

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.05 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Sufia Alam	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Mohammed Pappu
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Kyrsten Perry
Councillor Kevin Brady	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Dipa Das	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Dan Tomlinson
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Danny Hassell	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Denise Jones	

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Ayas Miah in the Chair

The Speaker of the Council brought the Council up to date with some of his activities since the previous Council meeting.

He advised that he was very pleased to have hosted and attended a variety of events. This included:

- Awards Ceremonies celebrating the achievements of community champions, sporting groups, including the London Cricket League and the Sporting Foundation as well as the 31st Squadron Tower Hamlets Air Cadets.
- The Tower Hamlets in Bloom Awards evening.
- An event marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Mile End Park.
- Welcoming HRH the Duchess of Cornwall and HRH Princess Alexandra to learn more about local community services and to meet volunteers.

- Had the honour of joining the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to celebrate the Victory Day of Bangladesh.
- A ceremony in Trafalgar Square with fellow Civic Heads to switch on the Christmas Tree lights.
- The Tower Hamlets Staff Carol Service.
- The Annual Speaker's Charity Ball in Canary Wharf. He thanked everyone involved in organising this event.

Turning to the Tower Hamlets Civic Awards, the Speaker encouraged nominations for awards. The ceremony would be held in May 2019.

With great sadness, the Speaker paid tribute to Syed Ashraful Islam who had sadly passed away. Syed was a prominent local activist in Tower Hamlets and a minister in Bangladesh. He also offered his condolences to Councillor Zenith Rahman following the sad death of her father Abdul Bashor Ansari. The Council's thoughts were with their family and friends.

The Council rose to observe a minute's silence.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Faroque Ahmed
- Councillor Kahar Chowdhury
- Councillor Rabina Khan
- Councillor James King
- Councillor Puru Miah

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The Speaker of the Council reported that he had received a tabled list (as set out at the end of this item) of Non Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (Other Interests) in relation to Agenda Item 12.1 regarding the TUC Great Jobs Agenda.

Councillor Denise Jones declared an interest that must be registered (Other Interests) in agenda item 9.4, a Member question regarding funding for a new health app. This was on the basis that she was a Member of the East London NHS Foundation Trust.

The Monitoring Officer advised that on 17th January 2019, the Standards (Advisory) Committee agreed a general dispensation to all Councillors in respect of matters relating to the Council Tax, including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. As a result, Members did not have to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 10.1 Report from the Executive: Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019-2020.

List of 'other interest that must be registered' - Agenda item 12.1 TUC Great Jobs Agenda

Name of Member	Register of Interest
Mayor John Biggs	Member of GMB
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Member of GMB
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Member of GMB
Councillor Sufia Alam	Unite Trade union
Councillor Amina Ali	Unite Union Unite Community
Councillor Shah Ameen	A member of the GMB
Councillor Asma Begum	Member of GMB
Councillor Kevin Brady	Community Union
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Member of GMB union
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Member, Unite
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Unite
Councillor Dipa Das	Unite the Union
Councillor David Edgar	UNITE
Councillor Marc Francis	GMB Union
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Member, Unite
Councillor Danny Hassell	Member, Unison
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	UNITE
Councillor Asma Islam	Member of GMB
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Member of Unison
Councillor Denise Jones	Member of Unite (the Union)
Councillor Rabina Khan	Member of GMB
Councillor Tarik Khan	Unite the Union Communications Workers Union
Councillor James King	Unite
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	Unite the union
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Unite
Councillor Ayas Miah	GMB
Councillor Puru Miah	TSSA Union Unite GMB
Councillor Victoria Obaze	GMB Union
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Unite
Councillor John Pierce	Unite
Councillor Leema Qureshi	Unite
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	GMB
Councillor Candida Ronald	Community Trade Union
Councillor Helal Uddin	GMB
Councillor Abdal Ullah	GMB
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	GMB member of the University and College Union.
Councillor Bex White	Member of Unite Community
Councillor Val Whitehead	Prospect

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the ordinary Council Meeting held on 21st November 2018 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

The Chief Executive updated the Council on a number of recent developments. He was pleased to announce that the Council had been awarded Silver Status for the Investors in People Award. Nominations for the Staff Awards were now open and were welcomed from Members. There was a further Ofsted visit of Children's Social Care and the feedback was positive.

