

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2022

**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 Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	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 Leema Qureshi
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Danny Hassell	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Mohammed Ahabab Hossain	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Denise Jones	Councillor Andrew Wood

Members Present Virtually:

Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor James King
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Councillor Dan Tomlinson

During the meeting, the Council agreed to vary the order of business to consider additional items – a presentation from the Pupil’s Parliament and an Urgent Motion on Ukraine. To aid clarity, the Minutes is presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda

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

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He advised that he had the honour of attending many community events and activities over the last couple of months with restrictions lifting. The highlights included:

- The annual gathering to mark International Mother Language Day held in Altab Ali park
- The Tower Hamlets Civic Awards. An event to honour and recognise the outstanding achievements of those in the Borough. He also wished to thank all those in the Borough working so hard to support the community. Their efforts were greatly appreciated.
- Attending the Rich Mix Centre with Councillor Denise Jones for a tour of the improvements.
- The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Members were invited to stay and join the Speaker for some cake, which has been made especially with the Platinum Jubilee emblem on it. The Speaker also looked forward to planting a tree during March, contributing to the Queen's Green Canopy.

Referring to International Women's Day, he thanked all women - mothers, sisters, daughters and friends for the important part they play in our lives on a daily basis.

Looking ahead, the Speaker noted that this would be the last meeting of the Council year before the May elections. He thanked everyone for their support and participation in these council meetings.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Rajib Ahmed
- Councillor Sufia Alam (maternity leave)
- Councillor Amina Ali
- Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
- Councillor Eve McQuillan
- Councillor Kyrsten Perry
- Councillor Val Whitehead

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were reported

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the following meetings of the Council be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly:
 - Ordinary Council meeting held on Wednesday 19th January 2022
 - Budget Council meeting held on Wednesday 2nd March 2022

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

The Chief Executive provided his regular update regarding the following issues:

- Covid rates and Vaccines. As restrictions had relaxed, the Borough had seen a rise in case rates up by 29% and hospital admissions. Although the Borough remained significantly below the national average. This situation will be kept under review. 236,815 residents had received their first vaccine and 1800 booster jabs were given last week. The Council, working with the NHS, will continue to encourage take up of vaccines – including the booster vaccines and amongst young people and children.
- Continuing success at Awards. He congratulated the Growth and Economic Development Team on winning an award from the Federation of Small Businesses and London Council's on their work in supporting local businesses in the pandemic. He was also pleased to report that the Council have recently been recognised in the following ways:
 - Awarded Silver Status by Stonewall.
 - Shortlisted for four LGC awards – in relation to public health, digital impact, growth and economic development and most improved council.
 - Shortlisted in the Sustain Awards for the work of the pensions fund on sustainable investment.
- Reviews and Inspections. He provided an update on the Council's participation in a forthcoming LGA Peer Review of Children's Social Care and the communications service. He also advised of his work to assist LB Croydon with their preparations for a Mayoral System
- Staffing Issues. Paul Rock, the Chief Internal Auditor, would be leaving the Council to join Lambeth. Araan Winter would be taking over this role for a period. It was also noted that the Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes, Susmita Sen, would be taking up a senior role at Croydon. They were thanked for their contributions to Tower Hamlets, and the Council wished them well for the future.
- Local Elections. The preparations for the May elections were gathering pace. Since this was the last Council meeting before the election, he expressed gratitude to the Councillors not standing for their contributions to the Borough. He also wished the those who were candidates in the election all the best.
- Regarding Ukraine, the Council stands ready to meet the needs of those arriving from the country.

Presentation from Isle of Dogs Pupil's Parliament

At this point in the meeting, the Speaker agreed to change the order of business to accept a request from the Isle of Dogs Pupil's Parliament to address the Council meeting on the issue of violent crime.

A number of the young representatives the addressed the meeting. They highlighted a range of issues discussed during their recent debates and responded to questions from Members. Some of the issues discussed included the following points:

- That tackling knife crime and violence was a top priority of the parliament
- Knife crime was everyone's responsibility as well as the Police.
- Importance of raising awareness of mental health issues in young people.
- The need to promote kindness and provide help to those in need, both in terms of those experiencing physical and mental health issues.
- Need for more safety precautions.
- Suggested crime prevention measures

Councillor Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, responded to the representatives, highlighting that they had raised some very good points on an important issue. She also praised their confidence and noted that it was very important to listen to young people and their ideas. The Council thanked them for attending the meeting.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Refuse & Recycling is collected on time – Keep our streets clean

Michael Robinson and others addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

It was noted that the Borough has faced a challenging period due the pandemic and Brexit, with difficulties in terms of staff sickness, and with a shortage of qualified drivers and repair issues with vehicles. A high level of waste had also been generated during the pandemic. However, she thanked staff for all their hard work and for continuing to deliver the service during the difficult period. To further improve the service, the Council had invested additional funding in a number of areas to provide:

- New Underground Waste Services vehicles.
- Resident and partner engagement initiatives, to raise awareness of waste and recycling issues.
- To tackle fly tipping and boost recycling
- To reduce missed collections.

She thanked the Petitioners for raising these very important issues.

RESOLVED

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

5.2 Petition regarding Say no to underpass closure and overdevelopment of Aberfeldy

Foysool Hussain and others addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Mayor advised that the Council engaged regularly with Poplar HARCA. The initial feedback from Poplar HARCA's consultation on the planning proposals indicated that residents supported the proposals. However, the plans will need to be formally considered by the Council and the Strategic Development Committee in accordance with procedure rules.

The Mayor stated he was happy to meet with the Petitioners to discuss their issues further.

