

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL (ORDINARY MEETING)**

**HELD AT 10.00 P.M.\* ON WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2012**

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

[\* Note: This meeting was scheduled to commence at 7.30 p.m. or at the rise of the Extraordinary Council Meeting which started at 7.00 p.m., if later.]

**Members Present:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Dr. Emma Jones
Councillor Helal Abbas	Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Rania Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Tim Archer	Councillor Fozol Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Mohammed Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer
Councillor Lutfu Begum	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Mizan Chaudhury	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Alibor Choudhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Zara Davis	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Stephanie Eaton	Councillor Gulam Robbani
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor David Snowdon
Councillor Judith Gardiner	Councillor Gloria Thienel
Councillor Carlo Gibbs	Councillor Bill Turner
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Shafiqul Haque	Councillor Kosru Uddin
Councillor Carli Harper-Penman	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Ann Jackson	Councillor Amy Whitelock
Councillor Denise Jones	

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Rajib Ahmed, in the Chair**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Lesley Pavitt.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members declared interests in items included on the agenda for the meeting as follows:-

Councillor	Item	Type of interest	Reason
Cllr Rajib Ahmed	5.1	Personal	Langdon Park School is in my ward.
Cllr Kabir Ahmed	5.3	Personal	I have signed the SRE petition
Cllr Khales Uddin Ahmed	5.4	Personal	I am a board member of Poplar Harca.
Cllr Abdul Asad	9.1	Personal	Community Safety Plan
Cllr Abdul Asad	5.4	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest – Cllr Asad left the meeting during consideration of this item	I am employed by a Youth Service Provider for LAP 4 (Bishop Challoner School)
Cllr Rania Khan	8.4	Personal	Supporter of the Women's Library
Cllr Rachael Saunders	5.4	Personal	I am on the board of the Bromley-by-Bow Centre which has contractual links with Poplar Harca, a Youth Service provider.
Cllr Helal Uddin	5.4	Personal	My employer is connected with one of the Youth Service Providers, Poplar Harca. I am also a board member of Poplar Harca.
Cllr Helal Uddin	9.2	Personal	I am a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## 3. MINUTES

Councillor Stephanie Eaton referred to the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Councillor Eaton stated that she had submitted her apologies for absence prior to the meeting and the draft minutes should be amended to record this.

### RESOLVED

1. That, subject to the above amendment, the unrestricted minutes of the following meetings of the Council be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly:

- Ordinary Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012
- Budget Meeting, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012
- Annual Meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012
- Ordinary Meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012
- Extraordinary Meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012

2. That the Part 2 (restricted) minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> May Ordinary Meeting and the 18<sup>th</sup> June Extraordinary Meeting be also confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly (agenda item 14 below refers).

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

No announcements were made at the meeting.

**5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS**

**5.1 Petition from Nahida Rashid, Mrs H Ali, Tajul Islam and Shamsul Hoque and signed by 89 persons regarding 'Attack on Bengali as a mother tongue teaching-learning at Langdon Park Secondary School':**

This petition was not heard as the petitioners were not present owing to the late start of the meeting.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that officers would contact the petitioners and offer them the opportunity to present the petition at the next meeting if they wished.

**5.2 Petition from Emily Sawyer and signed by 47 persons plus others online regarding the 'Residents Solidarity Campaign':**

Petition withdrawn.

**5.3 Petition from Mr A S Alom and signed by 39 persons regarding 'Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)':**

This petition was not heard as the petitioners were not present owing to the late start of the meeting.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that officers would contact the petitioners and offer them the opportunity to present the petition at the next meeting if they wished.

#### **5.4 Petition Debate: Youth Service Changes**

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the Council that a petition containing 2,403 signatures regarding Youth Service Delivery Proposals had been brought to the Council for debate under the provisions of the Petition Scheme. The text of the petition was set out in the report circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Mr Helal Ahmed addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and the Council then debated the matters raised by the petition.

#### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Rachael Saunders **MOVED**, and Councillor Helal Uddin **SECONDED**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.14, Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow an urgent motion regarding the youth service to be debated.”

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

Councillor Rachael Saunders then **MOVED**, and Councillor Helal Uddin **SECONDED**, the urgent motion [text of motion as set out in the resolution below].

Following debate, the urgent motion as tabled was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

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

That the executive Mayor has decided to bring youth services in house.

That the reasons given for this decision included assertions that money would be saved if the council staff rather than the third sector organisations and schools managed the provider contracts.

That no evidence has been given for this, and no numbers given.

That the decision is not in line with the principles set out in the current Tower Hamlets Children and Young People’s Plan.

That the current providers add significant value to the contracts they hold through supporting services within their own HR and IT and through running additional youth services with their own resources.

That youth services across Tower Hamlets have improved significantly since they were first contracted out, through effective partnership working.

That a significant number of local people have signed a petition to oppose bringing the youth service in house.

**This Council believes:**

That in tough times it is right to work with partners to seek savings and efficiencies, and wrong to undermine relationships and act unilaterally.

That localism means local power to make decisions, not local talking shops.

That the best youth services support educational attainment and equip our young people to lead their communities. Youth services are there to support excellence not just tackle ASB.

That resources should reflect need, with the greatest resources for areas with the greatest youth population.

That effective hyper local partnerships have been developed between youth services, schools, health services, employers and others through locally based management of services.

That currently our young people are able to shape and lead their own services. This must be strengthened, not weakened, in any future model.

That the targets that the contractors currently report against should continue to be publicly reported against if the service is taken in house.

That the youth service should continue to run at least as great a range of services as it does now.

That it is vital that our youth service includes people from across the whole of Tower Hamlets, young women and men, from all ethnic backgrounds.

**This Council resolves:**

To oppose bringing the youth service in house.

To call on the Mayor to seek efficiencies working with local community organisations, in a transparent way, not behind closed doors in Mulberry Place.

To call on the Mayor to listen to local people, young people and their families and communities, before making any changes to their youth services.

