

## **APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (17 January 2018)**

### **9.12 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

Will the Mayor confirm that the council's Anti-Bribery Policy will, under his administration, "Rigorously investigate all instances of alleged bribery," and assist the police and other investigative authorities in all such investigations?

#### **Response from the Mayor**

The Council will not tolerate bribery of any sort and to that end we have robust and unequivocal anti-bribery policies and procedures. Any breach of our processes is, and will continue to be treated seriously and we will work with enforcement authorities and the police so that the full force of the law is brought to bear on people who have sought to gain by bribery.

### **9.13 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

The Mayor recently launched his new Apprenticeship Commitment. What progress has been made so far?

#### **Response from Councillor Joshua Peck**

The Mayor's Apprenticeship Scheme launched in November 2017 with the ambitious pledge to help broker 1,000 apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Team has already been in discussion with more than 100 employers and in the first six weeks over 100 new apprenticeships were created.

### **9.14 Question from Councillor Maium Miah**

There were two recent separate horrific acid attacks in Tower Hamlets on Wednesday 27th December within the space of just two hours – one in my ward, Canary Wharf, on the Isle of Dogs.

According to the Police and other reports, a 36-year-old white woman suffered serious life-changing burns to her leg and face. No ID on the attacker or why she was attacked was established. She is in hospital at the time of writing this question.

The 2nd attack between Glengall Close and Crossharbour DLR was on an Asian male by two white men. The police stated they had decent CCTV images of two White males aged 20 – 22 years old approximately. 5'10 tall.

Given that Tower Hamlets is the third worst London borough for acid attacks, will the Council do more and agree to Cllr Ohid Ahmed's call for the council to use its existing regulatory powers to immediately create a 'Tower Hamlets Acid Register' on a voluntary basis for shops and businesses to record who they sell 'acid' or 'dangerous liquids' to; and to ensure acid/potentially dangerous liquid is not sold to under 18s in the borough which is being used

as the weapon of choice in attacks on our innocent residents?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

I was appalled to hear about the acid attacks which took place over the Christmas period and our sympathies go to those individuals injured and their families involved.

The Mayor has called on the Government to do more to tighten up the sale of these substances and introduce tougher sentences. Rather than just wait for the Government to take action we took steps to protect residents.

In December the Mayor launched an Acid Charter for shopkeepers to sign up to, restricting the sale of these substances in our Borough. This encourages businesses to voluntarily restrict the sale of corrosive substances to over 18's and for staff to be trained. They will also agree to maintain a "Refusals Register" showing how they won't sell to certain individuals. The Borough Commander supports this Charter.

We will work with partners to tackle this problem and are pleased that where we led the way with the Charter, large retailers including supermarkets and large DIY stores are following. We now need the Government to tighten up the law on this to make it mandatory.

### **9.15 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah**

What impact will the Mayor's Acid Charter have in tackling acid attacks locally?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

The objective of the Mayor's Acid Charter is to restrict the supply of corrosive substances/acids to under 18's, ensure that retail staff are suitably trained and that proof of age is checked before purchase.

The result of the Charter has been to raise the issue within the community to try and ensure that the supply of acid is restricted and is used only for responsible purposes. There was considerable media interest in the initiative resulting in increased awareness, and the Mayor set out the steps the Council is taking to prevent acid attacks in the Borough along with our partners including the Police and called on Government to tighten up legislation.

The Charter has also placed pressure on central government to ensure that the current review that is being undertaken on the legislative requirements of the retailing of such products is done so in a timely manner. We will be rolling out stickers and posters for retailers who participate to display and raise awareness of the steps we are taking.

### **9.16 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah**

Given the impact on working families, mini-cab drivers and the borough's disabled and vulnerable will the Mayor now reverse his cut to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

### **Response from Councillor David Edgar**

The current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) was approved by Full Council in February last year and included continued support of up to 100% discount of residents' council tax liability. This means that those entitled to the maximum reduction will not have to pay a single penny of council tax.

Part of the rationale for changing the scheme was the introduction of Universal Credit which is being rolled out across the borough and has far greater consequences for our residents.

Where the changes have had an impact on specific groups such as self-employed residents and residents with disabled non-dependents we have responded by introducing a scheme to provide discretionary relief in cases of financial hardship.

The Mayor has also approved £500k per year to help those affected by Universal Credit and the changes to LCTRS to ensure that they receive support that improves their financial circumstances in the longer term.

The Council continues to be one of the few in the country that still offers up to 100% reduction in council tax for the lowest income households. During this year 19,115 households have received 100% reduction in their council tax totalling £18,816,998 and consequently these households do not have to pay any council tax. In total there are over 27,000 households receiving some form of discount. The total discount awarded is likely to be over £24.4 million.