RESOLVED

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

5.3 Petition regarding prolonged road closure from Colliers (developer) risks residents' lives

Shorif Ahmed and others addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

It was noted that the development in Hanbury Street to provide 7 residential units and other works, was due to be completed soon. 25% of the lettings will be let to local residents. He also noted that it has been a difficult period for contractors, with issues with the availability of materials and labour. As a result of this, the works had been delayed. The Council will however continue to review the measures in place to manage the works – and will continue to learn from these issues to mitigate the impact from future schemes.

He stated he was happy to meet with the Petitioners to discuss their issues further.

RESOLVED

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

5.4 Petition regarding New Riverboat Service at Wapping Pier

Dominic Buxton and others addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Mayor advised that whilst responsibility for this issues rested with third parties, not the Council, it was willing to explore the potential costs and benefits of the proposals to provide the new riverboat service.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural Motion:

Councillor Tarik Khan **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded**, a procedural motion that “Council Procedure Rule 11.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion on Ukraine to be considered at this point at the meeting”. The Speaker indicated that he accepted the reasons for urgency. The procedural motion was **agreed**. [The minute for this item is presented under Item 13.]

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his report to the Council.

The Opposition Group Leader's then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

- Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Leader of the Aspire Group.
- Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group.

The Mayor provided concluding remarks

With the permission of the Speaker, a number of retiring Councillors shared their own personal highlights and memories of their time in office and their achievements. They stated that it had been a great privilege to serve as a Councillor and represent the community. They thanked residents, their families, Council staff, fellow Councillors and the Council partners in the community for all their support.

A summary of the contributions is set out below:

- Councillor Denise Jones. She stated that she was particularly proud to have fulfilled so many important roles including: Lead Member for Arts, Leisure and Sports, the Civic Mayor, and Leader of the Council.
- Councillor David Edgar. In particular, he welcomed his Corporate Parenting role given the importance of these duties.

- Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE. He stated that he was privileged to have acted as Speaker of the Council for two years and was honoured to serve alongside Councillor John Pierce who set a very high standard which everyone should try to follow.
- Councillor Helal Uddin. He stated that he was particularly proud of his involvement in a number of important projects in his ward.
- Councillor Leema Qureshi - thanked family, friends and colleagues for their support.
- Councillor Danny Hassell. He was particularly proud of his work as the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools, helping some of the most vulnerable residents
- Councillor Dan Tomlinson. He drew attention to his experiences as a Cabinet Member and as a Member of various Committees.
- Councillor Candida Ronald – paid particular tribute to the work of the voluntary sector for helping residents especially during the pandemic.
- Councillor Bex White. She drew attention and paid tribute to the important work of foster careers in the Borough.

Mayor John Biggs thanked all the retiring Councillors for their contributions to the Borough. In particular he paid tribute to the work of the late Councillor John Pierce.

In view of the time constraints, the Speaker proposed that the time limit for discussing both main motion items should be no longer than 15 minutes each. This was **agreed**.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE - COUNCIL'S RECORD

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Asma Begum **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Andrew Wood **seconded** the following amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda

Added text is underlined
Deleted text is scored ~~out~~.

This Council Notes:

1. In 2018, the Mayor pledged 2,000 new council homes by 2022, and the Council is on track to hit this target, with 2,046 homes delivered or in delivery. There have also been 6,876 new affordable homes completed across the borough since 2015.

That the 700 new homes promised as part of the wider Town Hall project have never been delivered (see the poster in the entrance to Mulberry Place)

That the Council intends to sell large sites to private developers (Car pound for example) rather than develop themselves and when it has sold those sites to private developers (LEB for example) no new homes have been built years later.

That the Council has displacing existing residents from 422 homes who now have to compete in the housing market meaning more people may need to rely on temporary housing.

That the Council only bought existing old homes from one housing association, Poplar Harca, providing them with a cash injection, that this opportunity was not extended to other housing associations. And again, has displaced existing residents.

That the Council bought 157 existing s106 properties so that they can be presented as new homes when they are not, they would have been bought by another housing association and provided to residents of Tower Hamlets in need.

That only 225 homes are genuinely new build plus 23 conversions, but this has in some cases meant the loss of scarce green space.

Only these 225 + 23 homes can be genuinely described as new Council homes.

2. That this Council provides Universal Free School Meals for all primary school children in the borough, one of only a few councils in the country that does this. This costs the council £3m per year, and means that 19,000 children get a meal, equating to an estimated saving for families of £450 per child.
3. Although tackling crime and ASB is a police responsibility, the Council are investing in tackling crime and ASB by funding additional police officers and a council-operated ASB service. It has also set up a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection order to tackle the misuse of laughing gas and the associated ASB.

The Conservative group welcome the adoption of the borough-wide NOX Public Space Protection Order that we suggested several years before its adoption.

We regret that other ideas we have suggested have not been adopted to reduce ASB.

That residents have had to flee their homes after a home invasion following vehicle related ASB.

That we also need Public Spaces Protection Orders to deal with all vehicle related ASB including tunnel runs, vehicle based parties, and noisy cars.

4. The Council is also investing over £3m in an upgrade to the entire public space CCTV network in part to allow the relocation of the CCTV control room from Mulberry Place to the new Town Hall.

That new residential areas in Tower Hamlets including some of the densest places in the UK have no Council CCTV cameras.

The network largely reflects residential areas several decades ago.

That the opportunity to use technology like acoustic cameras to monitor noisy drivers is not being taken.

5. The Council has supported over 7,000 people into jobs or training since 2016, including supporting 1,052 young people, and created more than 1,000 apprenticeships.

In part paid for by s106 contributions from developers.

6. The Council's multi-million pound Tackling Poverty Fund has invested £6.6 million since 2017 in innovative programmes to support residents affected by welfare reforms. Last year it also provided over £750,000 in Crisis Grants through our Resident Support Scheme.

