

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.40 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 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 Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
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)

**Other Councillors Present in Person:**

Councillor Nathalie Bienfait

**Officers Present in Person:**

Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Warwick Tomsett	Joint Director, Integrated Commissioning
Simon Baxter	(Interim Director Public Realm)
Catherine Boyd	Interim Head of Arts, Parks and Events
Michael Darby	(Head of Parking & Mobility Services)
Kelly Duggan	HOS Youth Justice & Young People's Service • LBTH - Childrens Services
Janet Fasan	(Director of Legal & Monitoring Officer)
Lisa Fraser	(Acting Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Ben Gladstone	(Deputy Director of Commissioning of Older People)
Sam Harney	(Mayor's Political Advisor)
Abidah Kamali	Policy Officer Housing
Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
Paul Patterson	(Interim Corporate Director Housing And Regeneration)
Leah Sykes	(Head of Customer Services)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))
Susannah Beasley-Murray	(Divisional Director of Supporting Families)

Kathy Constantinou

Superintendent Registrar/Head of Registration and  
Citizenship Service

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

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

There were none.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 25 October be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

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

There were none.

**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 meeting.

The meeting included a spotlight with the Chief Executive which discussed the Annual Resident Survey, People First transformation programme, and some of the findings from the recent LGA peer review. It also discussed arrangements for performance monitoring of services coming back in-house such as leisure and THH, and how scrutiny will be engaged on this. Council's approach to improving diversity in senior roles. Councillor Ahmed asked for an update on recent senior recruitment.

The meeting had also

- discussed proposals for the council tax discounts and empty homes premium and had welcomed the proposal.
- considered the Youth Justice Annual Plan
- welcomed the opportunity to feed into the council's future community engagement strategy.

Finally, Councillor Ahmed asked the Mayor and Cabinet to note the Committee agreed pre-decision questions. The questions, and responses had been tabled.

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

None.

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

### **6.1 Single Homeless Hostels – Contracts**

Councillor Gulam Kibria Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care introduced the report that sought permission to extend the hostel contracts further by a period of 12 months until end November 2024 so a recommissioning and tender process could leading to the award of new hostel contracts in 2024.

The pre-decision scrutiny questions and responses were noted.

The Mayor recognised the exceptional circumstances of this case, but stressed that he would not entertain extensions to contracts or direct awards in future. He made clear his preference was for full tender exercises wherever possible for reasons of competition and transparency.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The Corporate Director Health and Adult Social Care and Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to extend the five hostel contracts referenced below until 30 November 2024 to allow Officers to review and competitively tender the services. The hostels are:
  - a. Founders House
  - b. Riverside Complex
  - c. Daniel Gilbert House
  - d. Edward Gibbons House
  - e. Providence House
2. Following the review of the services, authorise the Corporate Director Health and Adults Social Care and Deputy Chief Executive, following consultation with the Mayor, to award new hostels contracts in accordance with the tender results as determined by the application of the published evaluation criteria.

### **6.2 Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway contract extensions**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor)) introduced the report that requested approval for direct contract awards for services to provide safe alternative to housing 16/17-year-olds and young people aged 18-25 who are in and on the edge of care and homeless young people, from 1 December 23 until 1 June 2024 to enable time to implement the newly transformed Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Living Pathway.

The pre-decision scrutiny questions and responses were noted.

Further to questions from Cabinet members, • Lisa Fraser, Acting Corporate Director, Children's Services and Layla Richards, (Head of Strategy and Policy – Children and Culture) provided detail on the monitoring arrangements in place for the proposed contracts.

The Mayor reiterated his comments about the undesirability of direct awards and extensions (see minute for Item 6.1).

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the direct contract award request for the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) for six months from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 with a value of £675,892.43.
2. Notes the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report.

### **6.3 Tower Hamlets Young People's Advocacy Service contract extensions**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor)) introduced the report that requested approval for a direct contract award for provision of independent and confidential advice, information, representation, and support to our children in our care from the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 until the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2024 to enable time to design and implement the newly transformed Tower Hamlets Young People's Advocacy and Independent Visitors service.

The Mayor reiterated his comments about the undesirability of direct awards and extensions (see minute for Item 6.1).

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the direct contract award request for the Tower Hamlets Young People's Advocacy service for six months from the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2024 with a value of £55,572.
2. Note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report.

### **6.4 Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan 2023-2028: A Tower Hamlets for All**

The Mayor introduced the report that sets out the draft which provided a new shared vision for the borough which is 'residents and partners working together to improve quality of life, advance equality and opportunities and empower communities.

