

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2020

COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

Councillor Helal Uddin (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Brady (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Faroque Ahmed
Councillor Asma Islam
Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Denise Jones

Apologies:

Councillor Amina Ali
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Shad Chowdhury

Officers Present:

Runa Basit	– (Head of School Governance & Information)
Pat Chen	– Head of HR HAC and Children's
Janet Fasan	– (Divisional Director, Legal, Governance)
Andy Simpson	– (Head of Strategy and Policy - Place)
Adam Boey	– (Senior Strategy & Policy Manager - Corporate)
Matthew Mannion	– (Head of Democratic Services, Governance)
Simmi Yesmin	– (Democratic Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

Councillor Denise Jones, declared a personal interest in relation to item 4.3 Central London Forward Membership Agreement on the basis she owned a business in the Brick Lane.

2. MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 10th December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

3. WORK PLAN

The General Purposes Committee Work Plan was discussed and agreed.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Local Authority School Governor Appointments

Runa Basit, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the regular report on Local Authority School Governor appointments. The report contained four proposed appointments. Members noted the relevant applications set out in the exempt appendix.

Members considered the report and agreed the nominations.

RESOLVED

1. To agree the nominated applicants to the positions set out for local authority governors at maintained schools in Tower Hamlets.

4.2 Strengthening Local Democracy

Adam Boey, Head of Strategy and Policy, introduced the first progress update report on the delivery of the of the Council's Councillor Support Framework since the framework was approved by General Purposes Committee in June 2019. Mr Boey referred The Committee to highlights from the performance report set out in 3.5 of the report, detailing the actions that had been completed, those that were ongoing and actions that had been delayed.

The Committee discussed a number of issues and in particular the following was noted;

- That the RAG rating for actions that were ongoing/in progress and had been marked as green should be changed to amber as this often can be misled to thinking the action had been complete.
- Concerns were raised, that booking children's centres, for community events was proving difficult, as prices were too high for community groups to hire and therefore groups have had to use alternative spaces which had been hard to get to and as a result the events have had a low turnout and have been less effective. It was AGREED that the pricing structure and concessions for council spaces to be included in the next update report.

- The results of the consultation for the allocation of the CIL monies to be included in the next update report.
- That a protocol for holding Committee meetings in external venues was in place. A list of venues was to be included in the next update report. Councillors were also encouraged to suggest suitable venues to Democratic Services.
- Democratic Services to review both timing and notice of Member Learning and Development Training sessions, as they were often at short notice or clashed with Councillors who were employed full time therefore attendances were low. It was suggested that dates of training sessions should be added into diaries in advance to avoid clashes, non-attendance etc.
- Democratic Services to repeat the VWAG training as not all Councillors had attended.
- To explore ways in which training sessions can be promoted better.
- Officers to provide more information on the 'Community Driving Change' in a future update report.
- To include a new column in the Councillors Support Framework, to note the impact made and capture feedback on how effective the outcome had been.
- Concerns remained in terms of Councillors not being informed about events and information relevant to their wards. Officers together with the Communication Team are to explore ways in which Ward Councillors can be better informed and notified in advance of upcoming events and promotions in their own wards and the borough as a whole.
- Concerns relating to Members Enquiries were raised and it was noted that the Head of Democratic Services was currently in the process of liaising with members regarding these matters.
- Clarity was sought in relation to Safer Neighbourhood Panels and the inconsistency around how they operate in different wards. Officers to provide a briefing note on the governance of ward panels, how they operate, who the lead contacts were and how information is shared in order for consistency across all wards.

The Committee welcomed the report

Concluding the discussion it was noted that Members would receive regular updates every six months.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.

4.3 Central London Forward Membership Agreement

Andy Simpson, Head of Strategy and Policy, introduced the report and referred to the report in the agenda. He explained that the Central London Forward's (CLF) purpose was to facilitate collaboration and partnership

amongst the 12 Central London boroughs and provide a collective voice for member boroughs and their residents in meeting challenges and capitalising on the opportunities which growth provides.

It was noted that one fifth of the UK's national income was generated in London and access to the opportunities generated from this growth was key to improving the lives of residents within the borough. Tower Hamlets residents have had direct access to opportunities generated via growth in affordable housing, workspace, employment, accessible infrastructure, connectivity and etc.

He explained that the proposal for this report was for The Committee to approve membership to the CLF Sub-Regional Partnership. Mr Simpson highlighted the fact as a result of the membership over the last two years, an excess of £7.5 million was secured for Tower Hamlets specific project as well as £8 million secured as part of a sub-regional consortium. He stressed that the council's success in securing funding supported through the CLF was critical in strengthening inclusive growth within the borough.

The membership of the sub regional partnership was £40k for an annual subscription and it was noted that the Chief Executive and The Mayor, were in support of this proposal.

The Committee welcomed the report and following a brief discussion the following was noted;

- That a future update should include where the investments are made and how the money from the growth is allocated.
- That Tower Hamlets have been a member of the CLF Sub regional partnership since 2015. The membership needed to be renewed annually.
- The Committee agreed to approve the membership to the CLF sub-regional partnership.
- That GP Committee is to receive an annual report with an update of the successes over the course of each year.

RESOLVED

1. The membership to the CLF sub-regional partnership, be approved.
2. The Corporate Director Governance to be authorised to update the relevant parts of the constitution accordingly.
3. That a regular annual update report is to be brought to the committee.

