

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2020

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

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor James King
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Sufia Alam	Councillor Puru Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Mohammed Pappu
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Kyrsten Perry
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor Dipa Das	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Councillor Dan Tomlinson
Councillor Danny Hassell	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Denise Jones	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Rabina Khan	Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Tarik Khan	

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

The Speaker of the Council brought the Council up to date with some of her activities since the previous Council meeting.

She advised that she was very pleased to have hosted and attended a variety of events. This included:

- A variety of awards ceremonies since the last Council meeting from food, horticulture and sports to community involvement – a perfect snapshot of Tower Hamlets (i) the Asian Curry Awards in November; (ii) the 2019 Community Champions in Canary Wharf; (iii) Tower Hamlets in Bloom (iv) Tower Hamlets Homes Community Awards; and (v) the Youth League cup final at Mile End;
- A Commendation Ceremony at the Tower of London to honour Police Officers, staff and members of the public across the borough for outstanding work, dedication to duty and acts of courage;

- Carol services at (i) All Saints in Poplar, (ii) the Town Hall with staff who made a donation to the Speakers charity; and (iii) Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest, which included the unveiling ceremony for the new Roe Wing;
- Christmas celebrations at the Canary Wharf community Christmas Reception;
- The Council staff bake-off to judge all the cakes entered;
- The Speaker's the Annual Charity Ball on 4th December, 2019 held at the East Wintergarden in Canary Wharf where over 200 people came together to support the fundraising on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society, BPCA and Providence Row. This event was sponsored by the Canary Wharf Group, Ballymore and Mulalley as well as the wonderful performers who did a great job and are all linked to Tower Hamlets; the Sir John Cass and Redcoat School Steel Orchestra, IMD Legion, Adanta Dance and the James Uglow Lion Group;
- Music performances from THAMES the Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service, at their Music Centre Concert;
- The performance of the London International Choral Festival on the 2nd January, 2020;
- Attending a Dementia Friends refresher which is something all Members of the Council are urged to support as it is of growing importance in our society which is why the Speaker had chosen the Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Project as one of her charities this year;
- Attending the Swanlea School and Raines Foundation, to speak with the students about knife crime. This resulted in a very interesting and lively discussion with a number of very useful ideas to take forward.

In addition to the above it was noted that the Speaker continues to attend citizenship ceremonies at the Borough's Register Office and to support community events across Tower Hamlets.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Asma Begum;
- Councillor Mufeedah Bustin;
- Councillor Kevin Brady;
- Councillor Marc Francis; and.
- Councillor Abdul Mukit M.B.E.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Following a request from a large number of Members who had interests in agenda item 12.1 (Motion regarding NJC Pay) the Monitoring Officer agreed to grant a dispensation to Councillors as an increase in NJC Pay could have an impact on the allowances of all Members 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.

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 13 November, 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

The Chief Executive:

Reported that Jenny Peters would shortly be taking up her appointment to the post of Divisional Director of Planning and Building Control and expressed his thanks to David Williams who had been acting in the role.

Placed on record his thanks to Theresa Heaney Interim Director Customer Programme for covering since Shazia Hussain had moved to Brent.

Was pleased to report the following success stories:

- Djamila Aggabi had won the 2019 Practice Educator of the Year; and
- Communications Team for winning the LGcommunications - Public Sector Excellence Award.

Finally thanked those members of staff who had worked the 2019 General Election.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Free Speech on Palestine

Sybil Cock 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. Whilst he understood the passion the topic raised he stated he did not consider it appropriate to add a caveat to the internationally recognised IHRA definition. In respect of events in parks he had asked for a review of the events in parks policy to ensure it was appropriately balanced.

DECISION

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

5.2 Wapping Bus Gate

Gina Hayden 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 acknowledged the mixed views on the changes but highlighted how the bus gate had cut rat-running and improved air quality and safety.

DECISION

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

5.3 Stop the Burdett Road Entrapment

It was noted that the petitioner Sumaia Begum was not present. The petition was therefore referred to the Corporate Director, 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; and
- The Mayor responded briefly.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE - UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Councillor Rachel Blake **moved** and Councillor Dipa Das **seconded** the motion as set out in the agenda

Accordingly, it was **RESOLVED** that:

This Council notes:

1. That Universal Credit (UC) has fundamentally failed as a social security system and has caused hardship wherever it is rolled out;
2. Councils are not recognised partners for Universal Credit in the way they are for Housing Benefit and receive no funding to check Universal Credit claims as they are managed by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP);
3. New figures and case studies from Tower Hamlets Council which highlight just how flawed the Universal Credit system is:
 - a. Over 700 errors flagged to the DWP by this council alone since April 2018 – these errors resulted in £335k in overpayments and £215k in underpayments;

