

Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>COUNCIL</b>  22 November 2017	
<b>Report of:</b> Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Motions submitted by Members of the Council</b>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services.
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards

## SUMMARY

1. Twenty One motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 13 for debate at the Council meeting on Wednesday 22 November 2017.
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, the motions are listed by turns, one from each group, continuing in rotation until all motions submitted are included. The rotation starts with any group(s) whose motion(s) were not reached at the previous meeting.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the Borough. A motion may not be moved which is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. There is no specific duration set for this agenda item and consideration of the attached motions may continue until the time limit for the meeting is reached. The guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.2 does not apply to motions on notice and any of the attached motions which have not been put to the vote when the time limit for the meeting is reached will be deemed to have fallen. A motion which is not put to the vote at the current meeting may be resubmitted for the next meeting but is not automatically carried forward.

## MOTIONS

Set out overleaf are the motions that have been submitted.

## **12.1 Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

**Proposer:** Councillor Oliur Rahman

**Secunder:** Councillor Ohid Ahmed

The Council Notes:

Because of changes made by the administration to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for poor and vulnerable residents, many residents are suffering – especially the self-employed residents and tax payers.

One of the changes made by the administration was to use notional earnings equivalent to 35 hours at the National Living Wage in the assessment of Council Tax Reduction for residents who have been self-employed for over one year and whose declared earnings are below this figure.

The Council Resolves:

The Council must reconsider its approach and reinstate its Council Tax Reduction Scheme to pre-April status as the change put in place by the Mayor and the administration are having a significant negative impact on the residents.

## 12.2 Motion regarding Operation Lynemouth

**Proposer:** Councillor Peter Golds

**Secunder:** Councillor Andrew Wood

This council notes the publication of the second interim report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue in respect of Operation Lynemouth, the inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's review and reassessment of alleged criminal offences arising from the 2014 mayoral election in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and, in particular, the following important paragraphs:

From Page 12

"It would appear that the original MPS investigation failed to secure pivotal evidence which could have led to further enquiries. Operation Lynemouth has done so and is seeking early advice from the CPS as to whether the evidence provides realistic opportunities for investigation and prosecution."

From Page 14

"The MPS's fraud squad considered ten matters during the original investigation, including allegations of fraud, bribery, perjury and tax evasion, but did not make any arrests. Operation Lynemouth has already identified potential evidential opportunities, although there is still much work to be done."

The council further notes:

That the residents of the borough will look to the police, electoral officials, political parties, their candidates and supporters to ensure that the elections to be held in 2018 are free, fair and untainted by the malpractice which so damaged the reputation of this borough in 2014.

The Council:

Calls on political parties and electoral officials to ensure that the corporate council itself remains impartial and remains apart from the political process and that council services and facilities are not used by candidates for political purposes.

The Council further:

Calls on all members and political parties when required, not to use council owned parks and facilities for political and electoral events.

### **12.3 Motion regarding Tower Hamlets Brexit Task Force**

**Proposer:** Councillor Rabina Khan

**Seconder:** Councillor Abjol Miah

This Council Notes:

1. That a recent YouGov poll on Brexit shows that a rising number of people regret the decision to leave the EU, with 47% of respondents saying it was wrong for the UK to vote Leave, compared with 42% who believe it was the right decision.
2. That two-thirds of the public think that Brexit negotiations are going badly, compared with just over a third in March this year.
3. That in June 2017, one year after Brexit, the pound was 14% lower against the dollar and 13% lower against the euro.
4. That Tower Hamlets has one of the most drastic levels of wealth inequality nationwide: 48.7% of households have an annual income of less than £30,000, 17% have an annual income exceeding £60,000 and another 17% have an annual income of less than £15,000.
5. That London has ranked among the European cities with the worst outlook for 2018, according to a survey of more than 800 real estate professionals.

The Council Further Notes:

1. That the impact of a hard Brexit would cost London's economy over £100 billion over five years, according to research.
2. That Tower Hamlets would be one of the hardest hit boroughs, losing some eight per cent of output worth £11 billion, because of its reliance on industries that are significant exporters, at risk of offshoring to the EU, or are deeply embedded in international supply chains.
3. That a hard Brexit will cause financial firms to move from Canary Wharf to more favourable cities in Europe, resulting in fewer jobs and reduced commercial and housing development.
4. The Bank of England stated that the decision to leave the European Union is having a noticeable impact on the economic outlook and will probably hamper productivity and slow growth.
5. That research from the Centre for London found that Brexit is already leading to fewer Europeans seeking work in London, a decline in confidence among businesses and a deceleration in house price growth.
6. That MPs on the Communities and Local Government Select Committee are due to look at which powers currently held by the EU could be transferred to town halls after the UK leaves.

7. That the Brexit vote has diminished London's status as an international haven for enterprise and created uncertainty in the property market. As Lucian Cook, Director of Residential Research at Savills has said: "When you've got people borrowing bigger multiples of income, they are much more exposed to a change of sentiment of any degree of uncertainty about the impact of Brexit."

8. Liam Booth-Smith, Director of the thinktank Localis said that the post-Brexit labour supply squeeze will affect parts of the country in very different ways. Many EU nationals, for example, are leaving the NHS following Brexit and employers' access to the EU labour market may be linked to the issue of skills shortages in the capital. This is particularly relevant to Tower Hamlets, because of The Royal London Hospital, one of the capital's leading trauma and emergency care centres.

This Council Believes:

1. That EU nationals living in Tower Hamlets should have the right to remain in the UK.
2. That EU funding, or its replacement, is vital support to economic regeneration, helping new and current businesses to create thousands of jobs and supporting broadband, new roads and bridges and other local infrastructure projects.
3. That Tower Hamlets Council must do all it can to protect the local economy, local regeneration projects, its residents, workers, businesses and all those in receipt of EU funding, or benefitting from services funded by EU funds during this time of uncertainty.

This Council Resolves:

To set up a Tower Hamlets Brexit Task Force to plan for a number of Brexit scenarios, with the following aims and objectives:

1. Proactively to campaign to ensure the EU funds expected by Tower Hamlets and local recipients of EU funds will be honoured until the end of 2020, in order to improve our local economy, development, infrastructure, employment and training.
2. To instruct the Senior Management Team to provide a dedicated help and information line to residents and businesses, with comprehensive and up-to-date information on the progress of Brexit and its effects on the Borough and address productivity and competitiveness challenges among local firms, enabling them to compete internationally.
3. To create new policies and programmes for education and skills to equip the local workforce for current and future jobs.
4. To work with local businesses to understand the changing market dynamics and focus on growing local SMEs.
5. To call on the Mayor and all Councillors to support this motion, to ensure that the resolutions are carried out and for the Tower Hamlets' Brexit Task Force to report on the progress of implementing the resolutions.

## 12.4 Motion regarding Operation Lynemouth

Proposer: Mayor John Biggs

Seconder: Councillor Sirajul Islam

This Council notes:

1. That Operation Lynemouth has published its second interim report, which is investigating *'any alleged criminal or electoral wrongdoing... committed, counselled or procured by a senior figure (or senior figures) within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets'* between 25 October 2010 and 23 April 2015.

This Council believes that:

1. Although, as was stated in the election Court judgement *'the election of all THF (Tower Hamlets First) Councillors must be taken to have been achieved with the benefit of the corrupt and illegal practices'*, all councillors in Tower Hamlets have a legal and moral duty to support the police investigation into the wrongdoing of the past;
2. While many councillors who were elected as part of Tower Hamlets First still serve on the Council in the Tower Hamlets Independent Group and the People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets, including potentially two Mayoral Election candidates, and that they remain in denial about the corrupt regime which they were a part of, all sitting councillors and the Mayor have a personal responsibility to address the failures and criminality of the Lutfur Rahman administration and help the borough move forward. We note with sadness that while a majority accept this responsibility a sizeable minority clearly do not.