Turning to staffing matters, he reported on progress with the recruitment of a Corporate Director of Resources and a Corporate Director of Place. He also outlined his plans to consult on a new staff awards scheme and consult Members about the forthcoming by – election arrangements.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition for CCTV – York Square Chasley/Flamborough/Barnes Streets**

Petition not presented due to the absence of the petitioner.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community, for a written response within 28 days.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his report to the Council. Councillor Andrew Wood, Leader of the Conservative Group, then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

7 – Administration Motion regarding Violence Against Women and Girls Services

Councillor Eve McQuillan **moved** and Councillor Asma Begum **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was then put to a vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

Addressing violence against women and girls is a priority for London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Approximately 70% of all known victims of interpersonal violence in Tower Hamlets are female and 1 in 3 women and girls will experience gender based violence in their lifetime with similar levels of domestic abuse in LGBT relationships and in heterosexual relationships, regardless of gender. In the UK, two women are murdered each week by a current or former partner, and 1 in 5 will be raped in her lifetime.

Since 2010, VAWG services have been decimated. Nationally, the majority of women who seek a refuge space are turned away because there is not enough space. Since 2015, this administration has chosen not to cut funding for VAWG services. The council launched its VAWG charter in November, as part of our manifesto commitments to tackle violence against women and girls.

Tower Hamlets has a multi-agency strategy in place to address violence against women and girls. As a council

- We have maintained all of our specialist refuge provision for women and girls fleeing abuse
- We have piloted and commissioned innovative new programmes, such as Female Genital Mutilation Community Engagement Programme and a Multiple Disadvantages VAWG Project
- We have maintained provision of life saving Independent Domestic Violence Advocates and Serious and Violent Crime Caseworkers.
- We have maintained our resources for our Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop, Sanctuary Scheme and Positive Change Services, including work with children living with domestic abuse
- We have developed the VAWG Champions Programmes and preventative VAWG programmes within schools and with young people across the borough.
- We run campaigns such as 16 Days of Activism, reaching around 1,000 residents each year, Ask for Angela in the night time economy and our Domestic Abuse No Excuse campaign.

Refuges are currently partly funded by housing benefit. This excludes those who are ineligible for housing benefit because they have no recourse to public funds. It also excludes those who are ineligible because they are working; leading to the perverse situation where people needing to access refuge spaces may have to leave their jobs, making themselves more vulnerable, in order to access help, or have to pay extremely high costs themselves. The government has tried ring-fence funding for 'supported housing services'. This funding structure is unsuitable for refuge provision because it incentivises councils to provide generic supportive housing services for older people, people with drug and alcohol dependencies, street homeless people and domestic violence survivors, rather than specialised services.

Refuge spaces are allocated on a multi-local authority basis, meaning that people likely won't be placed in the local authority in which they live. This means that when other councils cut funding for refuge services, women from Tower Hamlets are affected.

The biggest barrier to women leaving abusive situations is housing, with domestic abuse one of the leading causes of homelessness amongst women. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and Women's Aid have created the Make a Stand pledge which includes the following 4 commitments:

1. To put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are experiencing domestic abuse
2. To make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other places which are easily accessible to residents and staff
3. To put in place a HR policy and procedure on domestic abuse, or to incorporate this into an existing policy, to support members of staff who are experiencing domestic abuse
4. Appoint a champion in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

Universal credit payments to a single account for a whole household present a risk that perpetrators will gain control over a victim's finances.

This Council believes:

It is alarming that other councils have chosen to cut VAWG provision which has led to a reduction in refuge spaces.

Housing benefit should not be used to fund refuge spaces. Instead there should be ring-fenced funding for domestic violence services so that they are available for anyone who needs them, regardless of immigration status or income.

Whilst LBTH cannot deal with this issue alone, as councillors we are able to play a role by championing VAWG initiatives in our casework and our communities, and as a council we can campaign for better funding.

Universal credit makes those experiencing domestic abuse more vulnerable.

It is wrong that it is often the victim who loses the secure tenancy, rather than the perpetrator.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on all members of the council to become VAWG champions.
2. We will campaign for adequate funding for refuges and call on the council to champion this issue.
3. To call on the mayor and the lead member to advise other boroughs of the dangers of reducing funding for refuge services.
4. To ensure that this borough has adequate refuge spaces that meet the level of need.
5. To campaign to encourage all RSLs in Tower Hamlets to sign up to the Make a Stand pledges, improving their services for victims and survivors of domestic violence.
6. To call on MPs to advocate for increases to funding levels to domestic violence services so that funding at least matches 2010 levels. We call on them to campaign for changes to the funding structure for refuge provision in parliament, so that funding is ring-fenced specifically for refuges. We also call on them to campaign for split payments to reduce the risk of financial abuse.

