

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 3 JULY 2012

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Shiria Khatun (Chair)

Councillor John Pierce
Councillor David Edgar
Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Aminur Khan

Other Councillors Present:

None

Officers Present:

Isabella Freeman	– (Assistant Chief Executive - Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
John Williams	– (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
Matthew Mannion	– (Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)

1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair MOVED and Councillor John Pierce SECONDED and it was:

RESOLVED

That Councillor David Edgar be elected as the Vice-Chair of the General Purposes Committee for the Council year 2012-13.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None were received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, QUORUM, MEMBERSHIP AND DATES OF MEETINGS (GPC001/123)

Note – Agenda Items 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 were appendices to this item and are consequently not listed separately in the minutes.

Mr Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, presented the report which set out for noting the General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference, Quorum, Membership and dates of meetings as agreed by the Council Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2012.

RESOLVED

To note the General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference, Quorum, Membership and dates of future meetings as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to this report.

5.5 LOCAL ELECTORAL REVIEW - UPDATE

Mr John Williams, Service Head Democratic Services, introduced the report. He outlined the progress of the Boundary Commission's review to date and the next steps. He asked the Committee to note a number of points including:

- The review was proposing 45 Councillors for the Borough
- The Commission was now considering the development of the new Ward structure.
- The public consultation period would last until 28 August. Draft proposals were expected in November.
- Future population growth would be factored into the design of Wards. Early examples of population data prepared by officers were shown to Members for their information.
- The new Ward boundaries would be in place for the 2014 Local Elections.

The Committee discussed the report and noted particular issues including:

- Whether the population growth estimates were an underestimate, particularly in areas such as the Isle of Dogs.
- Population growth could well straddle existing polling district boundaries so care needed to be taken when compiling data.

- The naming of the Wards was an important consideration.
- Meetings with the Commission for particular political groups were likely to be very useful.

Responding to questions, officers stated that:

- Officers would be available to offer support to party groups that wished to submit consultation responses.
- The Commission were keen to meet with interested groups and could be invited to an 'all Councillors' meeting or to individual group discussions.
- The Commission were very aware of the importance of community and historical links when designing and naming Wards.
- More detail could be requested from the Commission but the officer understanding was that the Ward design should ensure no more than a 10% variation in Ward population by 2018.

RESOLVED

That the information in the report be noted.

5.6 APPOINTMENTS TO EXTERNAL BODIES - CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

Ms Isabella Freeman, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services), introduced the report. She set out the history of the issues in the report and confirmed the legal view that it was the Mayor who held the power to make Executive appointments to outside bodies except in certain specific circumstances.

Following a request from Councillor Peter Golds, officers agreed to examine whether the original rules for appointing to outside bodies, as agreed by Members, had been properly determined, with particular reference to decisions taken at 3 March and 27 October 2010 Council meetings that looked to reserve local choice functions to Council.

During discussion Members raised a number of points relating to the nature of Executive appointments such as:

- Many bodies had wide ranging functions that did not fit Executive portfolios.
- Many bodies required Members of a local, representative nature which could potentially be at odds with the appointment of Executive members. Officers agreed to consider the issue of balancing the representative as against Executive nature of Member appointments.
- Being appointed to outside bodies was an important part of the function of being a Councillor.
- There was a need to resolve this issue as vacancies were now occurring.

Following the discussion officers confirmed that there was scope for examining whether some appointments related to Executive functions.

However it was noted that the Local Government Act 2000 was fairly explicit that most issues were Executive functions. They also reminded Members that in most cases the Mayor was free to appoint any Councillor to outside bodies should he so wish.

Officers agreed to liaise with the Mayor's office and the party groups on this issue and that the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) would come to a view on these issues and present a report to the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee.

RESOLVED

That a report be prepared for the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee providing an officer response to the following issues:

- Whether the Constitution had correctly taken account of Council resolutions, with particular reference to those from the 3 March and 27 October 2010 meetings.
- Which appointments to outside bodies were considered to be executive functions, and reasons for each decision.
- The extent to which issues such as the representative role of Councillors impacts on the consideration of appointments to outside bodies.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

The meeting ended at 7.24 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Shiria Khatun
General Purposes Committee