

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING

6.1 Question from Ms Meredoc McMinn:

There is a serious problem with dangerous driving in Tower Hamlets. I have been communicating about this with Tower Hamlets and the police since the beginning of 2013. The police say it is the responsibility of Tower Hamlets, and the Borough says it is the responsibility of the police. I pay taxes to Tower Hamlets and would like them to deal with the problem. I also think that police resources should be used more effectively. I would like to know, in order to make communities safer from dangerous driving, if something could be done, specifically:

- Speed cameras, especially on Commercial Rd and around Stepney Green.
- Pinch points on all residential roads, including Senrab and Bromley Streets.
- If Senrab and Bromley St could also be made one way.
- An active programme in colleges to stop young dangerous drivers.

Response from Mayor John Biggs

A 20 mph Experimental Traffic Order was introduced in April 2015 seeking to address the large number of minor collisions which take place throughout the borough. TfL's LIP funding is also used to review the worst collision hotspots in the borough (measured in terms of serious or fatal collisions) and where feasible, to fund remedial measures to improve junction design and traffic management.

As part of our ongoing monitoring of road safety issues, reviews of four existing 20mph zones are currently being undertaken. These reviews will determine if further design modifications are needed in some areas to increase self-enforcement. These measures could include introduction of one-way streets or pinch points for instance.

The Council is also working with the Local Police to increase the level of traffic enforcement on the borough's roads. Whilst the Council can enforce a limited number of civil "moving traffic offences" by camera enforcement (e.g. banned right turns, bus lane abuse and blocking yellow box junctions), only the Police have the ability to stop traffic for the purposes of enforcing traffic regulations. Consequently, a programme of enforcement actions is being programmed with the Police targeted at those areas with the highest levels of complaints about anti-social racing and speeding. This will be complemented by a series of coordinated Community Speed Watch initiatives linked to local schools and colleges.

There are government restrictions on where speed cameras can be introduced which are based on collision records and few sites in the borough qualify. However, speed indicator devices which flash when speed limits are exceeded have been introduced in a number of areas and have been found to make a difference to driver behaviour.

Ms McMinn may also be interested to note that young driver education and awareness is offered to schools and colleges to try to encourage more responsible driver behaviour.

8.10 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

There has been much criticism of the housing bill, especially the extension of right to buy and the forced sell-off of social housing stock. But the “pay to stay” scheme will have a huge impact on tenants especially in Tower Hamlets, how will the Mayor address this scheme so that tenants are protected from facing eviction?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Housing and Planning Bill is currently making its way through Parliament and is at the Report Stage in the House of Commons.

Chapter 4 Section 79 sets out that ‘The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about the levels of rent that a registered provider of social housing must charge a high income tenant of social housing in England,

This is widely expected to impose a requirement for tenants in a household earning over £40k in London (and £30k elsewhere) to pay a higher rent in line with the regulatory requirements.

Until the final details in the Bill are agreed and regulations issued by the Secretary of State, it will not be possible to predict how much impact this duty will have on existing Council tenants as the Council does not currently collect details on household income for tenancy management purposes. At this point it is therefore not possible to consider what mitigating actions, if any will be required to ensure tenants can be protected from eviction.

The Pay to Stay proposal was subject to a public consultation by the Government and the Mayor responded robustly to the scheme stating that ‘I do not agree with the Pay to Stay policy which I believe is flawed, particularly in relation to the London Housing market and the impact on hard working families in LB Tower Hamlets’.

The response went on to make several points concerning the flawed notion of tenants receiving subsidy, proposed entry levels, the impact on mixed and balanced communities, the cost of the scheme to the Council and the operation of the scheme in relation to Housing benefit entitlement.

A copy of the consultation response is available to all Members from the Mayor's office.

8.11 Question from Councillor John Pierce

Can the lead member give us an update on the performance of the youth service?

Response from Councillor Rachael Saunders

The youth service sets annual targets for a range of Key Performance Indicators – contacts, participants and outcomes. These targets are set at service level, Local Area Partnership (LAP) level, for individual centres and for organisations funded through service level agreements and grants.

At midyear the service is meeting over half of its contact related targets and approximately half of its targets specific to participants and accredited outcomes. There can be some delay in recording particularly with certified and accredited outcomes and a clearer picture of end of year performance is always established at Quarter 3 for that reason.

