

Public Pack

COUNCIL, 22/01/2025

SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED)

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.01 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present:

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

AGENDA ORDER

During the meeting, Members agreed to vary the order of business to take item 10.1 (Briefing Note – OFSTED Inspection Report outcome) after the Chief Executive announcements (Item 4), as Children from a local choir were present at the meeting to perform their songs.

Item 10.2 (Progress update on Best Value Improvement Matters) was taken after item 8 (Opposition Motion on Best Value).

For clarity, the minutes are presented in the order the items appear on the agenda.

THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR SAIF UDDIN KHALED IN THE CHAIR

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He said he had enjoyed attending various engagements within the borough. He had celebrated achievements and marked special occasions with community organisations and individuals.

He said he had attended organisational milestones, the Independence and Victory Day of Bangladesh, educational achievements and the annual curry awards. Other highlights included:

- Attending the Tower Hamlets in Bloom Awards. He said the Borough excelled in this area with dedicated council officers ensuring the parks and open spaces were looking, their best. He said the borough had won 8 Gold Awards in 2024 at the London Bloom Awards and 14 Green Flags awards with Victoria Park ranked amongst the top 10 parks in the Country winning the Green Flag People's Choice award.
- He had recently returned from a tour of Bangladesh, which had been a great experience and source of inspiration to him. He said he had meet with various government figures and hoped Bangladesh would continue to prosper under the new interim government. He thanked his consorts for their support and cooperation.

The Speaker welcomed the new Director for Legal, Shupriya Iqbal and the ministerial envoys and said he looked forward to working with them.

Lastly, Council observed a minute silence in memory of former Councillor Ray Gipson who had recently passed away. He had served as a Liberal Democrat Councillor for Bow for 12 years before founding the Bow Geezers Group organising activities and campaigns for elderly gentlemen in the area. Councillor Peter Golds, Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Councillor Abdal Ullah and Councillor Maium Talukdar expressed their condolences to Mr Gipson's family and loved one and said he would be missed.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Sirajul Islam, Councillor Marc Francis, Councillor Asma Begum, Councillor Ayas Miah and Councillor Amina Ali.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor James King however he did not attend the Council meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Councillor Nathalie Bienfait, Councillor Shubo Hussain, Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury declared a personal interest in item 7 (Administration Motion – Council Divestment of Pension Funds) for the sake of transparency in that they had attended rallies supportive of the campaign and petition recently presented to pensions committee calling for the divestment of Tower Hamlets' pension fund.

3. MINUTES

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council of 22nd November 2024 and approve them as a correct record of the proceedings. The Speaker was authorised to sign the minutes accordingly.

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

Steve Halsey, Chief Executive provided an update to the Council meeting, highlighting the following issues:

OfSted Inspection into Children's Social Care Services – Mr Halsey said he was delighted Children Services had been recognised by OfSted as outstanding. He thanked senior management and staff for their hard work and said the service had achieved this result through its relentless drive for continuous improvement.

Youth Centres – Mr Halsey said the Council continued to roll out its programme of youth centres, with the Wapping Youth Centre being opened earlier in the month, following refurbishment as well as Samuda and The Reach opening on Monday 20th January 2025.

The Times List – Mr Halsey said the Times had listed Tower Hamlets as the 33rd Best place to live in the country – the highest for any east London borough. He said the list is put together by a panel of experts and looks at data for categories such as education, parks and open spaces as well as healthcare and crime.

Holocaust Memorial Day – Mr Halsey reminded Council Holocaust Memorial Day was on Monday 27th January. He said this was being marked internally as well as externally with an inter-faith Commemoration Service taking place at the Town Hall on Sunday 26th January 2025.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – Mr Halsey said he looked forward to the debate at next month's Full Council.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

There were no petitions to debate or be presented to Council.

CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** and Councillor Kabir **seconded** that the order of business be changed so that item 10.1 'Briefing Note – OFSTED Inspection Report outcome' be taken after item 4 'Chief Executive's announcements', as Children from a local choir were present to sing their songs. The Speaker accepted the exceptional circumstances for the change to the order of business and put the request to the meeting and it was agreed.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the Council.

The Deputy Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Amy Lee then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on Council Divestment of Pension Funds that had been **moved** by Councillor Saied Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Maium Talukdar.

Council also considered an amendment proposed and **moved** by Councillor Amy Lee and **seconded** by Councillor Shubo Hussain as set out in the tabled papers as follows:

Amendment Proposed by Councillor Amy Lee and seconded by Councillor Shubo Hussain.

Additions underlined
Deletions struckthrough

This Council notes:

1. That in Local Authorities across the country, millions of pounds from local government pension funds are being used to fund the unethical purchase of products, including arms.
2. ~~That the use of these arms is often used in serious conflicts across the globe including the ongoing conflict in Gaza (which the UN Human Rights Office found consistent with genocide).~~ That the use of these arms is often deployed in serious conflicts across the globe, including the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as conflicts in Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine, all of which are the subject of current and pending international legal cases concerning violations of human rights, war

- crimes and/or the crime of genocide (for example at the International Court of Justice).
3. That in August of 2024, Waltham Forest council took the decision to divest £773,000 of its £1.1billion pension fund, that appeared to be invested in companies engaged in the dealing of weapons, and other councils such as Islington have likewise made concrete divestment commitments, demonstrating that divestment is both possible and financially prudent.
 4. ~~That in Palestine (specifically Gaza) and other conflicts weapons are being funded by Local Government Pension funds.~~ That Local Government Pension funds risk funding weapons in multiple conflicts around the globe (including Gaza, Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine) if steps toward ethical divestment are not taken.
 5. That daily, civilians are killed by drone and aerial attacks across the globe.
 6. That these weapons – including deadly drones and missiles – are often part-paid for by funds drawn from local government pension pots.
 7. That at the September 30th meeting, the Pensions Committee requested legal advice in relation to divestment of any funds associated with arms dealing or any activities that facilitate death and destruction in other countries.
 8. That an update was provided by London CIV at the November meeting of the committee, where it was acknowledged that the council can divest its funds following due process and a declaration of intent to do so.
 9. That this was unanimously supported by all members of the committee.
 10. That the ongoing international legal cases regarding the occupation of Palestine and war between the State of Israel and Hamas, the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ever-growing climate emergency have highlighted the ethical implications of current investment practices.
 11. That across the UK, campaigns led by trade unions and human rights organisations, are pressing councils to divest millions of pounds from companies that are complicit in or profit from military occupation and violation of human rights; invest in weaponry and surveillance technology; and/or are involved in fossil fuel exploration and processing.
 12. That fossil-fuel-related investments pose a serious threat to the climate, contribute to toxic air pollution, and risk the financial stability of pension funds.
 13. That the Tower Hamlets Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) holds millions of pounds of assets, contributed by council staff and admitted employers, and is managed with oversight from the Pensions Committee (who act as Trustees) and the London Common Investment Vehicle (CIV).

