

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.37 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2013

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

Members Present:

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

The meeting commenced at 7.37 p.m.

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Shiria Khatun, Fozol Miah, M. A. Mukit MBE and Ahmed Adam Omer.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. MINUTES

In relation to the draft unrestricted minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting on 20th December 2012, Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman stated that the text under Agenda Item 1 (Apologies for Absence) from "Procedural Motion" to "7.45 p.m." should be replaced by the following:-

"Councillor Alibor Choudhury proposed and Councillor Rania Khan seconded that the Council appoint Aman Dalvi to the position of Chief Executive.

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman moved and Councillor Shiria Khatun seconded a procedural motion:- 'That under Procedure Rule 14.1.12 the meeting be adjourned for a period of half an hour'. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was agreed.

Accordingly the meeting adjourned at 7.15 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7.45 p.m.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the Council that the motion could not be voted on immediately but would lay on the table to be considered at the beginning of the debate on the relevant agenda item (item 5).

A number of councillors expressed concern that the motion which was proposed did not relate to a matter on the agenda of this part of the meeting, could not be moved under 'Apologies for Absence', and should be treated as an emergency motion. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the Council that this was not the case and allowed the motion."

In relation to the draft unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting on 28th November 2012, Councillor Gulam Robbani stated that at Agenda Item 6 ('Public Questions'), the supplementary question from Mr Shamsur Rahman at question 6.4 should read:- "Will the Mayor ask the East End Homes Board to commission an independent review of service charges?"

RESOLVED

That subject to the amendments above, the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 28th November 2012 and of the Extraordinary Council Meetings held on 11th December 2012 and 20th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

The Speaker stated that Members may be aware that former Councillors Jan Alam, a former Deputy Leader of the authority, and Monir Ahmed, a former Ceremonial Mayor of Tower Hamlets, had sadly each died recently.

Both were dedicated public servants and at the invitation of the Speaker a minute's silence was observed in memory of former Councillors Alam and Ahmed and in recognition of their contribution to the Borough.

5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS

5.1 Petition from Ms Christine Whaite and Spitafields Open Space regarding public open space in Spitalfields

Mr Philip Vracas addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He understood the concerns and issues that were being raised; and he was also committed to protecting open spaces. Councillor Ali reported that if the petitioners presented new information to officers this would be investigated.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal, for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

5.2 Petitions regarding the Local Government Boundary Review

- (i) From the Save Banglatown Campaign**
- (ii) From the Save East India and Lansbury Campaign**

The petitioners addressed the meeting. No questions were put by Members.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor, responded to the matters raised in the petitions. He stated that removal of the word Banglatown would be a blow to the community and that he and the Mayor were against this change. He stated that Banglatown, Lansbury and St Dunstan's should all be retained as ward names.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services), for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

5.3 Petition from Mr Mohammed Nurul Hoque and others regarding Rich Mix

Mr Yusuf Khan addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture, responded to the matters raised in the petition. She stated that she felt the centre was too expensive and was not catering to local people. She reported that the Council was pursuing recovery of loan monies from the centre in the High Court and this case was likely to be heard later in 2013 or 2014.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services), for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

6.1 Question from Mr Brian Nicholson regarding progress in recruiting a CEO for the Council.

Can the Mayor tell us how the council is progressing with the recruitment of the CEO?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you for your question Brian. After 18 months, numerous processes and a number of legal actions at great cost to the Council, the Council has not appointed a CEO despite having good candidates amongst our senior officers.

The good thing is the Council has coped well and the Mayor has been able to continue to deliver on his key priorities. Despite not having a CEO and with the help of a strong senior management team of officers the Mayor has been able to deliver his manifesto pledges, fight the Government cuts, protect front line services and protect residents' pockets. He has:-

- reintroduced EMA
- frozen Council Tax for four years
- built more homes than any other council in the country
- introduced a replacement 'Aim Higher' scheme
- established an energy cooperative to save residents hundreds of pounds on utility bills; and
- become the first Living Wage borough and is now campaigning for a Living Rent

In these circumstances the Mayor has written to the Group Leaders suggesting that the Council consider saving money by reviewing the need for a CEO post and investing those savings in front line services.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Brian Nicholson

Whilst I am glad to hear that savings are being made, can you confirm to me whether an elected member recently settled a case out of court for a six figure sum and who the officer and Member concerned were?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's response to the Supplementary Question

[Officer note: In responding to the supplementary question Cllr Choudhury proceeded to name a member of the Council and alluded to the identity of a member of staff so as to make them easily identifiable and set out what was a highly inaccurate account of a confidential employment matter to which he, as a member of the executive, was party.

