

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2019

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Farouque Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Sufia Alam	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Puru Miah
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Mohammed Pappu
Councillor Kevin Brady	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Dipa Das	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Danny Hassell	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Andrew Wood

**THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR VICTORIA OBAZE IN
THE CHAIR**

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Victoria Obaze in the Chair

The Speaker of the Council reported that since the previous Council meeting in September, she had participated in a variety of engagements. These included:

- The London in Bloom Awards, where Tower Hamlets received a number of awards.
- Black History Month events - including attending the opening of the Nollywood Film Festival and holding a charity dinner.

- National Democracy week events to highlight the importance of democracy and what it means.
- A sea cadet event commemorating the Battle of Trafalgar followed by the Annual Civic Service in Westminster Abbey.
- Participating in Remembrance Services and fundraising activities for the Poppy Appeal.
- A meeting with the Princess Royal, Princess Anne at a lunch to mark the Corporation of Trinity House links with the City of London.
- Meeting with the Duchess of Cornwall on her visit to Mulberry School for Girls.
- A range of other events, including the Costermongers' Harvest Festival and parade and a charity cycle ride for the 2021 census.

Looking ahead, the Speaker drew attention to her forthcoming Charity Ball on Wednesday 4th December 2019, and looked forward to visiting schools in the Borough.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Mufeedah Bustin
- Councillor James King
- Councillor Ehtasham Haque
- Councillor Kyrsten Perry
- Councillor Eve McQuillian
- Councillor Dan Tomlinson

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor John Pierce.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The following Councillors declared a Non - Disclosable Pecuniary interest that the Council has decided should be registered

- Councillor Asma Begum - agenda item 8.1, Member Question regarding the London City Airport. This was on the basis that Councillor Begum was an Authority appointed Member of the London City Airport Consultative Committee.
- Councillor Asma Islam - agenda item 8.1, Member Question regarding the London City Airport. This was on the basis that Councillor Islam was a Trustee of the London City Airport Fund
- Councillor Bex White agenda item 8.1, Member Question regarding the London City Airport. This was on the basis that she lived under the flight path of the airport.

Following a request from a large number of Members who had interests in agenda item 11.1 (Motion regarding restoring Fairness to the Leaseholder

System) the Monitoring Officer agreed to grant a dispensation to Councillors with a leaseholder Interest in respect of the Item, under Section C, Paragraph 32 of the Code of Conduct for Members.

As a result of this, Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item did not need to declare this and would be able to stay in the meeting room, participate in the discussion and vote on the item

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 18 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

On behalf of Chief Executive, the Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Community, Denise Radley made a number of announcements.

With great regret, she reported the sad passing of Andy Scott, the Council's Head of Economic Development. His funeral took place yesterday.

Turning to staffing matters, she was pleased to welcome to the Council, Michael Rourke - as the new Divisional Director, Property and Major Programmes.

She was also pleased to report that the Council had been shortlisted for:

- A number of Local Government Chronical Awards covering: the Council's Air Quality Action Plan, care services, the Exploitation Team, the Communities Driving Change programme, the Public Health Asthma Partnership and communications for Children's Services
- An award for Communications Team of the year.

It was also reported that the Commination Team recently won a Government Communication Service award for their Summer Activities Campaign.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Save Our Youth Centre

Geneva Blissett addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He advised of a new initiative to deliver street based activities in the Bow West area to ensure the continued availability of youth services, following the decommissioning of the provider for the Youth Centre

He also advised that the Council is currently carrying out a review of youth services, with the longer term aim of providing more detached youth work as well as youth hubs.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Children and Culture, for a written response within 28 days.

5.2 Petition regarding Trees for Mile End

Nicholas Caulkett addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Environment then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

He reported that the Council recognised the importance of tree planting in helping address climate change. A tree survey had been carried out by the Council recently. This revealed that some of the areas identify in the petition would require additional work.

He also noted that the Liveable Streets programme contained measures to improve the look and feel of the Borough's streets. He welcomed the petitioners involvement in the next phase of the programme.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

5.3 Petition regarding Anti - Social Behaviour issues in Jolly's Green Areas.

Redwan Shuhel and Tony Harrison addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Mayor expressed a commitment to take action to address the issues raised in the Petition given the impact that the issues highlighted had on people lives. He undertook to arrange a meeting with the Petitioners to further look at the issues.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community for a written response within 28 days.

5.4 Petition regarding residential permits for all Electric Car Drivers

Love Oyeniran addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Environment then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

He advised that the Council recognised the need to improve air quality and remained committed to carrying out a wide range of measures to achieve this. Recent initiatives included:

- Working with partners to implement the Council's Air Quality Action Plan to prevent such activities as engine idling outside schools.
- Redesigning street layouts through the Liveable Street programme.
- Measures to promote the use of low emission vehicles.

He also advised that there was simply a lack of space in the Borough to allow additional vehicles to park outside car free developments as requested by the petition.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

5.5 Petition regarding Bartlett Park and planning consultations.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his report to the Council. Following which:

- Councillor Andrew Wood, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.
- The Mayor responded briefly

7. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

7. Opposition Motion for Debate from the Conservative Group - regarding the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Rachel Blake **moved** and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as tabled:

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out.