This Council resolves:

1. To welcome and fully support the HMIC investigation into alleged criminal offences arising from the 2014 mayoral election;
2. That every councillor should cooperate fully with any police investigation into criminality, including coming clean about any of their own actions and proactively offering any evidence they may have of wrongdoing;
3. To work to ensure the highest possible standards in the coming election and consign the electoral fraud of the previous administration to the past;
4. To condemn in the strongest possible terms the illegality of the former mayor.

## **12.5 Motion regarding the new direction from the secretary of state for education about failure of tower hamlets children services**

**Proposer:** Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

**Secunder:** Councillor Mahbub Alam

The Council Notes:

1. On 12 September 2017, The Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, issued a fresh "Direction" to Tower Hamlets Council because John Biggs led Labour administration was failing the residents in the critical statutory area of 'children social care'.

2. Full details of the decision can be found here on the Government website [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643844/Tower\\_Hamlets\\_Direction\\_Sept\\_2017\\_signed\\_v2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643844/Tower_Hamlets_Direction_Sept_2017_signed_v2.pdf)

3. Tower Hamlets Children's Services Improvement Board was already chaired by a former DCLG appointed Commissioner in a new capacity as the Improvement Board Chair due to failure in April 2017 when OFSTED judged Tower Hamlets Children Services to be "inadequate" – the worst possible rating. The same service was judged "Good" with outstanding features under the previous OFSTED inspection.

4. The Secretary of State has now imposed fresh "Intervention Advisers" from two outside authorities (Islington and Lincolnshire County Council), whose own OFSTED inspection reports revealed their own services to be Good with Outstanding features, and the first line of their Terms of Reference state "London Borough of Tower Hamlets has failed in its delivery of children's social care services."

5. The latest decision by the Secretary of State is a clear proof that Government have no trust in John Biggs led Labour administration and their existing plan of improvement for Tower Hamlets Children Services.

6. After shambolic OFSTED failure, in yet another damning verdict on John Biggs's mayoralty, the new "Direction" letter from the Secretary of State stated, inter alia, the following:

· "...the Council is failing to perform to an adequate standard, some or all of the functions to which section 497A of the Education Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") is applied by section 50 of the Children Act 2004 ("children's social care functions");

· The Secretary of State, having considered representations made by the Council, considers it expedient, in accordance with her powers under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, to direct the Council as set out below in order to ensure that all of the Council's children's social care functions are performed to an adequate standard; and

· Pursuant to section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, the Secretary of State directs the Council as follows:

a. To comply with any instructions of the Secretary of State in relation to the improvement of the Council's exercise of its children's social care functions and to provide such assistance as may be required;

b. To co-operate with the Intervention Advisers, including on request allowing the Intervention Advisers at all reasonable times access:

- i. to any premises of the Council;
- ii. to any document of or relating to the Council; and
- iii. to any employee or member of the Council”

The Council believes:

1. The latest ‘Order’ from the Secretary of State shows that his mayoralty is not just in a crisis but in a complete meltdown – and the buck stops with him.
2. in addition to the political leadership, the catastrophic failure of the Council’s top professional leadership in Children Services in performing their duties and responsibilities as evident in 2017 OFSTED inspection result of “inadequate” – the worst possible rating, together with, the damaging data breach and leaking of confidential and sensitive council information about a 5-year-old foster girl.

The Council resolves:

1. John Biggs has not done what is required. He must act now to put Children Services back on track.
2. John Biggs must ensure to provide the political and officer level leadership that has clearly been lacking thus far. The Secretary of State clearly feels that John Biggs and the Council have not done what is required - hence the fresh “Direction”.
3. Banish all talk about delivering a Good OFSTED rated service in the next two years but only talk about our intention to receive an Outstanding OFSTED rating as soon as is practicable.
4. That the Council appoint an independent person to investigate individual cases like that of the 5-year-old foster child to ensure that we have full confidence in the handling of such cases while Children's Services rebuilds its credibility.

## **12.6 Motion regarding the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031.**

**Proposer:** Councillor Andrew Wood

**Seconded:** Councillor Chris Chapman

This council notes that the administration were, after considerable public comment, forced into holding a meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> to enable Isle of Dogs residents to discuss and comment on the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031.

The council further notes:

That despite 56% of all proposed new development in the borough being within the northern part of the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar the only two initially advertised meetings were to be in Whitechapel and Bethnal Green, where development is relatively minimal by comparison.

The council notes:

After pressure from local councillors and residents a meeting was organised but was poorly advertised and resulted in a low attendance, a limited number of tickets were advertised even though Jack Dash House can take up to 100 people, indeed residents who wished to attend were told that the event was completely full.

The council also notes:

That the authority had as at September 2017, £88.295 million of Section 106 funds and £35.184 million in respect of the new Community Infrastructure Levy, the overwhelming majority of which has come from development on the Isle of Dogs.

Development is focussed on relatively small parts of the Borough but S106 is being spent equally across the whole Borough leading to an ever increasing funding deficit for the Isle of Dogs which the GLA believe to be over £200 million pounds over 25 years.

That contrary to expectations relatively few people who live on the Isle of Dogs actually work in Canary Wharf.

That historic promises made to the residents of the Isle of Dogs regarding stepping down from Canary Wharf and infrastructure to match the developments have been ignored by the successive Labour and Tower Hamlets First administrations. The net result is that the average of the last fourteen planning applications on the island shows an average density of 900 homes per hectare versus a maximum recommendation in the London Plan of 405 homes per hectare. Millharbour has according to the ONS been the densest place in the UK since 2014.

The council therefore:

Calls upon the Mayor to reconsider the policy of mass development on the Isle of Dogs and to call on the Mayor of London, in the emerging London Plan.

## 12.7 Motion regarding Retain Career's Service Personalised Support

**Proposer:** Councillor Shah Alam

**Seconded:** Councillor Aminur Khan

### **This Council Notes:**

1. That the last round of cuts saw a reduction of around £200,000 to the Borough's careers service. In 2017/18, there has been a reduction from £1,047,000 (£800,000 being core) to £653,000 core (reduction of £394,000). It is estimated that in the period 2019/20, there will be a further reduction from £653,000 core to £510,000 core (reduction of £143,000).
2. That there has purportedly been an overspend of £200,000 in the service, which is forecast to rise to at least £362,000 in 2017/18. However, no details have not been provided as to the makeup of the overspend and forecast.
2. That there are essentially 4 teams within the careers service, which include:
  - Management
  - SEND Lead Advisers (SLAs) – minimum level 6 qualification
  - Careers Advisers (CAs) – minimum level 6 qualification
  - Information & Advice Personal Advisers (I&As) – minimum level 4 qualification(\*Level 4 is sufficient to practice as a CA or SLA; therefore, Level 6 is a self-imposed condition for the role by the Service Head)
3. That once the restructure is complete, the careers service and the remaining staff will move from Children's Services Directorate (learning and achievement) over to Place Directorate (economic regeneration) to be part of the Integrated Employment Service (IES) or Tower Hamlets Work Path, a unique employment service for all Tower Hamlets' residents, providing support for people at all levels of work, skill or experience.
4. That the purpose of the IES is to combine all council services that help residents with preparation and placement into education, employment and training under one umbrella. The aim is to save costs, avoid duplications and promote cohesion, although each service will continue to be managed by its existing service head.
5. That the I&As are disproportionately affected in comparison to other teams within the service with a proposed 88% reduction. I&As offer one-to-one support to vulnerable young people and are crucial in preventing NEET and reducing NEET figures.
6. That drastically reducing the I&A team will cause more young people to become NEET, dependent on welfare and prone to engaging in anti-social behaviour and crime.
7. That Ofsted has reported that as a result of the I&A work, an increasing number of previous offenders are now in education, employment and training, compared to the rest of England. The I&A team was instrumental in reducing youth unemployment from 10.9% in 2006 to 3.4% in 2016.