**6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

- 6.1 **Question from Mr Steve Walker regarding the incidence of tuberculosis in the Borough and the introduction of a by-law to ban spitting in public.**

The questioner was not in attendance. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

- 6.2 **Question from Mr Stuart Madewell regarding the representation of residents and councillors on Housing Association Boards.**

The questioner was not in attendance owing to the late start of the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

- 6.3 **Question from Ms Christine Whaite, Spitalfields Open Space; Chair, The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields regarding lack of open space in the Borough and the potential loss of open space at Christ Church.**

Does the Mayor agree that there is a lack of public open space in the borough, and please will he tell us what positive action he is taking to increase it for residents?

Specifically, is the Mayor aware that besides 350 letters to the planning department last year, the current petition requesting that the churchyard at Spitalfields be returned to public green open space has 600 signatures local, national and international, including those with expert knowledge? Is the Mayor willing to work alongside local people to find alternatives to meet educational needs **and** at the same time protect public open space and the historic environment; and what IMMEDIATE action is the Mayor taking to stop the terrible and unnecessary loss of this 2,500 sqm public open space, the setting of Hawksmoor's finest work, Christ Church Spitalfields, in the most densely populated area of his borough?

**Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for this question. The Mayor shares your concerns, but everyone must remember what is being built is a nursery and a community building, both of which are much needed in the borough.

A key task for the Council is to establish local standards for open space provision. We want to do this through planning policies which ensure that large scale developments maintain and enhance public open spaces.

As for the grant of planning permission for development at Spitalfields, these developments were supported by residents in the borough. 176 residents wrote letters in support as opposed to only 48 residents wrote letters to object. There will not be a loss of 2,500sqm. The new nursery and community building measures only 75sqm bigger than the existing building.

Christchurch gardens itself remains exactly the same size - 960sqm. Most immediately there is a separate agreement between Christ Church and the Council's parks department to open up the community gardens, up to the line of the new school building, which would increase the public open space by an additional 970sqm. There is £50,000 of s106 funding from the Bishops Square development to undertake these works and there is the intention to open up the gardens and re-landscape them.

### **Summary of supplementary question from Ms Christine Whaite**

The minimum garden should be 3,000 sq mtrs and the statistics are quite misleading. This will be the subject of a public meeting in Spitalfields. Everyone agrees that the school is a good thing but they do not have to build on this land south of the church. There are alternatives that give everyone what they need.

It has become clear that English Heritage and the Council's Planning Department have addressed the wrong brief and were unaware of the lack of underlying legal permissions. This is not a commercial development, it is for the public good. What Tower Hamlets needs is a solution that respects everyone's needs for public open space and respects our cultural and national environmental heritage. Christ Church is an architectural jewel, an iconic building and needs to be seen in its proper setting.

Will the Council invite the Diocese to come to the table to find a better solution for Spitalfields as a whole?

### **Summary of Councillor Shahed Ali's response to the supplementary question**

Yes I agree with your sentiments entirely. In terms of the planning process, you will be aware that this is the responsibility of a separate, quasi-judicial committee which assessed the merits of this application and made a decision based on that.

As an administration we welcome further discussions with anyone who has concerns that they feel have not been addressed and I invite you to raise these with me.

**6.4 Question from Mr S Mohammed regarding allegations of threats against a female councillor.**

The questioner was not in attendance owing to the late start of the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

**6.5 Question from Mr Amirul Islam regarding steps to be taken to tackle fuel poverty.**

The questioner was not in attendance owing to the late start of the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

**6.6 Question from Mr Iqbal Hussain regarding the coalition's moves to reform the welfare state.**

The questioner was not in attendance owing to the late start of the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

**6.7 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney regarding the promotion of "a workforce to reflect the community".**

The questioner was not in attendance owing to the late start of the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner.

[NOTE: The questions that were not put at the meeting, together with written responses subsequently provided, are attached as Appendix A to these minutes.]

## **7. MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting. He commented that the last few weeks had revealed shocking information about the banking system and called for a full judicial inquiry.

The Mayor stated that deeply-felt concerns had been raised concerning the teaching of sex education in primary schools and a 9,000-signature petition had been delivered to his office that day. Discussions inclusive of parents were needed to decide what should be taught and how the subject should be addressed. He added that he was committed to working with parents to address the issue.

The Olympics would commence in a few weeks and this would showcase the East End to the world. Undoubtedly there would be some traffic congestion but the Mayor had brought pressure to bear on Transport for London to minimise this; and had developed contingency measures for services.



The Leader of the Majority Group and Leaders of the Minority Groups each responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

## 8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

### Procedural Motion

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED** a procedural motion – “That under Procedural Rule 14.1.9 the Council proceed to next business.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The questions (8.1 – 8.27) that had been submitted by Members were therefore not put at the meeting. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that written responses would be provided to the questioners and published as an appendix to the minutes. (See Appendix B)

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

### 9.1 Community Safety Plan 2012/13

The Council considered the report of the Mayor in Cabinet dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012 as circulated with the supplemental agenda pack for the meeting. The report set out the Executive's proposals for the Council's Community Safety Plan 2012/13.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that the Council on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012 had agreed a number of amendments that it wished to make to the Mayor's draft plan and in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules had referred these back to the Mayor and Executive for consideration. At the Cabinet meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012 the Mayor and Executive decided to resubmit the draft plan to the Council unamended for the reasons set out in the circulated report.

Following debate, Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED** and Councillor Uz-Zaman **SECONDED** – “That the Community Safety Plan 2012/13 be amended in line with the amendments previously agreed by the Council.”

On being put to the vote there were declared 33 votes for and 17 votes against. The amendment therefore did not achieve the support of two-thirds of the Members present and voting and in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules was **defeated**, and the draft Community Safety Plan adopted as set out in the Mayor's proposals.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Community Safety Plan 2012/13 be adopted as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Cabinet meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012 (CAB 015/123).

## 9.2 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council considered the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2011/12.

Councillor Ann Jackson, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the annual report.

### **RESOLVED**

That the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2011/12 be noted.

## 10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (IF ANY)

There was no business under this heading.

## 11. OTHER BUSINESS

### 11.1 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services, proposing a review of the allocation of members' places on Committees and other bodies governed by the proportionality requirements of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The review was required owing to changes in the political composition of the Council that occurred on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

#### **Procedural motion**

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Craig Aston **SECONDED**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedural Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The report recommendation was put to the vote and was **agreed** and, accordingly, the Council:-

### **RESOLVED**

- (1) That the review of proportionality at paragraph 3 in the circulated report be noted and the allocation of seats on committees and panels established for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2012/13 be agreed as set out at paragraph 4.2.
- (2) That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services).