This Council notes:

The publication by the Mayor of London on the 21st November 2019 of the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF).

That the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said in his introduction *“without a plan in place, this growth is causing unacceptable impacts on existing local communities from construction in the short term to provision of the necessary supporting facilities for these developments in the long term.”*

The introduction also said, *“Unique amongst London’s Opportunity Areas, the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar is currently experiencing intense development pressure, mainly in the form of new, very high density housing.”*

That the OAPF contains three growth scenarios for new homes in the area (the wards of Island Gardens, Canary Wharf, Blackwall & Cubitt Town and Poplar):

- Baseline 31,000 extra homes
 - High growth 38,000 extra homes
 - Maximum growth 49,000 extra homes
- + office space for an additional 110,000 jobs in each scenario

That these are the largest combined OAPF targets in London.

That the new London Plan has a target of 29,000 new homes in the same area + 110,000 new jobs.

That the new Tower Hamlets Council Local Plan has a minimum target of 30,601 new homes between 2016 and 2031 in the same Area (56% of all new housing in Tower Hamlets)

This Council further notes:

- The council’s youth service operates a dedicated youth hub at Andrews Wharf, which has over the last summer been supplemented by additional capacity from the Rapid Response Team. In addition there are services and activities provided by the voluntary sector at Alpha Grove Community Centre. Isle of Dogs is also home to Streets of Growth who will be receiving money from the LCF. More specifically the LCF also includes funding for the Canaan Project which provides activities for young women aged 11-19 on the Isle of Dogs. Working with George Green’s school and Café Forever we offer activities including cooking, craft, sports, and inspirational workshops at our

weekly lunch and after school clubs as well as opportunities to join us for regular trips.

- That the Alpha Square primary school is no longer required by this Council although construction started in October
- The government commitment to fund 60 capital costs for new youth centres nationally but sadly not the ongoing staffing costs for hardworking youth workers who provide life-changing support and services
- ~~That the Isle of Dogs & South Poplar area has only two small youth centres, at St Andrews Wharf in Island Gardens and Poplar Spotlight. There are none planned in Canary Wharf and Blackwall & Cubitt Town wards despite both wards being the main focus of new residential growth~~
- The large amounts of allocated, unspent S106 & Community Infrastructure levy which is programmed for new investment
- The more than £167 millions of grant money paid by government (New Homes Bonus) to help support high growth which has been reduced by central government.

The Council is concerned that:

The GLA commissioned Development Infrastructure Finding Study (DIFS) which accompanies the OAPF ~~says that~~ forecast the following amounts (£'000) ~~should have been spent from~~ anticipated from April 2017 onwards on Infrastructure 'Gross' Costs in the Low/Baseline Growth option (excluding DLR Upgrade & Rotherhithe bridge costs)

Category £'000	2017 /18	2018/1 9	2019/20	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	First years	five
Utilities	£2,728	£11,08 8	£8,838	£11,838	£11,838	£46,330	
Transport & Local	£139	£9,806	£18,756	£23,830	£17,164	£69,695	

Connections

Education	£28,946	£28,946	£28,946	£28,946	£28,946	£144,730
Fire, Ambulance, Police, CCTV	£2,930	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,930
Health	£1,526	£1,526	£1,526	£1,526	£1,526	£7,630
Leisure	£4,764	£4,764	£4,764	£4,764	£4,764	£23,820
Community facilities	£738	£738	£5,411	£5,411	£5,411	£17,709
Total Low	£41,771	£56,868	£68,241	£76,315	£69,649	£312,844

During this period LBTH has undertaken it's own detailed forecasting for school places resulting in 98% of families getting their first choice of primary school.

Local Government does not have the necessary powers to direct primary care spending, despite the powers to plan for additional health infrastructure.

That with the exception of some spending on the new South Dock bridge that none of it has been spent or is likely to be spent soon despite development continuing and new planning applications being submitted.

That the total estimated 'all-in' infrastructure costs between 2017 and 2042 are in each growth scenario:

Baseline £1,604 million
 High growth £1,756 million
 Maximum growth £1,840 million

The Council resolves:

- To report on the newly established ~~set up an~~ internal LBTH team to leading on the programme of infrastructure development required to support this growth ~~paid for by New Homes Bonus~~
- To report on ~~ask~~ the GLA & TfL to committed staff to supporting this growth in the same way that they have done at Old Oak Common and the Royal Docks which have much lower housing and jobs targets
- To support a cross sector campaign to ~~the work~~ Canary Wharf Group ~~are doing in trying to~~ increase transport capacity to the area given that even the Elizabeth line is not sufficient to support this level of planned growth
- To responsibly programme, allocate and spend Community Infrastructure Levy and income from Section 106 agreements to the areas with the more significant infrastructure pressures including for example the South Dock Bridge and planned new primary schools

~~commit to only spending Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 money earn't in the OAPF area in the area as required by the DIFS, given the forecast funding deficits and lack of clarity over whether the rest of the money will come from~~