7. The current administration's work in turning the council around after the failures of the previous mayor. Tower Hamlets Council has transformed from being directly partially run by Government Commissioners in the wake of the former mayor's removal from office into an award-winning council but which still fails to deliver in a number of areas, for example:

- Failing OFSTED in 2017, being required to write an improvement plan after the most recent SEND inspection.
- That the financial accounts for three years now have not been signed off yet after multiple failings were found by our new auditors.
- Having the lowest recycling rate in London and the 2nd lowest in the country
- Failing to ensure the long-term condition of Tiller Road Leisure Centre, York Hall and St Georges Baths so that they could not re-open last year and that we will lose 1/5 of our swimming provision for 6 years as a result.
- Failing to build the much-delayed new South Quay Bridge.
- Losing access to GLA money for Poplar Riverside.
- That it has lost more than £30 million through inflation in the last 4 years.

8. The Council's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission has set out recommendations for how we make our community fairer and more equal. It is currently delivering on these, and backing this up with over £1.5m of council funding to meet the ambitious targets set forth by the Commission.

That 59% of the Council staff are BAME as at December 2021 but only 30.17% of staff earning more than £60k are BAME, that this

has dropped from 32.14% in December 2019. That it still does not understand why or in which department this happened in.

The relative pay of its own BAME staff has got worse.

9. The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and the council has committed to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner. In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country purely on the energy efficiency of housing in the borough, with so many new apartments built since the 1980's inevitably we have more energy efficient homes than other Boroughs with an older housing stock, this was not due to any direct action by the Council.

That in 2020 it bought a whole new fleet of diesel-powered refuse vehicles (after the City of London started trialing electric only refuse vehicles) and installed diesel storage tanks at its transport facility. That only one Council building has any form of renewable energy. That no Council building has any electric vehicle chargers because the Council has no purely electric road vehicles.

10. The Council funds a 100% council tax discount for the poorest in our community, one of the few places in the UK to offer this, meaning the poorest in Tower Hamlets don't have to pay a single penny of council tax. For the financial year 2021/22 the Council has so far awarded £33m in Council Tax Support to nearly 34,000 council taxpayers.

This reflects the failure for a generation now by Tower Hamlets Council to get so many of its residents into good jobs that would allow residents to be able to pay Council tax without help.

This Council believes:

11. Despite Council successes in the past four years, there is still more to be done to tackle the future challenges faced by Tower Hamlets residents.

But that its capacity for improvement is inadequate, that the Council is unable to do its day job in some areas, that it gets distracted whenever something goes wrong. That it remains a very small c conservative organization, incapable and unwilling to take any risk.

This Council resolves:

1. To continue its good work in tackling poverty and addressing inequalities in the borough, and delivering on residents' priorities.
2. To work diligently with residents, partner agencies and the Mayor

of London to ensure Tower Hamlets residents are supported in these uncertain times, and to listen to the concerns put forward by Tower Hamlets residents.

3. To work with other London boroughs to ensure good ideas and strategy can be shared and implemented for the benefit of all Londoners.
4. To focus relentlessly on delivery.
5. To have a clear plan for delivery
6. To change its culture and be more willing to do new things and to take appropriate risks.
7. To be more transparent in its comms activities about delivery.

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

The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed.**

RESOLVED:

This Council Notes:

1. In 2018, the Mayor pledged 2,000 new council homes by 2022, and the Council is on track to hit this target, with 2,046 homes delivered or in delivery. There have also been 6,876 new affordable homes completed across the borough since 2015.
2. That this Council provides Universal Free School Meals for all primary school children in the borough, one of only a few councils in the country that does this. This costs the council £3m per year, and means that 19,000 children get a meal, equating to an estimated saving for families of £450 per child.
3. Although tackling crime and ASB is a police responsibility, the Council are investing in tackling crime and ASB by funding additional police officers and a council-operated ASB service. It has also set up a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection order to tackle the misuse of laughing gas and the associated ASB.
4. The Council is also investing over £3m in an upgrade to the entire public space CCTV network.
5. The Council has supported over 7,000 people into jobs or training since 2016, including supporting 1,052 young people, and created more than 1,000 apprenticeships.
6. The Council's multi-million pound Tackling Poverty Fund has invested £6.6 million since 2017 in innovative programmes to support residents affected by welfare reforms. Last year it also provided over £750,000 in Crisis Grants through our Resident Support Scheme.
7. The current administration's work in turning the council around after the failures of the previous mayor. Tower Hamlets Council has transformed from being directly run by Government Commissioners in the wake of the former mayor's removal from office into an award-winning council.

8. The Council's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission has set out recommendations for how we make our community fairer and more equal. It is currently delivering on these, and backing this up with over £1.5m of council funding to meet the ambitious targets set forth by the Commission.
9. The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and the council has committed to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner. In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country.
10. The Council funds a 100% council tax discount for the poorest in our community, one of the few places in the UK to offer this, meaning the poorest in Tower Hamlets don't have to pay a single penny of council tax. For the financial year 2021/22 the Council has so far awarded £33m in Council Tax Support to nearly 34,000 council taxpayers.

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2. To work diligently with residents, partner agencies and the Mayor of London to ensure Tower Hamlets residents are supported in these uncertain times, and to listen to the concerns put forward by Tower Hamlets residents.
3. To work with other London boroughs to ensure good ideas and strategy can be shared and implemented for the benefit of all Londoners.

Procedural Motion

Under Council Procedure Rule 9.1, the Speaker proposed that the time limit for the meeting be extended for 15 minutes to consider item 8 and the reports at item 10. This was **agreed**.

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE - WHITECHAPEL MARKET

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Harun Miah **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Motin Uz – Zaman **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** the following amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda

Added text is underlined
Deleted text is scored out.