This Council believes:

1. That public pension funds should not be used to facilitate the mass murder of thousands of innocent men, women, children and infants. Public pension funds must not be used—directly or indirectly—to

- facilitate the mass harm of civilians or to enable violations of international law.
2. That Tower Hamlets council has a proud history of internationalism, and standing up in whatever way it can to global tyranny and acts of atrocity.
 3. ~~That the people of Palestine, and all those living in war-torn countries, should not face death; injury; or displacement from weapons funded from public money in Tower Hamlets.~~
That people living in Palestine (including Gaza) and all others affected by war—such as in Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine—should not be harmed by weapons funded by public money in Tower Hamlets.
 4. That council staff have a right to know where their money is being spent.
 5. That retirement funds should not undermine a safe climate or human rights; instead, our LGPS should be invested ethically to ensure both financial stability and respect for international law.
 6. That properly planned ethical investment (including divestment from fossil fuels, arms companies complicit in human rights abuses, and other unethical industries) will keep the Fund healthy and meet its financial obligations.

This Council resolves:

1. To call for a complete audit of how all pension funds are used, and where any funds are invested.
2. ~~To publicly declare its intent to divest all funds away from companies who deal with arms.~~ publicly declare its intent to divest all funds away from companies involved in arms dealing, violations of human rights, international/humanitarian law, or fossil fuel exploration and processing.
3. To request a formal report be brought to the next available Pensions committee and Cabinet on how this divestment process will be accelerated.
4. To support and commend any local community campaigns that call on the council to disclose its LGPS fund investments publicly and to develop a clear roadmap for ethical investment.
5. To ensure that the Pensions Committee (and any relevant subcommittees) consider both human rights and climate impacts in all future investment decisions, working with the London CIV to facilitate divestment where appropriate.

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Amy Lee and seconded by Councillor Shubo Hussain was voted on and was defeated. The motion moved by Councillor Saied Ahmed and seconded by Councillor Maium Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

This council notes:

1. That in Local Authorities across the country, millions of pounds from local government pension funds are being used to fund the unethical purchase of products, including arms.
2. That the use of these arms is often used in serious conflicts across the globe – including the ongoing conflict in Gaza (which the UN Human Rights Office found consistent with genocide).
3. That in August of 2024, Waltham Forest council took the decision to divest £773,000 of its £1.1billion pension fund, that appeared to be invested in companies engaged in the dealing of weapons.
4. That in Palestine (specifically Gaza) and other conflicts weapons are being funded by Local Government Pension funds.
5. That daily, civilians are killed by drone and aerial attacks across the globe.
6. That these weapons – including deadly drones and missiles – are often part-paid for by funds drawn from local government pension pots.
7. That at the September 30th meeting, the Pensions Committee requested legal advice in relation to divestment of any funds associated with arms dealing or any activities that facilitate death and destruction in other countries.
8. That an update was provided by London CIV at the November meeting of the committee, where it was acknowledged that the council can divest its funds following due process and a declaration of intent to do so.
9. That this was unanimously supported by all members of the committee.

This Council believes:

1. That public pension funds should not be used to facilitate the mass murder of thousands of innocent men, women, children and infants.
2. That Tower Hamlets council has a proud history of internationalism, and standing up in whatever way it can to global tyranny and acts of atrocity.
3. That the people of Palestine, and all those living in war-torn countries, should not face death; injury; or displacement from weapons funded from public money in Tower Hamlets.
4. That council staff have a right to know where their money is being spent.

This Council resolves:

1. To call for a complete audit of how all pension funds are used, and where any funds are invested.
2. To publicly declare its intent to divest all funds away from companies who deal in arms.
3. To request a formal report be brought to the next available Pensions committee and Cabinet on how this divestment process will be accelerated.

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda to Best Value that had been **moved** by Councillor Amy Lee and seconded by Councillor Mufeedah Bustin.

Council also considered an amendment proposed and **moved** by Councillor Saied Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed as set out in the tabled papers as follows:

Amendment Proposed by Councillor Saied Ahmed and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed.

Additions underlined
Deletions struckthrough

This Council Notes:

1. The Best Value Inspection Report, commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, identified areas where the Council has not met its Best Value Duty ~~under the current administration led by Mayor Lutfur Rahman and Aspire.~~
2. The report raises concerns about the Council's culture, noting:
 - “The lack of trust between councillors, officers, and partners is extremely worrying and is not conducive to good governance and decision-making.”(Section 3.4). This is a culture that has been exacerbated over the previous seven years, with several key failings identified by the report under the purview of the previous administration.
3. Leadership and accountability are highlighted as areas for improvement, with the report stating:

- “The perception of many interviewees was that many good managers had exited the organisation as a result of ‘speaking truth to power.’” (Section 4.50). However, as per section 4.10, the council was praised for permanently appointing a Chief Executive Officer; Section 151 officer and several other key director positions. This has since been supplemented by the permanent appointment of all statutory officers, and all Corporate Directors. This was never realised under the previous administration.
 - That several historical failings, including a failure to sign off historic accounts; unrecovered VAT; unreconciled payments on account relating to social care contracts with total contractual spend values in excess of £60million; and failure to submit annual governance statements, have contributed to this perception of a lack of accountability and leadership.
 - “Inspectors found the council’s scrutiny culture to be ‘weak and confused,’ with ‘The level of challenge or in-depth scrutiny offered, or exhibited has in our view been inadequate.’” (Sections 10.17 and 5.120) The Council is already in the process of implementing a scrutiny improvement plan. This improvement is also confirmed by Minister in the draft directions provided to the council.
4. A staff survey conducted by the inspection team revealed that 48% of respondents expressed discomfort in raising concerns, and only 27% believed their concerns would be appropriately dealt with. ~~The report also notes:-~~
- ~~“We have seen evidence that staff are also concerned by some appointments and consider them inappropriate. In our staff survey we heard about a ‘friends and family culture,’ ‘cronyism’ and that some staff are concerned that existing relationships between councillors and officers changes the way work is done in the Council.”~~
(Section 4.4)
 - It should also be noted that of a staff cohort of over 5,000, only 300 members of staff were interviewed.
5. The report expresses concerns about the Council’s capacity to improve without external oversight:
- “They found insufficient evidence that the organisation is open and transparent, and values the constructive criticism required to drive improvement. The Inspectors therefore express concern that the Authority will not make sufficient progress to deliver and embed these changes without external accountability.”
(Letter from SoS to CEX 12/11/24)

- However, the government believes that the tools are there – through existing building blocks such as the Transformation Advisory Board – to work collaboratively to achieve the improvements required.
- Similarly, the council has earmarked £6million in funding for a continuous improvement fund to support the continuing of this improvement journey.

This Council Believes:

1. The findings in the Best Value Inspection Report highlight serious challenges for the Council's governance and leadership, with potential implications for the effective delivery of essential services to residents. However, section 3.6 and other parts of the report commend service delivery and staff pride in their work. Indeed, this was confirmed by the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's service, that found the council was 'outstanding'.
2. Addressing concerns about the Council's culture, accountability, and scrutiny processes is vital to rebuilding trust and ensuring high standards of governance. There is a responsibility on all members, on both sides of the chamber, to contribute to this rebuilding.
3. Staff, officers, and residents deserve a Council that operates with transparency, respect, and accountability, prioritising professionalism and inclusivity.
4. External oversight can play a constructive role in supporting the Council to address systemic issues and implement meaningful reform.