- ~~To review youth services in the borough, including the location of youth centres, reaching out to all young people to ensure the best possible outcomes in the context of declining resources in Local Government. build a new youth centre in one of the sites with planning permission for a school and to partner with the Youth Zone charity in order to reduce the operating cost impact on the general fund~~

The amendment was put to the vote and **agreed**

Following debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

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- To report on the newly established internal LBTH team leading on the programme of infrastructure development required to support this growth
- To report on the GLA & TfL committed staff supporting this growth in the same way that they have done at Old Oak Common and the Royal Docks which have much lower housing and jobs targets
- To support a cross sector campaign to increase transport capacity to the area given that even the Elizabeth line is not sufficient to support this level of planned growth
- To responsibly programme, allocate and spend Community Infrastructure Levy and income from Section 106 agreements to the areas with the more significant infrastructure pressures including for example the South Dock Bridge and planned new primary schools
- To review youth services in the borough, including the location of youth centres, reaching out to all young people to ensure the best possible outcomes in the context of declining resources in Local Government.

Amendment to Motion on Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity

Area Planning Framework (Amendment)	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	No vote recorded
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Sufia Alam	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For
Councillor Shah Ameen	For
Councillor Asma Begum	For
Mayor John Biggs	For
Councillor Rachel Blake	For
Councillor Kevin Brady	For
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Dipa Das	For
Councillor David Edgar	For
Councillor Marc Francis	For
Councillor Peter Golds	Against
Councillor Danny Hassell	For
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Denise Jones	For
Councillor Rabina Khan	Abstain
Councillor Tarik Khan	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Harun Miah	No vote recorded
Councillor Puru Miah	No vote recorded
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	No vote recorded
Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
Councillor John Pierce	For
Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
Councillor Zenith Rahman	No vote recorded
Councillor Candida Ronald	For
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
Councillor Helal Uddin	For
Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
Councillor Val Whitehead	For
Councillor Bex White	For
Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
Carried	
Motion as ammended (Motion)	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	No vote recorded
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Sufia Alam	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For
Councillor Shah Ameen	For

Councillor Asma Begum	For
Mayor John Biggs	For
Councillor Rachel Blake	For
Councillor Kevin Brady	For
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Dipa Das	For
Councillor David Edgar	For
Councillor Marc Francis	For
Councillor Peter Golds	Against
Councillor Danny Hassell	For
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Denise Jones	For
Councillor Rabina Khan	Abstain
Councillor Tarik Khan	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Harun Miah	For
Councillor Puru Miah	No vote recorded
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	No vote recorded
Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
Councillor John Pierce	For
Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
Councillor Zenith Rahman	For
Councillor Candida Ronald	For
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
Councillor Helal Uddin	For
Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
Councillor Val Whitehead	For
Councillor Bex White	For
Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
Carried	

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

8.2 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood:

The government has announced funding nationally for 60 new youth centres, we have primary schools with planning permission that we do not want anymore and only two small youth centres in the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar area, it is not now time to build a new youth centre for the fastest growing place in the UK?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

First of all we covered the difference between capital and revenue. The Government has announced funding for 60 new youth centres. I am not quite sure how they think they are going to run, presumably on empty. But it is important to note that even according to DfE's analysis, the new investment they are providing for youth centres falls far short of the cuts in youth services that have been made since 2010. Because of the choices made by this Administration, Tower Hamlets still has one of the biggest and best funded youth services in London. In dozens of venues across the Borough, we offer over 400 hours of high quality activity every single week, including from eight hubs, 10 additional commissioned services, three specialist youth projects and 16 additional grant funded youth projects, which will be funded from the Local Community Fund. We are always looking at suitable options for delivering youth work. We would be happy to consider any options that Councillor Wood would like to suggest to be fed into our review of youth services so we can continue to provide a good quality youth service for all of our young people across the Borough.

No supplementary question was asked.

8.3 Question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury:

Can the lead member please provide information on primary school results this year?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

I am very pleased to report an excellent set of results for Tower Hamlets Primary schools this year. The results provisionally for key stage two show 71% of pupils have achieved the expected level of results in reading writing and maths compared to 65% nationally and 61% in London. Once again, we are beating London and the national average. We continue to close the gap in the early years foundation stage with the national average and for the first time, we have exceeded the national results in reading Year 1. We are incredibly proud of everything that our schools continue to achieve. Despite the fact that in Tower Hamlets, schools will be on average £730 per pupil worse off than they were in 2015/16 despite the Governments pledges on school funding.

Supplementary question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury:

Thanks for providing an overview of the overall picture. When we look at individual schools, some are below the national average in terms of their achievements. Therefore, can you confirm what resources were put into those schools to achieve or exceed the national average?

Councillor Danny Hassell's response to supplementary question:

I am very pleased to say we are working very closely with all our schools. We are very lucky that the schools in Tower Hamlets work in collaboration, rather than competition. Because of that strong spirit of collaboration, and peer to peer school improvements, we have well embedded systems of identifying just the schools that Councillor Chowdhury mentioned, that might need some additional help and support to improve their leadership. We do that through schools working together and through our school improvement partnership – the Education Partnership, which we continue to fund as a Council. We continue to monitor all schools looking at a whole range of risk factors not just school results, but also changes in leadership, their governance and funding. We will continue to ensure we have high aspirations of all our schools and children.

