

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

**RECORD OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS' DECISION MAKING
MEETING**

HELD AT 5.05 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2016

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

Members Present:

Sir Ken Knight	(Commissioner)
Chris Allison	(Commissioner)
Max Caller	(Commissioner)
Alan Wood	(Commissioner)

Co-opted Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs	(Executive Mayor)
Councillor Rachael Saunders	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)

Councillors Present:

Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	

Officers Present:

Vicky Allen	(Strategy Policy & Performance Officer, Strategy, Corporate Strategy and Equality Service, Chief Executive's)
Zena Cooke	(Corporate Director, Resources)
Emily Fieran-Reed	(Service Manager, Community Cohesion, Engagement and Commissioning, Corporate Strategy and Equality)
Jo Green	(Childcare Sufficiency Manager)
Everett Haughton	(Third Sector Programmes Manager, Third Sector Team)
Steve Hill	(Head of Benefits Service)
Pauline Hoare	(Lead Officer, Early Years)
Christine McInnes	(Service Head, Education and Partnerships, Children's Services)
Antonella Burgio	(Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rachael Saunders and Mayor John Biggs.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

Note – Guest, Councillor Golds declared an interest in respect of item 6.3 in that he was a Council appointee on the board of the Green Council Dance Company.

3. DECISIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The published decisions of the meeting held on 5 July were noted for information and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

The Chair advised that two public submissions concerning agenda item 6.3 “MSG Performance Report April - June 2016” had been received. These were from Mile End Community Project and Limehouse Project. He advised that these representations would be considered during the discussion of the item.

5. EXERCISE OF COMMISSIONERS' DISCRETIONS

The Chair introduced the item which reported two urgent decisions discharged by Commissioners as individual decisions in the period 28th June - 5th August 2016.

RESOLVED

That these decisions be confirmed

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 MSG Theme 5: Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience Arrangements from 1st April 2017"

Emily Feiran-Reed Service Manager, Cohesion Engagement and Commissioning presented the report which outlined a rationale for the adoption of a commissioning approach to voluntary sector activities around community engagement cohesion and resilience from April 2017.

The Chair invited Councillor Mukit to comment on the report on behalf of the Grants Scrutiny Subcommittee (GSSC) and he indicated that, in general, the proposal was endorsed. He also

- highlighted the importance of the work of small local voluntary sector organisations to vulnerable groups and
- raised concerns that local organisations would find the transition to commissioning arrangements challenging and, due to competition, these might be prevented from applying

Noting the concerns raised, the following information was provided to Commissioners and Co-optees

- it was intended that engagement would be facilitated through training on commissioning and co-production would give opportunities in this respect.
- since the services in this theme were not categorised as essential care services, there was scope to explore commissioning flexibly.
- the proposals reported would serve to test the suitability of the intended approach.
- the introduction of commissioning based procurement did not rule out all other forms of future grant-making.

Commissioners noted that co-production can appear fearful to small and inexperienced organisations and Commissioners asked officers to respond to the issues raised by GSSC.

Action by, Steve Hill, Head of Benefits Service, Resources

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

6.2 Integrated Early Years' Service Commissioning

Pauline Hoare, Early Years Lead Officer presented the report which outlined arrangements for clarifying arrangements for early year services provision in the circumstances of reducing Direct Schools Grant and move to a commissioning approach. To assist the transition, Schools Forum agreed arrangements for funding supplements for the Two-year Old Funding programme and for parachute payments for Early Years Grants over 19 months in the period August 2015 – April 2017. It was noted that Commissioners and the Executive had had input into the discussion regarding the arrangements for regularising early years provision.

The Chair invited Councillor Mukit to comment on behalf of GSSC and he indicated that

- GSSC requested an explanation as to why there were no bids from the complex needs block.
- GSSC wanted an assurance that there would be a process of review and learning as to why there had been no bids by involving the sector earlier through co-production.
- many groups did not understand the logic around placing bids.

The Lead Officer noted the comments and advised that

- Tower Hamlets Group had applied but were overwhelmed by the complexity of the process. Therefore officers have been asked to contact all interested groups to hear their views on how the process

can be made better and from these a re-commissioning will be explored.

