

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Peter Golds	

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Sabina Akhtar in the Chair**

The Speaker of the Council brought the Council up to date with some of her activities since the previous Council meeting. She reported that she had carried out a variety of engagements and supported a number of events. These ranged from: celebrations for the Victory Day of Bangladesh, Tower Hamlets in Bloom, cultural and sporting events, citizenship ceremonies and carol services to fundraise for her chosen charities.

In addition, the Speaker reported that she had visited a local school, attended a local Air Squadron Awards night, supported the fundraising efforts of Dementia Friends and held her Charity Ball to raise money for her charities.

The Speaker also reported that she had the honour of visiting Bangladesh when the Council was closed for Christmas where she met local dignitaries. This provided her with the opportunity to promote the Tower Hamlets and

explain how well the community worked together. She was pleased that the visit as a whole went very well.

The Speaker concluded that she was now looking ahead to the other events she was planning to hold this year which include fundraisers and the Civic Awards.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Shiria Khatun
- Councillor Abjol Miah
- Councillor Gulam Robbani

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

The Monitoring Officer advised that she had granted two dispensations in respect of Agenda Items 7, Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets and 12.16 Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents. As a result of this, Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in these items did not need to declare this and would be able to stay in the meeting room, participate in the discussion and vote on these items.

The Monitoring Officer had also received notification from Councillor Rabina Khan that she had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda items:

- 9.7, Member Question relating to new and small businesses.
- 9.31, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Reduction scheme and the self - employed.
- 12.2, Motion regarding stop the cut to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 12.7, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Councillors Mahbub Alam, Shah Alam, Ohid Ahmed, Shafi Ahmed, Aminur Khan, Peter Golds and Denise Jones declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda Items:

- 9.7, Member Question relating to new and small businesses.
- 9.31, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Reduction scheme and the self - employed.
- 12.2, Motion regarding Stop the cut to the Council Tax reduction scheme.
- 12.7, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Councillor Ayas Miah declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda Items:

- 7, Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets.
- 9.7, Member Question relating to new and small businesses.

- 9.31, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Reduction scheme and the self - employed.
- 12.2, Motion regarding stop the cut to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 12.7, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 12.16, Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents.

Councillor Rajib Ahmed declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda items:

- 9.16, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Reduction scheme and mini cab drivers.
- 12.2, Motion regarding stop the cut to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Councillors Dave Chesterton and Helal Uddin declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in the following agenda Items:

- 7, Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets
- 12.16 Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Councillor Helal Uddin also declared a non - disclosable interest in agenda item 12.16.

Councillor John Pierce declared a non - disclosable interest in agenda item 5.2, Petition regarding Galleon House fire safety.

Councillor Oliur Rahman declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 12.18, Motion regarding the Public Sector Pay Cap – including Tower Hamlets staff and emergency workers

Councillor Harun Miah declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda items:

- 9.20, Member Question relating to traffic and road safety measures
- 7, Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets
- 12.16, Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Members declaring Disclosable Pecuniary Interests would be required to leave the room for the duration of the relevant agenda items with the exception of those Members who had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer in respect of items agenda 7 and 12.16.

### **3. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 22 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

#### **4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

With regret the Speaker reported that George Desmond, who was a Mayor of Tower Hamlets in 1973-74 and former Councillor John Rowe, of St Katherine's Ward had sadly passed away. It was also reported that Eric Moonman, who was the last leader of Stepney Council and the first Leader of Tower Hamlets Council had sadly passed away recently.

The Speaker paid tribute to their contribution to the Borough and on behalf of the Council, passed on her deepest condolences to their families and friends at this difficult time.

The Chief Executive updated the Council on a number Senior Staff positions. He advised that:

- Vicky Clark had joined as Divisional Director, Growth & Economic Development;
- Roy Ormsby, Divisional Director of Public Realm had retired and
- Robin Payne had been appointed as the interim Divisional director of Public Realm.

He also advised that:

- Heather Daley, Divisional Director for Human Resources and Transformation would be leaving at Easter;
- Robert Curtis had joined as Head of Electoral Services and
- Louise Stamp had retired from the post of Head of Electoral Services.

In relation to other matters, he advised that there had been a further visit from Ofsted and their letter was to be published shortly. He also reported that the Council was in the process of being reassessed for the Investors in People accreditation and had been sort listed for five LGC awards. .

#### **5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**

##### **5.1 Petition regarding Latham House fire safety**

Councillor Oliur Rahman addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Mayor reported that the Council had commissioned fire risk assessments of its housing stock prior to the Grenfell Tower fire. He also reported that Tower Hamlets Homes had agreed a programme of works to address fire safety issues including measures to help address the issues identified at Latham House that had been assessed as at medium risk. He also advised whilst the initial testing of the cladding indicated that it was not at risk, samples would be sent off for further testing.

In addition, the Mayor reported that the Council had developed an Anti - Social Behaviour strategy to address the issues regarding community safety

and that he would be consulting on measures to improve the street layout around the Troxy on Commercial Road to minimise disturbance from events.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

**5.2 Petition regarding Galleon House fire safety**

Nasim Ahmed addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Housing then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported that the Council worked closely with housing associations including East End Homes in respect of fire safety matters.

He also advised that after receiving the petition, he had sought and received a statement from East End Homes regarding the matters raised in the petition. This provided reassurances about a number of matters including: their risk assessments of buildings; their investigation of the recent fire at the block; and the further steps they intended to take to address the issues raised in the petition.

He stated that both himself and East End Homes were happy to meet with the residents to discuss their concerns further

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

**5.3 Petition regarding for water sprinklers at Anglia House, Salmon Lane E14**

Dipu Jagirdar and others addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Housing then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported that the Council would continue to monitor fire safety and that all of the fire risk assessments of its housing blocks were up to date. Furthermore, the Council had committed funding for fire safety works,

He also advised that Anglia House had been identified as at moderate risk and the Council and THH had approved works to improve the fire safety rating. They would consult with residents throughout this process.

On the issue of sprinklers, he advised that the requirements only applied to buildings built after 2007 over a certain height. All of the Council's high rise housing blocks were built before this date. Nevertheless, they should be protected by their design features. He also added that the Council were awaiting further advice on this matter and had contacted the government to secure funding for sprinkler systems.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

**5.4 Petition regarding Campaign for Outdoor Gym in Sir John McDougal Park, Westferry Road, E14**

Petition not presented due to the absence of the petitioner.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Children's for a written response within 28 days.

**6. MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor made his report to the Council, referring to his written report circulated at the meeting, summarising key events, engagements and meetings since the last Council meeting.

When the Mayor had completed his report and at the invitation of the Speaker, the Leaders of the Independent Group, the People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets and the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

**7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE****Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets**

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim **seconded** the following amendment to the motion as **tabled**:

Additions in bold and deletions struck through:

This Council notes that:

1. The population of Tower Hamlets has broken through the 300,000 mark. It is predicted there will be a further 87,400 people living in the Borough over the next 25 years.
2. A lack of **genuinely** affordable housing is now the main concern for residents, as highlighted by the Annual Residents Survey 2017.

3. Since **the 2010 General Election**, rough sleeping has more than doubled and the number of homeless households has increased by half to almost 60,000. This is a direct result of the Government's failed housing policies: no proper investment for affordable homes; benefit changes; reduced funding for homelessness services, and a lack of action to help private renters.
4. The Government announced in its Autumn Budget that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) cap would be lifted for some councils, up to £1bn, starting in 2019/20, but that councils will need to bid for this in the future rather than automatically being given the power now.
5. The new Local Plan ~~will~~ **must** set out how the Council intends to manage the scale and pace of development and ensure that all residents benefit from the opportunities growth brings to the borough and will deliver more schools, transport, GP surgeries and jobs alongside new housing. **The Plan must ensure that it does not have a funding gap and ensures a fair, transparent and accountable distribution of local infrastructure levy and any development related funding is fairly distributed to all parts of the Borough – particularly the areas and neighbourhoods which are more deprived, poorer or those with the highest levels of child poverty and other needs.**
6. Mayor Biggs pledged to deliver 1,000 council homes and the Council is on track to meet this target. **However, Council considers that the current target is without any meaningful timescale, transparency and accountability and is not only unimaginative, lacks ambition and essential details but is also a poor attempt to steal the credit for the hard work already carried out by the previous administration led by former Mayor Lutfur Rahman, former Deputy Mayor Councillor Ohid Ahmed and the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Alibor Choudhury and their team.**
7. Council figures show Tower Hamlets delivered 1,070 affordable homes last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16) **all of which were approved by the previous administration.**
8. Under Mayor Biggs' new Living Rent policy, rents for new affordable homes are far more affordable to those on low incomes, saving residents up to £6,000 a year. This was a recommendation of the Tower Hamlets Affordability Commission, which was set up by Mayor Biggs in 2015 following his election. **However, Council considers that Mayor John Biggs did not need to spend taxpayers' money to set up a 'Commission' to figure out that the Council should make the rents more affordable. The lowering of some of the rents is also partly due to the imposition of a government requirement to cut social housing rent by 1% a year for four years.**
9. That Mayor Biggs unveiled 148 new council homes at Watts Grove in September; a scheme which was ~~scrapped in 2013 by the previous~~

