

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (19th SEPTEMBER 2018)

9.11 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze

Can the Mayor please provide an update on the delivery of affordable and social housing in the borough?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

Tower Hamlets continues to deliver the highest numbers of new homes overall and affordable housing in particular, not only compared with other London boroughs but on a national basis.

In the year Mayor John Biggs was first elected the number of affordable homes built jumped from 610 the year before to 1061 – a 74% increase. The following year it increased further to 1066 and then in 2017/18 926 more were delivered. All of these were far in excess of anything delivered under the previous mayor.

There is a strong pipeline of schemes in development and the Council itself is bringing forward plans for a further 1,000 new council homes to be provided over the next four years, whilst identifying opportunities for a further 1,000 new council homes in the following four years.

The council will shortly be bidding to the Greater London Authority for grant funding and additional borrowing headroom to finance this programme.

9.12 Question from Councillor Abdul Mukit

What steps are being taken by the Council to prevent ASB problems in the Weavers area?

Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities:

We are very aware that people have serious concerns about drug use and ASB in that part of our borough and we share those concerns. Drugs are ruining too many lives across the capital, and while keeping the streets safe is mainly a police matter collectively our public bodies can do better at tackling this problem.

As a council we have invested to fund additional police officers for our borough

Weavers Ward is one of the 4 Wards that form the Neighbourhood Pilot area. A dedicated Neighbourhood Manager has been in post since 16 March 2018 to help better coordinate the council and other agencies' responses to ASB and other issues in this area, although there was recently a change in personnel.

The feedback provided by residents across the neighbourhood management area is being investigated to look at how we can take these suggestions forward. These will be the subject of future focus groups with residents to progress. We also aim to set up a Neighbourhood Agreement which will seek to develop an agreement with residents which will identify and set out agreed priorities for a local area.

Permanent cameras are currently installed in 17 locations around Weavers Ward, including Ravenscroft Street, Columbia Road and Hackney Road. Operation Continuum, the joint council and police operation against drug dealing in our borough has also led to multiple arrests in the Weavers area which we hope will continue to help disrupt drug dealers operating in the area.

There is clearly a lot more to be done to tackle the scourge of crime and ASB in this area and the Mayor and I consider this a significant priority.

9.13 Question from Councillor James King

When will the council be making environmental improvements to tackle anti-social behaviour at the southern end of Three Colt Street in Limehouse?

Response of Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Environment:

Residents of Three Colt Street have highlighted a continuous concern of anti-social behaviour in the area and we are working in close partnership with the local Police Limehouse Safer Neighbour Team to alleviate the impact on local residents and businesses.

A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) under s59-75 of the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 is being implemented to tackle this issue in a number of areas in the borough. This includes Three Colt Street.

The PSPO gives the police and council officers additional powers to take enforcement action and in the last 2 months, Tower Hamlets Enforcement officers (THEOs) have used these powers to give three ASB Warnings, issue one Community Protection Notice Warning and one Fixed Penalty Notice.

Tackling ASB and reducing its impact on victims is a major priority and the council will continue to work proactively with the police and our residents to address this issue.

9.14 Question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury

With the recent approval of planning application of Chrisp Street Market Regeneration, will Mayor John Biggs use his best endeavours to canvass options of increasing the quota for social housing?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

The regeneration scheme at Chrisp Street has planning permission for over 35% affordable housing. Within the planning agreement there will be a viability assessment process that enables the level of affordable housing to be increased if the financial viability of the scheme improves sufficiently during the delivery period.

The Mayor and officers will also work with the developer to look at how the proportion of affordable housing can be increased on the scheme beyond the viability process.

We are proud that our borough is delivering more affordable housing than anywhere in the country and if there are viable ways for us to further increase the amount of affordable housing at Chrisp Street we will explore them.

9.15 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

Can Mayor Biggs explain what is his definition of building council homes as promised in his election manifesto?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

The Mayor's manifesto commitment to deliver 1,000 new council homes, pledged at the previous election, is now well underway. This does not necessarily require each one to be built by the council, although a lot of them will be.

This is being delivered through infill developments on existing estates, new developments, and bringing homes back under council ownership.

This was an ambitious target but despite opposition councillors opposing applications (i.e. Locksley) for council homes we are making good progress and delivering for families on the waiting list.

In the next four years we will start the delivery of an additional 1,000 new council homes on top of these.

As agreed following the Affordability Commission set up by Mayor Biggs, our aim for rent levels in new council housing is to include a 50:50 mix of social rents and Tower Hamlets Living Rents. This can save some families up to £6,000 compared to when Cllr Khan was Cabinet Member for Housing.

We are campaigning for the Government to properly fund councils to build new council homes, with grant and borrowing capacity and to retain right to buy receipts. We will keep lobbying for more resources and more flexibility.