

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 19 JULY 2023**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Ohid Ahmed
- Councillor Shubo Hussain
- Councillor Rachel Blake

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

Councillor Amin Rahman and Councillor Mushtak Ahmed declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12.3, and declared they were Board Members of Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

**3. MINUTES**

**DECISION**

1. Agreed that the minutes of the extraordinary and ordinary Council meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Speaker was authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

Announcements from the Speaker and the Chief Executive.

See the minutes.

**5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**

**Petition regarding cuts to infrastructure Projects**

Adam Allnutt, Lauma Kalns-Timans and Yesmin Begum presented a petition asking the Council to reserve its decision to cut NCIL funding for infrastructure projects. Especially projects on the Isle of Dogs. Mr Allnutt said it was vital funding for projects that had already been approved were implemented. He asked why funding had been halted.

Members asked questions of the petitioners before Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding responded to matters raised in the petition.

## **DECISION**

That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive)

## **6. MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the Council.

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

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks.

## **7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE**

### **YOUNG TOWER HAMLETS**

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the Young Tower Hamlets initiative that had been moved by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar and seconded by Councillor Bodrul Choudhury.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Sabina Akhtar and seconded by Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Addition in Bold  
Deletions ~~struckthrough~~

### **This Council notes:**

- That Mayor Lutfur Rahman, in his previous term as Mayor, oversaw a huge investment of resources into the borough's youth services – taking young people off the street, giving them educational, cultural, recreational, wellbeing and employment opportunities, and preparing them for adult life.
- ~~The chronic cuts to, neglect and underfunding of, Tower Hamlets' youth services during the terms of the previous administration, which resulted in the closure of 70% of all youth centres and attendant services in the borough.~~ And Insert:

- The previous administration built wealth, knowledge and skills in the community by partnering with the voluntary and community sector to deliver youth services. As they have a track record of delivering high quality youth provision.
- Insert: That this council's own studies demonstrated that when communities are empowered, they provide efficient, effective and economical youth services.

Tower Hamlets Youth Service (Commissioned Provision) 3 Year Performance									
	2017/18			2018/2019			2019/2020		
	Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Contacts	2779	3914	140.84%	4180	4723	112.99%	2505	5108	203.91%
Participants	1646	1676	101.82%	2598	2277	87.64%	1503	2394	159.28%
Recorded Outcome	991	1092	110.19%	1600	1462	91.38%	902	1416	156.98%
Accredited Outcome	494	499	101.05%	847	546	64.46%	451	519	115.08%

Tower Hamlets Youth Service (In-house Provision) 3 Year Performance									
	2017/18			2018/2019			2019/2020		
	Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Contacts	6,040	2,564	42.45%	5740	2948	51.36%	3835	2648	69.05%
Participants	3624	1119	30.88%	3444	1355	39.34%	2301	1579	68.62%
Recorded Outcome	2174	417	19.18%	2066	350	16.94%	1381	1008	73.01%
Accredited Outcome	1087	322	29.62%	1033	401	38.82%	690	621	89.96%

- That various studies – (set out below) – outline the correlation between access (or lack thereof) to youth services for young people and increased levels of crime and ASB, as well as low educational attainment and decreased job opportunities.

#### Links to External Reports/Websites

Social Mobility Commission 2019:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818679/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818679/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)

APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction: *Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime*, 2020  
<http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

ONS 2021 – Child Poverty and Education Outcomes by Ethnicity  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccount>

- That this latter point is particularly true in the youngest and most densely-populated borough in the country, where green space is scarce for many communities.
- That children from lower income households often have worse educational outcomes. A 2021 report found that those children from poorer households and without access to a decent education and extra-curricular activities end up with significant gaps in academic achievement – especially those from BAME backgrounds.
- ~~That young people in Tower Hamlets have suffered because of the previous administration's cuts.~~ **Insert: Under the previous administration Tower Hamlets had one of the best funded youth services in London and managed to secure more than £1m of funding from the GLA's *MyEnds* programme to combat youth violence on the Isle of Dogs.**

**This Council believes:**

- That the young people of Tower Hamlets deserve the best opportunities to excel, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- ~~That every ward in Tower Hamlets should have a dedicated youth centre, where children and young people can access services to help them develop skills, as well as their interests and aspirations.~~
- ~~That a serious (re-)investment in capital, personnel, and infrastructure is required to deliver these ambitions.~~
- **And Insert: Modern youth services are most effective when they are delivered through strategically located centres equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to engage and support young people.**
- **That you work is essential and under recognised profession. Professionally trained youth worker are experts in their field and know what's best when it comes to delivering youth services.**
- That the launch of the Mayor's *Young Tower Hamlets (YTH)* scheme earlier this week (Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July) – in which a £13.7million per annum investment in the borough's redesigned youth service and a guaranteed youth centre in every ward were showcased – represents a drastic change

in the Council's approach, and a firm commitment to the future of the borough's young people.

