

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY 9th FEBRUARY 2009

**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 Monday 9th February 2009.
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

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

7.1 Question from Councillor Fazlul Haque to the Lead Member for Employment and Skills, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Can the Lead Member for Employment and Skills elaborate on the work being done to improve jobs and skills in the community?

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

Will the Deputy Leader confirm that under the constitution it is a legal requirement for Council Members to be formally trained before taking part in and making decisions on the regulatory licensing and planning committees? Will the Deputy Leader explain the consequences to the Council if members take part and make decisions at regulatory committees who have not undertaken the required training?

7.3 Question from Councillor Harun Miah to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that we are facing a very severe recession and possibly a depression, that in these circumstances it would be madness to raise the Council Tax and council charges and that it would be far better if the Council Tax and charges were reduced, that we cannot afford to cut services or the workforce and that the incomes of the workforce must also not be cut and would he therefore also agree that the budget should be set within these parameters and that the relevant lead member and council officers should begin immediate negotiations with the Government to ensure any funding gap is met out of Government grant?

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

Does the Lead Member agree with me that it is vital for the effectiveness of community policing that our Safer Neighbourhood Teams get to know local residents and have a detailed knowledge of the neighbourhood which they police?

7.5 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins

Can the Lead Member for Children's Services give an indication of how the Government's new Play Pathfinder will be implemented in the borough?

7.6 Question from Councillor Tim Archer to the Lead Member for Regeneration, Localisation and Community Partnerships, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Will the Lead Member for Housing provide an up to date report on the situation regarding Blackwall Reach and Robin Hood Gardens?

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

In the light of the decision by English Heritage to give the green light to the redevelopment of Robin Hood Gardens, would the lead member give the following guarantees to the residents of Robin Hood Gardens, that every resident will be offered like for like alternative accommodation in the decant, that every resident will preserve their current secure tenancies in any decant, that residents will be granted a like for like return to the estate once it is redeveloped and that the community centre and other community facilities for the estate will be maintained and enhanced in any redevelopment?

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

Could the Lead Member advise me what percentage of the Borough's Schools have playgrounds or sporting facilities open to the community at weekends?

7.9 Question from Councillor Carli Harper-Penman to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Would the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener like to comment on the recent crime figures in the Borough?

7.10 Question from Councillor Philip Briscoe to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

A recent survey highlighted employment trends of local authorities in the face of the economic recession. Are there plans to reduce (or increase) the number of workers employed by Tower Hamlets Council and what are the numbers involved in any changes?

7.11 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah to the Lead Member for Culture, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

Would the Lead Member agree with me that martial arts provides young people in Tower Hamlets with an important means of keeping fit, enhancing their self-discipline and other benefits, that it is important for the Council to support the martial arts to improve accessibility and affordability and to secure proper facilities on a regular basis for martial arts to be practised, that martial arts should be promoted by a Council sponsored festival and that this should form part of the Council's Olympic strategy?

7.12 Question from Councillor Abdul Matin to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

Could the Lead Member advise me how many times the Council has been prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act in the past year, the fines and the costs payable as a result of any conviction? If there has been any conviction, could I be advised of any actions taken to prevent similar incidents?

7.13 Question from Councillor Mohammed Shahid Ali to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

Can the Leader of the Council inform us as to whether anything is being done to increase the number of goods and services that are being procured locally by Canary Wharf and the City of London?

7.14 Question from Councillor David Snowden to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Can the Lead Member for Housing please outline the work he has undertaken with regard to ensuring that resident and leaseholder concerns over the suspension of the Island Homes board are addressed?

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

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that the gagging orders included in contracts from the Olympic Development Authority, as reported on BBC London, represent an outrageous infringement of civil liberties and in particular will prevent whistle blowing on matters of the utmost importance relating to costs, the environment and health and safety and that these gagging orders are entirely contrary to the spirit of transparency that should inform everything to do with the Olympics as articulated by Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell when she criticised the Chinese authorities for not being fully transparent

7.16 Question from Councillor Tim O’Flaherty to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Could I be advised whether the residents of Charles Dickens House will be compensated for the inconvenience and distress caused by the recent fire and electrical failure, and will the Borough be compensated by THCH for the costs of accommodation and other expenses incurred by the Borough as a result of the emergency?

7.17 Question from Councillor Rania Khan to the Lead Member for Children’s Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins

Can the Lead Member for Children’s Services let us know whether there are plans to enlarge or improve any of the schools in Bromley-by-Bow ward?

7.18 Question from Councillor Rupert Eckhardt to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Tower Hamlets Homes is running a Cash Incentive Scheme to encourage tenants to give up their tenancy and buy their own home. This has existed for many years, and before the transfer of homes on the Isle of Dogs to Island Homes. Island Homes does not now offer such a scheme, but Tower Hamlets Homes continues to do so. This clearly represents a loss of rights for Island Homes residents. It is my understanding that all rights should have been protected for Island Homes Residents. Could the Lead Member please comment on this?

7.19 Question from Councillor Mamun Rashid to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Joshua Peck

Would the Lead Member agree with me that pensioners in Tower Hamlets should be afforded day trips out over the summer holidays to enable them to enjoy the seaside and other places of interest, that some pensioners are benefiting from such trips due to the fantastic work being done by voluntary and other organisations, but that LAPs must carry out an investigation of pensioner facilities to ensure no-one is falling between the gaps and then ensure adequate funding and other support to voluntary and other organisations to ensure that every pensioner has the option on going on day trips over the summer period?

7.20 Question from Councillor Alex Heslop to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Parking is a serious concern for residents and shoppers in the Roman Road area. Can the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener let us know if there are any plans to improve parking provision?

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

What action is the Council taking to enforce the weight restriction of lorries passing through Wapping High Street?

7.22 Question from Councillor Md. Abdul Munim to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that London, and in particular Tower Hamlets, is facing a particularly difficult time in terms of employment prospects now that the financial services sector, which provided the primary growth in jobs in recent years, is facing a long-term decline and that, for all that the Government and the Council may fund retraining and other employment enhancement programmes, it is not immediately obvious where the new areas of employment growth might come from and would he therefore agree that the Council must enter urgent discussions with the Mayor and above all the Government to map out a strategy for employment growth in Tower Hamlets in the very new circumstances we now find ourselves in?

7.23 Question from Councillor Ahmed Hussain to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member for Housing indicate what discussions he has had to secure a final date for the upgrading of the British Estate?

7.24 Question from Councillor Peter Golds to the Lead Member for Performance & Resources, Councillor Joshua Peck

During the budgetary process, what consideration has been given to:

- Reducing spending on the Council's PR budget
- Reducing hospitality expenditure
- Cutting agency staff
- Closing East End Life
- Reducing Executive Members' allowances?