- (3) That the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) be authorised 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.

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

### 12.1 Electoral concerns in Tower Hamlets

Councillor Peter Golds **MOVED**, and Councillor Timothy Archer **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was :-

#### **RESOLVED**

This Council notes that:

Following concerns raised by residents, the media, local Members of Parliament and the political parties, the police announced that they would be investigating voting concerns in the borough following the Spitalfields and Banglatown by election on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

That the election in Spitalfields and Banglatown was decided by 43 votes and that local residents complained of postal votes being collected from their homes by supporters of a particular candidate.

That in one case a householder repeatedly stated that there were just three residents in their property, whilst eight names were registered and all had postal votes.

That in the by election some 14% of postal votes returned to the town hall were rejected because of issues relating to dates of birth and signatures, yet in the May GLA election this figure of rejections fell to 7.66% of postal votes rejected on return.

That the following data concerning the April by election and the May GLA elections from five small areas gives rise to concern:

#### **Brune House, E1**

Flats: **92**

Electors: **231**

Registered postal voters: **69**

Postal votes cast April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: **55**

Postal Votes Cast May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **25**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19<sup>th</sup>: **60**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **54**

**Herbert House House, E1**

Flats: **43**

Electors: **108**

Registered postal voters: **38**

Postal votes cast April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: **29**

Postal Votes Cast May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **19**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **27**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **21**

**Chicksand House, E1**

Flats: **70**

Electors: **194**

Registered postal voters: **46**

Postal votes cast April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: **39**

Postal Votes Cast May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **24**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **31**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **32**

**8-24 Chicksand Street, E1**

Residential properties: **25**

Electors: **67**

Registered postal voters: **38**

Postal votes cast April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: **16**

Postal Votes Cast May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **7**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **16**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **11**

**14 Brick Lane, E1**

Flats: **18**

Electors: **44**

Registered postal voters: **16**

Postal votes cast April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: **12**

Postal Votes Cast May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **4**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **0**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012: **4**

**Total votes cast by post from these addresses on April 19<sup>th</sup> : 151**

**Total votes cast by post from these addresses on May 3<sup>rd</sup>: 79**

That overall the turnout in Spitalfields and Banglatown in the May 3<sup>rd</sup> GLA elections increased from that two weeks earlier, yet there is this wide discrepancy in voting as exemplified above and in other areas of the ward.

This Council believes:

That this research coupled with other information, indicates the need for a thorough investigation by the police.

This Council resolves:

To call upon the police to investigate all evidence regarding electoral malpractice in the borough and interview residents, councillors, political activists and journalists to ascertain evidence.

To call upon the Police and the CPS to pursue malpractice through the courts to ensure that everybody has confidence in the electoral process in Tower Hamlets and that it is not bought into further disrepute in this borough.

## **12.2 New Family Migration Rules**

Motion withdrawn.

## **12.3 Serious violent and acquisitive crime**

Councillor Abdal Ullah **MOVED**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

### **RESOLVED**

This Council notes:

- The increase in incidents of serious violent crime and serious acquisitive crime over the past year.
- That there were 19 more incidents of serious violent crimes this year than there were last year; that this is 47 more than the Mayor's target; and that this is a 4.4% increase year on year.
- That there were 353 more incidents of serious acquisitive crime this year than there were last year; that this is 423 more incidents than the Mayor's target; and that this is a 6.6% increase year on year.
- There has been a 4% increase in public concern over vandalism, graffiti and criminal damage in the past year.

- There continues to be serious public concern about the rising levels of crime in Tower Hamlets.

This Council Further Notes:

- Labour's decision to introduce Safer Neighbourhood Teams in every ward led to year on year falls which followed this initiative.
- Labour's introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams not only reduced crime in Tower Hamlets but also increased public confidence in the police.
- The decrease in the levels of police community engagement and the loss of many local ward panels.
- The lack of a designated member with responsibility for crime and community safety.

This Council believes:

- The rise in serious violent and serious acquisitive crime over the last year is of significant public importance and should be regarded a priority issue by the executive.
- With serious acquisitive and violent crime increasing the Mayor must do everything he can to protect local communities and reduce rates of criminality.
- That the Conservative-led Government's 20% cuts to policing budgets nationally are putting local communities at risk by cutting the numbers of front line police officers.
- That the Conservative Mayor of London has failed to protect London from these destabilising cuts to the police even in the face of last year's riots and the upcoming Olympic Games.
- The Mayor's administration has been ineffective at protecting community policing from government and GLA police cuts.
- The plans for police counter closures and sharing of Safer Neighbourhood Team sergeants should be reversed to ensure a reassuring police presence in our communities.
- There is a clear need for better community based policing including local engagement through ward panels.
- That not having an executive member dedicated solely to crime and community safety sends the wrong message.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Call on the Mayor to adopt a strong policy of community based policing; advocating the retention of local ward panels.
- Request the Council produce an assessment of the impact of sharing SNT sergeants between wards.
- To request the Mayor makes a biannual statement to Council on steps taken to combat crime and reduce anti-social behaviour.

#### **12.4 History Teaching And The English Bacculaureate**

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

That consideration of the motion as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

#### **12.5 Defending the Welfare State**

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

That consideration of the motion as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

#### **12.6 Urgent summit to avert a severe housing crisis**

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **MOVED**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

Councillor John Pierce **MOVED**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

### **RESOLVED**

This Council notes:

- London is suffering from a housing crisis. High housing costs are blighting lives in London.
- Social housing is under attack from David Cameron, Nick Clegg and the Tory-led Coalition government.
- The average house price in London is now double that for the country as a whole and prices in London continue to rise, despite falls elsewhere. Moreover, since 2008 private sector rents have risen 30%.
- Far too many workers cannot afford to buy or rent a decent home on the open market, and the social rented sector is struggling to cope with the severe demands placed on it.
- Overcrowding, homelessness and social housing waiting lists are all increasing – sure signs of the strain on people's finances and lives.
- The average house price in London in 2010 was £408,384, 15.1 times the median London income of £27,128, and easily the highest ratio of prices to incomes in the country.
- In 2010, there were 22,707 household on the council's housing waiting list.
- The gross income needed for a mortgage, based on 75% at 3.5 times, was £74,111.

