

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.45 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 10 JULY 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 Musthak Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Enterprise, Skills and Growth)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Kamrul Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Equalities and Social Inclusion)

**Other Councillors Present in Person:**

Councillor Jahed Choudhury	Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
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**Officers Present in Person:**

John Ainsworth	(Senior Performance Improvement Analyst)
Simon Baxter	(Corporate Director Communities)
Sam Brown	(Acting Head of Facilities Management)
Ayesha Hakim Rahman	(Acting Deputy Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Amy Jackson	(Head of Mayor's Office)
Abul Kalam	(Service Manager, Housing Management & Procurement)
Ahsan Khan	(Chief Accountant)
Nicola Klinger	(Housing Companies Manager)
Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
Damian Patchell	Markets Manager
Paul Patterson	(Interim Corporate Director Housing And Regeneration)
Doug Plumer	(Data Analytics, Business Intelligence & Performance Lead)

Layla Richards	(Director of Commissioning & Culture)
Karen Swift	(Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)
Jill Bayley	(Head of Legal Safeguarding)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))
Ashraf Ali	(Director of Public Realm)

**Officers In Attendance Virtually:**

John Harrison	(Director of Corporate Efficiency)
Robin Beattie	(Acting Director of Strategy Innovation and Transformation)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Steve Reddy, Corporate Director of Childrens Services.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES****RESOLVED:**

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

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR**

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, provided a brief update on the running of the General Election, 4 July 2024. He asked the Mayor and Cabinet to recognise the effort of all staff involved in polling, the count and related processes to ensure the smooth and professional running of the election. He would be writing to all involved to personally thank them for their efforts.

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

The Mayor welcomed the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Jahed Choudhury, to the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Jahed Choudhury informed the Mayor and Cabinet of the recent work undertaken by the Committee. The Committee had:

- Considered the provisional outturn Budget Monitoring report for 2023/24. The committee's comments were on: overspending or

underspending and the implications in this financial year; debt and borrowing; future projections; and progress on the investment in waste services.

- Considered the year-end report strategic delivery performance report for 2023/24. The Committee were disappointed to see a number of red rags in Q4
- Considered the Corporate restructuring report. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be engaged in proposals and would consider how it can continue to do so.
- Received an update on the Women Safety Action Plan following the Scrutiny Review recommendations put forward in 2023. Members were pleased to see the progress of their recommendations
- Discussed and considered the scrutiny portfolio areas, the work programme for this year and its improvement plan.

Councillor Jahed Choudhury also informed updated the Mayor and Cabinet on the Call-In the Committee heard on the decision to extend AEG's licence to occupy Victoria Park for major commercial events until 2027. OSC had heard testimonies from Friends of Victoria Park. Members of OSC felt that the Council must ensure that any decision to deliver events in Victoria Park does not restrict access for residents and that appropriate steps are taken to mitigate any disturbance they may encounter from events in the Park. The Committee endorsed the original decision and highlighted the opportunity to bring more cultural events to the borough, increase expenditure in the local economy, and generate income for council services as the main reasons for this.

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

None.

## **6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **6.1 Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Provisional Outturn**

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living introduced the report that provided the provisional outturn position for the General Fund revenue, capital and HRA capital accounts for 2023/24.

The Mayor welcomed the report and expressed his thanks to the Lead Member, the Corporate Director of Resources, Chief Executive and all members and officers involved with helping secure an outturn within budgets despite significant challenges and in-year pressures that many councils across the country had failed to contain.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the council's position and consequent provisional outturn as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, against General Fund Budget (£0.3m

underspend) Dedicated Schools Grant Budget (£1.5m overspend), Housing Revenue Account (£5.2m overspend).

2. Notes the actions taken to date to address the demand pressures as set out in Appendix A, Section 3.2.
3. Notes the progress made against the 2023/24 savings targets, based at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
4. Notes the council's provisional outturn position against General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programme approved budgets for 2023/24, based on provisional outturn at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
5. Approve the net slippages of £8.9m and net overspends of £1.7m across the General Fund capital programme and net slippages of £10.6m and net underspends of £0.9m across the Housing Revenue Account capital programme as detailed in section 3.18 and 3.19 below.
6. Note that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from this report, as set out in Section 4.

## **6.2 Record of Corporate Directors Actions 2023/24 Q4**

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living introduced the noting report on Corporate Director's Actions taken under the Constitution requirement that states that Corporate Director's Actions in respect of contracts over £100,000 must be reported to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet

1. Notes the Record of Corporate Directors' Actions set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **6.3 Procurement Transformation Programme**

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living introduced the report that provided a progress update on the Procurement Transformation Programme to significant procurement failures and historical challenges that have left the Council exposed to undue risk and service failure and to ensure full and exemplary compliance with the new Procurement Act 2023 and the NHS Provider Selection Regime.