- b. In many cases council staff have had to refer the DWP to their own regulations;
 - c. In February 2019 LBTH Housing Benefit assessors identified an obvious contrived tenancy between family members and notified the DWP that UC housing element should not be paid. The council issued four notifications to DWP before they stopped the payment which resulted in a £18k overpayment;
 - d. A lone parent placed in temporary accommodation had claimed UC, but the DWP did not understand its own rules (which the DWP had changed) and argued that the council should be paying Housing Benefit. The case took from January to September to resolve and eventually the DWP acknowledged their mistake and awarded £15k UC.
4. The Council commissioned the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to research the experiences of Tower Hamlets' families with children in receipt of universal credit. A qualitative research study between October 2018 and July 2019 found:
 - a. 79% of responses included some negative sentiment about universal credit;
 - b. The transition to Universal Credit has been problematic, and that claimants found making and managing claims using the online system difficult;
 - c. Claimants often had problems with Universal Credit payments, finding they varied and were often miscalculated or unexpectedly stopped;
 - d. Stakeholders highlighted the monthly payment system, Advance Payment Arrangements and deductions as problematic for claimants;
 - e. Claimants and stakeholders had negative experiences of Job Centre Plus (JCP) and interactions with the DWP. "A lack of support, training and awareness among JCP staff seems to have resulted in an absence of dignity for claimants, while stakeholders complained of poor communications with the DWP";
 - f. Many claimants were struggling to get by with the amount of universal credit they received, and were in debt and arrears as a result of being on universal credit. This is exacerbated by the system of payment in arrears and the five-week wait at the start of claims;
 - g. Universal credit was seen to have had a negative impact on children.
5. That Tower Hamlets Council has established a multi-million pound Tackling Poverty Fund and is working in partnership with CPAG to understand the impact of Universal Credit in Tower Hamlets and to deliver welfare advice in a local food bank which delivered £230k in income maximisation for residents in its first 5 months.

This Council believes that:

- I. That social security should lift people out of poverty, but Universal Credit is leaving people in debt and arrears, forcing many people to turn to food banks to survive;
- II. Social security should support people rather than driving them into poverty;
- III. That Universal Credit is not fit for purpose and is having a severely detrimental impact on residents in Tower Hamlets;
- IV. That Universal Credit should be scrapped and replaced with a new social security system that will support our residents rather than drive them into poverty.

This Council would:

1. Support calls for Universal Credit to be scrapped and replaced;
2. Campaign for emergency mitigation to be introduced, including scrapping the two-child limit and the benefit cap;
3. Ask the Cabinet Member to update members on how the Council is responding to the recommendations set out in Child Poverty Action Group report.

Item 7 ADMINISTRATION MOTION FOR DEBATE – Universal Credit	
1. Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
2. Councillor Rajib Ahmed	For
3. Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
4. Councillor Sufia Alam	For
5. Councillor Amina Ali	For
6. Councillor Shah Ameen	For
7. Mayor John Biggs	For
8. Councillor Rachel Blake	For
9. Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
10. Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
11. Councillor Dipa Das	For
12. Councillor David Edgar	For
13. Councillor Peter Golds	Against
14. Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
15. Councillor Danny Hassell	For
16. Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
17. Councillor Asma Islam	For
18. Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
19. Councillor Denise Jones	For
20. Councillor Rabina Khan	For
21. Councillor Tarik Khan	For
22. Councillor James King	For
23. Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
24. Councillor Ayas Miah	For
25. Councillor Harun Miah	For
26. Councillor Puru Miah	For

27. Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
28. Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
29. Councillor Kyrsten Perry	For
30. Councillor Zenith Rahman	For
31. Councillor Candida Ronald	For
32. Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
33. Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
34. Councillor Dan Tomlinson	For
35. Councillor Helal Uddin	For
36. Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
37. Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
38. Councillor Val Whitehead	For
39. Councillor Bex White	For
40. Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
Carried	

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE - QUEENS SPEECH AND MANIFESTO COMMITMENTS

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as set out in the agenda

Councillor Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Sabina Akhtar **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as tabled:

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out.

This Council notes:

- The election on the 12th December 2019 of a new majority Conservative government.
- A Queens Speech on the 19th December 2019 containing a large number of proposed Bills, some of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council.
- That the government was elected with a new manifesto containing a number of sections of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council ~~as noted below.~~
- The increase in the Public Works Loan Board interest rate from 1.82% to 2.82% in October 2019.

This Council further notes:

Voters in both constituencies in Tower Hamlets voted overwhelmingly for Labour Members of Parliament to represent them.

That the new Conservative manifesto & Queens Speech contains a number of sections directly relevant to Tower Hamlets. Some examples (but not limited to) include measures relating to Right to Buy, social housing, development infrastructure, Brexit and electric vehicle infrastructure:

~~*“We will maintain our commitment to a Right to Buy for all council tenants. We will also maintain the voluntary Right to Buy scheme agreed with housing associations. Following the successful voluntary pilot scheme in the Midlands, we will evaluate new pilot areas in order to spread the dream of home ownership to even more people.”*~~

For example we in Tower Hamlets could ask to be one of the new pilot areas in order to ensure that the new voluntary scheme works in London.