~~administration but reinstated after a local Labour led campaign to save the housing. The housing is covered by new rent levels, introduced by Mayor Biggs, which means that compared to the previous Mayor's rent levels, a family living in a new three bed property will be up to £5,791 better off. However Council believes that this had been approved by the previous administration at Cabinet on 5 November 2014 as shown on the Council website and that it is highly irresponsible for the current administration to claim otherwise. In its lazy and politically convenient manner, The Biggs Administration tries to claim its credit otherwise without listing the full facts which were that:~~

- a. **The previous administration paused on the first draft of the scheme in 2013 because it wanted to secure better value for money, secure additional funding and push for more affordable and Council housing.**
  - b. **The Biggs' Administration also fails to understand that the initial delay was to secure a grant of £7 million from the Greater London Authority to provide 150 homes but at a "significantly lower cost to the Council". In fact the previous administration achieved these objectives and delivered £26.33 funding to build Watts Grove Homes saving the Council millions, securing best value for money and providing much needed homes for local people.**
10. ~~The Mayor's Neighbourhood Refresh scheme will invest £3million in local neighbourhoods to make them safer, cleaner and greener. Practical improvements such as new lighting, more green space, traffic calming and new bins will make a positive difference to local areas is a positive step in the right direction in principle but two years too late.~~
  11. ~~The rights of private renters in Tower Hamlets are being protected with the launch of the Tower Hamlets Private Renters' Charter. This, alongside innovative new measures such as the landlord licensing scheme, means a better deal for private renters. However, Council notes that this was a project that begun under the previous Mayor Rahman Administration.~~
  12. ~~The Government's housing policies such as the benefit cap and bedroom tax, along with local failures by the current administration, have led to the total number of households in temporary accommodation – including bed and breakfast style housing, hostels, women's refuges and housing leased from private landlords – increasing by 55% from 50,400 in 2010 to 78,180 in 2017.~~
  13. ~~Families are no longer housed in B&B accommodation for longer than the 6 week legal limit, compared to the 174 families that were left to languish in B&Bs under the previous administration. However, Council considers that the current Mayor's lack of leadership and failures,~~

mean that many families, out of nearly 19,000 on the housing waiting list, are primarily being bused out of the Borough or put in inadequate accommodation. Council also notes that it was the previous Labour Administration which sold Tower Hamlets housing stock to RSLs which was a catastrophic decision – ironically some of those properties which were sold by Labour are now being bought back by Mayor John Biggs using £60 million of taxpayers' money (despite some of these being not fit for purpose or provide value for money) – as part of £119m decision which the Biggs Administration sneaked through the full council meeting without any meaningful or a proper debate.

14. The Development Viability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which ensures transparency in the planning process and encourages reviewing viability at each phase of large schemes, aims to provide greater clarity to both applicants and the public and ensures that the principles of sustainable development are at the forefront of decision-making in Tower Hamlets.

This Council believes:

1. Population growth will bring Tower Hamlets numerous benefits as well as challenges **that the previous administration was working hard to plan ahead and tackle proactively.**
2. The Borough benefits **when** ~~from the approach of this Council Administration which~~ **proactively** is meeting the challenge of the housing crisis head on by providing high quality affordable housing, a better deal for private renters, improved local environments and **1,000 and more** council homes, **as was the case under the previous administration.**
3. ~~The 174 families left to live in B&B accommodation for over 6 weeks, and their original decision to scrap the Watts Grove development, illustrates the approach of the previous administration: a failure to serve residents; a failure to properly manage council budgets; and a failure to plan for the future.~~
4. The Government's HRA cap proposals **are neither adequate nor do** ~~not~~ go far enough – borrowing caps should be lifted significantly higher, and not limited to a bidding process **and the local authorities provided with appropriate flexibility to deliver for communities they serve.**

The Council believes:

1. The former Mayor Lutfur Rahman's administration, supported by Deputy Mayor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources, Alibor Choudhury and their team, embarked on an ambitious journey to tackle the housing issues including by:

- a. Dealing with the poor standards of maintenance and upkeep within the private sector introducing 'licensing for private rented sector housing'.
  - b. Delivering a record 5,590 affordable homes (as confirmed by the Department of Communities and Local Government), the highest in the Country.
  - c. Securing the release of £53 million in New Homes Bonus by 2015 – again the highest in the Country. An achievement acknowledged in a recent report by City Hall.
  - d. A number of regeneration projects such as the London Docks project which helped to secure a space for a 1,500 strong secondary school in Wapping.
  - e. Other major regeneration schemes, led by Councillor Ohid Ahmed included the Ocean Estate and Blackwall Reach/Robin Hood Gardens.
  - f. Developing the Whitechapel Vision - along with its Master Plan, which was the brainchild of the former Mayor and his Cabinet Member for Finance/Resources Cllr Alibor Choudhury – that included support for local businesses, a 'tech city' and the expansion of medical research facilities. The historic regeneration of Whitechapel is a testament to their commitment and ambition to improve the Borough.
  - g. The Whitechapel Vision, its Master Plan and associated regeneration will also provide: at least 3,500 new homes; 5,000 new local jobs; school improvements; transformed public spaces; enhanced local heritage; and a new civic centre at the heart of the community.
- 2 The leadership and achievements of the Rahman Administration's policies and delivery between 2010 and 2015 were recognised by Government and commentators across the UK.

This Council resolves:

1. That Mayor John Biggs should stop taking the credit for the achievements of the previous administration led by former Mayor Lutfur Rahman, Deputy Mayor Cllr Ohid Ahmed and the team. Instead he must learn to take responsibility for a series of catastrophic failures under his watch, instead of indulging in lazy and politically convenient point scoring and excuses.
2. To acknowledge the historic achievements of the former Mayor, former Deputy Mayor and their administration in delivering the record level of affordable housing as acknowledged by the Government, the GLA and others.
3. For ~~to work with The Biggs Administration Mayor John Biggs~~ to work with all groups including the largest opposition, Independent Group (and its mayoral candidate, former Deputy Mayor Councillor Ohid Ahmed) to continue to work to deliver more affordable and social housing for local people.

4. ~~For To support Mayor Biggs~~ **The Biggs Administration to work with all parties and stakeholders** to campaign to lift the HRA cap significantly and immediately, to ensure that councils including Tower Hamlets can provide the good quality social housing that is so badly needed.
5. ~~For To Mayor John Biggs~~ **The Biggs Administration to work with everyone in the interest of residents, on a cross-party basis, to lobby** support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to make sure that the Government does not to impose High Value Sales on Local Authorities.

Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The original motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

#### **RESOLVED:**

This Council notes that:

1. The population of Tower Hamlets has broken through the 300,000 mark. It is predicted there will be a further 87,400 people living in the Borough over the next 25 years.
2. A lack of affordable housing is now the main concern for residents, as highlighted by the Annual Residents Survey 2017.
3. Since 2010 rough sleeping has more than doubled and the number of homeless households has increased by half to almost 60,000. This is a direct result of the Government's failed housing policies: no proper investment for affordable homes; benefit changes; reduced funding for homelessness services, and a lack of action to help private renters.
4. The Government announced in its Autumn Budget that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) cap would be lifted for some councils, up to £1bn, starting in 2019/20, but that councils will need to bid for this in the future rather than automatically being given the power now.
5. The new Local Plan will set out how the Council intends to manage the scale and pace of development and ensure that all residents benefit from the opportunities growth brings to the borough and will deliver more schools, transport, GP surgeries and jobs alongside new housing.
6. Mayor Biggs pledged to deliver 1,000 council homes and the Council is on track to meet this target.
7. Council figures show Tower Hamlets delivered 1,070 affordable homes last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16).