Motion on VAWG Services (Motion)	
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Sufia Alam	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For
Councillor Shah Ameen	For
Councillor Asma Begum	For
Mayor John Biggs	For
Councillor Rachel Blake	For
Councillor Kevin Brady	For
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	For
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Dipa Das	For
Councillor David Edgar	For
Councillor Marc Francis	For
Councillor Peter Golds	For
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
Councillor Danny Hassell	For
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Denise Jones	For
Councillor Tarik Khan	For

Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	For
Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
Councillor Kyrsten Perry	For
Councillor John Pierce	For
Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
Councillor Zenith Rahman	For
Councillor Candida Ronald	For
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	For
Councillor Helal Uddin	For
Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
Councillor Val Whitehead	For
Councillor Bex White	For
Councillor Andrew Wood	For
Carried	

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

8 – Opposition Motion by the Conservative Group regarding Democracy and Civic Participation Commission

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

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

Motion on Democracy and Civic Participation Commission (Motion)	
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Against
Councillor Sufia Alam	Against
Councillor Amina Ali	Against
Councillor Shah Ameen	Against
Councillor Asma Begum	Against
Mayor John Biggs	Against
Councillor Rachel Blake	Against
Councillor Kevin Brady	Against
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Against
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Against
Councillor Dipa Das	Against
Councillor David Edgar	Against
Councillor Marc Francis	Against
Councillor Peter Golds	For
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Against
Councillor Danny Hassell	Against
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Against
Councillor Asma Islam	Against

Councillor Sirajul Islam	Against
Councillor Denise Jones	Against
Councillor Tarik Khan	Against
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Against
Councillor Ayas Miah	Against
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	Against
Councillor Victoria Obaze	Against
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Against
Councillor Kyrsten Perry	Against
Councillor John Pierce	Against
Councillor Leema Qureshi	Against
Councillor Zenith Rahman	Against
Councillor Candida Ronald	Against
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	No vote recorded
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	Against
Councillor Helal Uddin	Against
Councillor Abdal Ullah	Against
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	Against
Councillor Val Whitehead	Against
Councillor Bex White	Against
Councillor Andrew Wood	For
Rejected	

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, relevant Executive Member, or Committee Chair.

9.1 Question from Councillor John Pierce

How has the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the Council's proposed 2019-20 Budget and the MTFS 2019-22?

Response of Councillor Abdal Ullah, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The Committee with the help and support of a cross party, and more importantly residents and school governors have had an extensive meeting. I am grateful for the support of the Cabinet Members, particularly the Lead Member for Finance, Councillor Ronald for her time. We have spent one meeting looking at the overall budget. We are having a second meeting on the 28th January to look at substantial changes if there are under the budget process. Can I also thank Neville Murton, the Acting Corporate Director of Resources and Zena Cooke the former Corporate Director of Resources. The Committee has scrutinised the following key areas: environment, community language, children's services and adults social care. We hope to have a second meeting on the 28th and to do more discussion about that.

Supplementary question from Councillor Pierce:

What is the Committee doing to scrutinise the Police's decision to merge with Hackney. We all know that there has been a reduction in police numbers. What is the Committee doing to hold the Borough Commander to account for this?

Councillor Ullah's response to the supplementary question:

The Communications department of the Council should be sending out a tweet as we speak, informing residents and Councillors of the next Community safety meeting, where the Lead Member, Councillor Asma Begum will be present with the Borough Commander who is now the Joint Borough Commander of Hackney and Tower Hamlets. I am assured by her that she spends more time in Tower Hamlets. Next Monday evening is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and as part of the trilogy, which has been looking at the Council's work around empowering, education and community safety, we had an event at George Green looking at empowerment and education and more particularly looking at white working class boys on the Isle of Dogs and their disadvantage and how we can get them to come out and reap the benefit of all that is great in our door step in Canary Wharf. We need to find work opportunities for young boys at the Council, so next Monday you are welcomed to the O&S Committee at the Town Hall.