8.4 Question from Councillor Peter Golds:

Will the Mayor explain, in the light of the third elected councillor in seven years being convicted for housing fraud, what steps are being taken to protect against this and to ensure the integrity of the majority of members who serve the community properly and legally and to the best of their abilities?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

Anybody who commits any crime or fraud, irrespective of if they are a Councillor or any other public representative, should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law – that is what we have done and will continue to do. Our Fraud Team investigates all allegations. To encourage members of the public, staff and Councillors to report any concerns, a dedicated hot line exists and a secure email has been made available. We are also subscribing through London Government, to a new pan Borough system, under which we will use the latest technology, such as data scrapping, to try to put together information on individuals, to help detect fraud not in a sinister way but to find out contradictions about where people live, what they are doing and how we can ensure that public assets, particularly public housing, are protected in the public interest

Supplementary question from Councillor Peter Golds:

I would observe that the overwhelming majority of people who serve and have served on this Council are scrupulously honest and people of integrity. What concerns me is that if you have rotten apples we all get tarnished by it.

Would the Mayor consider a thorough review of the internal housing programme so that internally we cannot have this corruption again. As we have pointed out, in a very short period we have had three people, all of whom were elected Councillors and corrupted the housing system for their own advantage. Therefore, would you consider an investigation of systems that could be put in place to prevent that in the future?

Mayor John Biggs response to supplementary question:

You raise quite a complex question with a hint of accusation behind it. I am not convinced that we have an endemic web of corruption or whatever you may be insinuating. I am very happy if you want to write to me with a detailed proposal and suggest what problems you might think might be with the system, to look into that. Certainly, I have regularly conversations and our excellent Chair of Audit has conversations with auditors and with professionals about how we can better detect fraud. We recently had a conversation about parking, for example, where the possession of a parking permit is quite a valuable asset in our Borough and we need to make sure that people who have it are entitled to it. I want to make sure that everyone is treated equally. However I also recognise that if you are a publicly elected representative, an even higher standard should be expected of you of a total scrupulous, fairness and transparency about your motives being in the public interest.

8.5 Question from Councillor Sufia Alam:

What assessment has the council made about the impact of the government's recent school funding announcements on schools in Tower Hamlets?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

The Government has awarded the minimum possible uplift of 1.84% per pupil known as the funding floor which is designed to offset inflation, however when we take into account the schools pay award which is above 2%, in fact our schools are getting a real terms cut. Government funding quite clearly is not keeping up with demand. We saw last year an overspend of £7million on our school funding, largely as a result of high needs funding which has not kept pace with demand. New national figures from the National Education Union shown that schools in Tower Hamlets have lost out on £110million of funding between 2015 and 2020, that is the equivalent of £735 per pupil.

No supplementary question was asked.

8.6 Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed:

With the Town Hall soon moving to the Royal London site and cross rail opening soon, Whitechapel would be the gateway to our borough. Can the Mayor or the Lead Member inform us what we are doing to help improve the markets and the environment around the new Town Hall?

Response of Councillor Motin Uz – Zaman, Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth:

The Council has been working hard to ensure that the environment around the new Town Hall, Whitechapel is improved. As a result a senior meeting called by the Mayor, with the Deputy Mayor of London, Rajesh Agrawal, senior Council officers and TfL met to look at how we can improve that area and making sure that Crossrail was on time. Following on from that meeting,

certain things were discussed including enforcement action for the Whitechapel Road Market. I can tell you that signs have been installed to ensure that the graffiti vans are taken out. You will also know that there is a lot of fly tipping that goes on and we are looking at how we can ensure that those enforcements are taking place.

Supplementary question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed:

I am confused here about the market the opposite side of the new Town Hall. My question is: how likely is it to be delivered on time and are there any plans in place to uplift the market?

Councillor Motin Uz – Zaman’s response to supplementary question:

The land opposite belongs to TfL. As you know, they are short of money to even deliver Crossrail, so one of the things we need to look at with our partners and developers is ways of improving the physical infrastructure of Whitechapel. Clearly, it will be the gateway to the Town Hall. We also note that there is a lot of fly tipping that’s happening there. The Council is looking to increase the fine to £400 to anyone doing this. Currently, it is £80 and it is not deterring anyone. We are also looking at CCTV cameras to find anyone doing this and to prosecute them.

8.7 Question from Councillor Leema Qureshi:

The first 1,001 days are crucial to a child’s development. Can the Lead Member please update the council on what we are doing to ensure children have a healthy start to life?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People:

The Council is committed to providing “every chance for every child” to have a great start in life. That’s why we are working together with our partners across the Tower Hamlets Together Partnership to deliver on that promise. As a result of that work we are delivering a Maternal and Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MECSH) Programme, which is a more intensive health visiting programme for those at risk of poor maternal health. We have got our family nurse partnership to support first time mothers, under the age of 21 or targeted up to 24.

