a part of every officers' priorities.
- It was important that Members of the Council understood what this meant for how the Council would operate.

Actions:

- Officers to provide the Board with more information on the Income Generation project, particularly around identified high risk areas.
- Further reports to be presented to the group in future as appropriate in particular around key areas such as leisure.
- Board Members to consider how they can support this work.

**4. AOB AND CLOSE**

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman  
Transformation Advisory Board