

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 7.10 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 JULY 2021**

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

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs*	Councillor Rabina Khan*
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Councillor Tarik Khan*
Councillor Rajib Ahmed*	Councillor James King
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Harun Miah*
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Puru Miah
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Kevin Brady*	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Councillor Mohammed Pappu*
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Councillor Kyrsten Perry
Councillor Shad Chowdhury*	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor David Edgar*	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Marc Francis*	Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan*
Councillor Peter Golds*	Councillor Dan Tomlinson
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Danny Hassell*	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Mohammed Ahabab Hossain*	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Sirajul Islam*	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Denise Jones	Councillor Andrew Wood*

\*Councillors present in person.

(Remaining Councillors attended from remote locations).

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Ahabab Hossain in  
the Chair**

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda.

Councillor John Pierce

With great regret, the Speaker reported that we were all very sad to hear the news about Councillor John Pierce who had unexpectedly passed away. He reported that he would always be remembered as a genuinely good person who was a strong voice in the community. He worked hard within his ward

both alongside the residents and on their behalf and was truly an excellent Councillor.

At the invitation of the Speaker, the Mayor John Biggs and a number of other Councillors paid tribute to Councillor Pierce:

The Mayor and Councillors paid the following tributes:

- Councillor Pierce was a great friend to fellow Councillors, the Council and the community. He will be remembered in this chamber for his work as an elected Councillor- but also his work outside the council including volunteering work.
- Councillor Pierce had made a significant contribution to the local community and was an excellent ward Councillor for the Weavers Ward. His loss will be greatly felt in the ward and he would be very difficult to replace.
- Councillors also reflected on Councillor Pierce's success at the hard fought by-election in 2012, where he first became a Councillor. He was an outstanding Councillor from the onset and was clearly an expert on housing matters.
- They also welcomed the way in which he chaired the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, particularly his work in holding to account the previous Administration.
- It was also stated that he was an excellent Chair of the Strategic Development Committee (SDC) and had brought many qualities to that role. He would be a hard example to follow.
- Councillors also paid tribute to the way, as Chair of the SDC, he helped new Members to learn this role in such a kind and supportive way. He was a great mentor. He enjoyed making people feel welcome and providing support and advice. Particularly to new Councillors.
- They also praised in particular, the way he worked to engage and involve local residents and to make sure their views were heard and acted on.
- Members also praised Councillor Peirce's good character, his powerful speeches and his community and voluntary work.
- It was noted that we could all try to learn from his example and apply his many personal qualities to how we conduct our lives.
- Councillors also reflected on how much he contributed to the work of Tower Hamlets Homes.
- It was noted that he enjoyed being a parent and he was just commencing on a new chapter in life. This felt like a huge injustice and we will never forget his personal qualities and his commitment to the Borough.

The Mayor and Councillors stated that they were proud to have known him and thanked Councillor Pierce for his service to Tower Hamlets and the lasting impact he has made on the Borough. He will be greatly missed.

The Council observed a minutes silence to remember Councillor Pierce.

The Speaker of the Council provided an update of his activities since the previous Council meeting.

He was pleased to say that, with the easing of restrictions, he had the honour of attending in person community events. Some of the key highlights included:

- Celebrations and sporting events to acknowledge the achievements of local residents.
- Traditional annual events such as the Lord Mayor's visit to Billingsgate for the annual rent payment of one salmon.
- The London Mayors Association Civic Service at St Paul's Cathedral.
- Engaging with the community and volunteers to express gratitude in person for all they had done over the past year and more.

In addition, the Speaker had added a number of online events.

The Speaker also thanked all those in the NHS for continuing to work so tirelessly to get residents vaccinated and caring for those who had become ill.

The Speaker also reminded the Council of a number of forthcoming events. These were as follows:

- The Freedom of the Borough Award. The Council were reminded that nominations were still open for the Award until 31<sup>st</sup> July, and were encouraged to nominate any worthy nominee.
- The continuing celebrations to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of Bangladesh - with the next event on Thursday 29th July 2021.
- The Speaker's reception which traditionally takes place after the Council AGM will finally be going ahead. Should the date need to be changed, the Council would be notified.