We recently launched our new Partnership Strategy for early years which has a focus on a number of areas. The first one is around: speech, communication and language needs. The second one is around using new methods of family identification to provide earlier support. We have seen that with our Early Help

Pilot, which we will be rolling out across the Borough. Other measures include: using the training offered through the Community Education Provider network to have a better understanding of the impact of early experiences on behaviour; and using our Restorative Practice to ensure all of our workers working with our families are doing so in a way that provides a critical friend supporting them build sustainable change

No supplementary question was asked.

8.8 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:

Will the Lead Member for Adults Services publish the service review report which has led to the proposal to end the meals on wheels service for pensioners and disabled people?

Response of Councillor Amina Ali, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing:

The number of people receiving a welfare meal at home has fallen from 350 in 2015 to 160 in June 2019. We need to note that we have been heavily subsidising these meals as we pay £11 per meal but charge £3.50 to residents. In the face of a decade of government cuts, we need to be thoughtful about how we use our limited resources to help residents and this has meant looking at supporting people's nutritional needs in a different way. It should also be noted that all current service users will continue to receive the service until they have the assessment. Service users will then be offered the most appropriate support from community services which offer lunch for some of them. For example, some may be able to attend Luncheon Clubs, often run by voluntary organisations. Others might have needs so will need support in their home to make sure they had a meal in their home. Others might receive help purchasing a chilled or a frozen meal from a different supplier.

Everyone who receives the service will be having a home visit to assess and review their needs and we remain committed to delivering a service and our duty of care.

The changes to Welfare Meals are part of the wider review of the Council's contract services and an update will be published when it comes to Cabinet later this month.

Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis:

The recommendations in the report that went to the Cabinet on 27th February 2019 stated that Adults Services would undertake further work to assess alternative delivery options and the future operation function of the central production unit. The findings of this work will be subject to a future report to the Cabinet and the outcome of the consultation on Adults Services will be reported back via a full report which will set out the preferred options. This decision has already been implemented and the Corporate Director confirmed that at the Health Scrutiny Sub - Committee last week. Can the Lead Member give us a commitment that this decision will be rescinded and brought back to

Cabinet so it can be subject to proper democratic scrutiny in accordance with this Council's Constitution as confirmed by the decision of Mayor in Cabinet on the 27 February 2019

Councillor Amina Ali's response to supplementary question:

A full report on contact services including Meals on Wheels did come to the Cabinet in February 2019 and a further report with an update will be coming to Cabinet at the end of this month and that is a guarantee.

8.9 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Will the Mayor reconsider the restrictions being put upon local residents of my ward? The 'bus gate' is a great idea to stop rat-runners however its introduction will limit the free movement of local residents. We welcome the Liveable Streets programme to Wapping and look forward to working to improve our streets and encourage people to walk and cycle, however the 'bus gate' restrictions will have an impact by adding further delays and congestion to locals residents who have to use cars.

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

Your constituents can rest assured that you and Councillor Denise Jones have been vocal advocates for them on the Bus Gate. The gate is due to operate from 5:30am to 10:30am and from 4pm to 7pm, at peak times when there is rat running in the area. The question you are asking is whether we should review the system to benefit residents locally who are inconvenienced or have to use their cars. I note there has been a number of requests for this. The purpose of having an experimental period is that we want to hear from residents and people affected by the proposals to see how it needs to be tuned to ensure that it minimises disruption to local lives while maximising the benefit to the local environment. I am happy to hear the representations and if there are ongoing difficulties, we can modify the scheme. However if it beds in successfully, we will be able to invest in more environment improvements along Wapping High Street which will further improve the quality of life including more greenery, wider pavements and improved crossing facilities.

No supplementary question was asked

8.11 Question from Councillor Asma Islam:

Can the Mayor please update members on the mitigations introduced as part of the Local Community Fund to support organisations whose funding ended once the mainstream grants programme ended, and how these measures will support service users?

Response of Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector:

An update report on the Local Community Fund mitigation and Transition came to the Grants Determination Sub – Committee on 6th November 2019.

That report contained details of the two new themes for the Small Grants Programme relating: to Access and Participation supporting VCS groups run for and led by BME community groups; and community support for Older people aimed at community led groups for elders. We have extended funding for Mainstream Grants (MSG) lunch clubs and community language projects to give time for them to apply for the new small grants themes. The Emergency Fund has been redesigned as a VCS Contingency Fund to enable organisations funded by MSG up to 30th September to apply for transitional support, if they can fulfil the criteria and demonstrate a realistic chance of alternative funding. Other mitigations are set out in the report that went to the Grants Determination Sub –Committee. In common with other Local Authorities this Council's budget is under extraordinary pressure, but we remain committed to supporting local organisations and look forward to them delivering great outcomes for our residents

No supplementary question was asked

8.12 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead:

What were the key findings of the Child Poverty Action Group's report on the impacts of Universal Credit in Tower Hamlets and how will the council be responding to the recommendations?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Planning Air Quality and Tackling Poverty:

The Child Poverty Action Group report recognised the work that Tower Hamlets was doing. We have been leading the way in on our response to Universal Credit. However, it did highlight a number of recommendations in three key areas to best address the impact of Universal Credit. Firstly, we will be continuing to invest in high quality welfare advice through the Local Community Fund, as well as through our Universal Credit Outreach Team, which is funded through the Tackling Poverty Programme. Secondly we will continue to develop our digital offer so that we can reach out to people using Universal Credit. Lastly, we have accepted the changes recommended to the Crisis Grants scheme, and will continue to work with partners to develop the scheme to ensure it is as effective as possible.