- 8 Under Mayor Biggs' new Living Rent policy, rents for new affordable homes are far more affordable to those on low incomes, saving residents up to £6,000 a year. This was a recommendation of the Tower Hamlets Affordability Commission, which was set up by Mayor Biggs in 2015 following his election.
9. That Mayor Biggs unveiled 148 new council homes at Watts Grove in September; a scheme which was scrapped in 2013 by the previous administration but reinstated after a local Labour-led campaign to save the housing. The housing is covered by new rent levels, introduced by Mayor Biggs, which means that compared to the previous Mayor's rent levels, a family living in a new three bed property will be up to £5,791 better off.
10. The Mayor's Neighbourhood Refresh scheme will invest £3million in local neighbourhoods to make them safer, cleaner and greener. Practical improvements such as new lighting, more green space, traffic calming and new bins will make a positive difference to local areas.
11. The rights of private renters in Tower Hamlets are being protected with the launch of the Tower Hamlets Private Renters' Charter. This, alongside innovative new measures such as the landlord licensing scheme, means a better deal for private renters.
12. The Government's housing policies such as the benefit cap and bedroom tax have led to the total number of households in temporary accommodation – including bed and breakfast style housing, hostels, women's refuges and housing leased from private landlords – increasing by 55% from 50,400 in 2010 to 78,180 in 2017.
13. Families are no longer housed in B&B accommodation for longer than the 6 week legal limit, compared to the 174 families that were left to languish in B&Bs under the previous administration.
14. The Development Viability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which ensures transparency in the planning process and encourages reviewing viability at each phase of large schemes, aims to provide greater clarity to both applicants and the public and ensures that the principles of sustainable development are at the forefront of decision-making in Tower Hamlets.

This Council believes:

1. Population growth will bring Tower Hamlets numerous benefits as well as challenges.
2. The Borough benefits from the approach of this Council administration which is meeting the challenge of the housing crisis head on by providing high quality affordable housing, a better deal for private renters, improved local environments and 1,000 council homes.

3. The 174 families left to live in B&B accommodation for over 6 weeks, and their original decision to scrap the Watts Grove development, illustrates the approach of the previous administration: a failure to serve residents; a failure to properly manage council budgets; and a failure to plan for the future.
4. The Government's HRA cap proposals do not go far enough – borrowing caps should be lifted significantly higher, and not limited to a bidding process.

This Council resolves:

- 1 To work with Mayor John Biggs to continue to deliver more affordable housing for local people.
2. To support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to lift the HRA cap significantly and immediately, to ensure that councils including Tower Hamlets can provide the good quality social housing that is so badly needed.
3. To support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to make sure that the Government does not impose High Value Sales on Local Authorities.

## 8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

### **Opposition Motion by the Independent Group calling for the abandonment of the planned State Visit by Donald Trump**

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** the following friendly amendment to the motion **as tabled**:

*Deleted text is scored out.*

*New text is underlined.*

Tower Hamlets is home to one of the country's most diverse communities. The borough has always been a home to migrant communities beginning with the French Huguenots in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, followed later by Jewish and Irish migrants. Bangladeshi residents began arriving in the borough during the 1970s. Somalian residents arrived as seamen and then later as a result of a war in Somalia. Tower Hamlets has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England – 35 per cent compared with the national average of 5 per cent.

Tower Hamlets Council undertakes important and positive community cohesion work through its policies and priorities.

The Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015 outlined the vision for the borough where people, regardless of their backgrounds, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The ~~then~~ Strategic Plan 17/18, sets out the council's aim to create more engaged, resilient and cohesive communities. One of the four key themes of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan, as part of its priority outcome to create and maintain a vibrant successful place, was to create a Safe and Cohesive Community and, as part of this, the plan highlighted a commitment to promote community cohesion. A cohesive community enables all to have an equal stake and status in the community; where people have the same opportunities as their neighbours; and where people have a commitment and responsibility to contribute to the well-being of their communities.

Like the neighbouring Royal Borough of Greenwich which formally adopted a similar motion, this Council notes with shock and alarm the decision by Donald Trump, President of the United States, to 'retweet' Islamophobic propaganda from the Britain First Twitter account.

The Council further notes with sadness the President's bigoted attitude (~~Washington Post, Caroline Lucas MP and co-chair of Green Party, Republicans in the United States, Boston Globe, Royal Borough of Greenwich among others~~) towards women, ethnic minorities and Muslims which has resulted in examples of division and hatred within the USA and beyond.

Mr Trump has been invited to visit the United Kingdom by the Government.

This Council also notes Trump's unilateral decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel which is against the United Nations resolutions, the official policy position of our country and all United Nations permanent member states and an overwhelming majority of nations refused to support this illogical decision. Trump's decision has created a huge impediment to achieving peace, to secure a possible two-state solution between Israel and Palestine and has unnecessarily provided a potential opportunity to be exploited by violent extremists which could have a possible knock-on impact on the efforts to deal with extremism and radicalisation in Tower Hamlets.

The Council further notes Trump's earlier remarks in December 2015 when he first stated 'parts of London were so radicalised that police feared for their lives', ~~and then~~ his decision to introduce 'a ban on Muslims travelling to the United States', and other statements and policies designed to sow division. ~~akin to 'Keystone Kops' running around.~~

For centuries our borough has welcomed people who want to make a better life for themselves or who are fleeing persecution. Our borough is one of the greatest of melting pots and as the centre of London moves towards us, in Tower Hamlets, we understand very well how to foster harmony and cohesion in society while defeating policies and decisions created to sow division and hatred.

The Council notes that on numerous occasions where far-right groups such as Britain First, the English Defence League and the Football Lads Alliance

~~have attempted to antagonise local communities in Tower Hamlets, Mr Trump needs to understand when the minority fascists calling themselves 'English Defence League (EDL)' tried to march into Tower Hamlets on 7 March 2013, the united local community led by the then leadership came together to stand up to the forces of bigotry and fascism. Similarly, when the East London Mosque was under siege on 12 March 2016, and again on 11 April 2016 by minority fascists calling themselves 'Britain First', it was the local community with a diverse and united population of our great borough, including a local Christian priest, Jewish, Buddhists, Jains, and people of no faith, who all came together to defend the right of their Muslim neighbours to worship peacefully.~~

The Council notes the positive impact of the work undertaken by the Council under the banner of its 'Community Plan', 'One Tower Hamlets', 'No Place for Hate' and 'Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission' bringing together all community; including faith, communities, community and third sector groups, throughout Tower Hamlets. As such, Council reiterates its commitment to working with residents to further strengthen community cohesion and relations.

The Council notes with regret that this Borough's commitment to maintaining a strong and vibrant community is totally incompatible with the ideology and policies espoused by President Trump and could have a very negative impact upon the positive work of the council.

Council notes Donald Trump has cancelled plans for a "working visit" to the UK which was scheduled for February.

**Based on above, London Borough of Tower Hamlets resolves:**

1. To fully support representations to the Prime Minister, which call for the offer of a state visit to be withdrawn, and to formally write to ask the Government, on a cross-party basis, to formally oppose the State visit to the UK, should a formal date for the visit be set.
2. The Council further calls upon the government to use funding that would have been spent on security and other arrangements for such a state visit to fund charities like the Jo Cox Foundation, ~~in conjunction with other~~ and local Tower Hamlets-based charities, that promote peace, dialogue and understanding and also tackle homelessness, loneliness and rough sleeping for our vulnerable citizens both locally and across the country.
3. However, should the Government still choose to go ahead with State Visit, this Council makes clear that President Trump would not be welcome in our Borough.
4. Declare Tower Hamlets a Trump-Free Zone like Chicago.

Following debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed.**

**RESOLVED:**

Tower Hamlets is home to one of the country's most diverse communities. The borough has always been a home to migrant communities beginning with the French Huguenots in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, followed later by Jewish and Irish migrants. Bangladeshi residents began arriving in the borough during the 1970s. Somalian residents arrived as seamen and then later as a result of a war in Somalia. Tower Hamlets has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England – 35 per cent compared with the national average of 5 per cent.

Tower Hamlets Council undertakes important and positive community cohesion work through its policies and priorities.

The Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015 outlined the vision for the borough where people, regardless of their backgrounds, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The Strategic Plan 17/18- sets out the council's aim to create more engaged, resilient and cohesive communities. One of the four key themes of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan, as part of its priority outcome to create and maintain a vibrant successful place, was to create a Safe and Cohesive Community and, as part of this, the plan highlighted a commitment to promote community cohesion. A cohesive community enables all to have an equal stake and status in the community; where people have the same opportunities as their neighbours; and where people have a commitment and responsibility to contribute to the well-being of their communities.

