

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.40 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 24 MAY 2023****COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL****Members Present in Person:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

**Members In Attendance Virtually:**

Councillor Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
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**Other Councillors Present in Person:**

Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

**Other Councillors In Attendance Virtually:**

Councillor Sirajul Islam

**Officers Present in Person:**

Stephen Halsey	(Interim Chief Executive)
Agnes Adrien	(Head of Litigation, Legal Services)
Matthew Eady	(Director of Commissioning and Culture)
Natalie Lovell	Public Health Programme Manager (Healthy Environments)
Jenny Pittam	Interim Head Contract Services
Karen Swift	(Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)
James Thomas	(Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Warwick Tomsett	Joint Director, Integrated Commissioning
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))
Sharon Godman	(Director, Strategy, Improvement and

Transformation)

### **Officers In Attendance Virtually:**

Caroline Holland	(Interim Corporate Director, Resources)
William Jabang	(Senior Procurement Manager)
Jignesh Parmar	(Head of Procurement)

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Janet Fasan, Director, Legal and Monitoring Officer (for whom Agnes Adrien was deputising).

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

Councillors Maium Talukdar, Suluk Ahmed and Abdul Wahid declared non-registrable interests in Item 6.3, as each had children at secondary schools who would receive free school meals as a result of the proposals in that report. The Councillors left the meeting for the duration of the discussion on the item.

### **3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 26 April be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

### **4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR**

The Mayor offered his thanks to the outgoing Lead Member for Community Safety and welcomed Councillor Abu Chowdhury to the role .He also welcomed Councillor Abdul Wahid to the Cabinet, who would be taking on the Jobs, Skills and Growth Portfolio.

### **5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

#### **5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions**

Councillor Bodrul Chowdhury, Vice Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee addressed the meeting on behalf of the Committee. He provided the Mayor and Cabinet with an overview of the Committee's recent work including:

At its first OSC's meeting the OSC had

- confirmed the vice chair for the committee and scrutiny leads for the subcommittees and portfolio's;

- enjoyed a Mayor's Spotlight item where the Mayor reflected on past year's achievement, key priorities and ongoing challenges and pressures and provided an overview of recent performance;
- heard examples of investment in young people such as in housing of youth service, EMA and education bursaries; and
- examined key Mayoral ambitions such as housing delivery, free school meals, recruiting more THEO's, and improving the provision of housing repairs.

The Committee had also reviewed progress of its Swimming Challenge Session action plan and held a spotlight on street and parks cleanliness. It had raised concerns about the issues of cleanliness and particularly missed waste collections.

At its meeting in May the Committee agreed two reports: food insecurity, and the review on women's safety. Both will now be moved to an action plan which will be presented to cabinet in the coming months. The Committee also received the O&S annual report which was in a film format. This would be published shortly. Councillor Chowdhury asked if all Members could help promote this.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Chowdhury for his update. He welcomed scrutiny's important role in improving services for residents.

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

None.

## **6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **6.1 Tower Hamlets Healthier Advertising Policy**

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) introduced the report that proposed the introduction of a healthier advertising policy in Tower Hamlets to restrict the advertising of unhealthy food and drink products.

Somen Banerjee, Director of Public Health and Katy Scammell, Associate Director of Public Health provided further details.

Further to questions from the Cabinet, the Lead Member, Somen and Katie explained:

- Whilst the policy applied only to Council land, the Council would be encouraging its partners and stakeholders to follow suit. A 'phase 2' of the work will explore how the work could be extended to maximise impact.
- Work was underway with the Council's Communications Team to investigate translation to reach residents for whom English may not be a first language.

- How parents and other key stakeholders were consulted prior to the formulation of the policy.
- They would explore if public health grants could be used to recover costs of the policy

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the policy which they felt showed the Council was a trendsetting and leading the way in public health.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The report is noted; and
2. The healthier advertising policy is approved.

## **6.2 Response to Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Recommendations on Increasing Female Sports Participation**

Councillor Iqbal Hossain (Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation) introduced the report that proposed a service action plan in response to the Overview & Scrutiny Challenge session report and recommendations on "increasing women and girls access and participation in sport provision and physical activities in the borough.

Matthew Eady, (Director of Commissioning and Culture) provided further details. Caroline Holland, Corporate Director, Resources asked the Cabinet to note that, in addition to the financial comments in the report, growth bids or savings may be required to fund new initiatives if necessary.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the report and made the following additional points:

- In the past, free swimming sessions encouraged residents to be active and worked well. The Council should explore if this could be introduced for women-only swimming.
- Variety and frequency of women only and culturally-sensitive sessions should be explored to encourage take-up across all the borough's residents. The Mayor indicated he was supportive of a women-only leisure facility.
- Creche provision on leisure sites could help to encourage female sports participation and should be explored as part of the wider work on insourcing leisure services.
- The Council should also support existing sport structures such as the provision of funding and/or assistance to women-only sport teams to ensure they can compete and represent the borough at competitions such as London Youth Games.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees the proposed action responding to the Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee Challenge Session on “Increasing Women and Girls Access and Participation in sport provision and physical activity”.

### **6.3 Recommendations for the delivery of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to all Secondary School Pupils**

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) introduced the report that provided a summary of actions to implement the Mayor’s pledge to deliver free school meals to all secondary school pupils up to the age of 16. Councillor Talukdar explained that the Council would be the first in the country to introduce such a policy. He indicated the proposal represented a huge step forward and set an example to the rest of the country. He offered his thanks to the Mayor for his leadership to bring this policy to realisation.

