

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.50 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 26 JULY 2023****COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL****Members Present in Person:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

**Members In Attendance Virtually:**

Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
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**Officers Present in Person:**

Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Denise Radley	(Corporate Director, Health and Social Care)
James Thomas	(Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Janet Fasan	(Director of Legal & Monitoring Officer)
Onyekachi Ajisafe	(Strategy & Policy Officer, Strategy, Policy & Performance)
Susannah Beasley-Murray	(Divisional Director of Supporting Families)
Stephen Bramah	(Corporate Head of Strategy and Improvement)
Terry Bryan	(Service Head (Pupil Access and School Sufficiency))
Lisa Fraser	(Director of Education)
Joseph Leach	(Business Intelligence and Performance Lead)
Simon Baxter	(Interim Director Public Realm)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

**Officers In Attendance Virtually:**

Caroline Holland	(Interim Corporate Director, Resources)
Jignesh Parmar	(Head of Procurement)

Jenny Pittam

Interim Head Contract Services

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES****RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 21 June be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR**

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, announced that there was an ongoing investigation by an independent investigator into concerns of Council homelessness staff that had been aired in a national newspaper article. Those staff had told the Chief Executive they were satisfied with the approach the Council was taking and would await the outcome of the investigation. Therefore the council would not be making any further comment prior to the outcome of the investigation. The Council's position was that the well-being of staff was an issue of significant importance both to the Chief Executive and the Mayor and they would be taking appropriate steps to ensure that staff impacted by the article were supported. Stephen also noted he felt the article was inappropriate, as it did not take into account the wider context of housing demand and had resulted in staff feeling undermined and stressed.

The Mayor noted the launch of Young Tower Hamlets recently at the Haileybury Youth Centre. He stressed the importance of promoting youth provision and to his administration and noted the significant additional investment previously agreed for youth services.

**5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions**

Councillor Musthak Ahmed, Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee addressed the meeting on behalf of the Committee. He provided the Mayor and Cabinet with an overview of the Committee's recent work including:

The call-in on the Cabinet Report on Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL). Councillor Ahmed extended his thanks to Councillor Kabir Ahmed, for his attendance and response to the call-in. The

committee deliberated on the evidence presented and subsequently voted on re-affirming the decision of the Mayor on Cabinet.

The committee had received and considered Cabinet reports for the Strategic Performance & Delivery Annual Report 2022/23 and the Outturn Budget Report 2022/23 (including Capital). One pre-decision question was agreed and submitted on Land Option – Neptune Wharf School Development Site.

## **5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

The Mayor and Cabinet noted that the decision on Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) taken at the June 2023 Cabinet meeting had been called in, and re-affirmed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **6.1 Annual Strategic Delivery and Performance Reporting –2022/23**

Stephen Bramah, Head of Corporate Strategy & Improvement introduced the report that provided an annual update on the delivery and implementation of the council's Strategic Plan throughout 2022/23.

The Mayor welcomed the report and noted high performance in several key areas, though expressed concern at the number of red-rated performance measures, particularly those directly related to tackling overcrowding and recycling. He emphasised his commitment to deliver 4,000 homes. He announced that he would ask officers to prepare improvement plans for underperforming measures.

At the invitation of the Mayor, Simon Baxter, Interim Director of Public Realm provided a verbal explanation for underperformance in recycling and the key measures to remedy it. Simon explained he was confident of seeing a material improvement in the next 12 months.

At the invitation of the Mayor, Paul Buckenham, Head of Development Management provided a verbal explanation for underperformance in housing delivery, including wider national and external challenges and the key measures the Council would take in response.

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, explained how the Council would review its role and relationship with central government including stronger and more effective lobbying for support to address the homelessness crisis.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the strategic delivery and performance report for 2022/23;
2. Notes the performance of the strategic measures, including those measures where the minimum expectation has been missed; and

3. Notes progress in delivering the council's Strategic Plan.

## **6.2 Tower Hamlets Council Strategic Plan : 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan**

Stephen Bramah, Head of Corporate Strategy & Improvement introduced the report that set out how the council would progress the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities in the second year of the administration. Stephen advised of a minor change to the proposed delivery plan: that the 2023/24 target for substance misuse continuity of care from prison to community, be increased slightly from 45% to 50% as the outturn for 2022/23 had only recently become available.

