

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 27TH JANUARY 2010

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by Members of the Council for response by Members of the Executive at the Council meeting on Wednesday 27th January 2010.
2. Questions are limited to one per Member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the Member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted.
3. Oral responses are time limited to one minute. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to one minute each.
4. There is a time limit of thirty minutes for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any question not answered within this time will be dealt with by way of a written response. The Mayor will decide the time allocated to each question.
5. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

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

7.1 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Is the Lead Member aware of the crime and environmental problems caused by the continuing problem of derelict scaffolded properties on Ropery Street, including the recent theft of lead from the roofs of homes adjacent to the scaffolded properties? Can he assure me that the properties are being disposed of and will be made fully safe within the next few months and will be brought back into use very soon?

7.2 Question from Councillor Tim Archer to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Joshua Peck

What is the current budget and personnel count for the Council's communications department?

7.3 Question from Councillor Alibor Choudhury to the Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families, Councillor Abdul Asad

Can the Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families give us an outline of how GCSE results have improved over the last four years, whether there has been any comparable improvement in other boroughs whose GCSE results were below par four years ago and what plans there are to ensure that the improvement continues?

7.4 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Would the Lead Member agree with me that it is extremely regrettable that the London Fire Brigade has effectively withdrawn its lift rescue service from Tower Hamlets residents trapped in lifts, that the claim that this lift rescue service was excessively costly is based on a false premise and that the Council will now have to bear additional costs of providing an emergency lift rescue service, and will the Lead Member also agree that the replacement Council lift rescue service is inadequate to the needs of Tower Hamlets residents in only having a target rescue time of two hours maximum, especially in a borough with such a high number of high rise blocks and so many lifts which have lacked adequate investment to keep them in good working order, and that a two hour entrapment in a lift will be extremely distressing especially to older residents and children?

7.5 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman to the Lead Member for Regeneration, Localisation and Community Partnerships, Councillor Rania Khan

Can the Lead Member give us a breakdown by ward of how last year's participatory budgeting money was spent, how well she feels the projects on which it was spent have delivered value for money and whether there are any plans to extend the range of services on offer for this year's YouDecide events?

7.6 Question from Councillor Tim O'Flaherty to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Could the Lead Member advise me how many households were affected by rubbish, recycling and bulk waste removals being missed or late during the bad weather in December 2009 and January 2010?

7.7 Question from Councillor Clair Hawkins to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Can the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener tell us what lessons were learned from the heavy snow experienced in London in early 2009 and how these lessons have been applied to the recent cold snap?

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

What steps is the Council taking to prevent further damage to the memorial sculpture in the Memorial Garden, Wapping High Street and to prevent the ongoing anti-social behaviour in the gardens?

7.9 Question from Councillor Waiseul Islam to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

How much social housing has the Council delivered for overcrowded and homeless people in the last four years?

7.10 Question from Councillor Dulal Uddin to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

Would the Lead Member agree with me that it is a matter of extreme regret that Poplar Baths remains unused, derelict and deteriorating after so many years, that the disuse of this facility is a major loss to the community and could the Lead Member say why this important facility has lain derelict and

disused for so long and what plans currently exist to bring it back into use as a facility of the community in Poplar and Limehouse?

7.11 Question from Councillor Muhammad Abdullah Salique to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Can the Lead Member for Resources and Performance tell us which economic group is most likely to be adversely affected by the bus fare rises agreed by the Tory Mayor of London?

7.12 Question from Councillor Stephanie Eaton to the Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families, Councillor Abdul Asad

Could the Lead Member advise me how many posts are currently being recruited in Children's Social Care; and the average and highest caseload of officers working in Children's Social Care?

7.13 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Joshua Peck

Can the Deputy Leader tell us what is being done to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council and how this compares to other inner London local authorities?

7.14 Question from Councillor David Snowden to the Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Who in the Council is responsible for approving advertising expenditure for job adverts in local and national newspapers?

7.15 Question from Councillor Mamun Rashid to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Joshua Peck

Would the Lead Member agree with me that it is entirely reprehensible that political leaders and representatives such as the MP for Poplar and Canning Town Jim Fitzpatrick, should have attacked the principle that it is the bride and groom and their respective families who should have the right to determine the form in which their wedding celebrations and ceremonies should take place, that it is particularly regrettable that this attack was focused on Muslim weddings in particular, and that this attack can only fuel Islamophobia and undermine community cohesion and would the Lead Member in particular join with me in opposing any proposal, such as that made by Jim Fitzpatrick, that legislation should be introduced to outlaw the right of bride and groom to have men and women seated separately at wedding ceremonies and celebrations?