Supplementary question from Councillor Val Whitehead:

What options are currently available for residents in a financial crisis?

Councillor Rachel Blake's response to supplementary question

Several years ago the crisis fund scheme was devolved to Local Government and is also unfunded by National Government. Because of Tower Hamlets commitment to those that are most vulnerable, we have protected a crisis fund in Tower Hamlets and the new Policy Institute has found that it is the most generous in London with several Boroughs having to abandon theirs due to Government cuts. We have allocated in most years £7000 to those in crisis

and we will continue to do so even though there are deep challenges with local government funding

8.13 Question from Councillor Tarik Khan:

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member update members on the Liveable Streets programme and the proposals for Bethnal Green?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

I want to thank you and your fellow Weavers and St Peters Wards Councillors on your work on supporting this. There is a set of proposals and the underlying reason for this is that over 21 thousand vehicles each day, travel through Bethnal Green. Of those 57% are travelling through the area without stopping. That means that there are over 12,000 non local vehicles travelling through Bethnal Green roads each day. Our proposals are designed to reduce this rat running by a number of strategically placed closed and one way systems. For example Arnold Circus would be completely pedestrianised creating a new public space. We are very aware of the concerns and anxieties this may cause. So we want to listen to people through the consultation and hear about the impact that these changes may have on their lives

Supplementary question from Councillor Tarik Khan:

What engagement has taken place to inform the public about the proposals in Bethnal Green?

Mayor John Biggs response to supplementary question

Every household should have received a brochure that summarises the changes. There have been a number of well attended workshops and public meetings and meetings with schools and businesses. We are inviting people to submit comments by email, and by other methods. The five Councillors in the area will be actively engaging with residents across the Bethnal Green area to understand their concerns. The next public consultation meeting is taking place tomorrow, at the Professional Development Centre

9.14 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

Will the Mayor agree to ensure that applications for medical priority on the basis of ASD should be assessed by a specialist medical assessor with a specific understanding of ASD and to ensure that, where necessary, such applications for medical priority should be entitled to automatic OT visit?

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing:

The council is committed to making Tower Hamlets Autism Friendly working in partnership with health providers and the third sector.

The Council and Clinical Commissioning Group have in place a 5 year partnership Strategy to address the needs of autistic adults in the borough. This runs to 2022.

Housing Options Occupational Therapists (OT) who have experience working with ASD and children complete the housing needs assessment and make housing recommendations aimed to reduce or manage risks. ASD referrals made up approximately 35% of all housing need referrals coming to OT team as at May 2019. Every case is different. If necessary, home visits are conducted.

Housing Options OT also are in the process of developing a new report form for parents of ASD children who apply for re-housing and an assessment pack.

We have also included autism in the Tower Hamlets Housing Strategy to ensure that when new homes are designed and commissioned, the needs of those with autism are taken into account.

Highest priority is given to severe cases of ASD. Families are usually recommended ground floor only accommodation, which in most cases places them in Band 1A.

No supplementary question was asked

Questions 8.1, and 8.10 were not put due to the absence of the questioner. A written response would be provided to the questions. (Note the written responses are included in Appendix A to these minutes)

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

9.1 Report from Cabinet: Gambling Policy 2019- 2022

The Council considered a report of the Mayor in Cabinet on the proposed revised Gambling Policy for 2019-22.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised Gambling Policy for 2019-22 be adopted.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Waiver of 6 Month Councillor Attendance Rule (Sec. 85 of the Local Government Act 1972)

The Council considered a report on the proposal to waive the 6-month attendance rule for Councillor Mufeedah Bustin's maternity leave.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Mufeedah Bustin's period of office be extended beyond the six month period of non-attendance provided for within Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds of being on maternity leave.
2. That Council approve the requested extension of time to expire on 31 May 2020.
3. That Councillor Eve McQuillan be appointed as the Mayoral Advisor for Tackling Poverty and Inequalities for the duration of Councillor Mufeedah Bustin's maternity leave.

11. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**11.1 Motion regarding Restoring Fairness to the Leasehold System.**

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Andrew Wood **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as tabled:

Added text underlined
Deleted text scored out.

This Council notes:

There is a need for Tower Hamlets Council to promote fairness and transparency for the growing number of leaseholders in our borough and to address the unfair practices that exist in the leaseholder market.

For over two decades issues regarding the unfairness of leasehold tenure in England and Wales have been raised by ministers from all governments.

Currently the Law Commission are considering a range of options for reforming the law on enfranchisement to make it easier, quicker, and cheaper for leaseholders to buy their freehold or extend their lease, for future implementation.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an investigation into the leasehold system in June 2019 following concerns from MPs and consumer groups, looking at potential mis-selling and potential unfair terms.

The council notes the number of leasehold properties within the borough and fully supports a fairer, more transparent system for leaseholders nationally.