Like the neighbouring Royal Borough of Greenwich which formally adopted a similar motion, this Council notes with shock and alarm the decision by Donald Trump, President of the United States, to 'retweet' Islamophobic propaganda from the Britain First Twitter account.

The Council further notes with sadness the President's bigoted attitude towards women, ethnic minorities and Muslims which has resulted in examples of division and hatred within the USA and beyond.

Mr Trump has been invited to visit the United Kingdom by the Government.

This Council also notes Trump's unilateral decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel which is against the United Nations resolutions, the official policy position of our country and all United Nations permanent member states and an overwhelming majority of nations refused to support this illogical decision. Trump's decision has created a huge impediment to achieving peace, to secure a possible two-state solution between Israel and Palestine and has unnecessarily provided a potential opportunity to be exploited by violent extremists which could have a possible knock-on impact on the efforts to deal with extremism and radicalisation in Tower Hamlets.

The Council further notes Trump's earlier remarks in December 2015 when he first stated 'parts of London were so radicalised that police feared for their

lives', his decision to introduce 'a ban on Muslims travelling to the United States', and other statements and policies designed to sow division.

For centuries our borough has welcomed people who want to make a better life for themselves or who are fleeing persecution. Our borough is one of the greatest of melting pots and as the centre of London moves towards us, in Tower Hamlets, we understand very well how to foster harmony and cohesion in society while defeating policies and decisions created to sow division and hatred.

The Council notes that on numerous occasions where far-right groups such as Britain First, the English Defence League and the Football Lads Alliance have attempted to antagonise local communities in Tower Hamlets, it was the local community with a diverse and united population of our great borough, including a local Christian priest, Jewish, Buddhists, Jains, and people of no faith, who all came together to defend the right of their Muslim neighbours to worship peacefully.

The Council notes the positive impact of the work undertaken by the Council under the banner of its 'Community Plan', 'One Tower Hamlets', 'No Place for Hate' and 'Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission' bringing together all community; including faith, communities, community and third sector groups, throughout Tower Hamlets. As such, Council reiterates its commitment to working with residents to further strengthen community cohesion and relations.

The Council notes with regret that this Borough's commitment to maintaining a strong and vibrant community is totally incompatible with the ideology and policies espoused by President Trump and could have a very negative impact upon the positive work of the council.

Council notes Donald Trump has cancelled plans for a "working visit" to the UK which was scheduled for February.

**Based on above, London Borough of Tower Hamlets resolves:**

1. To fully support representations to the Prime Minister, which call for the offer of a state visit to be withdrawn, and to formally write to the Government, on a cross-party basis, to formally oppose the State visit to the UK, should a formal date for the visit be set.
2. The Council further calls upon the government to use funding that would have been spent on security and other arrangements for such a state visit to fund charities like the Jo Cox Foundation—and local Tower Hamlets-based charities that promote peace, dialogue and understanding and also tackle homelessness, loneliness and rough sleeping for our vulnerable citizens both locally and across the country.
3. However, should the Government still choose to go ahead with State Visit, this Council makes clear that President Trump would not be welcome in our Borough.
4. Declare Tower Hamlets a Trump-Free Zone like Chicago.

**9. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member-

**9.1 Question from Councillor John Pierce:**

The scale of Government cuts to police budgets has led to police front counter closures in Limehouse and Brick Lane – what impact will this have?

**Response of Mayor John Biggs:**

This is an important issue and I regret enormously that the Mayor of London has felt forced to close the Police stations. We have lobbied against it and I fundamentally disagree with that decision. But there is a problem which is similar to the debates we have about our budgets each year, which is that he is facing from government, a massive cut in police numbers in Tower Hamlets and the whole of London. I think across our whole community including many Conservative voters, people feel anxious about the future of our borough because of the reduction in police numbers. I lobbied against the closure of Limehouse Police station and Brick Lane Police station. I think it is regrettable and I think there should still be an open police presence at those stations.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Pierce:**

The Mayor has rightly highlighted the harsh reality of the vicious tory cuts on policing. What representations did the Council make to oppose these closures?

**Mayor Biggs' response to the supplementary question:**

We responded to the official consultation to strongly object to the closures, and I hope the opposition groups also took part in that. I met with the Deputy Mayor for policing and made those representations as well. We argued that effective policing relies on public confidence and a sense of protection, including contact points such as front counters. We highlighted that between May 2010 and July 2017 Tower Hamlets lost 197 dedicated borough police officers and 98 PCSOs. That is simply unacceptable. The Council is investing in 39 new police officers but we cannot replace every police officer the Government scraps. We do not have the financial resources to fill in the gaps left by Government cuts. The Metropolitan Police should not have to choose between police stations and police officers. We will continue to work closely with the Police to tackle crime and ASB in the borough, and my latest Council Budget includes an additional £1.4m for this purpose. We will continue to work on this issue.

**9.2 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed:**

There is a slight typo in my question. It should actually read will the Mayor inform if he cut any council funded police officers in the 2016 budget and can he confirm that figure please?

(Question on the agenda - Will the Mayor inform the council if he cut 34 council-funded police officers in his 2016 budget?)

**Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:**

You asked me a similar question at a public meeting. From July 2011, the council funded a team of 21 police officers known as the Partnership Task Force (PTF) 1. The contract came to an end on 31st March 2015 and it was the previous Mayor Lutfur Rahman who chose not to renew this contract. In December 2012 the Council funded an additional team of 19 officers, known as Partnership Task Force 2. That contract also expired on 30th November 2015. Mayor John Biggs has funded a new contract of 6 police officers in December 2015 and then he also later agreed £3m funding to bring the number of council funded officers to 39 police officers. Community safety is an absolute priority. I want to make sure we keep our police officers on the streets delivering neighbourhood policing that stops crime and deals with the issues residents are facing.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Ahmed:**

I was at the meeting and you made a statement and I don't think it is a correct statement. You said that the Police officers were cut in 2014, rather than 2015 and a lot of people heard your speech so I think you need to rectify this. You have learnt your lesson and you are now going back to my policy of funding local partnership police. When I stood up here in 2016 I alerted Mayor Biggs and gave him an alternative budget. I said to him at the time that he should not be cutting police officer funding but he went ahead. I think you have learnt a lesson. I think that it is important that you carry on funding police officers until you finish your time in office. My question is have you learnt your lesson?

**Councillor Begum's response to the supplementary question:**

I am happy to sit down with you and show you this briefing and that it was in 2011 that these officers were made redundant.

**9.3 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison:**

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on Operation Continuum, the police and council operation to tackle drug dealers?

**Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:**

Tower Hamlets Police, and the Council are working together with other

partners to crack down on drug dealing through Operation Continuum. It was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and is a rolling 10 week programme. To date it has resulted in:

- 19 arrests for drugs and 4 arrests for other offences.
- 13 charges for drug trafficking.
- 12 addresses and 6 vehicles have been searched.
- £20,000 in cash has been seized.
- 2 carrier bags of cannabis have been confiscated along with a box of Class A Drugs.

Our partnership work maximises our resources and will help to stamp out drug dealing, which is a plague across London. Residents have told us where there are hotspots of drug dealing and crime, and we know that through partnership working we can be safer together.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Harrison:**

Can the Cabinet Member clarify whether Operation Continuum will be a one off or a continuing programme?

**Councillor Begum's response to the supplementary question:**

This is not a one off operation, it is a rolling operation and we will be working with our partners to deliver this once a month.

**9.4 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:**

Is Tower Hamlets Drugs Service in Special Measures?

**Response of Mayor John Biggs:**

I know there has been some misinformation about this so let me be clear. The Reset drug and alcohol services are not in special measures. There is no such category as special measures and they are also performing pretty well. The borough's Drugs and Alcohol support is provided by Reset. As you would expect, the contract is closely monitored by our Drugs & Alcohol team and we work closely with Reset to ensure that clients are offered the best service possible. We want to see constant improvement from all our services so where we feel that things could be improved we work with them to draw up and implement plans to do just that. Good progress has been made on implementing the new model of service delivery and we have had good feedback from service users.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Khan:**

The question still remains as to why Lifeline was awarded this contract when they were having internal mismanagement since 2015 according to newspaper reports. On that note, could I ask that the Mayor ensures that he provides a briefing to all elected Members containing the following information:

- to confirm whether substance misuse services were put on special

- measures and when that had happened;
- to provide a list of specific areas where services were failing Borough residents due to their underperformance;
  - to provide a performance comparison with previous years in all key measurement areas and demographics;
  - to provide a breakdown of client demographics entering each of these respective services.