### **9.17 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:**

How much S106 funding has the Council allocated since June 2015?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake**

Since June 2015, the Council has formally allocated £42m of S106 funding to over 80 projects via approved Project Initiation Documents.

There are multiple stages to 'allocating' S106 funding. When funding is received from a developer it is associated to the appropriate Service Area, e.g. a contribution towards education facilities is associated with the Education Department.

The relevant Service Area will then 'ring-fence' this funding for a particular project. Often this funding will need to be reserved and held until other S106

contributions are received and can be combined to allow the delivery of a project. E.g. the cost of the delivery of a primary school may require the use of contributions from more than 10 individual developments.

Then, when sufficient funding has been collected to deliver the project, the relevant Service Area will submit a Project Initiation Document which is assessed through the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Framework. If approved, funding will be formally allocated to the project.

### **9.18 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman**

Will the Mayor confirm the legal responsibilities and statutory duties of the council to report to the appropriate external authorities alleged criminal activity that is brought to the attention of the council, even when the activity has been undertaken by a perpetrator who is neither an employee, elected member or contractor to the council or an associated body of the council?

### **Response from the Mayor**

This is more properly a question for the Monitoring Officer. She has advised that the Council has certain specific responsibilities where it has a duty to report matters or consider reporting matters to appropriate agencies on various areas, for example:

- (1) Instances of relevant anti-social behaviour to the police
- (2) Suspicions of money laundering or terrorist financing to National Crime Agency
- (3) Fraud or cybercrime where the Council's business is part of a regulated sector report to for example to the professional body of accountants, solicitors and financial services firms
- (4) Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s which they identify in the course of their professional work must report the matter to the police
- (5) if the Council removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work such as looking after children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the Council must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service
- (6) Subject to the application of the Council's bribery prevention procedures, the Council can chose to report an incident of bribery to the prosecution authorities. If the Council becomes aware of such a matter, it will firstly consider whether it is a matter for the Council to investigate and take action and if it is not then the matter would be referred to the appropriate agency to investigate.

The above examples are not exhaustive. For clarity, an allegation of an attempt to bribe a 3rd party by another 3rd party would not immediately cause a referral to the police. Any allegation about members of the council would however have to be properly and independently investigated.

### **9.19 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member for Environmental Services instruct officers to carry out a consultation with residents in Cadogan Terrace and the Fairfield Conservation Area about extending the Controlled Parking Zone restrictions in those mini-zones to deal with the parking stress on weekends and early evenings?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

Officers last year issued an informal survey of residents and businesses in the B2 & B4 zones on the CPZ restrictions. Of those who responded in zone B2, in which the Fairfield Conservation Area lies, 47% of those who responded said they were satisfied with the current parking restrictions, as opposed to 40% who were not satisfied, with 13% not expressing a preference. While we recognise there may be a case for localised changes where residents support them, the case for change across the mini-zone appears less strong.

I understand that in some specific streets local considerations might mean amendments to the policy may be necessary and welcomed therefore I have asked officers to conduct a survey of the areas you have raised to better determine resident views on parking on Cadogan Terrace and in the Fairfield Conservation Area.

### **9.20 Question from Councillor Harun Miah**

I am concerned about the current consultation process in relation to traffic and road safety measures leading to a lack of clarity for residents, businesses and stakeholders. In relation to the urgent Shadwell ward traffic and road safety situation, I ask the Mayor if he will swiftly support improvement works of the types I list below as examples:

1. Martha St & Watney St junction - will put in place a 'No Entry' system on Martha Street - vehicles will be unable to turn into Martha Street from Watney Street;
2. Dellow Street, Lowood Street and Bewley Street - will implement a one-way system on the Dellow Street - Lowood Street - Bewley Street loop;
3. Tarling Street and Sutton Street junction - will implement a no entry system on Tarling Street, which means vehicles will not be able to turn into Tarling Street from Sutton Street; and

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

I can confirm that these three schemes were included in the recent traffic management consultation which is taking place 27 November to 21 January.

A leaflet detailing these schemes was distributed to all households in the immediate vicinity of these schemes who would be affected by the restricted movements.

A more detailed plan was available on the consultation website which was publicised in that letter and on the Council's website and social media.

The schemes were proposed as a solution to address the many traffic problems raised with local Councillors, the Mayor and officers.

Subject to the outcome of this public consultation being supportive and any issues raised being addressed, these schemes will proceed to be implemented.

As of 2 January, the consultation responses to each of these schemes were overwhelmingly positive.

I am proud to say it is this administration and Mayor Biggs acting to make the lives of the local residents of Shadwell easier. The residents asked and we acted.

#### **9.21 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald**

We have lovely new tennis courts in St John's Park which are proving very popular with my residents. However the final piece of the work has never been completed. Can the mayor or cabinet member tell us when the floodlights for the tennis courts in St John's Park will be working?

#### **Response from Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE**

Unfortunately, there has been substantial delay to make the floodlights operational. This is deeply disappointing.