7.16 Question from Councillor Abdul Matin to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

What is the level of confidence in the Police in Tower Hamlets and how does this compare with other London Boroughs?

7.17 Question from Councillor Peter Golds to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

What steps are the Council taking, apart from erecting hoardings, to bring the Poplar Baths buildings back into the public realm?

7.18 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Dr. Anwara Ali

Would the Lead Member agree with me that in the answer to my question on patients rights tabled at the last full Council meeting it was quite bizarre that it was claimed that there was no record of patients being removed from GP lists in the borough except by accident and would the Lead Member accept that there are examples of patients being removed from GP lists at the Limehouse Practice, Stepney Health Clinic and the Spitalfields Practice where those patients all have legitimate grievances over their removal and that despite the fact the Council has no direct responsibility for the operation of GP practices it is entirely appropriate for the Council to take a position on the lack of formal rights and processes for patients to appeal against their removal from GP practice lists, where these removals are based on false accusations, and that the Government should legislate to provide patients with formal rights and processes with which to appeal against their removal from GP lists and the consequent loss of medical support?

7.19 Question from Councillor Azizur Rahman Khan to the Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families, Councillor Abdul Asad

What is being done to address the concerns identified in the latest Ofsted report about the low educational achievement of white children at age 16 in the Borough's schools?

7.20 Question from Councillor Rupert Eckhardt to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

What contingency plans have been made and what budget will be available to deal with the damage caused to roads in the borough by the recent cold weather?

7.21 Question from Councillor Harun Miah to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Would the Lead Member join with me in expressing profound regret at the failure of the recent Copenhagen conference on climate change to agree tough and binding limits on greenhouse emissions and agree with me that this failure increases the responsibility on the government and local councils to do all in their power to limit energy use in order to limit greenhouse emissions in Britain, that energy consumption in Tower Hamlets would be very significantly reduced if a massive programme of investment to insulate and double glaze all properties across the borough and that this would also contribute to reducing fuel poverty and that it remains a matter of concern that so many lights and other forms of energy consumption are left on in council buildings when offices and electrical equipment are not being used?

7.22 Question from Councillor Ahmed Hussain to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

How many days' supply of grit and salt were held in store on January 1st 2010 and how often was grit and salt sold to other authorities by Tower Hamlets Council?

7.23 Question from Councillor Abdul Munim to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Would the Lead Member agree with me that leaseholders with registered social landlords have many legitimate grievances concerning value for money in their service charges and especially in relation to major works service charges which can be excessive because of a lack of investment in housing estates in the past and because of the lack of democratic accountability of registered social landlords, and that leaseholders therefore should have the right to organise themselves in the best ways they see fit in order to defend their legitimate interests and that legitimate leaseholder organisations may be either at a level below that of the estate, as on the Exmouth estate, or cross-borough as with East End Homes, well as estate-wide, and would the Lead Member agree to encourage registered social landlords to recognise all legitimate leaseholder organisations as partners with whom they should consult?

7.24 Question from Councillor Philip Briscoe to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

What plans are in place for Tower Hamlets to join the Boris Johnson-led scheme on roadwork permits?

7.25 Question from Councillor Shirley Houghton to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

I refer to question 7.22 of the last Council meeting asked about meeting start times and specifically what consultation (if any) was undertaken with the Members and the public to conclude that moving start times forward from 7.30pm would not impede their involvement in Council business.

Your response failed to disclose what consultation had been undertaken with the public before moving meetings to stop participation of working residents so I assume the answer is none.

Your response confirmed that the start time of Development Committee was agreed to be 7.30pm by full Council on 22 April 2009, and it was on that basis that I agreed to join the committee.

In respect of my question regarding what consultation had been undertaken with Members you stated that Members of the Development Committee had then expressed concerns that a 7.30 start was too late to hear all applications in one evening. This is not true. As a Member I was not consulted, the agenda for the first meeting was issued with a revised start time with no consultation whatsoever, indeed a very surprised Cllr Helal Abbas arrived at 7.25 for the first meeting, bemused that not only had it started but was also just closing.

Your original response stated "the Chair agreed" to move the start time.

Now, in respect of the Development Committee, please answer the question asked on December 9:

Who was it that the "the Chair agreed" with to move the meeting?;

Which Members were consulted before the meeting time was moved to 6.30?;

If any Members were consulted, why were all committee members not consulted?;

If any Members were consulted please provide a copy of the consultation note and the responses;

What public consultation was undertaken?; and

Given Development Committee meetings usually last for no longer than 1 hour, please explain why it would be difficult to hear all applications in one evening if the meetings started at 7.30, as they should, to allow working Councillors and residents time to arrive to participate?