

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.03 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2022

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

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Kabir Hussain
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Councillor Kamrul Hussain
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Shubo Hussain
Councillor Leelu Ahmed	Councillor Asma Islam
Councillor Musthak Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Saied Ahmed	Councillor Ahmodul Kabir
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Ahmodur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Sabina Khan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Amy Lee
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Abdul Malik
Councillor Maisha Begum	Councillor Abdul Mannan
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	Councillor Ana Miah
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Amin Rahman
Councillor Jahed Choudhury	Councillor Rebaka Sultana
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	Councillor Maium Talukdar
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury	Councillor Bellal Uddin
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Abdul Wahid
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	

Members Present Virtually:

Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Rachel Blake
Councillor James King	Councillor James King

SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Shafi Ahmed in the Chair

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He advised that he was pleased to have been able to participate in many events and activities in the community over the last couple of months.

Passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The Speaker reported that he had attended various community events to mark the passing of the Queen and expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude to all involved. He had attended a memorial service at All Saints in Poplar, which included representatives from the Council, the inter faith forum and the local community. He then asked those present to join him in standing for a two minute silence to remember the late Queen.

He had led the proclamation of King Charles III. He wished the new King every success as he took on his role.

Other highlights included:

- The Council's parks and open spaces service had won an award for City of the Year 2022 at the London in Bloom awards ceremony, which was hosted in the Borough.
- He had attended the Asian restaurant and takeaway awards, an industry which was very important to the borough. He was delighted once again to see Tower Hamlets businesses being nominated.
- He had met various community groups and organisations at annual events and celebrations and had also enjoyed getting to know more civic colleagues from other boroughs

Finally, he wished to pay tribute to the young men who had rescued residents from a fire at Bentworth Court, Bethnal Green; Sakariye, Zakariya and Saeed. He commended their bravery and thanked them for their selfless actions.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Suluk Ahmed.

Apologies for lateness were received by Councillor Rachel Blake.

It was noted that due to exceptional circumstances Councillor James King was joining the meeting remotely.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Following the receipt of a written request from a significant number of Members, the Monitoring Officer had agreed, in line with the Member Code of Conduct, to grant a general dispensation to all Councillors on Agenda Item 8 'Opposition Motion for Debate on Support for Small Businesses in the Face of the Energy Bill Crisis' as without the dispensation a large number of Members would have to declare a Pecuniary Interest and leave the room for the debate and this would impede the 'transaction of the business' as well as 'impact the

representation of the different political groups on the body conducting the business so as to alter the outcome of any vote on the matter’.

Councillor Shubo Hussain declared a non-disclosable non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 10.1 ‘Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan’ as he had a coffee shop on the boundary of the respective area.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on Wednesday 27 July 2022 be approved and signed by the Speaker as a correct record of proceedings.

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:

- The Council would be marking the following events and milestones in the coming weeks
 - Black History Month in October,
 - National Customer Services Week
 - National Hate Crime Week
 - World Mental Health Day on 10th October.
- Preparations were well advanced for the Bow Neighbourhood Planning Referendum. Polling day would be Thursday 13 October 2022.
- Matthew Eady, the new Director of Children’s Commissioning and Culture, would join the Council on 1 November 2022.
- He congratulated staff across Tower Hamlets, and particularly those in the Council, who received awards in the inaugural THT integrated care awards on 29 September and announced that the Team of specialist Teachers of the Deaf had been nominated for a Barts Health Allied Health Profession Day Award.
- The Council had received 8 gold awards at the London in Bloom awards for 2022 on 21 September, including the Large Park Award for Victoria Park and large cemetery, heritage and conservation awards for Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. The Council was named category winner for Town/City of the Year.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding CCTV on Gill Street

Lucilia Branco, Denise Otto and Shabul Zaman addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that the Council was committed to its investment plan to upgrade and replace all old cameras with a new high tech cameras. Whist deployable CCTV had recently been deployed in Gill Street. There were good reasons why CCTV installation there was not ideal and an alternative method of addressing ASB in that location would be explored.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Communities for a written response within 28 days.

5.2 Petition regarding Barleymow Estate

Derrick Cutler and Aftab Uddin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding responded to the matters raised in the petition. He acknowledged the difficulties faced by residents and the inadequate response of the previous administration. He explained that the delays related to a number of factors, but work should be completed by February 2024. The Council would be monitoring the situation to ensure this.

RESOLVED:

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

5.3 Petition regarding Antisocial Behaviour in and around Cambridge Heath Station

Ana Monzon, Anna Bosley and Chris Aria Tree addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that the current situation was a result of a lack of police presence in the street and a lack of investment from the previous administration. The petition had been raised with the local police. The Council under his administration had committed to significant investment in drug treatment, rehabilitation and recovery programs, and would work with police and partner organisations to tackle drug related crimes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Communities for a written response within 28 days.

5.4 Petition regarding Save our Safer Streets

Simon Ramsay, Jane Harris and Shaheena Parvin, addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Emergency responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that the Council was putting a robust consultation process in place to listen to all views on this matter and forge a solution that would unify the community and not pit one group against another. He urged Members to support his motion in response to the petition.

Following presentation of the petition Members held a debate on the issue. Two motions were tabled for consideration.

The First motion was Proposed by Councillor Asma Islam and seconded by Councillor Sirajul Islam

This Council notes that:

- Tower Hamlets has one of the highest levels of motor vehicle traffic in the country so there is a need to reduce vehicle use, as the Mayor said in his 28 September 2022 announcement. This is largely due to vehicles travelling through the borough, because Tower Hamlets has the lowest levels of car ownership in London with approximately only one third of households having access to a car. With the average lung capacity of a child in Tower Hamlets five per cent less than the national average, the Council's aim to tackle low air quality in the borough is important. With transport making up a significant portion of the borough's pollution, the trend towards an increase in vehicle miles in Tower Hamlets must be reversed.
- The implementation of the Liveable Streets was started by the previous Labour administration to reduce traffic and pollution in residential areas in Tower Hamlets, to create safer and more people-friendly and connected neighbourhoods. The target outcome was for all of our residents to enjoy a better environment with cleaner air and less noise and to find it easier and safer to walk and cycle locally.
- While the Liveable Streets schemes that were adopted were targeted at some of the more deprived residential areas in the borough, where there was the most need for capital improvements and had been developed following a thorough consultation with local residents, all areas across the borough should not have been treated the same and should have been directed by community support.
- School Streets, which was developed alongside the Liveable Streets programme, had the aim of identifying improvements such as removing areas where idling cars congregate and reducing traffic levels near schools significantly, making local children both healthier and safer. This policy was a big success and led to a 30% reduction in pollution near schools.