## **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****RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> 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**

The Chief Executive provided an update regarding the following issues:

- Covid/Vaccines. By end of week nearly 200,000 TH residents, will have received their first dose of the vaccine - with 110,000 having received both. The Council were continuing to work hard with the NHS to reach the target of vaccinating 100% of the most vulnerable cohorts.
- The SEND Inspection taking place at the Town Hall.
- Progress with delivering Children's Social Care services and preparing for the next focused Ofsted Visit.
- Staffing. He welcomed Raj Chand to the Council as the new Director of Customer Services.
- He also thanked Claudia Brown, Director of Adult Social Care who would be leaving the Council soon and wished her well in her new role at Brent Council.
- He also reported that Nisar Visram would be joining the Council as the new Director of Finance.
- Awards. He was pleased to report on the Council's success in winning the Local Covid – 19 Partnership Award at the HSJ Awards. This was in respect of its work on family focused multi- agency shielding support for clinically extremely vulnerable children.
- The Weavers Ward by – election. This would take place on 12<sup>th</sup> August. The count would take place at the Town Hall that evening.

## 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. He thanked the Petitioner for raising the issues.

The Petition referred to two schemes as follows:

- The public realm improvements in Dellow Street, Lowood Street and Bewley Street in Shadwell in relation to the one - way system. Consultation had been carried out on the proposals. Most of the respondents supported the improvements. These works had almost been completed. He felt that these changes had improved the area.
- As part of this, the Council also sought to carry out improvements to walking routes to Shadwell station from Wapping. He emphasised that resident access to the area would not be unduly affected by the changes.
- Proposals in respect of Martha Street and Tarling Street. It was noted that the Council will carry out further consultation on these proposals as part of the forthcoming Shadwell Liveable Streets consultation.

#### RESOLVED:

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

### 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. The Council recognised the need to retain and continue to plant new trees for the benefit of the public - in accordance with it's tree retention policy, it's legal duty and the commitments in the Mayor's Manifesto. The Council only felled trees under specific circumstances as set out in its criteria, generally when trees were dead or dying or dangerous. Due to this, consultation did not need to be carried out on such works, but the Council did however provide felling notices

#### RESOLVED:

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

### **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. The Council noted that it was important to help keep people physically active and provide space for this.

Nevertheless, it must also be recognised that the Council had received a large number of complaints about noise nuisance from the basketball courts, which has impacted residents amenity. To address this, the decision had been taken to keep the courts open – but to remove basketball hoops. Consideration had been given to alternative measures to mitigate the noise. No solution had been found to be practical.

The Council were also exploring the option of opening a new facility nearby. The Council will consult on this in September 2021, before making a final decision.

#### **RESOLVED:**

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

### **5.4 Petition regarding Human Rights Violations**

Petition not discussed due to the absence of the Petitioner.

#### **RESOLVED:**

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

## **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.

The Mayor gave his state of the Borough address, providing a summary of the Administration's achievements and future challenges. The issues covered included:

- The impact of Covid on the community and the Council's recovery plans.
- The Council's approach to keeping people safe, including the retention of social distancing measures and the work to increase vaccine take up.
- Council's budget and the ongoing activities to protect services and lobby for additional funding.
- Waste services and recycling.
- Measures to address pollution and promote sustainable transport including the Liveable Streets scheme and to make the Borough cleaner.
- Community safety measures.
- Children's and young people's services.
- Anti - poverty and equalities measures.
- The delivery of housing and raising housing standards.
- Housing safety.
- Activities to celebrate the Boroughs' heritage
- The need to continue to engage with the community and partners.

Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Opposition Group responded to the Mayor's report. He raised the issue of ASB in the Borough, particularly in the Isle of Dogs and the need for further action to address this. Regarding the issue of HMOs, he noted the need to better regulate this type of accommodation in Tower Hamlets.

The following Councillors also responded to the Mayor's report, highlighting a range of issues:

- Councillor Mufeedah Bustin
- Councillor Kyrsten Perry
- Councillor Marc Francis
- Councillor Andrew Wood
- Councillor Gabrielle Salva Macallan
- Councillor Danny Hassell
- Councillor David Edgar
- Councillor Eve McQuillan
- Councillor Puru Miah
- Councillor Kevin Brady
- Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Councillor Abdul Ullah
- Councillor Tarik Khan
- Councillor Rabina Khan

In closing the debate, the Mayor summarising the key theme running through the discussion, relating to the impact of Covid - particularly in terms of strengthening community solidarity. He closed by highlighting the pressing need for the Council to continue to stand up for and support the community.

**Procedural Motion**

Councillor Tarik Khan **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Council Procedure Rule 12.1, (c) the order of business is changed to consider Motion 11.4 regarding the purchase of 64 metre or Taller Turntable Ladder for Tower Hamlets Residents as the next item of the business. The procedural motion was **agreed**.