This Council notes:

The Whitechapel Market was established nearly 120 years ago in 1904. In 1909, the Council bought the strip from Vallance Road to Mile End Gate.

Leading up to that, in the 1850s there were stalls and costermongers' barrows along the north side of Whitechapel Road from St Mary (Davenant) Street to Charrington's Brewery in Mile End Old Town. Some sections of the waste were given over to the setting-out of furniture and, street junctions aside, paved cart roads separated the ground at several points.

In 1904 Stepney Council sought to take control of the market on the waste in both Whitechapel and Mile End to regulate nuisance traders. Terms were agreed with the Manor in 1909 and the Council acquired strips on both north and south sides from Vallance Road east into Mile End where gardens were laid out in 1909–10. Thus regulated, trading west of Mile End Gate came to be called Whitechapel Market. It was noted in the 1970s for clothing, jewellery, flowers, second-hand records and hi-fi equipment.

By the 1980s, when there were 124 pitches between Vallance Road and Cambridge Heath Road, the market was being transformed by a transition to the latest edition of East Enders, Bangladeshi stallholders. They remain the predominant community trading in the Whitechapel Market with a wide range of items for all in the community including idiosyncratic products including clothing as well delicious food and delicacies hard to come by elsewhere.

In 1997 the Whitechapel conservation area was established and later renewed in 2008. It has seen various communities pass through including the French Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews and currently the Bangladeshis. It is a market that exemplifies market street trade. By the 1980s the Market was established from Vallance road to Cambridge Heath Road. In 2008 the Whitechapel Market became the market in the UK to recycle its waste.

The Market's street furniture was renewed as part of the High Street 2012 project. Alan Baxter & Associates and East Architecture Landscape Urban Design oversaw standardisation of demountable market stalls, and the additions of perforated metal screens to face the road and catenary lighting along the pavement on a row of standards, as well as new bollards and seating.

In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council launched an extensive survey with traders, business owners, residents and visitors of Whitechapel Market. All were asked what changes they would like to see, and the responses then went out to public consultation and have been included in the Action Plan 2022-25.

One of the things that traders were strongly in favour of was new stalls to be provided. This is a current project funded by a Levelling Up Grant and part of the Whitechapel Road Improvement Program (WRIP).

The Council has conducted face to face consultation with traders on the design of the stalls. The next one planned for mid-March. This will inform the

stall pilot scheme where a number of stalls will be installed to test the design, with feedback from traders informing the final design for the stalls.

There was an increase in pitch fees in Summer 2021, however no further increases are planned for 2021/22.

With regard to 2022/23 Markets are partway through a trader and public consultation on fees, these are broadly in line with inflation.

This Council believes:

~~That this culturally rich and historic Whitechapel Market is an important part of Tower Hamlets. We understand the concerns that many have about how faces the challenges of gentrification and rising property prices, as well concerns about the cost of living crisis while stall owners are struggling to make a decent income. Furthermore, the current and the continuing economic impact of the pandemic crisis with Covid has left many traders on the verge of collapse which has had such a profound effect on both our national and local economy.~~

~~In addition to this, the Tower Hamlets Council is looking to increase the rent for stalls by 40p per day Monday to Friday and £1.00 on Saturdays, which in turn equates to £3.00 a week and £156 per year (11.4%). At times of crisis and where support is needed it seems unethical, inappropriate and cruel that the Council should increase rents now for stakeholders already under serious financial pressure. As this is the case for all market stalls in Tower Hamlets, the Council should freeze rents for all market stalls and consider further support for these unique and local market traders or else this increase by the Council cause them to disappear forever and simply be replaced by gentrified standard pop-up shops that have no real local connection or heritage.~~

This Council Resolves:

- ~~1. To freeze all increases to rent for market stalls in Tower Hamlet for this tax year and undertake a review in the next financial year. To continue working with the traders and business owners in Whitechapel Market see how the Council can assist in these uncertain economic times.~~
- ~~2. To protect the market stallholders from being priced out due to gentrification thereby supporting local history and heritage.~~
- ~~3. Not restrict or set quotas on what can legally be sold. To continue to work with traders at Whitechapel Market and engage with customers to ensure the goods offered are diverse and it offers a wide range of good, so that traders can also apply to change what they are licenced for through a variation each quarter.~~
- ~~4. To continue to engage with the stallholders in any changes to the dynamics and processes relating to Whitechapel Market.~~

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

The motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**

RESOLVED:**This Council notes:**

The Whitechapel Market was established nearly 120 years ago in 1904. In 1909, the Council bought the strip from Vallance Road to Mile End Gate.

Leading up to that, in the 1850s there were stalls and costermongers' barrows along the north side of Whitechapel Road from St Mary (Davenant) Street to Charrington's Brewery in Mile End Old Town. Some sections of the waste were given over to the setting-out of furniture and, street junctions aside, paved cart roads separated the ground at several points.

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In 1997 the Whitechapel conservation area was established and later renewed in 2008. It has seen various communities pass through including the French Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews and currently the Bangladeshis. It is a market that exemplifies market street trade. By the 1980s the Market was established from Vallance road to Cambridge Heath Road. In 2008 the Whitechapel Market became the market in the UK to recycle its waste.

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This Council believes:

That this culturally rich and historic Whitechapel Market is an important part of Tower Hamlets. We understand the concerns that many have about gentrification and rising property prices, as well concerns about the cost of living crisis and the continuing economic impact of the pandemic which has had such a profound effect on both our national and local economy.

This Council Resolves:

1. To continue working with the traders and business owners in Whitechapel Market see how the Council can assist in these uncertain economic times.
2. To continue to work with traders at Whitechapel Market and engage with customers to ensure the goods offered are diverse and it offers a wide range of good, so that traders can also apply to change what they are licenced for through a variation each quarter.
3. To continue to engage with the stallholders in any changes to the dynamics and processes relating to Whitechapel Market.