This Council further notes that:

- 3,094 local people signed the “Save Our Safer Streets in Tower Hamlets” petition, which is the second-highest number of people to complete a petition on the council’s website ever, and the most with regard to any road scheme. There is clearly a significant number of local people who feel strongly that the Liveable Streets schemes are working enough that they are campaigning extensively for their retention.
- A climate emergency has been declared by the council in 2019. The Mayor has an ambition for Tower Hamlets to be the greenest borough in London, including being a “net zero borough as soon as possible”. Actions to support a transition away from private car use and towards sustainable travel options including public transport, walking and cycling have to be part of that process.
- Transport for London has written to the Mayor of Tower Hamlets expressing concern about the complete closure of Liveable Streets, which could be detrimental to the local environment.
- Healthcare professionals, including the Leaders of Bart’s NHS Trust, have also written to the Mayor in response to his proposals, to express their concerns about the lack of evidence for his proposals, set against the established public health evidence that schemes which promote walking and cycling are “necessary measures in our response to both climate change and health inequalities.”
- Schools across the borough have also opposed the Mayor’s complete opening of the roads amid concerns that it will increase air pollution in the area.

This Council resolves:

- To remove Liveable Streets from the October cabinet agenda, to allow the council and the Mayor sufficient time to explore each scheme against consultation results, evidence and consultation views, including local health services and TfL.
- To ask the Mayor to seriously take into consideration the use of ANPR cameras to enable selective closure, allowing vulnerable residents and emergency service access, while discouraging through-traffic..
- To publish the results from the public consultations which finished on 7 August 2022 for transparency, as there has already been more than enough time to analyse the results fully. And to publish any evidence to support the council’s claims about the impacts of the Liveable Streets schemes to date.
- To create a working task force for each of the Liveable Streets schemes, with residents, ward councillors, local businesses, key stakeholders and officers, in order to find out what is working in the scheme and to develop bespoke solutions to issues in each area, where these are needed. The list of areas should include areas where implementations have already been removed and where the original plans were never implemented fully.

- To engage in a meaningful dialogue with TfL and GLA to discuss wider issues such as traffic calming, public transport and pedestrian and cyclist safety, which will support the council's 2019 Transport Strategy commitment to achieve 90% of journeys in the borough to be made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2041.
- To ask the Mayor to consider carefully the financial implications attached to removing the Liveable Streets schemes and what other urgent priorities could be funded instead.
- To implement any changes to Liveable Streets schemes on a case-by-case basis and ensure each scheme is guided by each area's diverse communities and stakeholders, along with thorough research and engagement mentioned above.

The second motion was proposed by Cllr Kabir Ahmed and seconded by Abu Choudhury:

Council notes:

- That In May, the people of Tower Hamlets demonstrated their desire for change, by voting overwhelmingly for Lutfur Rahman as Mayor and the Aspire Party as the largest Party on the Council.
- That the people of Tower Hamlets put their trust in a transformative Manifesto that offered real hope and a real vision for how we could rebuild our Borough.
- That this Manifesto listened to the people of Tower Hamlets, and put their needs and wishes first.
 - That one of the central pledges of this Manifesto was to get Tower Hamlets moving by removing the road closures implemented across the Borough by the previous administration.
 - That these closures have impacted thousands of working people in Tower Hamlets – from delivery drivers, to taxis and small businesses, carers – registered or otherwise – and people with commitments across the Borough, during a cost of living crisis.
 - That the Mayor is committed to ensuring that Tower Hamlets becomes a net-zero Borough as soon as possible, and has already initiated work on delivering the central pledges of his and his Administration's climate and energy offer.

Council believes:

- That it is right to consult residents and stakeholders – including the emergency services and businesses – on any decision to remove these road closures.

- That such a public opinion survey has recently come to a conclusion, receiving thousands of responses from across the Borough.
- That any decision to remove or retain these closures, before considering the results of these public opinion surveys, would pre-empt the right of such residents and stakeholders to have their voices fairly heard.
- That need to understand why people use their cars, what the barriers to public transport are for some, and how we can support them to move away from car usage.
- That this Mayor wants to represent all residents of this Borough and engage with them on this issue in an inclusive way.

Council resolves:

- To wait for all evidence gathered during these public opinion surveys to be analysed and considered with due diligence and process before any decision on the removal of these closures takes place.

Following debate the Motion **moved** by Councillor Asma Islam was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

The Motion **moved** Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:**Council notes:**

- That In May, the people of Tower Hamlets demonstrated their desire for change, by voting overwhelmingly for Lutfur Rahman as Mayor and the Aspire Party as the largest Party on the Council.
- That the people of Tower Hamlets put their trust in a transformative Manifesto that offered real hope and a real vision for how we could rebuild our Borough.
- That this Manifesto listened to the people of Tower Hamlets, and put their needs and wishes first.
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- That this Mayor wants to represent all residents of this Borough and engage with them on this issue in an inclusive way.

Council resolves:

- To wait for all evidence gathered during these public opinion surveys to be analysed and considered with due diligence and process before any decision on the removal of these closures takes place.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his verbal report to Council.

The Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Sirajul Islam then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks.

TRIBUTE TO QUEEN ELIZABETH II

In tribute to the passing of Her Majesty the Queen, the Speaker invited political group representatives to offer thoughts and reflections on her reign. Councillors offered reflections on her dedication, her extraordinary length of service and shared personal memories of times they had the privilege to meet

Her Late Majesty, reflecting on her warmth and grace. Each also offered best wishes to King Charles III for his reign.

7. **ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE**

Under Procedure Rule 12.1 (g), Councillor Kabir Ahmed gave notice that he was withdrawing his original motion for debate.

Under Procedure Rule 12.1 (n) he requested that Procedure Rule 11.2 be waived to allow the submission of an urgent motion to take its place. This request was seconded by Councillor Harun Miah. The Speaker accepted the reasons for urgency and put the proposal to the vote and it was **agreed**.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Abu Choudhury **seconded** the urgent motion as printed in the tabled papers supplement.

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.
- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.

- That in times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to proactively seek opportunities to maximise social and affordable house building, to help ease the pressures of the housing market on those with low and medium incomes.
- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

Councillor Asma Islam **moved** and Councillor Marc Francis **seconded** a proposed amendment to the urgent motion as printed in the tabled papers supplement.

Additions underlined

Deletions struck through

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.

- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council further notes:

- The previous Labour administration's work in building Council homes, which saw over 1,000 additional homes delivered during that time. However, more needs to be done to combat Government inaction.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That local authorities across the UK urgently needs a Labour Government in power to prioritise and support the rebuilding of our social housing stock and bring homes back into the ownership of local councils and communities, with home ownership opened up to millions more.
- That the current social housing stock needs to be reviewed and improvements considered alongside a program of housebuilding to ensure that the right to live in a home fit for human habitation is non-negotiable.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.
- That in these times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery economic turmoil, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are protected from the threats to are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to proactively seek opportunities to maximise social and affordable house building, to help ease the pressures of the housing market on those with low and medium incomes.
- To urgently look at the current social housing stock in the borough and immediately improve the quality of the housing, including providing better insulation to address fuel poverty in these difficult times.

- To do a review of the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in conjunction with the local communities and local businesses regarding its current state and to assess the negative impacts that could come from private developments related to anti-social behaviour, waste collection and the night economy.
- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.
- To set up a cross-party working group to look at developing Masterplans to all areas of Tower Hamlets, working with communities, businesses and the local Councillors.

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Asma Islam was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The motion as **moved** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.

- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.
- That in times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

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- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Sabina Akhtar **seconded** the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Abu Choudhury **moved** and Councillor Bodrul Choudhury **seconded** a proposed amendment to the motion as set out in the tabled papers supplement:

Additions underlined
Deletions struckthrough

This Council notes:

- The devastating impact the huge energy bills increase has had on small businesses across the borough, where many are now concerned that they will have to close due to the unreasonable cost.
- Small businesses are only recently recovering from the long term effects of the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The loss of small businesses across our borough will have a very negative affect on the local economy and residents who are already struggling in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis.

This Council believes:

- It is vital that innovative measures are immediately adopted – both at a Government level and at a Local Authority level - to support local businesses in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis, so local businesses, local jobs and local high streets are protected to benefit local residents.
- That schemes such as the Mayor's Energy Fund and Cost of Living package, that will benefit 7,000 households for the former and 27,000 residents for the latter, should be supported by all members of this Council and topped up as and when required.

This Council resolves to:

- Request the Mayor
 - o ~~To explore~~ Immediately set up a Small Business Hardship Fund to help small businesses in the borough in these times of economic crisis a Business Rates rebate for small businesses with Central Government to help offset the huge increase in cost of energy bills.
 - o ~~Provide Business Rates relief to small businesses to help offset the huge increase in the cost of energy bills.~~
 - o To continue providing support for small and medium enterprises, including the recently announced £28million dividend for Tower Hamlets' SMEs in the Mayor's Covid Additional Relief Fund, benefiting 850 businesses across the Borough.
 - o Work with the local Chambers of Commerce, community groups and business networks to establish a plan going forward on how to protect local businesses.

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Abu Choudhury was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

The motion as amended by Councillor Abu Choudhury was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The devastating impact the huge energy bills increase has had on small businesses across the borough, where many are now concerned that they will have to close due to the unreasonable cost.
- Small businesses are only recently recovering from the long term effects of the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The loss of small businesses across our borough will have a very negative affect on the local economy and residents who are already struggling in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis.

This Council believes:

- It is vital that innovative measures are immediately adopted – both at a Government level and at a Local Authority level - to support local businesses in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis, so local businesses, local jobs and local high streets are protected to benefit local residents.
- That schemes such as the Mayor's Energy Fund and Cost of Living package, that will benefit 7,000 households for the former and 27,000 residents for the latter, should be supported by all members of this Council and topped up as and when required.

This Council resolves to:

- Request the Mayor
 - o To explore a Business Rates rebate for small businesses with Central Government to help offset the huge increase in cost of energy bills.
 - o To continue providing support for small and medium enterprises, including the recently announced £28million dividend for Tower Hamlets' SMEs in the Mayor's Covid Additional Relief Fund, benefiting 850 businesses across the Borough.
 - o Work with the local Chambers of Commerce, community groups and business networks to establish a plan going forward on how to protect local businesses.

Councillor Peter Golds requested that it be recorded that he did not vote on this agenda item.

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

Nil items.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan – Post-Referendum Adoption

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Place.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Harun Miah **seconded** a motion not to adopt the neighbourhood plan as part of the development plan for the area as:

- There was a high turnout amongst the business community and most respondents voted against the plan. The resident turnout, narrowly in favour, was far lower.
- The Mayor and the. Aspire group had ambitions and a transformative vision for Spitalfields and Banglatown. This would recognise the historic and cultural significance of the area and would preserve and enrich these aspects. It would guard against gentrification and commercialisation, which presented an existential threat to many in Tower Hamlets.

During discussion, the Council heard views from members in support of the motion which included:

- The proposed plan was exclusionary. The Plan's designers had little regard for the cultural diversity of the area.
- The plan would interfere with the normal Council processes for planning applications, which ensured all stakeholders in the affected area are consulted.

The Council heard views against the motion which included:

- The result of the business vote should not be relied on as there were concerns regarding the legality of the business vote which were subject to investigation.
- The Council should not go against the will of residents, as evidenced by the result of the residents' vote, which was in favour of the plan.

Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 16.5. the names for and against the motion or abstaining from voting be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes. The motion was **agreed**."

The Mayor and Councillors recorded their votes on the motion as follows:-

RESOLVED

1. To note the results of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan referendums.
2. To agree not to adopt the neighbourhood plan as part of the development plan for the area.

3. To agree to set out the reasons for the above Recommendation 2 in a decision statement.

Vote to decide not to adopt the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan (Report)	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	For
Councillor Leelu Ahmed	For
Councillor Musthak Ahmed	For
Councillor Saied Ahmed	For
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	For
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	For
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For
Councillor Asma Begum	For
Councillor Maisha Begum	For
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	Against
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	For
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	For
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	For
Councillor Jahed Choudhury	For
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	For
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Marc Francis	For
Councillor Peter Golds	Against
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	For
Councillor Kabir Hussain	For
Councillor Kamrul Hussain	For
Councillor Shubo Hussain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Ahmodul Kabir	For
Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled	For
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	For
Councillor Sabina Khan	For
Councillor Amy Lee	For
Councillor Abdul Malik	For
Councillor Abdul Mannan	For
Councillor Ana Miah	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Harun Miah	For
Councillor Amin Rahman	For
Mayor Lutfur Rahman	For
Councillor Rebaka Sultana	For
Councillor Maium Talukdar	For
Councillor Bellal Uddin	For
Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
Councillor Abdul Wahid	For
Carried	

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following question and supplementary question was put and responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

11.1 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury on the progress of an Independent Council-wide Investigation.