This Council Resolves To:

1. Acknowledge the findings of the Best Value Inspection Report and commit to taking sincere action to address the challenges it highlights.
2. Collaborate fully with the appointed government envoy and statutory support team, welcoming their expertise and input in driving improvements. The Council will work constructively with external leads on governance, leadership, and culture to restore confidence in its operations.
3. Ensure work is taken to include all political groups in the improvement process and include opposition members on the transformation board.
4. Prioritise creating an open and collaborative culture within the Council, ensuring staff and residents feel their voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Saied Ahmed and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to the vote and carried. The motion as amended was then put to the vote and approved.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

This Council Notes:

1. The Best Value Inspection Report, commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, identified areas where the Council has not met its Best Value Duty.
2. The report raises concerns about the Council's culture, noting:
 - “The lack of trust between councillors, officers, and partners is extremely worrying and is not conducive to good governance and decision-making.”(Section 3.4). This is a culture that has been exacerbated over the previous seven years, with several key failings identified by the report under the purview of the previous administration.
3. Leadership and accountability are highlighted as areas for improvement, with the report stating:
 - “The perception of many interviewees was that many good managers had exited the organisation as a result of ‘speaking truth to power.’” (Section 4.50). However, as per section 4.10, the council was praised for permanently appointing a Chief Executive Officer; Section 151 officer and several other key director positions. This has since been supplemented by the permanent appointment of all statutory officers, and all Corporate Directors. This was never realised under the previous administration.
 - That several historical failings, including a failure to sign off historic accounts; unrecovered VAT; unreconciled payments on account relating to social care contracts with total contractual spend values in excess of £60million; and failure to submit annual governance statements, have contributed to this perception of a lack of accountability and leadership.
 - “Inspectors found the council’s scrutiny culture to be ‘weak and confused,’ with ‘The level of challenge or in-depth scrutiny offered, or exhibited has in our view been inadequate.’” (Sections 10.17 and 5.120) The Council is already in the process of implementing a scrutiny improvement plan. This improvement is also confirmed by Minister in the draft directions provided to the council.
4. A staff survey conducted by the inspection team revealed that 48% of respondents expressed discomfort in raising concerns, and only 27% believed their concerns would be appropriately dealt with.

- It should also be noted that of a staff cohort of over 5,000, only 300 members of staff were interviewed.
5. The report expresses concerns about the Council's capacity to improve without external oversight:
- "They found insufficient evidence that the organisation is open and transparent, and values the constructive criticism required to drive improvement. The Inspectors therefore express concern that the Authority will not make sufficient progress to deliver and embed these changes without external accountability."
(Letter from SoS to CEX 12/11/24)
 - However, the government believes that the tools are there – through existing building blocks such as the Transformation Advisory Board – to work collaboratively to achieve the improvements required.
 - Similarly, the council has earmarked £6million in funding for a continuous improvement fund to support the continuing of this improvement journey.

This Council Believes:

1. The findings in the Best Value Inspection Report highlight serious challenges for the Council's governance and leadership. However, section 3.6 and other parts of the report commend service delivery and staff pride in their work. Indeed, this was confirmed by the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's service, that found the council was 'outstanding'.
2. Addressing concerns about the Council's culture, accountability, and scrutiny processes is vital to rebuilding trust and ensuring high standards of governance. There is a responsibility on all members, on both sides of the chamber, to contribute to this rebuilding.
3. Staff, officers, and residents deserve a Council that operates with transparency, respect, and accountability, prioritising professionalism and inclusivity.
4. External oversight can play a constructive role in supporting the Council to address systemic issues and implement meaningful reform.

This Council Resolves To:

1. Acknowledge the findings of the Best Value Inspection Report directions emerging from the Best Value Inspection Report and commit to taking sincere action to address the challenges it highlights.
2. Collaborate fully with the appointed government envoy and statutory support team, welcoming their expertise and input in driving

improvements. The Council will work constructively with external leads on governance, leadership, and culture to restore confidence in its operations.

3. Ensure work is taken to include all political groups in the improvement process and include opposition members on the transformation board.
4. Prioritise creating an open and collaborative culture within the Council, ensuring staff and residents feel their voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

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

CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Councillor Saied Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Maium Talukdar **seconded** that the order of business be changed so that item 10.2 'Progress Update on Best Value Improvement Matters' be taken after item 8 'Opposition Motion on Best Value', as the two are intrinsically linked to each other. The Speaker accepted the exceptional circumstances for the change to the order of business and put the request to the vote. This was voted on and agreed by Council.

9.1 Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan Update Report

Council considered the report which went to Cabinet on the 8th January 2025 relating to the progress made in Youth Service.

The report was **moved** by Councillor Maium Talukdar and was **seconded** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the progress and achievements made in respect of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2024-25 and to agree the plan going forward.

9.2 Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2024

Council considered the report which went to the General Purposes Committee on 2nd December 2024 relating to Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2024.

The report was **moved** by Councillor Rebaka Sultana and was **seconded** by Councillor Maium Talukdar.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the review report and agree the action as set out in the Appendix.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Briefing Note - OFSTED Inspection Report Outcome

Council considered the briefing note relating to the OFSTED Inspection of Children Services.

The report was **moved** Councillor Maium Talukdar and **seconded** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. The Briefing note and congratulated Children Services on its 'Outstanding' rating.

10.2 Progress Update on Best Value Improvement Matters

Council considered progress update report on Best Value Improvement matters.

The report was **moved** Councillor Saied Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Maium Talukdar.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. To note the content of the update report.

10.3 Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees of the Council 2024/25

Council considered a report on proportionality and allocation of places on Committees for the Council 2024/25.

The report was **moved** Councillor Maium Talukdar and **seconded** by Councillor Asma Islam.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the review of proportionality as at Section 3 of this report and the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25 as set out at paragraph 3.4 to 3.5.

2. Note the Committees set out for the municipal year 2024/25 listed in paragraph 3.5 as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 15 May 2024.
3. To agree that the Monitoring Officer is delegated to approve the appointment of Councillors required to fill positions during the municipal year in line with the proportionality arrangements set out in this report on the nomination of the respective group leaders.
4. Agree that the Monitoring Officer be delegated to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council where there is only one application for the position (where there is more than one application these will be presented to Council for decision).

10.4 ER/VR Exit Payments

Council considered a report on the ER/VR – Approval of Exit Payments.