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

There were none

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Committee Calendar 2022-23

The Council considered the report of the Monitoring Officer regarding the Council's committee calendar. Due to time constraints, the recommendations were put to Members without debate.

RESOLVED:

1. Approve the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. To delegate to the Monitoring Officer the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Panels that are set up subsequent to

this report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

3. To note that the Annual Meeting of Council on 25 May 2022 may be moved to another venue depending on Covid safety requirements at that time and that should new Covid restrictions be introduced this may also apply to other future meetings.

10.2 Members Allowances Scheme 2022-23

The Council considered the report of the Monitoring Officer regarding the Members Allowances Scheme. Due to time constraints, the Council moved straight to the vote on the recommendations without debate.

The recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

1. Adopt the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Agree that the Members Allowances Budget be adjusted as necessary to cover the costs following the uprating of the local government pay award as set out at 3.7 of the report.
3. To agree that the General Purposes Committee lead on any required engagement with the upcoming London Independent Remuneration Panel in-depth review of Member Allowances and that the Committee is delegated authority to consider the outcome of that review, reporting back to Council as required for decision.

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Due to lack of time, the questions were not considered and written responses will be provided. The written responses are attached at Appendix A. (TO FOLLOW)

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Due to lack of time, no motions were considered

13. URGENT MOTION

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable the following urgent motion to be debated without notice:

13.1 Urgent Motion regarding Ukraine

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as tabled.

Following debate, the motion was put to a vote and was **agreed unanimously**.

RESOLVED:

This Council Notes:

- 1) The Putin regime's illegal invasion of Ukraine is an horrific attack not only on the Ukrainian people, but also on sovereignty, democracy, freedom and the rule of law.
- 2) The Ukrainian people continue to show incredible courage, dignity and resilience in the face of the horrific acts caused by Putin's invasion.
- 3) The many reports of individual and collective acts of bravery in defence of the nation's freedom and democracy, as well as heart-breaking reports about those who have tragically lost their lives because of Putin's actions.
- 4) The devastating plight of refugees from Ukraine who have been forced from their home in the most brutal manner, causing the biggest refugee migration since World War II.
- 5) The open letter signed by all the political groups in Tower Hamlets to the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK which outlines support for and solidarity with Ukraine.

This Council believes:

- 1) This invasion is due to the actions of President Putin and is not reflective of the Russian population. Many ordinary Russians have bravely protested the attack on Ukraine.
- 2) The Council stands united with both the Ukrainian and Russian communities in Tower Hamlets, and strongly condemns any abuse and harassment of these communities.
- 3) The East End has always been a magnet for opportunity and an area which has welcomed immigration and diversity throughout its history, and this will continue to be the case for our friends from Ukraine.

This Council resolves:

- 1) To work on a united cross-party basis to offer what support we can for the Ukrainian people affected by this senseless invasion.
- 2) To work with the Government on the 'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme to ensure refugees fleeing the atrocities taking place in Ukraine can have a safe haven in Tower Hamlets, such as the council's ongoing work to support a number of Afghan families.
- 3) To challenge anyone who seeks to sow division by making any derogatory or harassing comments towards anyone in the Ukrainian and Russian communities.

The meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

Responses to Questions not put at the Council meeting on 16th March 2022

11.1 Question from Councillor Krysten Perry:

Can the Mayor please provide us an update on the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

The Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund invests £3.6 million across 45 projects to kickstart the borough's recovery from the pandemic. This is split across:

- 9 community led recovery projects
- 13 healthy recovery projects
- 3 economic recovery projects
- 20 projects focusing on supporting children and young people.

3 examples of the kind of work funded are:

The Mayor's High Street Clean Ups which targets litter and grime in high streets and town centres in the borough. This includes deep cleaning of pavements, graffiti removal, fly tip collection and litter picking.

Solace Women's Aid has been supported by funding for 3 additional domestic violence case workers, who specialise in mental health and working with the Somali community. During the pandemic domestic violence charities have reported a sharp increase in demand for services and we are doing our bit to tackle this.

It funds our COVID-19 Recovery Volunteer Hub assisting the Hub to register an additional 338 volunteers between October 2021 to February 2022, so we now have over 3,700 volunteer who are doing great work across our whole community.

11.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor explain why Tower Hamlets under his leadership, has such a poor reputation in prosecuting fly tippers and issued no fixed penalty notices to fly tippers between 2015 and March 2021 according to DEFRA.

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

Tower Hamlets Council has a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping.

- We have stepped-up enforcement, increased monitoring of hotspot areas and improved communication. We have improved our clearance response times and made it easier for people to report fly-tipping using our website and Love Your Neighbourhood App.
- In February 2020, we increased the fixed penalty notice for fly-tipping from £80 to £400, with no discount for early payment. And we are prosecuting people and businesses who fail to pay.

- This January a local business was found guilty of illegal fly-tipping and ordered to pay £1,000 fine and £2,132 costs.
- Prior to April 2021 council teams used fixed penalty notices for littering to deal with most of the fly tipping incidents.
- In the period 2016 to 2021 we investigated over 57,000 incidents and issued approximately 3400 £80 Fixed Penalty Notices.
- Between December 2020 and December 2021, we carried out the following fly action:
 - 7,046 incidents investigated
 - 2,147 warning letters issued to residents for dumping or depositing waste on the wrong days
 - 231 warning letters issued to businesses
 - 431 £400 FPNs issued

11.3 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed:

What support and help has been given to local businesses during these difficult times by the council and how are we supporting local people back to employment in particular young people?

Response of Motin Uz-Zaman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Work, Economic Growth and Faith:

The council has done a huge amount to support residents and local businesses throughout the pandemic and we recently received a London councils award in recognition of our efforts.