~~*“As Boris Johnson has promised, we will bring forward a Social Housing White Paper which will set out further measures to empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes. This will include measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improve the quality of social housing.”*~~

We in Tower Hamlets need to be influencing this White Paper given both the large stock of existing as well as the large number of new build social homes we have which bring with them unique issues.

~~*“Infrastructure first. We will amend planning rules so that the infrastructure – roads, schools, GP surgeries – comes before people move into new homes”*~~

Given that Tower Hamlets is the most important deliverer of new homes in the country (exemplified by a record 10th year of New Homes Bonus receipts) this is a critically important for us to ensure that those new planning rules work for us here in Tower Hamlets.

~~*“In particular, we will make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences after Brexit.”*~~

We should work with the government to make the Life Sciences centre in Whitechapel the leading centre in London if not the country.

~~*“We will invest £1 billion in completing a fast-charging network to ensure that everyone is within 30 miles of a rapid electric vehicle charging station.”*~~

With more than 40,000 vehicles registered in Tower Hamlets it is clear that we need to substantially expand the charging network as a new generation of electric vehicles arrive so we should be aggressively bidding for a share of this money.

There are many more similar examples in the manifesto and Queens Speech which we need to explore.

This Council resolves:

Following the election of a new majority Conservative government Tower Hamlets ~~to set up a new working group (modelled on the Tower Hamlets Brexit Commission)~~ should continue to work with other London Boroughs, the GLA and London MPs through existing bodies such as London Councils and the LGA to protect and promote Tower Hamlets and secure the interests of London as an integral part of one nation.

That ~~this group~~ the council should seek to constructively engage with the new governments legislative agenda in order to ensure that the voice of Tower Hamlets specifically and other London Boroughs more generally are heard in the legislative process ~~to ensure that those new Acts of Parliament work effectively here.~~ and to actively campaign against any new measures or laws which would be detrimental to residents in Tower Hamlets.

That as a first step that we write to Sajid Javid and Robert Jenrick seeking a change to the Public Works Loan Board interest rate policy. We should request that borrowing to invest in building much needed new Council homes and new infrastructure should be charged at a lower interest rate than borrowing to buy commercial properties to generate a financial return for local authorities.

Following debate, the amendment to the motion was put to the vote and was **carried**:

Item 8 Amendment to Motion on Queens Speech by Labour Group	
1. Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
2. Councillor Rajib Ahmed	For
3. Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
4. Councillor Sufia Alam	For
5. Councillor Amina Ali	For
6. Councillor Shah Ameen	For
7. Mayor John Biggs	For
8. Councillor Rachel Blake	For
9. Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
10. Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
11. Councillor Dipa Das	For
12. Councillor David Edgar	For
13. Councillor Peter Golds	Against
14. Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
15. Councillor Danny Hassell	For
16. Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
17. Councillor Asma Islam	For
18. Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
19. Councillor Denise Jones	For
20. Councillor Rabina Khan	Against
21. Councillor Tarik Khan	For

22. Councillor James King	For
23. Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
24. Councillor Ayas Miah	For
25. Councillor Harun Miah	For
26. Councillor Puru Miah	For
27. Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
28. Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
29. Councillor Kyrsten Perry	For
30. Councillor Zenith Rahman	For
31. Councillor Candida Ronald	For
32. Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
33. Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
34. Councillor Dan Tomlinson	For
35. Councillor Helal Uddin	For
36. Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
37. Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
38. Councillor Val Whitehead	For
39. Councillor Bex White	For
40. Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
Carried	

Then the motion as amended was put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED**:

- The election on the 12th December 2019 of a new majority Conservative government.
- A Queens Speech on the 19th December 2019 containing a large number of proposed Bills, some of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council.
- That the government was elected with a new manifesto containing a number of sections of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council.
- The increase in the Public Works Loan Board interest rate from 1.82% to 2.82% in October 2019.

This Council further notes:

Voters in both constituencies in Tower Hamlets voted overwhelmingly for Labour Members of Parliament to represent them.

That the new Conservative manifesto & Queens Speech contains a number of sections directly relevant to Tower Hamlets. Some examples (but not limited to) include measures relating to Right to Buy, social housing, development infrastructure, Brexit and electric vehicle infrastructure

This Council resolves:

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London MPs through existing bodies such as London Councils and the LGA to protect and promote Tower Hamlets and secure the interests of London as an integral part of one nation.

That the council should seek to constructively engage with the new governments legislative agenda in order to ensure that the voice of Tower Hamlets specifically and other London Boroughs more generally are heard in the legislative process and to actively campaign against any new measures or laws which would be detrimental to residents in Tower Hamlets.

That as a first step that we write to Sajid Javid and Robert Jenrick seeking a change to the Public Works Loan Board interest rate policy. We should request that borrowing to invest in building much needed new Council homes and new infrastructure should be charged at a lower interest rate than borrowing to buy commercial properties to generate a financial return for local authorities.