4.4 Pay Policy Report 2020/21

Pat Chen, Head of HR, introduced the report on the draft Pay Policy statement 2020/21. She explained that the pay policy statement set out the

Council's current policies and practice in relation to pay for all parts of the Council's directly employed workforce. It was noted that under the Localism Act 2011, Full Council was required to adopt a pay policy statement each financial year.

Ms Chen explained that this was a draft statement and the key changes to the statement were the changes to the titles of the pay grades subject to the implementation of a revised grading structure in April 2020.

Concerns were raised about the number of consultants and temporary staff that were employed to cover vacant posts and the daily rate they were paid at. Members were assured that the HR team were working on robust recruit processes to ensure that posts were recruited to permanently.

The Committee discussed the report and agreed that it should proceed to Full Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted and it was recommended that the policy be forwarded to Full Council on 11 March 2020 for adoption.
2. That the proposed changes to the Pay Policy 2020/21 that would be needed to reflect the implementation of the revised grading structure be agreed.
3. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Divisional Director HR and Organisational Development, Chair of GP Committee and the Corporate Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer be delegated the authority to make any minor changes to the 2020/21 Pay Policy Statement.

4.5 Update on Senior Recruitment – February 2020

Pat Chen, Head of Human Resources, introduced the regular update report on senior officer recruitment.

The Committee was asked to note the re-evaluation of a Corporate Director role, resulting in a grade uplift from Key Officer to Corporate Director grade. It was noted that the upgrade was aligned with duties being undertaken by post incumbent and other Corporate Director roles, The Committee was referred to the restricted information contained in Appendix A.

At the last meeting the Committee had heard updates on recruitment to the post of Divisional Director Planning and Building Control and Members were pleased to note that the post holder had commenced employment earlier this month. This meant that the Place Directorate now had a full management team in place.

The Council were now considering the how best to recruit to the posts of Divisional Director, Finance, Procurement and Audit and Divisional Director Customer Services both within the Resources Directorate. It was noted that both recruitment process would start in February. In particular Ms Chen reported that recruitment efforts in relation to the Divisional Director Finance, Procurement and Audit post had not been successful during the first recruitment process and indications were that the role required a more attractive package and therefore Officers had now appointed a new recruitment agency and were working closely with them to successfully recruit to this position.

Members agreed that whilst temporary arrangements were in place to cover the posts it was important that the process for the finance post is recruited to as soon as possible.

Members welcomed the report and were pleased to note that the recruitment process had started for the Corporate Director Children and Culture role.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the re-evaluation of a Corporate Director role resulting in a grade uplift from Key Officer to Corporate Director grade be noted.

4.6 Constitution Updates including Directorate Schemes of Delegation

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, introduced the update report on the Council's Constitution Review. He reminded Members that Council had agreed the updated Constitution at its meeting on 17 July 2019. The one large piece of outstanding work was to complete the review of the Directorate Schemes of Delegation.

The Committee heard that some progress had been made, and since the last meeting, The Health, Adults and Community Directorate Scheme of Delegation had been completed and published. The Committee were also pleased to note that the Children and Culture Scheme was in the process of completing sign off. However the Place Scheme was still with Legal Services for review.

It was noted that explanatory paragraphs as way of introduction had been included for each directorate scheme of delegation setting out its role and authority. An updated terms of reference of the Audit Committee as attached in Appendix 1 was also put forward to The Committee to be added to the Constitution.

Mr Mannion explained that three amendments had been requested under the Council Procedure Rules, for the GP Committee to consider for inclusion in the Constitution.

Members discussed this and following a brief discussion the following was noted;

- Deadline for Amendments to the Budget

The Committee agreed to bring the deadline for amendments to the budget, forward to 5pm the Friday, before the Council Budget meeting.

- Ungrouped Members Moving Amendments to Motions and Reports

The Committee did not support the amendment to allow Ungrouped Members to submit amendments to motions and reports without a seconder.

- Change to the order of business

The Committee agreed to bring forward consideration of "Reports from Committees" ahead of "Members Questions" in the Council meeting agenda order.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed changes to the Constitution set out in relation to Schemes of Delegation (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.4 and Appendix 2), Terms of Reference (paragraphs 3.5 to 3.6 and Appendix 1) and Council Procedure Rules (paragraphs 3.7 to 3.12) be noted.
2. That any changes considered appropriate and/or relevant matters are to be put forward to Council for consideration.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

1. 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.

7. RESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Local Authority School Governor Appointments - Restricted Appendices

The exempt appendix setting out the details of the applicants for the School Governor appointments was noted.

7.2 Update on Senior Recruitment - February 2020 - Appendix A

The exempt appendix setting out the grading from Key Officer grade to the Corporate Director grade was noted.

7.3 Forthcoming Restructures

Pat Chen, Head of Human Resources, introduced the regular report listing any potential redundancies from forthcoming restructures where the overall severance package was likely to exceed £100,000.

One role was listed in the report.

The Committee reviewed the report and agreed the requests as set out.

RESOLVED

1. That the dismissal set out in the report be agreed.
2. To note and approve the severance packages that apply to the dismissals arise as a result of the individual's contractual terms and conditions of employment.

The meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Helal Uddin
General Purposes Committee