This Council further notes:

- The Mayor of Tower Hamlets recently blogged that "We are committed to building over a thousand new homes each year – which is far more than any other local authority".
- Based on HCA figures, from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012, a derisory 200 affordable homes were started, with only 31 social rented, 124 affordable rent, 14 intermediate and 31 affordable home ownership.



This Council resolves:

- The Mayor has broken his pledge to build 1,000 homes a year. In the first full year of the mayoralty, he has only achieved 1/5 of what he had promised during April 2011 to March 2012.
- This failure to build affordable housing will exacerbate the severe housing crisis in the borough.
- That the Mayor should urgently call a summit of social landlords and housing developers working in our borough to devise a strategy to avert this severe housing crisis caused by his administration's lack of leadership on house building.
- To call upon the Mayor to be honest with the electorate about house building and his ability to deliver new homes for the borough.

### 12.7 Social Landlords

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

That consideration of the motion as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

### 12.8 Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **MOVED**, and Councillor Rabina Khan **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

This Council notes:

- That Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) has produced a Residents Charter
- That the Residents Charter sets out some basic standards which residents believe that social landlords in the borough should adopt

This Council welcomes:

- The fact that TRAs are working together to give residents a voice in the important task of securing improvements in service standards of social landlords.

This Council believes:

- That all social landlords should sign up to the Residents Charter

This Council resolves:

- To endorse the Residents Charter which the Federation has produced
- To request the Mayor to ask social landlords in the borough to commit to meeting the standards set out in the Charter.

### **12.9 High Earners and Council Housing**

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

That consideration of the motion as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

### **12.10 Threats of violence**

Motion withdrawn.

### **12.11 Housing Benefit Reform**

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Oliur Rahman **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

#### **RESOLVED**

That consideration of the motion as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

**Procedural Motion**

At this point, Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **SECONDED**, a procedural motion that consideration of all further motions on the agenda be deferred to the next meeting.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

**RESOLVED**

That consideration of all further motions as printed in the agenda be deferred until the next ordinary meeting of the Council, namely:

- **12.12 Recorded Votes**
- **12.13 Dignity Code for nurses and care workers for the elderly**
- **12.14 Recession**

**13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

[Note: The resolution to exclude the press and public did not need to be adopted as the Part 2 (restricted) minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012 had been agreed at item 3 above, and there was no further restricted business.]

**14. EXEMPT MINUTES**

[Note: The Council resolved during the unrestricted part of the meeting (see item 3 above), as follows:- “That the exempt minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and the Extraordinary Council Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.”]

The meeting ended at 11.10 p.m.

Speaker of the Council



**APPENDIX A****WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS****6.1 Question from Mr Steve Walker:**

Given the high incidence of Tuberculosis in this borough, could the council take the necessary steps to introduce a by-law that would ban spitting in public?

**Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question.

The Council recognises the potential health risks associated with the act of spitting in the street. At this time the council is not considering the introduction of a by-law as an enforcement tool to deal with this specific issue.

We monitor what our community report and complain about and if this became a serious ASB issue in the Borough then we would review the position. In the meantime Council officers continue to liaise with Health Authority practitioners to promote awareness of risks to health.

**6.2 Question from Mr Stuart Madewell:**

Following the recent Weavers by-election when the Mayor supported the Respect candidate Abjol Miah can the Mayor please clarify what his views are in relation to Resident Social Landlords.

Does he agree that residents and councillors should be residents should be represented on the boards of Housing Associations or does he agree with Respect that Housing Associations are a form of privatisation that we should have nothing to do with?

**Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing**

Thank you for your question

The Mayor and his Cabinet have always supported the provision of council housing, provided and managed by the Council. However successive governments, through stock transfer, funding arrangements and deregulation, have changed the provision of social housing and introduced housing providers and other registered providers.

One of the most important achievements of the Mayor has been to deliver 2023 affordable homes in the borough. We know that due to the changing

funding arrangements we can only deliver housing in partnership with Registered Providers.

The Mayor will continue to work in partnership with the Registered Providers in order to achieve the best housing outcomes possible for residents in the Borough.

The Mayor and I also strongly believe that local accountability is important, which is why we work so closely with the Tenants and Residents Federation and other TRAs. Residents and Councillors should be able to scrutinise and challenge the performance of Registered Providers who operate in the Borough. Therefore we both support residents and Councillors who wish to take positions on Registered Providers boards, as this provides a good forum through which the needs of residents can be communicated to the Landlords.

#### **6.4 Question from Mr S Mohammed:**

Last month I read a shocking article on the front page of the Evening Standard alleging threats of violence against a female councillor. Why has the council failed to suspend this councillor who has clearly brought this authority into disrepute?

#### **Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor**

Thank you for your question. It is wholly unacceptable for any Councillor to threaten another Councillor. Councillors must treat each other with respect and follow the Code of Conduct which was adopted at the last Council.

So far as we are aware the Labour party has not taken any steps to sanction Councillor Kosru Uddin from within their group nor has any apology been forthcoming. Given that they have criticised other councillors regarding poor behaviour on many occasions, when councillors have been accused of far less shocking actions, and called for their suspension, why have they not taken any disciplinary action in group?

It seems like a clear case of double standards to me. Perhaps they're just worried about losing their 2/3 majority.

It is this kind of behaviour that brings our council into disrepute.

#### **6.5 Question from Mr Amirul Islam:**

We the residents are struggling with rising prices for gas and electricity. Living in a cold home is a huge health risk, particularly to the very young, the very old and other vulnerable groups. What is Mayor Rahman doing to tackle fuel poverty?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. For many years, fuel prices have continued to increase whilst the income for most residents in this borough has remained static or has fallen. And with just under one third of our residents indicating that they are concerned about paying their fuel bills it is time we take action.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 The Mayor launched the Tower Hamlets Energy co-operative '*T.H.E Community Power*' which looks to provide cheaper energy to council tenants and all residents living the borough. By harnessing the collective buying power of many the co-operative will be able to deliver cut price energy to the community.