The report was **moved** Councillor Saied Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Maium Talukdar.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Note and approve the exit payments, including redundancy and the cost of the early payment of pension benefits, the applications for Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy, as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) Note that the redundancy payment is part of the individuals' contractual terms and conditions of employment and that the early payment of pension benefits is linked to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Due to the lack of time, no questions from members were considered. A written response to be provided to the questions asked.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Motions 12.1 and 12.2 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.04 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix A to the Minutes

Written responses to the Questions submitted by Members for the Council meeting on Wednesday 22nd January 2025

11.1	Question from Councillor Sabina Akthar	<p>Can the Lead Member update the council on the delivery of new homes and a stand-alone community facility on the Harriot, Apsley, and Patterson House (HAP Regeneration) site in my ward Stepney Green?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The first stage of the process to procure a preferred developer partner to deliver the regeneration of Harriott Apsley & Pattison (HAP) Houses was completed in December. A Pre-Construction Services Agreement was signed with Countryside on the 17th of December 2024, enabling them to commence work on the technical design stage. This is to allow for a detailed pricing exercise to be completed and to confirm the full development costs of the project by Autumn 2025, which will then be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.</p> <p>Numerous other workstreams are progressing at pace. The buyback of leaseholder properties is well underway, with 13 homes acquired and several more in negotiation. Work to prepare the unoccupied sites on the estate for development will take place over the summer, including the demolition of the vacant former adult social care building.</p> <p>Work on the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is also progressing, which will ensure vacant possession of the blocks can be secured once the Phase 1 (decant) homes are ready. Following Cabinet approval on 16th October 2024? to authorise officers to make a request to the Secretary of State to approve a CPO, land referencing activities have been completed on the estate as part of this statutory process to inform the application to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government.</p> <p>The HAP Resident's Panel continues to meet regularly, including most recently on 4th December 2024, where useful discussions were had with residents regarding the next stage of the project</p>
------	---	--

<p>11.2</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Amy Lee</p>	<p>Can the Mayor outline plans and a timeline for improvements at Shadwell Basin and King Edward Memorial Park via Section 106 funds allocated as part of Tideway sewer works?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In 2015, a S106 agreement was signed between Thames Water and Tower Hamlets Council relating to King Edward Memorial Park in relation to the Thames Tideway. The Thames Tideway construction programme is scheduled to complete in summer 2025 (indicative timetable). Once the site is handed back, the implementation of the masterplan for this site will commence and these works are anticipated to take 12 months (circa September 2026).</p> <p>In addition, further funding of £206,874 (now £318,000 due to index linking) was allocated to enhance and improve Local Open Space in the vicinity of the foreshore site where the Thames Tideway project is being delivered. One of the potential projects considered was Shadwell Basin. However, allocation of this funding is being paused until the major works at King Edward Memorial Park have been delivered. Once this major programme is underway, officers will provide an update on options for allocation of the additional programme funding. Allocation of which will be subject to the terms of the s106 agreement. This funding needs to be spent within five years of the money having been passed to Tower Hamlets (August 2023) and therefore the allocation of these funds will need to be determined no later than August 2028.</p>
<p>11.3</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Sabina Khan</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to address the serious road safety issues on St Paul's Way, Thomas Road and Bow Common Lane in Mile End Ward? There were 14 car collisions recorded on Bow Common Lane between 2017 to 2022, alone. These roads for different reasons, are prone to accidents and are worryingly close to three schools, a church, community centre, mosque and commercial units with large footfalls.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In recent years, officers have developed road safety bids for both internal and external funding to address some of the concerns raised by residents in these areas. Unfortunately, to date, they have been</p>

		<p>unsuccessful. Officers will continue to pursue new funding sources to try to mitigate these concerns.</p> <p>Additional work is being undertaken to collate accident data to support the Council's emerging Road Safety Plan. This work will further support identifying strategic areas where historic road safety concerns must be prioritised.</p>
11.4	<p>Question from Councillor Asma Islam</p>	<p>Numerous residents have contacted me concerned about the future of Bethnal Green Weightlifting Club. Can the lead member inform me on what is being done to support a proud and historic organisation in our borough and commit tonight to ensure that this council does not cause actions that could bring about its collapse?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In July 2024, the council served notice ending the club's tenancy on 31 January 2025. The council is in the process of consolidating its land and property interests around the Professional Development Centre, in Bethnal Green Road to explore future uses, including building new affordable housing. A meeting has been offered to the club with the Interim Director for Regeneration, Housing Supply and Assets. The Council is keen to work with the Club to offer support and ensure they can continue as a valued organisation in our borough</p>
11.5	<p>Question from Councillor Harun Miah</p>	<p>Given the positive outcomes highlighted in our recent Ofsted inspection, can the Lead Member outline how this success will be built on to ensure continuous improvement in Children services and the learning from this taken to service areas where challenges remain?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Maintaining and sustaining the momentum from our recent Ofsted success is crucial. Meetings and workshops have already taken place to assess emerging priorities with plans to review and refresh our improvement plan, with key areas of challenge addressed through focused working groups.</p> <p>We aim to have a refreshed improvement plan by April, with challenge and review maintained through the leadership and governance boards already established. We need to embrace and promote our success</p>

		<p>and our goal is champion ourselves as sector leader, sharing our learning with teams and other local authorities so more children can benefit from outstanding services.</p> <p>Continued support and investment will be key to helping us to continue to innovate and strengthen our services, ensuring we adapt in line with changes nationally and locally.</p>
11.6	<p>Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury</p>	<p>Tower Hamlets lacks an adequate number of fast electric chargers, and the slow chargers on streetlamp posts are often inaccessible due to parked cars. I have heard of electric vehicle drivers spending hours searching for an available slow charger. What plans does the council have to address this issue and support our electric vehicle drivers?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In January 2024 Cabinet, the Mayor approved the following three projects to significantly increase the number of charging points in the borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project 1: 2000 lamp column (5kw) charging • Project 2: 35 rapid (50kw) charging points • Project 3: 200 fast (7kw) chargers <p>The council is currently working to procure for projects 1 and 2. We expect to commence the installation of lamp column chargers across the borough from April 2025. These will not have dedicated bays but will give residents many more options for charging when the space close to a charger is occupied.</p> <p>In Summer 2025 we expect to start the installation of rapid chargers which will have dedicated charging bays.</p> <p>The fast chargers for project 3 are planned for installation towards the end of 2025. These charging points are subject to a successful funding bid to the Department for Transport. The Council will be informed of the outcome of our 243EW bid in March 2025.</p>
11.7	<p>Question from Councillor Amin Rahman</p>	<p>The council has a proud record of supporting residents through the Cost-of-Living crisis, and that there has been an increase in funds and provisions to help those residents most in need. Can the Lead Member provide an update on the latest HSF allocation, including increased</p>

support through direct food vouchers for those affected by the two-child benefit cap; increased direct food vouchers for those families with SEND needs; and increasing accessibility and choice through more organisations throughout the borough through the Food Hub?

Response

The Council remains committed to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis and ensuring that we reach those most in need. We have been awarded £2.9 million for this tranche of Household Support Fund, and we have strategically allocated funds to address the key challenges faced by our residents.

We have allocated £2 million to cash-first vouchers and food vouchers to support our residents with rising food and energy costs. This includes over £800,000 allocated to families affected by the two-child benefit cap, as well as over £200,000 directed towards households with SEND children. We have also identified low-income pensioners, households with a disability, residents facing domestic abuse, and those financially worst-off as some of the target cohorts to receive support through food and fuel vouchers. This is to ensure that those in the most precarious financial situations receive the support they need.

