

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2008**

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,  
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**SUMMARY**

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by Members of the Council for response by Members of the Executive at the Council meeting on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008.
2. Questions are limited to one per Member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the Member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted.
3. Oral responses are time limited to two minutes. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to two minutes each.
4. There is a time limit of thirty minutes for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any question not answered within this time will be dealt with by way of a written response. The Mayor will decide the time allocated to each question.
5. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

## QUESTIONS

27 questions have been received from Members of the Council as follows:-

### **7.1 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah**

What measures is the Lead Member taking to deal with anti-social behaviour in Mile End East ward?

### **7.2 Question from Councillor Tim Archer to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member outline the recruitment strategy and approach to recruiting senior officers for the Tower Hamlets ALMO - Tower Hamlets Homes?

### **7.3 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman**

Would the Leader of the Council agree that it is a scandal that the Games Plan, a 250 page report on the likely economic and sporting effects of the Olympics commissioned by the government and produced and signed off by Tony Blair in 2002, has remained largely secret until now, that its assessment that there would be no economic or sporting benefits from the Olympics is very worrying, that the fact that £550 million of lottery money which would have gone to grassroots sport has been siphoned off to pay for the two week Olympic event is a matter of grave concern as this is now adversely affecting grassroots sport in Tower Hamlets and would he seek an urgent meeting with Tessa Jowell, the Olympics Minister, about these matters, following up a series of meetings that George Galloway has arranged with her and her office?

### **7.4 Question from Councillor Stephanie Eaton to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah**

Could the Lead Member comment on the recent increase in the number of people in the Borough stopped and searched under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) which are permitted only where an officer believes that serious violence may take place or that persons are carrying dangerous instruments or offensive weapons without good reason?

**7.5 Question from Councillor Rania Khan to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Anwara Ali**

How many people have taken advantage of the telecare scheme since charges for use were abolished in September 2008?

**7.6 Question from Councillor David Snowdon to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck**

Could the Lead Member please outline what steps are taken to ensure that pay rates agreed with contractors and temporary staff through individual negotiations – as per his written answer to my question at the last Council meeting – represent good value for money?

**7.7 Question from Councillor Harun Miah to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman**

Would the Leader of the Council agree that many of our pensioners in Tower Hamlets are facing severe economic difficulties at the moment as a result of inflation rising far above the Retail Price Index for most pensioners, particularly in the area of utilities bills but also on food and other essentials, that the Age Concern analysis of the pre-Budget Report from Alistair Darling claims that some £5 billion in tax credits and benefits are going unclaimed by pensioners, that the Winter Fuel Allowance now covers far too small a proportion of fuel costs to pensioners, and would he agree to write to all pensioners in the borough identifying for them the tax credits, benefits and other assistance they can seek from the Council and the government and other agencies and would he agree to ensuring that East End Life and other papers in the borough carry information for pensioners about tax credits, benefits and other help they may obtain prominently in those papers and would he agree to ensure there is an emergency helpline for pensioners to provide them with verbal advice should they need it and would he agree to write to the Government urging them to bring forward vital investment in heat insulation and energy efficient heating systems for council and social housing in the borough?

**7.8 Question from Councillor Tim O’Flaherty to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Anwara Ali**

Recent figures reveal a wide variance in the amount spent by London Primary Care Trusts on chemotherapy drugs between 2007 and 2008. Hammersmith & Fulham PCT spent the lowest of any London trust at £282.77 per patient, compared to Greenwich, the highest spending trust, which spent £434.53. The national average of £390 per patient compares with £294.60 spent per patient in Tower Hamlets. Can the Lead Member explain why Tower Hamlets PCT spends less on chemotherapy drugs than nearly all other London PCTs and why it is substantially below the national average; and can she explain the

likely impact on patient care of lower than average spending on essential chemotherapy medicines?

**7.9 Question from Councillor Carli Harper-Penman to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck**

A recent article in the Evening Standard reveals that Councillors in London take home over £28 million in allowances. Does the Lead Member for Resources and Performance feel that if an entire group of Councillors were to fail to attend statutory and quasi-judicial Council meetings for over eight months that this could be considered a waste of public money and an abuse of the position of elected Councillor?

**7.10 Question from Councillor Ahmed Hussain to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Anwara Ali**

Can the Lead Member let us know why the St. Paul's Way surgery is charging residents £67 for travel and other vaccines, when other surgeries are providing this for free, including her own surgery?

**7.11 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman**

Is the Leader of the Council aware of the great concern in the curry industry about the new points-based immigration system and the likely impact this will have on recruiting chefs and other workers to curry restaurants and would he agree that the last thing the curry industry needs now in the face of this mother of all recessions is a shortage of staff inhibiting the ability of the industry to provide the service customers will expect from them and does he have any plans to meet with the representatives of the curry industry in Tower Hamlets to discuss these matters and to make representations to the government accordingly?