Following on from last Full Council, could the Lead Member update the chamber on progress with the independent Council-wide investigation? Can the Lead Member tell us who has been appointed and set out a timeline for delivery?

Response from Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living

The Mayor was briefed by 16th of August as requested to outline delivery and provide assurance about improvement work. We are rapidly progressing reviews in the areas highlighted in the area of finance the council has commissioned worth technical accounting solutions to examine progress since the errors arose in 2018/2019 and highlight any gaps. Errors that arose in the supervision of the previous administration on the other side of this chamber. This administration take this very seriously. And a report is due to be shared with the officers in early October and will then be shared with Members. This follows the 2019 review when a finance improvement plan was implemented. On the youth justice service, a full diagnostic review has been commissioned to be carried out by two Youth Justice board approved and experienced improvement consultants to be completed February 2023.

Supplementary question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

Why were the accounts not audited for 6 years?

Councillor Saied Ahmed's response to supplementary question

This Council has a comprehensive Improvement Program, which provides assurance through our performance management framework, audit and external inspection regime. This includes corporate and public reporting, including audit committee, and Overview and Scrutiny and a commitment to an LGA corporate peer review next year to continue to drive improvement across all our services. It is important that audit papers are signed off. Now we are picking up the mess that we were left behind by the previous administration. We are working extensively hard with KPMG and Deloitte to make sure the accounts are signed off from 2017 onwards. So we are at a stage whereby the upcoming Audit Committee, we may be in a position to sign off the first two years.

Questions 11.2 to 11.27 were not put due to lack of time (Note: The written responses are included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No motions were considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.03 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

Responses to Questions not put at the Council meeting on 5 October 2022

11.2 Question from Councillor Rachel Blake

Will the Mayor or Lead Member provide the options appraisal analysis for removing much needed Council Homes schemes from the Capital Programme instead of other sources of funding?

Response:

The Capital Programme as approved is able support a specified level of funding for housing schemes.

Due to the significant inflationary increases experienced in recent months with building costs and supplies chains a number of schemes have exceeded their pre-tender budgetary levels.

In order to progress schemes to tender and start on site priority is given to those that are either most advanced, for example, that need to start on site due to planning permission expiry, those delivering the most homes or those where certain forms of funding are at risk.

To remain within the overall budgetary envelope this means that a rescheduling of priority has to be made.

The Council has an ambitious plan for delivering much-needed homes, as set out in our Strategic Plan, and we remain absolutely committed to delivering that.

11.3 Question from Councillor Abdul Wahid

The number of incidents concerning violent crime in the Borough is shocking. Following on from the issues outlined in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation Report – Inspection of Youth Offending Services, can the Lead Member or Mayor update Council on the measures he will be putting in place to tackle this surge?

Response:

There have been a number of measures put in place to respond to the youth violence incidences across the borough. There are now 5 full time support workers offering intensive one to one support to children who are victims and or perpetrators of violence. We develop disruption plans for all children who have been involved in a violent incidence to ensure join up and work across agencies. The support workers within the exploitation team have all been allocated secondary schools across the borough and are providing awareness assemblies to schools who have requested it. A training program is offered through the Learning Academy and delivered by Exploitation to raise awareness of serious youth violence across of London Borough of Tower Hamlets to professionals working with young people.

Community Safety and the Exploitation Service have further developed the Neighbourhood tasking meeting to have a youth section. Through the monitoring of locations done through data we are able to develop cross agency plans to make spaces and places safer for young people. There have been several developments in this area of work to ensure that information and intelligence is shared and understood across agencies. Partnership weekly briefing developed where information, incidences and intelligence is shared weekly across the partnership and tasks and actions are clearly undertaken and documented. Mapping meetings have been undertaken for all violent incidences across the borough to ensure oversight of locations, themes, and risks these are shared through the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel.

Youth Justice, Youth Services, Children's Social Care and Exploitation are working together to further develop services offered young people to ensure that they are offered intensive support across the spectrum of need which is part of the development of the wider adolescent offer.

11.4 Question from Councillor Maisha Begum

I understand the Mayor will be significantly expanding the Mayor's Office. Can the Mayor tell us how many additional people he is recruiting and at what cost to the Council?

Response:

The Mayor was elected on a transformative, ambitious Manifesto, after seven years of failures, empty promises and inability to support and deliver for the residents of Tower Hamlets. The Mayor is recruiting a team to facilitate the delivery of all of his 126 pledges, that will see real change and rebuilding improve the lives of all of the Borough's residents. This team will enable the Mayor and his Cabinet to build on the already strong connections with the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets; it will enable him to reinstate and improve the Borough's public services – from care, to youth services and employment opportunities – and enable the delivery more homebuilding, community services, safer streets and much needed economic and social support for residents of the Borough that has been evidently lacking over the past seven years.

I must confess, that I find there is great irony in the tone with which this question has been asked. To accuse the Mayor of 'significantly expanding' his office, when the Tower Hamlets Labour Group across from me oversaw one of the largest fire and rehire schemes in the history of Local Government, alongside wholesale cuts to critical public services, makes this question difficult to take seriously. This Mayor – demonstrated in the statement made by my colleague concerning the withdrawn motion – is committed to keeping the staff of this Council employed, but more importantly, supported in their roles, and these appointments will ensure that they are.

However, as the Mayor has nothing to hide, he will be recruiting new members of staff – comprised of both full time and part-time roles. These staff members include 11 additional caseworkers, additional Executive Support Assistants and additional

Cabinet Support Officers – positions that are critical in the delivery of the aforementioned gap in services presided over by the previous administration. The Mayor now holds 2 weekly surgeries, and has been averaging over 120 visits from residents for each, alongside a huge amount of casework that comes directly to his Office. As this cost of living crisis rages on these positions – alongside the appointment of experts from a diverse range of backgrounds including, Women and Equalities, the Somali community, social inclusion and policy and research – will ensure that the people of Tower Hamlets will no longer face delay and frustration in waiting for critical services, and are integral to the delivery of the Mayor’s transformational vision for our Borough.

11.5 Cllr Abdul Mannan

Can the lead member clarify the situation regarding large sums of money that were lent to other Local Authorities during the previous Administration, while at the same time cuts to services and staff were taking place? Will the Council be receiving these funds back anytime soon? Surely, they are better spent on the residents of our Borough during this Cost-of-Living crisis rather than laying idle in the coffers of other Local Authorities?

Response:

Spend on residents and services form part of the Council’s budget and this is separate from Treasury Management, which is managing cashflow each day to keep it safe and ensure money is available when the Council needs to use it. Holding money in the bank, in deposits with other Local Authorities or in funds are part of daily cash management and do not reduce the budget available for spend on services.