Certified and Recorded outcome performance is below where they should be at Quarter 2 as a result of grant recipients dropping out and the short term staff impacts of ongoing service reform and restructuring. Performance meetings were held with area managers and LAP co-ordinators in November / December to coordinate the collation and review of performance data to the end of Quarter 3 (December 2015) and a similar exercise is taking place with third party organisations. The additional quarter's figures should demonstrate a significantly improved picture from which we may more accurately determine likely year end outturn.

The service is reviewing the performance indicators in the coming quarter as part of the wider service review. It will be in a position to present new forecasts for the year 2015 – 16 against the existing indicators in February.

8.12 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

As many London local authorities issue on the spot fines for spitting and have raised considerable sums of revenue. Will the Mayor explain why has the council not taken full advantage of these powers and used them more extensively in a bid to stamp out the disgusting habit of spitting in public?

Response from Councillor Shiria Khatun

Spitting in public places is carries significant health risks and is not acceptable behaviour. To effect a change in behaviour of people who do spit requires a mixture of educational activities, reinforced by appropriate enforcement.

Public spitting was decriminalised in 1993 and is therefore not a criminal offence under the Public Health Act. The Council does have the power to take enforcement action against witnessed spitting in public under our powers to deal with litter and waste by way of issuing the offender with a fixed penalty notice (FPN). The FPN fine amount is £80, however if payment is made within the first 10 days there is a discounted amount of £50.

For a FPN to be issued uniformed Tower Hamlet Enforcement Officers have to witness the offence of spitting and in 2015 issued 14 FPNs for spitting.

As the offence of littering/waste (spitting) has to be witnessed by a uniformed THEO this clearly acts as a deterrent as individuals rarely undertake this behaviour in front of officers. THEOs will always issue a FPN when spitting in public is witnessed by officers and pro-active patrols are undertaken within identified hot-spot areas.

In the longer term an educational approach is almost certainly more effective than heavy enforcement as a way of changing behaviour. We are working with our health partners to raise awareness of the anti-social nature and the public health risks of spitting.

8.13 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam:

Can the Cabinet Member for culture outline the vision, strategy, activities and action plan for her brief for 2016/17 and beyond. In particular, when can we expect to see the draft of Council's overarching 'cultural strategy', and what is the envisaged outcome or objective of the Somali Taskforce?

Response from Councillor Asma Begum

The Council supports an exciting programme of activity for residents catering for all those interested in arts and culture, participating in sports and developing their learning through the programme of works at the Ideas Stores. It continues to work with the third sector and producing its own events programme. It's much too long a programme of activities for me to respond fully here but I am happy to send Councillor Alam details if he wishes.

There is no longer any statutory requirement on Councils to produce a Cultural Strategy. When these were a statutory requirement Councils always struggled to limit and therefore focus the extent and meaning of their cultural activities. These strategies were therefore seen by local authorities and central government as being too diffuse to add value and too unwieldy. Government abandoned the requirement. The Council is working on a range of more detailed strategies that drive the development and delivery of cultural services. These include an Open Green Spaces Strategy, Sports Facilities Strategy, Sports Development Strategy and the Idea Store Strategy. These reviews are all are timetabled to be completed in 2016.

While it does not fall within my portfolio I can confirm that the purpose of the Somali Task Force is to review the needs and issues faced by the Somali

community in Tower Hamlets and to identify how these needs can be better addressed through local services. The Task Force seeks to address inequality in outcomes for Somali residents across:

- health and wellbeing,
- provision for young people,
- educational attainment and employment and
- housing and welfare reform

8.14 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Will the Mayor announce who within the council is responsible for overseeing the operation of the heliport at Vanguard on Westferry Road?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for regulating helicopter flights and is tasked by the Department for Transport to investigate and prosecute breaches of aviation safety rules and some aviation related consumer protection and health and safety requirements.

Council responsibilities are limited to matters of planning enforcement and noise management, but Environmental Health services can only take action under the Environmental Protection Act if the matter relates to vibration or if the helicopter is not operating “normally” on take-off and landing (e.g. if there is a fault with the helicopter and it is generating more noise than it would under normal circumstances).

8.15 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

In addition to social housing, affordability and rent controls – social cleansing and gentrification have become a serious issue in Tower Hamlets, what is Mayor Biggs doing in his affordability commission to ensure local people are not forced out, priced out or bussed out of the Borough? How many families or people on the housing waiting list have been moved out of the borough and/or placed in bed and breakfast, since June 2010 until December 2015, with monthly breakdown for each year?

Response from Councillor Rachel Blake

Mayor Biggs has established a Cabinet Commission to investigate the delivery of affordable housing in Tower Hamlets. The Commission is scheduled to meet three times between December 2015 and February 2016.