**Mayor Biggs' response to the supplementary question:**

I am aware that the Director of Adults Services has offered Councillor Khan a confidential briefing on the performance of this service. She has done so on legal advice because of the nature of the contract and the way in which it is structured, and the way in which information within it is treated. I can tell you that our investment of just under £8 million a year to address substance misuse in Tower Hamlets, means that they are currently more people engaged in structured drugs or alcohol treatment here than in any other London Borough with about 500 individual successfully completing treatment each year and nobody waiting more than 21 days to receive treatment. I can also tell her as I have a good relationship with them historically that I hold in very high regard the work of NAFAS and I would love to see them continue to play a role in drug treatment in our borough.

**9.5 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell:**

Can the lead member please update us on the outcome of the Ofsted monitoring visit for Children's Social Care that took place in December?

**Response of Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services:**

Thank you Councillor Hassell for your question and for all your challenge in your role as scrutiny lead. I have reported to some previous full Councils on the August visit from Ofsted when they found significant progress at the front door of Children's Social Care services. Their second visit took place in December and I am pleased to tell colleagues that Ofsted's feedback was positive but I want to make clear that the Mayor and I know we have a long way to go and that there is absolutely no complacency on this side of the chamber. So the improvements they found in August in the MASH, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, were sustained. Ofsted said that there were no children at immediate risk which is really positive compared to the inspection. They found significant and positive change to previously poor practice in the family support and protection teams. They found better management, better use of performance information to tackle drift and delay in cases and crucially much more direct work with children - children being seen more frequently and at home.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Hassell:**

I am sure that all Members would welcome the news that we are on the right

track and that the direction of travel is very positive for our children and families. In particular, could the Lead Member update us as to what the Ofsted found in relation to management and leadership of children's services.

**Councillor Whitelock Gibbs' response to the supplementary question:**

We have seen a draft letter from Ofsted and Members will be pleased that the letter will be published next week and we will make sure that it is circulated to Members. About senior leaders and elected Members, Ofsted said that we have an increased in-depth knowledge of the strengths and areas of weakness in the service and that leaders and managers demonstrate considerable determination, commitment and a tenacity to embed and sustain these changes. I would just like to highlight though that there are areas of concern that the Mayor and I and I know Councillor Hassell as scrutiny lead is very interested in, particularly: case loads that our social workers are dealing with and the high volume of work we are seeing, stability in the workforce -I have talked at many meetings about our need to recruit and retain, excellent social workers and the need to support those staff, and really embedding sustainable change into the future. The Mayor and I will continue to focus on this fortnightly. I hope that opposition members will start to come to the formal meetings where we debate these issues rather than just throwing things around in the Council Chamber, like the Best Value Programme Board.

**9.6 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood:**

The Mayor will be aware of the spate of recent acid attacks on the Isle of Dogs and street robberies in Limehouse. In view of the sums of money held by Tower Hamlets Council under section 106 agreements, when will the administration provide modern, high quality and permanent CCTV cameras in Marsh Wall, Glengall Grove, Blackwall Way, Millharbour and Narrow Street, all of which are both areas of development and have been subjected to attacks and robberies as outlined above?

**Response of Mayor John Biggs to the question:**

I attended the meeting at St Ann's Church last week to listen to residents' concerns in Limehouse, which are considerable because of a spate of attacks in that area. I will be following up on the agreed actions. I am concerned about the recent acid attacks on the Isle of Dogs as well, as we spoke about earlier. I have launched an Acid Charter about the sale of acid and I have lobbied the Government who is responsive. I would not claim credit for that by the way but it is part of the campaign which I think has encouraged the Government to take an interest in this issue and act to some extent. CCTV plays an important role but it is mischievous to suggest for example that there are only 3 CCTV cameras on the Isle of Dogs. There are probably about 300 because we work with partners across all the different agencies, such as Canary Wharf, the DLR and every single bus. A lot of private landowners and estates have CCTVs which record evidence that is used everyday to help keep people on the island safe.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Wood:**

One the issues that has come up recently is the role of private CCTV cameras. I would like to ask the Mayor whether is thinks private CCTV cameras inside tall buildings are allowed to cover public spaces and roads outside those buildings or not?

**Mayor Biggs' response to the supplementary question:**

The short answer is that I probably have not got the faintest idea but I know that they have been used. A person we all know was assaulted outside his building on the Isle of Dogs a while back and the CCTV evidence from the cameras in that building was very useful to the Police in trying to identify the people who assaulted him. Whether such evidence is admissible in court is another matter of course. But if we can use camera evidence to help maintain safety and deter people and provide a greater sense of security then that is what we should do. What I am doing in addition and this follows the Limehouse meeting, but I was minded to do this in any event, is reviewing the way in which we use our CCTV cameras to make sure they are up to date and digital, that we use modern networks and that we review the location of them. I think that it is very important to maintain public confidence and that we reassure people in a number of ways including the use of cameras

**9.7 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed:**

What support does the Council offer for new and small businesses?

**Response of Councillor John Peck, Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth:**

I am particularly proud that Tower Hamlets is one of the most entrepreneurial Boroughs in the country with one of the highest number of new business start - ups of anywhere. Despite this, the previous Administration gave literally no support to our small businesses that create local wealth and employ lots of local people. By contrast, we have a whole raft of support for local businesses. We have opened the Tower Hamlets small business centre in the former Royal Mail building in Whitechapel from where we run a huge number of programmes including the start-up ready training for new entrepreneurs with a four day course and grants of up to £5,000. This has already benefited 170 people and 54 new businesses have been created. There is also: the supply ready scheme to help business apply for public contracts, the retail market ready scheme to help retailers, the growth ready scheme to assist businesses finding space and two small business rate relief schemes which between them have awarded almost £12million to local small businesses this year

(No supplementary question was asked)

**9.8 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:**

Will the Mayor inform the council why did he not personally ensure that the £2m bribery allegation eventually reported by the Sunday Times on 10 December involving, the journalist stated, a Labour-supporting businessman who campaigned for the Mayor in 2015 and 4 councillors (that a lay person would assume are Labour given the businessman's allegiance) and, were not reported to the police straight away in late 2015 by him when the Mayor was first informed about the criminal allegations?

**Response of Mayor John Biggs:**

This is an important matter but obviously we are guided by the advice we received from the Monitoring Officer. To date we are essentially dealing with hearsay evidence and no firm evidence of any particular activity, which needs to be investigated by the proper Authorities. I would like to correct two things in your question. Firstly, you assert that this was a Labour supporting person. I have here the front page of a local newspaper where he is supporting very vigorously, Councillor Rabina Khan who is leader of the PATH Group. So I don't think that it is unambiguous that he is supporting any particular party. I suspect that he is a businessman first and foremost. The second is that the report in the newspaper identifies four Councillors. It talks about four gatekeepers whatever that might be. All I am doing is reporting to you what was in the newspapers. So I think you are trying to sow something out of less than the sum of its parts.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Rahman:**

Do you know that the Council whistleblowing policy says that if there is evidence of criminal activity the person will be obliged to inform the Police. The criminal allegation reported to you was serious enough for both yourself and the Chief Executive to go for a walk by the river in late 2015 – two years before the Sunday Times exposed the information that was kept hidden away from the members and the people of Tower Hamlets. The Council had access to the audio tape as well yet it was not until August 2016 that the Council informed the Authorities and only after being told to so by a QC and a consultant. A very slow process by yourself Mayor John Biggs. This is not acceptable and it means that the residents cannot trust the current system. Can you update us on the latest investigation and will you ensure that the relevant Councillors cooperate and give interviews to the Police as a matter of urgency and before the election.

**Mayor Biggs' response to the supplementary question:**

I can't update you on an investigation as far as I can tell I have no evidence that the Police have properly carried out the investigation that they need to be carrying out. I can advise you to look at the recording of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which myself and the Chief Executive gave a pretty comprehensive account of what we, as representatives of the Council had done. I can advise you also that I have never seen or heard any audio tapes until I read about them. Well I knew that they existed but I have never had any

sight or contact with them and the Council had not either, it was through the independent investigation. We did not respond only when we were told to do so. I think the fundamental point is that if there was an offence it was initially an offence by a person between themselves and a private company. The investigation within the Council was designed to establish if there was any further concern about the role that the Council may have played in that and it was that which has been passed through the Audit to the Police.