There are two elements of the St. John's floodlight works which are currently outstanding;

1. The mobile application needed to operate the floodlights needs to be installed and made operational
2. The floodlight electrical works need to be certified.

I will be pressing officers to resolve these delays as quickly as possible and will update you as soon as there is a definitive date.

#### **9.22 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed**

Does the Mayor believe that the current community safety plan he has in place addresses the increasing knife crime and acid attacks we have seen in 2017?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

The Community Safety Partnership has prioritised violent crime. The Plan sets out actions to address emerging issues around the use of knives and corrosive substances in the borough. The Partnership has strengthened its understanding and operational responses to both of these serious issues. A dedicated Partnership Action Plan is in place to address knife crime and weapon enabled use and is managed under the governance of the community safety partnership.

### **9.23 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill**

Will the Mayor indicate what public consultation took place before deciding to lock in St Katharine's and Wapping and parts of Limehouse wards for another day this year when the Big Half Marathon takes place on Sunday 4th March 2018 resulting in closing off access to many roads and explain why with less than two months to go before the event there was still no detailed road closure information yet available to residents?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The Big Half is a new event, organised by London Marathon Events Ltd, and features a half marathon (13.1 miles) and other events held on closed roads in London including here in Tower Hamlets.

Road closures are being managed by Transport for London and formal consultation on these closures are dealt with by them. This borough will be consulted on the proposed Traffic Management Order and we have made enquiries with Transport for London on their progress and await their comments.

The Big Half website provides a map of the proposed route but no detailed information on road closures has yet been posted.

We are continuing to make representations that while Tower Hamlets is an attractive venue for these kinds of event, it needs to be balanced against the impact on residents.

### **9.24 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam**

Will the Mayor inform the council how many murders have taken place in the borough for each year since 2010 until now?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

According to the Met's datastore website there have been 817 murders across London from April 2010 until November 2017.

In terms of annual figures for murders in Tower Hamlets, the following are available for financial years (April – March) from April 2010 until November

2017:

2010/11 - 5

2011/12 - 5

2012/13 - 3

2013/14 - 5

2014/15 - 3

2015/16 - 4

2016/17 - 5

2017/18 - 6

### **9.25 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan**

Will the Mayor commit to supporting campaigners of the Advocacy Support system for carers and families of vulnerable adults which ran at John Smith's Children's Centre.

### **Response from Councillor Denise Jones**

The Parent Carers and Advisory Service was provided as part of the Community Learning Disability Service until July of this year. The learning disability service is an integrated health and social care team.

Following a CCG led procurement exercise, the East London Foundation Trust have implemented changes to the service and no longer provide the PCCA function, but new roles and functions have been put in place to support parents and carers. These changes were made following a consultation exercise.

Meeting the needs of carers remains a crucial part of providing the right support to people with a learning disability. The new model ensures that all staff are trained and competent to work with people from all local communities and there is a new full time interpreter post and cultural advisor post within the team. In addition there will be specialist support for carers in managing individuals who have challenging behaviour and identifying strategies to manage this. All professional staff are required to assess the needs of carers, as part of the Care Act responsibilities, as well as making appropriate arrangements for meeting those needs.

The Mothers' Group used to run at the Children's Centre, but the centre is no longer able to make the space available. There is now a weekly drop in service at the Community Learning Disability Service on the Mile End Hospital site whilst an alternative space for this group is identified and the service continues to work with the mothers to review how the group can be supported in the future.

### **9.26 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

Is the Mayor aware that the St James footbridge over the entrance to the Rotherhithe tunnel connecting Limehouse and Shadwell wards has been

owned by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets since 2003 but as yet no council department has taken responsibility for maintenance, resulting in the lighting on it has falling into disrepair despite a number of muggings close by?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The bridge in question has not come to the attention of the Police or Community Safety for a number of years now and the single incident which occurred in December is related to a series of robberies in the Limehouse area which both the Council and Police are aware of and are doing all they can to catch the suspects.

These robberies are a priority for the police and there was a public meeting with senior Council and Police officials on Tuesday 9th January 2017 in the Limehouse Ward to address concerns. Both Police and council officers have increased patrols in the area and a number of deployable cameras have been put up including one looking at the bridge.

The bridge is lit by four lights, 2 on land at either end, all of which have been replaced with bright LED lighting and are monitored by the Council's Street Lighting contractor. There is no space to accommodate lighting on the bridge itself.

The structural condition of the bridge is regularly inspected. The structural maintenance requirements of the bridge are an unrelated issue which the Council is seeking to identify funding for from its capital reserves. As it is not classed as public highway, highway maintenance funds cannot therefore be legitimately allocated to such work. However I will ask officers to look again at this bridge to ensure it is up to standard.

