


Non-Executive Report of the: Council 23 March 2016	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Director, Law, Probity and Governance	Classification: Unrestricted
Questions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services.
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions that were submitted by Members of the Council for response by the Mayor, the Speaker or the Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee at the Council meeting on Wednesday 23 March 2016.
2. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.2 as amended, questions relating to Executive functions and decisions taken by the Mayor are put to the Mayor unless he delegates such a decision to another Member, who will therefore be responsible for answering the question. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will answer questions directed to the Mayor.
3. Council Procedure Rule 12.5 provides for an answer to take the form of a written answer circulated to the questioner, a reference to a published work or a direct oral answer.
4. There is a time limit of thirty minutes at the Council meeting for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any questions not put within this time are dealt with by way of written responses.
5. This document includes the written response to each question submitted, whether or not put orally at the meeting. Where a question was put orally at the meeting, this document also includes a summary of any supplementary question and the response to this.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

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

8.1 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed

Could the Mayor please update Council on the situation with Poplar HARCA and parking charges?

8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

What is Mayor John Biggs' view and stance on academies and free schools?

8.3 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

School admission statistics show that many children applying for secondary school are being rejected from schools close to their home and being allocated to schools that are a great distance from their homes – what does the Lead Member think this says about the effect of Tory education policies on our Borough?

8.4 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Does the Mayor have any comments regarding a recruitment consultancy engaged by the council, under the previous administration, which failed to disclose important information concerning a candidate that could have affected the decision as to whether to make an appointment? It should be noted that this failure resulted in a course of events that cost Tower Hamlets Council thousands of pounds of taxpayers money, therefore will the Mayor assure the council that this will not occur again?

8.5 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the number of families housed in B&Bs for over 6 weeks at the end of February 2016 – and can a figure for the same period in 2015 be provided for comparison?

8.6 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Will the Mayor agree to look into and personally intervene, wherever possible, to ensure that the terrible traffic chaos and gridlock faced by the residents of Isle of Dogs in general but particularly between 5 & 7 March are never repeated. Will he confirm that robust and proactive measures are in place by the Council which has the responsibility to oversee agencies, contractors and developers to ensure that the essential needs of the local residents and local businesses - their ability to travel/move and go about their daily life without unnecessary, non-compliant blockages and obstructions – are paramount in planning and risk assessment of such activities, issuing of permits, deployment of enforcement action together with consultation and communication with the residents?

8.7 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald

Recently released figures for school admissions show that parents on the Isle of Dogs are still finding difficulty in getting their children into the schools of their choice. We know that the population of the Island is set to increase greatly over the next few years. Can the Mayor tell us what he is doing to ensure that the infrastructure comes before the developments?

8.8 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

How many petrol stations have been lost in the borough in the last five years or are likely to be removed as part of re-development in the Borough? What is the expected growth in vehicles in new developments over the next few years as not all developments are 100% car free. Does the Council have any plans to encourage on-street electric car re-charging points?

8.9 Question from Councillor Andrew Cregan

What assessment has the Council/Mayor made of the impact of Brexit on the Council/Borough?

8.10 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Genuine affordable housing, social cleansing and gentrification have become a serious issue in Tower Hamlets, when does the Mayor plan to present a report to the Council to update all members on any progress made by the commission and does he not think that it will be useful to ensure that at least one opposition member per group is included as an official member in the commission and/or subsequent implementation or monitoring of its recommendations to ensure cross-party involvement in such a critical issue?

8.11 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

Can the lead member please update the council on progress being made against the recommendations in the LSCB report 'Troubled Lives Tragic Consequences' which was commissioned following a number of serious violent offences committed by young people in the borough in 2013 and 2014?

8.12 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Will the Mayor please provide the Council with an update on the progress of the Governance Review Working Group?

8.13 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member for Environment Services set out the action that has been taken so far by LBTH and the Environment Agency to stop the alleged fly-tipping of industrial waste at 616 Wick Lane?