Councillors Maium Talukdar, Suluk Ahmed and Abdul Wahid left the meeting at this point and for the remainder of this item.

James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture and Jenny Pittam, Interim Head Contract Services, provided further details and context. James and Jenny explained how the proposal would secure health and education benefits, as well as direct financial benefits for local residents. They offered their thanks to schools for their willingness to collaborate to meet the huge challenges posed by the introduction of such a widespread policy.

The Mayor and Cabinet welcomed the policy and made the following additional points:

- The Council should aspire to include UFSM in its base budget.
- The Council should explore if similar support could be offered to faith and other independent schools
- The proposals would help to increase local employment.
- The Council should work with local schools to ensure any impact on their budgets arising from the proposals, such as calculation of the pupil premium, are mitigated.

The Mayor welcomed the report and offered his thanks to the Lead Member, officers (both current and former), schools and all involved in the delivery of USFM. He explained how the proposal linked to the Healthier Advertising Policy (agreed earlier in the meeting). He expressed hope this investment will improve health, tackle obesity and raise educational attainment. He expressed ambition to explore the inclusion of faith and independent schools under the proposals. He asked that an appropriate communications plan be developed to accompany the launch of the policy, which should explain the phased approach.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees to fund the meal price at £2.90 per pupil per day rising to £3 in year 2 of the project.
2. Agrees to a 3-phase approach to launching the project to allow schools to prepare appropriately for the delivery of meals to all secondary school pupils.
3. Agrees to fund the upfront investment costs for all the schools estimated to be a total of £722,350 to ensure schools have the correct equipment and resources to increase their catering capacity.
4. Approves the Conditions of Grant, support provision and evaluation activities for schools. These will provide a clear and consistent framework on how to derive maximum benefit from the project (encouraging uptake of good quality nutritious school meals) as well as providing data to demonstrate maximum value for money for Tower Hamlets' investment in UFSM.

#### **6.4 Record of Corporate Directors Actions 2022/23 Q4**

Councillor Saied Ahmed (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living) introduced the report that set out, for noting by Cabinet, the Corporate Director's Actions taken under Rule 10 (section 50 Record of Corporate Director's Actions (RCDA) - Waiving of Procurement Procedures) in Part C – Codes and Protocols of the Council's constitution.

The Mayor noted and welcomed the officer decision on community pharmacies, and indicated that he wished to be sighted on any new procurement.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The Record of Corporate Directors' Actions set out in Appendix 1 to the report is noted.

#### **6.5 Housing Capital Strategy 2023/24: Delivering at pace to increase the supply of new homes**

Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding introduced the report that, following previous Cabinet discussions concerning alternative delivery routes that limit the use of HRA funding, suggested an approach to increasing housing delivery and the resources required to maximise the development of additional social homes for rent. Karen Swift, (Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration) added further details and context.

The Mayor noted and agreed the reasons for urgency as set out in the report. He welcomed the report's proposals which he felt:

- Presented a tried and tested approach to expand delivery of housing at

pace.

- Would begin to overturn the severe overcrowding faced in the borough and the failure of the previous administration to remedy it.
- Would remove 'red tape' to ensure homes can be freed up where wanted and viable sites be brought back into use after sitting redundant for many years.

He further explained how addressing overcrowding in the borough would realise additional benefits such as reduction in ASB and young people out on the streets. He explained how the Council would use the new approach to work with development partners, whilst ensuring supply of social homes for rent and other benefits. He also explained the possible future roles of RSLs and how the Council proposed to hold them to account.

The Cabinet welcomed the report and echoed the sentiments of the Mayor. They felt the proposed programme was ambitious and demonstrated strong leadership. They noted and welcomed the additional funding proposed for professional fees to ensure minimal delay.

The Mayor noted and amended the recommendations as follows:

- To replace all references to 'Corporate Director of Place', with 'Chief Executive'; and
- To add a requirement for consultation with the Mayor to all delegated authority resolutions.

The Mayor also explained that he wished to formally rescind a past Cabinet decision (taken under the previous administration) to dispose of the site at Bromley Hall/Lochnagar Street. The site would instead be included in the package of sites as set out in the report.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Notes the alternative delivery approaches set out in the report.
2. Rescinds the Cabinet decision of December 2021 to dispose the Bromley Hall/Lochnagar Street site and to instead include that site within the scope of the proposals in the report.
3. The Mayor will approve the Heads of Terms of the final agreements for each development package for the Joint Venture (JV) Development Agreements, following consultation with the Chief Executive and the interim Corporate Director of Resources.
4. Approves a revenue-funded budget allocation of £1.1m from the HRA to cover the professional fees for legal, and consultancy advice and any de-risking activity to potential sites being delivered through the JV Development Agreement approach to enable the alternative delivery route to be established and progressed to the issue of the tender prospectus

5. Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and the interim Corporate Director of Resources, to substitute schemes within the Approved HRA Capital Programme.
6. After prior consultation with the Chief Executive and the interim Corporate Director of Resources, the Mayor will authorise them to take all necessary steps to deliver the approved capital programme, including but not limited to going out to tender, appointing consultants and contractors in accordance with the Procurement Procedures, acquiring land interests, appropriating land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the delivery of new council homes and exercising other rights of appropriation, subject to approved budget.
7. Note the Equalities Impact Assessment and specific equalities considerations as set out in Section 4 of the report.

**7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

None.

**8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

No exclusion of press and public was necessary.

**9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

None

**10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

None.

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

None.

**11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

None.

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

None.

The meeting ended at 7.07 p.m.

Mayor Lutfur Rahman