Schemes like this have seen impressive reductions in Energy Bills. Which's Big Switch saved customers on average £123 on their bills. Schemes in Europe have seen customers saving 20% on their bills. At a time when my residents are feeling rising living costs, a freeze in wages and reductions in benefits, this scheme couldn't be any more timely or important for residents.

In addition to providing cheaper energy '*T.H.E Community Power*' will provide energy efficiency advice through qualified advisors, Ending Fuel Poverty Advice through income maximisation and benefit entitlement checks, Access to Affordable Warmth Grants and Renewable Energy Advice.

In this United Nations Year of the Co-operative, Tower Hamlets is leading the way in bringing residents together with an innovative solution to end fuel poverty.

Roadshows are now taking place throughout the summer where residents can find out more about the Tower Hamlets Energy Co-operative and also sign up becomes members.

I would urge all residents to visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/energy](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/energy) to sign up! In addition, as part of the Decent Homes Programme I am also targeting insulation measures alongside new boilers and replacement windows wherever these are needed, all of which will help reduce the dangers of living in cold damp houses.

**6.6 Question from Mr Iqbal Hussain:**

What does the Mayor think about the coalition's recent moves to reform the welfare state?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. I am very concerned about the government cuts to the welfare state. The scale of these cuts are driving more and more people into poverty and despair. I was horrified to read the media reports

about the man in Birmingham who set himself alight at his job centre in protest at their plans to remove more of his benefits. With the government planning another £10 billion of welfare cuts, on top of the £18 billion it has already in motion, the impact of the poor will simply be devastating.

But these welfare cuts are not just effecting those not in work. According to a recent report in the Guardian newspaper almost 7 million working-age adults are just one bill away from being in extreme financial stress. These are not the unemployed. These are the working poor. These are people who need benefits and tax credits to top up their low wages.

The government new reforms will reduce a range of benefits including housing benefit available to for tenants who rent from Private landlords and the amount of childcare support included within Working Tax Credit. I fear that these reforms will drive more and more people deeper into poverty.

#### **6.7 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney:**

Since 1998 Tower Hamlets has had a policy to promote a "workforce to reflect the community" What has the Council done to promote this?

In view of the Councils support for this policy, why when opportunity arose to appoint the first black CE did the Council make such a fuss?

Many of the workforce have been waiting for years for equality to be shown in this council however are we still living in the 1960's.

#### **Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. The Council has had a variety of initiatives and development programmes to promote its workforce to reflect the community.

We set ourselves a target of ensuring 49% of the workforce are from BME backgrounds. We have met and surpassed that target. 51.6% of staff are from BME communities.

But we continue to fall far short of our target of 30% for senior staff who are at head of service level and above. We have only achieved 11%. This is shameful.

The Mayor welcomed the opportunity to appoint a CEO that was the best person for the job would best serve the community AND also would be BME. Appointing the first black muslim CEO would have shown that if you work hard excel at what you do there is no door shut no glass ceiling on account of your colour, race, or religion. That could have been a very powerful message to all our residents no matter what their race or religion. It would have encouraged future generations of what they can achieve with hard work and dedication to public service.



The Mayor does not know why there was so much fuss over the appointment of the first BME CEO for Tower Hamlets. That question must be asked of all those individual Councillors who preferred to have no CEO rather than the best person for the job.



**APPENDIX B****WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING TO MEMBERS' QUESTIONS****8.1 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman**

Does the Mayor agree with me that the Baishaki Mela should be a celebration of all that is good about Tower Hamlets and that representatives of the Mela should at all times be respectful and courteous to all involved including representatives of the media?

**Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture**

Yes.

**8.2 Question from Councillor Tim Archer**

Will the Mayor inform the council as to who the current occupiers of the old Poplar Town Hall, 117 Poplar High Street, are?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. 117 Poplar High Street is currently unoccupied.

**8.3 Question from Councillor John Pierce**

What plans does the Mayor have to support active and representative resident groups to take over the running of unused buildings in Tower Hamlets such as the Dorset Library in Weavers Ward?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. Our Assets Team work with the Third Sector Team to market surplus assets identified for community use to community user groups.

The Dorset Library premises were advertised on the Council's website and in East End Life and the East London Advertiser between 9 April to 4 May. Only third sector organisations could apply to become tenants of the premises.

Three applications were received by the deadline and were assessed in accordance with the Allocation process. The Council is currently negotiating a five year lease with Dorset Community Association, which submitted the strongest bid.

These are tough times for local government. We have a Tory government intent on punishing public services by way of deep and crippling cuts. Disposal of surplus assets is a vital part of mitigating the impact of these vicious cuts on our front-line services, and I am proud that where possible these disposals can be to community organisations rather than corporate developments.

#### **8.4 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah**

Is the Mayor aware of the threat posed to the future of the Women's library in Aldgate and would he agree with me that this is an invaluable resource and asset to the people of Tower Hamlets and beyond who believe in the equality of women and their struggle for their basic human rights and would he agree to contact the library management and seek to work with them to do everything possible to secure its future?

#### **Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture**

Thank you for your question. Yes, myself and the Mayor are aware of and extremely concerned by the threat posed to the future of the Women's Library. I have always been proud that this borough hosts the Women's library and its wonderful collection of artefacts, testimonials and literature. As a feminist, I have been inspired by Britain's feminist history and it is wonderful that we can visit such a thorough archive of everything from the suffragette Emily Davis' return train ticket, to women's magazines, to a first edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women.

As a teacher, I understand the importance of this collection in helping education future generations of the struggles women have faced, and won, and to gain inspiration for struggles still to be won.

I would very much like to ensure that the collection, if possible could be kept in the borough, possibly through one of our other excellent universities. I will work with the Mayor to discuss how the Council can support the campaign to keep the collection in the borough and if not possible, to keep the collection together and open for all to enjoy and study in.

#### **8.5 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan**

Recent statistics have shown that there are now almost 15 people chasing every job in Tower Hamlets. These figures are significantly worse than most other East London boroughs.

When will the Mayor produce a coherent plan to tackle joblessness?

**Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills**

In the last year the council has adopted the Employment and Enterprise strategies. These are comprehensive documents which have looked at how we can influence the local labour market and better prepare local people who are looking for work. The strategy objectives demonstrate the key areas of work we will take forward to offer local residents the best chance of achieving success in what is the most competitive labour market for decades.

