

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.01 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2014

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

Members Present:

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman (Chair)
Councillor Rachael Saunders (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs
Councillor Helal Uddin

Co-opted Members Present:

Memory Kampiyawo – (Parent Governor Representative)
Nozrul Mustafa – (Parent Governor Representative)
Rev James Olanipekun – (Parent Governor Representative)
Dr Phillip Rice – (Church of England Diocese Representative)

Guests Present:

Councillor Alibor Choudhury – (Cabinet Member for Resources)

Officers Present:

Agnes Adrien – (Team Leader, Enforcement & Litigation, Legal Services, Chief Executive's)
Mark Cairns – (Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Dave Clark – (Acting Service Head Resources, Development and Renewal)
Everett Haughton – (Third Sector Programmes Manager, Third Sector Team, Development and Renewal)
Nazrul Islam – (Principal Reporter Harmony, Communications, Chief Executive's)
Louise Russell – (Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality, Directorate for Law Probity and Governance)
Graham White – (Interim Deputy Head of Legal Services)
Louise Fleming – (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

The Chair advised that the regular Scrutiny Spotlight item had been missed off the agenda in error. He wanted to record his disappointment that the Mayor was not available to attend the meeting and advised that the Mayor would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from

- Councillor Stephanie Eaton
- Councillor Fozol Miah
- Councillor Abdal Ullah
- Councillor David Snowden

The Chair **Moved** and it was

Resolved

That the apologies for absence be received and noted

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

Nozrul Mustafa declared a personal interest in item 6.1 (Project Information Report – Community Chest and Community Events) due to being an Executive Member of the Collective of Bangladeshi School Governors, which had applied for and had been granted funds from the Mayor's Community Chest and Events fund.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs advised that she had given her apologies prior to the meeting and that they had not been recorded.

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20th January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings, subject to being amended to record Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibb's apologies.

Matters Arising

The Chair advised that a Freedom of Information request had been submitted on his behalf in respect of diary/timesheets for the Mayor, specifically in relation to community events at which he had used the Mayoral Car.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items.

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Project Information Report - Community Chest & Community Events

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, and Dave Clark, Acting Service Head Resources, Development and Renewal presented a report which set out information requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7th January 2014.

The report focussed on bidding rounds 1 to 4 of the Community Chest and Community Events funding streams and reviewed the approved projects and initiatives in relation to the levels of the awards; the type of events' the agreed outputs and the geographical spread of the awards. The report also clarified the processes and procedures relating to the management and administration of the 2 funding streams and the pre-election guidance pertaining to funded events. Members were advised that the minutes of the relevant Corporate Third Sector Grants Programme Board had been circulated electronically by email in January. Members requested that hard copies of the minutes also be circulated.

The Chair apologised for the lack of refreshments at the meeting and the lack of papers and asked officers to ensure that papers were sent to all Members of the Committee and that the appropriate arrangements were made for future meetings.

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

Dave Clark, Acting Service Head Resources, Development and Renewal, advised that projected dates for forthcoming community events would be added to the appendix to the report when they became known and would send a list of all those events to Members.

Members asked for clarification regarding the outputs of the event organised by Mulberry School as this was not clear in the report. Councillor Choudhury and Everett Haughton, Third Sector Programme Manager, advised that the event had taken place in the summer of 2012 and the grant had been paid retrospectively. An application form had been submitted by the Headteacher of the School, but was not dated. The Chair requested further information, in particular whether the outputs had been monitored and what the conditions for funding had been. A letter which had been submitted by the School in relation to the aims of the event would be circulated to Members of the Committee. The Chair asked for further information on exactly what the money had been used for as it was not clear from the report. Members requested a breakdown of the expenditure for this grant.

Action by:

Dave Clark (Acting Service Head, Resources, Development and Renewal)
Everett Haughton (Third Sector Programme Manager, Development and Renewal)

Members asked for clarification on the number of outputs which had been verified and the number of grants to be paid which were still outstanding. Mr Haughton advised that 50% of the grant was paid in advance and the remaining 50% was paid on receipt of evidence, for example invoices for equipment or services. 100% of the grants have been closed. The Council would only pay for what had been spent, if the final total was less than the grant originally applied for.

Members asked for clarification on whether the Council for Voluntary Services had expressed a view on the winding down of the Community Chest fund and it was proposed that a letter be written to the CVS to ask for their view.

