

# Mayor's Report to Council 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

## Key Events/Announcements

**Remembrance Day:** I attended the Remembrance Day Service at the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill. I also joined members, officers, the Deputy Lieutenant and members of the Crane Society to observe a two minute silence at the Town Hall.

**London Borough of Culture:** We have launched our bid to be London Borough of Culture, and we need everyone to get behind our bid. Tower Hamlets offers the best of London in one borough and this is a fantastic opportunity to showcase our borough. I was very pleased to hear that Dame Helen Mirren and Sir Ian McKellen have also backed our bid.

We are determined to win the bid, but we also want to use this opportunity to position our borough as an outward-looking place, and to ensure that residents benefit from all that Tower Hamlets has to offer.

**Old Flo:** Henry Moore's 'Draped Seated Woman' is finally back home, where she belongs. She is an important part of our cultural heritage. One of the first decisions I made after my election was to reverse the former mayor's decision to sell the sculpture and she is now safely back in the borough at a secure and accessible home in Cabot Square. Whilst I would have loved to see Old Flo returned to her old home in Stepney her considerable value means we've had to find her a safe and secure home for her for the next five years in Canary Wharf. My hope is after that she can move even closer into our community, to the new Civic Centre in Whitechapel when it is complete.

Old Flo is playing an important part in our bid to be London Borough of Culture.

**Mayor's Apprenticeship Programme:** Last week I launched this new programme with a pledge to help create 1,000 apprenticeships. This will build on the success of WorkPath. Creating greater opportunities for our young people is one of my main priorities as Mayor and while we have record employment levels of 72% in the Borough, for too many young people getting on-the-job training is still a barrier to getting a job. My Apprenticeship Programme will help to change that so young people can also benefit from the enormous growth in our borough.

**Budget 2017:** The Government today announces their Budget. Although the details were not certain at the time of writing, the Government has given no signals that it intends to properly fund our public services. We will closely examine what the Budget means for local government, but their proposed measures to tackle the housing crisis are feeble. We need proper action.

Ahead of the Budget I have written to the Chancellor to call for fair police funding. Crime nationally has risen by 13% and although I have invested a

multi-million pound funding package in our local police service, bringing the total number of council-funded officers up to 39, we simply cannot replace every police officer that the Government cuts. I have also joined other Labour London Council leaders in calling for further powers for councils to tackle the housing crisis. The savings imposed on the Metropolitan Police have a very real impact. And mitigating those cuts is the key reason why we have reintroduced funded police officers, although our budget pressures means that this is currently funded from reserves and longer term funding would mean savings elsewhere.

**LBTH Budget:** Work on our Budget proposals continues. The draft Budget will go to Cabinet in January 2018. A lack of proper funding from central Government remains a serious issue for councils across the UK, and Tower Hamlets is no exception. Independent Councillors argue as if there was a 'magic money tree' and no savings were needed but these Government cuts tell another story. Will they ever learn.

**Children's Services:** We have made steady progress and it remains a major focus. We are preparing for the next Ofsted visit. I visited the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) earlier this month to see the frontline day-to-day work there, and have developed my understanding of the whole service and the challenges it faces. I have continued to work with my Lead Member, Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs, who is doing an excellent job, in offering political leadership and challenge to the improvement process and we will be investing further in next year's Budget.

A written Direction has been issued, setting out the agreed processes and accountabilities we are following in the light of the Ofsted report. This is a part of the agreed intervention process, and not a separate intervention as has been suggested by some. We have developed our approach to improvement positively, and this is taking a good deal of our time. This contrasts with the inattentiveness of the previous administration to this and many, many other issues where leadership was needed.

**Partnership Board:** I led a meeting of the Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership Executive Group this week, to discuss how we can deliver our shared vision for the future of Tower Hamlets. In the New Year there will be a Partnership Summit to bring together representatives of our whole community to discuss our borough's collective vision. It is clear that this partnership is key to our future, as an outward looking and collaborative authority

**Planning:** I am disappointed that the Development committee rejected a recent application for affordable housing and I am disappointed that opposition members are not willing to support much-needed affordable housing in our borough. Perhaps when the election is over they will behave more responsibly again.