#### **9.9 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders:**

How will the Mayor tackle air pollution in Tower Hamlets?

#### **Response of Councillor Rachel Blake's Cabinet Member for Strategic Development and Waste:**

In October 2017 we adopted an Air Quality Action Plan, drawing together information from a range of stakeholders. The whole borough has been declared an Air Quality Management Area. 48 of our schools are in areas of poor air quality in the borough. 37 of those are primary. 9000 Londoners die early due to poor air quality so it is critical that we get our air quality in legal limits. Our Action Plan considers priorities under nine broad headings - Local Air Quality Management which is around tackling and enforcement of particular poor emissions, development and buildings - designing out the issues that cause air quality, major infrastructure projects - making sure that our own projects don't cause any worse air quality emissions and critically raising awareness around public health and the impacts people can have on air quality themselves.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor Saunders:**

Are the Government or the Greater London Authority doing any useful to help in the work you have described?

#### **Councillor Blake's response to the supplementary question:**

I think that it is to be welcomed that Mayor Sadiq Khan has set up both his toxicity charge and introduced the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). We have done some work to understand what mitigation measures we can help residents with to prepare for the ULEZ. I think that it is unfortunate that national government is dragging its heels on this issue and what would be welcomed would be a national car scrappage scheme to recognise the scale of the challenge we have to face to improve air quality in the borough.

#### **9.10 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad:**

How has the Mayor's decision to charge for adult social care services which includes free homecare affected vulnerable and disabled adults, their carers and families?

**Response of Councillor Denise Jones, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services:**

As you know, we resisted doing this for many years in this Council and there is in fact only one Council left in the country now that isn't charging. However, in the face of Government cuts we were forced to make the decision. In 2016 the Council decided to ask those who can afford it to contribute to their homecare. We were clear that people on the lowest incomes would continue to be protected and receive free home care and that many people would only pay a small contribution towards their care. To make sure that only those who can afford to contribute are asked to, individual assessments are carried out to identify the needs of service users and their carers. Service users are then financially assessed and only contribute an amount based on their ability to pay. There are currently 2,929 service users in receipt of community based care. Financial assessments have been completed for 2,145 service users. Of these completed assessments, 746, that's 35%, have resulted in no charge being made at all.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Asad:**

Given the impact of the changes, is there any chance that this decision will be reversed to help the very vulnerable people in the borough?

**Councillor Jones's response to the supplementary question:**

To further support vulnerable and disabled adults and their carers, Tower Hamlets Council does not charge carers for the services that they access and receive. Charging for adult social care service users was implemented in October 2017, to allow more time to complete the financial assessments. There will be individual cases being reviewed as and when there are changes to their individual packages of care and on receipt of any updated financial information they are reassessed. The overall impact assessment on the implementation of the charging policy will be carried out in 2018 in about six months' time, so there will be reviews carried out.

**9.11 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin:**

How will the Mayor's £5m Tackling Poverty Fund be used?

**Response of Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources:**

I think that everyone in this chamber is well aware of the impact the austerity measures have had on many Tower Hamlets residents, in particularly the welfare reforms that have been introduced including the universal credit. So part of the Council's response to that is the establishment by the Mayor of a £5 million Tackling Poverty Fund to help mitigate the impact of those changes. I think that people will also be aware that at the November Cabinet meeting, the Mayor approved two reports. One of which would provide support for residents moving to universal credit, as well as those who have been affected by the benefit cap and the self-employed residents subject to some of the changes to the local Council Tax scheme. That report recommended

investment of about £500k per year for two years in the support. What the Mayor also approved at that Cabinet meeting was a consultation on a Resident Support Scheme which will replace the previous welfare support scheme.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Helal Uddin:**

This is a large amount of money and I would like to see a proper transparency strategy in place with aims and objectives being set up to target economic activities and tackling poverty. I am not talking about subsidising national welfare. It has to be used in an appropriate way that improves economic activity and reduces deprivation in our borough. It would also be helpful to know how the deprived wards like Bromley by Bow would be allocated the right proportion of money to be used to benefit the residents and how we would measure the impact of the investment to ensure it is used in a productive way?

**Councillor Edgar's response to the supplementary question:**

On transparency, I think if you were to look at the reports that I mentioned they both set out the plans in detail and the consultation is something that will be reported back on. As part of making sure that the work is going well, we are working with a number of agencies that provide support and we are developing ways that our internal team can work even more effectively with those agencies, making use of the information that we as the Council have access to. There is a focus within the scheme on things like fuel poverty and what we have also done is worked with other organisations to make sure we have the research about the impact that is taking place both in the Bromley wards and other wards across the borough to ensure that our case is well founded. When it comes to the next Council meeting, people should be able to look at and support the extension of the tackling poverty fund as part of next year's budget proposals.

Questioners 9.12- 32 were not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to the questions. (Note the written responses are included in Appendix A to these minutes.)

**10. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES****10.1 Report of Cabinet: Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-2021**

The Council considered a report on the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-2021. This plan was forwarded to Council for consideration by the Mayor in Cabinet on 31 October 2017. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-21 at Appendix 1 of the report be adopted.

**11. OTHER BUSINESS****11.1 Localism Act 2011 - Appointment of Second Independent Person**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer proposing the appointment of a second Independent Person. The recommendations were put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

**RESOLVED:**

The Council agree:

1. The appointment of Rachael Tiffin as a second Independent Person for a period of 4 years effective from the date of the Council meeting and concluding on 16 January 2022.
2. An annual allowance of £1,000 for any person appointed by the Council to the role of Independent Person to replace the existing separate allowances payable for attendance at meetings and training events and consultation on complaints as detailed in paragraph 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

**11.2 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees and panels of the Council 2017/18**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Governance, in respect of changes to the proportionality calculations for allocating places on the Council's Committees. The recommendations were put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the review of proportionality as at section 3 of the report be noted and the allocation of seats on committees and panels be agreed for the

remainder of the Municipal Year 2017/18 as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report.

2. To note the committees and panels established for the municipal year 2017/18 as listed in paragraph 4.2 as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2017.
3. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Corporate Director, Governance.
4. That the Corporate Director, Governance be authorised to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council.

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

No motions were debated due to a lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.05 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

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## **APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (17 January 2018)**

### **9.12 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

Will the Mayor confirm that the council's Anti-Bribery Policy will, under his administration, "Rigorously investigate all instances of alleged bribery," and assist the police and other investigative authorities in all such investigations?

#### **Response from the Mayor**

The Council will not tolerate bribery of any sort and to that end we have robust and unequivocal anti-bribery policies and procedures. Any breach of our processes is, and will continue to be treated seriously and we will work with enforcement authorities and the police so that the full force of the law is brought to bear on people who have sought to gain by bribery.

### **9.13 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

The Mayor recently launched his new Apprenticeship Commitment. What progress has been made so far?

#### **Response from Councillor Joshua Peck**

The Mayor's Apprenticeship Scheme launched in November 2017 with the ambitious pledge to help broker 1,000 apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Team has already been in discussion with more than 100 employers and in the first six weeks over 100 new apprenticeships were created.

### **9.14 Question from Councillor Maium Miah**

There were two recent separate horrific acid attacks in Tower Hamlets on Wednesday 27th December within the space of just two hours – one in my ward, Canary Wharf, on the Isle of Dogs.

According to the Police and other reports, a 36-year-old white woman suffered serious life-changing burns to her leg and face. No ID on the attacker or why she was attacked was established. She is in hospital at the time of writing this question.

The 2nd attack between Glengall Close and Crossharbour DLR was on an Asian male by two white men. The police stated they had decent CCTV images of two White males aged 20 – 22 years old approximately. 5'10 tall.

Given that Tower Hamlets is the third worst London borough for acid attacks, will the Council do more and agree to Cllr Ohid Ahmed's call for the council to use its existing regulatory powers to immediately create a 'Tower Hamlets Acid Register' on a voluntary basis for shops and businesses to record who they sell 'acid' or 'dangerous liquids' to; and to ensure acid/potentially dangerous liquid is not sold to under 18s in the borough which is being used

as the weapon of choice in attacks on our innocent residents?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

I was appalled to hear about the acid attacks which took place over the Christmas period and our sympathies go to those individuals injured and their families involved.