### **The Council Further Notes:**

1. That in order to justify the reductions to I&As, the argument is that since young people are now encouraged to remain in education and training until they are 18, the I&Es are no longer required. However, there is no enforcement attached to this legislation, which means that many vulnerable young people remain disengaged from learning after the age of 16.
2. That one could also argue that CAs are no longer required, because the statutory obligation for providing careers' guidance is now placed on the schools and no longer with the local authority.
3. That it has been suggested that Skillsmatch would fill the I&A gap without any additional funding being provided to them. However, Skillsmatch do not hold the same level of qualifications and expertise that I&As possess and currently do not work with young people who have special needs, looked after children, young offenders and young people with ongoing social and behavioural issues. The I&As, on the other hand, specialise in engaging with and supporting hard to reach clients.
4. That the I&A team is predominantly BME, while the other teams are predominantly – or all – ethnically white.

### **This Council Believes:**

1. That the reduction in the I&A team will have a hugely detrimental effect on vulnerable groups in the borough. There will be no concentrated support for year 11s at risk of NEET, nor for looked after children, graduates, women and young offenders.
2. That this small group of staff could easily be slotted into roles in the Integrated Employment Service as they already have the skill sets, training and qualifications to adapt, and enhance IES delivery.
3. That the Economic Regeneration Unit has secured a large amount of funding (ESF, growth bids) that have not yet been allocated to any particular teams within the IES.
4. That the Integrated Employment Service is likely to create a number of roles over the coming months, as outlined in the Reorganisation of the Careers Service Pack. Nevertheless, there has been a delay in the creation of these roles meaning that by the time these vacancies do become available, staff would already have been made redundant.
5. That it will be difficult to manage contracts without the frontline staff to deliver them. How will the workload be covered, for example, when one I&A goes on leave?
6. That the budget in the Economic Regeneration Unit could accommodate creating 7.7 I&A posts and one team leader post.
7. That the costs of redundancy and potential recruitment of Information and Advice Personal Advisers in the future could be offset now by ensuring staff transfer over

to the Integrated Employment Service.

8. That since the IES is likely to draw down significant sums via ESF contracts, other central government funds and grants etc., a small proportion of that money could ensure that the Careers Service continues to employ a small number of I&As to support the most vulnerable young people in the community.

**This Council Resolves:**

1. To place pressure on the relevant management to expedite changes taking place in Place Directorate and finalise the structure of IES.
2. To instruct directors in Children's Services and Place to agree a way forward to ensure that a small amount of money is set aside to create posts within the next few months to ensure this valuable resource and asset is utilised for the benefit of young people and adults in the borough.

## 12.8 Motion regarding the future of Old Ford Housing Association

Proposer: Councillor Marc Francis

Seconder: Mayor John Biggs

### This Council notes:

1. Old Ford Housing Association (OFHA) was established in 1998 as the successor body to Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust (HAT);
2. OFHA was a subsidiary of Circle 33 Housing Trust for financing purposes, but was accountable to its own Board of tenants, leaseholders and independent members;
3. In 2005, Circle 33 merged with Anglia Housing to form Circle Anglia Ltd, and that other associations joined later to form Circle Housing Group;
4. In July 2007, LBTH transferred the "Parkside" council estates to OFHA with the promise to refurbish individual flats and the estates within five years;
5. In 2015, following complaints from LB Islington and LBTH about the performance of its repairs service, the Social Housing Regulator found evidence of "serious detriment" to tenants and downgraded Circle Housing Group, requiring an action plan to improve governance;
6. In response, Circle put forward an "action plan", which involved closing down its subsidiaries, including Old Ford HA, and centralising services, moving most Bow-based staff to a new call-centre in Kent;
7. In summer 2016, despite clear evidence of a continuing deterioration in services, including tenants being left without heating for weeks on end, the Regulator upgraded Circle again;
8. Within days, Circle announced its intention to merge with Affinity Sutton "*to create the largest housing association in Western Europe*";
9. In response to Circle's "consultation", more than 1,000 residents signed a petition opposing the proposed closure of Old Ford, which led to Old Ford's Board declining to agree to Circle's proposal;
10. Following a Parliamentary debate initiated by Rushanara Ali MP, the Regulator finally began an investigation, which confirmed "serious detriment" had again been caused to tenants and resulted in the newly-merged Circle / Affinity Sutton being downgraded again in December 2016;
11. The former Chief Executive and Chair of Circle have both left the new organisation - Clarion Housing Group - and it is now run by former Affinity Sutton staff;
12. While Clarion's new Management Team has made some improvement in services, it is continuing with Circle's plan to close subsidiaries and centralise services;
13. Clarion has asked Old Ford's Board to consult residents again on closing Old Ford;

14. At least two other local community-based housing associations have expressed an interest in coming together with Old Ford.

**This Council believes:**

1. The ex-HAT and “Parkside” estates in Bow were transferred to Old Ford on the basis that it would be a “*community-based housing association*”, and that residents voted in favour of the transfers from LBTH on that basis;
2. As the former landlord, Tower Hamlets Council has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that any substantive changes to the governance arrangements at Old Ford are only made with the consent of residents;

**This Council resolves:**

1. To oppose any attempt by Clarion Housing Group to close Old Ford without the formal consent of residents;
2. To support the Mayor and Cabinet in opposing these plans publicly, including by raising objections to the Housing Minister and Social Housing Regulator, and by legal means if necessary;
3. To support the Mayor and Cabinet in facilitating direct discussions between Old Ford’s Board and those other community-based housing associations that have expressed an interest in combining with Old Ford.

## **12.9 Motion regarding the future of the Tower Hamlets Youth Service**

Proposer: Councillor Gulam Robbani

Seconder: Councillor Oliur Rahman

### **This Council notes that:**

1. Former Mayor Lutfur Rahman had a positive vision for the Youth Service which was expressed, for example, at the Cabinet in April 2012:

“He considered that what really mattered were the young people of Tower Hamlets who represented the future of the Borough and that youth services were provided that benefited them. It was his intention as Mayor that young people in Tower Hamlets received the best youth services and best education possible.”

2. That the main motivations of bringing the Youth Service back in-house were:
  - to save money on duplicating management functions and re-invest it in the front line of the service;
  - to respond to the Government’s localism agenda;
  - to strengthen the Council’s partnership agenda;
  - to obtain extra value by, for example, the youth service working effectively.
3. That although bringing the Service back in-house was a decision of the Executive Mayor, councillors were able to discuss the transfer openly within Council structures – for example, Councillor Oliur Rahman was able to explain the decision to the April meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at which Councillor Rachael Saunders declared a personal interest on this item as she had “been in receipt of information from some of the service providers managing the contract in question.”

### **This Council further notes that:**

1. The current Mayor’s intention to make a fundamental change in the way that the Youth Service is run (initially on an interim basis) was not mentioned at the Cabinet on 10th May 2016, although planning must have been well underway by then.
2. The Mayor’s intention to make this fundamental change was set out in a briefing paper from the Mayor’s office dated 12th May 2016 which was circulated to all councillors.
3. This paper stated that the interim delivery plan would begin in July, which clearly precludes any wider member involvement (indeed, the paper refers to the decision having been developed in discussion with John Biggs and Councillor Saunders) and a future delivery model will be in place from April 2017 (and there will be full member involvement in options for this model, but how this will happen is not explained).
4. This paper also stated that a gap analysis is underway with a view to there being a programme of procurement and commissioning in June 2016 targeted at local third

sector organisations.

