

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

**RECORD OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS' DECISION MAKING
MEETING**

HELD AT 5.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2016

**ROOM MP701, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Sir Ken Knight (Chair)	(Commissioner)
Chris Allison	(Commissioner)
Max Caller	(Commissioner)
Alan Wood	(Commissioner)

Councillors Present:

Mayor John Biggs	(Mayor)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Cabinet Member for Strategic Development)
Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor John Pierce	(Chair of OSC)
Councillor Rachael Saunders	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)

Officers Present:

Caroline Billington	(Commissioning Manager, Tower Hamlets CCG)
Zena Cooke	(Corporate Director, Resources)
Terry Parkin	Interim Service Head, Learning & Achievement
Steve Hill	(Head of Benefits Service)
Alison Thomas	(Head of Housing Strategy, Partnerships and Affordable Housing, Development and Renewal)
Shalina Hussain	(Communications Officer, Communications, Chief Executive's)
Jackie Odunoye	(Service Head, Strategy, Regeneration & Sustainability, Development and Renewal)
Karen Sugars	(Interim Service Head, Commissioning and Health)
Antonella Burgio	(Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Commissioner Max Caller made an enhanced disclosure and declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 6.7 in that he had once worked in the steel industry in Wales.

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

3. DECISIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The published decisions of the meetings held on 1 March and 8 March 2016 were noted and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

The Chair advised that a submission had been received from Tower Hamlets CVS relating to the following items

- “Commissioners Discretions – Emergency Funding Decisions” and
- “Support for the VCS and the Innovation Fund”.

The Chair advised that the representations would be discussed in conjunction with their respective agenda items.

5. EXERCISE OF COMMISSIONERS' DISCRETIONS

The Chair introduced the item which reported urgent decisions taken by Commissioners individually.

Commissioner Caller responded to the written submission by CVS relating to refusal of emergency funding to certain organisations advising that the representation that had been made suggested that the purpose of the Emergency Fund was not clearly understood. He asked that officers work with CVS and community organisations to clarify the purpose of emergency funding and how the criteria should be applied.

RESOLVED

That the Decisions that the decisions made under the Exercise of Commissioners' Discretions as set out at Appendix 1 be approved.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business. He **moved** and it was

RESOLVED

That the items of business be varied from that printed in the agenda and considered in the following order:

Item 6.7, item 6.8, item 6.1, item 6.2, item 6.3, item 6.4, item 6.5, and 6.6.

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Mental Health User Led Grants Programme 2016 - 18

The Chair invited Caroline Billington, Commissioning Manager, Tower Hamlets CCG to introduce the report which concerned a programme of grants to support those with mental health issues in the community, giving them more control over their own care interventions and so avoid the need for other more costly forms of support.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals. Councillor Golds also expressed concern that the geographical spread of the schemes across the borough was uneven.

Commissioners noted their support for the proposals and approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed awards of small grants to independent user led groups at a total value of £90, 838 per annum, in line with the individual decisions detailed in the body of this report be approved.
2. That it be noted that awards will be on the basis that there will be no right of appeal against the refusal of a grant and that grants approved must clearly state the purpose for which the funding is being given.

6.2 Tower Hamlets' Education Award (Higher Education): Post 16 Progression - school-led programme

The Chair invited Terry Parkin, Interim Service Head, Learning & Achievement to present the report which informed Commissioners of an award, approved by Cabinet, intended for post 16 pupils wishing to pursue forms of higher education including apprenticeships.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals.

Commissioners noted

- that the revised award now incorporated a rationale which indicated how the scheme would support pupils.
- that the report concerned funding principles and that headteachers would be involved in the scheme to ensure that interventions were monitored.

RESOLVED

1. That the recommendations in the Cabinet report at Appendix A be noted.
2. That the decision of the Mayor in Cabinet be endorsed.

6.3 Community Buildings and Heritage Buildings

The Chair invited Zena Cooke, Corporate Director of Resources to introduce the report which concerned a proposal to reallocate funding from the previous Community Faith Buildings Support Scheme as set out in the report. The new scheme would support the Council's priorities and be reviewed at the end of its second year.

The Chair invited the Mayor and Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals. Councillor Pierce noted that Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed concern regarding the impacted of the termination of the previous scheme in some areas of the Community.

Commissioner Max Caller noted that the new scheme should not preclude application from faith groups and was satisfied that the new process provided a regularised framework for the grant.

The Chair noted that a further report would be made.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposals to reallocate the funding of approximately £2.276m previously set aside for the Community Faith Building Scheme be noted.
2. That the following reallocation be noted:
 - A total of £300k (£100k per year for three years) for the council's existing Historic Buildings Grant scheme; and
 - A total of £1.976m to be allocated to deliver property related actions arising from the Community Buildings review and support the Voluntary and Community Sector action plan.
3. That the proposed approach in terms of advice, information and guidance to the 47 organisations that applied for round 2 CFBS funding be noted.