**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 and presented at the meeting by John Pulford MBE, Chair of the Standards Advisory Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**8.2 Annual Report of the Audit Committee**

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

**RESOLVED:**

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

**8.3 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board**

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

**RESOLVED:**

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

**8.4 Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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

**RESOLVED:**

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

## **8.5 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22**

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

### **RESOLVED:**

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

### **Procedural Motion**

At this point in the meeting the Speaker advised that the time limit for the meeting had been reached. In accordance with Paragraph 9.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, the Council considered the remaining reports, Items 9.1 and 9.2 under the guillotine procedure

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Appointment of a Chair of the Strategic Development Committee**

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

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 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.

### **RESOLVED**

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.

**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)

**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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 CIL (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**

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Council Notes:**

- June 14<sup>th</sup> 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.
- LFB have told councillors that fires in high-rise blocks are fought using their internal systems in the overwhelming majority of cases.
- 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.

### **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.
- 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. Many buildings in Tower Hamlets are considerably taller than 64m.
- A fire in a tall building now automatically triggers the dispatching of a ladder to the affected site, 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.

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

The meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix A

### Written Responses to Member Questions not put at the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 Council Meeting

#### 10.1 Question from Councillor Leema Qureshi

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member please provide information on how many affordable homes have been built in the borough since 2015?

#### Response from Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing

Between 2015/16 and 2020/21, I'm pleased to report that 4,424 affordable homes have been built in the borough.

I'm really proud of the work we do on housing, and it makes such a big difference to the lives of our residents.

We've set ambitious targets for ourselves to deliver thousands of new homes, and we're delivering the much-needed new affordable and new council homes that we need in Tower Hamlets.

We're investing heavily in providing new homes, but we also do a lot in other housing issues, for example protecting private renters' rights, cracking down on rogue landlords, and of course our landlord licensing scheme.

But we also have to be realistic about the scale of the challenge we face. There is a housing crisis in this country, and the Government is simply not doing enough to tackle it, instead they pursue policies which actually worsen the crisis.

We need the Government to step up and start backing our local councils who are doing everything they can to tackle the crisis.

Tenure Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
Total Affordable Completions	952	1376	383	118	1005	590	4424
Private Market	1634	3703	1060	915	3092	2113	12517

#### 10.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Noting the problems regarding consultation with both school streets and liveable streets will the Mayor explain how he and his officers liaise with the emergency services before implementation of his proposals.

#### Response from Councillor Dan Tomlinson – Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Public Realm:

As you'd expect, the council has continually consulted key stakeholders, including the emergency services, in relation to both of these programmes.

Before and as schemes are implemented, the council works with the emergency services to understand how they use the roads and to amend schemes when requests are received.

For Liveable Streets, the council holds monthly Emergency Services User Group meetings to present the programme and individual schemes to all three emergency services as well as holding individual meetings for larger, more complex schemes.

For school streets, officers are in regular contact with emergency services and so far there hasn't been any major issues that have been raised.

### **10.3 Question from Councillor Dipa Das**

How will the Government's cuts to Discretionary Housing Payments affect residents in Tower Hamlets and in particular how will the Council's Tackling Poverty work help to support these residents?

#### **Response from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion**

The Government's cut to Discretion Housing Payment is deeply disappointing and has come at the worst time. Residents have struggled with the economic impact of the pandemic which has led to an increase in applications. Last year, we received a total of 2120 applications, and in the last 3 months only we have already received 531 applications.

The Council received a funding of £1.9m last year which was fully spent helping our residents who are struggling to pay rent. This year, the council received around 45% less funding allocated for just 6 months with a small top-up to be received midway through the year. There has been little to no clarity on the amount Tower Hamlets will receive as a top-up or when exactly it will be received.

We have written to the Housing Minister to call for the cuts to be reversed and for more investment to be made in Discretion Housing Payment. The cuts will hurt many households in Tower Hamlets and worsen the poverty levels we have been working hard to tackle. Additionally, the Government's decision to withhold the further funding until mid-year and not disclose the level of funding Tower Hamlets will receive has placed a huge challenge on us and has made it difficult to plan for the future to ensure we can help those who need it most.

### **10.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood**

Can the Council help find new facilities for the Police Cadets based at the Isle of Dogs Police station which has been sold as well as the 2nd East London Scouts twice now forced out of their base by squatters?