5. This paper also states that it is the intention to offer youth services for the rest of this financial year from only eight venues in the borough – despite the fact that youth are often very reluctant to travel far to a formal provision. The paper states that the Council intends to offer an outreach service to encourage you to travel to the formal provision and also to rely, in the interim, on whatever additional services are provided in an un-co-ordinated manner by local charities or voluntary organisations.

**This Council further notes that:**

1. The Mayor's decision was revealed at the Council's Annual Meeting on 18th May 2016 by Councillor Rachael Saunders in what appeared to be an unplanned announcement. This included Councillor Saunders reading out an email from her mobile phone but not saying who had sent her the email (in sad contrast to her previous openness about who was briefing her).
2. Councillor Saunders stated that "The service has faced allegations of fraud and corruption" and other serious allegations. She also said that "Investigations into these serious allegations are ongoing," and that the Youth Service does not have the capacity to deliver as much as it has in the past. She stated that "we" were working out a service plan which would be based on reduced capacity and on when that had been developed would consideration be given to identifying and filling gaps. She expected the identification of gaps to be finished by June (a couple of weeks after she was speaking) – but did not mention John Biggs's intention to fill these gaps by contracting out parts of the service to third sector organisations (or who, in the event of this being done, would manage these organisations).
3. The Council Communications Office issued a press release on 26th May referring to the change only having been prompted by "historic shortcoming". This announced that an interim delivery model would be adopted "by the summer". It gave details of the interim delivery model and stated that young people's views had been listened to throughout the review process. (The members have yet to see a concrete tangible and evidence of that)
4. There have been a number of reports in the local press since the Council AGM which have reported the detail of various allegations – presumably either on the basis of their own imaginations or on the basis of briefings from unknown parties in the Council which have not been shared with all councillors.
5. That as a result of the way the Mayor and relevant Cabinet Members have dealt with this issue, it is entirely unclear what is happening to the youth service – which has led to a great deal of serious concern among service users and in the wider community.

**This Council believes that:**

1. If and when there are allegations of corruption or other serious malpractice, these should be investigated in accordance with Council procedures and individuals should be dealt with appropriately. (Independent Group fully supports this approach and have publicly offered to work together for the benefit of young people of Tower Hamlets).
2. That if a service is to be reviewed in order to spend or save money by cutting

certain provisions, and/or deliver the service more efficiently or effectively, this should be discussed openly, including with councillors and services users and the wider community rather than playing politics or blame-game.

3. (1) and (2) above should not be confused.

**This Council further believes that:**

1. The current position, in which the Administration appears to have responded to allegations against individuals by pre-emptively altering the service as a whole, and in which the Youth Service is to be run on an interim delivery model based on reduced capacity and enhanced by some sort of ad-hoc procurement, is ill thought out and poorly planned.
2. The interim service delivery model will, for the rest of this financial year, lead to an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour across the Borough – to the irritation of the whole community, for whom this is already a massive problem.
3. The interim service delivery model will, for the rest of this financial year, incur a risk of extra spending on management and quality assurance of the service – risks which have not been addressed in the little documentation available or in such public statements as have emerged.

**This Council resolves that:**

1. The current Mayor, John Biggs, should honour his commitment to govern in a transparent manner and he should put on the public record a full account of what has been going on, including what allegations have been made, when these were made, by whom and how - and critically how these are being investigated (releasing as much information as is possible without compromising the investigations or the individuals concerned); what prompted the service review and how it took place; and what his intentions are towards the service.
2. The current Mayor, John Biggs, to immediately stop any further work to drastically reduce and cut the Youth Service provision in the name of interim delivery model and engage in a serious, open, transparent consultation with the young people, residents and stakeholders.
3. The current Mayor, John Biggs, to reverse the decision to close unprecedented number of Youth Centres and look for an alternative way to provide effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose Borough-wide localised youth service provision.
4. The current Mayor, John Biggs, must keep the Youth Service in-house rather than privatising or contracting it out.
5. In the event that the current Mayor, John Biggs, should not agree to do think again, he must issue a statement clarifying how he intends to procure a service to fill in the gaps from the third sector, given that the Commissioners have been running grant-making functions; and he must also issue a comprehensive statement covering which of his chosen eight venues will pick up delivering the service previously provided by centres which John Biggs and Councillor Saunders have closed and how service users whose centres have been closed are expected to access the replacement services, including details of travel arrangements, etc.

## **12.10 Motion regarding the Canary Wharf to Rotherhithe cycle and pedestrian river crossing**

Proposed by: Cllr Chris Chapman  
Seconded by: Cllr Andrew Wood

This Council notes the start of the public consultation by Transport for London (TfL) on the Canary Wharf to Rotherhithe cycle and pedestrian river crossing on the 8th November 2017.

That the upfront capital costs are between £30 million for the ferry option to £335 million for a tunnel and TfL are clearly indicating their preference for a bridge costing between £120 million and £180 million upfront with annual running and maintenance costs of up to £2.4 million a year.

This Council further notes:

The Councils Infrastructure Delivery Plan October 2017 shows a funding gap of £648 million over the next 15 years across Tower Hamlets with no detail yet on how that gap will be filled. The draft GLA Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework Development Infrastructure Funding Study also indicates a large funding gap exists in the OAPF area.

That in October 2016 the Labour Mayor of London announced the delivery of a Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf bridge by 2020 before work had even started by TfL looking at the different options for a crossing.

This Council believes:

That the current consultation paper contains a number of questionable assumptions and that the need to prove that a bridge is required after it was announced by the Mayor is constraining the detailed analysis of potential options.

This Council:

Supports an improved river crossing but remains to be convinced about the value for money, timing, location and the rush to deliver this bridge. The council believes that a more open process may well result in a better solution and avoids the risk of another Garden Bridge debacle.

That without some certainty over how local infrastructure is funded; the council should not support an expensive and uncertain project.

## 12.11 Motion regarding Retain the Day Care Nurseries Motion

Proposer: Cllr Shafi Ahmed

Seconder: Cllr Aminur Khan

### This Council notes

1. That our Local Authority day nurseries – John Smith Children’s Centre, Mary Sambrook and Overland Day Nursery – are described by the council as providing for ‘the most vulnerable children in the borough’ and in particular that:
  - i) 40% of children who attend John Smith have a form of learning disadvantage or disability;
  - ii) Overland has a specialist deaf unit and provides 10 part-time nursery spaces for deaf children and staff who are trained in sign language;
  - iii) Mary Sambrook supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds and whose first language is not English;
  - iv) staff at all three nurseries are trained to support children with very complex needs and who require above-average staff/child ratios;
  - v) staff are also skilled at helping families dealing with stress and prioritise places for vulnerable children on child protection plans.
2. That a money saving proposal that “voluntary, independent or private organisations be commissioned to deliver in house day nursery provision where they are currently being provided directly by the council” was included in the Mayor’s budget for 2017-2020.
3. That one of the borough’s MPs, Rushanara Ali, has written to the Mayor asking him to reconsider this proposal.

### This Council believes

1. That “voluntary, independent or private organisations” cannot match the service currently run by the Council with in house staff who have built up expertise over many years

That such organisations cannot be expected to be accountable to the public and therefore to service users in the same way as council-run services are.

That it is invidious for the taxpayer to prop up the profits of private companies.

2. That this element of the Mayor’s budget overlooks the needs of the disabled children who use these nurseries and abandons the low income families these nurseries currently serve.

3. That this cost saving measure is short sighted and any money saved would be offset in the short term by the costs of tendering the service and monitoring the contract and in the medium and long term by having to provide extra help for children who would miss out on specialised support in Council nurseries and would need extra support once they reach school age.

4. That if the Council no longer provides this service access will be reduced for the most vulnerable children, and there will be a negative impact upon social

mobility in the borough.

**This Council resolves**

To request that the Mayor

- a) Retains the provision of in-house day nurseries and explores alternative methods of saving money;
- b) Brings forward a programme that reintroduces Sure Start/Council-run nurseries across the borough.