With the country's economy still affected by recession and a lack of growth, Tower Hamlets is not alone in seeing higher unemployment. Inner city areas are being hit the hardest. Hackney, Waltham Forest and Haringey all suffer even worse rates than we have.

We have a plan to help local people and it is disappointing that there is little response from Government in promoting economic growth especially in places like Tower Hamlets.

**8.6 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

Will the Mayor inform the council in light of the third censure for political imbalance by Ofcom as to his and his staffs' relationship with Channel S?

**Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor**

Our staff have the usual relationship that local authority communications' departments and local councillors have with local media.

**8.7 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam**

What is the Mayor doing to support the regeneration of Town centres in the borough?

**Response by Councillor Rofique Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration**

Thank you for your question. The regeneration of town centres is one the Mayor's priorities and is incorporated into the Council's Core Strategy, Town Centre Spatial Strategy and Community Plan.

This has set our strategic objectives for our town centres to be active, well-used and safe during day and night; for them to promote mixed-use and multi-purpose town centres with a mix of unit sizes and types (including smaller unit sizes); and for them to assist creation of vibrant centres that meet the needs of communities and facilitate and promote the cultural and leisure sector in our town centres.

The Council plans and delivers projects in accordance with its policies, working with residents, businesses and partner organisations to improve our borough's diverse and vibrant town centres.

Some significant town centre related initiatives include:

- Development management to protect and enhance town centres
- Shopfront and historic façade improvements
- Public realm improvements
- Support and advice to small businesses

### **8.8 Question from Councillor Harun Miah**

Would the Mayor agree with me that there are many in Tower Hamlets and beyond who believe there has been little benefit from the Olympics in terms of sustainable employment or long-term regeneration, that there will be huge inconvenience and loss of security, that the Olympics is now completely dominated by multinational corporate interests and that such people should have the right to make their voices heard during the Olympics and would he also therefore agree to instruct officers to give permission for a peaceful demonstration to take place on the first Saturday of the Olympics, providing the police are also happy to allow it, processing from Mile End to end in Victoria Park?

### **Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills**

Thank you for your question. The Olympics have already delivered substantive investment in the transport infrastructure of East London and specifically in Tower Hamlets, that will benefit the Local Economy in the years to come.

The Olympic Park Legacy Company is responsible with most of the physical regeneration. I call upon them to do us justice, and will hold them to account if it appears that they are less than assiduous in their work.

Council officers are currently liaising with the Police and protest organisers concerning the proposed march.

### **8.9 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed**

Can the Mayor confirm the total cost of the 400 Olympic tickets purchased by the Council and clarify where this funding came from?

### **Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture**

Thank you for your question. As I have recently reported to Full Council, the total value of Olympic and Paralympic event tickets ordered is £35,125 (+VAT).

All of these tickets are being offered to residents as part of my commitment to ensure that as many local Tower Hamlets residents as possible get an opportunity to see Olympics events. The short term purchase of these tickets was secured through corporate budgets but will be recovered from resources related to the proceeds of crime seizures.

#### **8.10 Question from Councillor David Snowdon**

Will the Mayor explain why despite ongoing public concern he continues to use the Borough's parks as a financial resource?

#### **Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question. Parks are a resource that can and should be used for a variety of social functions and these include events. The income received from commercial events is re-invested into the parks each year to benefit local people. The income also enables us to put on free community events, whilst local businesses get a boost during festivals due to increased customers.

The parks are first and foremost for the local residents and all appropriate safeguards are put in place to reduce the impact on residents who live closest to the limited number of event sites.

Without the income generated:-

- services would need to be cut;
- the HLF business plan for Victoria Park would be undermined;
- free community events would have to be cancelled; and
- the local economy would suffer.

#### **8.11 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders**

In his position as the Chair of the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board what is the Mayor doing to tackle increased cancer waiting times for the people of Tower Hamlets?

#### **Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing**

Thank you for your question. As Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Mayor has a strategic overview of health and wellbeing in the borough. We currently monitor targets as set out in the Community Plan, one of which relates to cancer waiting times for treatment.

The Mayor and I were shocked and disappointed to see that Barts Health is under target both for breast cancer treatment and the 62 day referral. Early diagnosis and treatment of cancer is vital for fast and full recovery and I made it extremely clear that the missing of these targets was not acceptable.

Local Health Services have reassured myself and the Mayor that they are doing all they can to improve this figure. I particularly note that the Chair of the new Clinical Commissioning Group is meeting with Barts Health monthly to discuss the action plan and trajectories. They have also appointed a new Cancer General Manager to make improvements to the service.

The Mayor and I will continue to monitor this target and ensure that it is improving.

### **8.12 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed**

Members from the Labour group have developed a reputation for bringing the Council into disrepute. Following his suspension, the last Leader of the Council refused to apologise for his conduct towards a Council staff; and most recently another allegedly threatens a fellow female member in the Council Chamber. Does the Mayor agree with me that the Leader of the Labour group has failed to take any action against his Members and has therefore lost control of his group?

### **Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor**

Thank you for this question on this sensitive topic. No one in this chamber should feel fear in asking questions on sensitive topics this question is welcomed.

There have been a number of incidents of bad conduct on the part of councillors in the Labour Group and it is not clear as to what action the Leader of the Group has taken. It is not clear therefore whether the Leader of the Labour Group condemns or condones such conduct.

It should be clear to all the residents we represent that none of us particularly those of us who hold leadership roles condone bad conduct on the part of any councillor.

I ask the Leader of the Labour Group to take action and make his position clear to us but particularly our residents.

### **8.13 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

What plans he has to extend the mandatory licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation to smaller HMOs or introduce select licensing for all private rented sector properties?

### **Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing**

Thank you for this question Councillor Francis. We're aware of Newham's recent experiment in requiring licensing of all private rented properties.



As you know, our own policy for mandatory licensing currently focuses on the highest risk i.e. larger properties. However, we're reviewing our Housing Strategy and will be producing a Private Sector Strategy which will draw on the evidence from our recent Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. This will enable there to be a more detailed and informed opportunity to consider any additional controls needed and all options will be on the table in the aim to raise standards in this sector.

It's our objective to uphold the highest of standards for rented properties. Residents should be able to expect the same high standards from private sector landlords as we uphold in the stock that the Council owns or manages.