The Mayor welcomed the report and approved the revision to the target as above.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the Tower Hamlets Council Annual Delivery Plan for 2023/24 (Appendix 1 and 2 to the report) subject to measure 6.02 Adults with substance misuse treatment need who successfully engage in community based structured treatment following release from prison being increased to 50%.
2. Notes the specific equalities considerations as set out in paragraph 4 below.
3. Delegates authority to the Director Strategy, Improvement and Transformation to finalise any targets for performance measures which remain provisional (Appendix 2 to the report), following consultation with the Mayor.

## **6.3 Budget monitoring report 2022-23 Outturn (inc Capital)**

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living introduced the report that presented the provisional outturn compared to the budget report 2022-23 as at 31 March 2023 for the General Fund, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), progress made against savings targets and the council's capital programme. The report also provides projections on General Fund earmarked reserves and the forecast impacts of Covid on the councils finances in 2022-23.

Caroline Holland, Corporate Director Resources, asked the Mayor and Cabinet to note the Council faced substantial financial challenges over the next few years to deliver a balanced budget. It would also be necessary to address the significant overspends to the HRA outturn to ensure it remained stable and could deliver the Mayor's ambitious house building commitment.

The Mayor welcomed the report. He explained that some overspends were unavoidable, but the Council continues to monitor these pressures as closely as possible.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the council's Provisional outturn position against General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget, Housing Revenue Account and earmarked reserves for 2022-23, based on provisional outturn as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023;
2. Notes the progress made against the 2022-23 savings targets, based on provisional outturn as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023;
3. Notes the council's provisional outturn as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 against General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programme approved budgets for 2022-23, underspends to be released back into the general programme, the slippage into future years and the revised capital budgets for 2023-26; and
4. Notes that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from this report, as set out in Section 4 of the report.

#### **6.4 Contracts Forward Plan 2023/24 - Quarter 1**

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living introduced the report that set out a forward plan of supply and service contracts over £1m in value, or capital works contracts over £5m.

The Mayor welcomed the report, although expressed concern with the detail of the proposed contract 'St George's Leisure Centre Rebuild – Award of Main Contractor as he felt the delivery time was too long and should allow an open tender as opposed to a framework route. He indicated he did not approve authorisation for this contract to progress in its current form.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the contract summary at Appendix 1 to the report
2. Authorises the appropriate Corporate Director in consultation with the Mayor to award contracts set out in Appendix 1 following an appropriate procurement exercise, except for the contract with ref/title 'St George's Leisure Centre Rebuild – Award of Main Contractor';
3. Requests that the contract with ref/title 'St George's Leisure Centre Rebuild – Award of Main Contractor' is the subject of a separate report to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity;
4. Authorises the Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer), to execute all necessary contract documents in respect of the awards of contract referred to at resolution 2.
5. Notes the procurement forward plan 2023-2028 schedule detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

## **6.5 Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022/23**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning introduced the report that presented the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership (THSCP) annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in its locality for 2022-23.

James Thomas, Corporate Director Children and Culture provided further detail including highlighting the main challenges faced by the partnership in the last year. James stressed it was more important than ever for the Council to work with its partners to keep children safe.

At the invitation of the Mayor the other partner leads: Korkor Ceasar, Integrated Care Board and James Conway, Metropolitan Police, addressed the Cabinet. Korkor provided information on statutory reviews, their context and rationale. She explained how the partnership had learned and developed over the year. James summarised the next steps for the partnership including setting priorities and how it could learn from past experiences. He stressed that the partnership placed the voice of child at heart of its work.