Compared to alternative places to hold cash, local authorities remain amongst the safest places available to hold money with, due to the organisations being ultimately linked to the UK Government.

With £1.5bn gross annual expenditure, on any given day the Council will hold a significant cash balance. Some sources of this include:

- Pending creditor payments
- Capital grants unspent
- S106/CIL cash
- Schools’ balances
- Ring fenced HRA cash balances
- Earmarked/ring fenced revenue grants
- Receipts in advance of spend including grants from Government
- Business Rates pending payment to government

Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure cash is available when needed. Monies not immediately required are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments, keeping funds secure with adequate access to the cash prioritised, before considering investment return. This is in line with DLUHC Guidance, which states that when entering into treasury management investments, local authorities

should consider security, liquidity and yield in that order of importance. The council carefully reviews which authorities it would consider depositing funds with, carries out financial checks, takes expert advice, obtains approval to its investment strategy from full Council and it is also ratified by the council's Chief Finance Officer before being progressed.

The Council has always ensured it diversifies where it holds its cash, to reduce risks of losing money if one of those counterparties were to fail, and investment are held in line with the Council's treasury management strategy. Investments have been in Money Market Funds (MMF), local authorities (LA), banks, building societies, strategic pooled funds, cash plus funds, UK Government Debt management agency (DMO), callable deposits with banks and building societies and structured deposits. The Council's treasury management strategy includes limits for each type of investments as well as maximum amounts that can be invested with each counterparty.

At present the Council has two deposits with other Local Authorities: Liverpool City Council £10m maturing on 1st May 2023 interest earned by council £30,915.07. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council £5m maturing on 14 November 2022 interest earned by council £60,082.19. Each local authority pays in full principal and interest on maturity.

11.6 Question from Asma Islam

Can the Mayor tell us if ANPR cameras were considered as an option when consulting with officers before approving to consult residents on removing Liveable Streets schemes?

Response:

As part of the ongoing review of Liveable Streets schemes, the Mayor and officers have been considering all options available, including the use of ANPR. Options will continue to be considered during the decision-making process.

11.7 Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussein

Could the Lead Member provide Council with an update on how the Mayor's pledge to build affordable housing is progressing following on from his first one hundred days in charge?

Response:

Between the 9th of May and the 27th of September 2022, there have been 324 completions of affordable homes. There are another 537 due for completion within this financial year, and another 1,640 currently forecast for next year.

11.8 Question from Councillor Asma Begum

It is understood that the Mayor and Lead Member are reviewing the LIF programme. Could the Mayor/Lead Member confirm:

- a) When the outcomes of that review will be published, and
- b) that the principles of the LIF programme (ie. a minimum of 25% of CIL earned in the area will be spent in the area, and projects based on residents' suggestions), will continue?

Response:

The council is currently reviewing how it uses available funding to best deliver infrastructure, housing and other improvements to benefit local people and support delivery of the Strategic Plan.

The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) - known locally as the Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) – is an important part of delivering for local communities and dealing with the impact of development. We are reviewing it to ensure it delivers on our local priorities.

The government set out regulations and guidance on NCIL, including the level (15% - 25%) and the need for consultation with the public. Any amendment to the council's approach to using NCIL will accord with these requirements.

At the current time, it is not possible to provide a timetable for the review, but we will continue to keep members updated.

11.9 Question from Councillor Musthak Ahmed

This Cost-of-Living crisis has seen the poorest and most vulnerable in Tower Hamlets hit hardest. Can the Mayor/Lead Member provide Council with an update on what measures have been put in place to ease the economic burden on those who are least to blame for this crisis?

Response:

The council is making direct payments to help low-income residents most acutely impacted by the cost of living crisis, totaling more than £5m.

Letters explaining how to access funds will start to go out to the majority of recipients in September, with payments for FSM eligible children expected to follow in November. Anyone who receives a letter will then have three months to withdraw funds from their local Post Office.

The Mayor's Energy Fund and direct payments made as part of the Mayor's cost of living relief package will provide money directly to residents – a cash first response for our most vulnerable to make sure people can continue to meet their food and energy needs over the winter.

Tower Hamlets has some of the highest rates of child and pensioner poverty in the UK so support will be targeted at those groups, with payments to all recipients of pension credit and a per child payment for FSM eligible households.

In addition we will be identifying and supporting hard to reach cohorts - like those with younger children eligible for the healthy start scheme, and the borough's most vulnerable single residents living in shared accommodation and alone. These measures will run alongside central government programmes including Cost of Living payments to Universal Credit recipients, pensioners and those with disabilities, as well as council tax rebates and the energy bills support scheme.

We will also continue to fund initiatives designed to support those in crisis and tackle the root cause issues that keep people below the poverty line – including the Mayor's free school meals, council tax reductions, discretionary housing payments, uniform grants and the residents support scheme.

We continue to support income maximisation by funding the Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) advice network and maintaining the Tackling Poverty Outreach team. Food insecurity is mitigated by our FOOD Store pantry initiative, now operating at seven sites, and the Holiday Activities and Food programme that provides hundreds of thousands of hot meals to children over the school holidays while also tackling social isolation.

In addition we continue to fund the LBTH Food Hub, a pioneering project that provides repurposed food directly to 62 VCS organisations that help provide a safety net for those in need in the borough.

11.10 Question from Councillor Amy Lee

Could the Mayor confirm if the Council submitted a formal representation to TFL in regard to the proposed bus routes cuts?

Response:

Yes, a formal response to the TfL Central London Bus Review was submitted on 05/08/22 setting out the council's concerns on impacts the proposed reductions to the network would have on local residents. TfL's consultation report and their proposed next steps are due to be published at some point within the next 3 months.

11.11 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman

Could the Lead Member provide an update on the recently published Ofsted report following an inspection of the Borough's children's services?

Response:

Ofsted undertook a focused visit in July 2022 and published their findings in a letter on 31st August 2022. The focus of their visit was in relation to the support that we provide to the children that we care for, otherwise known as our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. They recognised the positive support that is provided to this cohort of children stating, "Children in care in Tower Hamlets benefit from committed social workers who build positive relationships with them and understand their needs and wishes well." The published letter highlights a number of key strengths including:

Children's needs are being met well and they are helped to progress and improve their experiences.

Our staff has felt well supported through the pandemic and valued by the organisation. Social workers are highly positive about the leadership and organisational culture in Tower Hamlets.

Children are enabled to build effective and supportive relationships with committed, skilled, and highly motivated social workers.

Thresholds are appropriate for children coming into care and appropriate placements are provided to meet their needs.

