

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

HELD AT 5.32 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 3 MARCH 2021

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

Mayor John Biggs	
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, Faith and Equalities)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	(Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit)
Councillor Danny Hassell	(Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Candida Ronald	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	(Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion
Councillor Asma Islam	Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Planning

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor Rabina Khan	
Councillor James King	
Councillor Puru Miah	
Councillor Val Whitehead	
Councillor Marc Francis	
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	

Officers Present:

Kevin Bartle	(Corporate Director, Resources and Governance)
Stephen Bramah	(Deputy Head of the Mayor's office)
Claudia Brown	(Divisional Director of Adults Social Care)
Terry Bryan	(Service Head (Pupil Access and School Sufficiency))
Ann Corbett	(Divisional Director, Community Safety)
David Courcoux	(Head of the Mayor's Office)
Thorsten Dreyer	(Head of Intelligence and Performance)
Janet Fasan	(Director of Legal)
Sharon Godman	(Director, Strategy, Improvement and

	Transformation)
Chris Harrison	(Liveable Streets Technical Director)
Teresa Heaney	(Interim Customer Services Programme Director)
Steven Heywood	(Planning Officer, Plan Making Team)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Dan Jones	(Divisional Director, Public Realm)
Denise Radley	(Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community)
Marissa Ryan-Hernandez	(Plan Making Team Leader)
Joanne Starkie	(Head of Strategy and Policy - Health Adults and Communities)
Ann Sutcliffe	(Corporate Director, Place)
James Thomas	(Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Pauline Maddison	(Interim Director, Education and Partnerships)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

AGENDA ORDER

At the meeting the Mayor agreed to vary the order of business by taking Agenda Item 6.3 (Bow Bus Gateway and time closures exemptions considerations) as the first report for consideration. For clarity the minutes are presented in the order the items appeared on the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence but Councillor Dan Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) – Lead on Public Realm, gave apologies for having to leave the meeting early.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 27 January 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

The **Mayor** noted that Item 6.4 (Limehouse Neighbourhood Forum) had been withdrawn by the applicants and that an addendum to the report on Item 6.1 (Idea Stores Post Consultation Report) had been tabled which included additional opening hours to the original options presented

He noted that the National budget had been announced today.

Finally he highlighted that Covid continued to dominate life but that it was good news that the rates of infection was decreasing whilst vaccination rates were increasing. However, it was still important to act carefully to avoid infections.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

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

- 6.1 – Idea Stores Post Consultation Report
- 6.2 – Outcome of consultation on revised approach to day support Services in adult social care
- 6.3 – Bow Bus Gateway timed closures exemptions application.
- 6.7 – Statutory Proposal to close Cherry Trees Special School
- 6.9 – Statutory Proposal to close St Matthias Primary School
- 6.12 – Budget Monitoring Report 2020-21 (Period 9)
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the Community Safety Partnership Plan (at Agenda Item 6.11)

This were considered during discussion of the relevant items.

In addition, Councillor James King, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, provided a brief update on his Committee's activities. At their meeting on Monday they had looked at the response to Covid-19, budget and performance monitoring and also a Community Safety spotlight. There had been good discussion on all matters and feedback provided.

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

Nil items.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Idea Stores Post Consultation Report

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, introduced the report setting out a revised approach to Idea Stores and Library Services. She clarified that at no point had there been an intention to close any services. She thanked Councillors and residents who had engaged with the consultation exercise. She tabled a supplement to the report which proposed increased opening hours from those set out in the options in the report including providing some Saturday and evening opening hours.

The consultation had shown strong responses in support of the Councils Idea Store and Library services and the proposals set out showed how the Council listened to responses in public consultations. She thanked officers for their

hard work on this issue. The revised proposal ensures that the four main sites in the borough would be open seven days a week whilst still delivering some savings as required by the Council's budget pressures. The changes would be reviewed after 18 months of operation.

The meeting heard from a number of residents and Members who expressed strong support for the services provided and had significant concerns about the proposed reductions in hours of service at the different locations. They highlighted how important libraries and Idea stores were in helping local people including in their studies and supporting children in their reading. Particular support was heard for Cubitt Town library.

The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted and in particular the desire to make best use of the buildings was noted and officers confirmed that only appropriate shared-space users would be sought.