- That this investment will provide jobs, intern and apprenticeship opportunities for young people across the borough.
- That this investment will also help tackle inequalities faced by disabled and SEN young people in the borough; it will also provide women and girls with increased safe access to sporting, educational, and cultural services previously cut.
- That the work of the Deputy Mayor and Council Officers should be particularly recognised in helping to deliver this key Mayoral priority.
- That this scheme represents the insourcing of another key service in the borough, enhancing democratic accountability and control, and symbolising a key step in accelerating education and attainment in Tower Hamlets.
- **That an overcentralised youth service is an inefficient way of delivering youth services and has previously led to poor governance and malpractice occurring in the borough.**

**This Council resolves:**

- To approve and endorse the Mayor and Council's newly launched service, *Young Tower Hamlets*, and recognise the huge benefits it will have on the borough's young people and families.
- To commend Officers and the Lead Member for their work in delivering this project.
- To support officers in the delivery of this key service moving forward.
- **That every youth worker employed by the borough undergoes a full DBS check before being employed by the borough.**
- **To only recruit professional youth workers to staff our service.**

- **To request that the lead member explore the creation of a youth worker training fund to be delivered by our partners in the FE/HE sector.**

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

The motion as moved by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

## **DECISION**

### **This Council notes:**

- That Mayor Lutfur Rahman, in his previous term as Mayor, oversaw a huge investment of resources into the borough's youth services – taking young people off the street, giving them educational, cultural, recreational, wellbeing and employment opportunities, and preparing them for adult life.
- The chronic cuts to, neglect and underfunding of, Tower Hamlets' youth services during the terms of the previous administration, which resulted in the closure of 70% of all youth centres and attendant services in the borough.
- That various studies – (set out below) – outline the correlation between access (or lack thereof) to youth services for young people and increased levels of crime and ASB, as well as low educational attainment and decreased job opportunities.

#### **Links to External Reports/Websites**

Social Mobility Commission 2019:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818679/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818679/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)

APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction: *Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime*, 2020  
<http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

ONS 2021 – Child Poverty and Education Outcomes by Ethnicity  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccount>

- That this latter point is particularly true in the youngest and most densely-populated borough in the country, where green space is scarce for many communities.

- That children from lower income households often have worse educational outcomes. A 2021 report found that those children from poorer households and without access to a decent education and extra-curricular activities end up with significant gaps in academic achievement – especially those from BAME backgrounds.
- That young people in Tower Hamlets have suffered because of the previous administration's cuts.

**This Council believes:**

- That the young people of Tower Hamlets deserve the best opportunities to excel, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- That every ward in Tower Hamlets should have a dedicated youth centre, where children and young people can access services to help them develop skills, as well as their interests and aspirations.
- That a serious (re-)investment in capital, personnel, and infrastructure is required to deliver these ambitions.
- That the launch of the Mayor's *Young Tower Hamlets (YTH)* scheme earlier this week (Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July) – in which a £13.7million per annum investment in the borough's redesigned youth service and a guaranteed youth centre in every ward were showcased – represents a drastic change in the Council's approach, and a firm commitment to the future of the borough's young people.
- That this investment will provide jobs, intern and apprenticeship opportunities for young people across the borough.
- That this investment will also help tackle inequalities faced by disabled and SEN young people in the borough; it will also provide women and girls with increased safe access to sporting, educational, and cultural services previously cut.
- That the work of the Deputy Mayor and Council Officers should be particularly recognised in helping to deliver this key Mayoral priority.
- That this scheme represents the insourcing of another key service in the borough, enhancing democratic accountability and control, and symbolising a key step in accelerating education and attainment in Tower Hamlets.

**This Council resolves:**

- To approve and endorse the Mayor and Council's newly launched service, *Young Tower Hamlets*, and recognise the huge benefits it will have on the borough's young people and families.

- To commend Officers and the Lead Member for their work in delivering this project.
- To support officers in the delivery of this key service moving forward.