The Mayor has called on the Government to do more to tighten up the sale of these substances and introduce tougher sentences. Rather than just wait for the Government to take action we took steps to protect residents.

In December the Mayor launched an Acid Charter for shopkeepers to sign up to, restricting the sale of these substances in our Borough. This encourages businesses to voluntarily restrict the sale of corrosive substances to over 18's and for staff to be trained. They will also agree to maintain a "Refusals Register" showing how they won't sell to certain individuals. The Borough Commander supports this Charter.

We will work with partners to tackle this problem and are pleased that where we led the way with the Charter, large retailers including supermarkets and large DIY stores are following. We now need the Government to tighten up the law on this to make it mandatory.

### **9.15 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah**

What impact will the Mayor's Acid Charter have in tackling acid attacks locally?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

The objective of the Mayor's Acid Charter is to restrict the supply of corrosive substances/acids to under 18's, ensure that retail staff are suitably trained and that proof of age is checked before purchase.

The result of the Charter has been to raise the issue within the community to try and ensure that the supply of acid is restricted and is used only for responsible purposes. There was considerable media interest in the initiative resulting in increased awareness, and the Mayor set out the steps the Council is taking to prevent acid attacks in the Borough along with our partners including the Police and called on Government to tighten up legislation.

The Charter has also placed pressure on central government to ensure that the current review that is being undertaken on the legislative requirements of the retailing of such products is done so in a timely manner. We will be rolling out stickers and posters for retailers who participate to display and raise awareness of the steps we are taking.

### **9.16 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah**

Given the impact on working families, mini-cab drivers and the borough's disabled and vulnerable will the Mayor now reverse his cut to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

### **Response from Councillor David Edgar**

The current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) was approved by Full Council in February last year and included continued support of up to 100% discount of residents' council tax liability. This means that those entitled to the maximum reduction will not have to pay a single penny of council tax.

Part of the rationale for changing the scheme was the introduction of Universal Credit which is being rolled out across the borough and has far greater consequences for our residents.

Where the changes have had an impact on specific groups such as self-employed residents and residents with disabled non-dependents we have responded by introducing a scheme to provide discretionary relief in cases of financial hardship.

The Mayor has also approved £500k per year to help those affected by Universal Credit and the changes to LCTRS to ensure that they receive support that improves their financial circumstances in the longer term.

The Council continues to be one of the few in the country that still offers up to 100% reduction in council tax for the lowest income households. During this year 19,115 households have received 100% reduction in their council tax totalling £18,816,998 and consequently these households do not have to pay any council tax. In total there are over 27,000 households receiving some form of discount. The total discount awarded is likely to be over £24.4 million.

### **9.17 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:**

How much S106 funding has the Council allocated since June 2015?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake**

Since June 2015, the Council has formally allocated £42m of S106 funding to over 80 projects via approved Project Initiation Documents.

There are multiple stages to 'allocating' S106 funding. When funding is received from a developer it is associated to the appropriate Service Area, e.g. a contribution towards education facilities is associated with the Education Department.

The relevant Service Area will then 'ring-fence' this funding for a particular project. Often this funding will need to be reserved and held until other S106

contributions are received and can be combined to allow the delivery of a project. E.g. the cost of the delivery of a primary school may require the use of contributions from more than 10 individual developments.

Then, when sufficient funding has been collected to deliver the project, the relevant Service Area will submit a Project Initiation Document which is assessed through the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Framework. If approved, funding will be formally allocated to the project.

### **9.18 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman**

Will the Mayor confirm the legal responsibilities and statutory duties of the council to report to the appropriate external authorities alleged criminal activity that is brought to the attention of the council, even when the activity has been undertaken by a perpetrator who is neither an employee, elected member or contractor to the council or an associated body of the council?

### **Response from the Mayor**

This is more properly a question for the Monitoring Officer. She has advised that the Council has certain specific responsibilities where it has a duty to report matters or consider reporting matters to appropriate agencies on various areas, for example:

- (1) Instances of relevant anti-social behaviour to the police
- (2) Suspicions of money laundering or terrorist financing to National Crime Agency
- (3) Fraud or cybercrime where the Council's business is part of a regulated sector report to for example to the professional body of accountants, solicitors and financial services firms
- (4) Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s which they identify in the course of their professional work must report the matter to the police
- (5) if the Council removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work such as looking after children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the Council must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service
- (6) Subject to the application of the Council's bribery prevention procedures, the Council can chose to report an incident of bribery to the prosecution authorities. If the Council becomes aware of such a matter, it will firstly consider whether it is a matter for the Council to investigate and take action and if it is not then the matter would be referred to the appropriate agency to investigate.

The above examples are not exhaustive. For clarity, an allegation of an attempt to bribe a 3rd party by another 3rd party would not immediately cause a referral to the police. Any allegation about members of the council would however have to be properly and independently investigated.

### **9.19 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member for Environmental Services instruct officers to carry out a consultation with residents in Cadogan Terrace and the Fairfield Conservation Area about extending the Controlled Parking Zone restrictions in those mini-zones to deal with the parking stress on weekends and early evenings?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

Officers last year issued an informal survey of residents and businesses in the B2 & B4 zones on the CPZ restrictions. Of those who responded in zone B2, in which the Fairfield Conservation Area lies, 47% of those who responded said they were satisfied with the current parking restrictions, as opposed to 40% who were not satisfied, with 13% not expressing a preference. While we recognise there may be a case for localised changes where residents support them, the case for change across the mini-zone appears less strong.

I understand that in some specific streets local considerations might mean amendments to the policy may be necessary and welcomed therefore I have asked officers to conduct a survey of the areas you have raised to better determine resident views on parking on Cadogan Terrace and in the Fairfield Conservation Area.

### **9.20 Question from Councillor Harun Miah**

I am concerned about the current consultation process in relation to traffic and road safety measures leading to a lack of clarity for residents, businesses and stakeholders. In relation to the urgent Shadwell ward traffic and road safety situation, I ask the Mayor if he will swiftly support improvement works of the types I list below as examples:

1. Martha St & Watney St junction - will put in place a 'No Entry' system on Martha Street - vehicles will be unable to turn into Martha Street from Watney Street;
2. Dellow Street, Lowood Street and Bewley Street - will implement a one-way system on the Dellow Street - Lowood Street - Bewley Street loop;
3. Tarling Street and Sutton Street junction - will implement a no entry system on Tarling Street, which means vehicles will not be able to turn into Tarling Street from Sutton Street; and

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

I can confirm that these three schemes were included in the recent traffic management consultation which is taking place 27 November to 21 January.

A leaflet detailing these schemes was distributed to all households in the immediate vicinity of these schemes who would be affected by the restricted movements.

A more detailed plan was available on the consultation website which was publicised in that letter and on the Council's website and social media.

The schemes were proposed as a solution to address the many traffic problems raised with local Councillors, the Mayor and officers.

Subject to the outcome of this public consultation being supportive and any issues raised being addressed, these schemes will proceed to be implemented.

As of 2 January, the consultation responses to each of these schemes were overwhelmingly positive.

I am proud to say it is this administration and Mayor Biggs acting to make the lives of the local residents of Shadwell easier. The residents asked and we acted.

#### **9.21 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald**

We have lovely new tennis courts in St John's Park which are proving very popular with my residents. However the final piece of the work has never been completed. Can the mayor or cabinet member tell us when the floodlights for the tennis courts in St John's Park will be working?

#### **Response from Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE**

Unfortunately, there has been substantial delay to make the floodlights operational. This is deeply disappointing.

There are two elements of the St. John's floodlight works which are currently outstanding;

1. The mobile application needed to operate the floodlights needs to be installed and made operational

2. The floodlight electrical works need to be certified.

I will be pressing officers to resolve these delays as quickly as possible and will update you as soon as there is a definitive date.

#### **9.22 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed**

Does the Mayor believe that the current community safety plan he has in place addresses the increasing knife crime and acid attacks we have seen in 2017?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

The Community Safety Partnership has prioritised violent crime. The Plan sets out actions to address emerging issues around the use of knives and corrosive substances in the borough. The Partnership has strengthened its understanding and operational responses to both of these serious issues. A dedicated Partnership Action Plan is in place to address knife crime and weapon enabled use and is managed under the governance of the community safety partnership.