We have also allocated £200,000 of the Household Support Fund and £50,000 from council budgets to the LBTH Food Hub to supply 80 food banks with fresh and ambient produce, ensuring accessibility and choice for residents across the borough.

We have re-launched our Warm Packs programme with £100,000 allocated from the Household Support Fund. These packs provide residents with items such warm blankets, socks, gloves and hot water bottles, and are being distributed through our Warm Hubs at Idea Stores and libraries to help residents in need during the colder months.

We have also allocated £50,000 to our Community Cupboards programme at Family and Children Centres, providing essential items such as toiletries, nappies and hygiene products to ensure residents have access to basic household necessities. An additional £25,000 has been directed to a commissioned homelessness provider to deliver hot meals and wrap-around support to those in need.

		<p>We continue to fund our long-standing Resident Support Scheme, having allocated an extra £400,000 through this tranche of Household Support Fund. The scheme provides a vital safety net to residents and is open all year round to allow residents at risk or in crisis to apply for financial support.</p> <p>These measures are designed to provide practical and accessible support to residents across Tower Hamlets as we work to address food insecurity, financial hardship, and rising energy costs. We will provide further updates on the progress and impact of the various programmes as they roll out in the coming months.</p>
<p>11.8</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin</p>	<p>A notification has been sent that the Grants Determination Sub Committee will be considering a number of SLAs, including for Mudchute Farm on the Isle of Dogs. Could the Lead Member indicate what the plans are for the SLA, and whether the farm has been engaged in discussions on this?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Mudchute Park and Farm is managed by a charitable community-based organisation (Mudchute Association). The site forms part of the borough's physical heritage and is a much-valued community asset. Although the land is owned by the Council, the management has been in the hands of the community since 1974.</p> <p>Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park is a unique open space managed by a community-based charity (Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, registered charity number 1107136). The site forms part of the borough's physical heritage and is a much-valued community asset. Although the land is owned by the Council, the management has been in the hands of the community since 1990.</p> <p>Tower Hamlets Council has provided both the Mudchute Association and the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park with funding of a total of £63,800 from the Parks Department's revenue budget in the form of a service level agreement to support the management and maintenance of these open space sites for many years. These SLAs lapsed on the 31st March 2024.</p> <p>Within their Annual reports / accounts both of these organisations have large reserves and surplus. Given the current reserves and</p>

		surplus of these organisations, and the pressure on local government finance the continuation of this Grant Funding in the form of an SLA is being considered. No decision has been made on this funding.
11.9	Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan	<p>Given the recent decision of the pension committee to look to divest all investment from the council's pension fund from problematic practices such as arms dealing, and today's reiteration of that commitment through the administration motion, can the Chair of the Committee provide an update on what next steps will be taken to expedite this divestment?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>We are currently working with our investment advisor and LCIV to consider options for divestment in line with our ethical investment strategy with due consideration to the new pooling and pension fund review to maximise the scale and impact of any action. Also, we will be reviewing our Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) arrangement with a view to broadening investment options to include a range of ethical investment funds. An update paper will come to the March committee meeting.</p>
11.10	Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain	<p>Over the last few months, I am aware of a number of road accidents on Devon's and Violet Road – at what point will the council consider installing speed humps or other traffic calming measures?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Officers have submitted a funding bid in the new LIP to Transport for London (TfL) for funding to signalise the Devons Road / Campbell Road / Violet Road junction, and we are currently awaiting the results. Accident data for serious and slight incidents, as well as speed data, have been used to inform the LIP bid. If successful, a signalised junction scheme would be programmed to commence from 2025/26 but given current TfL resources in the planning of such projects, it is likely to take up to 3 years to commission, design and deliver. Officers will of course continue to explore other opportunities for internal and external funding sources to try and mitigate residents' concerns.</p>
11.11	Question	Following the significant re-investment in the Youth Service can the

	<p>from Councillor Iqbal Hossain</p>	<p>lead member update the Council on progress with establishing a safe space for young people in every ward?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The total of all youth provisions (direct and commissioned / universal and specialist) currently being delivered is 31 which includes ward based, quadrant based and borough-wide services.</p> <p>Young Tower Hamlets is currently directly delivering from 12 youth centres across the Borough. The total commissioned youth provisions are 19 (specialist and universal). The total number of youth centres (direct and commissioned delivery) is 17. The total number of wards that has one or more youth centre directly delivered or commissioned by Young Tower Hamlets is 15.</p> <p>Over the next 3 months we plan to open another 3 Young Tower Hamlets youth centres (direct delivery) and to start the commissioning process for youth centres (safe spaces) in 5 wards which will complete all 20 wards having at least one or more youth centre (safe space) by the end of 2025.</p> <p>Further information regarding locations and provision can be found here on the YTH website Young Tower Hamlets</p>
<p>11.12</p>	<p>Question from Councillor James King</p>	<p>Please could the Lead Member confirm what the administration's plans are for the South Dock Bridge, an important infrastructure investment to improve accessibility on the Isle of Dogs?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The cost of delivering South Dock Bridge has increased for a variety of different factors, including inflation and cost of construction. There is now a £4.5m funding gap which will need to be closed in order to complete the scheme. Officers are exploring options with local stakeholders and funding bodies, including the GLA, to see if additional money can be raised.</p>
<p>11.13</p>	<p>Question from</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member confirm if the Trumans Brewery owners have submitted a planning application or are in pre-planning dialogue with council officers and if so, can you tell us how many family sized social</p>

	<p>Councillor Suluk Ahmed</p>	<p>housing units are being proposed, along with the number of amenity spaces for locals?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Truman’s Brewery owners submitted three planning applications, and one listed building consent application registered in August and September 2024.</p> <p>The most substantial application is for redevelopment of land on the east side of the Trumans Estate, with 5 new buildings and extensions to the existing Boiler House (Grade II Listed building).</p> <p>The proposal is mainly for commercial floorspace (24,629 sq.m of office space, 1,887sq.m of retail and market floorspace, 823sq.m of cinema/event space).</p> <p>115sq.m of community space is proposed.</p> <p>44 homes are proposed in a building on Spital Street at the corners of Hanbury and Woodseer Streets.</p> <p>Of these 6 would be for social rent made up of 3 x 3-bedroom and 3 x 4-bedroom homes. There would also be 5 intermediate (shared ownership) homes. The overall affordable housing is equivalent to 36% calculated by habitable rooms.</p> <p>The new building which would provide the 44 homes would include communal amenity and play space, reserved for the use of future residents.</p> <p>Two new public spaces are also proposed - <i>Chimney Yard and Cooperage Yard</i>, together providing 1,124 square meters of hard and soft landscaped open space. (Planning reference PA/24/01451).</p> <p>The other three applications are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An application for listed building consent for alterations and an extension to the Grade II Listed Boiler House (reference PA/24/01475). 2. An application for planning permission for construction a 6-storey building to provide market space at ground floor and
--	--------------------------------------	---