Our business support includes:

- Distributing over £200m provided in grants and reliefs to more than 5,000 businesses.
- 598 businesses received free expert-led advice from the council
- Our Pivot, Creative Freelance and Business Adaptations Projects will provide support and grants to 475 small and micro businesses.

Our employment support for residents has included:

- WorkPath supported 326 residents into work in 2020/21.
- Support and training provided through the JETS programme to 259 residents who have been unemployed for over 12 weeks.
- Central London Works Programme has supported over 450 to overcome health barriers and get into work.
- 263 people have been equipped with tech and digital skills through apprenticeships and work experience opportunities through the LIFT Employability Incubator

For young residents, Young WorkPath has continued to support young people not in education, employment or training.

We secured 550 Kickstart placements across the borough, including 33 London Living Wage placements within the Council.

We re-established the Tower Hamlets Careers Leads Network.

11.4 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

There have been recent reports that Tower Hamlets has once again failed to safeguard children, with one child going missing 107 times in two years and was found to be a victim of modern slavery. Can the Mayor explain why such gross negligence has taken place under his watch?

Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services, Education and Equalities (Statutory Deputy Mayor:

Firstly, I'd like emphasise just how seriously we take these matters. Safeguarding children is one of our most important duties as a local council, and indeed a duty that all of us councillors share as corporate parents.

I want to draw Cllr Ahmed's attention to the Ofsted report which said that – and I quote – “Highly vulnerable children at risk of exploitation, including those missing from home, school or care, receive effective, bespoke services, delivered sensitively by skilled and committed staff. Strong partnerships serve to protect these children from harm.”

Ofsted has also said – and again I'm quoting – that “leaders and managers have had a relentless focus to improve practice to deliver good experiences and progress for children and their families.”

In response to the recent IICSA report, which I believe Cllr Ahmed is referring to, the report based upon a review of the work done by Councils and Police between April 2017 and April 2019 in six areas of the country including Tower Hamlets.

The Inquiry found weaknesses in safeguarding practice between 2017 and 2019, as had already been identified by Ofsted in their 2017 inspection, whilst recognising the positive improvements that the Council had delivered and which were recognised by Ofsted later in 2019 in their inspection report and which I've already mentioned.

There are some helpful recommendations from the IICSA report that will help with our local plans to strengthen the protection of children from sexual exploitation, in particular in respect of the consistent and systematic use of data, and the strengthening of our local problem profile.

We have already delivered a number of specific improvements including:

- The Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy approved in 2020.
- Creating a dedicated Exploitation Team, which is now co-located with Police colleagues.
- Daily meetings are held to review risks and initiate protective actions.
- Creating a dedicated analyst role to collate intelligence which informs protection plans.
- Offering children who go missing a return home interview within 72 hours.

The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children's Partnership prioritises Child Sexual Exploitation as one of the three areas of harm that are our top priorities, and this work is guided by the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy 2021-24 approved in the autumn of 2020 and overseen by a dedicated multi-agency sub-group reporting to the Executive.

The Council has sustained its dedicated Exploitation Team, which ensures that the most vulnerable children receive skilled support and that partners are aware of the signs of exploitation, and this Exploitation Team is co-located with Police colleagues, and they hold a daily meeting to review information about risk and to task actions and interventions both to protect children as well as to disrupt and prosecute offenders, and this joint work has helped to identify an increased number of networks and children at risk in the past year.

We deliver multi-agency training in respect of exploitation and youth violence, and a Multi-Agency Risk Panel oversees the work with individual children who are at risk or have been harmed through sexual exploitation and the linked risks of criminal exploitation, missing, trafficking and serious youth violence.

11.5 Question from Councillor Dan Tomlinson:

How many School Streets have been implemented across the borough since 2018?

Response of Councillor Kahar Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm – (Job Share post as part of Social Inclusion and Public Realm portfolio):

Tower Hamlets has implemented 23 school streets across the borough since 2018. This amounts to over 10,000 children receiving cleaner air and reduce health risk as a result of the scheme. Clean air is one of our key priorities and forms a part of the council's commitment to tackling the Climate Emergency. Tower Hamlets was declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and the council has committed to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner.

It is important that we do our best to clean up the air we breathe in borough for our children, as the average lung capacity of a child in Tower Hamlets is up to 10 per cent less than the national average. Along with cleaner air, the school streets scheme has created more spaces for our children to play in a safe and healthy environment as we are keen to ensure the best start for every child.

11.6 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood:

Why did Tower Hamlets have the worst recycling rates in London in 2020/21 and the 2nd worst in the country?

Response of Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning:

It is well established that people living in flats recycle less than those who live in houses. Most boroughs are able to easily capture food and garden waste from street level properties which boosts the overall recycling rate. 85% of properties in Tower Hamlets are flats and this poses a big challenge to achieve high recycling rates.

The quarter 1 and 2 2021/22 dry recycling only rate has shown that Tower Hamlets compares favourably with other London boroughs as well as outperforming a number.

ReLondon conducted a study in 2018 on Peabody estates across London to help understand why people in flats recycle less. We have gained funding, via CiL, to take forward ReLondon's recommendations including a roll out of their 'First Recycling Package' across the borough. This package includes clean and well-maintained bins and areas, and clear and visible signage on and above the bins. Extra funding has been awarded to develop a new communication campaign for 2022/23 to encourage behavioural change which includes raising awareness of the food waste collection service to houses/low rise properties and to increase participation. The Recycling Champions scheme went live in October 2021 and has over 40 members. The scheme aims to enable residents to help to spread the word about reducing, reusing and recycling amongst their peers.

We have gained funding, via CiL, to take forward the recommendations from the ReLondon study and roll out the Flats Recycling Package across the borough. This project will span the next three years and will improve the recycling facilities in blocks of flats and on estates to help and encourage more recycling.