#### **8.14 Question from Councillor Zara Davis**

During the Olympic period, there are a number of activities taking place in the borough, including the Live Site in Victoria Park and the German National Pavilion at the Museum of London Docklands. These activities will inevitably cause additional disruption to local residents, in particular noise disturbance.

What is the Mayor doing to ensure that its Noise Nuisance team has sufficient capacity to meet the additional demands that residents are likely to be placing on this service during the Games?

#### **Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question. I understand and share resident concerns about noise disturbance during the Olympic period.

That's why we have identified the Noise Nuisance team as being a critical service for the purposes of Olympic Planning.

Leave is restricted during the Olympics and the service has been required to develop detailed operational arrangements in readiness for the Games. Shift patterns and back office working arrangements have been reviewed and adapted.

We have also invested in 34 additional police officers and have expanded the Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officer Programme.

We have further been advised that there will be a net gain in Police Officers to the Borough during Games time and that normal policing levels for borough police duties will be maintained.

All of this will help deal with anti social behaviour during the Olympic Period and our existing joint tasking processes with the Police will be used to ensure that our resources are deployed as flexibly and effectively as possible.

In relation to the Live Site I can assure residents the Live Site has a detailed noise management plan and robust noise monitoring arrangements based on comprehensive technical analysis.

**8.15 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun**

What impact does the Mayor expect the introduction of charging for bulk rubbish collection to have on levels of street cleanliness?

**Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question. Charges for bulk waste collections were introduced on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2012. Since then there has been no increase in fly tipping or any deterioration of the standard of street cleanliness.

**8.16 Question from Councillor Stephanie Eaton**

What progress is being made on having a workforce that reflects the community?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question Councillor Eaton. The Council has had a variety of initiatives and development programmes to promote its workforce to reflect the community. We set ourselves a target of ensuring 49% of the workforce are from BME backgrounds. We have met and surpassed that target. 51.6% of staff are from BME communities.

But we continue to fall far short of our target of 30% for senior staff who are at head of service level and above. We have only achieved 11%. This is shameful.

The Mayor welcomed the opportunity to appoint a CEO that was the best person for the job would best serve the community AND also would be BME. Appointing the first black muslim CEO would have shown that if you work hard excel at what you do there is no door shut no glass ceiling on account of your colour, race, or religion. That could have been a very powerful message to all our residents no matter what their race or religion. It would have encouraged future generations of what they can achieve with hard work and dedication to public service.

The Mayor does not know why there was so much fuss over the appointment of the first BME CEO for Tower Hamlets. That question must be asked of all those individual Councillors who preferred to have no CEO rather than the best person for the job.

**8.17 Question from Councillor Carlo Gibbs**

Does the Mayor agree with me that the Government's Welfare Reforms scheduled over the coming year are the single most significant risk faced by the council? If so, can he outline exactly how much the council has set aside across all departments in order to meet the potential cost of these changes?

**Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. Central Government, over the last two years, has increased the level of risk to the Council significantly!

The welfare reforms are certainly a significant risk, but not the only one. Reduced funding by the Government coupled with increasing population in the midst of a continuing recession is in itself an enormous challenge.

Welfare reform is especially difficult due to the level of uncertainty surrounding it. We know the number of residents who will be affected and the amount of benefit they will lose by these appalling cuts. However we do not know how residents and landlords will react. The government believes that landlords will reduce rents and residents will find jobs. However in an area of huge demand for housing, with demand being pushed up by young professionals who cannot afford to buy housing, it is unlikely rents will fall. And in the middle of a recession finding jobs has never been more difficult.

We also do not know the knock on effect of this on other council services, including vulnerable adult support services, children's services and advice services as residents struggle to cope. The Mayor and I are extremely aware of these risks and we will be monitoring them. Through this year's budget process we will be developing our contingency response to this risk.

However I would like to reassure Councillor Gibbs that the Council has made financial provision for dealing with uncertainty through our reserves. Within that sum there is £2.9m earmarked to the Homelessness service to help fund homelessness prevention measures in the lead-up to welfare reform. We also have over a £5m contingency within the General Fund budget and over £20m in General Reserves which are there to deal with unforeseen costs, among which are the implications of welfare reform.

Local authorities have recently been criticised for holding onto high levels of reserves. The level of uncertainty created by economic conditions and Government policy to transfer funding risk to local government requires Tower Hamlets, as a responsible authority, to be reasonably cautious.

**8.18 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel**

Will the Mayor account as to how he justifies an Olympics' All Areas road pass when the Meals on Wheels Service can't get to Wapping & other vulnerable people in our borough who will be suffering whilst the Mayor is driven around in his tax payer funded car?

**Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture**

Thank you for your question. The member is clearly misinformed. The Mayor does not have access to such a pass.

And I'm proud to say that we have personally intervened to guarantee a normal Meals on Wheels service to all of our residents during the Games, including those from Wapping.

This has meant putting in place contingencies such as increasing the number of daily rounds from 6-12 and the number of kitchens used from 1-3. It will be business as usual: all service users will continue to get the hot meals they are used to.

**8.19 Question from Councillor Mohammed Mukit**

What measures is the Mayor taking to reduce anti-social behaviour, public urination and late night nuisance noise in the Brick Lane and Shoreditch area of Tower Hamlets?

**Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor**

Thank you for your question. We recognise that the growth of the night-time economy has resulted in additional challenges which need to be resolved. But it is vital that we seek to encourage an environment in which visitors can enjoy the cultural and social interests Brick Lane and Shoreditch have to offer.

We are continuing to work in partnership with the Police and the community to ensure that our local residents' concerns are addressed.

We have accordingly recently invested in additional police officers to support the existing Safer Neighbourhood Teams so there is a visible reassuring presence of bobbies on the beat.

The Mayor has also launched an additional 14 enforcement officers last Wednesday. The hours of patrol of Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) have also recently extended to ensure officers are present late into the night across weekends.

The Council's licensing team are working with the police and the licensing trade to develop proposals to improve the management and enforcement of licensed premises.

The introduction of the Responsible Drinking Borough has provided the police and civil enforcement officers with specific powers to take enforcement action against those who are committing alcohol related ASB in the street.