Item 8 Motion on Queens Speech as amended by Labour Group	
41. Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
42. Councillor Rajib Ahmed	For
43. Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
44. Councillor Sufia Alam	For
45. Councillor Amina Ali	For
46. Councillor Shah Ameen	For
47. Mayor John Biggs	For
48. Councillor Rachel Blake	For
49. Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
50. Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
51. Councillor Dipa Das	For
52. Councillor David Edgar	For
53. Councillor Peter Golds	Against
54. Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
55. Councillor Danny Hassell	For
56. Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
57. Councillor Asma Islam	For
58. Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
59. Councillor Denise Jones	For
60. Councillor Rabina Khan	For
61. Councillor Tarik Khan	For
62. Councillor James King	For
63. Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
64. Councillor Ayas Miah	For
65. Councillor Harun Miah	For
66. Councillor Puru Miah	For
67. Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
68. Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
69. Councillor Kyrsten Perry	For
70. Councillor Zenith Rahman	For

71. Councillor Candida Ronald	For
72. Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
73. Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
74. Councillor Dan Tomlinson	For
75. Councillor Helal Uddin	For
76. Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
77. Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
78. Councillor Val Whitehead	For
79. Councillor Bex White	For
80. Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
Carried	

9. 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.

9.1 **Question from Councillor Dipa Das** Can the Mayor update members on the pledge to welcome 10 unaccompanied child refugees to our borough, under the Dubs scheme?

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- I am pleased to say that all 10 young people that we pledged to accommodate via the Dubs arrangements have arrived and are being actively supported.
- The young people have a range of complex needs and trauma from their life within an active war-zone.
- Despite these challenges most have settled well and are engaged in education and training with a view to obtaining employment in the coming months.
- The Government provides only a fraction of the cost to host unaccompanied refugees. We estimate that the shortfall is over £2,500 a week and so my budget proposals include a growth bid to meet this.
- Despite the squeeze on the Council's budget I'm proud we are doing the right thing continuing the legacy of the East End welcoming refugees.
- In contrast last week the government voted to water down their commitments. Children should not be bargaining chips in any EU negotiations: child refugees should be with their families and the UK government should be fighting for them.
- We will continue to lobby government through London councils to properly fund this scheme in the future.

No supplementary question was asked.

9.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds Will the Mayor comment on how the Council will use the recently announced £5.1 million homeless grant from the Government?

- The response of Councillor Sirajul Islam Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing: This funding is to support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the new responsibilities that fall on councils as a result of the Act as well as to tackle rough sleeping. This funding is used for various purposes including staffing, homelessness prevention initiatives and securing temporary accommodation. This includes the conversion of empty/redundant buildings for use as temporary accommodation.

Supplementary question from Councillor Peter Golds: (i) In 2018/2019 the Council used £140m from reserves to buy new properties please can we be provided with the details on the outcome of that expenditure; and (ii) Can we also be provided with details of what the £5.1 million Homeless Grant from Government will be spent on.

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam: I will undertake to provide you with that information.

9.3 Question from Councillor Sufia Alam How is the Council preparing for any forthcoming inspection of Youth Justice Services?

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

- We are committed to ensuring that the work of the Youth Offending Team ensures that young people leave the service with improved circumstances and aspirations, in line with our ambition to give 'Every Chance for Every Child'.
- Since the new inspection framework was introduced in 2018 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in 2018, the Youth Justice Service has done a lot of work to prepare for inspection, in line with the current guidelines.
- This work has been aided by the Youth Justice Management Board and the scrutiny of the independent Chair in driving improvements forward.
- In a recent example of this performance monitoring work, the Youth Justice Service looked into the health needs of children in partnership with Public Health and highlighted areas where we can improve our health offer. There have also been other deep dives on children looked after, school attendance and exclusions and further are planned later this year.
- The service has worked hard to adapt to the new inspection framework and we should be pleased with their efforts.

Supplementary question from Councillor Sufia Alam: How is the Youth Justice Management Board working to support the Youth Offending Team?

The Board under the new independent Chair has been driving improvements forward with spotlight sessions to focus on specific areas; looking at the impact of services upon young people's lives and how more can be done to support them. This will help to develop the plans to improve services and assist Board Members when they visit the front line providers.

- 9.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood** Has the Council been involved in or signed off on the large salary increases granted by Veolia to staff before they transfer to Tower Hamlets Council from the 1st April 2020?

The response of Councillor David Edgar Cabinet Member for Environment:

- The Council has not been involved in or signed off any salary increase to Veolia staff in advance of the transfer to Tower Hamlets Council. The latest pay round for Veolia staff was agreed in winter 2019 and covers pay from 1 April last year.
- Under TUPE, Veolia staff will transfer into the Council on 29th March this year. They will transfer at their current pay point and in line with their contract of employment. From that point they will receive the same annual increments as other LBTH staff for the 2020-21 financial year.

Supplementary question from Councillor Andrew Wood: Did Veolia not discuss the pay increase with the Council?

The response from Councillor David Edgar: The pay negotiations are between Veolia and the TU representing the workforce. It is therefore not appropriate for LBTH to be involved.

- 9.5 Question from Councillor Kyrsten Perry** What steps are we taking as a Council to tackle the climate emergency?

