

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

HELD AT 5.33 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2019

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

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs	
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Planning, Air Quality and Tackling Poverty)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	(Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit)
Councillor Amina Ali	(Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing)
Councillor David Edgar	(Cabinet Member for Environment)
Councillor Danny Hassell	(Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People)
Councillor Candida Ronald	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	(Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Peter Golds	
Councillor James King	
Councillor Andrew Wood	(Leader of the Conservative Group)

Officers Present:

Agnes Adrien	(Head of Litigation, Legal Services)
Kevin Bartle	Interim Divisional Director of Finance, Procurement and Audit
Chris Humphreys	(Senior Communications Officer)
Asmat Hussain	(Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Debbie Jones	(Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Neville Murton	Corporate Director of Resources
Denise Radley	(Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community)
Judith St John	(Divisional Director, Sports, Leisure and Culture)
Ann Sutcliffe	(Corporate Director, Place)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Matthew Vaughan	(Political Advisor to the Conservative Group, Democratic Services, LPG)
Adam Boey	(Senior Strategy & Policy Manager - Corporate)
Stephen Bramah	(Deputy Head of the Mayor's office)

David Courcoux	(Head of the Mayor's Office)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Keiko Okawa	(Senior Strategy & Policy Manager)
Karen Swift	Divisional Director Housing
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services, Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

However, Councillors Rachel Blake and David Edgar noted personal interests in Agenda Item 6.6 (Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and Lodge) as they were members of the friends group due to previous donations they had made.

Councillor Andrew Wood, Leader of the Conservative Group, noted a personal interest in Agenda Item 6.7 (Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Plan) as he was an active member of the Neighbourhood forum.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

DECISION

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 27 November 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

The **Mayor** congratulated the two MPs for the borough who had been elected at the recent general election.

He congratulated Councillor James King on his recent marriage and finally he wished everyone a Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were tabled in respect of the following agenda items:

- 6.1 – Budget Consultation Outcome 2020-21
- 6.2 – Review of the Community Language Service
- 6.3 – Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy 2019-41
- 7.1 – Angela Court

These were considered during discussion of the relevant items.

In addition Councillor James King, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) updated Cabinet on OSC's recent activities. He reported that they had held a meeting on Monday where they had discussed a number of issues including:

- Holding a number of budget scrutiny sessions looking at children's and adults services as well as the general medium term financial strategy.
- The Committee expressed concerns over the levels of savings the Council was required to make and whether the Council's processes were robust enough to deliver agreed savings.
- The Committee had held a challenge session on how to engage with hard to reach residents, looking at barriers to engagement and participation. A report and action plan would be presented to Cabinet in due course.

The **Mayor** thanked Councillor James King for his update.

5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nil items.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Budget Consultation Outcome 2020-21

Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector, introduced the report which provided the feedback received from the Council's budget consultation exercise. She highlighted how respondents had picked out a number of key areas for the Council to protect including services for the most vulnerable and those for children generally.

She highlighted the national challenges to Council budgets with increasing demand for care services whilst at the same time facing cuts to government funding.

During discussion it was noted that:

- There were significant pressures on adult social care.
- Income generation was a challenge especially during a time when Council staff who could support such work were being reduced.
- The different options for increasing income such as through acquiring assets and other commercial opportunities.
- Government information appeared to suggest they were expecting Councils to increase council tax by the maximum 2%.

The **Mayor** welcomed all submissions to the consultation and ideas for income generation. He noted that the draft budget pack would be published shortly, taking into account the comments received. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses and **agreed** the recommendation as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To note the analysis and outcomes from the Your Borough Your Future budget consultation in Appendix A and have due regard to the issues raised in finalising its detailed budget proposals.

6.2 Review of the Community Language Service

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, introduced the report setting out the findings of the review into the Community Language Service and a number of options for the service. She reported that this followed the budget decision earlier in the year to look to achieve savings in this area by reviewing how the service was provided with the intention of ensuring a sustainable, high-quality model could be created. Of the options set out, Option 3 was being recommended.

It was noted that in other parts of the country community language services were provided by the third sector and it was proposed that this was a more appropriate solution for Tower Hamlets. It was noted that the Council would be looking to support local organisations to build up their capacity to provide good quality language services.

The meeting then heard from a number of residents, service users and unions who expressed concern about the proposed changes and fears that the service would not be able to continue if it was left to the voluntary sector to provide. They highlighted the important role that the community language service plays in supporting a vibrant and diverse local community.

Responding to questions, officers undertook to provide the figures for the number of students who had taken GCSEs and A Levels through the service although it was noted that this option ceased three years ago when government funding was ended.

The **Mayor** welcomed all the responses, he highlighted that this was a difficult decision but in the circumstances he considered Option 3 as set out in the report to be the most effective solution to secure the long term future of community language services. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses and **agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To approve Option 3 as set out in the report below.
2. To note the Equalities Impact Assessment.

6.3 Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy 2019-2041

Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report setting out the Council's proposed Transport Strategy. In a fast-

growing, densely populated borough, provision of good public transport and cycling/walking options was vital to support a healthy community and to tackle air quality. There had been high numbers of responses to the consultation including from businesses and a good evidence base had been created to help support future policies and programmes. It was noted that action plans relating to the strategy would be published next year.