### **9.23 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill**

Will the Mayor indicate what public consultation took place before deciding to lock in St Katharine's and Wapping and parts of Limehouse wards for another day this year when the Big Half Marathon takes place on Sunday 4th March 2018 resulting in closing off access to many roads and explain why with less than two months to go before the event there was still no detailed road closure information yet available to residents?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The Big Half is a new event, organised by London Marathon Events Ltd, and features a half marathon (13.1 miles) and other events held on closed roads in London including here in Tower Hamlets.

Road closures are being managed by Transport for London and formal consultation on these closures are dealt with by them. This borough will be consulted on the proposed Traffic Management Order and we have made enquiries with Transport for London on their progress and await their comments.

The Big Half website provides a map of the proposed route but no detailed information on road closures has yet been posted.

We are continuing to make representations that while Tower Hamlets is an attractive venue for these kinds of event, it needs to be balanced against the impact on residents.

### **9.24 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam**

Will the Mayor inform the council how many murders have taken place in the borough for each year since 2010 until now?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

According to the Met's datastore website there have been 817 murders across London from April 2010 until November 2017.

In terms of annual figures for murders in Tower Hamlets, the following are available for financial years (April – March) from April 2010 until November

2017:

2010/11 - 5

2011/12 - 5

2012/13 - 3

2013/14 - 5

2014/15 - 3

2015/16 - 4

2016/17 - 5

2017/18 - 6

### **9.25 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan**

Will the Mayor commit to supporting campaigners of the Advocacy Support system for carers and families of vulnerable adults which ran at John Smith's Children's Centre.

### **Response from Councillor Denise Jones**

The Parent Carers and Advisory Service was provided as part of the Community Learning Disability Service until July of this year. The learning disability service is an integrated health and social care team.

Following a CCG led procurement exercise, the East London Foundation Trust have implemented changes to the service and no longer provide the PCCA function, but new roles and functions have been put in place to support parents and carers. These changes were made following a consultation exercise.

Meeting the needs of carers remains a crucial part of providing the right support to people with a learning disability. The new model ensures that all staff are trained and competent to work with people from all local communities and there is a new full time interpreter post and cultural advisor post within the team. In addition there will be specialist support for carers in managing individuals who have challenging behaviour and identifying strategies to manage this. All professional staff are required to assess the needs of carers, as part of the Care Act responsibilities, as well as making appropriate arrangements for meeting those needs.

The Mothers' Group used to run at the Children's Centre, but the centre is no longer able to make the space available. There is now a weekly drop in service at the Community Learning Disability Service on the Mile End Hospital site whilst an alternative space for this group is identified and the service continues to work with the mothers to review how the group can be supported in the future.

### **9.26 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

Is the Mayor aware that the St James footbridge over the entrance to the Rotherhithe tunnel connecting Limehouse and Shadwell wards has been

owned by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets since 2003 but as yet no council department has taken responsibility for maintenance, resulting in the lighting on it has falling into disrepair despite a number of muggings close by?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The bridge in question has not come to the attention of the Police or Community Safety for a number of years now and the single incident which occurred in December is related to a series of robberies in the Limehouse area which both the Council and Police are aware of and are doing all they can to catch the suspects.

These robberies are a priority for the police and there was a public meeting with senior Council and Police officials on Tuesday 9th January 2017 in the Limehouse Ward to address concerns. Both Police and council officers have increased patrols in the area and a number of deployable cameras have been put up including one looking at the bridge.

The bridge is lit by four lights, 2 on land at either end, all of which have been replaced with bright LED lighting and are monitored by the Council's Street Lighting contractor. There is no space to accommodate lighting on the bridge itself.

The structural condition of the bridge is regularly inspected. The structural maintenance requirements of the bridge are an unrelated issue which the Council is seeking to identify funding for from its capital reserves. As it is not classed as public highway, highway maintenance funds cannot therefore be legitimately allocated to such work. However I will ask officers to look again at this bridge to ensure it is up to standard.

### **9.27 Question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim**

Will the Mayor inform if the Labour members serving on the council's planning committees have been asked by the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Police if they were approached by a fixer with the alleged £2m bribe or, If this has not been done, will they do so now?

### **Response from the Mayor**

The Council received advice from a leading QC that it should not pursue internal investigation of the allegations to avoid potential prejudice to any criminal investigation. The National Crime Agency is considering the matter and has declined to comment at this stage.

I would not be privy to any such investigation but I would expect all members of the committee to be treated equally.

### **9.28 Question from Councillor Shah Alam**

Will the Mayor ensure that genuine consultation takes place regarding the

proposals for traffic calming measures put forward for Shadwell?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The current consultation on traffic calming in Shadwell has been as thorough, detailed and transparent as possible.

The consultation took place 27 November to 21 January. A leaflet detailing these schemes was distributed to all households in the immediate vicinity of these schemes who would be affected by the restricted movements.

A more detailed plan is available from the consultation website which was publicised in that letter and on the Council's website and social media.

Subject to the outcome of this public consultation being supportive and any issues raised being addressed, these schemes will proceed to be implemented.

### **9.29 Question from Councillor Kibria Choudhury**

Will the Mayor confirm or deny if one of his Labour Cllrs arranged an introductory meeting between the fixer, who claimed, as set out by a Sunday Times journalist, to pay a £2m bribe to 4 councillors (who a lay person would assume were Labour given the fixer's allegiances), and a developer who wanted to build one of Britain's tallest skyscrapers in Canary Wharf, Tower Hamlets?

### **Response from the Mayor**

As you well know this matter is currently under investigation by the police following a full and independent investigation by the Monitoring Officer. It would be inappropriate to comment further other than to say I entirely refute the assertion that a lay person should assume any 'fixers' referred to were councillors, let alone Labour councillors. If Cllr Choudhury has evidence to suggest as much, he should pass this to the police, if not he should desist from making such claims until the investigation is complete and the full facts are known.

### **9.30 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani**

Will the Mayor inform the council how much did it cost the taxpayers to procure the external consultant, EY, and a leading QC in relation to seeking further advice (in addition to Bribery, Fraud, Best Value and other relevant policies, legislation and acts governing the Council's conduct in such circumstances which were already in place and must be followed) about the £2m bribery allegations before the council was forced to approach the police?

### **Response from the Mayor**

Following the Monitoring Officer's enquiries into allegations raised with the

Council she decided to seek competitive quotations from three specialist external providers of forensic accounting and investigatory services. Ernst & Young (EY) were appointed. These actions were carried out, and the associated costs approved, by the Monitoring Officer in her independent role and did not involve the Mayor or his office.

On the advice of EY following further investigation and material being made available to them, the Monitoring Officer sought advice on the matter from Michael Bowes QC.

The matter and the full investigation report was then passed to the police for assessment and if necessary further investigation.

The combined cost of EY and counsel was under £45,000

### **9.31 Question from Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah**

Given the seriously negative impact of the Mayor John Biggs's new Council Tax Reduction scheme, particularly on the self-employed and vulnerable residents in my ward as well others in London Borough of Tower Hamlets, will the Mayor now admit that he misled Tower Hamlets when he stated that the council was still retaining 100% of the original scheme and any such claims should not be allowed by the Monitoring Officer on the factual accuracy ground?

### **Response from Councillor David Edgar**

The Mayor did not mislead anybody.

The current Local Council Tax Reduction scheme was approved by Full Council in February last year and included continued support of up to 100% discount of resident's council tax liability. This means that those entitled to the maximum reduction will not have to pay any council tax.

This contrasts with local schemes adopted by many other local authorities where the maximum reduction does not cover 100% of a residents council tax liability and even those residents who get maximum reduction will still be expected to pay some council tax.

Despite the funding challenges resulting from the cut in government funding for council tax benefit in 2013, the council continues to give a council discount to over 27,000 residents with over 19,000 getting the maximum reduction totalling over £18million. The council is projecting to spend over £24.4 million on council tax reduction in the current financial year.

### **9.32 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed**

How many rape cases have been reported in the borough for each year since 2010 until now?

## **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

According to the Met datastore, there have been 36,485 reported rapes in London from April 2010 until November 2017.

Across the whole of London there has been a significant increase in the number of rapes over this period. The Met total (all boroughs) has seen a 96.1% increase when comparing full financial years 2010/11 with 2016/17. Part of this rise is likely to be down to an increase in reporting with more victims having the confidence to come forward and report these crimes to the police.

In terms of annual figures for reported rapes in Tower Hamlets, the following are available for financial years (April – March) from April 2010 until November 2017:

2010/11 - 119  
2011/12 - 135  
2012/13 - 124  
2013/14 - 155  
2014/15 - 192  
2015/16 - 230  
2016/17 - 268