

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

**MP702, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Marc Francis (Chair)

Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Craig Aston

Officers Present:

Mark Norman – (Monitoring Officer)
Louise Stamp – (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)
John Williams – (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
Hania Franek – (Head of School Governance & Information, Education Social Care & Wellbeing)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apology for absence was received from Cllr Shiria Khatun

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members of the Committee declared that they knew some of the applicants applying for the positions of Local Authority Governor. Full details in Part 2 minutes.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the general purposes Committee held on 17 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Polling Place Review

At the request of the Chair, John Williams, Head of Democratic Services, presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The report was a progress report and provided an update on the review of polling districts and polling places, and the representations received during the consultation.
- A lot of representations were received which affected two thirds of the wards. Officers were still in the process of visiting all proposals of new polling stations in order to decide on their suitability, this was a huge undertaking which had to be completed thoroughly.
- A Members seminar was held as part of the consultation process which also produced numerous suggestions which are also being reviewed.
- Officers were still in the process of working out final recommendations on polling arrangement which would be brought back to the December Committee meeting.

A discussion followed which focused on how the new changes would be publicised. In response to questions John Williams and Louise Stamp gave the following answers:

- Household canvassing would start next week and will continue through to mid-February 2014. The new polling details would therefore be published on 17th February 2014. There would be two versions available, current councillors would continue to receive updates of the electoral register for their current ward, whilst all candidates for the 2014 elections would be issued with the updated register based on the new ward arrangements.
- The Council had delegated powers to the GP committee relating to the holding of elections and the maintenance of the electoral register. The final recommendations for new polling arrangements on polling stations were delegated to the Returning Officer, John Williams.
- All addresses would be cross matched with DWP records, any anomalies would be investigated and verified i.e. by visiting properties etc. Members could inform electoral services if they had details of people who were not on the electoral register.
- All representations would be investigated, however the difficult part was that there were a lot of conflicting information which had to be stringently verified to ensure that no properties had been missed before final recommendations were made. It is likely that the final report would be ready before the December Committee. When finalised officers could discuss with the Chair whether an extra ordinary Committee meeting should be organised for members to view.
- Canvassers would visit all properties, including new build complexes. All Council tax forms would also come with a register form, however it was likely that there would continue to be people changing addresses from now to the election date, hence the Council had applied for a grant from the Cabinet Office to enable it to send out confirmation forms in order to update records.
- All polling stations that were previously used will display full details of new polling locations during the election period. Confirmation forms and polling cards would provide residents with the full information on the changes and sites of new stations. All the Idea stores in the

borough would also be advertising the new information on their announcement screens.

- Newspapers like Eastern Life would be used to inform the public of upcoming changes. There is a big communication strategy being rolled out, as there would be 3 elections on the same day that voters needed to be made aware of, as well as the recent boundary changes which had altered the number of councillors standing per ward.

With regards to Appendix A, the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places documents which was handed out to members at the meeting, officers highlighted that the information listed were subject to change as each location was investigate for accessibility.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to officers who had worked hard to ensure residents in Fish Island were provided with an accessible polling station.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

6. RESTRICTED MINUTES

The restricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the general purposes Committee held on 17 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

8. ANY OTHER EXEMPT BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Shiria Khatun
General Purposes Committee