The response of Councillor Rachel Blake Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

- Since 2009 the Council has been monitoring its carbon emissions and has committed to achieving a 60% carbon dioxide emissions reduction from our own operations by March 2021. By March 2019, we had already achieved 58% reduction in carbon emission and are well on track to exceed our target;
- Yet, with this achievement, there is still more work to be done and further dialogue needed on a national and local level;
- As a result, the Council declared a climate emergency and set a very ambitious target to become net zero carbon by 2025 from our own operations;
- We are developing a Zero Carbon Roadmap and a progress report to Cabinet is scheduled for the first half of 2020 which will help us achieve our goal.

- Additionally, we have established a Carbon Fund which has delivered a number of projects helping schools, small businesses and residential homes become more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions.
- The Carbon Fund has received £3.8m to help fund our efforts to reduce carbon emissions in our borough.

No supplementary question was asked.

9.6 Question from Councillor Shah Ameen Can we have an update from the cabinet member on the two recent fatal incidents in Whitechapel ward and what the police and the council are doing to improve confidence amongst residents?

No supplementary question was asked.

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

I was shocked and saddened to learn of these two incidents. In both cases, police have made arrests and charged suspects with murder.

I would like to reassure Members and the community that we have been working closely with the police to do all we can to respond to these awful incidents.

- The police have brought in extra officers to mount additional patrols and provide a visible police presence in the area.
- The council has provided dedicated THEO patrols, deployed our Rapid Response Team and our CCTV suite was used in the murder investigation.
- I attended a public meeting at Toynbee Hall along with the police, housing providers and ward councillors to listen to residents and provide reassurance that we are responding.
- On the 19th December, 2019 the Council and police conducted operation 'Continuum Plus' in Whitechapel to target ASB and organised crime.

No supplementary question was asked.

9.7 Question from Councillor Leema Qureshi What progress has been made against the commitment to plant 1,000 trees across the Borough?

- The Council is committed to delivering a cleaner, greener Tower Hamlets and planting 1,000 trees across the borough is one of the Mayor's pledges to achieve that;
- We are making good progress with the first phase of tree planting of 300 trees being completed this month. For year one, the Poplar and Bow area have been targeted with 150 trees on scheduled to be planted in each area; and
- The remaining trees will be planted in the Autumn/Winter 2020 and

2021. We will provide updates on the progress as we continue to improve our public spaces.

No supplementary question was asked.

- 9.8 Question from Councillor Mohammed Pappu** When will the identified changes that are urgently needed regarding parking around City Island & Orchard place be implemented?

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- Officers are progressing with the introduction of 14 new parking spaces on the slip road onto the Lower Lea crossing and Orchard place beside the 339 bus stop;
- The potential for further additional spaces is limited but will be explored for creation when construction of new developments in the area is completed.
- The legal Traffic Management Order procedures will commence within the next couple of weeks and, following the necessary works, the new parking bays are expected to be operational in April/May.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mohammed Pappu: This has been an issue for residents since they moved into their properties. I would therefore like to extend an invitation to the Mayor to come and discuss this issue with the residents.

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- I would welcome the opportunity and come and met with resident to discuss this matter.

- 9.9 Question Councillor Denise Jones** With continued austerity for local government, what level of savings is Tower Hamlets required to make over the coming years and is there any indication from the new Conservative Government that this situation will improve any time soon?

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

- Throughout a decade of austerity, we have seen our budgets cut year after year and the Council has had to make £190 million in savings since 2010.
- Tower Hamlets has seen a huge increase in demand for key services driven by rapid population growth and changing demographics and this is forecast to continue with the equivalent of 14 new residents every day for the next ten years. The Government is also expected to bring forward the so-called 'Fair Funding' review which could take money away from areas of high deprivation like Tower Hamlets and redirect it.
- These challenges combined with reduced funding mean that the squeeze on local government looks set to continue, and Tower

Hamlets Council still has to save an extra £39 million by 2023.

- Next month we'll debate our new budget proposals. We've worked hard to produce a budget that protects key frontline services that residents rely on – however each year this is becoming harder as demand grows and government cuts continue.

Supplementary question from Councillor Denise Jones: Has Councillor Peter Golds and Councillor Andrew Wood approached the Mayor to discuss making a joint approach to the Government regarding an end to austerity.

The Response of Councillor Candida Ronald: Whilst I am not aware of any approach from those Members we are on regular dialogue through London Councils with local authorities regardless of their political persuasion.

- 9.10 Question Councillor Puru Miah** Can the Mayor please give an update on the implementation in the Council of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Islamophobia definition, passed by the Council in March?

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- It is entirely right that the Council does all it can to challenge and address discrimination and inequality faced by any and all of our faith communities. Since the adoption of the Islamophobia definition last year Cabinet has also received and agreed a refreshed Equality Policy reaffirming the Council's commitment to equality including setting out clearly the responsibility of officers and members.
- Members of staff will have seen the Council's adoption of both the Islamophobia and anti-Semitism definitions and plans are in place in coming weeks to reiterate the text of the definitions and our wider equalities duties through our internal communications channels. This is in addition to incorporating them into the training offer for members and officers.