Children receive very effective support from the virtual school.

Disabled children's needs are prioritised, and the quality of their lives improved.

Children in custody have their needs met and careful planning minimises risks.

The Corporate Parenting Board provides effective scrutiny and is focused upon improvements.

Leadership has clear understanding of our services and our improvement priorities.

Political leaders and senior officers share strong ambition and aspiration for our children, and political leaders are committed to ensuring resources are available to drive ongoing improvement.

Ofsted did not find any areas for "priority action." They did however make a couple of recommendations which we are actioning:

Oversight of the work with children who go missing and are at risk of exploitation
Use of Family Group Conferences when children are subject to care proceedings
Ofsted recognised that we are ambitious in our plans for further improvement but agreed with the programme that we had developed and felt that our improvement plan contained the right areas of focus.

11.12 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Could the Mayor and Lead Member provide an update on the progress of the much-needed London Docks School in St Katherine's and Wapping Ward, and confirm if the school will be completed by the initial projection date of September 2023?

Response:

The build project for the school's permanent site is now scheduled for completion in Autumn 2024. The school would therefore need to open on an interim site, for the duration of the 2023/24 school year, before moving to occupy its permanent accommodation.

All construction projects are under severe pressure due to external factors and this has caused some delay to the original estimated date.

11.13 Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan

Could the Mayor provide us with an update on the decision taken to bring all of the Borough's leisure services in-house?

Response:

Officers, led by a dedicated project director, have commenced work on the insourcing of the Leisure Service, establishing the full governance structure for delivering this project, and identifying the budget required to resource this work. Workstreams have been established to lead on each specific strand of the project, based on both the Council's experience of insourcing the waste service and the London Borough of Southwark's own leisure insourcing programme. Officers are identifying all of the resource requirements to bring the service in-house by 1 May 2024, and where additional support may be needed to provide expert technical guidance. The cost of this support has been included in the budget.

The key objectives for this initial phase of the project are:

- To agree the operating model for the insourced Leisure Service, in particular to ensure all users, staff and visitors will be safe when using our leisure facilities.
- To identify the most effective IT solution for managing bookings and taking payments.
- To commence the recruitment of the permanent management team for the insourced service.
- To develop the detailed budget for the service, building on work already completed during the options appraisal stage in spring 2022.

Progress will continue to be reported to the Cabinet Member and Mayor through regular briefings.

11.14 Question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin

Could the Lead Member update the council on progress in delivering the new school building for George Green's secondary school on the Island?

Response:

The George Green Secondary School Rebuild scheme is in progress and is now at the design phase. The proposed design sees the school building move from its current location to where the sports pitch is currently located, with the pitch moved to the location of the car park. The new school will be built in three phases: with phase one seeing the development of the main school building and phase two and three delivering the sixth form block, MUGA and sports pitch.

The design teams are currently preparing the scheme for submission to the Planning Authority. In conjunction with this phase of works, the project team is also working with the relevant stakeholders to enable efficient and speedy progression and delivery, maximising opportunities for cost efficiencies.

The proposed start on site date is September 2023 (Phase 1), with an anticipated completion date of the school year 2025/26.

11.15 Question from Councillor Jahed Choudhury

Many residents have complained about the constantly shocking levels of filth, vermin and rubbish on Tower Hamlets' streets. Please could the Lead Member or the Mayor provide Council with an update on measures being taken to ensure our residents don't have to suffer such levels of uncleanliness?

Response:

Officers are working on a new plan for cleansing and enforcement in the borough, that will meet the Mayor's pledge to wage war on fly tipping and to provide a clean borough.

As well as a revised schedule of street cleansing, with an increased focus on evening and night time cleaning, our enforcement team will be targeting the areas with the highest number of flytips and will be issuing £400 fines for anyone caught dumping waste on our streets illegally. 252 FPNs have been issued between May and Aug 2022.

Complementing our tough stance on irresponsible and antisocial behaviour by individuals and businesses, we hope that through community engagement and education we can significantly reduce fly tipping and the significant cost to residents.

The plan will be phased in over the coming weeks and months and the impact of the change closely monitored for improvement.

11.16 Question from Councillor Leelu Ahmed

Will the Mayor follow Westminster Council's example, and seize dumped e-bikes and e-scooters that are cluttering streets in the borough?

Response:

A London-wide e-scooter rental trial is taking place – see Electric scooters - Transport for London (tfl.gov.uk) for further details. This covers Tower Hamlets on a limited basis with parking of e-scooters restricted to a small number of sites at Canary Wharf and on TfL land only – no trial scooters can be left on council owned land. Privately owned e-scooters are illegal on public roads, and officers are in contact with the Metropolitan Police regarding enforcement.

With regards to dockless e-bikes, officers are closely monitoring Westminster Council's approach to enforcement and its effectiveness via the borough officer pan-London dockless working group. Officers are also reporting issues directly to the operators themselves.

11.17 Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

Could the Mayor provide us with a timeline of when the new Town Hall will be completed, and when Council services can expect to move into the new facilities?

Response:

The new Town Hall build works are expected to be completed by the end of October 2022, with fit out and move programme to follow on to January 2023. Staff and services will be moving in phases subject to the thorough and highly important testing and commissioning stage.

11.18 Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed

I have been receiving complaints from concerned residents and business owners about the untidy waste left on the streets on Whitechapel Road and has not been cleared for the last few months. Could the Lead Member provide an update on how he is going to tackle this as soon as possible?

Response:

Officers are working on a new plan for cleansing and enforcement in the borough, that will meet the Mayor's pledge to wage war on fly tipping and to provide a clean borough. As well as a revised schedule of street cleansing, with an increase focus on evening and night time cleaning, our enforcement team will be targeting the areas with the highest number of flytips and will be issuing £400 fines for anyone caught dumping waste on our streets illegally – 252 FPNs have been issued between May and Aug 2022.

Complementing our tough stance on irresponsible and antisocial behaviour by individual and businesses, we hope that through community engagement, education we can significantly reduce fly tipping and the significant cost to residents.

The plan will be phased in over the coming weeks and months and the impact of the change closely monitored for improvement.

Specifically, at the Whitechapel Market area, we have recently started a pilot to improve the management of market trader waste and tackle the high levels of fly tipping in the area. Whilst this is still early days, we expect it to greatly reduce the amount of waste deposited in the area and improve the streetscape.

11.19 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Can the Mayor provide Council with an update on his plans to make Tower Hamlets a greener and cleaner Borough?