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

## 8. **OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE**

### **WOMEN'S SAFETY**

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on Women's safety that had been moved by Councillor Sabina Khan and seconded by Councillor Rebeka Sultana.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Abu Chowdhury and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Additions – Bold

Deletions – ~~Struckthrough~~

#### **This Council notes:**

- That many women and girls in Tower Hamlets face harassment, assault and violence in public and private spaces, which affects their freedom, dignity and wellbeing.
- That Tower Hamlets has very high levels of domestic abuse and sexual offences reported to the police, as well as 14 domestic homicides since 2011.
- In Tower Hamlets on average 6000 Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each year.
- Last year 2,082 sexual offences were reported, of that 1348 were non rape offences and 734 rape offences.
- That improving women's safety is the responsibility of everyone, especially men, and requires more action from the Council and its partners.
- **That for some time now the council's service offer around women's safety has been far too limited, and that this lack has only been exacerbated by austerity measures occurring over the last 7 years such as the closing of the Jagonari centre.**
- **That the mayor Lutfur Rahman acknowledges these historic failings and has already demonstrated a commitment to reversing**



trends of service cutting by identifying new funding options for crucial VAWG services such as our women's criminal justice pathway coordinator role and investing community safety resources in a new series of ground-breaking digital women's safety walks.

- **That the mayor has taken personal responsibility for the development of a new VAWG strategy being produced for 2024, which under the direct oversight of the newly hired Women and Equalities Officer, is intended to set a new standard for direct government intervention in issues of violence against women and girls.**

**This Council resolves to:**

- Launch a public advertising campaign to raise awareness and challenge violence against women and girls, and to communicate the Council's commitment to women's safety using council communications and the public relations departments of partner agencies. The campaign should also promote positive messages about consent, respect and healthy relationships, and encourage bystander intervention. **This campaign will also focus on intersectionality in women's safety, prioritising the needs of LGBTQI women, BAME women, and women involved in sex work and/or sexual exploitation in line with the mayor's equalities priorities.**
- Strengthen the enforcement partnership between the Council, the Police and other agencies, and use innovative anti-social behaviour legislation to fine individuals who harass and cat-call women on our streets. The partnership should also work to improve the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and provide specialist training for frontline staff.
- **Support the work being done to build a mayor's anti-crime task force that will strive to build specialisation around VAWG and women's safety issues into our local enforcement service, while also increasing the capacity of our THEO service to respond to issues of street harassment and abuse more generally.**
- **Continue to increase the visibility and effectiveness of CCTV cameras across the borough following the massive upgrade of our CCTV cameras and control overseen by the mayor.**
- Ensure that CCTV operators monitor lone individuals, particularly women, during the night and early hours of the morning. The Council should also **continue and expand its** use of other technologies, such as street lighting, alarms and apps, to enhance women's safety in

public spaces. **The council should also continue to build on the successes of the mayor's recently rolled out women's safety walks and expand the use of resident consultation in shaping street patrols and CCTV placement.**

- Organise women's safety community meetings to connect residents with the Council and the Police, and to address their concerns and suggestions on how to improve women's safety in Tower Hamlets. **These meeting will be built out of the digital women's safety walks that were rolled out this spring.** The meetings should also provide opportunities for women and girls to share their experiences, access support services and participate in co-designing solutions.
- **Support the development of upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and facilitate a wide-ranging consultation process that will ensure the new strategy is first and foremost based around the needs of women across the borough and from a wide variety of different racial, religious, economic, and sexual identity-based backgrounds.**
- **Reverse/mitigate the impact of the closure of the Jagonari centre by making the development of new BAME women's centre capable of providing a variety of resources around VAWG advocacy and support a top priority.**
- **Reassess the way that this borough supports women involved in sex work and victims of sexual exploitation. The council will begin this process by committing to the recommendations of the off-street sex work action plan and scoping the feasibility of both a sex workers hostel and a prostitution needs assessment.**
- **Ensure that transgender women in particular are properly served by our VAWG strategy and by the variety of VAWG women's safety services offered by the council. Trans women continue to be victims of sexual violence and hate crime at an alarmingly high rate, and yet Tower Hamlets has historically done almost nothing to support this marginalised. The council will therefore work to embed the needs of this community across the council and into our VAWG services in particular.**

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

The motion as amended by Councillor Abu Chowdhury was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

## **DECISION**

**This Council notes:**

- That many women and girls in Tower Hamlets face harassment, assault and violence in public and private spaces, which affects their freedom, dignity and wellbeing.
- That Tower Hamlets has very high levels of domestic abuse and sexual offences reported to the police, as well as 14 domestic homicides since 2011.
- In Tower Hamlets on average 6000 Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each year.
- Last year 2,082 sexual offences were reported, of that 1348 were non rape offences and 734 rape offences.
- That improving women's safety is the responsibility of everyone, especially men, and requires more action from the Council and its partners.
- That for some time now the council's service offer around women's safety has been far too limited, and that this lack has only been exacerbated by austerity measures occurring over the last 7 years such as the closing of the Jagonari centre.
- That the mayor Lutfur Rahman acknowledges these historic failings and has already demonstrated a commitment to reversing trends of service cutting by identifying new funding options for crucial VAWG services such as our women's criminal justice pathway coordinator role and investing community safety resources in a new series of ground-breaking digital women's safety walks.
- That the mayor has taken personal responsibility for the development of a new VAWG strategy being produced for 2024, which under the direct oversight of the newly hired Women and Equalities Officer, is intended to set a new standard for direct government intervention in issues of violence against women and girls.