This council further notes:

Problems with some leases are becoming increasingly onerous to those purchasing a leasehold flat or house. While a leasehold may be presented as a cheaper option than buying the freehold, it is not always clear to the leaseholder what additional medium or long-term costs they may face.

Some of the problems experienced by leaseholders are:

- Doubling ground rents: paying an increasing and continuing ground rent, which makes some leaseholders unable to sell their home due to difficulties securing a mortgage;
- Excessive and unjustified service or administration fees: paying potential fees for permissions to make alterations to a property or covenants in a lease; and
- Difficulty buying the freehold: the financial impact of extending the lease or buying the freehold from the developer after moving in;
- Lack of transparency: information is not always clear to leaseholders when purchasing to leaseholds.

These costs can total thousands of pounds more than envisaged at the point of sale.

In addition, where developers sell on the freehold interest to a third party after a leaseholder has moved into a new build house, consumers can find that they are faced with significant legal and surveyor costs where they want to purchase the freehold. Such transfers can take place without the leaseholder being informed.

The council supports a small number of leaseholders who contact officers directly however in the vast majority of cases leaseholders are advised to raise issues with their freeholder or managing agent, and to contact the Leasehold Advisory Service who provide free advice on service charges, extending a lease, and buying the freehold. Where there is a dispute, the leaseholder is advised to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Tower Hamlets Homes launched its 'New Deal for Leaseholders' in June 2017 to give better payment terms and consultation for major works, access to partner services, clearer details about rights and responsibilities and better digital services.

This Council resolves that:

- ~~Support for commonhold ownership for flats, in preference to leasehold title ownership should be encouraged.~~
- The Cabinet Member should update members on the CMA review into the leaseholder system when it has been completed.

- That council officers should hold a discussion with developers should be encouraged to deliver about commonhold ownership, not leasehold and that the council explores ways of encouraging that via the existing planning system. at the next bi-annual Developers Forum following the conclusion of the CMA review.
- That the council supports should signpost advice for leaseholders looking to buy their freehold often against freeholders who are unwilling to negotiate fairly.
- The council explores ways in how we can support continue to signpost leaseholders with to more information from expert agencies about service charges, their calculation, how to complain and to what support is available to them against the occasional in respect of unscrupulous landlords.

Councillor Peter Golds and Councillor Andrew Wood indicated that they accepted the amendment to the motion.

The motion as amended was unanimously **agreed**.

DECISION:

This Council notes:

There is a need for Tower Hamlets Council to promote fairness and transparency for the growing number of leaseholders in our borough and to address the unfair practices that exist in the leaseholder market.

For over two decades issues regarding the unfairness of leasehold tenure in England and Wales have been raised by ministers from all governments.

Currently the Law Commission are considering a range of options for reforming the law on enfranchisement to make it easier, quicker, and cheaper for leaseholders to buy their freehold or extend their lease, for future implementation.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an investigation into the leasehold system in June 2019 following concerns from MPs and consumer groups, looking at potential mis-selling and potential unfair terms.

The council notes the number of leasehold properties within the borough and fully supports a fairer, more transparent system for leaseholders nationally.

This council further notes:

Problems with some leases are becoming increasingly onerous to those purchasing a leasehold flat or house. While a leasehold may be presented as

a cheaper option than buying the freehold, it is not always clear to the leaseholder what additional medium or long-term costs they may face.

Some of the problems experienced by leaseholders are:

- Doubling ground rents: paying an increasing and continuing ground rent, which makes some leaseholders unable to sell their home due to difficulties securing a mortgage;
- Excessive and unjustified service or administration fees: paying potential fees for permissions to make alterations to a property or covenants in a lease; and
- Difficulty buying the freehold: the financial impact of extending the lease or buying the freehold from the developer after moving in;
- Lack of transparency: information is not always clear to leaseholders when purchasing to leaseholds.

These costs can total thousands of pounds more than envisaged at the point of sale.

In addition, where developers sell on the freehold interest to a third party after a leaseholder has moved into a new build house, consumers can find that they are faced with significant legal and surveyor costs where they want to purchase the freehold. Such transfers can take place without the leaseholder being informed.

The council supports a small number of leaseholders who contact officers directly however in the vast majority of cases leaseholders are advised to raise issues with their freeholder or managing agent, and to contact the Leasehold Advisory Service who provide free advice on service charges, extending a lease, and buying the freehold. Where there is a dispute, the leaseholder is advised to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Tower Hamlets Homes launched its 'New Deal for Leaseholders' in June 2017 to give better payment terms and consultation for major works, access to partner services, clearer details about rights and responsibilities and better digital services.

This Council resolves that:

- The Cabinet Member should update members on the CMA review into the leaseholder system when it has been completed.
- That council officers should hold a discussion with developers about commonhold ownership at the next bi-annual Developers Forum following the conclusion of the CMA review.

- That the council should signpost advice for leaseholders looking to buy their freehold often against freeholders who are unwilling to negotiate fairly.
- The council explores ways in how we can continue to signpost leaseholders to more information from expert agencies about service charges, their calculation, how to complain and what support is available to them in respect of unscrupulous landlords.

11.2 Motion regarding Autism in Housing

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Amina Ali **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as tabled

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out.

