

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 JULY 2021

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Sufia Alam
- Councillor Dipa Das
- Councillor Candida Ronald

Apologies for lateness were also received on behalf of Harun Miah.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations on interest were reported.

The Monitoring Officer reported that under paragraph 32, of the Code of Conduct for Members, she had granted a dispensation to all Councillors in relation to Agenda item 11.3 (Motion on Local Government pay to council).

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. (This motion was not considered)

3. MINUTES

DECISION:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 19th May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

Please see the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Objection to the one way system in Shadwell and carry out a new consultation.

Ruhul Amin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners. Councillor Dan Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm, Lead on Public Realm, then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

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

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

5.2 Petition requesting a Moratorium on The Felling of Trees

Geoffrey Juden addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm, Lead on Environment then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

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

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

5.3 Petition regarding Bring Back the Basketball courts at Wapping Gardens

Fernando Saravia Rajal addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit then responded to the petition.

DECISION

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

(Action by: James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture)

5.4 Petition regarding Human Rights Violations

Petition not discussed due to the absence of the Petitioner.

DECISION

1. That the petition be referred to the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

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

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

7. STATE OF THE BOROUGH DEBATE

The Mayor gave his state of the Borough address, highlighting a number of issues.

Following this:

- Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.
- Councillors responded briefly to the Mayor's report.
- The Mayor closed the debate.

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

8.1 Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee

The Council considered the report of the Standard's Advisory Committee setting out it's Annual report.

1. To note the Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee for 2020/21.

(Action by: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

8.2 Annual Report of the Audit Committee

The Council considered the Annual report of the Audit Committee for 2020/21

DECISION

1. To note the Annual Report of the Audit Committee for 2020/21

(Action by: Kevin Bartle, Interim Corporate Director, Resources and Section 151 Officer)

8.3 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Council considered the Annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2020/2021

DECISION

1. To note the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2020/2021

(Action by: James Thomas, Director of Children and Culture)

8.4 Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council considered the Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DECISION

1. To note the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2020/21.

(Action by: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

8.5 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

The Council considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out it's work programme for 2021/22

DECISION

1. To note the draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021/22, as set out at Appendices 1-6 of the report.

(Action by: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Appointment of a Chair of the Strategic Development Committee

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer regarding the appointment of a member and a Chair of the Strategic Development Committee.

The report was considered under the guillotine at Council Procedure Rule 9.1. As no nominations had been received before the guillotine fell, no decisions were taken on this item.

9.2 Extensions of the 6-month attendance rule

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer regarding a request to extend Councillor Sufia Alam's period of office on the grounds of maternity leave.

This report was considered under the guillotine in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1. As no nominations for the Mayoral Advisor position had been received by the time the guillotine fell, no decision was taken on that item.

DECISION

1. Agree to extend Councillor Sufia Alam's period of office 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 January 2022.

(Action by: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

10. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions 10.1 – 10. 2 and 10. 4 – 10. 17 were not put due to lack of time. Question 10.3 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. A written response would be provided to these questions. (Note the written responses will follow)

(Action by:–Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services to arrange written responses)

11. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

11.4 Motion on The Purchase of a 64-Metre or Taller Turntable Ladder for Tower Hamlets Residents

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

Councillor Eve McQuillan **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** an amendment to the motion as published in the supplementary report, as follows:

The Council Notes:

- June 14th marked the day four years ago when a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower killing 72 and leaving many more injured, traumatised, and homeless.
- This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do. In our own

borough, crews were on site within 4 minutes of the first 999 call from New Providence Wharf and we are immensely grateful for the work they did to protect residents' lives.

- Tower Hamlets has more tall residential buildings that anywhere in the country. These buildings are predominately located on the Isle of Dogs and in Aldgate.
- Whilst blocks should be designed to ensure that fires are contained within the area of the building in which they begin, we know that 293 high-rise buildings have applied to the government's building safety fund because surveys have found that they are not fully fire safe. This is the highest number for any local authority in England. Mitigation has been put in place to reduce risk to residents and their homes in the event of a fire.
- ~~As we saw with the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th, fires in tower blocks can start at any time.~~
- ~~As more high-rise schemes are built which individually house many occupiers, the need to locate a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller where the supertall residential buildings are, i.e. Isle of Dogs and Tower Hamlets, is urgent.~~
- ~~292 high-rise privately-owned blocks in Tower Hamlets are in need of fire safety remedial work, having applied to the government's Building Safety Fund, the highest number of any Local Authority in England.~~
- Residents living in social housing across the borough are also in high rise towers.
- LFB is responsible for ensuring that fire fighters have the equipment and infrastructure they need in the event of a fire. LFB holds the expertise necessary to do this properly.
- Council officers and THHF meet regularly with the LFB to work in partnership to protect residents in the event of a fire, and to do all we can to prevent fires starting. There was also a briefing held for councillors following the New Providence Wharf Fire.
- LFB have told councillors that fires in high-rise blocks are fought using their internal systems in the overwhelming majority of cases.
- ~~Tower Hamlets councillors had a meeting with the Tower Hamlets London Fire Brigade Commander on the 30th of June 2021 regarding fire safety infrastructure in the Borough and lessons learnt from the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th.~~
- ~~This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do.~~
- London Fire Brigade are working within a time of budget restraints with the LFB having to find £10 million of savings in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 in a way that does not affect the frontline services they provide to Londoners.
- Tower Hamlets does not have a 64m tall Turntable Ladder, that ~~could minimise risk and support our firefighters during a live fire event.~~

The Council Further Notes:

- The borough hosts several high-rise socially owned or ex-social properties.