Supplementary question from Councillor Puru Miah: Is the Mayor aware that it is considered to be Islamophobia to criticise the "right of a people to self-determination"?

The response of Mayor John Biggs: I would be happy to sit down with the Member to discuss the implications of the definition to the Borough.

- 9.11 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead** What action will the Mayor and lead Member take to ensure Clarion Housing improve their contact centre and repair service which is causing severe detriment to our Bow residents?

The response of Councillor Sirajul Islam Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing:

- Clarion's performance in this area continues to be of concern, particularly with regards to repairs and responsiveness to residents and members complaints.
- Meetings have taken place with Clarion's Head of Housing and an

Action Plan has been devised which highlights key areas for significant improvement with repairs and complaint being two key components however there is clearly still a lot of work to be done.

- All of the Bow councillors have fought on behalf of residents to get Clarion to up their game and the Mayor and I remain committed to working alongside you to stand up for our residents and insist they are given the service they deserve.

No supplementary question was asked.

- 9.12 Question from Councillor Dan Tomlinson** How are discussions with Transport for London progressing with respect to the construction of new pedestrian crossings over the A12 at Bromley-by-Bow? This scheme has been consulted on, developer contributions are available for it, and yet there has been little sign of progress over the past year.

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- You are entirely right, the Bromley-by-Bow A12 improvements have been a long time coming, despite TfL and the LLDC beginning development work back in 2010.
- Public consultation took place in April 2017 and progress has been frustratingly slow.
- TfL report that they have completed their detailed engineering design work and I am advised that a preferred option was agreed in December. This would result in the delivery of a grade junction on the A12 to provide direct access to the development area off Hancock Road. This would also allow for new pedestrian crossings across the A12 as well as the potential for an east – west bus route crossing the A12.
- While the design work is complete there remain a number of issues regarding land ownership on the site which still need to be resolved by the LLDC before a schedule for works can be agreed. I will be writing to the LLDC later this week to urge them to expedite this.

No supplementary question was asked.

- 9.13 Question from Councillor John Pierce** What actions has the Mayor of Tower Hamlets taken to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Boundary Estate?

The response of Mayor John Biggs:

- As you know, tackling crime and ASB are key mayoral priorities and the council has invested over £3 million to fund additional police officers. We are also enhancing our THEO and ASBs teams to help bring offenders to justice.
- On the Boundary Estate, resident's main concerns of ASB relate to the Shoreditch night-time economy. One of the issues we have is revellers parking on the estate, playing loud music and drinking before and after

using clubs and bars in Hackney. Unfortunately, this also attracts drug dealing activity.

- Following a public meeting with residents in September, the council has taken swift action including:
 - Changing parking restrictions dissuade revellers from using the estate.
 - Repairing the lighting at Arnold Circus and other parks. Further work is taking place to prevent ongoing vandalism.
 - The Liveable Streets programme will improve the public realm and will design-out crime, making it harder for drug dealers to use local streets and estates.
 - The area also significantly benefits from the council-funded police who target those involved in the sale and supply of drugs.

No supplementary question was asked.

- 9.14 Question from Councillor James King** Can I have an update on the process and funding thereof of the structural repair of Malting and Brewster Houses?

The response of Councillor Sirajul Islam Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing:

- We have a duty of care to residents at Malting and Brewster Houses to ensure their safety. We have shared information with residents through the process so they are aware of the structural issues with the blocks which we are seeking to resolve.
- The decision on the structural repair was deferred at Cabinet in June 2019 subject to further discussion with residents.
- Following this it was agreed to do further work to validate the structural works and the arising costs for both Malting and Brewster Houses.
- The Council has employed Arup and Potter Rappers to independently validate the structural works and the costs as they are experts in their field with experience on other similar projects. We will continue to work with tenants and leaseholders to ensure any costs are as fair as possible.
- The final reports are anticipated in January 2020 and will then go to Cabinet for a final decision.

Supplementary question from Councillor James King: Whilst I appreciate work with tenants and leaseholders it has now been six months since the decision to defer the structural repairs. This has been a cause of uncertainty for both tenants and leaseholders. Therefore, what is being done to ensure the timeline for this project is adhered to?

The response of Councillor Sirajul Islam: We have had to take a proper review of the works required and we will you provide you with an update in January on Malting and Brewster Houses.

- 9.15 Question from Councillor Marc Francis** Will the Lead Member for Housing Services explain the rationale for the proposal to scrap Band 3 of the Choice Based Lettings scheme effectively denying those 8,000 households the chance of a move to social housing in Tower Hamlets unless they become disabled, homeless or overcrowded?

Written response to be provided.

- 9.16 Question from Councillor Asma Islam** The Conservative Party's general election manifesto promised to 'continue the roll-out of Universal Credit' – does the Mayor think this is the right thing to do given the impact of universal credit on residents in Tower Hamlets?

Written response to be provided.