9.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds:

Why did the Mayor say in 2017 the "Illegally demolished historic cottages (on Eastferry road) must be rebuilt brick by brick" when in 2005 the "Council were happy at that time to see them demolished" according to the Planning Inspectorate?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

The question refers to something I said in 2017. I stand by these words that the Illegally demolished buildings should be rebuilt brick by brick. The villains in this piece appealed to the Planning Inspectorate and we think that the Planning Inspectorate in this case has made an incredible perverse decision, and has not given proper weight to planning policy and is relying on anecdotal information and is not acting properly. We are considering our options as to how we can readdress this, because we feel that it is absolutely the wrong decision and gives a very poor signal to other developers who think that they can cynically demolish historic buildings and get away with it.

Supplementary question from Councillor Golds:

I think it is reassuring both to residents, those who are concerned on the Isle of Dogs and the Council that the Mayor stands by everything that was said. He makes the point that the line in the Planning Inspectorate report on that is at best anecdotal. I hope we can proceed with this. I do think we need to join up issues here. This afternoon, I met two groups of residents on the Isle of Dogs. One of whom is living in an house that is actually falling down, and has

a mother in a wheelchair. The next door neighbours are concerned that the semi detached house is falling down. They are having an ongoing battle with our planning department and we can't get that resolved. It's a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. I would not expect the Mayor to go into detail about this as he has no idea of what I am talking about, as I have just raised that.

Therefore, I come to this issue of how the evidence described as anecdotal can be taken into account by the Planning Inspectorate and they can use it so lethally?

Mayor Biggs response to the supplementary question:

I agree with him. The advice I have is that the decision was perverse . It is certainly not anything that we expected. It is a green light if it is not challenged for developers to act cynically. One of thing we have done in the last three years is to invest in increasing our enforcement capacity, as that was whittled down to almost nothing under the previous Administration.

9.3 Question from Councillor Dipa Das

Could the Lead Member please provide an update on the Brexit Commission?

Response of Councillor Amina Ali, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit:

In terms of Brexit, while this current Prime Minister and her Government may be in a shambles, this Labour Administration is not. The Commission has finished gathering evidence, through our oral hearings and written submissions. We have run several events across the Borough including, a Business and Brexit event. We are due to hold a young people and Brexit engagement event this evening. As the Mayor said, the Commission will be launching its findings on 14th February at the City Hall. However, we have taken a number of steps to reassure our residents and our staff including, I am proud to say, continuing to hold residents road shows. We have published information on line for staff and residents and have gone to some effort to publicise a positive message to the 41, 000 EU residents in the Borough. You may have seen these messages across the Borough on bin lorries and on street advertising boards. Finally, I would like to finish on saying that this Labour Administration will continue fighting to prepare for Brexit - whichever type of Brexit we may get. We are on the side of all residents. #Tower Hamlets is a hospitable environment.

Supplementary question from Councillor Das:

Regarding the staff in Tower Hamlet Council who may require the settled visa, if there is a fee involved, will the Council pay the fee?

Councillor Ali's response to the supplementary question:

That fee is now being waived and it is no longer a Government policy. I think they got the message from Tower Hamlets, so they have scrapped it.

9.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood:

Why did the Council on the 5th November 2018 ask the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee to agree to spend £650,000 on a new health app when on the 27th September 2018 the national NHS started beta testing of their own health app with very similar or additional features? (the NHS app was available on Google Play and Apple app stores from the end of 2018)

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

We have been in conversation with the NHS, and we are not convinced that this is a replication, but we are not going to proceed with funding until we clarify with the NHS its progress. I think anyone who knows about the NHS, will know that its record on developing software is pretty notoriously bad. It may well make sense for us to get a move on with this since we have found residents taking up some of the superficially attractive offers for online GP services which actually let them down in the long run. We want to look after local people but we will not act and spend money without proper advice and understanding of the NHS proposals and the timeline they are working to.

Supplementary question from Councillor Wood:

I think the most useful thing we in Tower Hamlets could do is to get our own local surgeries to sign on to this service, because currently you can access the app but until the GPs surgeries are connected to it, it is of limited use. So will the Council be pushing to connect local surgeries to this NHS app as soon as possible in order to see how it works?

Mayor Biggs response to the supplementary question:

I think I just need to refer you to my previous answer. We are going to have a lively conversation with NHS Tower Hamlets who we have a very strong partnership. Our primary interest is the welfare of our residents and that they get the best possible advice and access to the health services in our Borough.

9.5 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze:

Can the Mayor or cabinet member please tell me what preparations the Council has made for rough sleepers during cold weather?

