

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2013

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

Members Present:

Councillor Shiria Khatun (Chair)
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Craig Aston
Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Shahed Ali

Officers Present:

Hania Franek	– (Head of School Governance & Information, Education Social Care & Wellbeing)
Louise Stamp	– (Electoral Services Manager, Chief Executive's)
John Williams	– (Service Head, Democratic Services, Chief Executive's)
Evelyn Akoto	– (Committee Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There was an apology from Councillor Pierce for whom Councillor Mukit was deputising.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 25 September 2013 were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Polling District and Polling Place Review Final Proposals -

At the request of the Chair, John Williams (Service Head Democratic Services) presented the report. He stated that the report outlined the final recommendations for the polling arrangements. A revised paper on polling districts and polling places was circulated at the meeting (Appendix C); he highlighted that the former Holy Trinity Church should have been listed as the proposed polling place for Bow West (BW3) and also that Whitechapel had four proposed polling districts and not 5 as listed in the circulated agenda.

A discussion followed which focused on the following points:

- Concern was raised with the proposal of changing the current polling place of St Matthias Primary School in polling district WE3 (Weavers) to William Davis Primary School. Members stated that St Matthias was well situated in the Ward, with many pensioners, and the balance of people living nearer to St Matthias.
- Officers commented that not all proposed polling stations had yet been visited to check Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance, and that if stations were found not to be suitable, Members would be duly informed via the Chair of the Committee. It was hoped that this process would be completed by the end of January 2014.
- The Committee agreed to delegate authority to officers to approve potential changes to the proposed polling arrangements as necessary, following consultation with the Chair and relevant ward councillors.

Councillor Mukit **PROPOSED** and it was **AGREED** that the Weavers WE3 polling station should be St Matthias CE Primary School.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee note the information in the report and agree the proposed new arrangements for polling district and polling places, as set out in the tabled Appendix C, with the following exception;
 - a) That the WE3 polling station be changed from William Davis Primary School to St Mathias CE Primary School.
2. That the Committee delegate authority to the Service Head Democratic Service to approve any necessary changes to polling arrangements after consultation with the Chair and relevant ward councillors.

4.2 Local Election Protocol

This report was tabled at the meeting.

John Williams (Service Head, Democratic Services) presented the report to the Committee for noting. He stated that the report was to update the Committee on the ongoing work with the Metropolitan Police, Electoral Commission and other partners to ensure transparency of the elections

processes in Tower Hamlets. He highlighted key areas such as the local code of conduct, which was to supplement the codes issued by the Electoral Commission, enhanced to address issues of local concern.

A discussion followed which focused on the following points:

- The Committee discussed the varied ways that postal votes could be delivered, and felt that the option of recorded delivery should be the preferred choice, as it required a signature from the recipient.
- It was noted that although it would not be compulsory for members to sign the local protocol, all parties and candidates would be asked to sign up to the code. Some Members felt that this information should be made available on the Council's website.
- The Committee discussed plans to maintain public order on voting day, such as requesting Candidates not to allocate more than two campaigners to gather outside polling places at any one time. Access to polling places and pavements around polling places would be kept clear to allow easy access for voters. Public order offences committed during Election Day would be dealt with by the Police, but this will be limited to public areas and not within polling stations.

A Member commented that elections in Tower Hamlets were sensitive, and felt that there should be tight procedures to regulate behaviour during the whole election period.

RESOLVED

That the report and the draft Local Electoral Protocol be noted.

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

Please refer to section two minutes.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

Please refer to section two minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

Chair, Councillor Shiria Khatun
General Purposes Committee