Confidentiality rules prevent the replication of Cllr Choudhury's answer verbatim.]

6.2 Question from Mr Victor William about Weavers Adventure Playground.

First of all I would like to thank the Mayor for supporting the Weavers Adventure Playground with the MSG grants. We provide an exciting and stimulating environment for children and young people to play, learn, develop and increase their health and wellbeing. We would obviously like to continue our work given the safe, secure and multi-cultural environment that we offer.

It is precisely because of the current climate that our provision is of increasing importance. The impact to families and the community if Weavers has to reduce their opening hours will be enormous. We provide training opportunities for volunteers, many of whom have moved on to full time employment and we encourage participation from parents at all times. Indeed, it is not simply a playground but a vibrant community resource.

In these times of austerity, how can the council support our project to ensure that we continue to provide these services to the local community?

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

Thank you for bringing this question. We recognise that Weavers Adventure Playground provides a valuable resource to the local community which is evident from our continued investment in the facility albeit at a reduced level of funding.

The Mayor and his administration are committed to supporting the local voluntary and community sector and we have maintained our grants programmes at a time when other authorities have cut theirs. Indeed,

we have invested significantly more funding overall in our MSG programme, which means that projects such as Weavers can continue to provide much needed support to local residents, which is particularly important during these times of Tory-led austerity. I was very disappointed to see some of Labour Group tactics and increasingly strange behaviour from their Leader over this matter.

The new MSG programme will provide a diverse range of services to support the changing needs of our community and meet the increased demand for specific targeted support services. We will work closely with organisations that have seen a reduction in their grants and provide support to enable them to secure alternative sources of funding; and I am happy to meet your group to discuss your needs.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Victor William

Will the Mayor ensure that our group is given proper consideration in future grant application rounds?

Summary of Councillor Oliur Rahman's response to the Supplementary Question

Information about all future funding programmes will be advertised on the Council's website. I will also be happy to put you in touch with officers who can offer advice.

6.3 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney about the Council's financial settlement from Central Government.

The questioner was not in attendance. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner [see Appendix A attached to these minutes].

6.4 Question from Ms Claire Harrisson about the 'Old Flo' Henry Moore sculpture.

There has been lots of press coverage about the disputed ownership of the Old Flo Henry Moore sculpture and the Mayor's attempts to sell it. What steps were taken by the Council to ensure 100% that the sculpture actually belonged to Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you Claire for your question. I understand that you were prominent in Cambridge University Labour and are an aspiring candidate.

For your information, the Council has checked all the records and leading Counsel has reviewed this and confirmed that it is his "firm opinion" that the Council is the owner.

I find it shocking that the Opposition tried everything to stop us from selling this to raise essential funds to invest in the borough's future; and that members of this chamber are now supporting attempts to take this community asset from the people of Tower Hamlets for nothing. They should hang their heads in shame.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Claire Harrison

How much money has the endeavour to sell the statue already cost the Council, including legal advice?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

I do not have the detailed figures in front of me but I can assure you that the sum involved is a very reasonable amount.

6.5 Question from Mr Junnel Uddin about the number of new homes being built in the borough.

The questioner was not in attendance. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner [see Appendix A attached to these minutes].

6.6 Question from Mr Muhammad Shafique Islam about the Local Government Boundary Review.

Can the Mayor tell us what he is doing to the fight the offensive attempt by the Conservative group to erase Banglatown & Lansbury from the borough's ward map?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question. As I mentioned earlier, we condemn in the strongest possible way the clear attempt by the Conservative Party, led by Cllr. Peter Golds, to abolish historic ward names.

Cllr. Golds has caused deep offence by his attempts to influence the Local Government Boundary Commission in this way, and by his subsequent comments in a satellite channel interview on Sky 815, aired on 22nd November 2012 where he said about Banglatown, and I quote:-

'What will happen if every single tiny group in the country suddenly decides they want their local government ward named after it? What

are we going to have, Earls Court and Kangaroo Valley for the Australians?’

For these offensive and derogatory comments, Cllr. Golds should apologise not only to the residents of Spitalfields and Banglatown for the upset he has caused, but also to Australians and Bangladeshis

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Muhammad Shafique Islam

Will Councillor Peter Golds say sorry?

Summary of Councillor Ohid Ahmed’s response to the Supplementary Question

I think he should do.

