

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

**HELD AT 6.03 P.M. ON MONDAY, 11 JUNE 2018**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON  
E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	Executive Mayor
Sir Steve Bullock	External Representative - THBVIB
Alan Finch	Local Government Association
Will Tuckley	Chief Executive
Councillor Peter Golds	Leader of the Conservative Group
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Deputy Mayor for Housing (Statutory Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Candida Ronald	Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector
Councillor Danny Hassell	Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People
Councillor Abdal Ullah	Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Officers Present:**

Zena Cooke	- Corporate Director, Resources
Debbie Jones	- Corporate Director, Children's
Afazul Hoque	- Interim Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance
Daniel Kerr	- Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer
Sam Nair	- Team Manager- Children with Disabilities Team
Antonella Burgio	- Democratic Services

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Board Members Sir Alan Wood and Sharon Godman.

The Board also noted an apology for absence from Nancy Meehan Interim Divisional Director, Children's Social Care.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

### **3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

### **4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2018-19 QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Acting Service Manager Strategy Policy and Performance presented the report which provided an update on the delivery of actions in the Best Value Improvement Plan. Updates were reported in each of the five areas/themes specified in the Secretary of State Directions of 2017. The Board noted that at the year 2017-18 over 80% of the milestones had been delivered and this report provides updates against the outstanding milestones for each of the themes.

#### **Elections**

Much preparatory work had been done and a robust delivery framework established for the delivery of the borough mayoral and local elections. There had been extensive collaboration with Police around training, arrangements at polling stations and at the Count. Additionally the Council had participated in the Cabinet Office Postal Vote Pilot.

Analysis of data from Postal Vote Pilot and review data and feedback of the elections will be used to inform future elections.

#### **Communications**

All milestones have been achieved except the implementation of a new Council intranet, however work on this was progressing. Additionally the Communications Team had been shortlisted for three Public Relations and Communications Association awards for their work on two campaigns and also for Team of the Year.

#### **Property**

The schedule of Community Hubs to be brought into service had been revised to mitigate delays in the implementation of Raines House as the borough's second Community Hub. This was due to delays incurred relating to its listed building status. The Council intended to re-focus towards the delivery of other Hub sites to ensure the impacts on implementation of the Community Hubs programme were reduced.

#### **Grants**

Achievements included completion of a review of the Third Sector Team, and development of a new compact. Additionally work has progressed to develop a community commissioning framework and a new grants policy.

#### **Organisational Culture**

Achievements included a review of the Constitution, including member-officer protocols, and Member codes of conduct. Staff had been involved in work to develop new corporate values to deliver excellence under the theme of TOWER Values. Additionally the Mayor had re-established the Tower

Hamlets Partnership Executive Group and significant work has been to develop a single vision and priorities for the borough.

During discussion, the Board considered the data provided and received the following information in response to questions:

The re-establishment of the Tower Hamlets Partnership affirmed the Council's intention to work together with its strategic partners. There had been meetings between Chief Officers to establish the vision and priorities around five themes; "strong resilient and safer communities, building a stronger, inclusive and fairer borough, good jobs and employment, better health and wellbeing and better deal for young people".

The challenges of delivering the local elections in 2018 had been met. Extensive and detailed preparations had been undertaken in all aspects of the delivery from prevention of identity fraud at registration to arrangements and procedures at Polling Stations and at the Count. These were underpinned by a comprehensive training programme which had been delivered to elections staff and Police. Feedback had been received and would be used towards future improvements. Some issues around counting of ballots had arisen during the Count and these had been addressed immediately and rectified proactively. It was suggested that the Council explore whether scanning equipment owned by the Greater London Authority might be loaned to the Council at future Counts to mitigate the disadvantages of manual counting. The Board considered the request and noted that both electronic and manual voting systems had their respective advantages and disadvantages; however the counting of single votes was significantly improved. The Board noted that actions arising out of the poll were being pursued.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the update and revised milestones as attached at appendix 1 be noted.
2. That the comments of the Board be noted.

