

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

**COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWER HAMLETS TOWN HALL, 160 WHITECHAPEL
ROAD, LONDON E1 1BJ**

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Shafi Ahmed (Chair)
Councillor Saied Ahmed
Councillor Kabir Ahmed
Councillor Sabina Akhtar
Councillor James King
Councillor Rebaka Sultana

Members In Attendance Virtually:

Councillor Asma Begum

Apologies:

Councillor Maium Talukdar (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education,
Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy
Mayor))

Officers Present in Person:

Janet Fasan (Director of Legal & Monitoring Officer)
Matthew Mannion (Head of Democratic Services)
Joel West (Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Farhad Ahmed (Head of Governor Services)
Robert Curtis (Head of Electoral Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None were declared.

2. MINUTES

The unrestricted minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 13 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to Item 6.1, the Committee were informed that Councillor Nathalie Bienfait had accepted the position on the Corporate Parenting Board for 2023-24.

3. WORK PLAN

The work plan, as set out in the agenda pack was noted.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Local Authority Governor Applications September 2023

Farhad Ahmed, Head of School Governance and Information, introduced the report that set out for Members details of applicants who had applied to be nominated as local authority governors at Tower Hamlets maintained schools.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

1. Agree to nominate the applicants to the positions that are available for local authority governors at maintained schools in Tower Hamlets as set out in the report.

4.2 Elections Act 2022 - Electorate Engagement Update

Robert Curtis, Head of Electoral Services, introduced the report that updated the Committee on the planning that is in place, the co-operation between departments within the Council, the national engagement planning undertaken by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators regarding the implementation of the Elections Act 2022.

Further to questions from Committee members, Robert provided more information on:

- Communication campaigns including social media and email updates to stakeholders
- How the Council was ensuring best practice by learning from and visiting to local authorities
- How the Council was communicating with hard to reach residents.
- Changes to poll cards to highlight changes to voting (such as requirement for ID) and accompanying leaflets from the electoral commission.
- Plans to provide translations of advice and guidance into other languages, including Bengali.
- Arrangements for voters who may not have valid ID. A special certificate is available which can be requested any time until 12 days before the election. There will also be an urgent process for lost etc certificates.
- Planning for and contingency arrangements around general elections. Uncertainty of timings and dates made planning difficult, but plans and

additional resources were in place if needed at short notice.

- Saied – grants from DLAC? Forecast expenditure and whether any under or overspend and where spent?
- Funding and allocation of grants for election expenses and additional duties. Whilst costs are unknown, the Council will re-approach the government department for additional bids should there be a shortfall in the available grant.

Members offered their thanks to Robert and his team for their hard work.

RESOLVED that the General Purpose Committee:

1. Notes the engagement planning for the Elections Act 2022 and the continual updating and reviews of implementation approaching the Greater London Authority polls in May 2024, the General Election to be held no later than 28 January 2025 and the changes to electoral registration.

4.3 Constitution Updates

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, introduced the report that provided an update on amendments to the constitution required or made under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Committee.

Matthew provided a brief update of the first meeting of the constitution working group. The Committee discussed the role and work plan of the working group, including asking that the work plan include a review of timings and deadlines for motions for Council, including whether a deadline should be included for notifying opposition groups. Mathew advised that the working group could explore, but would have limited powers to influence executive procedures, such as public and back-bench engagement opportunities at Cabinet meeting.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

A resolution to exclude press and public was not required.

7. EXEMPT MINUTES

There were no exempt minutes to consider.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Shafi Ahmed
General Purposes Committee