

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2021**

**THE NEW ARMOURIES, TOWER OF LONDON, LONDON EC3N 4AB**

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Farouque Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor James King
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor Kevin Brady	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Councillor Dan Tomlinson
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Sirajul Islam	

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of

- Councillor Sufia Alam
- Councillor Asma Begum
- Councillor Dipa Das
- Councillor Marc Francis
- Councillor Ehtasham Haque
- Councillor Danny Hassell
- Councillor Ayas Miah
- Councillor Harun Miah
- Councillor Puru Miah
- Councillor Mohammed Pappu
- Councillor Kyrsten Perry
- Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
- Councillor Andrew Wood

Apologies for absence were also received from Jim Fitzpatrick - one of the nominees for the Freedom of the Borough Award.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

## **3. FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH - NOMINATIONS REPORT**

The Speaker of the Council invited Members to consider the report of the Freedom of the Borough Panel.

The Speaker explained that the Freedom of the Borough was the highest honour or recognition that a Council could bestow on an individual in recognition of their outstanding achievements. This is the second time it had been awarded in almost twenty years.

The Speaker stated that he was very pleased to have chaired the cross party Freedom of the Borough Panel that assessed the nominations for the award. The Panel sought and assessed many high quality nominations based on the criteria set out in the report. On behalf of the Panel, he thanked everyone who submitted a nomination. He also thanked the Panel for their hard work and dedication to support this award process.

After considerable discussion, the Panel determined that five nominations should be submitted to Council for consideration for the Freedom of the Borough.

They were:

- Sufia Alam
- Jim Fitzpatrick
- Sister Christine Frost fcJ
- Sir George Iacobescu CBE and
- Abdul Aziz Sardar

At the invitation of the speaker, a number of individuals and Councillors addressed the Committee on their reasons for nominating the candidates. These were:

- Mahbub Alam – on Sufia Alam
- Lord Michael Cashman - Sister Christine Frost fcJ
- Sheikh Aliur Rahman - Sir George Iacobescu CBE
- Councillor Kahar Chowdhury - Sister Christine Frost fcJ
- Councillor Motin Uz-zaman - Jim Fitzpatrick
- Councillor James King - Jim Fitzpatrick
- Councillor Helal Uddin - Abdul Aziz Sardar

Mayor John Biggs, alongside Group Leaders, (Councillors Peter Golds, and Kabir Ahmed) and as well as a number of other Councillors also spoke in recognition of the candidates.

They highlighted the following points in relation to each of the candidates:

- Sufia Alam. It was stated that it was a great honour to speak in support of Sufia Alam in view of all her tireless community work, and her role in acting as a strong advocate for women from different backgrounds, especially Muslim and Bangladeshi women. It was noted that she had done so much good work over many years, particularly during the pandemic - for example by setting up a number of community projects to support health and wellbeing, education and recreational activities. Her voluntary work included leading the Women's collective, significantly raising recycling rates. These were very special and unique achievements.
- Sister Christine Frost fcJ. The speakers paid tribute to Sister Christine's great ability to lead and her tireless work, over decades, to bring people together, regardless of their faith, and her persistence in overcoming barriers, especially during the pandemic to help vulnerable residents. She had given so much and had changed many lives. The speakers gave many examples of Sister Christine's work, particularly in relation to tackling poverty, promoting community cohesion and preventing loneliness and isolation. Sister Christine's contributions have been massive and she was an inspiration.
- Sir George Iacobescu CBE. The speakers also addressed the meeting in recognition of Sir George's achievements. This was in view of his contributions towards the development of Canary Wharf, as a world class business centre and his wide-ranging fundraising and charity work. Similar to many of the candidates, he had arrived in London from a modest background working his way up. His work and leadership skills had transformed Canary Wharf - bringing people together to the benefit of many people and creating many jobs. He has also shown that it was possible to pursue business interests - whilst also making a huge contribution to the community.
- Jim Fitzpatrick. It was noted that, as one of the Borough's MP's from 1997 to 2017, he was an outstanding parliamentarian, who went above and beyond his call of duty. He raised the standard for politicians given his many good qualities. In particular, Members welcomed how he proactively worked to reach out to constituents, and his willingness to help others. This included representatives from across the political spectrum. They also noted that he regularly took the time to take school children on Parliamentary tours, and took on many important causes. This included taking forward a campaign to secure justice for the victims of the Docklands bomb. He has left a strong legacy.
- Abdul Aziz Sardar. Tributes were also paid to the work of Abdul Aziz Sardar given his tireless community work to promote diversity and cohesion, particularly in respect of helping the Bangladeshi community. It was considered that he was one of the first of his generation 'to break the glass ceiling' and he has always been a great role model and an inspirational mentor for so many - especially for the younger people growing up in the community. His many achievements included the establishment of the Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques. The speakers also praised Sardar's involvement with Poplar HARCA and the Bromley by Bow Centre, which had improved the lives of many.

The recommendations were put to a vote and **unanimously agreed**

**RESOLVED**

That the Council

1. Award the Freedom of the Borough to:
  - Sufia Alam
  - Jim Fitzpatrick
  - Sister Christine Frost fcJ
  - Sir George Iacobescu CBE
  - Abdul Aziz Sardar
  
2. Thank all those who submitted nominations for the Freedom of the Borough.

The recipients were then presented with the certificate and flowers

At the invitation of the Speaker, the recipients addressed the meeting and thanked the Council for the award. (A representative spoke on behalf of Jim Fitzpatrick)

The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

Speaker of the Council