Work is planned to raise awareness of the food waste collection service to houses/low rise properties and to increase participation. Promotion of the food waste collection service will begin in September 2022.

Extra funding has been awarded to develop a new communication campaign for 2022/23 to support behaviour change.

The Recycling Champions scheme went live in October 2021 and has over 40 members. The scheme aims to enable residents to help to spread the word about reducing, reusing and recycling amongst their peers.

11.7 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead:

Can the Mayor inform us of how many trees were lost in the borough due to Storm Eugene and what are the plans to replace them?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

The council manages 25,000 trees across the borough. Of these, I'm sorry to say that 48 were brought down by the recent storms. 10 of these were on highways, and 38 in parks.

However I'm delighted to say that all of the trees that were lost during Storm Eunice will be replaced as part of our annual tree planting programme, which resumed on (Friday 25 February)

Over the last three years, more than 5,000 have been planted within the borough's Highways and parks.

Tower Hamlets is also among the first councils in the UK to join Trees for Streets, a national street tree sponsorship scheme that aims to plant more than 250,000 street trees nationwide over the next 10 years.

The parks' team will use the wood from the fallen trees as a soil improver and mulch to suppress weeds, and to create habitat piles for bugs and wildlife in parks' woodland areas. Some will also be turned into high-grade chip suitable for smaller biomass boilers and used to generate energy.

It is also available for any local artists or community groups who would like to use it to create benches or sculptures for public benefit.

All the Council's trees are inspected regularly by a qualified arboriculturist. High category trees, which include those in falling distance of a highway or play area, are inspected every 18 months. Low category trees are inspected every three years.

11.8 Question from Councillor Harun Miah:

On the council's website it states 'The housing crisis is the greatest challenge facing London today' can the Mayor explain why he has only built 224 new homes in his 7 years? Clearly this does not demonstrate a robust approach to tackling 'The housing crisis is the greatest challenge facing London today'.

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing:

- The housing crisis is a national problem which has a severe local impact.
- As a council, we're on track to deliver have 2,000 additional homes either delivered or in the pipeline by the end of this administration.
- These new homes are being delivered through a variety of routes, including newly built homes and buy-backs.
- We currently have completed 225 new build council homes, with another 225 on site.
- 157 new build homes were built in conjunction with a developer via a s.106 agreement.
- A further 179 new build sites have received planning consent and are due on site shortly. Another 42 have planning consent and 14 have been submitted for planning.
- Funding has been approved for 406 new builds and 32 acquisitions. Of these, 222 have been submitted for planning and the others are at pre-planning stages.
- A pipeline of other 318 other mainly new build homes are at various stages of feasibility, consultation and planning.
- In addition, 421 homes have been acquired from existing Council leaseholders, Poplar Harca disposals and a small number of out of borough purchases and 27 converted from other uses.

- This is 2,046 homes in total.

11.9 Question from Councillor Kevin Brady:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the continued efforts to address the persistent fly-tipping & waste problems around Middleton Green and the surrounding areas, including Bethnal Green Road?

Response of Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning:

Most of the fly tipping in these areas has been focused around the textile recycling banks. These are being removed and our Environmental Services teams will continue to monitor the area to identify those households responsible for dumping. We will issue advice, guidance, and warning letters where necessary and follow up with enforcement action if required.

Keeping our borough clean is a top priority for us and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets has recently announced a £2.1m funding to tackle fly-tipping and waste as well as boost recycling. The funding will mean additional staff to target fly-tippers, 200 new bins, more vehicles to collect waste and recycling, as well as supporting waste and recycling services to deal with growing levels of waste as the borough's population grows. This comes as part of our ongoing commitment to target litter and grime across the borough to make Tower Hamlets a cleaner, safer and fairer borough.

11.10 Question from Councillor Shah Ameen:

Residents in Tower Hamlets see crime and ASB as a priority in the borough. Can the Cabinet Member please provide me with an update on the work the Council has done in partnership with our colleagues in the police to tackle crime and ASB?

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:

Tower Hamlets Council is committed to tackling crime and ASB in our borough and our recent work with our partners in the Metropolitan Police and other external organisations shows great progress. I will provide an update on our most recent successes.

The council continues to provide council-funded police officers, known as the Partnership Task Force (PTF). Since April 2021 the PTF has undertaken more than 9,000 hours of uniformed patrols, issued nearly 200 antisocial behaviour warnings, conducted 376 stop and searches and made 53 detections for possession of drugs or possession with intent to supply.

The council's award-winning Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) team continues to offer support for victims of domestic abuse and improve women's safety, offering training sessions to encourage male allyship and reporting of abuse.

The council is also working to deliver its CCTV Transformation Programme, a £3.1million investment to upgrade the whole CCTV network to new digital

technology, which will increase visibility and allow the council to better support the police and tackle crime.

We also continue to have regular joint meetings with our partners to respond to emerging issues and problem locations, identifying required actions to satisfy local issues.

11.11 Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed:

When are we going to see any improvements to Whitechapel markets?

Response of Motin Uz-Zaman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Work, Economic Growth and Faith:

The Council has initiated the Whitechapel Road Improvements Programme in response to the significant changes that are underway in the Whitechapel area, including the arrival of Crossrail and the relocation of the Council's Town Hall to the Old Royal London Hospital.

The Programme features three strands:

Firstly, Public Realm: enhancements to the quality, organisation and functionality of the footways to increase accessibility, wayfinding and safety, and clearly define spaces for different uses and activities.

Secondly, Market Stalls: Upgrading the market stall infrastructure to make them easier to use and improve the shopping environment.

And thirdly, Market Management: Determining a vision for the long-term success of the market and improving the day-to-day function of the market operation.