Abidah Kamali, Senior Strategy & Policy Officer, provided further detail. Abidah explained that the Plan sets out five key cross-cutting calls to action (priorities) which focus on the issues that matter most to residents and where the partnership can achieve most by working together. The Plan had been developed by a partnership Task and Finish Group and shaped by evidence and insight including key findings from the 2021 census data, a state of the borough paper and stakeholder and community engagement which included involvement of over 700 people through a range of mechanism including events and a survey.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the report and draft Plan, in particular noting

- The ways that partner agencies and groups can help to unlock opportunities otherwise out of direct reach, especially during the cost of living crisis.
- That the Council could learn a lot from how its partners work
- How the recent LGA Peer Review had highlighted good partnership working in the borough, of which this was an example.
- The passion, energy and engagement shown by partners

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, echoed the comments of Cabinet members. He noted the remarkable passion and commitment shown by partners in delivering better results for the borough.

The Mayor welcomed the report and expressed his thanks to officers, residents and partners. He indicated he would particularly welcome comments on the Plan from our partners.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees the Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan 2023-2028.

## **6.5 Children and Families Strategy 2024-2029**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor) introduced the report that proposed a new Children and Families Partnership Strategy with 8 agreed priorities for 2024 to 2029 for noting. Councillor Talukdar briefly summarised the priorities and how the Strategy would deliver improvements for children and families in the borough. He explained how the partnership strategy linked to the Mayor's priorities, particularly the priority to accelerate education.

Further to questions from Lisa Fraser, Acting Corporate Director, Children's Services provided more detail on how the experience of Covid and the current cost of living crisis had shaped the preparation of the Strategy. Layla Richards, (Head of Strategy and Policy – Children and Culture) explained how the Strategy aligns closely with the Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan, considered at the previous agenda item.

The Mayor welcomed the report and expressed his gratitude to all officers, members and partners involved in its preparation.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the strategic priorities set out for the Tower Hamlets' Children and Families Partnership in the Accelerate! Children and Families Partnership strategy.
2. Notes that the priorities identified in Accelerate! are reflected in the Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan.
3. Notes the Equalities Impact Assessment set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

## **6.6 Youth Justice Board Annual Report**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor) introduced the report that highlighted the progress made since the HMIP inspection in May 2022 and set out a plan to support the Youth Justice Partnership in delivering a consistently high-quality service for children and their families, providing clear strategic goals and an ambitious plan for 2025 and beyond. Councillor Talukdar briefly explained the key findings from the annual report and the four priorities for the 2023-25 plan.

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency as provided on the report.

Further to questions from Cabinet members, Susannah Beasley-Murray, (Divisional Director of Supporting Families) explained how feedback from children, partners and staff had shaped the 2023-25 plan themes and priorities.

Cabinet members welcomed the report noting in particular

- How it would empower the council to move forward and tackle the issues that most affected young people in the borough.
- The links and alignment to the Council's serious violence needs assessment.

The Mayor welcomed the report and expressed hope the new plan would enable young people to improve their life chances. He expressed his thanks to officers, partners and members of the Youth Justice Board.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the Youth Justice Annual Plan.

## 6.7 Review of the Major Events Policy, Victoria Park

Councillor Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation introduced the report that set out the current Major Events Policy for Victoria Park and proposed a number of amendments to the Major Events Policy to enable the Council to programme more events in Victoria Park, increase opportunities for residents to access high quality events and cultural programmes, benefit the local economy and support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) through revenue generation. Councillor Hossain explained how the new approach would bring the Council more into line with practice of other local authorities and would assist the Council financially in a time of reducing income and government support. He outlined the communication and consultation plans accompanying the policy change.

The pre decision scrutiny questions and responses were noted.

Cabinet members welcomed the report, in particular noting

- Victoria Park and other local parks played an important role in the lives and wellbeing of residents.
- Wider community and economic benefits could be realised in addition to direct income as a result of more commercial activity in the park.
- The additional income to be realised was essential to assist with the Mayor's pioneering and visionary approach to transforming and reviving public services to benefit all residents.

The Mayor welcomed the report. He noted the borough was small and densely populated with extremes of wealth and poverty. He stressed his administration had worked to find creative ways to increase the Council's income, whilst offering protection for open spaces. He felt the approach set out in the proposed new policy struck the right balance between these priorities. He offered his thanks to officers involved in preparing the report and draft policy.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Amends the Major Events Policy for Victoria Park to allow for up to 12 Major Event Days per calendar year as set out in paragraph 3.13 of this report.
2. Amends the Major Events Policy for Victoria Park to increase the capacity threshold for a major event from 5,000 persons at any one time to 20,000 at any one time, and amend the thresholds for small, medium and large events accordingly as set out in paragraph 3.16 of this report.
3. Amends the Major Events Policy for Victoria Park to change the categorisation of events considered to be major events, thereby allowing a broader range of events to take place in addition to the major events programme.