		<p>4,500sq.m of office workspace on upper floors (reference PA/24/01439).</p> <p>3. An application for planning permission for demolition of existing buildings on site and construction of a new building to provide 5,200sq.m of floorspace as a Data Centre (reference PA/24/01450).</p> <p>Officers have advised that the public consultation for the applications was carried out in the autumn of last year and has now ended.</p> <p>The applications are likely to be reported to the Strategic Development Committee at either the 23 April or 11 June meetings.</p>
<p>11.14</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed</p>	<p>Residents have written to me expressing their concern about waste management near Hessel Street with rats being reported to be seen around Delafield House. Will the lead member consider investigating this matter and working with myself to see that it is resolved?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>We are working to improve waste and recycling facilities around Delafield House. Site visits have taken place, and we are working to resolve waste management problems in the area that have led to issues with rats, fly tipping and abuse of residential bin stores.</p> <p>Problems are linked to lack of suitable waste and recycling storage facilities at Delafield House, nearby block of flats and business properties. In addition, existing open bin storage areas suffer abuse from other residents, passers-by and businesses.</p> <p>Our waste and recycling teams are working closely with colleagues from Housing and Regeneration, Community Safety and other landlords to ensure adequate waste and recycling bins are available; that regular collections are taking place; that antisocial behaviour and illegal waste dumping is reduced; and waste storage facilities are properly managed.</p> <p>We have carried out site visits and are working to improve the overall waste, recycling and cleanliness standards in this area.</p>

11.15	<p>Question from Councillor Ahmodur Kabir</p>	<p>Could the Lead Member provide an update on what the BVI Inspection team found concerning the surety and sustainability of the Council's finances?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Inspectors stated that “The Council’s provisional general fund out-turn for 2023/24 is a saving of £300,000 with a minor slippage in its capital programme.</p> <p>The Council has set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and established a focused Medium Term Financial Strategy. Its Capital Programme is financed, and we found good practice in terms of Internal Audit and Treasury Management” and stated that “We believe good progress is being made under the best value themes of use of resources”. They went on to state “The Council is in a strong financial position with significant reserves” and under the theme of continuous improvement inspectors recognised The Council has a robust Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in place and has addressed the delays in the publication of the accounts and a historic delay to the publication of the Annual Governance Statements. It is investing in corporate services, including finance, human resources, procurement, and information technology.</p> <p>The new proposed budget goes further and addresses all of the observations made by the inspectors in terms of financial risk associated with underlying pressures for waste and housing options, removes reliance on use of reserves, adopts best practice in terms of increased minimum balances and removes our reliance on commercial income generation as a source of future savings.</p>
11.16	<p>Question from Councillor Abdi Mohamed</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member outline how this administration is prioritising efforts to tackle hate crime in the borough, particularly in light of the forthcoming review of community safety by the council?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Tower Hamlets Council remains committed to making every community in the borough feel safer and heard. We are a best practice borough with a range of innovative work to tackle Hate Crime, this includes:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Hate Crime victims through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) commissioned provider CATCH, who provide vital help for those affected by hate crime. • Through the Tower Hamlets No Place For Hate (NPFH) Forum the Hate Crime team brings together key partners. This ensures delivery of the 3 key priorities: Protect & support victims, Holding Perpetrators accountable through the Criminal Justice System and Civil Enforcements and Raise awareness through education, training and community outreach. This involves overseeing the delivery and implementation of the Monthly Hate Incidents Panel, Tower Hamlets No Place For Hate Forum and delivering the annual Hate Crime Delivery Plan. • We also raise awareness through training, outreach and engagement activities. So far in this financial year, 2024-25, the Hate Crime team have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trained/engaged 536 people. ✓ Encouraged 8 new organisations and 270 individuals to show their support and actively challenging prejudice in themselves and others by signing the No Place For Hate Pledge. To date 214 organisations and 6003 Personal Pledges have been signed. ✓ Recruited 50 more No Place For Hate Champions. These Champions are active in creating allyship/bystander action and help challenge prejudice.
11.17	<p>Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan</p>	<p>We live in difficult times and much has been done by this administration to help those in need. In terms of support for our elderly residents, can the Lead Member outline steps taken to combat poverty and isolation?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Supporting our elderly residents is a key priority for the Council, and we have implemented a range of initiatives to address poverty and isolation.</p> <p>Through the Household Support Fund in 2024, we allocated just under £700,000 specifically to support pensioners. We have distributed cash payments ranging from £95 to £175, providing targeted financial assistance to over 6,000 low-income pensioner households in the past year. This continues our ongoing commitment to pensioners, following</p>

		<p>previous tranches of the Household Support Fund where we have awarded over £1.6 million in cash vouchers exclusively to pensioners since October 2022.</p> <p>Since the government's decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Allowance, the Council has launched its very own Tower Hamlets Winter Fuel Payment. This will provide £175 to eligible pensioners who would otherwise miss out, as part of a £1m package of support.</p> <p>We have also been actively working to push our Pension Credit campaign to encourage pensioners to claim the benefits they are entitled to. Our targeted approach has included a dedicated Outreach team making calls to residents as well as sending out letters to 650 households identified over the past year as eligible for but not claiming Pension Credit. We also published the latest edition of our <i>Cost-of-Living Help</i> booklet, distributing thousands of physical copies through our libraries, schools, residents' hubs, and voluntary and community sector organisations to help older residents access information on the support available in the borough.</p> <p>The Council also relaunched Warm Hubs across Idea Stores and libraries at the beginning of December 2024, offering a safe and warm space with hot drinks and refreshments for our residents over the colder months. Warm packs are being distributed through our Warm Hubs, providing residents with warm blankets, socks, gloves and hot water bottles in our efforts to support pensioners in the borough.</p> <p>We also plan to launch our Meals on Wheels scheme in 2025 to continue tackling food insecurity and isolation amongst older residents in the borough.</p>
11.18	<p>Question from Councillor Maisha Begum</p>	<p>In light of the Council's commitment to sustainability, how are environmental considerations integrated into the planning and execution of highways and transportation projects, and what steps are being taken to minimize the carbon footprint of these initiatives?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>All Transportation schemes explore the ability to deliver enhancements relating to new planting and greening opportunities, sustainable drainage (SuDs) as well as consideration of measures</p>

		<p>that support walking and cycling, improved accessibility and opportunities to access and use sustainable travel modes.</p> <p>Further to this we are rolling out three projects which will significantly increase the number of EV charging points in Tower Hamlets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project 1: 2000 lamp column (5kw) charging • Project 2: 35 rapid (50kw) charging points • Project 3: 200 fast (7kw) chargers <p>The recent conversion of the borough’s street lighting stock to LED lights has made a significant contribution to the Council’s overall carbon saving target.</p> <p>We are working with our highways contractor to identify special techniques to reduce the temperatures of the hot asphalts we use when laying new road resurfaces. Thereby reducing the carbon emissions associated with construction projects to assist meeting our zero carbon ambitions.</p> <p>In addition, we have been proactive in the planting of extra trees across the borough. 1,451 trees planted (702 new street trees, 455 in parks and green spaces and 294 trees across housing estates).</p>
<p>11.19</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury</p>	<p>Our residents have welcomed the opening of several Residents Hubs across the borough. They offer those digitally excluded or with literacy issues a chance to interact with an officer. Can the Lead Member breakdown what services will be delivered at these places, and can we expect to see a ‘One Stop Shop’ approach where support with filling in benefit forms, welfare benefits advice, parking, housing repairs, council tax enquiries and homelessness is provided?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Resident Hubs represent a collaboration between the council and the borough's Voluntary and Community Services to assist our most vulnerable residents. The objective of the Residents' Hub is to engage with residents who have difficulty accessing support via other means, such as online or by phone and a focus on enabling residents to help themselves.</p> <p>The resident hubs provided a range of services to ensure a comprehensive support. Services covered: Housing Benefits, Welfare Benefits, Council Tax, Parking, Debt, Employment, Pupil Services,</p>