Further to paragraph 3.5, the Chief Executive expressed his thanks to the Corporate Director, Resources and her team preparing this at pace.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the report which they felt modernised the Council's financial and procurement processes whilst addressing many of the historical failings on previous administration which had left the Council exposed to serious risks.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Note the high-level changes to procurement regulations as derived from the Procurement Act 2023, outlined in section 3.15 of the report.
2. Note the changes to procurement regulations for Health and Social Care contracts as derived from the Provider Selection Regime (PSR) which came into effect in January 2024, outlined in section 3.10 of the report.
3. Support the transformation plan to redefine the Procurement function across the Council; to be an exemplary model of best practice and better enable compliance with the new government legislations.
4. Support the proposed hub-and-spoke structure for managing procurement, to align with the Council's draft Target Operating Model. This restructuring aims to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, whilst maximising value for the Council.

#### **6.4 Annual Strategic Delivery & Performance Report 23/24**

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

The Mayor introduced the item which provided a Quarter 4 monitoring update of the Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 performance measures and annual deliverables to give a clear understanding of the council's current performance.

Officers provided an update on ongoing work to address the measures marked as red (outside target) in the report.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the discussion by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this matter the previous evening, which they felt was productive and rigorous. The Mayor and Cabinet noted that several of the underperforming measures related to delivery of housing and expressed their disappointment at the impact on the borough's homeless and vulnerable residents. They explained how external market trends were believed to be shifting which would, combined with new process and dedicated infrastructure, see a redress in the performance and increased delivery of new and affordable housing starting in Q1 2024/25.

Robin Beattie, Director Policy Improvement and Performance explained that work continued to make the performance reports more accessible and understandable.

Cabinet members highlighted some of the strong performance and achievements demonstrated in the previous year in areas including substance misuse, uniformed patrols, and equalities measures.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Note the strategic delivery and performance report for Q4 covering the period of 1st January 2024 to 31st March 2024.
2. Review the status of 51 performance measures in Q4 tracking the delivery of Year 2 of the Strategic Plan 2023-2024 (See Appendix A to the report).

### **6.5 Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2038 – Proposed Submission Version**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda on request of the Mayor.

### **6.6 Approval of the council's revised Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy**

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding introduced the report that recommended the approval of the council's revised Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy. Councillor Ahmed explained that the existing policy was no longer fit for purpose given the current increase in homelessness, lack of availability of affordable and suitable accommodation in the borough and recent changes in legislation. In addition, a new Homelessness Accommodation Procurement Strategy would sit side by side with the Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy and would set out the council's approach as to how officers will procure available housing stock to discharge the council's statutory homelessness duties and responsibilities. The strategy will ensure that the council follows current legislation and provides clear guidance for staff to ensure affordability and suitability of accommodation which is procured for this purpose.

Councillor Ahmed explained that the report also proposed two pilot projects, a Cost of Living Grant Scheme and a Find Your Own PRS Accommodation Grant scheme. Councillor Ahmed explained how each of the grants would operate.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed explained how the proposal would ensure financial viability to provide long term stability for suitable housing. He noted that some councils faced risk of bankruptcy because of homelessness and temporary accommodation spending. However, the proposals would enable a stronger long-term approach and better quality service for residents.

Karen Swift, Director of Housing explained how the proposals linked to the previously considered performance outturn, noting that the plan would help move KPI004 from red to amber. Karen provided more detail on the proposed grants pilot projects, the procurement strategy and asked the Mayor and Cabinet to note the equalities impact assessment accompanying the policy, which demonstrated that impact on equality and associated safeguards were considered to be satisfactory.

The Mayor welcomed the report and the prioritisation offered to vulnerable residents, those with health and children's educational needs.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the council's revised Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy (Appendix A to the report) and new Homelessness Accommodation Procurement Strategy (Appendix B to the report).
2. Delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration should any further amendments be required because of new legislation or case law in consultation with the Mayor and Lead Member.
3. Approves the two pilot schemes, (1) Cost of Living Grant Scheme and (2) Find Your Own PRS Accommodation Scheme, and to register both on the council's grants register.
4. Delegates authority to officers to administer and issue grants to residents under the Cost of Living and Find Your Own PRS Accommodation Grant schemes.
5. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing to extend the pilots or make them permanent prevention initiatives, subject to available finances and in consultation with the Mayor and Lead member.

## **6.7 Improving our homelessness services - update**

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding introduced the report that outlined a comprehensive strategy to address current challenges and ensure the Council's Housing Options Service could effectively deliver an enhanced service that meets the current and future needs of the residents of Tower Hamlets. Councillor Ahmed also explained how a new focus on induction and training would ensure a service more sensitive to residents needs, many of whom were vulnerable or had faced traumatic circumstances before approaching the Council.

Karen Swift, Director of Housing provided further detail on the consultation and engagement work underlying the programme. Karen explained engagement had been very positive and had attracted a large number of contributions.

The Mayor welcomed the report. He stressed that his administration had inherited a legacy of poor customer service and an under resourced housing

options service. He expressed hope that the new measures would create a better experience for residents and in particular welcomed the 15 new frontline officers, a new 24/7 service including weekend availability. He asked that quarterly updates be provided on the implementation of the programme.