Responding to above, Commissioners and Co-opted Members noted that:

- their support for the approach in the transitional period and the proposal to provide funding supplement
- 1100 children had been supported by the early years programme.
- a future report should be made outlining and monitoring growth of the service
- the proposals will ensure that future arrangements will be operated in a transparent manner
- the projects would be aligned to Government priorities
- it was desirable that delivery of imaginative solutions should be achieved. The Lead Officer confirmed that this would be thought through highly skilled and creative staffing from the voluntary sector

Action by, Pauline Hoare, Early Years Lead Officer, Children's Services

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

6.3 MSG Performance Report April-June 2016

Steve Hill, Head of Benefits Services presented the report which informed Commissioners and Co-opted Members of the activities and services being delivered and their respective RAG ratings in the period April to June 2016. Two public submissions circulated at item 4 were considered as part of the discussion.

The Chair invited Councillor Mokit to comment on behalf of GSSC and he indicated that:

- the Subcommittee wish future reports to provide some high-level information about the support offered to organisations which are needed to improve their performance
- the subcommittee endorsed the proposed recommendations but also wished to receive information on measurable actions and cost analysis in future reports

Councillor Golds made a representation on behalf Green Candle Dance Company requesting that their case be re-examined.

Commissioner Caller noted:

- the requests made by GSSC
- that the process of monitoring performance and imposing sanctions was not being administered correctly.
- that for transparency, changes to targets and terms must be done through an open process and brought before Commissioners for approval.

- there was concern that details and arguments around changes to targets/criteria had not been provided. Commissioner Caller agreed that a written report should be received made containing a rationale for proposals relating to withdrawal of funding
- that changes affecting the criteria for release of grants may be taken forward only after Commissioners have been apprised and considered the matter.
- Commissioners had previously highlighted that it was necessary to report to them details of organisations receiving MSG which had ongoing performance issues. Therefore Commissioner Caller suggested that decisions to close underperforming projects reported be deferred pending a detailed report to be presented at a future meeting

The Chair endorsed Commissioner Caller's approach noting any withdrawal of grant must be made through a transparent process.

Mayor Biggs noted that it had been inappropriate in the past to delegate powers to re-negotiate contracts to officers; therefore it was necessary to have an appropriate transparent protocol. To prevent further delays he suggested that Commissioners should take individual decisions on projects in danger consulting with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that these decision be reported in public. Commissioner Knight also requested that GSSC be kept informed of matters.

Actions by, Steve Hill, Head of Benefits Service, Resources

Concerning the projects that reported performance issues, the following was noted:

- The Corporate Director Resources advised that grant to the Limehouse Project had been withheld due to outstanding issues around a property lease in accordance with agreed Commissioners' directions. It was noted that there had been recent progress around resolving this matter.
- Councillor Saunders noted that Mile End Community Project was a small project and personal circumstances were responsible for its withdrawal from MSG rather than performance issues.

RESOLVED

1. That,
 - a. regarding the ongoing premises agreement at 3.3.1 of the report and noting the information provided verbally on Osmani Trust and Limehouse Project on their premises agreements, that funding should be released to these named projects
 - b. that discussions around premises agreements be continued with Children Education Group

2. That,
 - a. based on the verbal information presented at the meeting relating to red and amber projects that the withdrawal of Mile End Community Project from MSG as per the public submission for the personal reasons described by Councillor Saunders be noted
 - b. since the Ragged School Museum had requested a significant variation in their targets, the withdrawal of funding for this project be deferred pending Commissioners consideration of the variations requested.
 - c. the withholding of £5053 grant funding to Somali Parents and Children's Play Association be endorsed on the basis of the monitoring information provided
3. That,
 - a. on the basis of the monitoring information provided in the report, the following *amber rated* projects receive two of the three months advanced funding in accordance with the MSG programme procedure
Teviot Bangladeshi Association
City Gateway
Wadajir Somali community Centre
Age UK East London
Toynbee Hall well-being in Tower Hamlets
Toynbee Hall well-being Centre
 - b. on the basis of the monitoring information provided in the report, the following projects which have *moved from red ratings to amber* receive two of the three months advance funding
Teviot Bangladeshi Association
City Gateway
Bangladesh youth movement
 - c. on the basis of the monitoring information provided that the following projects have which have *moved from green to amber* receive of two of the three months funding
Wadajir Somali community Centre
Age UK East London
Toynbee Hall well-being in Tower Hamlets
 - d. on the basis of the monitoring information provided that the following projects which would have *remained at amber* rating receive two of the three months funding with the expectation that these projects will return to green rating in the next period
 - e. Toynbee Hall well-being Centre
- 4 That on the basis of the verbal discussion at the meeting that the release of funding for the following projects be deferred:
 - a. Monakka Monowar Welfare Foundation - on the basis that the supplementary monitoring information provided at page 3 of 2nd supplement raised performance issues