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing:

Nobody should be sleeping rough in Tower Hamlets, this is an issue which we and the rest of the capital need to work together to tackle. A severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) is activated by the GLA, when in London

Boroughs night time temperatures are forecasts to reach zero degrees or below on a single night . When it is activated, the hostel sector provides 36 additional bed spaces and our commissioned outreach team work additional hours to bring in doors those who they know who are on the street and respond to new referrals. No one is asked to leave the SWEP accommodation without a support plan in place to move them off the streets. We also offer mental health support directly to rough sleepers. These measures are in addition to the support we provide all year round, through our outreach team run by St Mungo's, access to 450 supported accommodation bed spaces, a further 8 dedicated emergency bed spaces, and specialist drug and alcohol outreach. Cabinet recently approved our Homeliness and Rough sleeping strategy, which sets out our commitment and vision to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets.

No supplementary question was asked.

9.7 Question from Councillor Bex White:

Could the Mayor outline how the council is taking forward the concerns raised regarding dangerous driving and air quality?

Response of Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Environment:

The question is about the steps that the Council is taking to address concerns about dangerous driving and air quality. Clearly vehicle exhaust is one of the leading causes of air pollution in the Borough, I think we and other people across the country know that air pollution is something that is increasingly seen as something that is damaging to the health of all ages in a whole range of ways. One of the things that the Council did in response to that was to adopt powers to issue a £20 fixed penalty notice to drivers who refuse to turn off their vehicles when asked. We make visits to hotspots where that is seen as a problem. So far people have responded to requests. The issue of fast driving is one where people drive fast and they break hard which produces much more pollution than driving at a steady rate. So I am pleased that in the past the Police have been very responsive to discharging their obligations to try and control speed limits to keep it within the 20 mile limit that we have. I hope that the Police continue to do this, and it really helps achieve this objective.

No supplementary question was asked.

9.8 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:

Will the Lead Member update me on the progress of the refurbishment of the Victoria Park One O'clock Club, including a date when it will be re-opened for stay and play sessions for young children?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

As you outlined we did make funding available this year, capital funding, and funding to commission a voluntary sector provider to run sessions at the building. Unfortunately, we have not been able to finish the works at this time. A full refurbishment will need to take place and that will need to meet the relevant requirements. Currently, we think the works to the buildings are likely to exceed the current costs that we have allocated in the capital budget, so we are currently undertaking a feasible study with the Corporate Property and Major Programmes and the Integrated Early Year service. I can assure you that using that information, we will be able to make an informed decision. I will be able to give you more information on what the future of services will be and when we might be able to get services running their again. I can assure you that we are committed to delivering good quality early years. A sign of that commitment is during the summer period, when the club was closed, we did make sure that there were sessions running from the children centre at Overland in the park and they were running until the end of October. They will be running occasionally over the winter months as well .

Supplementary question from Councillor Francis:

Can I thank the Lead Member for that response and his work last summer to make sure the temporary activities took place in the park and also his most recent work along with the Mayor to push things along in terms of the refurbishment of the facility. In response to a follow up enquiry that I received asking about who children's services approached, they said that they had not actually approached any voluntary sector providers as the building does not meet legal requirements. I think the Lead Member will know well enough that that sort of response, being told on one occasion that they have been unsuccessful and then subsequently that they have not actually made an approach, will ring a bell, because that is what happened with the nurseries as well. So I am really grateful for the assurance and the work that he is doing to make sure that that service is reopened. Can he also give us an assurance that in the interim, if it is not open in the summer, a temporary programme will be re-established from early summer this year?

Councillor Hassell's response to the supplementary question:

Just to explain the reasons why some of works have proven slightly more complicated. It is likely to include looking at such measures as ensuring there are separate toilets for children, adults and staff, disability access, repairs to the roof and potentially electrical rewiring. So all that needs to be costed up, so we can make a decision and think about what needs to be done. That's also complicated by the rules around building footprints within the park. So once we have full information, we will be able to make an informed decision and will provide you with further information. In the meantime, I am happy to work with our teams in the children's centres to ensure we have a stay and play offer running in the parks. I think this is really important particularly in a Borough such as ours where so many children are not able to access much open space.