6.4 Grants Register 2016/17

The Chair to introduced the report noting that:

- the register had been produced out of a commissioner request to ascertain all grants given by the Council.
- the report set out the approach that would be undertaken to ensure the active maintenance of the Grants Register.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the approach suggested.

Commissioners were pleased to receive the plan which clearly set out how the Council intended to spend grant funds.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and Commissioners' comment above be noted
2. That the 2016/17 Grants Register attached at Appendix A be noted.

6.5 Grants Forward Plan 2016/17

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director of Resources introduced the report which set out how the Council intended to publicise the items of future business and ensure that grant making was administered openly and transparently via a rolling forward plan. Once established the plan would inform the administration of future grants making meetings via the Councils' committee procedures.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the approach to be taken.

Commissioner Max Caller was satisfied the plan would provide members with information on the status of grant applications and recommended that officers use the plan as a 'living document'.

RESOLVED

1. That it be agreed that the Forward Plan become a standing agenda item
2. That the draft Forward Plan attached as Appendix 1 be approved.

6.6 Support for VCS and New Innovation Fund

Councillor Saunders, Deputy Mayor, Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and with special responsibility for Grants introduced the report which concerned an award to support CVS to increase its capacity and its capacity building and a new Innovation Fund to enable CVS to respond reactively to Third Sector innovations. The Chair noted the written submission made by CVS regarding this matter.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals.

Commissioner Max Caller indicated that he supported the proposals, however the Council must continue to discharge its responsibilities on consultation and maintain proper consultation arrangements.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposal to have two funding arrangements to provide 1) infrastructure support via the CVS and
2. That the creation of an Innovation Fund be agreed.
3. That the criteria, process and timetable for the new Innovation Fund be co-produced with the voluntary and community sector and consulted on in line with the principles of the VCS strategy be agreed.

4. That a further report be made to Commissioners on the outcome of the consultation and the final arrangements for the Innovation Fund.

6.7 Tower Hamlets Affordable Housing Grant 2016-19

The Chair invited Councillor Blake to comment on the report. She indicated that she supported the proposal since affordable housing was a matter of local concern and a Council priority. Additionally, the council had received many right to buy receipts as a result of Government policy. The conditions of the scheme to mitigate the risks of abuse of the scheme also were noted.

The Chair invited Councillors present to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals.

Commissioner Max Caller noted that an application under this scheme concerned the purchase of steel. He recommended that the Council reflects the new Central Government guidance on the procurement of steel in development projects funded by the Council in its procurement strategy.

RESOLVED

1. The Officers' recommendations to award Right To Buy grant funding in the amounts listed to the Registered Providers outlined in point 5.2 of the report be endorsed and allow for a 10% uplift to this amount to allow flexibility to take account of potential higher build or acquisition costs.
2. That it be noted that the programme has been extended beyond December 2017 to encourage the inclusion of more new build schemes and facilitate the take up of RTB receipts that continue to accumulate.

6.8 OSC Feedback on Cross Party Forum for Grants

The Chair invited Councillor Pierce, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to comment on the report. He informed Commissioners that the Council had considered where the Cross Party Forum to review grants should lie. Since the function of the Forum was review, it was deemed that this role should be performed by a scrutiny body as the scrutiny function was in keeping with purpose of the Forum. A subcommittee of 5 members plus co-optees (to be confirmed) was established to perform the review function hitherto carried out by the Cross Party Forum. Its terms of reference would include enhanced disclosure of interests to fulfil aims around transparency. The subcommittee would be trialled over a three-month period and then reviewed.

The Chair invited Councillor Saunders and Councillor Golds to comment on the report and they indicated that they supported the proposals.

Commissioners welcomed the initiation of the scrutiny of grants and regarded this as a positive development. They were informed that arrangements for the scrutiny of grants would follow the same pattern as Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Commissioners' Decision Making Meetings.

The Chair noted that Commissioners' aim was that long-term arrangement be established and asked for a report outlining proposals concerning arrangements for the delivery of grants once commissioners had retired from their responsibilities.

RESOLVED

1. That the outcomes reported by Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted
2. That the proposals that future grant requests be reviewed by a Scrutiny Grants Sub-Committee be endorsed for the duration of the trial.
3. That a report outlining proposals concerning arrangements for the delivery of grants once commissioners had retired from their responsibilities be brought to a future meeting.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

The Chair thanked Leaders of the political groups for their support to Commissioners Decision Making Meetings hitherto and welcomed the involvement of the new Scrutiny Grants Sub-Committee in discussion of future grants applications.

In recognition of the work done to-date, in regularising processes around grant making and progress made, the Chair indicated that he would be formally writing to the Mayor to invite the Mayor and/or his representative to sit alongside Commissioners in a non-voting capacity to discuss grants applications for all future cycles of meetings.

The meeting ended at 6.03 p.m.

Chair: Sir Ken Knight
COMMISSIONER