- b. Shadwell Community Project - the release of funding deferred pending the provision of all the required monitoring information.
 - c. Green Candle Dance Company - release of two of the three months funding deferred pending Commissioners' consideration of variation to agreed targets.
5. That the project and programme management arrangements and ongoing improvements in the monitoring and reporting of information be noted

6.4 Emergency Funding Revised Criteria

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director Resources presented the report which proposed a number of changes to the current emergency funding programme, to ensure a clear understanding and consistency in approach to addressing any applications in this category.

The Chair invited Councillor Mukit to comment on the report and he indicated that GSSC:

- suggested that the presentation of the table at Appendix B should first indicate which types of activity for which emergency funding *may* be awarded followed by types of activity would not qualify for this funding.
- wished to receive an update on developments in this area at a future meeting.

Action by, Steve Hill, Head of Benefits Service, Resources

Commissioners and Co-opted Members indicated support for the proposals and welcomed the clarity that would be offered to those that need to access this funding.

RESOLVED

1. That the revised process and criteria for emergency funding as detailed in paragraph 3.9 and 3.10 subject to the revision requested by GSSC be approved
2. That a report detailing feedback on the revised scheme be made to Commissioners three months after implementation of the revised process, taking into account the views of the Third Sector Advisory Board
3. That the revised arrangements were decision-making as detailed in Option 2 at paragraph 3.9 of the report be approved
4. That the examples of matters likely and unlikely to be funded through the program as detailed at 3.12 of the report be agreed

5. That the issues relating to the reserves as set out in paragraph 3.13 to 3.17 the report be noted
6. That the revised application assessment forms and FAQs at appendices A,B and C be approved subject to the revision suggested by GSSC regarding the display of eligible/ineligible activities for this category of funding.

6.5 Grants Register - Moving to Commissioning (review outcomes)

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director Resources presented the report which sought to identify which grants were likely to be commissioned in future. It was noted that the outcome of the review indicated that a large number of grants were likely to remain in a grants format rather than transferred to a commissioning arrangement.

The Chair invited Councillor Mukit to comment on the report of behalf of GSSC and he indicated that he had no specific comments it wished to make although GSSC was awaiting officer responses to questions relating to some schemes in the register.

Commissioners and Co-opted Members considered to the report and noted:

- the information at appendix A should clearly outline which services/projects would transfer to commissioning arrangements and which would not.
- The following projects had not detailed their budget 2016-17, Local Community Ward Forums, Crisis and Support Grants, and Discretionary Housing payments. They were informed that it was impossible to report this figure because it was subject to policy considerations which were to be made in the coming months.

RESOLVED

1. That it be noted that the four grants below are likely to be commissioned in future as detailed in the report
 - MSG programme (2015 -- 16) VCS organisations
 - Positive activities are young people, VCS organisations
 - Ben Jonson Road improvement Works, Community
 - Local Community Initiatives S106 Funding, Community

6.6 Grants Forward Plan

RESOLVED

That the arts forward plan 2016 17 as at 27 September 2016 be noted

6. REVIEW OF GRANTS SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

Vicky Allen, Corporate Strategy and Equality Officer presented the report which reviewed the initial activity of the Grants Scrutiny Subcommittee during its first three months. The report made 11 recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Committee based on the findings of the review. Councillor Mukit advised that a recruitment of co-opted members was being undertaken with the aim of bringing experience, relevant experience from the community into the grants making process.

Commissioners and Co-opted Members noted:

- The wide cross-party engagement offered by the creation of the subcommittee
- The support and efforts of Councillor Mukit to engage all of the political parties in this area of work
- That work undertaken to increase the profile of GSSC and engage local people in the delivery of its work was supported by Commissioners and Co-opted members
- That co-optees appointed to GSSC should add value but needed to be selected carefully to prevent potential conflicts of interests

RESOLVED

1. That the above comments be noted and referred to Grants Scrutiny Subcommittee for information
2. That the recommendations of the report be endorsed
3. That the report be referred onwards to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 6.20 p.m.

Chair: Sir Ken Knight
COMMISSIONER