8.14 Question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim

We welcome the fact that the administration under Mayor John Biggs has been forced to continue the Boisakhi Mela **for this year only**. We note that the Council has pledged to fund £25,000 to support the event this year. Could the Mayor clarify if his pledge of £25,000 support by the Council be in addition to the actions and activities stipulated in the Council's decision making report (item 8 on page 7(3), of 8th March 2016 or not, and how many people are expected to attend the Mela this year?

8.15 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

Can the Lead Member for Housing advise me why residents of St Andrew's Development are no longer allowed to load and unload on that site?

8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor expedite the replacement of the showers in the Millwall Park changing rooms and provide and provide users, which local football, cricket, and rugby clubs, with a clear delivery date? The showers have not been functioning since properly since November 2014, although the various users pay for the privilege of using a non-functioning facility.

8.17 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton

What does the Mayor plan to do about the traffic chaos on the Island? On 27/28 February people were stuck in hour-long traffic jams getting on and off the Island and if the current level of new developments continues, this is likely to become a regular occurrence. Boris's is undertaking a secretive strategic planning exercise on the Island; the Opportunity Area Planning Framework. Boris refuses to come clean with residents about his plans for even more massive developments on the Island and the impact these will have on Island roads.

8.18 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad

If correctly implemented, the Whitechapel Vision will result in thousands of new homes and jobs. Can the lead member for strategic development update us on how many schemes have been submitted for planning, how many are upcoming, how many homes and jobs they will lead to and when the strategic development committee can expect to have the chance to make a decision on these projects?

8.19 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

According to Council's own budget reports - including impact assessments - as published and presented in January and February 2016 to the Cabinet and full Council, can you please confirm how many total staff were stated therein to be made redundant as a result of budget cuts?

8.20 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

Would the Mayor take the second opportunity to respond to my question at January Council which he failed to address in his written response to me, the very simple queries are: what is the exact savings achieved by closing down and/or making East End Life (EEL) quarterly, on what date or in which month is the EEL being scrapped by the Mayor as he stated at the full council and lastly how many staff will lose or will be at the risk of losing their jobs (whose current roles significantly depend upon the existence of the paper), as a result of EEL being scrapped, after the year end? I'd be grateful for clearer and transparent answers as the Mayor often claims that he likes to give?

8.21 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

What was the rate and targets of recycling in the borough for each year since 2010/11 until 2015/16 and what is the target and forecast for 2016/17?

8.22 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

How many staff in total were made redundant (please indicate if it was voluntary redundancy or compulsory redundancy) by the Council in each budget year, as per budget proposals agreed by budget Council meetings for the financial years in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17? Please provide breakdown by title, salary band and with a relevant copy of the information with clearly identified salary range for each post?

8.23 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Could the Mayor/Cabinet member responsible for housing and welfare provide the information and details, as follows:

- Please provide the numbers of residents since June 2015, who have been a) sent outside Tower Hamlets to be housed b) where are they housed in terms of type of accommodation c) how many have been placed in the Bed and Breakfast?
- What was the Council's housing waiting lists in June 2015 and at the end of February 2016.

I'd be very grateful if the Mayor could ask the relevant department to provide the specific information requested instead of a link to some obscure information on websites. Thank you.

8.24 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

How many meetings of the Mayor's Somali Taskforce have taken place since its inception and on what dates and venue? And given its remit and stated objectives, how many meetings were attended by the relevant Cabinet Members responsible for: culture, health and wellbeing, provision for young people, educational attainment and employment - since their appointment?

8.25 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

How many Tower Hamlets Partnership Police Officers did the Council have each year since 2009 until May 2015 and what was the official overall crime rate for each year? How many Partnership Police Officers will there be from May 2016 onwards in Tower Hamlets?

8.26 Question from Councillor Shahed Ali

Can the procedure for dealing with members enquiries be clarified please?

It seems at the moment that members enquiries made by opposition members are awaiting months and still not in receipt of their relevant responses. My understanding is that a response should be expected within 10 working days, or at the very least, an interim response. This reflects very badly upon the relationship we build with members of the public.

Furthermore, can a list be provided of the number of members enquiries received by each councillor since May 2014, with figures to illustrate how many were responded within the stated 10 working days, and how many were delayed responses, indicating timeframes i.e. 2 weeks late, 2 months late etc.