#### **Response from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion**

The police cadets and scouts are both valued local organisations, and I'm very keen to support them to find alternatives.

Finding spaces can be challenging, particularly on the Island where we have a limited number of council-owned assets, and of course we have to balance our available spaces between availability for the community and our best value duty, but we can certainly work with them to find space.

You will be aware that we provide details of community spaces on our website, providing details of more than 80 halls and venues for hire ranging from community centres to churches, in addition to our network of community hubs.

The property lettings page gives information on properties being marketed for lease, some of which may be suitable for community use. The information is updated frequently as new properties become available and existing opportunities go under offer.

I'm very happy to meet with the organisations to discuss what their needs are and to offer support in finding suitable alternatives.

### **10.5 Question from Councillor Amina Ali**

What action is the Council taking to drive up vaccination rates in Tower Hamlets?

#### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing**

190,000 residents have now received their first dose and 97,000 have received their second dose.

Residents have been accessing vaccinations from a range of sites – community pharmacies, primary care network sites, community clinics and mass vaccination sites outside of the borough

We were the first in London to set up a multilingual helpline which proactively called people who had not responded to their invitation for vaccination and also provide information and advice.

We've also set up community clinics to increase access to vaccination and address inequalities. This led to regular clinics in the East London Mosque and Granby Hall (particularly targeted at Somali residents).

A programme of further community clinics is being implemented using schools, parks, voluntary sector organisations and other settings.

To increase accessibility, all clinics in Tower Hamlets take both booked and walk in appointments.

We have engaged with residents through a range of channels including COVID Champions, COVID ambassadors and targeted outreach.

Currently, a key focus for us is young people. This is a particular challenge for Tower Hamlets as it has amongst the highest proportion of young people in the country. There has been extensive engagement with young people networks to understand barriers they may have to taking up the vaccine and this has informed our ongoing communications.

## **10.6 Question from Councillor Shad Chowdhury**

How will the Mayor's £3m Covid Recovery Fund be used to support the borough's recovery over the coming months and years?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

The damage that Covid has caused to lives, to the economy and to our community has been enormous.

While the pandemic isn't over, it's important that we support our borough's recovery from the crisis. This month, as part of this, we agreed my Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund.

This is a £3 million investment that we're putting into various projects across Tower Hamlets to help kickstart our community's recovery from the pandemic.

I know how hard the last 15 months have been on all of us, and as we gradually return to some form of normality we want to use this money to build a brighter future for our borough.

We'll be focussing on supporting

- Mental and physical health
- Children and young people
- Our local economy
- Welfare advice
- And we also want to use some of the money to come together again and celebrate the way our community has rallied together.

It's been a tough time for us all and this fund will help our great borough to recover.

## **10.7 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead**

What progress is the council making in meeting its commitments on climate change?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment**

In March 2021, the mayor agreed the Net Zero Carbon Plan, setting out two ambitious targets – to become a net zero council by 2025 and a net zero borough by 2050.

To achieve the 2025 target, officers have developed the Net Zero Carbon action plan. The delivery of actions is regularly monitored by the Air Quality and Net Zero Strategic Working Group made up of officers from relevant services.

There is a dedicated Climate Emergency page on our website which outlines specific steps we've made to reduce our carbon emissions.

As the first step in the journey to a net zero carbon borough, the council hosted a Climate Engagement Event in March 2021. Over 70 representatives from the council and partner organisations participated and agreed to work together to achieve this target.

The Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group agreed to own and monitor a boroughwide action plan and established a time-limited taskforce to develop a boroughwide plan.

The first of three taskforce meetings to inform the development of the plan was held on 7 July. The action plan will be launched in November to coincide with the UN COP26 summit in Glasgow.

### **10.8 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member for Housing provide an update on the roll-out of the Traffic Management Orders to enable parking enforcement on our council housing estates?

### **Response from Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing**

As a borough with a growing population we have to strike a balance in parking policy to ensure residents can park but we enforce to ensure parking bays are not being mis-used.

In Shadwell Gardens and Wapping I'm pleased to report that the scheme is now fully operational and compliance is high. Visitor scratch-cards will shortly be available to THH residents only and enforcement is taking place.

Solander Gardens: We have consulted with residents and ward councillors and works are now progressing.

Royal Mint: The consultation has been concluded and we anticipate work starting in late summer or autumn.

Berners Estate: The consultation has now finished. A petition has been received against the scheme and this is being considered. Ward members have also requested a follow up meeting.