Response:

The Mayoral Greener Future for Tower Hamlets programme is an umbrella for all policy delivery for a Clean and Green Future. The programme has four themes as follows;

- Mayor's Energy Fund: This will now include the Carbon Fund which is collected through s106 for carbon offsetting from new developments, projects delivered from these funds will include Energy Grants for Schools, Small Businesses, Community Groups and Residents
- Mayor's Advisory Board for Climate Change: Through the Partnership Executive Group (PEG)

In addition to the work we are undertaking to improve the cleansing regimes and prevention of fly tipping, we are very pleased that Tower Hamlets has been awarded 'Tree Cities of the World' status for our dedication to urban and community forestry, tree-planting, and biodiversity.

In the last five years, Tower Hamlets Council has planted approximately 7,800 trees in our streets and across our parks.

The Mayor has committed to a programme of planting even more trees in our borough, including with a £1.5 million fund for tree-planting so all our residents can enjoy the benefits of trees and the improvement to the environment.

11.20 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Mayor and Lead Member update me on the progress of the review of the Car Free Zone / Permit Transfer Scheme policies initiated by former Councillor Kahar Choudhury in late-2021?

Response:

A review of the PTS policy is nearing completion and will be taken through the decision-making process in the near future.

11.21 Question from Councillor Ana Miah

Sport and culture have played an historic role in the tradition and identity of our Borough. Can the Mayor tell us more about his plan to encourage young people in the Borough to use sport to take them onto better things?

Response:

The Council is financially supporting the delivery of school sport, the London Youth Games, the School Games and the elite school sport pathway through district and borough teams for gifted and talented students. This programme enables inter-borough competitions between primary and secondary schools, young people with SEND as well as training and competitions against other London boroughs and districts. Leadership, and volunteering opportunities are also included as part of the programme.

The Council has just completed an extremely successful Summer Programme that provided a variety of sporting activity for children and young people ranging from adventurous activities such as canoeing and climbing to football and basketball. To assist families with the 'cost of living' crisis, free nutritional food was also provided with each activity.

The Council also provides certified and accredited courses / training for young people through the Duke of Edinburgh and Community Sports Leaders Award.

Looking ahead, officers are working with the Mayor and Lead Member to develop proposals for a significant investment in our youth provision, which will include a specific element to promote sporting activities for young people.

11.22 Question from Councillor James King

Will the Mayor provide an update on the structural work on Malting and Brewster Houses?

Response:

Following a Cabinet decision to undertake structural works to the two blocks, Wates was awarded the works contract in May 2021.

The delays we have experienced relate to a number of factors, mainly contractual related to the contract awarded to Wates, and this has led to unforeseeable delays THH have resolved all the outstanding matters and the works are likely to commence in September 2022 and complete in February 2024.

Some works have already taken place on site, for example lift overhauls. Work is also well advanced in identifying and refurbishing the temporary accommodation into which residents will move into whilst works are undertaken in their flats. Residents on the 11th and 12th floors will be rehoused temporarily for the duration of the project and six households are planned to be permanently re-housed due to overcrowding and medical issues.

Forty-two properties have been earmarked to support the decanting process. On site respite facilities will be available for residents to use during the works.

11.23 Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin

Following the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, will the Mayor endorse the Aspire Group's suggestion for a memorial to the Queen at the new Town Hall?

Response:

The Queen spent many, many years as Head of State of the UK. If there is appetite for a memorial at the Town Hall then I will not object to its construction and would support any memorial agreed by this Council.

11.24 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury

Tower Hamlets council has been providing lower skilled training which doesn't encourage or provide higher skilled work opportunities. The cost of living set to increase to the highest amount in 10 years. Upskilling is a proven method of mitigating the impact of inflation for the individual, local communities and wider society.

What is the Council's plan to provide opportunities for residents to move into high skilled professional roles?

Response:

The employment and skills service is delivering a number of projects designed to support residents into more aspirational work in the short, medium and long-term which are listed below.

However, to set the context, further education qualifications above Level 2 are not delivered by the council; they are delivered by FE colleges and other providers who are funded by the government to deliver them. Idea Store Learning, the council's adult and community learning provision, delivers a range of training to approximately 4,500 residents each year, translating into 6000 learner registrations (i.e. individuals taking more than one course). Idea Store Learning is funded by the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and is the largest provider of ESOL and functional skills courses in the borough, after New City College. The AEB funding has been devolved from the Department for Education to the GLA and is linked to qualifications that already exist, and must be taught to a syllabus. Idea Store Learning direct their AEB funding to learners who are at entry level or have not yet achieved their Level 2 qualifications in ESOL, English, Maths and/or Digital Skills. These qualification courses are aimed at supporting learners who are furthest from the labour market and those learners who have barriers to progression into higher level qualifications or employment.

The council's employment support service, Workpath, focuses its limited resources on supporting people furthest from the labour market into work and the majority of the 2000 residents who use the service each year have multiple barriers to employment. Barriers include: a lack of basic employability skills, ESOL needs, health, disabilities, mental health issues, debt, long term worklessness and a lack of basic skills in English and maths, which they are supported to overcome. These basic barriers need to be removed before clients can be supported into upskilling to Level 3 and higher.

The strategic work being delivered by the Employment & Skills service to secure an inclusive economy includes:

LIFT Digital Hub – GLA Mayoral Academies Programme

The E&S team is delivering the LIFT Digital Hub as part of the GLA funded Mayoral Academies Programme. The MAP aims to support Londoners into good work in growth industry sectors with job creation potential and that are key to London's recovery. LBTH and LIFT successfully secured MAP Funding of £250k over 2 years to deliver the LIFT Digital Hub across TH, Camden, Hackney and Islington. The Academy is focusing on this thriving sector, spanning the breadth of front end, back end and business roles, and reflecting industry demand. Key areas of focus will include software engineering, web development, cyber security, digital marketing, data analytics, business analysis, tech consulting. The team is working with employers, booking insight sessions for the wider staff team, and running outreach sessions to promote opportunities to a wider audience.

Central London Forward: Strategic Development Fund

Led by our own New City College, we are working at a sub-regional level on a collaboration between employers, equipment manufacturers, industry standard

bodies and education providers to create low carbon technology learning labs. Through these, people will have access to contemporary equipment and skilled staff, so they can enter and develop a career in low carbon technologies. Starting with the delivery of conversion courses for current electricians and plumbers, the project then seeks to develop pathways for people wishing to enter the industry as either an initial job or as a career change. Learning courses are being aligned to industry standards by working with MCS, so people can be confident they will meet the required level of industry competence to install and maintain low carbon energy technology. This work will also provide a best practice framework for the Corporation of London's Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, which is mapping over the next three years, development and skills needs to achieve carbon net zero across London development, and which seeks to ensure that London residents will benefit from the resultant skills accelerators.