Finally, to date the THEOs have made 3109 alcohol seizures for DCZ enforcement and reported 454 cases of street urination for prosecution.

#### **8.20 Question from Councillor Maium Miah**

At a time when families are feeling the pinch due to the failing economic policies of this government; what is the Mayor doing to recover the £850,000 loan from public funds to bankroll the Rich Mix Centre?

#### **Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture**

Thank you for your question. The funding of Rich Mix is a complex matter and the Council was party to an agreement between the Arts Council and the Lottery Fund to develop the site.

The matter of the loan which was forward funding which it was agreed would be repaid by Rich Mix themselves is being pursued with Rich Mix. The Council has been obliged to issue proceedings to protect its position.

In the meantime it is hoped that there will be discussions with Rich Mix to try to resolve the matter out of Court if they are amenable to do this.

#### **8.21 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck**

How many visits to one stop shops in the last year were for visitors' scratch cards?

#### **Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources**

Thank you for your question. The parking system (Chipside) does not make a distinction between parking permit visits and scratch card visits – they are not counted separately.

In the last 12 months the number of permit related visits were 37,539.

#### **8.22 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones**

What percentage of pupils in Tower Hamlets schools sit science A-Levels?

**Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Thank you for your question. Based on the latest pupil level data released for 2011 KS5 exam cohort, out of 664 pupils on roll in our schools (exc. TH College), 127 were sitting at least one science A-Level (i.e. biology, chemistry or physics) therefore the percentage was 19.1%)

The Mayor is funding £800,000 of programmes around one-to-one tuition. We want more and more of our children to be taking science A-levels.

**8.23 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock**

Given the Mayor's recent support for the Time to Change pledge on mental health run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, what steps is the council taking in relation to both awareness raising and service provision to reflect the commitment to this pledge?

**Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing**

Thank you for your question. The Mayor's administration is highly committed to improving the experience of residents with mental health problems.

Tower Hamlets is now one of the few councils nationally which has publically committed to reducing stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems.

We know that Tower Hamlets has amongst the highest levels of mental health need in the country. That is why the shadow Health and Well-Being Board, under my leadership, has very recently identified mental health as one of its five priorities for improvement. We want to ensure that mental health is thought about as equally important as physical health.

We are also working on identifying ways in which we can promote positive mental health within the Council. This is likely to involve an internal communications campaign, developed to coincide with World Mental Health Day on 10<sup>th</sup> October.

**8.24 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani**

What measures has the Mayor taken to ensure that our parks are not permanently damaged as a result of events that are taking place?

**Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question.

Local residents are given a hotline to call to report any concerns. During the

festivals in Victoria Park the event organisers deploy teams to patrol the area to ensure there is not a build-up of litter during the events. Events like Lovebox and the forthcoming London Live event are confined to a specific, fenced-off area. They take up 16.5 acres out of the 86 acres of park land available, leaving 80 per cent of the park for general use.

I am not complacent. The state of the park after Lovebox was not good enough. This was compounded by adverse weather conditions last month. I will always hold festival organisers to account, and demand that they treat our park with care. When there is damage or mess, I will as always require promoters to pay to restore the site to its original condition, including damage to the grass areas – and indeed they have to commit to this before we allow them the use of our parks.

Our parks are jewels in the Tower Hamlets crown. Whilst the festivals are enjoyed by thousands of people every year, and showcase our borough at its best to the wider world, the park is first and foremost for the benefit of our local residents, and they will always be my priority.

#### **8.25 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

Will the Mayor give the cost incurred in developing the wildflower meadow in Victoria Park and the timescale for it being revealed to the public?

#### **Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question.

The cost of provision of the wild flower meadows in Victoria Park East covering an area of 7,018 sq metres is £7,776.

The cost of provision of wild flower meadows in Victoria Park West covering and area of 2,200 sq metres is £3,210.

This was part of the bio diversity action plan that was demanded by and signed off by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the refurbishment of the park.

The visual impact of the wildflower areas has been much appreciated by many park visitors during April and May and photographs of the meadows are available.

#### **8.26 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum**

We are delighted with a once in lifetime opportunity to host the Olympic Games. Will the Mayor reassure residents that Tower Hamlets will not become gridlocked and grotty during the Games?

**Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Thank you for your question. Whilst I am very much looking forward to the Games, I'm afraid I can't promise there won't be gridlock – and this isn't something that any local council can ultimately prevent.

TfL and LOCOG are responsible for the city-wide Transport Strategy during the Games, and like everyone else we must trust that their traffic modelling and planning assumptions are adequate.

We've actively challenged those assumptions in the planning stages when we felt they were not adequate, and have sought to reduce the impact of their Olympic management plans on local residents and businesses.

Increased footfall naturally suggests increased litter, so we've developed an enhanced waste and cleansing strategy to keep our streets as clean as possible.

However it should again be noted that the total additional costs of managing the Olympic cleansing and waste risks to the Borough is £1.7m and the total value of impact uplift cost support from government for all impacts across all service areas was only £1.1m.

I am confident that we have done a robust job of planning in very challenging financial circumstances.

**8.27 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan**

Crime and community safety is a key concern for many residents; what is the Mayor doing to reassure local people that Tower Hamlets remains a safe and cohesive borough?

**Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor**

Thank you for your question. We have recently contributed to a number of Safer Neighbourhood Public Meetings, where local people were able to hear from THEOs and community safety officers, as well as Police, about action being taken by the Police and the Council in their local area to keep them safe.

The Mayor has also launched an additional 14 enforcement officers last Wednesday.

We have held two public meetings in the last month where residents were able to hear about action being taken on crime and anti-social behaviour across the borough by the Police and the Council.

We also have a page in the Police Safer Neighbourhood newsletters. As well as this there has also been a number of "You Said We Did" leaflets delivered to specific streets and estates, where residents in those localities reported an



issue, in order to inform them of the action taken by Police and Council in response.

We regularly publicise Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Premises Closures when these are secured in court. Depending on the case, this can include leaflets, newsletters, press releases and posters.

Finally, letters are sent to Councillors on a fortnightly basis, informing them about activity of the Council funded Police Partnership Taskforce in their ward. These letters specifically encourage Councillors to share this information with constituents and others in their ward and we know that this information can often be reassuring to residents.