**Policing:** Last month I announced a multi-million pound investment to bring the total number of council-funded officers up to 39. These officers will play an important part in community policing, but we as a council cannot replace every police officer that the Government scraps.

Members and residents will also be aware of the recent Metropolitan Police announcement that the police will close the front counters at Limehouse and

Brick Lane police stations, as a result of cuts to their funding. To be clear, this was not a Council decision and I opposed the decision. I responded to the official Met consultation and I hope opposition groups provided similarly robust consultation responses.

I have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, ahead of the Budget, to call for fair funding for our police.

Members will be aware of the launch of the London-wide anti-knife crime campaign. We wholeheartedly support this campaign and will be working closely with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.

The Home Secretary has also announced new measures to tackle acid attacks, including introducing an age restriction and making possession of acid without good reason an offence. This is a good first step, but I have called for much stricter rules and I hope the Government strengthens their proposals.

**£119 million for affordable housing:** This is on the agenda for tonight's meeting – I have proposed £119m funding for affordable homes. We will discuss this fully during the meeting, but this includes:

- the purchase of additional dwellings for use as temporary accommodation; and
- the purchase of new housing, provided by developers as part of their planning obligations.

This is a major investment in affordable housing for our residents. I look forward to this issue being thoroughly scrutinised at Overview & Scrutiny tomorrow evening. But I urge members to support the increase in the authorised limit as this will enable us to then progress schemes that will, in my view, improve housing conditions for local residents.

As regards the purchase of dwellings for temporary accommodation, while such property may not be new, it is of a good and habitable standard and is in the borough. This is advantageous when compared to the other options for housing for homeless families, both in terms of value for money, and also in that it allows a greater number of those in temporary accommodation to be housed in the Borough, maintaining local networks for school, work, family and so on. And it is of a superior standard to much of the temporary housing which London Boroughs currently fight over to meet the demand for temporary homes in the Capital, and beyond.

**Brexit:** I asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following this year's budget-making to look at Brexit. This formed part of their work programme and a short scrutiny has I understand been set up to look at the impact of Brexit on our borough.

I am also intending to work with businesses and partners, including in the Tower Hamlets Partnership, to examine the impacts of Brexit on our borough, the steps we might take to meet or mitigate these and the opportunities that will, more positively, arise from Brexit in the entrepreneurial melting pot that is Tower Hamlets. It's vital that we take a proactive approach to this, especially given the uncertainty – a direct result of the Government's seeming inability to

progress its negotiations – and given the inexorable approach of a Brexit, hard or soft.

**Fire Safety:** We continue our work to address fire safety issues. We are focussing initially on eight higher risk high-rise blocks in Tower Hamlets and are working hard to address issues identified. I have agreed an additional £4.5m to remove the external cladding from two blocks in Limehouse. I am pleased to report that we have agreed to publish, and in many cases, after checks, published, Fire Risk Assessments for all THH blocks. We are also lobbying the Government for the proper resources to implement recommendations that come from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

**Air Quality and Climate Change Strategy:** This new strategy was agreed at the last Cabinet meeting. This 5-year plan sets out our vision of how we can tackle air pollution and climate change at a local level. Poor air quality isn't something the Council can fix on our own but we have an important role to play and it's vital that we take what action we can.

**Old Ford:** I firmly share the anxieties of residents and councillors over Clarion's attempts to close Old Ford Housing Association. There is a motion on this issue, and we are very clear that we oppose any such moves, and that Old Ford must not be absorbed without the consent of residents. Our leverage over this is however limited.

**Council Procedure Rules:** There is a report this evening from the Constitutional Working Party and the General Purposes Committee. Members had an opportunity to feed into the proposals at these meetings. The proposals were agreed by the GPC, and now come to Council for final approval.

**School funding:** I recently met with the Deputy Regional Schools Commissioner to discuss school funding in our borough. I'm very clear that the Government's proposed new school funding formula is unfair and will only take money away from the areas that need it the most. A meeting with the RSC is now due.