Action by:

Mark Cairns, Strategy Policy and Performance Officer

Members expressed the view that the governance of the Community Chest fund seemed more robust and could better meet the sustainability and capacity building aims. It was felt that moving the money from the Chest fund to the Events fund was a step in the wrong direction.

In response, Councillor Alibor Choudhury advised that the CVS could continue working on building capacity among community organisations and it received £250,000 of Council funding to carry out this function.

Members also expressed concern over the disparity between the funding across different areas of the Borough, particularly in LAPs 5 and 6; and between the east and west of the Borough. In response, Councillor Choudhury advised that approximately 64% of community organisations were based in the west of the Borough and that many are based there but work across the Borough. Members asked the Cabinet Member whether he was concerned that the areas of multiple deprivation, with the worst poverty, were

receiving the least funding. It was suggested that an event be held in the east of the Borough to try and encourage applications. In response Councillor Choudhury advised that grants were made based on applications received and that it would be inappropriate to solicit applications from any one area of the Borough. He reminded Members that it was the role of the CVS to provide support for the more inexperienced community organisations.

The Chair expressed concern that there was a disparity between the funding in the west and the east of the Borough and a perception in the Borough that the grants should not fund events which could be used for political gain. He asked Councillor Choudhury for his assurance that every effort would be made to protect community organisations, the Mayor and Councillors from any accusations of impropriety. In response, Councillor Choudhury drew Members' attention to the clear guidelines and pre-election guidance and advised that officers would ensure that correct procedures were followed. He did not feel that there was a disparity, however he undertook to pass the Committee's comments to the CVS.

The Chair concluded the discussion and requested that:

- The Mayor consider the disparity in grant funding across the Borough when considering future grant applications. Grant funding should benefit the whole community.
- The Mayor should also consider transferring money back into the Community Chest Fund.

The Chair then **Moved** and it was

Resolved

1. That the contents of the report be noted, subject to the above comments.
2. That it be noted that the Service Head Resources had included the Community Chest and Community Events programmes in the 2014/15 Audit Plan.

Action by:

Dave Clark, Acting Service Head, Resources, Development and Renewal
Everett Haughton, Third Sector Programmes Manager, Development and Renewal

6.2 Log of Actions Requested at Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings During the Municipal Year 2013-14 (1)

The Chair briefly outlined some proposed points and recommendations which would form part of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March on the Executive Mayor's Car, of which the Committee Members were broadly in support.

Louise Russell, Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equalities, updated the Committee on the outstanding actions in the report and advised that they would be followed up with the relevant officers.

The Chair requested that the action relating to the TV advert on the Decent Homes Programme be progressed as soon as possible. In response, officers advised that a report would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th March in relation to this issue.

The Chair also requested that the points made at the meeting on 7th January 2014 in relation to electoral fraud and the Committee's request to see the related communications strategy should be added to the action log.

The Chair then **Moved** and it was

Resolved

3. That the contents of the log of actions attached to the report be noted, subject to the above comments.
4. That the progress made on actions that remain outstanding and the completion of the actions as indicated in the log attached to the report.

Action by:

Louise Fleming (Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

7. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

Nil items.

8. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

Members made the following comments and asked the Chair to raise at the meeting of the Cabinet on 5th February:

- expressed concern that the exempt report relating to the new Civic Centre and was too brief and did not contain enough financial information in order for Members to properly scrutinise the decision particularly in relation to the costs of the proposals.
- The proposals in the report had budget implications and as the final decision on the budget was the responsibility of full Council, Members needed more information in order to make an informed decision. There should be information on the pros and cons of the proposals and alternative options considered.
- Information relating to an audit of the Council's assets was needed to give context for the decision.

In addition the Chair made the following comments:

- It was important for the decision to be made with the proper information being available, and that the decision process made should be as

clear and as transparent as possible. Therefore the information contained in the pink paper should be reviewed to ensure it met the criteria for exemption. If not, the information should be put into the unrestricted part of the report.

- It was important to understand what assets had been sold and what the receipts had been used for. Information should be provided on future potential sales of assets to provide reassurance to Members.
- A clear picture was needed on the Council's assets, why the Council was selling and what the receipts would be used for.

The Chair Moved and it was

Resolved

That the comments above be passed on to the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th February 2014.

Action by:

Mark Cairns, Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer

9. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

SUMMARY OF EXEMPT PROCEEDINGS

11. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

12. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

13. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS

Nil items.

14. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.08 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Overview & Scrutiny Committee