6.7 Question from Mr Mohammed Mufti Miah about the impact of the Government Housing Benefit cap.

As we begin to feel the full impact of the Government Housing Benefit cap, can the Mayor update in this meeting what the Council is doing to inform residents and mitigate against the adverse impact?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question. These reforms pose an enormous risk to the residents of Tower Hamlets – they will increase homelessness and poverty in the borough. They are reckless and undermine the work of Councils like ours to support the most vulnerable in our community. We can only help residents if they understand the changes occurring and are able to reach support and advice quickly.

We have created a £1m homelessness fund to support the most vulnerable families and residents.

I am delighted that through my and this Mayor’s lobbying, we have ensured that the benefit cap will no longer be implemented in Tower Hamlets in April, but later in the year. We will be using this extra time to ensure we reach even more residents with advice and support.

Tower Hamlets has implemented a number of actions to mitigate the impact of the cap including:-

- Borough wide awareness campaigns of the changes
- Personalised joint housing options / employment advice visits to every household who is at ‘high’ and ‘medium’ risk

- A series of high profile drop in roadshow events (“Money Matters Month”) providing advice to over 600 residents in one month
- A short welfare reform video, booklet and practitioners guide
- Ongoing training for council, housing provider and partnership staff
- A rich number of resources for residents and practitioners on our website: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/welfarereform

Meanwhile the Government’s response to the concerns of councils and charities up and down the country has been woeful and at the same time as working families are facing enormous problems the new Governor of the Bank of England has been awarded a £480k salary.

[No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.]

Procedural Motion

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded** a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered to consider Motion 12.11 ‘Motion regarding the impact of Housing Benefit ‘reform’ on women and families” now, followed by Motion 12.13 “Motion against erasing the history of Tower Hamlets”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The following Members requested that it be recorded that they voted **in favour** of the above procedural motion:- Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Rofique Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfu Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina Khan, Rania Khan, Harun Miah, Maium Miah, Oliur Rahman and Gulam Robbani.

6.8 Question from Ms Lilian Collins about Poplar Baths.

We are very pleased with the announcement made by the Mayor about the plans to bring back Poplar Baths into community use.

Can the Mayor outline the next steps and possible timescales to complete the restoration of the Baths?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you Lil for your question. May I take the opportunity, on behalf of the Mayor and this Administration, to thank you and your colleagues for your tireless campaigning and dedication to bring this historic site back into community use.

We are delighted to be bringing this much loved community asset back into use where residents can again enjoy first class leisure facilities and restore the baths to its former glory.

In terms of next steps, you will be consulted on the design and pre planning consultation by the end of May 2013 and we hope start on site in December 2013 or January 2014.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Lilian Collins

Will the Mayor be looking to bring other heritage buildings back into community use?

Summary of Councillor Rabina Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

The Mayor has worked to bring back or improve a number of important locations including Bancroft Library, the Cable Street mural, Stairway to Heaven memorial and Victoria Park and will continue to protect and promote the borough's proud heritage.

6.9 Question from Mr Muhammad Haque about the Tower Hamlets People's Education Life and History Archive.

Will Tower Hamlets Council support in principle the Tower Hamlets Peoples Education Life and History Archive that is a move to record and chronicle for present and future generations the lives of all the people who make up this community?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

This Administration recognises the importance of local history projects and histories of all communities that make up our borough. They strengthen community cohesion and reinforce our One Tower Hamlets policy in the borough. For example the Mayor saved Bancroft Library from the previous administration's intention to dispose of it.

The Council is aware of the aspiration of Youth Initiative UK to establish a centre in the borough. A number of organisations have already indicated their support for this project and on the basis of the information provided we will be pleased to support the initiative in principle and wish the project well for its fundraising.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Muhammad Haque

As far as possible in the current economic climate, will the Council be able to offer practical support to this organisation?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

We recognise the importance of the project. We have a history of supporting the preservation of the Borough's history and will offer support where we can.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting. The Leader of the Majority Group and the Leader or Deputy Leader of each Minority Group then each responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor Denise Jones on the recent stabbings in Wapping Woods.

In December in Wapping Woods two women were stabbed in separate incidents that made residents frightened to go out. A public meeting was quickly organised by me and the police Safer Neighbourhood Team to brief residents and listen to their concerns about safety in Wapping. Can the Mayor tell the Council what steps officers have taken to improve public safety in Wapping since these stabbings took place?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Public safety is a priority for the Mayor, for this administration and for me.

We were all deeply shocked of the news that two women were stabbed in Wapping. As I am sure you are aware, a man has been arrested and charged with attempted murder and is on remand awaiting trial. CCTV was installed the next day in the area.