Supported Employment - Intermediate Labour Market programmes

The Supported Employment Programmes team delivers a range of intermediate labour market programmes, i.e. paid work experience with mandatory training over 4 to 6 months. ILM programmes still support those most in need and with significant barriers, but whilst they are expensive to deliver, have a retention and progression rate as high as 76% (national average is @ 55%). The combination of work experience with mandatory training allows people to prove themselves and to develop both personal and workplace skills simultaneously. Target groups for various programmes include women, over 50s, Through Care, 16-24yrs, SEND. Programmes depend upon available funding, but the delivery focus for 2022/23 is on:

- An ESF funded cohort of 10
- 10 x creative and cultural apprenticeships
- 10 x creative and cultural internships
- 10 x SEND apprentices
- 50 Plus programme
- DWP funded Supported Employment (SEND) programme for a cohort of 60 over two years

Creative Enterprise Zone

The CEZ which encompasses Hackney Wick and Fish Island is delivering the following outcomes:

- Protection and creation of permanent, affordable creative workspace and live-work spaces at below market rents;
- Development, delivery and implementation of proactive, pro-cultural statutory and non-statutory policy approaches;
- Providing innovative, effective business support to artists, sole traders, micro and small creative businesses to support their resilience and growth;
- Developing career pathways and progression opportunities into the creative industries and supporting sectors, building a pipeline of local talent through accessible skills and training;
- Embedding creative production in communities through engagement activities that create vibrant, socially inclusive and integrated places.

The new (July 2022) Careers & Social Mobility team has picked up work related to “Bridging the Divide” and the Race Equality Action Plan to raise and expand the careers opportunities for our young people. Some key areas of work are:

- Careers Curated Website - Research and scoping for the new curated website is well under way with a view to launching in the autumn term. Providing careers information and resources from a range of partners. Youth Council consulted and engaged.
- Leaders Forum - The Leaders Forum is a key recommendation from the 2021 Equalities Commission and aligns with the Mayor’s proposals to write to all businesses in the borough to re-engage and negotiate ‘better/higher skilled’ roles for residents. This is part of a wider effort to maximise our opportunity with partners. “Assemble a Leaders' Forum which brings together organisations in Canary Wharf and City of London to deliver a range of initiatives to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people into work, increase the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents in senior positions, and unblock systemic barriers within organisations”.

The Leaders Forum will support and guide a mixed programme of work based on the following:

- o Mentoring commitments
- o Internship commitments
- o Apprenticeship commitments
- o Experience of the Workplace and curriculum support, including challenge events and soft skills training
- o Develop guidance and resources for businesses to review their CSR programmes
- o Creating Safe spaces in the workplace for meaningful dialogue to take place
- o Developing and piloting New Methods of Recruitment

- 6 x Borough-wide Careers Fairs each year – delivered over the academic year from Oct 2022. Dates and venues secured from NCC, UEL, QMU, CWG, London Met, as well as input from various public and private partners. Full programmes are still being developed but each fair will host @ 2000 young people from our secondary schools across the borough.

- The Summer School – university (UEL, QMUL, London Met) summer schools being promoted to the schools again from May in order to get young people booked into sessions.

- BAME Mentoring - contract awarded to The Switch. Their development work began May 2022 with mentoring work beginning from Sept term 2022. 400 young people over two years. Discussion underway to develop a generic and co-produced offer of mentoring to support more young people.

- CEZ - The Careers & Employment Support officer will pick up delivery of the CEZ employment outputs with the Supported Employment Team (SEP). 10 x CCI apprenticeships and 10 x CCI paid internships.

In addition to the work the teams are undertaking, the Mayor is currently writing to the top businesses in the borough to re-engage and negotiate “better/higher paid” roles for residents as part of the Council’s effort to maximise our opportunities with partners.

11.25 Question from Councillor Abdul Malik

Could the Mayor explain how he plans to strengthen the Trade Union voice in the decision-making processes in Tower Hamlets, and how these changes can be locked in constitutionally?

Response:

Trade Unions are an integral and invaluable vehicle in the social, political and economic furtherment of working people, and this administration recognizes their importance and the importance of ensuring their voice is heard and considered in any decisions taken by the Council. The Mayor has already held several meetings with the recognized Trade Unions in this Council, and continues to liaise and consult with them on all policy decisions that could impact council employees – front line or otherwise.

The Mayor is confident that this relationship will continue to grow, and is pleased to announce that he will be extending an invitation for representatives from the Council's three recognized Trade Unions to update the administration's monthly cabinet meeting, where they will be able to share concerns, ideas and suggestions to the Executive.

11.26 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

The revised traffic scheme on Preston's Road will have a serious impact on residents and business on the Isle of Dogs. It has been known for years that the traffic Island close to Yabsley Street has regularly been the location of many accidents. Will the Mayor outline when and what level of consultation was undertaken prior to the commencement of these works and what happened as a result of the consultation on what appears to be a different scheme?

Response:

The works that started on the 19th September on Prestons Road are Section 278 Highway works for the Wood Wharf development and therefore are not being financed by the Council, they are purely to facilitate the access to Wood Wharf.

The S278 works cover an area from the Blue Bridge to approximately 40m north of Managers Street and is not the scheme previously consulted on for Prestons Road. The consultation for the Vision 0 scheme took place on June 21.

11.27 Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait

Could the Executive outline what they are currently doing to start work on insulating council homes in the borough? Could they also outline any work they are undertaking to understand the current state of home insulation in the borough's council homes?

Response:

THH, who manage the council's housing stock, has delivered insulation works to over 2,200 flats and houses which has been funded through a number of initiatives including Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding schemes.

THH are exploring funding sources and engaged in the Retrofit London Housing Action Plan to deliver the boroughs objective of reaching an average EPC B rating across all London domestic properties. The financial implications require further investigation as significant additional funding will be required to achieve EPC B by 2030 (SAP 81).

THH are looking at opportunities to carry out insulation improvements as part of any building safety/fire safety work and upgrade properties to achieve EPC B rating.

Tower Hamlets is a member of the Retrofit London Housing Action Plan, through this action plan London Councils is working to leverage significant private sector finance to support green initiatives, including retrofit projects across the country. The Council is also working on a number of other funding opportunities including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Local Authority Delivery Scheme to retrofit homes in the borough.

The Mayor's Greener Future for Tower Hamlets programme will set up a Mayor's Advisory Board for Climate Change, this board will have the remit to work with and engage all housing providers in the borough to work together to retrofit and improve the energy efficiency of all homes in the borough.

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