**This Council resolves to:**

- Launch a public advertising campaign to raise awareness and challenge violence against women and girls, and to communicate the Council's commitment to women's safety using council communications and the public relations departments of partner agencies. The campaign should also promote positive messages about consent, respect and healthy relationships, and encourage bystander

intervention. This campaign will also focus on intersectionality in women's safety, prioritising the needs of LGBTQI women, BAME women, and women involved in sex work and/or sexual exploitation in line with the mayor's equalities priorities.

- Strengthen the enforcement partnership between the Council, the Police and other agencies, and use innovative anti-social behaviour legislation to fine individuals who harass and cat-call women on our streets. The partnership should also work to improve the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and provide specialist training for frontline staff.
- Support the work being done to build a mayor's anti-crime task force that will strive to build specialisation around VAWG and women's safety issues into our local enforcement service, while also increasing the capacity of our THEO service to respond to issues of street harassment and abuse more generally.
- Continue to increase the visibility and effectiveness of CCTV cameras across the borough following the massive upgrade of our CCTV cameras and control overseen by the mayor.
- Ensure that CCTV operators monitor lone individuals, particularly women, during the night and early hours of the morning. The Council should also continue and expand its use of other technologies, such as street lighting, alarms and apps, to enhance women's safety in public spaces. The council should also continue to build on the successes of the mayor's recently rolled out women's safety walks and expand the use of resident consultation in shaping street patrols and CCTV placement.
- Organise women's safety community meetings to connect residents with the Council and the Police, and to address their concerns and suggestions on how to improve women's safety in Tower Hamlets. These meeting will be built out of the digital women's safety walks that were rolled out this spring. The meetings should also provide opportunities for women and girls to share their experiences, access support services and participate in co-designing solutions.
- Support the development of upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and facilitate a wide-ranging consultation process that will ensure the new strategy is first and foremost based around the needs of women across the borough and from a wide variety of different racial, religious, economic, and sexual identity-based backgrounds.
- Reverse/mitigate the impact of the closure of the Jagonari centre by

making the development of new BAME women's centre capable of providing a variety of resources around VAWG advocacy and support a top priority.

- Reassess the way that this borough supports women involved in sex work and victims of sexual exploitation. The council will begin this process by committing to the recommendations of the off-street sex work action plan and scoping the feasibility of both a sex workers hostel and a prostitution needs assessment.
- Ensure that transgender women in particular are properly served by our VAWG strategy and by the variety of VAWG women's safety services offered by the council. Trans women continue to be victims of sexual violence and hate crime at an alarmingly high rate, and yet Tower Hamlets has historically done almost nothing to support this marginalised. The council will therefore work to embed the needs of this community across the council and into our VAWG services in particular.

**(Action by:** Denise Radley, Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Community)

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

### **9.1 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Annual Report to Council**

Councillor Mushtak Ahmed, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the annual report. He outlined the achievements of the Committee before members added their comments.

#### **DECISION**

Council **AGREED** to:

1. Note the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **9.2 Report of the Corporate Parenting Board: Annual Report 2022-23**

Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning introduced the report. He stated the report highlighted the achievements of the Corporate Parenting Board. Members of the Council commented on the report.

#### **DECISION**

Council **AGREED** to:

1. Note the content of the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

**10. OTHER BUSINESS**

Nil Items.

**11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

- 11.1 Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain regarding the Council's accounts. A supplemental question was asked.
- 11.2 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury about housing in the borough. No supplemental question was asked.
- 11.3 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed regarding the local plan. No supplemental question was asked.
- 11.4 Question from Councillor Marc Francis about Road Safety. A supplemental question was asked.
- 11.5 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman regarding the peer review of the Early Help Service. A supplemental question was asked.
- 11.6 Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin relating to investment on the Isle of Dogs. A supplementary question was asked.
- 11.7 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury about the Housing Management Department. A supplementary question was asked.
- 11.8 Question from Councillor Asma Islam about accommodation for the homeless. A supplementary question was asked.

Questions 11.9 to 11.31 were not put due to lack of time.

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

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Motions 12.1 to 12.4 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.13 p.m.