- 9.17 Question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury** A study from the IPPR has found that social security payments are now at their lowest level since the launch of the welfare state, and the Trussell Trust reveals that the demand for food banks has risen by 3,772% over the last decade. What steps is the council taking to mitigate some of the worst impacts of austerity in Tower Hamlets?

The response of Councillor Rachel Blake Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Air Quality:

- The need for food banks is a national disgrace and should not be a feature of society in 2020.
- They are a symbol of a decade of austerity are impacting on the most vulnerable in society.
- The Government's benefit changes through its introduction of Universal Credit, the benefit cap and measures like the bedroom tax have chipped away of the welfare safety net.
- I'm proud that as a council we have set aside £6.6 million to a flagship Tackling Poverty Fund.
- It provides crisis grants which many councils have cut to help residents in desperate need.
- It also funds an outreach team to work with residents moving to Universal Credit – this team has so far assisted over 900 residents to claim a projected £1.2 million p/a.
- It has also funded new research on the policy changes which has led to work identifying unclaimed benefits - such a recent pension credit campaign which led to an extra £150k p/a being claimed by residents.
- LBTH is working to deliver council homes and get residents into employment and training also plays a key role in helping residents.
- We will continue to lobby government to stop its damaging austerity policies.

Supplementary question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury: My thanks to Councillor Blake for being proactive and providing a much needed safety net for many of the most vulnerable residents. However, these residents want to be able to (i) maximise their income; (ii) secure their situation financially; and no longer be dependent on food banks etc. Therefore what is being done to help on the most vulnerable in the community?

The response of Councillor Rachel Blake: We have been mapping out where some of the most vulnerable residents how maybe eligible for additional benefits. It is through this proactive approach that we are working to ensure that all residents who are eligible to claim are maximising their income.

9.18 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan the Community Language Service campaign held another meeting in December 2019 raising concerns that the service may not be running as promised by the Mayor? Will the service be running as previously?

Response from Councillor Sabina Akhtar Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit:

- The Council is facing increasingly difficult decisions as a result of reductions in funding. As a result we have to explore new ways of services being delivered.
- We value community language provision in Tower Hamlets which is why we have worked closely with parents, pupils, tutors and community groups to explore options for providing the service.
- At last month's Cabinet Meeting a paper was presented outlining four options. Instead of closing the service as many other councils have decided to do, the Mayor listened to representations and agreed that while the council cannot afford to continue direct funding of the CLS, we will provide funding, training and free venue space in the Council's award winning Idea Stores for community organisations who want to continue the CLS classes they currently run.

As the time had expired for this item no supplementary question was asked.

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

10.1 Report of Cabinet: Adoption of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031: Managing Growth and Sharing the Benefits

The Council considered a report that recommended the adoption the Local Plan recommendations as set out in the main report.

RESOLVED

1. To note that the Local Plan has been subject to further amendments (following its submission to the Inspector in February 2018) as part of the independent public examination, as described in:
 - a. the Inspector's Final Report (see appendix 1), and;
 - b. schedule of main and additional modifications (see appendix 2).
2. To agree the recommendation stated in the Inspector's Final Report.
3. To adopt the Local Plan, including the modifications recommended by the Inspector and the additional minor modifications proposed by officers, in accordance with Section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.
4. To authorise the Corporate Director of Place to prepare and publish an Adoption Statement and the final Integrated Impact Assessment Report, in accordance with S26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
5. To authorise the Corporate Director of Place in consultation with the Mayor and Lead Member for Planning, Air Quality and Tackling Poverty to make typographical amendments to the plan prior to its publication to improve cross-referencing (e.g. paragraph numbering, page re-numbering) and typographical errors.
6. To agree to revoke the Council's current adopted Core Strategy (2010) and Managing Development Document (2013). It is recommended that the current adopted Plans are revoked following the statutory six week legal challenge period of the Local Plan adoption.
7. To note that Cabinet has agreed to revoke the following Council's supplementary/Interim planning documents, subject to adoption of the Local Plan by the full Council (see appendix 3 for a full SPD review). The following documents will be removed as planning policy guidance to ensure an effective and efficient development management process. It will be revoked following the statutory six week legal challenge period of the Local Plan adoption.
 - a. Wood Wharf Masterplan (2003)
 - b. Aldgate Masterplan (2007)
 - c. Former Whitechapel Masterplan (2007)
 - d. Bishopsgate Goods Yard (2009)
 - e. Bromley-by-Bow Masterplan (2012)
 - f. Whitechapel Vision Masterplan (2013)
 - g. South Quay Masterplan (2015)
 - h. Millennium Quarter Public Realm Guidance Manual (2008)

10.2 Report of Cabinet: Adoption of the Tower Hamlets Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule

The Council considered a report that recommended the adoption of a new schedule subsequent to three separate public consultations and examination in public. The newly proposed Charging Schedule aims to increase the rates that the Council currently charges.

DECISION

1. To formally adopt the new CIL Charging Schedule in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, Regulation 25.