Spitalfields and Banglatown: The consultation is ready to go ahead and an Open Day is proposed in late July.

Colombia Road: We will be consulting shortly on an area including Avebury and Dorset Estate. At Gosset Street a joint project has been looked at with Liveable Streets.

Experimental Traffic Management Orders: These exist on the Stepney Causeway area in Pitsea and around Hanbury Street and have experienced some enforcement issues which are being taken up with the contractor.

### **10.9 Question from Councillor Bex White**

What is the council doing about mopeds, motorbikes and pushbikes being ridden on pavements in connection with the increase in food delivery. Will we be incorporating this into the licensing policy and processes to ensure that takeaway food premises have a plan that doesn't involve using the pavements inappropriately?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment**

I understand that this is a growing area of concern for some residents.

The food delivery platforms are independent to the food premises and there would be very little control that the food premises can exert over the delivery driver. This would therefore fall outside the Licensing Policy.

However, riding on the pavement is already illegal and this is a matter that the police and other enforcement agencies to take up if required. Any hot spots that are identified can be referred to the police via 101 and I would encourage residents to do so.

### **10.10 Question from Councillor Tarik Khan**

What assessment has been made of the funding announced by the Government to help school pupils catch-up?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education**

Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on our children and young people and the disruption to their educations means that work is need to bring pupils to where they need to be.

The funding received was allocated to schools on a per pupil basis for 20/21 academic year. The funding must be used to suit the individual needs of pupils with a particular focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. School leaders must be able to demonstrate that they are using the funding to support pupils' educational recovery in line with curriculum expectations. Governors/Trustees must scrutinise the school's approaches including their plans. Schools are expected to provide details on their websites regarding the Coronavirus (COVID 19) catch up premium. When inspections resume in September 2021, Ofsted will assess and evaluate how the catch- up premium has been used. The Tower Hamlets Education Partnership provides challenge and support to our schools in relation to their learning recovery work.

The Government's education recovery plan is not enough to meet the needs of the children in our schools or help resolve the impact the pandemic has made on education. Therefore, we will continue to lobby the government for a more significant and longer-term investment in our children's future.

### **10.11 Question from Councillor Kyrsten Perry**

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member provide an update on the delivery of new street trees?

#### **Response from Councillor Dan Tomlinson –Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Public Realm:**

The council is committed to increasing and maintaining a safe tree stock across the borough. It is well evidenced that trees provide numerous health, social, economic and environmental benefits.

You will be aware of our manifesto commitment to plant 1000 new street trees by the end of 2022, I'm delighted to report that the council has planted 700 trees and has a further 300 trees scheduled for delivery from 1st October this year, when the planting season begins again.

Having targeted Poplar and Bow in year one, the Isle of Dogs and Stepney in year two, the final phase of planting will focus on the Wapping and Bethnal Green areas.

### **10.12 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze**

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member update members on the Covid-19 Response Annual Report, and how the council has responded to the pandemic?

#### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

The pandemic has been an extremely challenging time for our residents. The Covid-19 Response Annual Report provides a description of how the council has responded to the pandemic. This includes but not limited to

- Prevent and limiting the spread of Covid-19.
- Supporting the most vulnerable through the pandemic
- Supporting children and families through lockdown and school closure
- Supporting businesses and residents through economic hardship
- Help make Tower Hamlets as safe a place as possible
- And, working in close partnership with our communities

Whilst the focus of the report is over 2020-21, appendix I also includes key updates up to June 2021 where relevant (e.g. on vaccination levels).

We will continue to support our residents through this pandemic, particularly our most vulnerable residents and continue to provide updates where necessary.

### **10.13 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member give an update on the decision to renew the council's selective licensing scheme, and what other measures are in place to protect private renters

#### **Response from Councillor Eve McQuillan – Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Planning**

The Mayor and Cabinet recently approved the renewal of the selective licensing scheme.

Under this scheme to date, Environmental Health staff have recovered £320,000 in rent repayment orders for tenants where landlords have not licensed their properties across the borough.

Landlord licensing has been a game changer for us to take action against rogue landlords. We want to see big reforms in the private rented sector to reset the balance of power between landlords and renters.

Currently we can only licence in a limited area of these 3 wards but we'd like government to extend this - while we are using all the powers we have at our disposal to protect renters we want to be able to do more.

This scheme complements the current mandatory Housing Multiple Occupation and additional HMO licensing schemes that we have in place and our Private Renters Charter to drive up standards in the sector.

