

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY BOARD

HELD AT 2.16 P.M. ON MONDAY, 15 APRIL 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Richard Penn	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Steve Bullock DL	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Stephen O'Brien	(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)
Hira Islam	(Independent non-executive member)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)

Members In Attendance Virtually:

Martin Esom	(Independent non-executive member)
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Officers Present in Person:

Amy Jackson	(Head of Mayor's Office)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Ayesha Hakim Rahman	(Acting Deputy Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Lisa Fraser	(Acting Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Steve Reddy	(Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Abidah Kamali	Policy Officer Housing
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services)

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
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1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Sir George Iacobescu CBE.

Martin Esom was in attendance virtually and gave apologies for having to leave the meeting early.

Steve Halsey, the Chief Executive, explained that the agenda for today's meeting had been taken from the agreed forward programme.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 19 February 2024 were agreed.

3. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Education - Outcomes and Attendance

Steve Reddy, Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services and Lisa Fraser, Director of Education, introduced the item on Education matters.

They took the Board through the information contained in the presentation set out in the agenda papers. They highlighted the excellent results local schools were achieving at KS2 and KS4 and a number of other indicators which showed the strengths of local schools.

However, the Board were being asked to consider two areas for action which were around primary level attendance and results at KS5.

KS5 Performance

Looking at KS5 first, the Board were asked to note that in relation to student progress, the Borough's schools performed reasonably well, with all being in the top half of the country's schools for progress but results were still seen as an issue. A lot of students applied to KS5 courses outside of the borough which was also particular concern (this did not used to be the case). The overall situation was being reviewed to develop an action plan.

The Board discussed the issue and came up with a number of suggestions and questions including:

- Was there a curriculum issue at any of the schools, or generally on the offer across the borough? It was also noted that applied studies did a little better than academic studies.
- Was there the right amount/right mix of sixth form provision?
- It was suggested that the overall facilities available be considered in the review, not just facilities relating to the courses themselves.
- Attainment wasn't just about going to university, the Council needed to do more to highlight other options available to students. Schools also needed to be encouraged to see things like apprenticeships as a good solution for many students.
- It was important to look to engage with all communities.
- What were the exemplars both locally and more widely?

The use of data was a particular point of discussion at the meeting including around:

- How far could the data be mined to show more about KS5 students and their progress.

- What could be learnt about the 19% of A level students who didn't go on to university.
- Overall, looked after children did better than the national average but it would be useful to see more in-depth data on this cohort.
- Are there statistics available to track pupils all the way through their schooling?
- What was the retention rate at university once the students progressed.
- More comparison data would be useful to see how the figures compared to other similar authorities.

Actions:

- It was proposed that a specific focus group was required to look at KS5 including schools and external specialists.
- It was agreed that the action plan, once developed, would be provided to the Board and that more detail on the data available would be circulated as soon as possible.

Primary School Attendance

Looking at school attendance, the board were taken through the presentation in the agenda pack. It was noted that secondary school attendance was always very good and was one of the best (possibly 'the' best) in the country. Attendance at primary level starts off poorly but improves as you progress through the schools.

Resourcing of the data team in the council had improved recently, so whilst there was still much to learn, the service were learning more about school attendance and what were the most significant determinants.

Particular points were noted:

- The Council was looking to speak to specific communities where there were problems and would look to engage with faith communities and the third sector.
- The Council was also looking at the impact of universal free school meals.
- It was important to establish good habits even before children started school.
- The attitude to school attendance from parents appeared to have changed post pandemic and needed attention.

Actions:

- That more information on the data available be collated and presented to the Board as soon as possible.
- The Board to be kept updated with progress on this work and to receive further papers if useful.

3.2 Partnerships Review

Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities (supported by Abidah Kamali, Senior Strategy and Policy Officer), introduced the update report. He reminded the Board that this item had come to the December meeting and the Board were now being provided with a progress update. The Board were asked to consider how it could use its knowledge and expertise to best engage with the Council's partnerships.

The Board was taken through the presentation in the pack including setting out the Partnership review, the five cross-cutting calls to action for the partnership and its linked commitments. A borough action plan was being developed.

The review had engaged with partners as well as over 100 community representatives including through facilitated workshops and was used to develop the set of priority areas to focus on areas of weakness or development.

As set out in the presentation, the headline findings explored areas such as definition, communications, accountability and community representation with the intention that the actions identified would tackle issues such as focus, duplication, inclusivity and engagement.

There was clear enthusiasm for the partnership and it had the potential to have a transformational impact. The Transformation Board were therefore encouraged to engage with this work as much as possible.

The Board welcomed the report and the work that had gone into this vital area for the Council. It then moved on to discuss the item and a number of points were considered including:

- How important it was to have energised partners if you wished to deliver real change.
- Whether it would be useful for Board Members to observe some partnership meetings to get a feel for how they were working.
- What were the priorities for partners and making sure the widest range of partners were considered.
- The need to ensure the right people with authority to agree actions were involved in the meetings.
- The voluntary and faith sectors were important and so was the private sector from the large financial companies to small local traders.
- Whether looking to focus on one or two big areas could be a way of maximising impact/effectiveness.

Board Members indicated that they were happy to help with the work to develop the strategy. In particular, it was agreed that Sir Stephen O'Brien would lead support from the Board supported by Sir Steve Bullock. Other Members were asked to indicate should they wish to be directly involved.

Actions:

- That Board Members consider the report and respond to officers with any comments or to request to be further involved.
- The project to report back to the Board at an appropriate future meeting on progress and to consider how best set out to the Board.

3.3 Transformation Dashboard

Ayesha Hakim Rahman, Head of Corporate Strategy and Transformation, introduced, introduced the revised Transformation Dashboard for discussion by the Board. She explained that the dashboard will show progress against the key indicators such as budget sustainability and progress against the LGA Peer Review actions. Progress will be reported at each Board meeting.

In relation to some of the areas noted by the dashboard the meeting noted that:

- The annual resident's survey was out now and the results should be available by May.
- The Council's governance structures had been made more efficient by reducing the number of boards.
- More information on social housing would be useful.
- Over £8 million of the £20 million planned savings for the year had already been achieved and more detail could be shared with Board Members if useful.

Members welcomed the presentation and dashboard. In looking to continue to develop the tool, the Board asked if consideration could be given to making it more interactive and to how it will show progress over time.

It was noted that the intention was to present the Corporate Peer Review and a Medium-Term Financial Strategy update to the next Board meeting.

Actions:

- Officers to continue to develop the dashboard in particular looking at interactivity and how to display progress over time.
- Reports on the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be presented to the next meeting.

4. AOB AND CLOSE

Under Another Other Business, the Board were given an update on progress to recruit to senior officer positions with shortlisting for the Corporate Directors for Children's Services and Health and Adults Social Care about to take place and the Sub-Committees for the Director of Legal role due shortly.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Transformation Advisory Board