

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

HELD AT 1.00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 15 APRIL 2021

ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)

Members Present:

Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain Speaker of the Council
(Chair)

Councillor Sabina Akhtar

Councillor Peter Golds

Councillor Denise Jones

Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

Councillor Rajib Ahmed

Councillor Victoria Obaze

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Co-opted Members Present:

Councillor Asma Begum

Councillor Rachel Blake

Councillor Sirajul Islam

Officers Present:

Patricia Attawia

– (Democratic Services Team Leader,
Civic & Members, Governance)

Matthew Mannion

– (Head of Democratic Services,
Governance)

Muhammed Uddin

– (Democratic Services Officer, Civic &
Members, Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from Members already appointed to the Panel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

3. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Freedom of the Borough establishment and membership

The Chair handed over to Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, to administratively run the meeting and introduce the report.

Matthew Mannion presented the report on the establishment and membership of the Freedom of the Borough Ad-Hoc Panel 2021/22.

The panel was asked to note the Terms of Reference, Quorum, timetable and Membership.

Co-opted Members

The Terms of Reference allow the Panel to consider co-opting additional non-voting Members from outside the Council onto the Panel. The report included options available to the Panel for co-opting new Members.

The panel discussed the process for appointing co-optees, highlighting the importance of cross-party representation and gender balance. A list of potential co-optees drawn up in line with the recommendations in the Terms of Reference and consultation with officers and councillors, was presented to the Panel for consideration.

The Panel were in favour of co-opting all those listed. In addition, they asked that the Deputy Lieutenant for Tower Hamlets, Leslie Morgan, be invited to join the Panel.

Nomination Process and Form

The Panel were presented with options for the nomination process and nomination form, broken down into three main areas: timetable, process and level of publicity and nomination form. The prestigious nature of the award was emphasised, and the Panel discussed the alternative option of nominations for a Civic Award for unsuccessful applicants.

Timetable

The Panel considered the different options for the timetable, taking into account potential Covid restrictions that may still be in place, and the need to try and avoid a virtual ceremony if possible and plan for a full celebration.

They discussed the importance of taking the necessary time to reach all sectors of the community and to give the process the consideration needed for such a prestigious award. The Panel therefore considered it would take several months to conduct the nominations process and so the Award Ceremony should take place in the Autumn.

Process and level of publicity

The Panel discussed the need for clarity around what the Freedom of the Borough means, what it is and who should be nominated. It should be emphasised that it is an extremely prestigious award, granted for eminent services to the Borough given over a significant period of time.

Consideration was given to ways of reaching people and raising awareness of the award and the opportunity to nominate. It was highlighted that digital platforms alone would not be enough and other means of publicity should be used such as magazines, newspapers etc.

Members agreed it was important to ensure an open and inclusive process, with awards being representative across communities and gender. It was also considered important to show that it was supported on a cross-party basis.

There was a discussion about the number of awards that should be given out and it was felt that given the exclusive nature of the award the number should not be too high, but as there had only been 1 ceremony in the last 20 years it was felt that subject to nominations the Panel would be happy to give a number of awards this year.

The Panel discussed signposting to other awards such as the Civic Awards, and the special award being run by the Government specifically for contributions during Covid.

Nomination form

The panel considered the nomination form briefly but wanted more time to look at it together with the accompanying guidance.

DECISION

1. To note the Terms of Reference, Membership, Quorum and planned timetable.
2. To agree to the appointment of the following people as non-voting co-opted Members of the Panel
 - Mike Smith, Chair of THCVS and CEO of Real
 - Mizan Chaudhury, Former Speaker of Tower Hamlets
 - Cllr Sirajul Islam
 - Cllr Rachel Blake
 - Cllr Asma Begum
 - Cllr Rabina Khan
3. To invite the Deputy Lieutenant of Tower Hamlets, Leslie Morgan, to join the Panel as a co-opted member.
4. That a second meeting of the Panel be arranged for the end of May to consider amended proposals for the nomination form and process.

4. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 2.00 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain
Freedom of the Borough