

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE CABINET****HELD AT 5.45 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 24 APRIL 2024****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 Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

**Officers Present in Person:**

Menara Ahmed	(Hate Crime Policy & Partnership Manager)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
Dr Somen Banerjee	(Director of Public Health)
Steve Reddy	(Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Ann Corbett	(Director, Community Safety)
Robin Beattie	(Acting Director of Strategy Innovation and Transformation)
Katie Cole	(Associate Director of Public Health)
Nicola Klinger	(Housing Companies Manager)
Craig Morbey	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Simon Smith	(Head of Community Safety)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

**Officers In Attendance Virtually:**

Layla Richards	(Head of Strategy and Policy – Children and Culture)
Richard Ward	(Head of Commercial & Contracts)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

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

None.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES****RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 27 March 2024 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

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

The Chief Executive announced that a recent Member appointment panel had recommended the appointment of Steve Reddy as Corporate Director Children's Services.

The Mayor and Cabinet noted that the St George's flag had been flown at the Town Hall yesterday (23 April) to mark St George's Day.

The Mayor asked that attendees observe a minute's silence to commemorate the anniversary of the nail bomb attacks in Brick Lane, Soho and Brixton in April 1999.

**5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions**

Councillor Musthak Ahmed, 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 previous meeting and recent work including:

- the Committee's review of the LGA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan and in particular actions to streamline decision-making, the council's workforce strategy and efforts to address recruitment and retention to ensure greater diversity in senior leadership.
- Exploring leisure Insourcing opportunities, investment requirements and communication challenges
- the Committee had reviewed plans for a new Parking Enforcement Strategy; managing matchdays and events at London Stadium, plans for electrical charging points, and questioned performance data on ticket challenges; and

- the Committee had agreed recommendations from its Challenge Session on Markets. This followed site visits and engagement with traders to hear their lived experiences; examination of best practises adopted nationally and in neighbouring boroughs. An action plan response would be drafted for Cabinet's consideration shortly.

Further to the first point (LGA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan), Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive asked the Mayor and Cabinet to note that he had met with representatives of all political groups to discuss the draft action plan. Follow-up correspondence had been limited. He stressed the development of the action plan was to be an inclusive and iterative process.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ahmed and the rest of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the important role that they play. He welcomed the additional value the Council's scrutiny function brought to the Council's governance and decision-making processes. He also expressed regret that, due to a close family bereavement, he was unable to attend the most recent meeting of the Committee.

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

Nil items.

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

### **6.1 Community Engagement Strategy 2024-28**

Craig Morbey, Strategy and Policy Lead and Robin Beattie, Director. of Strategy, Transformation & Improvement introduced the report that outlines the Council vision for community engagement to be 'a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone.' Craig briefly summarised the Strategy's six priorities.

Steve Haley, Chief Executive, explained how the strategy would ensure a joined-up, corporate approach to engagement.

Cabinet members welcomed the report and encouraged the Mayor to consider even more engagement activities to listen to residents, such as exploring participatory budgets. Members also highlighted how technical ability can be barriers to participation on consultations.

The Mayor welcomed the new strategy which he hoped would improve the way the Council engages with and consults residents. He emphasised his manifesto commitment to become a 'listening council'. He also stressed the Council must work with faith communities and BAME media to best utilise local resources.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the Community Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Notes the consultation with residents, partners, staff, and elected members to develop the strategy as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
3. Notes the result of the equality screening as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

## 6.2 Women's Safety Action Plan

Council Abu Talha Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, introduced the report that set out the Women's Safety Action Plan developed and implemented as a result of seven recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2023. Councillor Choudhury explained that all of the recommendations were already in progress of implementation, with an overarching Strategy to be launched soon.

Ann Corbett, Director Safe Communities and Simon Smith, Head of Community Safety and Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG, Domestic Abuse & Hate Crime Manager added detail summarising some of the current Council initiatives to address safety of women including working with partners such as police, licensing colleagues, schools and faith communities.

Cabinet members welcomed the report and explained how some of the Mayor's recent initiatives would also improve the lives of women by providing a more active, affluent and stronger economy and community.