(Action by: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place)

10.3 Report of the General Purposes Committee: Delegation of Role to London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee (LC TEC)

Council considered a report that advised Members of two new items being adopted by London Councils and sought Council's approval to both. The first related to establishing a London wide partnership to assist boroughs in the management and delivery of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (for residential and car club use) and the second to the development of a London wide by-law to control Dockless Cycle Hire Schemes.

DECISION

1. To approve the delegation of authority to London Councils to enable them to better support the boroughs in managing and delivering the provision of Electric Charge Points as set out in 3.5 of the main report;
2. To approve in principle the development of a new London-wide bylaw to control the operation of Dockless Cycle Hire Schemes within the Borough; and
3. To authorise the Divisional Director, Public Realm to sign authorisation forms for both the above matters.

(Action by: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place)

10.4 Report of the General Purposes Committee: Polling districts and polling places review 2019

The Council noted that (i) this report sets out recommendations for changes to polling districts and polling places as a result of the statutory review of polling districts and polling places undertaken in 2019; (ii) it also set out a small number of recommendations arising from the review but that do not fall within the scope of a statutory review; (iii) the report also incorporated comments on draft recommendations made by the General Purpose Committee on 10 December 2019.

DECISION

1. Agreed the proposed changes to polling district boundaries within the wards of Canary Warf, Island Gardens, Spitalfields & Banglatown, and St Katharines & Wapping as set out in paragraphs 3.27 to 3.31 of the report;
2. Subject to the availability of the venues, agreed the proposed changes to polling places in the wards of Canary Warf, Spitalfields & Banglatown and Bow West as set out in paragraphs 3.32 to 3.34 of the report;
3. Requested that the Electoral Registration Officer, on conclusion of the review, to make the necessary amendments to the polling districts and any consequential amendments arising from the review, to take effect from publication of the revised register on 1 December 2020;
4. Noted the other recommendations arising from the review.

(**Action by:** Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)

10.5 Report of the Audit Committee: Treasury Management Mid-year Report for 2019/20

The Council considered a report that updates members on both the borrowing and investment decisions made by the Corporate Director, Resources under delegated authority in the context of prevailing economic conditions and considers the Council's Treasury Management performance.

DECISION

1. Contents of the treasury management activities and performance against targets for half year ending 30 September 2019; and
2. Council's investments as set out in Appendix 1 to the main report. The balance outstanding as at 30 September 2019 was £307.250m

(**Action by:** Neville Murton, Corporate Director, Resources)

11. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no other items of business for consideration.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other items of business for consideration.

13. URGENT MOTION FOR DEBATE - WESTFERRY PRINTWORKS

Accordingly, it was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that:

The Council **noted**:

1. That the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has gone against the views of the Council, many local

- residents and the Planning Inspectorate and granted planning permission for redevelopment of the Westferry Printworks site;
2. That the proposed development was initially refused by Tower Hamlets Strategic Development Committee in March 2016. This was then overturned by the then Mayor of London in April 2016;
 3. In 2018, the developer submitted a new application more than doubling the amount of housing, increasing further the density and heights of buildings and reducing the amount of open space, with no significant change in the proportion of affordable housing. The developer appealed before the Council was able to make a decision. However the SDC agreed clear and robust planning reasons for refusal. A public inquiry took place last year. The Secretary of State has however now granted planning permission, against the recommendation of his appointed inspector, who broadly supported the Council's case and despite clear opposition of the Council, Mayor of London and local residents;
 4. That the Secretary of State's decision comes only 24 hours before tonight's meeting where the Council will vote on the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule. By doing this the new development avoids the CIL liability and hence the Secretary of State has deprived the Council of an estimated £30m-£50m in CIL contributions.

Therefore this Council believes that:

- I. Developments on the Isle of Dogs – which has seen decades of intensive development – must be sensitive to ensure developments strike a balance between realising opportunities for growth and respecting local context;
- II. The plans for the site are unacceptable due to their height and density as well as the low level of affordable housing;
- III. The decision by the Secretary of State to grant planning permission goes against the considerable views and professional opinions that were presented in opposition to the permission being granted;
- IV. Decisions of this magnitude should not be taken by the Government behind closed doors and this decision completely disregards local democracy.

This Council:

Condemns the unilateral decision taken by the Secretary of State and to ask Council officers to examine what options are available to the Council to challenge this decision, including the option of a judicial review.

Item 13 Urgent Motion - Westferry Printworks	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	For
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Sufia Alam	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For

Councillor Shah Ameen	For
Mayor John Biggs	For
Councillor Rachel Blake	For
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Dipa Das	For
Councillor David Edgar	For
Councillor Peter Golds	For
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
Councillor Danny Hassell	For
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Denise Jones	For
Councillor Rabina Khan	For
Councillor James King	For
Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Puru Miah	For
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	For
Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
Councillor Kyrsten Perry	For
Councillor Zenith Rahman	For
Councillor Candida Ronald	For
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	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	For
Carried	

**The meeting ended at 10.00 p.m.
Speaker of the Council**