**5. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE**

The Acting Service Manager Strategy Policy and Performance presented the report. The Board noted:

- The summary of the review arrangements.
- The membership of the Peer review team.
- The schedule of interviews with Councillors staff and stakeholders.
- The challenger process as outlined in Section 5 of the report.
- The themes for review as set out in section 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

The Board noted:

- Feedback from the Peer Team had been received that arrangements for the review were satisfactory.

- That the Council's intention was to demonstrate that it wished to build on learning and embed a culture of improvement into the organisation into the future.
- The credentials of the Peer Team and the experience these will bring to the review.

A request was made that the position statement be shared with Board Members.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the progress made with preparations for the peer challenge as outlined in the report and presentation be noted.
2. That the position statement be shared with Board Members.

**Action by:** A Hoque, Acting Service Manager Strategy Policy and Performance

## **6. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed the new Cabinet Member for Children Schools and Young People. He thanked the outgoing Cabinet Member for Children's Services and acknowledged the work she had undertaken in providing leadership to address the findings of the inspection. He also acknowledged the work done by the Interim Divisional Director for Children's Social Services in this regard.

The Corporate Director, Children's presented the report which provided an update on progress in delivering improvements to children's social services in response to the OFSTED inspection report of April 2017. The Board was informed that:

- The report provided an update on progress against the 15 recommendations identified in the OFSTED inspection report.
- The service had entered the second phase of the improvement programme that had been established in response to the inspection and its aim was to achieve continuous improvement.
- OFSTED had conducted a visit in May 2018 and out of this had indicated that, since its visit in December 2017, there had been substantial improvement in the quality of practice relating to exploited children and their families. OFSTED noted that:
  - A dedicated multiagency team had been established to respond quickly to situations.
  - Overall, vulnerable adolescents were receiving higher levels of support.
  - There had been a change in culture in frontline social work.
- OFSTED were encouraged by the improvements evidenced in the quality of multiagency and social work practice for vulnerable adolescents and their families

The Corporate Director advised that, while the exceptional progress made had given encouragement, the Service need to ensure that the challenges of sustaining the improvements that had been achieved and the challenges around staff recruitment and retention would need to be met.

The Member for Children, Schools and Young People informed the Board:

- That there had been induction training as part of the Member learning and development programme to support elected Members to deliver their roles and responsibilities around safeguarding children. Further training was also included in the programme.
- That the Council faced challenges in meeting its sufficiency duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure that accommodation within authority's area met the needs of the children in the care of the Council.
- That he was keeping the IT infrastructure under observation to ensure that this did not act as a barrier to document access for social workers.

The Board:

- Acknowledged that addressing the areas of recruitment and retention was a long-term matter.
- Noted that, as part of the council's ongoing IT infrastructure improvements, it was planned that Framework-i social services casework management system would be implemented; this would provide a better IT interface.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and achievements.

The Board considered the report and information provided and in discussion:

- Noted, in relation to the Council's aim to becoming a recruiter of choice that much work had been done around recruitment. This had been evidenced in a good reduction of staff turnover rates which had fallen from 26% to 19%. However recruitment and retention was not solely influenced by salaries offered but on the 'offer' as a whole including learning and development and workloads.
- Noted that the service was moving towards restorative methods of social work where an holistic model was adopted as well as favourable rates of pay; this also influenced recruitment models. Turnover rate remained a factor for the Council even though most agency staff currently engaged had been with the Council for some time and brought a good range of skills to the service.
- Noted an advice from the Corporate Director that OFSTED had reported that there was evidence of a change of culture.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the progress made in delivering the children's services improvement programme be noted.

2. That the next steps in the improvement journey which will be updated in the next report be noted

**7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

The Board noted:

- That the period of the Secretary of State's directions would conclude on 30 September 2018.
- The Mayor stated he was keen to establish a Cabinet led Performance and Improvement Board to continue driving improvements across the the Council following the conclusion of the directions.

The meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs  
Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board