This Council Notes:

1. That Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a wide-ranging and complex condition, which has far-reaching effects on an individual's life and that of their families and others involved in their lives. Autism is regarded as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). However, high-functioning autism (Asperger's) is often seen as an invisible disability.
2. Sufferers have diverse physical and psychological requirements, so the home environment and the available facilities are therefore crucial to the wellbeing of families with a member on the ASD spectrum. Some ASD sufferers rely heavily on routine and structure and can suffer from extreme anxiety when they face any major upheaval or changes.
3. Many families with one or more members on the ASD spectrum are living in wholly inadequate properties, which do not meet their needs, yet they are not being given medical priority to enable them to be rehoused.
4. Under the DDA, reasonable steps must be taken by councils, housing associations and landlords to address the barriers that may be experienced by disabled tenants.
5. Adults with ASD may feel isolated, but do not have the social skills to enable them to connect with other people. They may not know how to behave appropriately with neighbours of others in the community and some have obsessive or ritualistic behaviours, which can seem challenging to others.
6. The new local Housing Strategy has specifically recognised the needs of people with learning difficulty and autism and contains a commitment

to work to support the development of an Accommodation Plan for People with Learning Disabilities and those on the ASD spectrum.

7. However, it does not go far enough in properly assessing the forms submitted by those who have applied for medical priority, especially when there is overwhelming evidence from doctors, health departments and other professionals to support the applications.

This Council Believes:

1. That the Council has a duty to support and assist people with ASD to enable them to access appropriate living conditions.
2. It recognises that every case is different and there can be a variety of complex needs specific to each case.
3. Some children with ASD have very little awareness of their own safety and that of others, so full assessments should be carried out to ensure that adaptations are made where necessary to protect the families concerned.
4. Through our Choice Based Lettings scheme each case will be assessed so applicants are awarded priority based on this and can then bid for properties they deem are suitable for their individual needs. ~~Priority must be given to families where the ASD sufferer does not have their own bedroom, as they need their own space and it is important that they do not disturb their siblings/other family members and vice versa. There should also be adequate toilet/bathroom facilities.~~
5. Many people with ASD need a calming environment, as some have a higher sensitivity to noise, light, heat or smell. ~~Placing a family with an ASD member in a property next to a busy train line, for example, would not be suitable.~~

This Council Resolves:

1. To fulfil its vision in its [Autism Strategy for Adults 2017-22](#) of ensuring that: "All adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents."
2. To ensure that applications for medical priority on the basis of ASD should be assessed by an appropriate, trained assessor and where appropriate receive a home visit. ~~by a specialist medical assessor with a specific understanding of ASD.~~

- ~~3. To ensure that, where necessary, such applications for medical priority should be entitled to automatic OT visit.~~

Councillor Rabina Khan indicated that she accepted the amendment to the motion.

The motion as amended was unanimously **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council Notes:

1. That Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a wide-ranging and complex condition, which has far-reaching effects on an individual's life and that of their families and others involved in their lives. Autism is regarded as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). However, high-functioning autism (Asperger's) is often seen as an invisible disability.
2. Sufferers have diverse physical and psychological requirements, so the home environment and the available facilities are therefore crucial to the wellbeing of families with a member on the ASD spectrum. Some ASD sufferers rely heavily on routine and structure and can suffer from extreme anxiety when they face any major upheaval or changes.
3. Many families with one or more members on the ASD spectrum are living in wholly inadequate properties, which do not meet their needs, yet they are not being given medical priority to enable them to be rehoused.
4. Under the DDA, reasonable steps must be taken by councils, housing associations and landlords to address the barriers that may be experienced by disabled tenants.
5. Adults with ASD may feel isolated, but do not have the social skills to enable them to connect with other people. They may not know how to behave appropriately with neighbours or others in the community and some have obsessive or ritualistic behaviours, which can seem challenging to others.
6. The new local Housing Strategy has specifically recognised the needs of people with learning difficulty and autism and contains a commitment to work to support the development of an Accommodation Plan for People with Learning Disabilities and those on the ASD spectrum.
7. However, it does not go far enough in properly assessing the forms submitted by those who have applied for medical priority, especially when there is overwhelming evidence from doctors, health departments and other professionals to support the applications.

This Council Believes:

1. That the Council has a duty to support and assist people with ASD to enable them to access appropriate living conditions.
2. It recognises that every case is different and there can be a variety of complex needs specific to each case.
3. Some children with ASD have very little awareness of their own safety and that of others, so full assessments should be carried out to ensure that adaptations are made where necessary to protect the families concerned.
4. Through our Choice Based Lettings scheme each case will be assessed so applicants are awarded priority based on this and can then bid for properties they deem are suitable for their individual needs.
5. Many people with ASD need a calming environment, as some have a higher sensitivity to noise, light, heat or smell.

This Council Resolves:

1. To fulfil its vision in its [Autism Strategy for Adults 2017-22](#) of ensuring that: "All adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents."
2. To ensure that applications for medical priority on the basis of ASD should be assessed by an appropriate, trained assessor and where appropriate receive a home visit.

The meeting ended at 9.25 p.m.

Speaker of the Council