		<p>Pest Control, Street Line and more recently incorporated Resident support outreach service. Lettings, Temporary Accommodation and Homeless are currently delivered at Whitechapel only. We also deliver a range of services through our partners. Where possible it is advisable to book an appointment.</p> <p>The team will help customers complete council forms online, make phone calls, check in for appointments, and assess needs to identify pathways. They will triage customers for signposting, referrals, or appointments not provided by the hubs.</p> <p>Please note we will complete forms for those not digitally enabled but cannot create email addresses or online accounts for them. Paper forms can be requested, and assistance will be provided to complete them where required.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing the resident hub delivery model and services to better meet the resident's needs across the borough.</p>
<p>11.20</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Rebaka Sultana</p>	<p>The recently published Youth Justice Service report identifies that 32% of post-16 young people under YJS supervision end their interventions as NEET. What additional measures is the Council implementing to support these young people in accessing education, training, or employment opportunities?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Careers Young WorkPath provides impartial careers information, advice and guidance to young people between 13-19 years and up to 25 years if the young person has special educational needs and has an education, health and care plan. We work in all schools and colleges in the borough and offer careers guidance interviews to young people with SEND, SEN, looked after young people, young people working with the Youth Justice Service and other young people deemed at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) NEET young people.</p> <p>Careers guidance interviews empowers young people to think about and explore options and opportunities, discuss their career ideas and helps them plan for their future. Young people who are NEET also receive ongoing help and support to develop their employability skills including developing the attitudes and behaviours necessary in the workplace. Our Brokerage and Tracking Advisers support young</p>

	<p>people to complete CVs, application forms and prepare for job and apprenticeship interviews, and Advisers offer ongoing advice and practical support and work with young people at their pace to help them to move into appropriate provision.</p> <p>The team work closely with colleagues in the Youth Justice Service, and young people are referred to Careers Young Workpath for ongoing careers advice, guidance and practical support to move into training find work or into education.</p> <p>Our Brokerage and Tracking Team Leader sits on the YJS Employment, Training and Education NEET Oversight panel and attends this once a month. The panel is made up of senior colleagues from the Youth Justice team and Virtual School – cases are reviewed, services report on progress with young people, barriers to progression are discussed and suitable EET provision identified for individual young people.</p> <p>The YJS employ their own Education Adviser, and she works closely with her counterpart at Careers Young WorkPath and he shares details of new and existing provision to support their work with young people.</p> <p>The Brokerage and Tracking Team Leader at Careers Young WorkPath provides ongoing advice and guidance to support the YJS Education Officer in her day-to-day work.</p> <p>As part of our statutory duties on behalf of the local authority, Careers Young WorkPath staff track and follow up all 16- and 17-year-olds who are NEET and Not Known including those working with the YJ service to identify what they are doing and to support those who are NEET to move into EET.</p> <p>The team work closely with colleagues in WorkPath, and young people are referred to them so that they can access and benefit from additional support via external contracts and avail of bespoke provision.</p> <p>We currently have 70.6% of year 12 and 13s (24 young people) who are involved with YJS in learning and 29.4% (10 young people) who are NEET.</p> <p>Careers Young WorkPath also attends and participates in a wide</p>
--	--

		<p>range of careers and social mobility events for young people including apprenticeship fairs, careers fair and events for SEND young people.</p> <p>Workpath UKSPF NEET Team (sub regional programme funding with Corp of London as Accountable Body) is working with Youth Service at present attending Columbia Road Youth Centre, as part of the Universal Safe Spaces work, in the evenings to engage with NEETs. There is ongoing dialogue between both services to increase presence in other Safe Spaces across the borough.</p> <p>The programme works with specialist partners including OMG Education, Osmani Trust, Poplar Harca, and Cultiv8 to increase engagement with this group and reduce reoffending. Provision includes flexible support with travel and other barriers and training in Cyber Security Level 2, SIA Security and CCTV, Enforcement Agent and CSCS training targeted for NEET participants.</p> <p>To date the UKSPF NEET programme has engaged with over 240 NEETs, since September 2024, assisting them to access education, training, and employment. The programme has supported 77 participants with training, further engaged 33 NEET participants with Life Skills, 72 with increased employability and 9 NEET participants into employment to date. The UKSPF Programmes overall has assisted 60 NEETs into employment.</p> <p>The UKSPF Programme ends March 2025, but the partnership boroughs are anticipating a contract extension to be announced shortly. The service is restructuring to ensure a continued strong focus on NEET and the council is working with Central London Forward to develop a Trailblazer bid to central government with a targeted focus on young people with specific barriers to training and work.</p>
11.21	<p>Question from Councillor Abdul Malik</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member provide an update on highway improvements and road safety measures implemented on the Isle of Dogs over the last 12 months?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In the last 12 months the council has implemented the following schemes in the Isle of Dogs:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zebra crossing on East Ferry Road adjacent to Chapel House Street • Zebra crossing on Marshwall adjacent to Limeharbour • Zebra crossing on Limeharbour adjacent to Marshwall • Alpha Grove area footway improvements • Two Marshwall bus stop improvements <p>We are currently programming to implement six new speed humps in Cassilis Road and Millharbour.</p> <p>We have also completed, or are scheduled to complete the following highway maintenance in the same area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pier Street footway reconstruction • Newby Place footway • Napier Avenue (part) footway • Pier Street carriageway resurfacing • Stewart Street carriageway • West Ferry Road carriageway (part)
11.22	<p>Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam</p>	<p>Could the Mayor inform me as to whether the council has been contacted regarding or consulted on the future of Billingsgate Fish market? Before Christmas the City of London announced that the plans to secure the future of the market were being scrapped.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The council has been working with the City of London Corporation on the future of the Billingsgate Market site for a number of years. The site has potential for a major redevelopment scheme, bringing forward much needed housing for the local area and is identified in the Local Plan. On 27 November 2024, the Corporation submitted a Private Bill to Parliament that will end the City’s responsibilities to operate a market at the Billingsgate and Smithfield sites. As the council is an interested party, we are in discussion with the Corporation in relation to this and to unlock the site for delivery.</p>
11.23	<p>Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member provide an update on when the Meals on Wheels scheme will be rolled out across the borough, who will benefit, and how it can be accessed?</p> <p>Response</p>