The Mayor welcomed the report and thanked officers and partners for their hard work to deliver the report and their role in promoting the safety of children in the borough.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the work that has been carried out by the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children's Partnership over the year 2022-23 and the outcomes that members would like to see from the THSCP over the next year; and
2. Notes the specific equalities considerations as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

## **6.6 SEND Improvement Annual Report 2022**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, introduced the report that provided an overview of the progress and impact of SEND improvement work during 2022/23 and explained how NHS Northeast London and the Council worked together with other partners across the local area to deliver on priorities set out in the SEND Strategy and SEND Improvement Plan.

James Thomas, Corporate Director Children and Culture, provided further detail. James explained that whilst SEND support continues to be an area of significant pressure on the Council, new investment and a strong focus on

partnership working had contributed to driving improvements in the past few years.

Further to questions from the Mayor and Cabinet, James provided more detail on the support available for SEND post-16. James explained that support is provided up to 25 and the Council has expanded provision for that older age group. Lisa Fraser, Director of Education, provided details of new apprenticeship programmes launched January 2023, some of which are specifically for SEND residents.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the SEND Improvement Board Annual Report 2022/23.

## **6.7 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 - 2028**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning, introduced the report that outlined a vision for the future with a set of priorities; providing a roadmap of how the Council would work with young people over the strategy's five-year lifecycle to ensure they have every opportunity to develop, realise their aspirations and thrive.

James Thomas, Corporate Director Children and Culture and Susannah Beasley Murray, Head of Supporting Families, added further detail. Susannah stressed the strategy was ambitious and was co-produced with stakeholders including young people and parents etc coproduction. All priorities had clear work streams. James highlighted the important work of the Council's virtual school in promoting better attainment and outcomes for those in care.

The Mayor welcomed the report and draft strategy. The Cabinet welcomed the proposed strategy and noted the Mayor's commitment to expanding post-16 support for young people.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the final version of the Corporate Parenting Strategy following its progression through the council's decision-making process.

## **6.8 Corporate Parenting Commitments**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, introduced the report that proposed the Council introduce care experience as a protected characteristic, recognising the disparity and disproportionality faces by those with care experience when it comes to health, education, housing, employment, and criminal justice amongst others.

At the invitation of the Mayor, three care leavers addressed the Cabinet to talk about the experiences and challenges they faced due to being within the care system. Each reported how they had overcome those challenges to realise significant success in their professional and personal lives, but recognised the same was not always true for all care leavers, for whom statistics showed poorer outcomes compared to those without care experience. They welcomed the proposal to introduce care experience as a protected characteristic as they felt it would greatly help future care leavers to realise their goals and aspirations.

The Mayor and Cabinet thanked the young persons for their moving and inspiring testimony. All Cabinet members expressed a desire to celebrate their achievements so all could learn from their experiences.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Recognises that care experienced people are a group likely to face discrimination.
2. Agrees to treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic, conducting Equality Impact Assessments for future services and policies.
3. Proactively seeks out and listens to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies.
4. Includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and annual information relating to Protected Characteristics.
5. Calls upon all other local organisations and partners to treat care experience as a Protected Characteristic and adopt corporate parenting principles.
6. Identifies and review barriers impacting care experienced people in recruitment, offering guaranteed interviews for eligible applicants.
7. Encourages statutory partners and small businesses to adopt similar employment practices.
8. Establishes a cross-council approach to creating opportunities for care experienced individuals, including training for recruiting managers and support into apprenticeships.
9. Reports progress and achievements in the annual Corporate Parenting Board report and lobby central government for care experience to be a protected characteristic.
10. Notes the Equalities Impact Assessment / specific equalities considerations as set out from Paragraph 4.1 of the report.
11. Notes this report at the next Full Council meeting.



**6.9 Land option – Neptune Wharf**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning introduced the report that recommended that the Council not take up the option to develop the Neptune Wharf school site for a new primary school.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees that the Neptune Wharf site allocation is not taken forward for the development of a new three form entry primary school.

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

None.

**8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

A motion to exclude press and public was not required.

**9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

None.

**10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business**

None.

**10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

None.

**11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

None.

**12. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

None.

The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman  
Cabinet