**7.12 Question from Councillor Azizur Rahman Khan to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins**

Could the Lead Member advise how many schools in the Borough have been fined for permanently excluding pupils, and the total amount of the fines imposed on schools who have permanently excluded pupils? Does she accept that imposing financial penalties in this way makes it more likely that head teachers will resort to temporary exclusion where a permanent exclusion is the appropriate action for the school to take?

**7.13 Question from Councillor Fazlul Haque to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman**

What is being done to address the problem of the proliferation of strip clubs in the borough?

**7.14 Question from Councillor Peter Golds to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins**

How many children, known to the Borough's Children's Services Department, have died since May 2006, and if so what measures have been put in place to tighten procedures to ensure that any identified failings by public bodies do not re-occur?

**7.15 Question from Councillor Dulal Uddin to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis**

Would the Lead Member give a report on the progress he has made in appointing an independent auditor to assess the basis for leaseholder charges in this borough and would he agree that in the current economic climate there should be a review of all major works charges to leaseholders to ensure there is a charging regime they can afford as many leaseholders will not now easily be able to add major works charges to their mortgages or raise large-scale finance in other ways and that we must ensure that leaseholder charges in general do not force leaseholders out of their homes?

**7.16 Question from Councillor Abdul Matin to the Lead Member for Employment and Skills, Councillor Alibor Choudhury**

What action will the Lead Member take in response to the Equality & Human Rights Commission report published on 27 November 'Insight: work fit for all - disability, health and the experience of negative treatment in the British workplace', which found that disabled staff and those with long term illnesses faced higher levels of violence, injury, bullying and humiliation, with 11.5% of workers in these categories likely to experience physical violence at work, compared with 5.5% of other employees?

**7.17 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins**

Could the Lead Member give an update on the progress of the Building Schools for the Future programme and also say whether she feels that encouraging more independent schools to become voluntary aided schools within the state sector would go some way towards addressing the need for more high quality school places in the borough?

**7.18 Question from Councillor Philip Briscoe to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis**

Can the Lead Member set out the Council policy on the off-site provision of affordable housing, including details of distance limits and minimum percentage requirements, and provide a list of all approved schemes within the borough that have included an off-site element, including the percentage of affordable provided?

**7.19 Question from Councillor Mohammed Abdul Munim to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis**

Would the Lead Member confirm whether any commercial or housing developments in the borough have been put on hold or cancelled as a result of the credit crunch and could he confirm what action he has taken to find out from housing associations and other developers in the borough what their current financial position is and what effects the credit crunch may be having on their business plans and could he confirm that he will take the results of a review of development projects in the borough to the relevant government ministers in order to seek assistance to ensure that developments that are of benefit to the majority of the population in Tower Hamlets will proceed if they are threatened by the credit crunch and will he agree to report back to Councillors on this matter as a matter of urgency?

**7.20 Question from Councillor Shahed Ali to the Lead Member for Employment and Skills, Councillor Alibor Choudhury**

Can the Lead Member supply an update on the allocation of Working Neighbourhoods Fund money?

**7.21 Question from Councillor Dr. Emma Jones to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah**

What are the Council doing to stop unlicensed traders around the Tower of London?

**7.22 Question from Councillor Mamun Rashid to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah**

Would the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener confirm that the highest ranking Muslim police officer in Tower Hamlets is at the rank of constable and that there are no ethnic minority, never mind Muslim, police officers in senior management in the Tower Hamlets police, and that the fact the Met Police in Tower Hamlets are so unrepresentative of the diverse communities here is likely to inhibit confidence in the police amongst some of Tower Hamlets

diverse communities and thereby limit police effectiveness and has the Lead Member seen the research carried out by Demos showing the systematic under-representation of the members of the Muslim community in the police and has he seen the criticisms made by the National Association of Muslim Police about the lack of Muslim officers in, for example, counter-terrorism where there are only 27 Muslim officers out of 2,300 and would he agree to convene an urgent meeting with representatives of the Metropolitan Police Authority and Tower Hamlets Police to discuss the issues of the lack of Muslim and ethnic minority officers at all levels of the police establishment in Tower Hamlets and particularly at senior management level?

**7.23 Question from Councillor Bill Turner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman**

The economic crisis is having an impact on residents across all areas – particularly jobs and housing. Can the Leader of the Council give us some idea of the approaches being taken to help our residents through these difficult times?

**7.24 Question from Councillor Rupert Eckhardt to the Lead Member for Resources & Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck**

In view of the new government legislation to allow local authorities to levy any additional business rate of up to 2p in the £1 on top of business rates, what current plans does the Council have for raising additional tax on our hard pressed local businesses?

**7.25 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis**

What is being done in Tower Hamlets and at a national level to protect those who are unable to keep up with mortgage payments due to the current economic crisis?

**7.26 Question from Councillor Shirley Houghton to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Sirajul Islam**

Could the Deputy Leader please provide a full list of all members of the Licensing Committee and Sub-Committees who have received training for 2008/9 indicating separately for each member, the date they actually undertook their training.

**7.27 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson to the Lead  
Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah**

Can the Lead Member outline how much Tower Hamlets has improved its recycling rates in the past year?