## 12.12 Motion regarding Thrive LDN

Proposer: Councillor Denise Jones

Seconder: Councillor Amina Ali

This Council acknowledges that two million Londoners experience poor mental health, which equates to 62,500 people in each borough, and that London's suicide rate increased by 33 per cent from 552 to 735 incidents between 2014 and 2015 – the highest figure recorded by the Office for National Statistics since records began.

This Council understands that employment for Londoners with a mental health problem is 31 per cent lower than the UK average and that the financial cost of mental ill-health is approximately £700million for each London borough.

This Council reaffirms its commitment to approach mental health and wellbeing as a key priority and to work collaboratively with partners within and outside the borough to address and tackle mental ill-health across our communities.

This council commits to support and work with Thrive LDN to:

1. Create a citywide movement for all Londoners that empowers individuals and communities in our borough to lead change, address inequalities that lead to poor mental health and create their own ways to improve mental health.
2. Following on from the examples set by Harrow Thrive and Black Thrive in Lambeth, look in to localising Thrive LDN to Tower Hamlets by exploring the practicalities of establishing a local Thrive hub that responds to local needs
3. Examine new methods to support more people in Tower Hamlets to access a range of activities that help them to maintain good mental health and wellbeing.
4. Work closely with partners across Tower Hamlets to end mental health stigma and discrimination.
5. Build on the great work happening across London to engage children and young people in mental health by helping Thrive LDN to develop training and resources for youth organisations, schools and student societies.
6. Support employers to make mental health and wellbeing central to the workplace.
7. Work with partners to explore new ways to access services and support, and consider the use of digital technologies to promote mental health and improve information about accessing support.
8. Work with partners and build on the excellent work being done across the borough to reduce suicides in Tower Hamlets. We will build on existing suicide reduction and prevention initiatives by establishing a zero suicide ambition for Tower Hamlets.

## **12.13 Motion regarding Housing Achievements in Tower Hamlets – setting the record straight**

**Proposer:** Councillor Ohid Ahmed

**Seconded:** Councillor Maium Miah

### **The Council Notes:**

It has become more difficult than any time before for people in inner City boroughs like Tower Hamlets to find a decent home to rent or buy. Today many essential workers; teachers, nurses, fire fighters and other public service workers find it nearly impossible to buy or rent in Tower Hamlets.

The former Mayor Lutfur Rahman's administration embarked on an ambitious journey to tackle the housing issues locally in a two-prong strategy:

1. Building affordable houses in Tower Hamlets; and
2. Improving the standard for private properties.

For example, to deal with the poor standards of maintenance and upkeep within the private sector, then Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his Deputy Mayor Ohid Ahmed introduced 'licensing for private rented sector housing' under the Housing Act 2004.

The achievements of the Rahman Mayoral policies and the leadership between 2010 and 2015 were recognised by people and commentators across the UK. With Cllr. Ohid Ahmed he also led building the highest number of affordable homes in the country. Figures released by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) showed that between 2010/11 and 2015, Tower Hamlets delivered a record 5,590 affordable homes.

In addition, as Cabinet Lead Member for Regeneration, Cllr Ohid Ahmed led two major regeneration programmes, Ocean Estate and Blackwall Reach.

The Independent Group's success under the leadership of former Mayor Lutfur Rahman, his Deputy, Cllr Ohid Ahmed, and his team was further acknowledged by the Government, who released £24.2 million in 2015 alone from the 'New Homes Bonus' scheme, which has enabled the current administration to continue that legacy of our housing delivery. By 2015, the council had secured the total of £53m in New Homes Bonus - the highest in the country.

A recent City Hall report further acknowledged our administration's achievement that Tower Hamlets had built more affordable housing than anywhere else in the capital.

There were other regeneration projects – approved by the previous administration - for example 148 homes in Watts Grove with £26.33m funding approved by Mayor Lutfur Rahman on 5 November 2014. The London Docks regeneration project not only secured invaluable affordable housing but also a space for a 1,500 spaces strong secondary school in Wapping.

The Whitechapel Vision along with its Master Plan was the brainchild of the former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his then Cabinet Member Alibor Choudhury. Both were approved by the previous administration and adopted by the Council. This historic regeneration of Whitechapel is the former administration's hard work and a testament to their

commitment and ambition to improve the Borough which included local businesses, the agreed 'tech city' and the expansion of medical research facilities.

The Whitechapel Vision, its Master Plan and including associated regeneration will also provide:

- At least 3,500 new homes
- 5,000 new local jobs
- School improvements
- Transformed public spaces
- Enhanced local heritage
- A civic centre in the heart of the community

We have proposed a 'local community-led forum of grass-root stakeholders' to add value to get it right in the implementation phase which has been ignored by John Biggs.

### **The Council Believes:**

John Biggs, his allies, and other opportunists have sought to take credit for what Mayor Lutfur Rahman, his Deputy Ohid Ahmed, former Cabinet member Alibor Choudhury and other cabinet members worked hard to deliver for residents.

John Biggs promised to build a thousand more houses in his manifesto, in reality he has built none save to carry on Lutfur Rahman's commitments as this was tied to the projects previously started and the funding previously secured and approved by us.

In the 2014 mayoral election, the previous administration had a manifesto promise to deliver further 5,000 affordable housing for the next 4 years by 2018. Indeed, on top of the 5,590 homes already delivered by the previous administration, another 3,000 affordable homes were in the pipeline and were well on course to be delivered as the previous administration's manifesto promise of additional 5,000 local homes. It's disingenuous for John Biggs to take credit for affordable housing in Tower Hamlets in which his administration had no contribution.

Our administration had a clear vision and drive to deliver more social affordable housing in the borough to alleviate overcrowding and increase life chances of our young people. A vision and drive we fail to see in John Biggs administration. There are no new council or affordable homes built between June 2015 until now 'which were not started or approved by our previous administration under former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his Deputy Mayor'.

John Biggs has yet to credibly name one big regeneration project which he has initiated and approved which will deliver substantial affordable housing but as usual, he tries to take credit for the success of our hard work.

### **The Council Resolves:**

John Biggs should stop taking the credit for former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and Deputy Mayor Cllr Ohid Ahmed's achievements and learn to take responsibility for the series of catastrophic failures he has committed and to stop blaming anyone but him for easy political point scoring.

To acknowledge the historic achievements of the former Mayor, Deputy Mayor and their administration in delivering the record level of affordable housing as acknowledged by DCLG, the GLA and others.

## **12.14 Motion regarding Tower Hamlets Communities to shape neighbourhoods and council services in decision making NOT a closed Mayoral Decision of £3.5 million contract to consultants to transform our services and communities**

Proposer: Councillor Aminur Khan

Secunder: Councillor Abdul Asad

The Council Notes:

1. It has developed a new strategy to encourage local communities to play a bigger and more active role in shaping their neighbourhoods and council services.
2. A wide programme of consultation was done with key stakeholders to develop the current priorities in the strategy, and to help define the council's vision for involving the community and consultation closed on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017
3. Labour Mayor Biggs said: "I want our council to draw on all the talent and experience of our community and to include more local people in our decision making. With government continuing to cut council funding each year it's more important than ever that residents are at the heart of everything we do. Working together to identify local priorities and develop solutions to the challenges we face is vital."
4. A number of campaigners, community groups and organisations have addressed the council following Mayor Biggs's cuts to frontline services providing talent and experience of how decisions could be made without impacting on the children, young people, families, working people, the elderly, disabled and vulnerable.
5. Mayor Biggs has not listened and included local communities in his decision making but instead made a £3.5 million Mayoral Decision on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017 to provide a contract to Grant Thornton Consortia as the strategic partner to transform the council services effecting Tower Hamlets communities.
6. Mayor Biggs chose not to make Tower Hamlets residents his strategic partner.