Cabinet discussed the report and welcomed the work that had been done to fully consult with residents. In particular, the tabled amended proposals were welcomed and supported by Members. The extent of the reduction in government funding over recent years was highlighted and the impact that had on the provision of local services generally and libraries in particular.

The **Mayor** highlighted the excellent library and Idea Store services that the Council was still able to provide and proposed the recommendations as set out in the Supplement to the main report to the Cabinet. These were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the results of the public consultation and other feedback received.
2. To approve the revised proposals as set out as the 'New Option' on pages 2 and 3 of the supplement to the Report presented at the meeting.

6.2 Outcome of consultation on revised approach to day support in adult social care

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report on the outcome of the consultation in relation to day support in adult social care. She thanked the service users and carers who had taken part in the consultation highlighting the services they most value. Lockdown had been a very difficult time for service users and the Council was grateful for their time and contributions.

The purpose of the review was to look at pressure on the services and how services could be shaped in the future. She noted that there was significant opposition to the closure of the physical disability day centres but she confirmed the Council's view that these services could successfully be

provided under the new community hub model. Appendix 1 set out the vision for the community hub at Somali Gardens. The equalities impacts were set out as well as how those were mitigated. It was important that services could improve mental and physical health of users and benefit their carers. The Community Hub would offer them a safe space where services could be provided and advice given. There would also be a specific hub for dealing with Dementia.

The equalities impact assessment noted the risks to those with protected characteristics and the mitigation measures were set out. It was also noted that pilot projects for new service ideas would be trialled.

The Cabinet then heard from a number of speakers including Councillors, residents and service users who raised a number of issues including:

- Whether service users would be able to cope with the changes and the extent to which it could set them back.
- The excellent provision of the existing services and that new solutions may result in lower quality care.
- Whether the consultation had been effective and that the responses were not in favour of many of the changes.
- The impact on women, older people, those from ethnic minorities and others with protected characteristics.

The **Mayor** thanked everyone for their responses and contributions to the meeting. He highlighted how important it was that people were able to access services that can support them when they really need it. He noted how the hub would work and how other locations would be used. Support would be provided to service users as the changes were made. Finally, he noted there was a lot to do to ensure everyone could enjoy all the opportunities available in Tower Hamlets.

The **Mayor** noted the pre-decision scrutiny questions and officer responses. He proposed the recommendations as set out. These were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To agree the closure of Physical Disability Day Opportunities, Riverside day centre and Pritchard's Road day centre with effect from 4 May 2021
2. To agree to develop Russia Lane as a 'dementia hub' day service
3. To agree to open a community support hub from May 2021 onwards (if it is safe to do so in light of the Covid-19 pandemic)
4. To endorse the proposal to encourage more people to organise their own day support through a direct payment
5. To agree the commitment to make Tower Hamlets a more inclusive place for people with care and support needs.

6.3 Bow bus gateway and timed closures exemptions considerations

Councillor Dan Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) – Lead on Public Realm, introduced the report to Cabinet. He explained that the road closure and bus gate set out in the report had been supported by a significant majority of respondents in the recent consultation exercises. However, Aware that there was a potential impact on those who still needed to use their cars and so a number of exemption options were being offered as well as different timings and hours of operation.

It was noted that there was an error in the report in that the Western boundary to the scheme was by the canal and not on Grove Road.

The Cabinet then heard from a number of members of the public and councillors with a wide range of views on the proposals, including:

- Support for the changes and in particular encouragement to move forward on the Liveable Streets programme as quickly as possible.
- That the restrictions should be for much longer periods of the day/week.
- Concern about whether the taxi card scheme could be properly enforced.
- A variety of views on whether the consultation exercises had been sufficient.
- Would the closures just result in traffic being diverted to other roads and whether those who could be impacted in these areas should have been consulted.
- The potential impact on local businesses and the increased time residents may have to spend driving around the borough.
- Making sure the equalities impact had been properly assessed.

From the discussion the Mayor noted the thorough consultation with good response levels from different groups and types of residents. The negative health impacts of pollution on residents, especially the young. That the Council would continue to actively monitor the schemes and that it could react to any positive or negative impacts if required. The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were also noted.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report. Noting, the correction to the scheme boundary, the **Mayor** proposed the recommendations in the report with Option 1. This was **agreed** by the Cabinet without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the content in this report and in particular the alternative options considered in section 2 of the report.
2. To agree the hours of operation for the Roman Road bus gateway to be 6.30am to 9.30am and 3.30pm to 7pm, Monday to Friday.