**Cabinet and Mayoral Decisions:** Cabinet has met once since my last report and considered a number of matters, with decisions published on the Council's website. In addition, a Mayoral Decision was also signed on:

- 10 Nov 2017 - 176 - Acquisition of Affordable Homes

### **Engagements and Meetings: 20 September to 21 November 2017**

(The following is extracted from my diary. A small number of meetings may have been rearranged. Other, less formal, meetings will have been added)

- 20 September 2017
  - Apprentice's Induction Week meeting
  - Victoria Cross Paving Stones Project
  - Civic Centre Project Board meeting
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Full Council
- 21 September 2017
  - LGA Leaders Programme 2017

- 22 September 2017
  - LGA Leaders Programme 2017
- 23 September 2017
  - Neighbourhood Refresh Campaign With Street Audit
  - Somali Community History and Heritage Project
  - London Region Reception
  - Labour Party Conference: Canary Wharf Group Dinner
- 24 September 2017
  - The London Dinner at Labour Party Conference
- 25 September 2017
  - Corporate Induction
  - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership Meeting
- 26 September 2017
  - Meeting with officers re. Isle of Dogs OAPF and DIF study
  - Meeting with officers and Poplar Harca
  - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake and Chief Executive of Poplar Harca
  - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
  - Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum and Cllr John Pierce
  - St Paul's Way Surgery
  - Ask the Mayor Event – Harford Centre
- 27 September 2017
  - Meeting with Cllr Pierce
  - CLT meeting
  - TV interview re. EastFerry Homes
  - Poplar Harca Neighbourhood Centre update
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Strategic Forward Planning meeting
  - Visit to Swanlea School
  - Civic Centre Project Board
  - Sonali Othith Dhaka Reception event
- 28 September 2017
  - LLDC Board Meeting
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Governance
  - Mayor's Surgery
- 29 September 2017
  - City Wood & Lanrick Road meeting
  - Meeting with Cllr Dave Chesterton
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Service
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Adult Service
  - Durga Puja event
  - Sanaton Association event
- 1 October 2017
  - Bengali Cultural Conference
- 2 October 2017

- Meeting with Jim Fitzpatrick MP
- Meeting with Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs
- Meeting with LocateEd
- Meeting with officers re. Education Resources
- Meeting with Cllr Abdul C. Mukit and officers re. Youth Services
- Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
- Meeting with Chief Executive
- Meeting with Chief Executive and Chief Executive of Barts Health
- Meeting with Cllr Amina Ali
- Ethics and Probity Seminar
- 3 October 2017
  - School Funding Campaign meeting
  - Meeting with Cllr Denise Jones
  - Meeting with officers re. Tower Hamlets Youth Sport Foundation
  - Meeting with officers re. Drug Dealing and ASB
  - Quintet Meeting
  - Site visit to Trinity Buoy Wharf
  - Grant Determination Sub-committee Pre-agenda meeting
  - Finance & Performance Quarterly Monitoring Meeting
  - Meeting with officers re. Local Authority Day Nurseries
  - Annual Hennessy Lecture & Dinner at Queen Mary University London
- 4 October 2017
  - Meeting with Strategic Director
  - Meeting with President and Principle of Queen Mary University London
  - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
  - Meeting with Lettings Service Manager
  - Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
  - Meeting with Cllr Shafiqul Hoque
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Meeting with Cllr Oliur Rahman
- 5 October 2017
  - Meeting with officers re. Customer Services Next Steps
  - Interview for Divisional Director; Sport, Leisure and Culture
  - Meeting with Divisional Director; Strategy, Policy and Partnership
  - Walkabout with Police
  - Mayor's Surgery
- 7 October 2017
  - Bangladesh Fashion Week London
- 9 October 2017
  - Meeting with resident
  - Bangladesh Italian Family Welfare Association
  - Pre-Infrastructure Delivery Board Briefing
  - Fashion Event in Speakers Parlour
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
  - Interview with Estate Gazette
  - Meeting with Chief Executive

- Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Services
  - Children's Services Improvement Board
- 10 October 2017
  - London Councils Labour Group Meeting
  - London Councils - Congress of Leaders
  - Central London Employment and Skills Board
  - BBC London Interview
  - Quad Meeting
  - LCCI and London Borough Leaders' Dinner
- 11 October 2017
  - Meeting with Clarion Housing
  - Adult Learning Partnership Board/ Launch of Adult Learning Disability Strategy event
  - Meeting with Friends of Island Gardens re. Calders Wharf
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Resources
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Jim Fitzpatrick event
  - Home Visit
- 12 October 2017
  - Walkabout - Lowder House, Wapping
  - Meeting with Betar Bangla
  - Meeting with The RTK Ltd
  - Channel S Interview
  - Civic Centre Project Board
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Communications and Marketing
  - Mayor's Surgery
- 13 October 2017
  - Charity Football 5 A-Side Tournament
- 14 October 2017
  - Governors' Conference 2017
  - Street Audit
  - Visit to Tower Hamlets Burial Ground
- 15 October 2017
  - UKBCCI Annual Business & Entrepreneur Excellence Awards and Gala Dinner 2017
- 16 October 2017
  - Interviews for Divisional Director of Youth & Commissioning
  - Meeting with Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Meeting with officers re. Tower Hamlets Youth Sports Foundation
- 17 October 2017
  - Meeting with officers re. Bow primary briefing
  - National Hate Crime Photocall
  - Mayoral meeting re AEG major events programme in Victoria Park
  - Mulberry Housing Board meeting

- Meeting with Cllr Amina Ali
  - Tower Hamlets Air Quality Strategy Meeting
  - Meeting with Cllr Khales Uddin Ahmed
- 18 October 2017
  - Gateway 2.0 Review meeting
  - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
  - Local Democracy Week
  - Grand Opening of the New Olga Primary School
  - LGA Conference
- 19 October 2017
  - LGA Leaders Programme 2017
- 20 October 2017
  - LGA Leaders Programme 2017
- 21 October 2017
  - Street Audit
  - Collingwood TRA AGM
- 23 October 2017
  - Meeting with Strategic Director
  - Meeting with Bangladesh High Commissioner and Prime Minister Economic Adviser
  - Meeting with Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs
  - Meeting with Cllr Dave Chesterton
- 24 October 2017
  - Interview with Evening Standard
  - Central London Forward Board
  - LLDC Board Away Day
  - Quintet Meeting
  - Grants Determination Sub-committee
  - Old Flo Installation
- 25 October 2017
  - Old Flo Installation Press/Photocall
  - Meeting with Chief Executive, Divisional Director: Planning and Canary Wharf re. LBTH Local Plan
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Strategic Forward Planning meeting
  - Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 26 October 2017
  - Planning Meeting
  - Meeting with officers re. THH Leasehold Extensions
  - Meeting with Cllr Candida Ronald
  - Mayor's Housing meeting
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Services
  - Mayor's Surgery
- 28 October 2017
  - Excel Tutors GCSE and A level award ceremony
- 29 October 2017
  - Neighbours in Poplar event
- 30 October 2017
  - Meeting with Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs



- Steel Warriors Launch of First Park Made from Recycled Knives
- Meeting with The Partnership and Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs
- Youth Services meeting
- Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
- Meeting with Whitechapel Bell Foundry
- Brewster and Maltings TRA Meeting
- British Bangladesh Minicab Drivers Association Eid Reunion
- 31 October 2017
  - Meeting with Osmani Trust
  - Meeting with Second Home
  - Prevent Strategy Discussion
- 1 November 2017
  - Meeting with Belgrave
  - Channel S Interview Preparation
  - Meeting with Rooms of our Own
  - Freedom of the Borough Panel Ad-Hoc Panel
  - Meeting with Deputy Mayor of London for Transport
  - Lovebox Meeting
  - Visit from Youth Leadership Group
  - Channel S Interview
- 2 November 2017
  - Meeting with Cllr John Pierce
  - Meeting with resident
  - Meeting with officer re. GLL Contract Extensions
  - Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum
  - Meeting on London Borough of Culture
  - Meeting with officers re. Aldgate to City Hall March
  - Berner TRA Pre-meeting
  - Meeting with officers re. Permit Transfer Scheme
  - Interview with Evening Standard
  - Home Visit
  - Mayor's Surgery
  - Berner TRA Meeting
- 3 November 2017
  - Local Media Briefing
  - Keep our Street Safe - Torchlight Procession
- 4 November 2017
  - Street Audit
  - Meeting with Cllr David Edgar
- 5 November 2017
  - Panchakhasa Haragovinda High School (Beanibazar) Centenary Celebration and Reunion
  - Victoria Park Firework Display
  - 100 years anniversary celebration ceremony and re-union of Beanibazar PHG model High School
- 6 November 2017
  - Meeting with Jim Fitzpatrick MP
  - Visit to Bow Foodbank
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community
  - Meeting with Cllr Joshua Peck

- Meeting with Corporate Director, Place
  - Pre-Infrastructure Delivery Board meeting
  - Living Wage Announcement
  - Tower Hamlets U15 District Football V Chiltern & South Bucks
- 7 November 2017
  - Poppy Appeal
  - Meeting with Divisional Director, Strategic Director
  - Victoria Park Commercial Events Tender
- 8 November 2017
  - Meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner re Aspirations Academies Trust
  - Meeting with East London Mosque
  - Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
  - Meet with CSE Survivor
  - Meeting with a resident
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Meeting with Alan Wood
  - Mayor's Apprenticeship Programme Launch Event
- 9 November 2017
  - Chief Executive Appraisal
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Services
  - MASH Visit
  - London Borough of Culture meeting
  - Home Visit
  - Mayor's Surgery
  - Who's Who event
- 10 November 2017
  - Tower Hamlets 2 Minutes Silence
  - Visit to Mosque on British Estate
- 12 November 2017
  - Remembrance Day (Master Mariners)
- 13 November 2017
  - Meeting with Divisional Director for Strategy, Policy and Partnership
  - Meeting with Whitechapel Gallery
  - Meeting with Cllr Abdul C Mukit
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Governance & Monitoring Officer
  - Meeting with Corporate Director, Resources
  - Somali task Force Training and Employment Event
- 14 November 2017
  - Meeting with Mayor of London's Mayoral Director, Political and Public Affairs
  - Tower Hamlets Wheelers meeting
  - Meeting with Divisional Director, Community Safety and Cllr Asma Begum
  - Grant Determination Sub-committee Pre-agenda meeting
  - Tower Hamlets Partnership Board
  - Quad Meeting
  - Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum

- Ask the Mayor event, St Hilda's Community Centre
  - Meeting with resident
- 15 November 2017
  - THCH Governance
  - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
  - Meeting with Cllr Denise Jones
  - Isle of Dog Working Group
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Meeting with resident re. ASB at Robin Hood Gardens
  - Queen Mary University, London Guest Night
- 16 November 2017
  - Interview with ITV
  - Interview with Channel S
  - Mayor's Surgery
  - Old Flo Community Events
- 17 November 2017
  - Charity Dinner for Interfaith Week
- 20 November 2017
  - Pre-meeting with officers re. Enderby Wharf
  - Meeting with Leader of Greenwich Council Cllr Denise Hyland
  - Meeting with Family Support & Protection (FSP) Student Cohort
  - Children's Services Improvement Board
  - Meeting with Chief Executive
  - Meeting with THCVS
  - Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership Executive Group Meeting
- 21 November 2017
  - Fire Safety briefing
  - Planning Meeting
  - Quarterly Portfolio Reviews with Cllr Amina Ali
  - Somali Senior Citizen Club
  - Meeting with Chief Executive of Poplar Harca
  - Civic Centre Project Board Pre-meeting
  - Outstanding Contribution to the Community Awards (OSCCAs)