

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2007

**COMMITTEE ROOM, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Shafiqul Haque (Chair)

Councillor Waiseul Islam (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Councillor M. Shahid Ali
Councillor Peter Golds

Officers Present:

Isabella Freeman	– (Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services])
Minesh Jani	– (Interim Service Head Risk Management)
Kamini Rambellas	– (Service Head Children's Social Care, Children's Services)
Seema Shahnaz	– (Deputy Electoral Services Manager)
John Williams	– (Service Head, Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Philip Briscoe, Councillor Carli Harper-Penman and Councillor M. Mamun Rashid.

Councillor Peter Golds and Councillor Mohammed Shahid Ali deputised for Councillor Briscoe and Councillor Harper-Penman respectively.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lutfur Rahman declared a personal interest in agenda item 4.6 'Local Safeguarding Children's Board – Serious Case Reviews' as a non-executive member of the Barts and the London NHS Trust.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 18th October 2007 be agreed as a correct record.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Review of Polling Places and Districts

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) setting out the Returning Officer's proposals for the review of polling districts and polling places.

An amended plan was tabled to replace Appendix D in the circulated report, showing the proposed revised polling districts and polling places in Mile End East ward.

Ms Isabella Freeman, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services), introduced the report. Ms Freeman and Ms Seema Shahnaz, Deputy Electoral Services Manager, provided further information on the process of the review and the consultation undertaken, and responded to a number of questions from Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee note the consultative process and responses received as set out in the report; and
- (2) That the Council be recommended to adopt the Returning Officer's revised representations as set out in Appendix A to the report, subject to the revised Appendix D as tabled, and that the polling districts and polling places be formally designated.

4.2 Establishment of Audit Committee

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive seeking agreement to a proposal to alter the composition of the Audit Panel to reflect CIPFA guidance by establishing an Audit Committee as part of the Council's formal committee structure.

Mr Minesh Jani, Interim Service Head, Risk Management, introduced the report and responded to questions from Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) To establish an Audit Committee with the following terms of reference:
 - 1 To consider the Audit Plan and review the performance of Internal Audit against this target;
 - 2 To review internal audit findings and the annual report from the Head of Audit and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary;
 - 3 To act as a forum for the Audit Commission (external audit) to bring issues to Members' attention including both specific reports and general item such as the Annual Audit Letter and the Annual Governance Report;
 - 4 To be satisfied that the authority's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it;
 - 5 To enable the Council to demonstrate a response to its fiduciary responsibilities in preventing fraud and corruption;
 - 6 To consider reports of audit activity together with specific investigations;
 - 7 To monitor the Authority's Risk Management arrangements and seek assurance that action is being taken on risk related issues identified by auditors and inspectorates;
 - 8 To make arrangements for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and for the proper stewardship of public funds expect the appointment of the Chief Finance Officer which shall remain the duty of the Council; and
 - 9 To meet the obligations of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 and the various statutory requirements in respect of the duty to approve the Authority's Statement of Accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet or record of payments and receipts (as the case may be).
- (2) To rename the Pensions and Accounts Committee, the Pensions Committee and transfer the second term of reference, that is "To meet the obligations of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 and the various statutory requirements in respect of the duty to approve the Authority's Statement of Accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet or record of payments and receipts (as the case may be)" to the newly constituted Audit Committee.
- (3) That the composition of the Audit Committee be in proportion to the political composition of the Council and comprise 4 majority group

members and 3 minority group members, pursuant to the review of the proportionality to be determined at the Council meeting on 28 November 2007.

4.3 Ocean Regeneration Trust Interim Board

The Service Head, Democratic Services informed the Committee that this item had been **WITHDRAWN** from the agenda.

4.4 Filling of casual vacancies on committees and panels (if any)

There was no business to consider under this agenda item.

4.5 Recommendations from the Review and Evaluation of the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Board

The Committee considered a report on the process, outcome and recommendations of the review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board following its first year of operation.

Ms Kamini Rambellas, Service Head, Children's Social Care, introduced the report and answered questions from Members of the Committee

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the outcome of the review undertaken and the recommendations arising out of that review with respect to the future functioning of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

4.6 Local Safeguarding Children's Board - Serious Case Reviews

The Committee considered a report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board which presented the executive summaries of two Serious Case Reviews undertaken during 2007.

Ms Kamini Rambellas, Service Head, Children's Social Care, introduced the report and answered questions from Members of the Committee.

Councillor Peter Golds asked what mechanisms were in place to ensure that the lessons arising from the Serious Case Reviews were learned and acted upon by all agencies concerned. He also expressed concern at the large number of different agencies involved in the cases as listed in the report.

Ms Rambellas reported that the involvement of each of the agencies listed was appropriate to the particular case. Some represented authorities that had previously provided services to the families concerned. In relation to learning

lessons from the cases, Ms Rambellas confirmed that that this was the purpose of the Serious Case Review and that a detailed action plan was in place arising from each review. The Serious Case Review Group would continue to meet throughout the year to monitor this and report back to the Local Safeguarding Children Board on action required.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note (1) the content of the report and the executive summaries attached which include recommendations as appropriate to the cases; and (2) that in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006), the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will oversee the implementation of the action plan in respect to these reports.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

NOTED that the next ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 13th February 2008, at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Shafiqul Haque
General Purposes Committee