3. To agree the hours of operation for the Coborn Road timed closure to be 6.30am to 7pm, Monday to Friday.
4. To agree the following exemptions during the hours of operation for both the Roman Road bus gateway and Coborn Road timed closure: local buses, emergency services, blue badge holders, carers, Local GPs on-call, Taxicard users and Royal Mail vehicles while fulfilling their Universal Service Obligation as defined in 3.16 onwards within the report.
5. To agree to charge a £20 annual fee for exemptions to cover the cost of administration.
6. To agree that in line with the experimental traffic order procedures any necessary alterations are made within 6 months and the hours of operation and exemptions are reviewed between 6 and 18 months after implementation.
7. To note the Equalities Impacts as set out in section 4 of the report and the full Equalities impact Analysis (EqIA) in Appendix B to the report.
8. It was noted that the scheme boundary should include Clinton Road, Haverfield Road and Cadogan Terrace (from Wick Lane to Cadogan Close).

6.4 Determination of Limehouse Neighbourhood Forum Application

This item was withdrawn.

6.5 Determination of Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum Application

Councillor Eve McQuillan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) – Lead on Planning, introduced the report. She explained that the report proposed designating the Spitalfields Neighbourhood planning forum as the formal Neighbourhood Forum for that area. Their application met the requirements and a consultation had come out in favour so it was proposed that their application be approved.

The **Mayor** put the recommendations to the vote and they were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To approve the redesignation of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum as the designated neighbourhood forum for the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Planning Area, to come into force on 5 April 2021.
2. To note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 7.1 of the report.

6.6 Report on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory Notice on the proposal to amalgamate Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools: Decision on Amalgamation of Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education, introduced the report following a statutory consultation on amalgamating Cubitt Town Infant and Junior Schools. She highlighted that this was a positive change to allow full integration and operation between the schools.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and put the recommendations to the vote. They were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the report and supporting documentation, particularly the statutory notice at Appendix 1 to the report and the Equalities Assessment at Appendix 2 to the report, along with any comments and/or objections made by respondents to the Statutory Notice.
2. To agree to proceed with plans for the amalgamation (merger) of Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools into an all-through 3 to 11 years' primary school to be completed by 1 April 2022.

6.7 Report on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory proposal to close Cherry Trees Special School: Decision on Closure of Cherry Trees Special School.

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education, introduced the report following a statutory consultation on closing the Cherry Trees Special School. She highlighted that it was a small special school but it had a low school roll and standards and quality of education had been declining. The school was no longer financially viable. It was proposed that new provision be established elsewhere.

The **Mayor** noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses he noted that there was ongoing work to ensure the children currently at the school were supported. He put the recommendation to the vote which was **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. Having considered the responses to the statutory (public) notice at Appendix 1 to the report, the Equalities Assessment at Appendix 2 to the report and the alternative options explored in the earlier public consultation report, to agree to close The Cherry Trees Special School with effect from 31 August 2021.

6.8 Report on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory proposal to close Shapla Primary School: Decision on Closure of Shapla Primary School.

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education, introduced the report following a statutory consultation on closing Shapla Primary School. This stemmed from a primary review which highlighted the need to reduce the number of primary places in the West of the Borough. Shapla School had significant financial challenges which indicated it could not continue. Responses to the consultation exercise were set out in the report. The team would ensure that alternative provision was available for all current pupils and officers were working to support school staff.

The **Mayor** noted this was a challenging situation and thanked officers for their work on it. He proposed the recommendation as set out. It was **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. Having considered the responses to the statutory (public) notice at Appendix 1 to the report, the Equalities Assessment at Appendix 2 to the report and the alternative options explored in the earlier public consultation report, to agree the proposal to close Shapla Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021.

6.9 Report on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory proposal to close St Matthias Primary School: Decision on Closure of St Matthias Primary School.

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education, introduced the report following a statutory consultation on closing St Matthias CE Primary School. She explained that this was a result of the primary review which showed a declining number of pupils at the school and in that part of the borough. This was impacting the financial stability of the school which was no longer viable.

Officers would work to ensure alternative provision was provided for all pupils and they were supporting the school staff.