In response to questions it was noted that work was ongoing with Newham into looking at potential new bridges across the River Lee.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and stated he would be continuously reviewing the borough's transport needs. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses and **agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To note the outcome of the public consultation that informs the Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy 2019-2041.
2. Having regard to the Council's Public Sector Equality and the equality analysis, to agree the Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy 2019-2041.

6.4 Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy and Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19

Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities, introduced the report setting out the Council's Equality Policy as well as its Annual Equality Report for 2018-19. The reports set out how the Council met its statutory duties as well as the commitments set out in the Mayor's manifesto. She highlighted a number of points including how important it was that equality matters were considered in all Council decision making. She also thanked Councillor Mufeedah Bustin who had been supporting this work.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and in particular how it combined all the relevant information into one piece. He thanked officers and Members for their hard work on the issue and **agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To agree the Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy at Appendix 1 to the report;
2. To note the Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19 at Appendix 2 to the report;
3. To note the equalities implications set out at paragraph 4 of the report.

6.5 Physical Activity & Sport Strategy

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, introduced the report setting out how increased participation in physical activity could be encouraged. The strategy had been developed with the support of many local groups and the Health and Wellbeing Board was also playing a key part in its development as the link to a healthy borough was so important. It was noted that the Strategy would continue to develop over time.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and in particular its focus on wellbeing with it targeting all age groups. He encouraged Scrutiny to play a role in reviewing the Council's support for sports and physical activity and to see how the strategy could impact on different initiatives. He therefore modified then **agreed** the recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. To note the report and to agree that the Strategy will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2020.
2. To propose that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the benefit of a scrutiny review of the Council's support for physical activity and sports within the borough.

6.6 Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and Lodge (excluding Soanes Centre)

The **Mayor** introduced the report into the proposal to lease Cemetery Park and Lodge to the Friends of Cemetery Park to support their work in the park. It was explained that the report was proposing a new 30 year lease of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (excluding the Soanes Centre) be granted to the Friends who had plans to improve the Lodge then use the Lodge to generate income to support their work and the park.

The **Mayor** welcomed the proposal and **agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the Council will grant a new lease to the Friends for a term of 30 years at a peppercorn rent, covering the Cemetery Park, but excluding the Soanes Centre and on the main terms set out in paragraph 3.8 of the report.
2. To agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place to agree the remaining terms of the lease and minor variations to the terms set out in this report.
3. To note the equalities considerations as set out in section 4 of the report.

6.7 Isle of dogs Neighbourhood Plan-Validation of submission

Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Planning, Air Quality and Tackling Poverty, introduced the report asking for agreement to be given to submit for examination the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Plan on the basis that it was compliant with the relevant regulations.

The **Mayor** stated that he supported the neighbourhood planning model and was happy to confirm agreement to submit the plan. He therefore **agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Plan to be submitted for examination, on the basis that it is compliant with the necessary regulations under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) regulations 2012.
2. To authorise the Divisional Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Air Quality and Tackling Poverty, to provide comments on behalf of the Council on the submission version of the neighbourhood plan during the Regulation 16 publicity period.
3. To agree that the Council should proceed to appoint an examiner of the neighbourhood plan with the consent of the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Forum.
4. To note the Equalities Impact Assessment considerations as set out in Paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 of the report.

6.8 Contracts Forward Plan 2019/20 – Quarter three

Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector, introduced the regular contracts forward plan report. She highlighted a number of the services the contracts related to and the community benefits that would be required from bidders such as training for local residents. The second appendix to the report set out the forward plan of proposed future contracts.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report. He confirmed that the contracts listed in appendix 1 to the report could proceed to contract award after tender and he noted the procurement forward plan set out in appendix 2 to the report. He **agreed** the recommendations as set out below.

RESOLVED

1. To note the contracts summaries at Appendix 1 to the report and agree that all contracts can proceed to contract award after tender.

2. To authorise the Divisional Director, Legal Services to execute all necessary contract documents in respect of the awards of contracts referred to at recommendation 1 above.
3. To note the procurement forward plan 2019-22 set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

7.1 Angela Court

The reasons for urgency were agreed as set out in the report, namely that:

“Agreement has only recently been reached that this proposal was the most appropriate course of action. Whilst the report could have been delayed to a later Cabinet meeting, any delay to the decision results in a delay to taking action to help support residents into housing. It is also noted that this report follows on from a Cabinet report presented at the meeting on 31 July 2019 and so is not a wholly new issue.”

Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report. He highlighted that the report followed on from a decision at July 2019 Cabinet where it had been agreed to lease Angela Court to Mulberry Housing Society. However, this proposal had not progressed as expected and so different options were now being explored. The report was proposing that the Council instead acquire the properties for the Housing Revenue Account and that Tower Hamlets Homes be asked to manage them.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and noted that it was now important to have a discussion as to the future role of Mulberry Housing Society. The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted and the **Mayor agreed** the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED

1. To agree that negotiations with Mulberry Housing Society are terminated.
2. To agree that Angela Court is acquired into the Housing Revenue Account and the units let on secure tenancies.
3. To agree that Angela Court and the units therein are managed by Tower Hamlets Homes subject to any necessary variations to the management agreement.
4. To delegate to the Corporate Director, Place in consultation with the Corporate Director, Finance any further decisions required to achieve the outcomes set out in these recommendations.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Nil items.

9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business

Nil items.

10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nil items.

11. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

MAYOR JOHN BIGGS