One of its aims is to determine what rent levels are affordable and to try to find a way to apply these to future housing developments. Its findings can also be used to test the affordability of current rents charged by the Council, RP's and Private Landlords.

The Commission will also consider current models for low cost Home

Ownership.

The Commission will consider the impact of the proposals set out in the 2015 Housing and Planning Bill on affordability in the borough, particularly the Starter Homes initiatives and Pay to Stay for high income social tenants and the Chancellor's autumn budget statement.

To date the Commission has met twice. The first meeting was an introductory session with the panel receiving presentations on the LBTH housing market, contributions from the panel from their expert areas and the views of both council and private tenants. This week's meeting and the next one will consider in more detail how the Council should respond to the challenges set by the expensive local housing market and provision in the Housing and Planning Bill.

With regard to the number of homeless households placed out of borough and in temporary accommodation, these figures are published quarterly on the Council's website.

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/housing/housing_options_service/housing_and_homelessness_public.aspx

8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

In 2013/14 the Council estimated that its aggregate infrastructure cost to be over approximately £530 million and that CIL would only cover 40% of that amount leaving a significant shortfall. Does the Mayor have an update on those numbers and if the shortfall cannot be filled what impact that will that have on the Local Plan currently being consulted on and the scale of development?

Response from Councillor Rachel Blake

The 2013/14 estimate referred to in the question currently remains the most up to date. Officers are working on renewing the evidence base regarding infrastructure need, future demand, project funding and delivery.

At the Cabinet meeting of the 5th of January 2016, the Mayor approved the implementation of a new Infrastructure Delivery Framework (IDF). This set up a new decision-making structure relating to the expenditure of CIL and S106 on infrastructure projects and will be implemented in spring 2016. The renewed evidence base forms part of the IDF.

The IDF evidence base will also support the formation of the Local Plan ensuring consistency in approach. The IDF provides a transparent process for prioritising the funding of the most needed infrastructure projects. This will help ensure that infrastructure that is essential to the new Local Plan can be delivered. Officers will continue to work on locating and securing other funding sources to address any future funding gap.

8.17 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad

Ambulance services in Tower Hamlets have failed to meet monthly target response times. Recently, the CQC recommended the London Ambulance Service be placed into special measures after an inspection resulted in an overall rating of 'inadequate'. What has Mayor Biggs actually done, through CCGs, H&WB or otherwise, as local Mayor with responsibility of public health - to ensure people of Tower Hamlets can have a reasonable ambulance service sent to them in decent time when they are hit with a crisis or tragedy?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

The CQC undertook an inspection of the London Ambulance Trust in November 2015 and rated the Trust 'inadequate overall' reflecting concerns particularly around staffing, leadership, performance governance and risk management. The inspectors did note efforts to progress from the previous inspection in 2014 but also noted the decline in response times since March 2014. Tower Hamlets performance is slightly better than elsewhere.

Professor Sir Mike Richards, Chief Inspector of Hospitals, said the LAS needed extra support to address poor performance on response times, whilst the Commission also called for improvements on safety, effectiveness, and leadership

Tower Hamlets CCG receives weekly dashboard reports on local performance of services. Performance is reviewed at local monthly meetings. Issues emerging are then fed into a London wide contract group.

The local NHS, through the CCG, is therefore well aware of the issue and is working locally and London wide to improve services to local residents. The CCG, as members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, will continue to ensure that the Board is aware of any issues where the Board could support performance improvements.

The Mayor in his capacity as Greater London Assembly Member for East London has been involved in the city wide response to this situation and has criticised the Mayor of London for not supporting the service better, describing the crisis facing our ambulance service as "the culmination of years of underfunding and understaffing."

8.18 Question from Councillor Shah Alam:

Does the Mayor agree that it will be far more effective if the Somali Taskforce was chaired by the only Somali Cllr in the Council?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

The taskforce is chaired by the Statutory Deputy Mayor (Cllr Sirajul Islam) as

a Cabinet Member. Cllr Amina Ali is the Vice Chair. Cllrs Islam and Ali work closely together with a wider reference group drawn from the Somali community.

The taskforce has been working hard to identify how the needs of the Somali community can be better addressed, including in relation to health, provision for young people and employment.

