

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**MP702, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,  
LONDON, E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Marc Francis (Chair)

Councillor Aminur Khan

Councillor Rajib Ahmed

Councillor John Pierce

Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Councillor Craig Aston

**Officers Present:**

Mark Norman

– (Interim Monitoring Officer)

Louise Stamp

– (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)

John Williams

– (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)

Hania Franek

– (Head of School Governance & Information, Education Social Care & Wellbeing)

Evelyn Akoto

– (Committee Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apology for absence was received from Cllr Shiria Khatun

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest but Members of the Committee declared personal interests as they knew some of the applicants applying for the positions of Local Authority Governor. Full details in Part 2 minutes.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

## **4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **4.1 Polling Place Review**

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

- The report was a progress report and provided an update on the review of polling districts and polling places, and the representations received during the consultation.
- A lot of representations were received which affected two thirds of the wards. Officers were still in the process of reviewing all proposals and visiting new polling stations in order to decide on their suitability, this was a huge undertaking which has to be completed thoroughly.
- A Members seminar was held as part of the consultation process which produced numerous suggestions which were being reviewed.
- Officers were still in the process of working out final recommendations on polling arrangements which would be brought back to the December Committee meeting.

A discussion followed which focused on how the new changes would be publicised. In response to questions John Williams and Louise Stamp gave the following answers:

- Household canvassing would start next week and would continue through to mid-February 2014. The new polling details would therefore be published on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014. There would be two versions available, current councillors would continue to receive updates of the electoral register for their current ward, whilst all candidates for the 2014 elections would be issued with the updated register based on the new ward arrangements.
- The Council had delegated powers to the GP committee relating to electoral matters. The final recommendations for new polling arrangements on polling stations were delegated to the Returning Officer, John Williams.
- All representations would be investigated; however there was a lot of conflicting information which had to be reviewed and verified to ensure that no properties had been missed before final recommendations will be made. It is likely that the final report would be ready before the December Committee.
- Canvassers would visit all properties, including new build complexes. All Council tax forms are sent out with a registration form, however it was likely that there would continue to be people changing addresses from now to the election date, hence the Council had applied for a grant from the Cabinet Office to enable the Authority to send out confirmation letters at the end of February 2012 to ensure the register is up-to-date.
- All polling stations that were previously used but are no longer being used will display full details of new polling locations on polling day.

Confirmation letters and polling cards would provide residents with the full information on the changes to new wards and new polling stations. All Idea stores in the borough would be advertising information on their plasma screens.

- Newspapers like East End Life would be used to inform the public of upcoming changes. There is a big communication strategy being rolled out, as there would be 3 elections on the same day that voters needed to be made aware of, as well as the recent boundary changes which had altered the number of councillors standing per ward.
- When IER commences in June 2014, all addresses would be crossed matched with DWP records, any anomalies would be investigated and verified i.e. by visiting properties etc. Members could inform electoral services if they had details of people who were not on the electoral register.

With regards to Appendix A, the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places documents which were handed out to members at the meeting, officers highlighted that the information listed was subject to change as each recommendation was reviewed and new locations visited for suitability.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to officers who had worked hard to ensure residents in Fish Island were provided with an accessible polling station.

#### **5. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the remaining agenda item contained information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

#### **6. RESTRICTED MINUTES**

The restricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the general purposes Committee held on 17 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

#### **7. LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS**

Please refer to Part 2

#### **8. ANY OTHER EXEMPT BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Marc Francis

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE,  
25/09/2013

SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED)

General Purposes Committee