		<p>The Council is committed to supporting our residents with initiatives which promote wellbeing and tackle food insecurity. We are currently in the process of developing the Meals on Wheels programme to ensure it meets the needs of our community.</p> <p>The scheme will be designed to benefit poorer residents, particularly pensioners who need extra support. Once finalised, information about how to access the service, eligibility criteria, and the timeline for its rollout will be widely communicated across the borough.</p> <p>We understand the importance of this service and are working hard to ensure it is launched as soon as possible. Further updates will be provided in due course.</p>
11.24	<p>Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah</p>	<p>Residents of Wapping have raised concerns about increasing levels of anti-social behaviour and crime, particularly around key public spaces like Wapping High Street and the Shadwell Basin. What specific steps is the administration taking to ensure adequate police presence, improve community safety, and address residents' concerns in Wapping?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Council is committed to addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime concerns in Wapping & Shadwell through a comprehensive localised approach focused on police presence, community engagement, and targeted interventions.</p> <p>We have a designated ASB & Community Safety Officer who regularly attends residents' ward panel meetings to ensure ongoing communication and collaboration with local community & key partners. Additionally, a dedicated THEO (Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officer) Team is assigned to the area, conducting targeted patrols in hotspot locations across Wapping and Shadwell.</p> <p>Our community safety service, carry out fortnightly tasking meetings that is co-chaired with the Sector Police Inspector, to discuss & focus on addressing ASB, crime, and community safety issues in both Wapping and Shadwell wards. The administration have funded for additional Police which includes 4 Sergeants and 22 Constables to increase Police presence in our borough and tasked through our</p>

		<p>tasking meetings.</p> <p>Our Community Safety service also conducts safety surgeries to engage residents directly, providing advice, guidance, and services such as bike and phone marking. These sessions address key concerns, including bike theft and phone theft, and distribute multilingual leaflets to inform residents about effective reporting methods for ASB. Personal safety alarms, primarily for women, are also provided during these events, with councillors attending to offer support.</p>
11.25	<p>Question from Councillor Leelu Ahmed</p>	<p>Residents in Mile End have raised ongoing concerns about issues with waste collection and persistent fly-tipping in key areas such as Burdett Road and around the Regent's Canal. What specific actions is the administration taking to improve waste management services and tackle fly-tipping hotspots in Mile End?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>We have reviewed street cleansing complaints and fly tipping reports for these areas to understand reported problems and specific locations of concern.</p> <p>Action is being taken to task cleansing resources and enforcement resources to help drive improvements. Our integrated enforcement team within community safety will be working to task resources to these locations with increased use of education, advice and enforcement action to improve local environmental quality. We will be actively monitoring the impact of this work to show how cleaning standards and antisocial behaviour reduce over the next 3 months. A number of £1000 fixed penalty notices for fly tipping have been issued to businesses in this area, but we will re-focus enforcement efforts across this area.</p>
11.26	<p>Question from Councillor Amina Ali</p>	<p>Over Christmas and New Year there were several missed waste collections around the borough with rubbish building up in Grove road, Morgan Street, Tredegar Square and Lichfield Road. Why were these collections missed, and can the lead member provide assurances that these errors have now been rectified?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Over Christmas and New Year its usual to reschedule collections</p>

		<p>because of public holidays, and this was the case in December and early January. Rescheduling collections leads to delays in collections occurring and therefore prior to the holiday period we notify Registered Social Landlords of the amended collection arrangements. These are also published online on the council website. As with all holiday periods, access to estates and roads becomes more difficult due to far heavier parking of resident's cars and this issue can lead to further delays in providing collections.</p> <p>Despite the issues the service performed well overall across the Christmas and New Year period and the delivery of the refuse service overall, continues to improve, with significantly reduced levels of complaints being received. The improvement is expected to continue as we move through 2025.</p> <p>Any issues experienced by residents over the holiday period were due to the reasons stated above and the service is now operating to the regular weekly schedules.</p>
11.27	<p>Question from Councillor Mark Francis</p>	<p>Will the Lead Member for Environmental Services explain what action has been taken to improve the safety of pedestrians crossing the A12 slip roads at the junction of Wick Lane in the past two and half years?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>There have been no recorded pedestrian casualties associated with the crossings at A12 slip road junction with Wick Lane. Prior to this some highways works were carried out in Wick Lane in 2018 resulting from the 2017 fatality of a pedestrian walking down the northbound slip road to the A12, and the subsequent Coroner report.</p> <p>We have made adjustments to barriers, signage and tactile crossing points in response to this. However, the improvement of safety implied the provision of new pedestrian signal facilities, (currently unfunded).</p> <p>As well as the surface crossing works, a good amount of engineering design and planning was carried out to provide new signal crossing facilities.</p> <p>The scheme was on hold at the time of the Covid -19 pandemic after which a backlog of TfL projects developed and the funding opportunity was no longer available. Subsequently TfL removed the signalisation project from their programme.</p>

		<p>We have been in recent discussion with TfL about practical ways in which the commitment to improve pedestrian signals can be honoured in light of no available funding source.</p> <p>It is understood that local developer proposals here have the capacity to support the required resources. The timing of these developments is uncertain.</p> <p>We will continue to work with TfL to try and find a way forward that provides the necessary safety mitigation for pedestrians.</p>
11.28	<p>Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait</p>	<p>Will the Administration please re-instate the camera-controlled school street closure of Chisenhale Road outside the primary school for a hour in the morning and in the afternoon for drop off and pick up? Will you also provide your position and reasoning for whatever you choose?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Chisenhale Primary school street was introduced as a trial scheme under an experimental traffic order during the Covid-19 pandemic. When this traffic order elapsed, the Council did not progress its permanent adoption as a school street.</p> <p>Currently, there are no plans to implement new school streets in the Borough or to re-introduce the Chisenhale scheme.</p>
11.29	<p>Question from Councillor Peter Golds</p>	<p>Residents in Poplar, the Isle of Dogs and Mile End have campaigned for many years to protect the D7 link between Poplar, Cubitt Town and Mile End, despite TfL attempting to scrap the route. It is significant that repeatedly D7 and 277 buses increasingly run in convoy northwards from Westferry Road. Will the Mayor and administration support residents by raising the importance of retaining the D7 for residents of Poplar and Cubitt Town as the only link to Mile End.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>During 2022, Transport for London (TfL) undertook a consultation on changes to bus routes serving Tower Hamlets, which at the time, proposed removal of the D7 bus route and re-routing of the 277 to Poplar All Saints DLR instead of the Asda Store at Crossharbour.</p>

		<p>Following concerns raised during this consultation by the council and other stakeholders on the impacts of this on local residents, particularly those with mobility impairments, TfL retained the D7 bus and the existing route alignment for 277.</p> <p>Officers continue to engage with TfL on bus network planning on an ongoing basis, identifying opportunities to consolidate and grow the network (e.g. Lower Lea Valley bus review to accommodate new housing development and provision of new SL4 Superloop route between Canary Wharf and Grove Park via Silvertown Tunnel) alongside monitoring performance of the network, including the D7 and 277 routes.</p>
--	--	--

This page is intentionally left blank