My best wishes go out for the speedy recovery of the two women. Fortunately this type of serious assault is very rare in Wapping. However, it is because of these shocking incidents that I and other councillors including the ward member Councillor Haque attended the public meeting on 8th January along with senior officers from the Council, the Police and Tower Hamlets Homes to listen to residents' concerns.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Denise Jones

The attacks took place over the Christmas and New Year period. I tried to contact the Head of Paid Service, other Directors and Service Heads without success. Councillors were not told who to call over the holiday period and there was a lack of response. We only found out on the day of the public meeting who would be attending.

What will the Mayor do to ensure that Councillors know who to contact and are kept informed of actions taken, and can we have an administration that makes the Borough safe?

Summary of Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the Supplementary Question

The relevant Service Heads were at the residents meeting. Councillors should know who to contact and instead of playing politics, if the matter had been raised with me I would have helped. Swift action was taken in this case and we are also visiting every ward in the borough to discuss community safety. In Wapping, Council services are liaising with the police and we are planning a further walkabout with residents to look at additional improvements.

8.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

In 2011 the Parliament approved the "Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity". Tower Hamlets Council has chosen to ignore this code, in particular by continuing to publish East End Life at cost to the taxpayer.

The Government has announced that to ensure compliance of the Code of Recommended Practice legislation is to be introduced which will empower the Secretary of State to make a direction requiring compliance with some or all of the Publicity Code's recommendations.

Will the Mayor announce when he proposes to cease publication of East End Life, which contravenes the Code?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Let's start with the facts. The code is not law, it is guidance. Local authorities must have 'regard' to the code when deciding on publicity and that is exactly what we did.

The Council undertook a comprehensive review into East End Life which included:-

- a consultation with over 600 responses
- a review of practice in other local authorities
- a review of alternative methods of reaching the borough's residents
- a cost benefit analysis to ascertain the cost associated with getting information across to residents using other means
- external legal advice from counsel.

72% of people consulted felt positively about East End Life and over half (53%) of respondents wanted to see East End life continue as a weekly publication.

The review also found that other local papers had limited distribution in the borough and that the cost of using alternative publications would be more expensive, costing the taxpayer more. East End Life is budgeted at zero cost for this financial year and is on track to achieve its income target.

East End Life is compliant with the code in all respects except where the code suggests to publish quarterly. With public health responsibilities returning to local authorities from April this year a council publication becomes even more important.

The District Auditor said of East End Life in September 2011 that:-
"The Council has had regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and has taken Counsel's advice on the impact of the Code. The Council's interpretation of the current law in this area is very similar to my own".

If the Secretary of State thinks he knows best what the residents of Tower Hamlets want he should examine the last local and general election results.

Of course we have all heard the rumours that Mr Pickles is planning legislation. Is this really a cost a good use of Parliament's time when we are about to enter a triple dip recession? Local councils are best placed to decide what works locally. Mr Pickles should get on with clearing up the economic mess of his Tory-led Government.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Golds

I have copies of letters from DCLG which confirm that when the legislation is introduced you will be directed to close East End Life. I am also aware that the Mayor's subsidy to Channel S will be criticised by Ofcom. The Government will change the law, why are you pretending otherwise?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's response to the Supplementary Question

I will not repeat what I have already said. We are not going to take advice from Mr Eric Pickles MP whose department spends £10k per year on biscuits whilst forcing boroughs to cut services to the most vulnerable.

8.3 Question from Councillor Khaled Ahmed about the Mayor's Office staffing and advisor budgets.

In a time of significant cuts why does the Mayor think it is right to increase his staffing and advisor budget by over 65%?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Councillor Ahmed, you say there has been a 65% increase, but looking at the work done by the team since the Mayor has been in office there has been a 700% increase in Member's Enquiries from Councillor Abbas alone. The figures you quote are not actual staffing cost but it includes stationary, printing, postage, supplies and contingencies. As I understand it, our costs are comparable to Labour mayoral boroughs that have:-

- Failed to save the EMA
- Failed to provide Free Homecare for the elderly and vulnerable
- Failed to keep all Libraries and Leisure centres open, and
- Failed to keep up with our house building programme, which is the most prolific in the country.

Why don't you ask our neighbours what their mayors are doing with their office costs?

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Khales Ahmed

Why do you need so many advisors if you have a Cabinet of all the talents and at a time when residents are having their benefits cut?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's response to the Supplementary Question

The advisors are value for money when you look at what they are delivering, unlike some of the expenditure incurred by Labour members for example on training by RADA, taxis and Special Responsibility Allowances of £3,000 per hour.