- Irrespective of whether these properties have cladding issues or fire safety defects, their occupiers need protection in the event of a fire and suitable equipment that could be at the site almost immediately
- ~~A tall ladder will benefit all in the high-rise community of Tower Hamlets, whether leaseholder, shared owner, renter, right-to-buy lessee or social tenant.~~
- ~~This is a safety issue, not a tenure issue.~~
- LFB has 15 32m tall ladders in London (11 active, 4 reserve) and these are set to be joined by three new tall ladders to be based in Dagenham, Old Kent Road and Wimbledon fire stations.
- The location of the 64m ladders is determined by LFB, who will locate them in places so that the average response time for anywhere in London is 12 minutes.
- Unfortunately, none of these ladders will be housed in Tower Hamlets, an area of intense redevelopment and whose comparatively unique high-rise terrain (in the UK context), especially in the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, ~~demands that sort of fire safety infrastructure to be hosted locally.~~ Many buildings in Tower Hamlets are considerably taller than 64m.
- ~~In any case, a~~ A fire in a tall building now automatically triggers the dispatching of a ladder to the affected site, ~~it can take some time for these to arrive especially in traffic,~~ whilst the average response time is 12 minutes, it may take longer for a ladder to reach a fire.

The Council Resolves:

- The Mayor will contact Fiona Twycross to ask her to ensure that the siting of the new tall ladders will be optimal for residents in Tower Hamlets and to explain to us and residents lessons learnt from tall building fires and the steps the LFB are taking to both better safeguard and reassure residents.
- The Council to investigate through working with the LFB whether purchasing a further 64m ladder to site in the borough would be beneficial in the event of a fire in a tall building in the borough.
- Dependent upon this, the Council should work with the LFB to determine where it would be best to site a 64m ladder. This would depend on a variety of factors including the capacity of fire stations and the road network, alongside the likely need for this ladder in other boroughs.
- Dependent upon this, with the LFB and statutory partners, neighbouring boroughs, housing associations and the private sector the council should explore options for the provision of an aerial fire and rescue platform at least 64m or taller to be based in Tower Hamlets, if the LFB deems this necessary.
- If the provision of a further aerial platform was deemed to be a priority, but without funding, the council consider using CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) which is generated by new developers, towards such a purchase, noting that S106 funds cannot be used for this purpose according to legislation, and further noting that the revenue costs of operating an additional appliance would be a matter for the LFB.

- ~~The Council to investigate with statutory partners, housing associations and the private sector options for the purchase of a tall aerial fire and rescue platform of at least 64m or taller to be based in Tower Hamlets.~~
- ~~The council uses its existing and considerable s106 and GIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds, most of which have been generated by intense redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, but also seek to secure donations from developers and other private sector stakeholders.~~
- ~~Once the funds are raised for the Tall Ladder the Council works with LFB to identify the appropriate aerial equipment for the borough. LFB will have the expertise to work related to operation of aerial equipment needed to tackle a fire in high rise towers.~~
- ~~That the Council works with LFB to identify the designated location of the aerial equipment in the borough whether it is at Millwall or Poplar fire stations which are ideally placed, on top of the heavily built-up Isle of Dogs dominated by multi-occupancy apartments buildings, many of which compete to be amongst the tallest in Europe. Or a relevant location identified by LFB.~~
- ~~The council seeks to investigate that life-saving infrastructure is located closer to the area with the biggest concentration of high-rise and high-density residential developments in the entire United Kingdom.~~
- ~~Since Tower Hamlets regularly clinches the top spot for number of new homes built in the country, it is essential that this housebuilding achievement is matched by world-class fire safety infrastructure, including adequate water pressure and a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller.~~

Councillor Rabina Khan indicated that she accepted the friendly amendment.

Following debate, the motion as amended was unanimously **agreed**

DECISION

The Council Notes:

- June 14th marked the day four years ago when a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower killing 72 and leaving many more injured, traumatised, and homeless.
- This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do. In our own borough, crews were on site within 4 minutes of the first 999 call from New Providence Wharf and we are immensely grateful for the work they did to protect residents' lives.
- Tower Hamlets has more tall residential buildings that anywhere in the country. These buildings are predominately located on the Isle of Dogs and in Aldgate.
- Whilst blocks should be designed to ensure that fires are contained within the area of the building in which they begin, we know that 293 high-rise buildings have applied to the government's building safety fund because surveys have found that they are not fully fire safe. This is the highest number for any local authority in England. Mitigation has

been put in place to reduce risk to residents and their homes in the event of a fire.

- Residents living in social housing across the borough are also in high rise towers.
- LFB is responsible for ensuring that fire fighters have the equipment and infrastructure they need in the event of a fire. LFB holds the expertise necessary to do this properly.
- Council officers and THHF meet regularly with the LFB to work in partnership to protect residents in the event of a fire, and to do all we can to prevent fires starting. There was also a briefing held for councillors following the New Providence Wharf Fire.
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- London Fire Brigade are working within a time of budget restraints with the LFB having to find £10 million of savings in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 in a way that does not affect the frontline services they provide to Londoners.
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(Action by: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place)

(Motions 11.1- 11.3 were not considered due to lack of time).

The meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.