The Cabinet welcomed the report and asked the lead Member to ensure that local people had opportunity to fully participate in recruitment processes for the new posts and it was felt local people would have a greater appreciation of the borough, its people and their particular experiences.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress made to improve the Council's homelessness services.

### **6.8 Annual Report on School Performance for 2022-2023**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor) introduced the report that provided an overview of the 2022-23 education results from Early Years to Key Stage 5 at Local Authority level, and a summary of how the results compare to national averages and London regions / statistical neighbours where known.

The Mayor welcomed the report, but expressed his ambition to address underperformance of LBTH schools, especially at KS5. He, and other members of the Cabinet expressed concerns that many pupils felt they had to travel outside of the borough to ensure they could receive quality educational provision. It was critical that the borough provide the facilities to ensure time and money of the borough's families and young people were not wasted. The Mayor asked that a report be provided to Cabinet in future to explore options for how attainment in LBTH schools could be driven up. This report should include an exploration of the different support/guidance that could be procured from external sources.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the performance outcomes for Tower Hamlets schools.
2. Requests a report be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting setting out options to improve school performance in the borough including commissioning of external advice.

### **6.9 Interim use of former Shapla School Site**

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

The Mayor introduced and welcomed the report that sought approval of the Mayor in Cabinet for the former Shapla School site to be allocated as the agreed decant site for the services identified in this report from the

Professional Development Centre (PDC) and Commercial Road site until 2027 to meet the requirements for the re-development of the Professional Development Centre for the Institute of Academic Excellence and the decant of services based at Commercial Road site for housing redevelopment

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves Shapla School site is allocated as the agreed decant site for the services identified in this report from the PDC and Commercial Road site until 2027.

#### **6.10 Market Designation (Columbia Road, Watney, Whitechapel)**

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

Councillor Shafi Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency introduced the report that, following consultation on a proposal to alter the pitch sizes at three locations, identified the rationale for the proposals consulted on, the results of the consultation and the recommended action following consultation. Councillor Ahmed briefly set out the benefits of the proposed approaches for each of the sites, which he hoped the Mayor would agree to progress.

The Mayor welcomed the report. Further to a brief explanation from officers regarding delays to works at Watney market and measures to compensate stall holders, he asked officers and the Lead Member to develop proposals to demonstrate goodwill to shop-owners as well.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the report.
2. Recommend that full Council agrees the markets improvements.
3. Columbia Road Market – The proposal is to make permanent the temporary measures put in post-Covid:
  - officially increase the pitch size to 3mx3m from something that traders have been using for more than six years.
  - Make permanent the layout that has been used since reopening after Covid. This means all pitches on the north side and extended from Ravenscroft to Barnet Grove, with market parking on both side of Barnet Grove and one side of Chambord.
4. Watney Market
  - to carry out further engagement with market traders around the use of the gazebos at a later date.
  - to delegate the adoption of the new pitch size of 3m x 3.81m decision on gazebos to the Corporate Director depending on the results of engagement exercise.

## 5. Whitechapel Market

- officially designate the area that traders have been using for many years to make the official designated pitch size the one currently marked by red line, 2.57m width x 4.5m depth.

### 6.11 Market & Street Trading Fees & Charges 2024/25

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

Councillor Shafi Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency introduced the report that, following annual review as part of the financial and business planning process, presented findings of the consultation on market trading fees and charges and recommended fees for 2024/25. Councillor Ahmed asked the Mayor and Cabinet to note that fees and charges relating to street trading must be approved by full Council.

The Mayor asked officers to ensure that the report to Council recommending the changes include a pounds and pence breakdown of how the new fees would compare to those charged in 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the consultation response.
2. Recommends to full Council that it agrees option 2 from the report, namely to increase the street traders and markets fees by 3.1% from September 2024.

### 6.12 LBTH Productivity Plan

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency, as provided in the report submitted.

The Mayor introduced and welcomed the report that responded to a Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) request for all councils to assess and report on efficiency improvements. The Mayor noted that the plan detailed the Council's approach to service delivery, organisational structure, and resident value.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the LBTH Productivity Plan (Appendix 1 to the report). This plan fulfils the government's request for councils to assess and report on efficiency improvements.
2. Acknowledges the submission deadline of 19 July 2024 and website publication requirements. The council will ensure timely submission and public accessibility of the plan.

3. Recognises the LBTH productivity plan as a positive reflection of ongoing efforts to strengthen its efficiency framework. The plan demonstrates the council's commitment to continuous improvement and resident value.

## **7. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Mayor introduced and welcomed the report that proposed changes to nominees to outside bodies.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet agrees:

1. To replace Councillor Kabir Hussain with Councillor Shafi Ahmed as the Council's nominee to London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee (TEC).
2. To replace Councillor Abdul Wahid, with Councillor Musthak Ahmed as the Council's nominee to London Councils' Greater London Employment Forum.

## **8. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil items.

## **9. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

A resolution to exclude press and public was not required.

## **10. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items.

## **11. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

Nil items.

### **11.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Nil items.

## **12. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Nil items.

## **13. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman  
Cabinet