

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2009

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6

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

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by members of the public, for response by the appropriate Lead Member at Council on 9th February 2009.
2. The Council's Constitution provides a maximum time limit of thirty minutes for this item.
3. A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one brief supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original or the reply. Supplementary questions and Members' responses to written and supplementary questions are each limited to two minutes.
4. Any question which cannot be dealt with during the thirty minutes allocated for public questions, either because of lack of time or because of non-attendance of the questioner or the Member to whom it was put, will be dealt with by way of a written answer.
5. Unless the Mayor decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member of the Council may move, without discussion, that the matter raised by a question be referred for consideration to the Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee.

QUESTIONS

Four questions have been submitted as set out below:-

1. Question from Mr. Philip Whittington to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

“I moved to the borough earlier this year and my housemate and I duly tried to establish a direct debit mandate with the Council for the payment of Council Tax. We later received a ‘reminder’ so I made arrangements to set up payments again. After a period where we heard nothing, we then received a summons to a magistrates’ court for non-payment dated 9th July (which we received on 12th). When I came to the Town Hall on 14th July to explain the situation, the Council had my bank account details already (complete with a scanned copy of my signed debit mandate) in the first place but had neglected to set up the payment process. I would like to know:-

- a) How many people across the borough experienced this problem?
- b) How many of those people fitted any of the Council’s definitions of ‘vulnerable’ or ‘living in vulnerable circumstances’ (whom we would expect to experience severe distress in this situation)?
- c) How many older people received summons to magistrates’ courts due to this administrative error?
- d) What measures have been put in place to avoid innocent residents in future being intimidated by government (albeit unintentionally) in this way?”

2. Question from Ms. Johanna Kaschke to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

“I pay my rent per Standing Order each Tuesday without fail. Countless times I have received non payment reminders despite the money leaving my account each week on the same day. It was admitted that internal cash-flow admin problems prevent the monies from showing as paid in the Council’s records.

On 4th January 2009 I received a complaint that rent paid on 22nd December 2008 has still not been received when it was paid via my Standing Order. These reminders are costly and why doesn’t the Council instead query non payments internally or with the bank first instead of writing costly letters to tenants?”

3. Question from Mr. Len Aldis on behalf of Tower Hamlets Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

“Will the Council agree to affiliate to the international organisation “Mayors for Peace”, and have as its representative the Mayor of Tower Hamlets?”

Information has been circulated to Councillors giving the aims and principles of this organisation that Tower Hamlets CND considers worthy of support from all peace loving people.

In December Mayors for Peace gained 99 new member cities bringing the total for 2008 to 515 and a grand total of 2,635 member cities in 134 countries.

We are also pleased that following his election as Mayor of London, Boris Johnson agreed to continue his support for Mayors for Peace.”

4. Question from Mr. Terry McGreenera to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

“Will any provision be made in the budget to encourage the introduction of the living wage in Tower Hamlets as announced in the Council’s Employment Policy?”