### **10.14 Question from Councillor Shah Ameen**

What continuing support is available to help our local businesses as restrictions are eased and as trading begins to gradually recover?

#### **Response from Councillor Motin Uz-zaman, Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth**

Local businesses continue to be supported through the Business Rates Retail Relief and Nursery Relief Schemes although this has been reduced from 100% relief available from April to June, to 66% relief for the remaining 9 months of the year.

Further funding will also be available through the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme with details on the amount to be confirmed on 16th July 2021.

The business rates team is also taking a more lenient approach on collection for the first 6 months of the year working with local business that are struggling to pay, making longer arrangements where we can and not taking any court action. This will be reviewed as we begin to understand the effect of the furloughing schemes coming to an end, and whether businesses are continuing to trade or are closing down.

The Enterprise Team are currently finalising arrangements for a range of COVID-recovery focussed projects, including:

- The 'PIVOT project', an extension of a previous pilot project, is a business support initiative that will provide funding and advice to a minimum of 150 x TH businesses seeking to access new sources of revenue as a result of the pandemic.

- The Creative Freelance Futures project; a new project offering support and funding to a minimum of 60 x TH freelance workers in the cultural and creative industries.
- A COVID business adaptation grant, a new grant which will provide funding to a minimum of 240 TH SMEs, to make additional COVID-safe physical adaptations to their businesses, in order to trade safely.

#### **10.15 Question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury**

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member provide an update on the Council's planned summer activities programme?

#### **Response from Councillor Sabina Akhtar , Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing**

The council, voluntary sector groups and wider partnership organisations have worked together to plan and deliver a comprehensive programme of more than 200 events, activities and play opportunities for children, young people, and families during the school holiday. The majority of activities are free for residents to access.

The summer programme will support children, young people and families to recover from the impact of the pandemic and include Bounce Back to Play projects, walking football, basketball, holiday provision, arts activities and outdoor events to support families in keeping children learning, entertained and active over the summer.

Over 40 Holiday Activity and Food clubs (HAF) will be offering around 4,000 places to children and teenagers, ages 5 – 18 years. The HAF programme supports children to eat healthier, be more active and be safe. Families who receive free school meals will be given priority places. Summer activities will be available online and face-to-face and will take place in schools, community centres, children centres, playgrounds, Idea Stores, parks & open spaces.

#### **10.16 Question from Councillor Gabriella Salva-Macallan**

The Council have earmarked a community centre, the Canal Club in St Peter's Wards for demolition as part of the council house building project. Would the Mayor and lead member consider meeting with local residents to discuss 'meanwhile use' by the local community of the centre?

#### **Response from Councillor Mufedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion**

A planning application is pending consideration by committee for the redevelopment of the Canal Club site as part of the Mayor's Homes Programme, and the previous permanent tenants (a nursery) have been found alternative accommodation.

The vacant premises were recently squatted and there is a risk of this recurring if the building is not either secured or occupied for the greater part of the time. Officers need to use their professional expertise to determine whether any proposed meanwhile use would be of sufficient scale to deter further squatting. I am happy to meet the TRA, with officers, to hear their proposals and understand whether they could meet these criteria.

### **10.17 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan**

Mayor John Biggs is proposing to spend £2,996,265 on the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund. Will the Mayor ensure money is allocated to address educational digital divide so that every child in the borough has access to a laptop or IT device over the summer and when schools reopen to support children's gap in their learning caused by Covid?

#### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

In Tower Hamlets one-in-four children is digitally disadvantaged – with no means of accessing their education online.

Even with the return of face-to-face classroom learning the pandemic has highlighted the importance of learning from home.

We have, in addition to limited government support, set up a local campaign to get kids the tech they need.

There has been intensive work to lobby the DfE and support schools to maximise the opportunities from their scheme providing free devices to children.

We have secured 10,478 laptops from the DfE to be distributed in Tower Hamlets. This distribution level is the highest in London and almost double the amount of any other London Borough.

The Council has also committed £50,000 towards further devices, as well as working to repurpose 250 old council laptops.

The Every Child Online campaign has secured a further £130,000 in corporate and individual donations.

The work is now moving from the focus on lockdowns and remote learning for children out of school, into a longer term campaign to ensure that every child in the borough has the equipment to learn effectively. after effectively add 'The above resources have however been secured from outside of the Covid Recovery Fund, and an alternative funding strategy for this important priority is therefore in place.