

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

**MINUTES OF THE BEST VALUE PROGRAMME REVIEW BOARD QUARTERLY
MEETING**

HELD AT 6.10 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2016

C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14 2BG

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Aisling Lyon (Member)	(Local Intervention and Europe Local Government Policy, Department for Communities and Local Government)
Sir Ken Knight (Member)	(Commissioner)
Max Caller (Member)	(Commissioner)
Chris Allison (Member)	(Commissioner)
Alan Wood (Member)	(Commissioner)
Will Tuckley (Member)	(Chief Executive)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Rachael Saunders	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)
Councillor David Edgar	(Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	(Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services)
Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)

Officers Present:

Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Minesh Jani	– (Head of Audit and Risk Management, Resources)
Kevin Kewin	– (Interim Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equality)
Denise Radley	– (Director of Adults' Services)
John Seekings	– (Interim Service Head, Communications and Marketing)
Louise Stamp	– (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)
Antonella Burgio	– (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Alex Powell

Apologies were also noted from the following Members and officers:

- Councillors: Rachel Blake, Clare Harrisson, Josh Peck, Sirajul Islam and Oliur Rahman.
- Officers: Stephen Halsey, Aman Dalvi and Melanie Clay

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair **moved** and it was

RESOLVED

That the order of business be varied. Accordingly the Board discussed the reports for consideration in the following order:
Item 4.2, item 4.3 and item 4.1.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Elections Update

Chief Executive Will Tuckley introduced the presentation informing the Board members that the Election Action Plan had focussed on:

- Lessons learned
- Local protocols which support the wider guidance of the Electoral Commission
- Extensive liaison with the Metropolitan Police
- Introduction of exclusion zones around polling stations
- Implementation of a joint training programme for Police and Presiding Officers involved with elections
- Ensuring that polling staff were assigned to stations outside of the area in which they lived
- Marking the Corresponding Numbers list
- Checks via home visits of properties where six or more electors were registered

- Adoption of a code of conduct at the count.

The above measures combined, provide an environment of confidence in the delivery of future elections.

Councillor Saunders requested that properties where four or more voters were registered should also be checked as well as those where six or more electors resided.

Louise Stamp. Head of Elections gave an update on individual electoral registration informing the Board that:

- Registration activities in April leading up to the London Mayoral election had created significant work volumes
- Enhanced security measures would be adopted at polling stations which included procedures around the use of social media during the poll as well as other security procedures related to bomb, flood and fire threats and personation
- An emergency contact would be made available to polling staff at each polling station.

Will Tuckley noted that, in view of the additional measures adopted and enhanced training undertaken, there was confidence that free and fair elections would be delivered.

Responding to questions the following information was provided:

- Helen Lewis of the Metropolitan police would act as the local single point of contact during the elections
- There was now a protocol between the Police and the Returning Officer which clearly described their roles and responsibilities.
- The delineation of responsibilities of Police and Presiding Officer had been communicated through joint Police and Presiding Officer training.
- Issues around the behaviour of voters in the polling stations have been addressed via training of all those involved in administering the poll.

Members were invited to comment on the matters reported. Councillor Golds and Councillor Saunders indicated that they broadly they supported the measures taken although some concerns remained about enforcement of the protocols.

Commissioner Max Caller noted that:

- Many lessons had been learned around the delivery of elections
- In his view, the Chief Executive was the appropriate person within the organisation discharge the role and responsibility of Returning Officer
- On the basis of the evidence so far provided, he was minded to recommend to the Secretary of State that his directions relating to elections now be withdrawn.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation and verbal update be noted
2. That Commissioners' recommendation to Secretary of State that his directions relating to elections now be withdrawn be noted.

4.2 Best Value Plan Update

The Chair advised he had recently had discussions with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Commissioners concerned with progress on the Best Value Action Plan.

Commissioner Ken Knight noted that the Commissioners' letter, (Annex B) set out outstanding issues in the Best Value Plan relating to Secretary's additional directions, original directions and an overview of the progress made. He informed the Board that the matters identified would form the basis of the way forward in dealing with directions that remained outstanding. It was noted that the letter set out two types of directions.

Commissioner Ken Knight

- advised that that the approach described in the letter was intended to assist the Council to fulfil the directions and indicated how these should move on to completion.
- noted that this discussion was in its formative stages and would be taken forward with the Secretary of State

Commissioner Max Caller suggested that the Council consider what evidence would be needed going forward and how unforeseen issues might be mitigated and resolved to the Secretary of State's satisfaction.

The Chair noted that

- Unforeseen circumstances, by their nature, remained a potential risk however he looked forward to a form of validation so that outcomes can be achieved
- the Council would require time to consider the proposals put forward in the letter

Councillor Golds was invited to comment on the Best Value Plan update. He asked all to consider the difficulties that the Council had experienced in the recent past and utilise the lessons learned to ensure that checks and balances were in place to prevent such circumstances recurring.

RESOLVED

1. That the second six-month progress update submitted to the Secretary of State on 17 March 2016 as set out in Annex A be noted.
2. That the response of the Secretary of State's Commissioners as set out in Annex B to be noted.
3. That the additional points contained in the Secretary of State's Commissioners' letter (Annex B) form the basis of future agreement.

4.3 Best Value Plan Themes and Key Milestones: Board Forward Plan

The Chair introduced the item noting that the actions and milestones set out in the plan had been superseded by the additional points discussed at Item 4.2.

Commissioner Ken Knight informed the Chair that Commissioners would inspect the plan and determine whether it flowed with the evidence that would be required to satisfy the directions.

RESOLVED

That it be noted that the plan has been superseded.

5. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Best Value Programme Review Board Quarterly Meeting