4. Notes the Equalities specific considerations as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report.

## 6.8 Parks and Open Spaces Capital Improvement Programme

Councillor Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation introduced the report that sought approval of capital funding to support priority capital investment projects for parks and open spaces, including some housing estate sites. Councillor Hossain explained that investment would enable the Parks Service to improve parks and open spaces, existing outdoor sporting facilities (and provide some new facilities) and enable playgrounds at a number of sites to be upgraded and have a minimum of 50% accessible play equipment.

Cabinet members welcomed the report and proposals, in particular noting:

- That open spaces play a vital key role in supporting and wellbeing of residents across all ages and genders.
- The investment would help to address a lack of adequate sporting facilities for young people in the borough.
- Similar investment in other areas of the borough, especially Island of Dogs, would be welcome.

The Mayor welcomed the report and proposals and wished to stress that he was aware of the importance of Health and Safety in respect to any decision made in relation to children's play equipment. He indicated he understood that no inspection regime, however good, is infallible. Accordingly, the Mayor made an addition instruction that a review is undertaken identifying any additional council play equipment that should be renewed or replaced on health and safety grounds and setting recommended dates for such action.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the Parks and Open Spaces Capital Programme and the allocation of Capital funding from s106. The estimated amount requested is £5,246,000 (including £627,000 reallocation of budget provision within the existing programme) and is subject to funding being confirmed through the Capital Governance Process.
2. Authorise the Corporate Director of Communities, after consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources (or their nominee) to agree and enter into the terms and conditions of any agreements required to implement the programme.
3. That a review is undertaken by the Parks Service that identifies any additional council play equipment that should be renewed or replaced on health and safety grounds, setting recommended dates for such action.
4. That a report is brought back to the Mayor in Cabinet by the Corporate Director of Communities at the earliest opportunity identifying any such play equipment along with the costs of renewal and forming part of a



structured, risk-based renewal and replacement rolling plan that ensures that health and safety risks in relation to children's play equipment is properly mitigated in a planned way going forward.

5. To note the health and safety consideration in Paragraph 3.10 of the report and risk management section in 5.5 of the report.
6. To note the Equalities Impact Assessment considerations as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report.

#### **6.9 New fees for the Garden Suite at St. Georges Town Hall – Register Office**

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding introduced the report that proposed new fees for post wedding celebrations in the new Garden Suite at St. Georges Town Hall. Councillor Ahmed explained that this would allow customers and residents the opportunity to hire a new space for post wedding celebrations as part of wedding packages. A consultation with residents will take place in the future if it is decided to hire the room out beyond office hours.

Further to questions from Cabinet members, Kathy Constantinou, Superintendent Registrar/Head of Registration and Citizenship Service and Leah Sykes, (Head of Customer Services) provided an overview of expected demand for the service in the first few years. They noted not many other local authorities offered a similar service.

The Mayor welcomed the report and asked that the new service is promoted widely including via BAME media outlets.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Corporate Director Resources to agree new fees being introduced by the Registration Service for post wedding celebrations in the new Garden Suite at St. Georges Town Hall as set out in section 3 of the report.

#### **6.10 Nominations to Outside Bodies – Tower Hamlets and Canary Wharf Further Education Trust**

The Mayor introduced the report that proposed changes to nominees to outside bodies.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Replaces Councillor Abdul Wahid with Councillor Amin Rahman as the Council's nominee to Tower Hamlets and Canary Wharf Further Education Trust.
2. Replaces Juned Khan, with Shenaly Miah as the Council's nominee to Stepney Relief in Need Charity.

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

None.

**7.1 Changes and amendments to the Permit Transfer Scheme criteria**

Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency introduced the report that proposed a review the car parking permit transfer scheme (PTS) to reword the scheme to remove ambiguity and widen the criteria of those who can apply to the scheme. Councillor Hussain explained how the new scheme would work if approved. He asked the Cabinet to note the change would have a positive impact on those who needed to use their car for their livelihoods, including taxi drivers and market traders.

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency as set out in the report.

Cabinet members welcomed the report and expressed hope the changes would empower residents who sought to move properties to within a previous car-free Zone.

The Mayor welcomed the report and asked that the new approach is clearly communicated to housing officers at the earliest opportunity to mitigate any risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The Council should similarly inform all affected RSLs to they understand the new policy.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees the proposed changes to the Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) criteria to fulfil the manifesto pledge.
2. Notes the Equalities Impact Assessment / specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report.

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

A resolution to exclude press and public was not required.

**9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****9.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business**

None.

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

None.

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

None.

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

Mayor Lutfur Rahman