

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009

**COMMITTEE ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor M. Shahid Ali (Chair)

Councillor Philip Briscoe
Councillor Clair Hawkins
Councillor Waiseul Islam
Councillor A A Sardar (Vice-Chair)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Peter Golds

Officers Present:

Isabella Freeman – (Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services])
Nadir Ahmed – (Democratic Services)
Angus Taylor – (Scrutiny and Regulatory Team Leader,
Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
John Williams – (Service Head, Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Lutfu Begum and M. Mamun Rashid.

NOTED

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES

The Chair **MOVED**

and it was

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17th June 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Review of Polling Stations

4.1A - Review of Polling Stations Addendum

The Chair informed members of the Committee that an addendum to the report "Review of Polling Stations", containing revised recommendations, had been **TABLED** (a copy of which would be interleaved with the minutes).

Isabella Freeman, Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services], at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report summarised the salient points contained therein highlighting in particular that it had been noted, at the General Purposes Committee meeting on 22nd October 2008, that the Boundary Commission would not be carrying out a boundary review in Tower Hamlets until after the 2010 Local Elections.

The report before the Committee presented the outcome of a review of polling stations undertaken by the Electoral Services Department with a particular focus on mitigating any issues of overcrowding due to population growth and other issues, particularly in relation to Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

Louise Stamp, Electoral Services Manager, informed Members that an additional polling place had been identified and proposed in Bow East Ward, BE2 electoral division, the Wrights Community Centre, Wrights Road, E3 5LG, which would ease the overcrowding faced at the current polling place, Eastside Youth Centre, Parnell Road, E3 2EX.

Members sought and were given clarification that the new polling place would be in addition to the existing one at Eastside Youth Centre and as it was east of Parnell Road and in the middle of a large, residential estate it was convenient for local residents and reduced their travelling distance.

Ms Stamp also informed Members that due to objections received from Members, the proposals to use the Burdett Neighbourhood Centre, Masjid Lane, E14 7BW in relation to Mile End East Ward had been withdrawn and Stebon Primary School would continue to be the polling place for that area. Members welcomed this.

Ms Stamp also commented that the request for an additional polling place in Bow East, BE1, had been considered but the small size of the electorate there

did not currently warrant it. Assurances were sought and given that the situation would be closely monitored for signs of population growth and that an additional site had already been identified if it was needed.

Ms Stamp then drew Members attention to the addendum report which had been **TABLED**. The original report contained in the agenda had recommended, due to the increased number of properties numbering 4000+ in the last nine months, the creation of a new polling district, MI4, in the Millwall ward. The River House Montessori School which had been proposed as a polling place was no longer available for use. Further examination of the locality had identified the Victory Outreach Church as an alternative site. This venue was well known to local residents and could accommodate current elector numbers with additional capacity for future increases.

Members welcomed the proposal to split the electoral district MI1 and create a new district, MI4 to mitigate issues caused by growth in the electorate. However, concern was expressed that the originally proposed site for the new polling station (River House Montessori School) was too far from the relevant electors and the proposed site in the addendum report, the Victory Outreach Church, was even further away particularly for those in the north and north west of the area. Also, the Victory Outreach Church was in an inappropriate location as it was in the midst of commercial/office space and building sites. The old site had been a long way away but was easier to get to as it was on a bus route. Ms Stamp advised that four new tower blocks were all to be occupied by the time of the elections in May and would shift the balance in terms of the location which would be most convenient for the majority of electors.

The freeholder of the site was also currently involved in a court case against the Council and this had the potential to cause last minute problems prior to an election. Ms Stamp undertook to look into this.

Whilst concurring on the validity of concerns raised regarding the proposed location of the polling station in the Victory Outreach Church, differing views were expressed as to the whether an alternative location of the City Pride Pub Car Park was appropriate. The Cascades Car Park was also suggested as a potential alternative.

Some discussion also ensued as to the most appropriate dividing boundary for the new polling district, MI4. In the context of the concerns raised by Members of the Committee regarding the proposals outlined for Millwall ward in both the original and Addendum reports, Councillor Briscoe proposed that their consideration be deferred to allow officers to re-examine the options and give Members the opportunity to make suggestions. Ms Stamp acknowledged that a further examination of the options seemed appropriate.