**The Council resolves;**

1. To stop the privatisation of council nurseries.
2. Increase the number of Youth Centres per ward to deliver a comprehensive plan of detached and outreach work.
3. Reinstate all council funded Police Officers cut by Mayor John Biggs.
4. Fund the Tower Hamlets Youth Sports Foundation with the council working in partnership with the THYSF Business Plan.
5. Fund the Careers Service adequately so that young people aged 16-17 can be supported into higher and education and employment.
6. Hold a Public Inquiry by Overview and Scrutiny to hear from all parties affected by the damning Ofsted report.
7. To introduce Rent Control in the Private Rented Sector.
8. The closed decision of Mayor John Biggs to sign off £3.5 million to a private contractor will need to be made accountable to the communities in Tower Hamlets.

## **12.15 Motion regarding Westferry Printworks Secondary School**

Proposer: Councillor Dave Chesterton

Secunder: Councillor Candida Ronald

### **The Council notes;**

1. The Council's Local Plan adopted in April 2013 identifies the site of the former Printworks on Westferry Road as a priority location for a new secondary school on the Isle of Dogs.
2. A new 1,200 place secondary school on this site was granted planning consent in May 2016. When this opens this will be the first new second secondary school on the Isle of Dogs since George Green's School opened in 1975, more than 40 years ago;
3. Currently there is a surplus of secondary school places on the Isle of Dogs (just over 7% across all year groups). Current projected demand for secondary school places indicates that additional provision will not be required until the start of the school year 2021/22;
4. The "free school presumption" is the process Local Authorities have to follow where they intend to open a new school. It is set out in section 6(A) of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 which provides that where a Local Authority believes that a new school needs to be established in their area, they must seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy or Free School;
5. However, the guidance clearly states (para 17) that 'In considering the need for a new school, local authorities should factor in any other free school projects that the department has approved and are due to open;'
6. The Secretary of State has made it clear that she considers Canary Wharf College to be an appropriate provider as it is already open as a school and includes secondary provision from September 2016;
7. Even where the Council decides to run a competition, the Secretary of State is the ultimate decision maker and may decide to appoint a sponsor other than that recommended to her by a local authority following competition. The guidance states: "The Secretary of State reserves the right to agree a sponsor of her own choice (from the list of approved sponsors) on the basis that she may have further evidence about a proposer, or proposers, which means that none of those put forward is suitable." In this instance it seems likely she may decide to appoint Canary Wharf College despite other expressions of interest submitted, making the process abortive for the Council and other schools who bid;
8. If the Council opts to run a competition, the Council could bear costs of up to £30million, in addition to the costs of running the free school competition. The costs would remain the responsibility of the Council regardless of the Secretary of State's decision on who the provider will be;
9. If the school goes ahead as a central free school determined by the Department for Education, and the Council does not run a competition, the capital costs and the pre and post-opening costs for the school would be borne by the Department for Education;

**This council also believes:**

10. That the previous Regional Schools Commissioner indicated that, by virtue of the fact Canary Wharf College has already been approved by the Secretary of State to open a secondary school on the Isle of Dogs, it would be fair to assume the Government intends to approve Canary Wharf College despite any recommendation process.

**The Council Believes;**

1. There is no need to rush to select an operator for the Westferry Printworks Secondary School, this secondary school will not be required until September 2021;
2. The process by which an operator for this new school is selected should be by open competition, completely transparent and the views of parents placed at the centre of the selection process;
3. Potential operators must be able to evidence outstanding success in:
  - a. High educational attainment for children from diverse backgrounds;
  - b. Community cohesion and inclusiveness;
  - c. Actively reaching out to children from poor families;
  - d. Actively reaching out to children of parents from all faiths;
  - e. Positively encouraging children with special needs.
4. Ideologically motivated interference by the Secretary of State in this selection process is unacceptable;
5. That by making the Council liable for what could cost £30m, without giving them the power to decide on who will run the school is entirely wrong and flies in the face of parents' wishes and local democracy;

**The Council Resolves to;**

1. Ask the Mayor to continue to stand up for the rights of local parents, to have their voices heard and to write to the Secretary of State urging her to properly consider and be guided by local opinion before making any decision on this site;
2. Ask the Mayor to urge the Secretary of State and Regional Schools Commissioner not to undermine local decision-making and accountability, and to be open about their intentions relating to the Westferry Printworks Secondary School and to make this process fully open by waiving in advance of any local competition, the requirement for council to fund as much as £30m costs should the recommendation of such a competition not be approved by the Secretary of State;
3. Call on Conservative Councillors to add their voices to local concerns and make representations to the Department for Education to enable a genuine free school competition where the decision is not pre-determined and which does not cost the council millions even if the local process is then overturned by Government;
4. Refer the petition signed by local people to the Secretary of State and Regional Schools Commissioner.

## **12.16 Motion regarding Stop closure of one stop shops in Tower Hamlets**

Proposer: Cllr Suluk Ahmed

Seconder: Cllr Oliur Rahman

The Council Notes:

John Biggs led Tower Hamlets administration is planning to shut down four One Stop Shops in their current form which provide invaluable services to many residents, including friends, family members and loved ones. This is being disguised as a “merger”.

The reason or ‘excuse’ given is the integration of the service with the Idea Stores and forcing the residents to use online services instead.

To force the service online will alienate the elderly, those who do not use a computer, find reading a challenge, have special needs or for whom the first language is not English.

This means there will no longer be ‘immediate’ face to face service in its current form about parking, housing benefits, council tax, welfare etc. for the residents in stand-alone One Stop Shops with face to face contact providing expert knowledge and support to help residents – many of whom would be vulnerable in a distressed situation or in need of ‘urgent’ help.

There is a genuine fear that the face to face service will completely disappear even if any ‘temporary stop-gap-measures’ or ‘a provisional promise’ to see complicated cases at a future date was made to some users to get the changes approved now in order to ‘manage’ any protest or to negate the complaints from the residents/users, staff, elected representatives and others. The ‘if needed’ assistance and a possible face to face meetings in complicated cases at a ‘future’ date leave a lot to be desired and are meaningless rhetoric for residents who need immediate face to face help.

Independent Group’s Shadow Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Partnerships, Cllr Ohid Ahmed, has raised this important issue and is campaigning to save the service. If approved this proposal will mean there will no longer be any stand-alone One Stop Shops with immediate face to face service using ‘ticket and wait’ provision currently in place in the borough.

It is also important to ensure that the Council does not allow the new wifi service to provide an opportunity for hackers and others in respect of data breaches and access to confidential information.

Approximately 1,000 residents visit the One Stop Shops services on daily basis – many of whom are from the ethnic minorities or the most vulnerable groups due to a variety of factors.

The Council Resolves:

To ask Mayor John Biggs to stop his proposed cut and closure of four One Stops Shops in Tower Hamlets due to its detrimental impact on residents who already feel besieged by his brutal cuts as well as a record 9% increase in the council tax while the Mayor enjoys an 11.7% pay rise at more than £10,000 extra in his pay packet.

## **12.17 Motion regarding housing in Tower Hamlets**

Proposer: Councillor Sirajul Islam

Secunder: Councillor Rachel Blake

This Council notes that:

1. The population of Tower Hamlets broke through the 300,000 mark last year. 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. 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.
4. Mayor Biggs pledged to deliver 1,000 council homes and the Council is on track to meet this target.
5. Council figures show Tower Hamlets delivered 1,070 affordable homes last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16).
6. 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 last year.
7. That Mayor Biggs unveiled 148 new council homes at Watts Grove this month; 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.