The **Mayor** noted the challenging circumstances of the decision. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses and he put the recommendation to the vote. It was **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. Having considered the responses to the statutory (public) notice at Appendix 1 to the report, the Equalities Assessment at Appendix 2 to the report and the alternative options explored in the earlier public consultation report, to agree the proposal to close St Matthias CE Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021.

6.10 Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision at Ben Jonson School'

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education, introduced the report following a consultation on making alterations to Ben Johnson and Bowden House Schools to support dedicated SEND space in mainstream schools. The joint proposal was seen as a successful solution. The designated arrangement had 24 spaces with half managed by each school. They will have access to the curriculum and high-quality teaching. Financial viability is assured through this model.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and noted the link to the previous report on Cherry Trees School. He proposed the recommendation and it was **agreed** without dissent. It was:

RESOLVED

1. Having considered the responses to the statutory (public) notice at Appendix 3 to the report, the Equalities Assessment at Appendix 4 to the report and the earlier public consultation report at Appendix 1 to the report, to agree the prescribed alterations to Ben Johnson and Bowden House Schools as set out in the Statutory Notices at Appendix 2 to the report.

6.11 Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-2024

Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Faith and Equalities introduced the report proposing the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-24 for submission to Council for agreement.

The plan was owned by the Community Safety Partnership Board and builds on the work of the previous plan. The Plan was scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had provided valuable comment. The Plan was working to make the borough safer for residents which was a high priority for the Council.

A wide consultation had been undertaken including with partners, residents and young people. Tackling hate crime, ensuring young people did not enter the criminal justice system, fear of crime, violence, anti-social behaviour and Black Lives Matter were some of the many issues explored.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report. He put the recommendation to the vote and it was **agreed** without dissent. It was:

RESOLVED

1. To agree to recommend that Full Council approve the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-23.

6.12 Budget monitoring report 2020-21 as at 31st December 2020 (period 9)

Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector introduced the regular budget monitoring report. The general fund showed a predicted £2.9 million overspend which would result in an equivalent draw down of reserves if that was the year end situation. The DSG was forecast with a £100k overspend and £11.2 million cumulative deficit. The HRA was forecast to underspend by £1.5 million.

The report set out details for each directorate and it was noted that the Covid Pandemic had had a significant impact on the Council finances.

It was noted that the report had been updated to increase financial transparency including on business rate and council tax collection figures, Covid spending and details on adult social care which showed the particular challenges to that service.

The Council had proposed savings of £21 million for the year of which £11.7 million was being forecast as to be delivered. Overall, Council finances remained uncertain and even though Government had provided significant support in relation to the Covid pandemic this was still expected to have a significant negative impact.

The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted.

The **Mayor** noted the pre-decision scrutiny questions and officers responses and noted the extremely challenging financial position at the Council and the increasing demand for services. He thanked Kevin Bartle, Interim Corporate Director, Resources and his team for their hard work supporting the Council's finances. The **Mayor** proposed the recommendation as set out. It was **agreed** without dissent and it was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the Council's projected outturn position against General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget, Housing Revenue Account and earmarked reserves for 2020-21, based on forecasts as at 31st December 2020;
2. To note the reserves position of the Council is uncertain pending the closure of the statement of accounts for the period 2016 – 2020;
3. To note the Council's projected outturn position against General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programme approved budgets, based on forecasts as at 31st December 2020;
4. To note that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from the report, as set out in Section 4 of the report.

6.13 Strategic performance and delivery reporting – Q3 2020/21

The **Mayor** introduced the regular report updating Cabinet on the Council's performance and delivery reporting. He noted that he had been scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report on Monday night.

The Covid pandemic had caused significant disruption to the Council's performance management and some targets were not now achievable. However, the Council had also managed to maintain core services which were important to residents. He noted that the report had positive highlights as well as areas of concern.

Will Tuckley, Chief Executive, highlighted that the Council had reviewed how it had performed during the Covid Pandemic compared to other authorities and he considered that the performance held up well.

The **Mayor** proposed the recommendations for the vote and they were **agreed** without dissent. It was:

RESOLVED

1. To note the strategic delivery and performance report for quarter 3 2020/21.
2. To note the performance of the strategic measures, including those measures where the minimum expectation has been missed; and
3. To note progress in delivering the council's Strategic Plan.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

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. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items.

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

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.04 p.m.

MAYOR JOHN BIGGS