Clarification was sought and given that following further officer examination of the options, any determination would require either consideration by the Committee at an Extraordinary meeting or delegation of authority to a Chief

Officer and it could be requested that this follow consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Councillor Hawkins accordingly proposed the following:

That all Members be advised of the proposals arising out of the further officer review;

That the Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services] be delegated authority to make the final determination on the split of the electoral district, MI1, Millwall ward, and the location of the polling station, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was clarified for Members that a polling place was the geographical area, usually defined as a building, where a polling station was situated whereas a polling station was the actual area where the process of voting took place.

Clarification was sought as to the rationale for not using Sidney Street Library, Whitechapel ward, as a polling place in the forthcoming elections when it had been used previously. Ms Freeman undertook to expand upon clarification given by Ms Stamp in writing.

The Chair **MOVED** (taking account of the advice of the Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services] and the proposals of Councillors Briscoe and Hawkins) and it was

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommend the following be adopted by the Council for implementation in time for the local government election in May 2010:

That a new polling place, BE2A, be created at Wrights Community Centre, Wrights Road, E3 5LG to deal with the area south of Parnell Road and reduce one polling station at Eastside Youth Centre in Bow East, BE2;

That it be noted that the proposals to use the Burdett Neighbourhood Centre, Masjid Lane, E14 7BW in relation to Mile End East Ward had been withdrawn.

That consideration of the proposals in relation to the Millwall ward be deferred to allow the Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services] to carry out a further officer review and re-examine the proposals;

That all Members be advised of the proposals arising out of the further officer review in relation to the Millwall ward.

That the Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services] be delegated authority to make the final determination on the split of the electoral district, MI1, Millwall ward, and the location of the polling station, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

4.2 Appointments to Panels/ External Bodies

4.2A – Appointments to Panels/ External Bodies Addendum

The Chair informed members of the Committee that an addendum to the report “Appointments to Panels/ External Bodies”, containing an updated schedule of nominations, had been **TABLED** (a copy of which would be interleaved with the minutes).

John Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services, at the request of the Chair, in introducing the report summarised the salient points contained therein and drew Members’ attention to the updated schedule of nominations that had been **TABLED**.

Fostering Panel

Responding to requests for clarification from Members, Mr Williams reported that as this position on the Fostering Panel had been allocated to the Labour Group at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2009, if the Committee determined to appoint a non-Labour member, the decision would have to be ratified at the next meeting of the Council. It was also clarified that the vacancy did not impede the work of the panel. There being no valid nominations, the Chair **MOVED** and it was

RESOLVED

That consideration of the appointment to the Fostering Panel be deferred to the next meeting.

Futures Charitable Trust

The Chair **MOVED** the following motion for the consideration of the Members of the Committee

“That the Committee agree the nomination of the Labour Group that Councillor Ann Jackson be appointed as the representative of the Authority on the governing body of Futures Charitable Trust until 31 December 2011.”
and it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ann Jackson be appointed as the representative of the Authority on the governing body of Futures Charitable Trust until 31 December 2011.

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Councillor Philip Briscoe nominated Councillor Peter Golds.

The Chair **MOVED** the following motion for the consideration of the Members of the Committee

“That the Committee agree the nomination of the Labour Group that Councillor Carli Harper-Penman be appointed as a deputy on the governing body of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority for the remainder of the 2009/10 Municipal Year.”
and it was

RESOLVED (on a vote of 4 for and 1 against)

That Councillor Carli Harper-Penman be appointed as a deputy on the governing body of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority for the remainder of the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

Norton Folgate Almshouses Charity

Councillor Philip Briscoe nominated Ms Claire Palmer.

The Chair **MOVED** the following motion for the consideration of the Members of the Committee

“That the Committee agree the nomination of the Labour Group that Mr Chris Dyson be appointed as a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Norton Folgate Almshouses Charity until June 2013.”
and it was

RESOLVED (on a vote of 4 for and 1 against)

That Mr Chris Dyson be appointed as a representative of the Authority on the governing body of Norton Folgate Almshouses Charity until June 2013.

Parmiter’s Almshouses and Pensions Charity

There being no valid nominations, the Chair **MOVED** and it was

RESOLVED

That consideration of the appointments to the Parmiter’s Almshouses and Pensions Charity be deferred to the next meeting.

Stepney Relief in Need Charity

There being no valid nominations, the Chair **MOVED** and it was

RESOLVED

That consideration of the appointment to the Stepney Relief in Need Charity be deferred to the next meeting.

The Committee requested that future reports provide some information on each organisation including the area they operated in, their background and the length of time and frequency with which the body met.

The meeting ended at 7.53 p.m.

Chair, Councillor M. Shahid Ali
General Purposes Committee