This Council resolves:

1. To work with Mayor John Biggs to continue to deliver more affordable housing for local people.

## **12.18 Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents**

Proposer: Councillor Kibria Choudhury

Seconder: Councillor Md. Maium Miah

### **The Council notes:**

Prime Minister Theresa May has admitted in the Parliament that there are other buildings with 'combustible' cladding - like Grenfell Tower - across the country. She stated that the Department for Communities and Local Government will inform the relevant local authorities and checks were being carried out.

The fire in Grenfell Tower in London was a national tragedy - with 80 people presumed dead but the accurate figure is likely to be more - to widespread public anger, dismay and a national search for answers. They all should have been safe when they went to sleep at night. In the 21st century Britain, one of the richest countries in the world, in the richest city in the country, nobody should be living in a home that risks their life.

It's heartbreaking when you consider that this devastating fire was eminently avoidable. The allegedly unnecessary cost cutting measures by Kensington and Chelsea (K&C) Council or its agencies to reportedly save £5,000 by installing cheaper but more flammable cladding and non-existence of sprinklers did not help the poor people, which included very young children, who were trapped and died in the fire. This becomes even more devastating when you consider the fact that the K&C Council is sitting on a shocking £209 million reserves in their coffers – surplus to their requirements, and offered a £100 council tax rebate to residents just before the local election in 2014.

The Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader have of K&C council had to resign from their positions after initial reluctance. The Government is being urged to send commissioners to the K&C council.

The Boss - Director of Grenfell Tower insulation provider - 'is government adviser'. Technical director of Saint Gobain UK, which makes Celotex insulation, is reportedly also on the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC), which advises Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

In Tower Hamlets, we have many similar towers and residents are genuinely worried and have concerns. We have seen many fires in Tower Hamlets in recent weeks with many families evacuated.

On 3 July, a young teenage girl – 17 years old – tragically died after trying to escape a burning fire in her home in Mile End, with 50 people evacuated and four suffering smoke inhalations. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and loved ones, as well as all the victims and loved ones of Grenfell Tower and other fires in the capital.

A large blaze tore through the roof of a multi-million-pound development next to Regent's Canal, Bow Wharf in Tower Hamlets where eighty firefighters were dispatched to tackle the fire at the five-storey building in Bow Wharf, Wennington Road – luckily no one was yet living in the building.

Following Grenfell fire tragedy, John Biggs issued a statement citing Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), Council's Arms-length Housing provider, about the Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) of its THH managed tower blocks in the Borough but has failed to publish the FRAs despite requests by the residents and the Independent Group.

John Biggs has yet to confirm the final details about the safety of the buildings and towers managed by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and private landlords.

Labour administration in Tower Hamlets sold off the family silver – our social housing stock – to private companies or RSLs – so John Biggs cannot simply absolve himself of his utmost responsibility of keeping all our residents safe in light of the tragedy that befell on the poor people of Grenfell Tower in west London at night.

Independent Group in London Borough of Tower Hamlets had officially written to John Biggs highlighting the concerns and asking for reassurance and specific answers for residents, still awaiting a reply.

### **The Council believes:**

Everyone deserves to know if their home is safe when they go to sleep at night.

All Landlords - including local authorities, RSLs, Arm's Length Housing Management Organisations (ALMOs) like THH and private landlords - have a legal obligation to provide safe and secure buildings for our residents and where they cannot do so they must provide alternative accommodation.

People need assurance and answers and Biggs must ensure that 'all' our buildings in Tower Hamlets are safe for our residents.

### **The Council resolves:**

1. Install up to date sprinklers and smoke alarms that are regularly checked – retrofitted if needed without any exception, and implement all relevant recommendations made by Lakanal House fire inquiry.
2. A clear public assurance that none of our buildings, not just THH tower blocks, is fitted with the cladding that contains 'flammable polyethylene' used in Grenfell Tower or have 'any combustible material' that may spread instead of containing the fire.
3. The most appropriate fire safety doors that can at least withstand the fire for 60 minutes, retrofitted if necessary, in consultation with the residents.
4. Comply with the best practice and official advice from the Fire Brigade and other relevant authorities on fire safety.
5. Comply with the advice from The Department for Communities and Local Government which state: "Cladding using a composite aluminium panel with a 'polyethylene core' would be non-compliant with current Building Regulations guidance."
6. Use the Council's position and power directly, or through appointed board members sitting on RSL boards and other influential places, to ensure that the above is complied with by the RSLs, the Council and THH.
7. Publish all Fire Risk Assessments carried out by the Council, THH and RSLs.
8. Keep all local ward councillors inform of any local issues in this regard.

With the Independent Group and others who may wish to join, write to the Government for urgent changes in the fire safety laws. Use the Council's reserves and/or contingency funds to ensure all our buildings - particularly high rise and tower blocks - are safe and are properly maintained

## **12.19 Motion regarding Acid Attacks**

**Proposer:** Councillor Mahbub Alam

**Seconded:** Councillor Ohid Ahmed

### **The Council notes:**

Senseless, tragic and bigoted acid attacks have become prevalent in London and all over the United Kingdom. This year the number of attacks doubled. Too many families and individuals are suffering and falling victim to this grievous and criminal act.

London is being dubbed as 'Acid attack capital of Britain'. Instances of acid attacks are on the sharp increase in 2016, a big increase on the year before.

On 21 June in east London, Resham Khan, a university student, was driving a car with her cousin Jameel Mukhtar when they were victims of a horrific acid attack by a white male. Without any provocation or logic, out of nowhere, both were attacked with acid thrown at their face and body. Both will have scars that will never leave them. Their lives have been changed forever. The pair strongly believe this was an Islamophobic hate crime.

Worryingly, a high percentage of these attacks have been concentrated in a small pocket of east London with a high Muslim population - 398 attacks in Newham, 134 in Barking and Dagenham and **84 acid attacks in Tower Hamlets in recent years**.

Two of the most recent attacks were on Commercial Road with the junction of Sidney Street, in Tower Hamlets on 29 June – another such attack on Burdett Road, E3 at 02:13hrs on 4 July 2017. A separate attack, possibly unreported, took place in Watney Market in the week before. There are quite a few other attacks which were neither reported to the police, nor appeared in the media.

### **The Council believes:**

The attackers seem to specifically target Muslims and/or Asians but an attack like this could happen to anyone.

The horrific injuries often sustained from such attacks can leave victims with permanent scarring, psychological problems and destroy their lives.

These barbaric and inhumane attacks, the impact on those who suffer as well as the wider community relations and cohesion, should not be dumbed down or diluted by anyone.

It is about time that the law changes for the purchase of corrosive acid and dangerous chemicals - right now anyone can buy it easily from any hardware store. A person can easily walk into a store and purchase this lethal substance or similar chemical off the shelf.

Corrosive acids like sulphuric acid are very lethal and life damaging substances. You should only be allowed to purchase them with a licence to buy or verifiable professional/trade identification. The person purchasing should go through checks before.

Many attacks could have been stopped if there were controls that made it harder to buy, and meant we knew more about people buying it.

Acid attacks have become too common, the Home Office and the local authorities through trading standards and other means available at their disposal needs to do something to bring it under control. It is a disgusting criminal act. We need licensing laws and the use of existing regulatory powers now to deter this from happening.

John Biggs needs to strengthen the scope of community safety and enforcement, with more resources, to protect and support our residents. He can easily do so by reversing his illogical cuts in budgets for the community safety team, enforcement team of police officers and THEOs.

### **The Council resolves:**

The assailants of such inhumane attacks need to be prosecuted and publicised for an effective deterrence and punishment. Critically, the victims and the families of these barbaric attacks be supported in every way possible.

To reverse the Mayor's decision to sack 34 dedicated local partnership police officers - a critically important frontline resource - appointed by the former Mayor and his team who could be used to work with and provide support to the community.

With the Independent Group and others who may wish to join, to write to the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the local MPs to do whatever they can to change the laws on the purchase of corrosive acid and dangerous chemicals used in acid attacks.