Combined, these changes will make a significant change to the area, with a range of benefits including the promotion of sustainable modes of movement to promote accessibility and safety, strengthening the market by supporting existing traders with new stalls infrastructure, reducing clutter and waste issues, promoting growth, and encouraging opportunities.

The Council has been working with landscape designers and architects to develop the proposals for the public realm and new market stalls, and held a public consultation between the 29th November 2021 and 9th January 2022 to gather the views of residents, businesses and visitors. Feedback from this consultation is now being considered by the design team to make amends to the designs, and begin to develop detailed proposals, with work on the southern footway expected to begin in the first half of 2022. Separately, a prototype market stall will be delivered in Summer 2022 to allow market traders to test the proposed design and provide detailed feedback to inform the final scheme. It is anticipated that work to the northern footway and the market stalls will take place in 2023.

In addition, the Council had carried out an extensive consultation for a Borough wide Markets Action plan that also includes a dedicated Whitechapel Action Plan. This is planned to launch in Quarter 2 2022 and run through to 2027. This will also bring forward a number of projects to improve Whitechapel Market.

For more information on the Programme, a dedicated webpage can be found on the Council's Let's Talk Tower Hamlets webpage at <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/wrip>

11.12 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze:

Can the Mayor or Lead Member update us on the Mayor's High Street Clean Up?

Response of Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning:

The project has already covered locations in Shadwell, Whitechapel, Limehouse, Spitalfields & Banglatown and Bethnal Green South delivering graffiti cleaning, jet washing, fly tip collection, litter picking and parking enforcement activity.

We have engaged with local businesses, community groups and residents.

In the first week it supported 20 businesses with Graffiti cleaning support, over 500m of pavement jet washed/day, 67 waste investigations (resulting in 12 section notices and 4 FPNs) and 10 fly tip filled cage vehicles.

The project has looked to identify damaged footways and street furniture, tidy up around markets, engage with specialist contractors to clean the roads and gullies around our Street Market Food Courts, and target on street utility providers to address defaced apparatus such as old phone boxes.

We'll continue to target these hotspots across the borough so we have a cleaner and greener Tower Hamlets.

11.13 Question from Councillor Bex White:

I have been involved in a handful of cases where people with young children are in temporary accommodation that is completely unsuitable, and the cabinet member has been helpful in dealing with these when I have raised these issues.

However I am concerned that for every case that comes to councillors there might be others who don't realise that there is help available, and are suffering at the hands of unfit landlords. I would like to know what criteria the council uses to assess the suitability of temporary accommodation and how can we be assured that people in crisis are not being forced into accommodation that is unsafe?

Response of Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing:

- We are committed to improving the quality and location of temporary accommodation.
- I recently visited new homes in Turin Street which will ensure that people who become homeless can have access to good quality temporary accommodation and help keep them close to their family and friends here in the borough.
- The council has extensive property standards criteria that it uses to procure temporary accommodation. The criteria covers a wide range of requirements such as location, property type, minimum floor space, kitchen and bathroom facilities, floor coverings, furniture, and more. All suppliers of TA are required to ensure that TA being offered meets the standards set out

- New suppliers providing properties for TA use for the first time are required to undergo inspections on their first 5 properties to ensure that they meet this standard.
- Where we have identified or been made aware of a property failing to meet the standards, this escalates to relevant managers in order to ensure that prompt action is taken right away. This may be a quick turnaround on remedial work that may have been overlooked or the immediate return of a property to the respective supplier.
- Suppliers for whom we receive a number of complaints (i.e. those consistently breaching the standards) are then required to have their properties inspected on each occasion again, until officers are satisfied that standards are being met.

11.14 Question from Councillor Tarik Khan:

Can the Cabinet Member please give us an update on the two food recycling pilots in the borough?

Response of Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning:

We're committed to improving recycling rates across the borough, and we hope our food recycling pilot helps us achieve that.

The council's waste service is currently running a food waste pilot project in two locations in Tower Hamlets with the aim of testing logistics and engagement and costing a borough-wide food waste service rollout.

Preparatory work for the pilot began in May 2021, which included liaising with all stakeholders and the two sites, Besford and Dinmont, and The Bow Quarter.

Having pre-delivered the 5 litre in-door caddies and biodegradable food waste sacks to estate managers in early October, the project formally began in early November once the outdoor brown food waste bins were on site.

Leaflets explaining the process to residents were also delivered in November and posters supplied to place on notice boards.

The pilot is monitored every three weeks with site visits on a variety of days and times, along with regular contact with estate managers who provide resident feedback.

Feedback so far has been very positive, and we'll continue to review this before deciding on next steps.

11.15 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:

Will the lead member provide an update on the average waiting time for a housing OT assessment and the action being taken to reduce that to a more acceptable timeframe?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing:

There is a backlog of OT assessments - but we are taking action to clear this.

The service has worked hard so that a backlog of 155 cases in October 2021 has now been reduced to 55 cases. In the same period the earliest outstanding medical application date has been reduced from 12 to 5 months.

We will be clearing the rest of the backlog by end of April 2022 and then will put in place measures to complete medical OT assessments within an 8 week target.

I know how life changing OT improvements can be to our residents and we will continue our focus to reduced waiting times.

11.16 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

Will the Mayor commit to taking a Public Health approach in addressing knife and violent crime in the borough?

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:

Violent crime is a serious issue and a key priority area for the council. In 2018, the council and the community safety partnership adopted a public health approach to tackling violence.

We acknowledge that tackling violence requires a whole system approach and this is addressed not just by Tower Hamlets council, but in partnership with other key agencies such as the Metropolitan Police Service, public health and wider partners. This commitment has been embedded within the published Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-24: focusing on early intervention and prevention, and the wider determinants of crime and community safety to address violence locally.

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