The Mayor welcomed the report and stressed how some of his wider efforts, including those to combat overcrowding in the borough and investment in a new youth service would promote wider social and health benefits for women in Tower Hamlets, adding value to the work of this action plan. The Mayor asked for some amendments to the recommendations as listed.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the women's safety action plan at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the following additions to the recommendations as underlined below:

### Recommendation 1

The council and its strategic partners, including the Metropolitan Police, Faith Communities and the VCS to collaborate to improve the awareness of women of the programmes and help available directly that support women's safety on the streets.

## Recommendation 2

The Council to review current funding arrangements and increase the capacity to support women's groups that offer domestic abuse services to the community. This to tie into a service-wide review of what is on offer to women of all communities.

## Recommendation 4

The Council's Children and Education Service, in particular Young Tower Hamlets to design support for increasing capacity at schools on raising awareness of domestic abuse and support available.

## Recommendation 5

The Council and Residential Social Landlord (RSL) partners should actively strengthen their partnership workings to focus on tackling women safety issues on RSL estates which will build on ongoing RSL work begun with the Ask the Ombudsman event.

## Recommendation 6

The Police/THEOs to actively target and focus their recruitment and retention strategy to reflect recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets. This to be done in cooperation with faith communities and the Council.

### 6.3 New Social Housing Regulatory Functions and Nominees to Adopt Responsibilities

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding introduced the report that set out the requirement to nominate individuals to two new functions (Responsible Person and Health and Safety Lead) to comply with the below new regulations for social housing landlords.

Paul Patterson, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration, explained how the new approach reinforced the Council's commitment to housing safety and new standards. He also explained that work was underway to integrate workstreams following insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes.

The Mayor welcomed the report

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet

1. Notes the requirement for individuals to be appointed to two new functions to comply with new commitments and legislation related to social housing landlords:
  - a. **Responsible Person** to oversee the council's compliance with the new social housing Consumer Standards, as set out in the Charter

for Social Housing Residents and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

- b. **Health and Safety Lead** to be responsible for monitoring and assessing the risk of failure to comply with health and safety requirements related to the council's social housing stock as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
2. Appoints the Director of Housing Asset Management to be the Council's Health and Safety Lead as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
3. Appoints the Corporate Director, Housing & Regeneration to be the Council's Responsible Person as set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

#### **6.4 Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway**

Steve Reddy, Corporate Director Children's Services introduced the report that, further to a previous extension in November 2023, updated Mayor and Cabinet on the recommissioning of the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) and sought permission for the retendering of the YPSHP and an extension to the existing contracts. Steve explained the difficulties that officers had encountered with the previous procurement exercise and explained that this approach would ensure service continuity and contracts were awarded to suitably qualified providers when the existing contract extensions had ended.

Cabinet members asked that a forward plan of procurement activity could help the Council prepare for similar occurrences.

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director Resources, asked Mayor and Cabinet to note that the comments of the chief finance officer in the report provided should refer to a six-month extension (not 9 months).

The Mayor asked officers to note that he was minded to agree a six-month extension to the current contract as an exception, but that ordinarily he insisted on open procurement wherever possible. He also asked officers widen future procurement exercises to ensure smaller providers were not excluded or did not face unnecessary barriers.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the recommissioning of the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway procurement that went live on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and closed on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023.
2. Approves the award of contract extensions to the four block contracts of three existing providers in the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway of 6 months each to allow for a suitable tender and mobilisation period of the reprocurement.

3. Notes the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report.

**6.5 Contract extension for School Health and Wellbeing Service and Integrated Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East**

Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care, introduced the report that sought contract extensions for the School Health and Wellbeing Service and the Integrated Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service. Councillor Choudhury explained that whilst a procurement exercise had concluded, evaluation had concluded the bid did not deliver best value for the requirements as set out in the service specification.

Katie Cole, Associate Director for Public Health, added further detail. Katie explained why an 8-month extension was desirable in this instance.

Further to his comments on the previous item (Item 6.4, Young People's Supported Housing Pathway) The Mayor asked officers to note that he was minded to agree an eight-month extension to the contracts as an exception, but that ordinarily he insisted on open procurement wherever possible. He also asked officers widen future procurement exercises to ensure smaller providers were not excluded or did not face unnecessary barriers.

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director Resources, explained that officers in her service had recently met with the Interim Corporate Director for Adult Social Care to agree new procurement processes to address backlogs and ensure that future resourcing was adequate.

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Approves the extension of the contracts for the two services for a period of 8 months to allow for the continuation of the procurement process and mobilisation of the new contract during term time.

**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 7.05 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman  
Cabinet