9.9 Question from Councillor Sufia Alam:

Can the Lead Member please update us on work around the recruitment and retention of social workers?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

I am pleased to report to the Council that we are having real success with the recruitment of permanent social workers. We are on track to meet or exceed our three recruitment targets. They are for the recruitment of experienced social workers, recruitment of newly qualified social workers and for the conversion of agency workers to permanent. As a sign of success we have managed to reduce our turn over figures for staff from 23.3% in February 2018 to 15.1% at the end of November. I am pleased to report that we have now gone from the highest in London back in 2017 for our turnover to now below the London wide average. We will continue to make sure that we are an employer of choice for social workers through the development of our restorative practice model and investment we are proposing in our budget for the further development of our Social Work Academy.

Supplementary question from Councillor Alam:

Can you please advise if there any institutions in particular that have shown an interest in associated themselves with the social work academy?

Councillor Hassell's response to the supplementary question:

We are currently working with London Metropolitan University and Royal Holloway to develop that offer. We want that to be an accredited offer as we know that its accredited outcomes that will support our social workers to stay here to develop their practice and for that practice to be able to benefit our children and our families.

9.10 Question from Councillor Kyrsten Perry:

I'd like to ask Deputy Mayor Councillor Rachel Blake for an update on the Breathe Clean awareness campaign, given Tower Hamlets air pollution is the 5th worst of any London borough.

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

I think the highlight of the last quarter of the Breathe Clean promotion campaign was securing a visit from Father Christmas. He had to leave Rudolf at home due to the terrible air quality in some of our worst areas. He carried out a visit to promote our various schemes to get people undertaking active travel, get businesses to move over to electric vehicles or cargo bikes. London Live did a feature on our campaign. The event attracted 25,000 impressions on Twitter as well as 563 engagements. It was the 37th most

influential tweet in the country and listed as the Great Government Tweet. The video itself was viewed 1357 times. In all seriousness, we have been very active in promoting our School Streets and the Mayor's air quality funding as well in order to ensure behaviour change to get our air quality to legal limits in Tower Hamlets.

Supplementary question from Councillor Perry:

What more needs to be done to get our air quality to legal levels?

Councillor Blake's response to the supplementary question:

I think this comes down to two fundamental issues. The first is behaviour change in the Borough. The second is lobbying and campaigning to make sure that the biggest sources of pollution in the Borough which we do not have any direct control over, such as traffic driving into the city fringe, construction work and of course the Blackwall Tunnel next to us are tackled. In terms of behaviour change, we have launched some really exciting campaigns in schools. We are working with schools in the Lansbury ward, which is one of the worst effected wards for air quality, where they have a disco bike. You can get in touch to find out more about that. We have been doing a citizens science project on mapping for change. We have an air quality fund that has been delivering small projects to help deliver the behaviour change and encourage active travel. I would like to work with the whole Council to take our fight to TfL and the GLA and to the national government to secure a national car scrapage scheme, so we can get some of our most polluting vehicles off the road and get air quality within legal limits.

9.11 Question from Councillor Asma Islam

Can the Lead Member please provide an update on the findings of the latest Ofsted monitoring visit of Children's Social Care?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

The opening line of the main findings of Ofsted was that the effective action taken by Leaders and Managers following the August Monitoring visit has led to considerable improvements in the quality of social work practice for children in care. I am sure as corporate parents, we are all incredibly pleased with the progress that has been made and are grateful to the social workers, the managers and the partners who have made that possible. The inspection found that there has been a positive cultural change in the service. We have seen that there are better quality housing for our care leavers, that our health assessments are now conducted in a more timely fashion, and our permanence planning has improved. This is also supported by the work of our Social Work Academy, with more social workers choosing to stay here to develop their practice and for that to benefit the children in our care even more.

Supplementary question from Councillor Alam:

What are the areas for further focus and development going forward?

Councillor Hassell's response to the supplementary question:

As ever, we know that we are not going to be complacent. We are on an improvement journey and we will never be complete. We always need to make sure that there is more work to be done to improve those outcomes. Our particular areas of focus are developing our Thought Care Service, so we are better supporting our children in care, as they become care leavers. That will be supported by additional funding being proposed in the budget. We also want to do more to reduce the number of care leavers who are not in employment, education or training. We are going to be working with partners both within and outside the Council to make sure that we deal with that. One of the really key areas of focus for all of our partners that's our schools, children's centres and health partners is going to be how we respond to neglect and how we do that in a timely fashion, to make sure we deal with needs when they emerge, before they escalate. Our early help offer will be coordinating much of that work.

9.12 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead:

I would like to thank the Lead Member for inviting me to the Mayor's Early Years Summit in November and ask him to update us on the issues raised and the next steps to be taken.

