

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**  
**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 17 JUNE 2013**

**ROOM C1,1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE  
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Shiria Khatun (Chair)  
Councillor Aminur Khan  
Councillor Marc Francis  
Councillor John Pierce  
Councillor Alibor Choudhury (Cabinet Member for Resources)  
Councillor Craig Aston

**Officers Present:**

Chris Holme – (Acting Corporate Director, Resources)  
Louise Stamp – (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)  
  
John Williams – (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)  
Hania Franek – (Head of School Governance & Information)  
Evelyn Akoto – (Committee Officer)

**1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**RESOLVED**

That Councillor Marc Francis be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the General Purposes Committee for the remainder of 2013-14 municipal year.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Councillors Craig Aston, Marc Francis and John Pierce declared that they knew some of the applicants applying for the positions of Local Authority Governor. Full details in restricted minutes.

#### **4. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 27 March 2013 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

#### **5. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

##### **5.1 General Purpose Committee Terms Of Reference, Quorum, Membership and Dates of Meeting (GPC001/124)**

John Williams, Head of Democratic Services, 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 22 May 2013.

In response to a question, the Head of Democratic Services gave the following answer:

- It was possible for the 'Independent' to have deputies on Committees. If this was requested, a report would have to be submitted to Full Council for the appointments to be made.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the General Purposes Committee note its Terms of Reference, Quorum, membership and dates of future meetings as set out in the Appendices 1, 2, 3 of the report.

#### **6. REVIEW OF VIREMENT RULES - UPDATE**

At the request of the Chair the Committee adjourned for 5 minutes to allow Members to read the report which had been tabled.

Upon reconvening, the Chair asked Chris Holme, Acting Director of Resources, to present the tabled update report. Chris Holme highlighted key points in the report, which provided details on the resolution from Council that changes to the Virement rules should be part of the wider governance review being undertaken. He continued that Eugene Sullivan, a former Chief Executive of the Audit Commission was appointed to provide input to the review, and had already met with representative from each of the major parties.

In response to questions, Chris Holme gave the following responses:

- The governance review should be submitted to the General Purposes Committee in the autumn. A letter was sent to the Mayor and group leaders from the Head of Paid Service, setting out the time table.

- The intention was that the governance report would be seen by the General Purpose Committee before being submitted to Full Council.

The Chair requested that Chris Holme email the governance review timetable to General Purposes Committee Members.

Members noted that the process for the governance review could be delayed due to the Committee's meeting dates, and therefore proposed that Extraordinary General Purposes meetings could be held if deemed necessary.

**Action:** Chris Holme

### **RESOLVED**

That the Committee note the progress to date in undertaking the review.

## **7. WARD BOUNDARY CHANGES UPDATE AND POLLING DISTRICT POLLING PLACE REVIEW**

At the request of the Chair, John Williams, Head of Democratic Service presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Boundary Commission had confirmed their recommendation to reduce the Council size from 51 to 45.
- There was an increase in the number of wards from 17 to 20, with a variety of Councillor Ward sizes. There would be 2 single-member wards; 11 two-member wards and 7 three-member wards.
- The final recommendations included three minor changes; the significant changes were on ward names.
- The Boundary Commission had confirmed that the draft order was laid in Parliament for a period of 40 sitting days, and if accepted would come into effect at the next elections in 2014. The first register based on the revised electoral arrangements would be published on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014.
- An objection was made by Canary Wharf group PLC with 'Canary Wharf' being used as one of the revised ward names. Their objection was on the basis that it is their trading name and also that the ward did not include the entire Canary Wharf group. The Boundary Commission have indicated that they would not be revising the ward name. Canary Wharf Group PLC had therefore asked the Council to use its discretionary powers to make the change. A letter would be sent to the Mayor and group leaders about the representation made, to seek their views.

A discussion followed which focused on the implication and possible cost of the Council changing the proposed ward name. In response to questions John Williams, the Head of Democratic Services, and Louise Stamp, Electoral Services Manager gave the following answers:

- The initial name for the area was 'West India', but representations received complaints that the name was not suitable and so 'Canary Wharf' was a last minute change.
- The Council could use the Local Government Act to change the name of an existing ward, there are conditions attached and it would have to be with the permission of the Boundary Commission. If the council decided to pursue this, the timetable to make the change would be tight.
- The new revised register would be available for candidates and agents on 17 February 2014, and that would be the first register published on the new warding structure.
- As the electoral register would be published later than normal, it would be prudent for members to wait for the new information before canvassing.

John Williams, Head of Democratic Services highlighted key matters concerning the Polling District and Polling Place review;

- The Boundary Commission did not take into account the current location of polling stations, as it is recognised that once the recommendations had been confirmed the authority would carry out a Polling District Review in light of the new boundaries. The last review on Polling Districts was in 2011 and the Committee agreed to leave the polling locations at that time in place pending the completion of the Electoral Review by the Boundary Commission.
- John Williams would begin the review by seeking representations from members regarding any known issues about existing polling stations, or suggestions about other suitable premises that could be used.
- Maps of the new wards would be given to group leaders for their reference, and also posted on the website.
- A notice of review would be published on 21 June 2013 and Members would have up until 12 July 2013 to comment. An initial draft proposal would go to general public consultation, closing on 13 September 2013, with the final proposal report submitted to the General Purpose Committee on 25 September 2013.

In response to questions, the Head of Democratic Services gave the following responses:

- The guideline is that there should be an average of 1,500 electors per polling station, but factors such as major roads, accessibility etc, would have to be considered when making final decisions.
- There is a move away from using Secondary Schools as polling stations, due to exam periods, and also the use of portakabins due to hiring costs. There is now a move towards using other buildings such as community halls, but there needs to be assurances that they are DDA compliant before being considered.
- The final proposal would be presented to the General Purposes Committee, before being submitted to Full Council.
- The best ways for Members to make comments on the review of polling places is in writing to Louise Stamp.

The Committee suggested that a Members Seminar should be organised to give members the opportunity to further explore this matter and also comment. Members expressed a wish for the Seminar to be organised in July before the initial phase of consultation closes. Officers were reminded that the religious Month of Ramadan will need to be considered when making arrangements.

**Action: John Williams**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee note the report and agree the proposed process and timetable for the review of polling districts and polling places as set out at section 6 of the report.
2. That members be invited to submit any initial comments on proposed new polling districts and polling places to the Electoral Services Manager by 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

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

A motion to exclude the public and press was passed in the unrestricted part of the proceedings.

**9. RESTRICTED MINUTES**

Please refer to restricted minutes.

**10. LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS**

Please refer to restricted minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Shiria Khatun  
General Purposes Committee