8.19 Question from Councillor Kibria Choudhury

Can the Mayor provide exact figures as to how much money will the Council save by cutting the East End Life (EEL) to a quarterly publication, as according to his own response, it brought income of around £1.1m and the cost of weekly production is £1.2m and the Council still needs to have Communications strategy, team and tools to engage with the residents? In addition, in his response the Mayor stated that no loss of jobs until the end of financial year, how many jobs will be lost after the year end? and lastly, following the cut to EEL, Can the Mayor guarantee that all statutory and advertisements will not go to East London Advertiser (ELA) and explain what % might or will go to ELA - which has been extraordinarily generous in its praise for Mayor Biggs recently?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

As reported at the last full council meeting, effective communication is important and has a cost. The Council will need to continue to invest in its communications activity to ensure it effectively meets the needs of residents.

Officers have been tasked with developing an ambitious communications strategy which builds on our digital strategy and makes use of the full range of communications channels available to a modern local authority.

As part of this work, officers are tasked with identifying the exact resources, in terms of staff and finance, to deliver this strategy.

The Mayor confirms that our communications strategy and the service should meet the needs of our residents in ways which offer value for money and are cost effective. Future staffing needs will be assessed in the light of the agreed strategy and any changes in staffing will be achieved by application of the Council's agreed procedures.

As part of this planning work, the council will need to ensure it meets its legal requirements for the publication of statutory notices. In the short term the majority of these notices can still be accommodated in East End Life as a fortnightly publication. For the longer term officers are undertaking a procurement exercise to ensure that the council complies with its statutory duties in a cost effective manner once East End Life ceases to be published fortnightly. This will require the consideration of all options for local publication of statutory notices, including the East London Advertiser.

8.20 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Will the Mayor agree to put in place 'Local Stakeholders Forum' as proposed by the Independent Group for the implementation phase of the new Civic Centre in Whitechapel?

Response from Councillor Joshua Peck

The Civic Centre project will underpin the transformation of the council's services in to the future. It is an important ingredient in the broader regeneration aims of the Whitechapel Vision. External stakeholders in the form of local residents and local businesses will be fully engaged in a timely manner, both formally and informally in the delivery of the strategy.

The existing Whitechapel Strategic Partnerships Board has been in place since 2014 and meets quarterly. Through this forum, we will engage with strategic stakeholders essential to the successful delivery of the Whitechapel Vision. This will provide the umbrella to initiate more detailed project engagement as appropriate.

Given the nature of the local economy small business are a vital stakeholder group. The Mayor has already met with many individual businesses and representative groups and this dialogue will be an important part of the development going forward.

As a significant build project, the specific brief and design solution for the Civic Centre project will be consulted formally as part of the planning process. This will ensure all key stakeholders are appropriately engaged throughout the process - continuing from the extensive consultation which has already taken part as part of the Whitechapel Vision Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document sign off.

8.21 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Following my previous Council question and response from the Mayor on this matter, is the Mayor now in a position to tell members and residents whether the Council will be better off or worse off, and by how much, under the new business rate retention proposal announced by the Chancellor a few months ago, if not when will he be in such a position?

Response from Councillor David Edgar

A number of announcements have been made in relation to the future of business rates:

- 1) Revaluation in 2017/18
- 2) 100% retention by 2019/20
- 3) Business Rates base reset 2019/20.

Exactly how these changes will be enacted and the impact on the council's finances cannot be fully determined yet.

As a top up authority we have been able to retain our share of all growth and benefitted from the top up. We can reasonably assume that this will change and as a tariff authority, we would be expected to pay a proportion of the growth back to the government.

However, the current assumption in the absence of precise detail of future funding arrangements is that continued growth in our base, if it continues at its current trajectory, would compensate for the tariff and we may not be substantially worse off by the changes.

Our retained BR income was £105.6m in 2014/15 and £118m in 2015/16. Forecasts for 2016/17 are being reviewed and are expected to be in the region of £120m-£124m.

8.22 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Please provide a monthly breakdown of statistics, in numbers as well as in percentage terms, relating to reported Islamophobic and anti-Semitic hate crimes in Tower Hamlets since 2011 until December 2015?

Response from Councillor Shiria Khatun

Figures are available for the recorded incidents of Hate Crime Offences from January 2012 to September 2015.

Historically the data supplied by the Police did not break down the offences into specific categories such as Islamophobic or anti-Semitic. Since September of 2015, reports have been requested for more detail of the type of hate crime and the NPFH report covers September 2015 to December 2015 capturing this detail.

In order to fully respond with the detail requested above, an enquiry has been made to the CSU Police to arrange for a report to be run via their Intel system. It will take approximately a month to obtain the report capturing the information requested. Arrangements can be made for it to be circulated when it is received.



CSP - Hate Crime
Offences & SDs.pdf



NPFH Stats 28-09-15
- 03-01-16.xls