### **9.27 Question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim**

Will the Mayor inform if the Labour members serving on the council's planning committees have been asked by the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Police if they were approached by a fixer with the alleged £2m bribe or, If this has not been done, will they do so now?

### **Response from the Mayor**

The Council received advice from a leading QC that it should not pursue internal investigation of the allegations to avoid potential prejudice to any criminal investigation. The National Crime Agency is considering the matter and has declined to comment at this stage.

I would not be privy to any such investigation but I would expect all members of the committee to be treated equally.

### **9.28 Question from Councillor Shah Alam**

Will the Mayor ensure that genuine consultation takes place regarding the

proposals for traffic calming measures put forward for Shadwell?

### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali**

The current consultation on traffic calming in Shadwell has been as thorough, detailed and transparent as possible.

The consultation took place 27 November to 21 January. A leaflet detailing these schemes was distributed to all households in the immediate vicinity of these schemes who would be affected by the restricted movements.

A more detailed plan is available from the consultation website which was publicised in that letter and on the Council's website and social media.

Subject to the outcome of this public consultation being supportive and any issues raised being addressed, these schemes will proceed to be implemented.

### **9.29 Question from Councillor Kibria Choudhury**

Will the Mayor confirm or deny if one of his Labour Cllrs arranged an introductory meeting between the fixer, who claimed, as set out by a Sunday Times journalist, to pay a £2m bribe to 4 councillors (who a lay person would assume were Labour given the fixer's allegiances), and a developer who wanted to build one of Britain's tallest skyscrapers in Canary Wharf, Tower Hamlets?

### **Response from the Mayor**

As you well know this matter is currently under investigation by the police following a full and independent investigation by the Monitoring Officer. It would be inappropriate to comment further other than to say I entirely refute the assertion that a lay person should assume any 'fixers' referred to were councillors, let alone Labour councillors. If Cllr Choudhury has evidence to suggest as much, he should pass this to the police, if not he should desist from making such claims until the investigation is complete and the full facts are known.

### **9.30 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani**

Will the Mayor inform the council how much did it cost the taxpayers to procure the external consultant, EY, and a leading QC in relation to seeking further advice (in addition to Bribery, Fraud, Best Value and other relevant policies, legislation and acts governing the Council's conduct in such circumstances which were already in place and must be followed) about the £2m bribery allegations before the council was forced to approach the police?

### **Response from the Mayor**

Following the Monitoring Officer's enquiries into allegations raised with the

Council she decided to seek competitive quotations from three specialist external providers of forensic accounting and investigatory services. Ernst & Young (EY) were appointed. These actions were carried out, and the associated costs approved, by the Monitoring Officer in her independent role and did not involve the Mayor or his office.

On the advice of EY following further investigation and material being made available to them, the Monitoring Officer sought advice on the matter from Michael Bowes QC.

The matter and the full investigation report was then passed to the police for assessment and if necessary further investigation.

The combined cost of EY and counsel was under £45,000

### **9.31 Question from Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah**

Given the seriously negative impact of the Mayor John Biggs's new Council Tax Reduction scheme, particularly on the self-employed and vulnerable residents in my ward as well others in London Borough of Tower Hamlets, will the Mayor now admit that he misled Tower Hamlets when he stated that the council was still retaining 100% of the original scheme and any such claims should not be allowed by the Monitoring Officer on the factual accuracy ground?

### **Response from Councillor David Edgar**

The Mayor did not mislead anybody.

The current Local Council Tax Reduction scheme was approved by Full Council in February last year and included continued support of up to 100% discount of resident's council tax liability. This means that those entitled to the maximum reduction will not have to pay any council tax.

This contrasts with local schemes adopted by many other local authorities where the maximum reduction does not cover 100% of a residents council tax liability and even those residents who get maximum reduction will still be expected to pay some council tax.

Despite the funding challenges resulting from the cut in government funding for council tax benefit in 2013, the council continues to give a council discount to over 27,000 residents with over 19,000 getting the maximum reduction totalling over £18million. The council is projecting to spend over £24.4 million on council tax reduction in the current financial year.

### **9.32 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed**

How many rape cases have been reported in the borough for each year since 2010 until now?

## **Response from Councillor Asma Begum**

According to the Met datastore, there have been 36,485 reported rapes in London from April 2010 until November 2017.

Across the whole of London there has been a significant increase in the number of rapes over this period. The Met total (all boroughs) has seen a 96.1% increase when comparing full financial years 2010/11 with 2016/17. Part of this rise is likely to be down to an increase in reporting with more victims having the confidence to come forward and report these crimes to the police.

In terms of annual figures for reported rapes in Tower Hamlets, the following are available for financial years (April – March) from April 2010 until November 2017:

2010/11 - 119  
2011/12 - 135  
2012/13 - 124  
2013/14 - 155  
2014/15 - 192  
2015/16 - 230  
2016/17 - 268