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

The Early Years Summit was a key priority in the Manifesto, the one that Councillor Wood has apparently read. It is very important to us the work that we want to do for our early years. I would echo what Jeremy Corbyn said at the Labour Party conference last year, which is quite how important it is to empowering people to provide good early years support. But it is important for another reason as the science is clear, that adversity in a child's early years dramatically effects their health and education and outcomes for life. If you don't catch these things early and disrupt them, the problems can continue and massively set children back. Following the Summit we used the feedback to help design a number of investments and they are in the budget pack, which we will be debating in the next week. That is really a down payment as to make a real intervention, we need to have a government and a funding regime, which allows us to identify resources to really raise the game for under fives so we can tackle the disadvantage of people who are currently not receiving those services.

Supplementary question from Councillor Whitehead:

Can I ask about the measures in the package for our children's first 1001 days?

Mayor's Biggs response to the supplementary question:

The package includes: a doubling of the Council's holiday childcare scheme; £500,000 to top up the number of hours of free education offered to two year olds, which is within the 1000 days and a targeted programme to improve attendance of early years service sessions. We find that in cases that some of the people who probable need the service most might have the greatest challenges in accessing them for their children. The package also includes: a pilot programme of breakfast and after school clubs which is maybe a bit over 1000 days. Capital funding to create new inclusive settings, for example, induction loops for deaf children and investing in the infrastructure of early years in partnership with private and voluntary providers and also through the Council own facilities.

9.13 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar:

Can the cabinet member please update members about the £1.5m investment in the borough's leisure centres?

Response of Councillor Amina Ali, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit:

Works have started on major improvements to the borough's leisure centres with over £1.5 million investment across the borough. Why are we doing this?. It is because it is part of our manifesto promise. In that manifesto, we made a commitment to ensure that residents can have access to high quality leisure and exercise facilities wherever they live in the Borough. The Council's Strategic Plan, which sets out our broad plans for the coming years, includes a commitment to improve our sport, cultural and recreational offer and we are working to do just that. Improvements are being made to a number of our facilities, and the full details and the timescales can be passed on to you Councillor at another date.

No supplemental question was asked.

Question 9.6 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. A Written response would be provided to the question. (Note the written response to the question is attached at Appendix A)

10. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**10.1 Report from the Executive: Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019-2020**

The Council considered a report on proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, forwarded for consideration of Council by the Mayor in Cabinet on Wednesday 9 January 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the Council agree:

1. To limit the maximum disabled non dependant deduction to £4 per week.
2. To adjust the minimum level of income for self-employed under 25's to reflect age rules.
3. To enhance the support available to increase earnings and income for self-employed claimants.
4. To increase backdating provision for the scheme from 4 weeks to 52 weeks.
5. To note the equalities impact assessment arising from the recommended changes to the scheme as set out in section 4 of this report.

11. OTHER BUSINESS**11.1 Appointment of Chair of Pensions Committee**

The Council considered the report regarding the appointment of a Chair of the Pensions Committee.

Following the receipt of two nominations for the position, the nominations were put to the vote and Councillor Mufeedah Bustin was elected to the position of Chair of the Pensions Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Mufeedah Bustin be appointed Chair of the Pensions Committee for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.1 Motion regarding the TUC Great Jobs Agenda**

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Motin Uz – Zaman **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was then put to a vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council believes that everyone at work deserves a great job, where workers in our borough are paid and treated fairly and with respect; work in a safe and healthy workplace; have regular hours; have the chance to be represented by unions and be consulted on what matters at work; and get the chance to learn and progress at work and get on in life.

This Council resolves to:

1. Support the TUC's Great Jobs Agenda, which sets out the actions employers and the government must take for every job to be a great job.
2. Ensure as an employer we continue providing great jobs for our own employees.
3. Continue to value meaningful workforce engagement and representation through our recognised trade unions.
4. Continue our work with employers in the borough to influence their employment practices, and to ensure that business growth is sustainable and ethical.
5. Make increasing job quality a key part of the conversation when pursuing local economic development opportunities in the city.
6. Use our commissioning and procurement processes where possible to raise employment standards amongst those suppliers and providers we work with.
7. Where appropriate, engage with government and other bodies who hold regulatory powers, to tackle issues which local authorities do not have statutory powers to address directly.
8. Write to our MPs informing them of our position and encouraging them to support the Great Jobs Agenda too.

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.
Speaker of the Council