To explore local authority's powers to stop the sale of these dangerous substances other than to licenced or registered trade buyers with a clear database and checks.

John Biggs to ensure an accurate and up to date monitoring and publication of Islamophobic crimes in Tower Hamlets. *(something which the Independent Group has been urging the Mayor for more than a year but the Mayor has failed to listen or deliver the information despite a promise by his cabinet member)*

John Biggs need to reverse his catastrophic decisions: to cut community safety team; to stop CCTV upgrades, to sack 10 THEOs; to remove the community safety coordinator post; and to bring the teams up to the level under the former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his cabinet.

There needs to be more THEOs and the Police on the beat. CCTV and surveillance need to be a lot more robust in order to apprehend the assailants which mean the planned CCTV upgrade by the previous administration - stopped by John Biggs - must go ahead immediately.

## **12.20 Motion regarding the Public Sector Pay Cap – including Tower Hamlets staff and emergency workers**

**Proposer:** Councillor Harun Miah

**Secunder:** Councillor Gulam Robbani

### **The Council notes:**

The political choice of austerity has failed miserably.

The Tory Government and their allies need to recognise that the economic approach of the past decade has been an abject failure. The recent economic data shows that growth has slowed, Inflation is rising. Wages - when adjusted for prices - are lower than they were when the last recession began in early 2008.

Britain has a cost-of-living crisis as well as a political crisis but most importantly it is affecting our residents, our staff, wider public sector workers, civil servants and their loved ones which in turn affect the local economy and the wider society.

Local Government is the most efficient part of the public sector according to Government. Tower Hamlets council staff have had their pay frozen or capped for nearly a decade.

Firefighters, Nurses, Police, Paramedics, all put their lives on the line to protect people, but right now they're suffering because of a pay cap which means that wages stay frozen while costs of living continue to go up.

MPs had their pay increased by 10%. John Biggs gave himself a 14.24% pay increase and granted a 40% increase to the pay packet of a local Tory councillor.

Stephen Crabb, the former Conservative Work and Pension Secretary, as well as, Government Cabinet Ministers, Michael Gove and Boris Johnson have called for the pay cap to be lifted. Regrettably and hypocritically, they did not vote for removal of the cap in the Parliament.

The Chancellor had previously claimed that the public is "weary" of austerity and wants to see an end to the "long slog" of cutbacks. The latest comments from within the Government's top brass about austerity and pay cap follow accusations of a Government "shambles" on the issue after a Number 10 source said the PM was ready to listen to the pay review bodies' recommendations, only for her official spokesman and the Treasury to insist "the policy has not changed".

Speaking to Panorama, a former Tory MP and now Theresa May's Chief of Staff at No 10 Downing Street, Mr Barwell said "There's a conversation I particularly remember with a teacher who had voted for me in 2010 and 2015 and said 'you know I understand the need for a pay freeze for a few years to deal with the deficit but you're now asking for that to go on potentially for 10 or 11 years and that's too much'.

### **The Council believes:**

Given the outstanding job that our emergency services perform week in, week out, we feel that they deserve just reward for their efforts.

Given the recent tragedies and the incredible bravery and heroism these people and their colleagues across the country have shown, with little thought for their own lives, it is time

to find the money to make sure these brave and honourable men and women are being paid a decent wage for the incredible job they do.

We all saw the brave police tackling the terrorists at London Bridge, the firefighters rushing in to tackle the Grenfell fire, the paramedics running to help the people caught up in the Manchester terror attack. And every day nurses working round the clock to keep our NHS going. These people shouldn't have to worry about whether they can pay their rent or the electricity bill at the end of the month.

**The Council resolves:**

With the Independent Group, the Mayor to write to the Chancellor and Prime Minister asking them to remove the pay cap and officially end austerity in order to help the working people, the public-sector workers and local authorities including our hard-working council staff.

With the Independent Group, the Mayor to write to the local MPs and shadow chancellor John McDonnell requesting them to do whatever in their power to influence and force the Government to lift the pay cap - present an Early Day Motion or a joint opposition motion - and vote for it in the Parliament at the next possible opportunity in light of clear divisions in the Government at the highest level.

## **12.21 Motion regarding John Biggs failing the Borough and austerity axing the Olympic Legacy**

Proposer: Councillor Maium Miah  
Seconded: Councillor Oliur Rahman

### **The Council Notes:**

Residents and Tower Hamlets Independent Group of councillors are disappointed to learn that the number of people playing a sport or taking another form of exercise at least once a week has fallen since the Olympic Games were held in east London.

Although participation in sport has risen since 2005, the Olympics were supposed to leave a legacy of greater participation in sport after the event – and it's not happening in East London. A particular worry is that the highest decline has been among ethnic minority communities (a drop of 1.4%) and least well-off sections of the community (a drop of 2.9%).

The Games cost £8.77 billion to stage – but already 8,700 fewer people are participating in sport or exercise at least once a week than were doing so in 2012. The main factors influencing whether people take exercise include whether they have facilities nearby and whether they can afford to use them. Sport England figures show that overall Council spending on local sports has fallen by over a quarter (£389 million) over the last five years – and this is thought to be contributing to the decline in participation rates.

Cllr Ohid Ahmed, Shadow Lead for Community Safety and Partnerships, said: “It is sad to see that the number of people participating in sports at a grassroots level has begun to fall. This is not the Olympic legacy we were hoping for – or that we were promised. With John Biggs creating uncertainty over the future of our youth clubs and other community centres, it's going to be difficult to keep our young people healthy.”

In relation to Tower Hamlets Council, the Trustees of the Tower Hamlets Youth Sport Foundation (THYSF) are lobbying the Members for support after the breakdown of their discussions with the Mayor and Council last month - after they first raised the need for Council action with the Mayor in August 2015.

John Biggs inherited over £400m reserves from the former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his administration which were put aside through robust and painstaking fiscal management to protect the residents and key local services from cuts and closures.

### **The Council Believes:**

The Trustees of the THYSF are lobbying for the support of our residents and elected representatives to help them save what is currently the most successful youth sport partnership in the country.

Our children are in danger of losing, as the article by Seb Coe in the Evening Standard (15 May 2017), circulated by THYSF to Members, shows the alarming deterioration in youth sport in our country as a whole, the final page of this shows how everything Lord Coe would wish to see available nationally is currently still in place in Tower Hamlets - for some of the most economically deprived youngsters in the UK. Not for much longer however, since the breakdown of our discussions with the Mayor and Council officers last month - after we first raised the need for Council action with the Mayor in August 2015 - now seems certain to result in the staff being made redundant and the organisation and its activities dismantled.

The email from THYSF, among other facts and information, stated that “For those of you unfamiliar with the organisation, the second attachment gives just a flavour of the range of activities and opportunities available to youngsters in Tower Hamlets right this minute. None of which is provided by or through the Council. Most of which will go if this organisation is allowed to go under.”

“For historical reasons (this all started with the national School Sports Partnerships scheme in 2005) the staff of THYSF are all employed by Langdon Park School (where I was the Headteacher for 21 years until 2013), but they did this on behalf of the Borough’s schools and by agreement with the Council. Langdon Park, having done an extraordinary job for Tower Hamlets for 12 years, now quite understandably needs to be relieved of this responsibility. Trustees of THYSF believe the obvious answer is for the staff to be adopted as a business unit in the Council’s sports department, which currently and by design focuses nearly all of its work on adult provision. The Mayor disagrees, and wants Trustees to take responsibility for employing the staff, something we are very clear we do not have the capacity to do.”

### **The Council Resolves:**

John Biggs should listen to THYSF, Tower Hamlets Independent Group, our young people and residents by transparently addressing the points raised herein.

John Biggs needs to act – beyond platitudes – and update the members and residents about the issues raised in this motion.