8.4 Question from Councillor Harun Miah about tube and bus fares

Does the Mayor agree that this month's increase in the cost of tube and bus fares by an average of 4.2% and in some cases by as much as 7.1% is unacceptable; will present an additional challenge to the tens of thousands of Tower Hamlets families who rely on public transport to get to work, school, college, university and to see friends and family; and will he in light of this undertake to write to Mayor of London Boris Johnson expressing our view that Transport for London should end its policy of above inflation fare rises for bus and tube passengers?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

This Tory Chancellor, in his first two and a half years in office has already increased rail fares by 12 per cent. By the end of his term, he will have seen them increased by a staggering 20 to 25 per cent.

Hiking up fares increases only makes problems of congestion and air pollution worse London and does nothing to persuade people out of their cars.

Our rail fares are the highest in Europe but I don't think you will find anyone who would claim that we have the best rail services in Europe.

I will be writing to Boris Johnson calling on him to use his position to speak out for London's commuters. Unfortunately in view of his comments defending the fare rises I don't hold out much hope that he will be champion for the thousands of hard working families hit by these increases.

[No supplementary question was asked.]

8.5 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah on the Mayor of London's proposals to reduce the number of police stations in Tower Hamlets.

Earlier this month the Tory Mayor of London revealed his budget including proposals to halve the number of police stations in Tower Hamlets. What steps will the Mayor take to mitigate the impact of these cuts?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Council is committed to taking services closer to the community through the localisation of its services into the four locality-based offices. We have successfully opened up two of the four offices and are on target to have all four offices opened by the end of this financial year. A key element of this work is to co-locate police teams into the four bases.

A formal commitment has been made for the police to co-locate into each of the four bases and we have successfully been operating from the Toby Club for over a year.

The closure of Police Stations is something that the Mayor is actively engaged in lobbying against and the Borough Commander is well aware of his position.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

This is a worrying issue. We have already discussed the stabbing in Wapping and I attended the public meeting as a local resident. As our

representative at London Councils will the Mayor reach out to find as many allies as possible to oppose these cuts and protect the people of Tower Hamlets?

Summary of Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the Supplementary Question

We are already delivering in this important area to safeguard the borough and we are fortunate to have excellent members, staff and advisors. I would urge all councillors to co-operate in this and not give wrong messages to the outside world.

8.6 Question from Councillor Zara Davis on Tunnel Runs in the Westferry Circus underground roundabout.

What action has been taken by the Council to prevent Tunnel Runs occurring in the Westferry Circus underground roundabout, since the meeting between the Council and Police on 5th December?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Council and Police met on 5th December 2012 to review their joint response to the Tunnel Running issue at Westferry Circus. The following areas were revisited and agreed.

The Police will continue to monitor social websites to identify potential events that may take place at Westferry Circus.

Any events advertised the police will post a notice on the website stating that the police and local authority will take a robust response to any event at Westferry Circus, and it will include:-

- Prosecuting people for road traffic offences
- Stopping and conducting police examination of vehicles
- Notifying insurance companies of any vehicle modifications and driver behaviours; this will have an impact on insurance premiums
- Injunctions or Asbos will be taken out
- The location will be subject to a dispersal notice, providing police with additional powers and will support any application for an injunction etc
- The Council will install barriers to restrict the ability to park in the Circus
- Automatic number plate readers will be used to obtain evidence of vehicles
- CCTV of both Canary Wharf and Council will be optimised
- Council will work with the Police to have a dispersal notice to cover the area

- The Police will ensure that this is a local policing priority (PP)
- The Council and Police will write to the owner/parents/ insurance companies outlining the behaviour and vehicle modifications etc
- Local Police will liaise with New Scotland Yard for a Pan London approach for this type of incident
- If or when the Council or Police have prior notification that an event will take place there will be a co-ordinated Partnership response that will ensure that local police officers, MPS traffic police, local authority THEO's, parking control and CCTV are co-ordinated to prevent and deal with the incident as it arises

If an event takes place without prior warning the local police and council officers will attend to disrupt the activity and try to stop the event using the power provided by the dispersal notice and there'll be using technology to obtain best evidence for injunctions, insurance companies etc.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Zara Davis

Whilst I am glad there is cooperative working going on I am concerned that some key actions agreed – for example barriers and dispersal notices - may have been abandoned. Can I ask the Cabinet Member to provide written confirmation and ensure that the actions proposed will effectively address the issue, as these runs are continuing?

Summary of Councillor Shahed Ali's response to the Supplementary Question

Yes, I will provide you with a full response that I hope will address your concerns but please discuss it further with me should you wish.

8.7 Question from Councillor Sharia Khatun on gritting roads and walkways.

The questioner was not in attendance. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that a written response would be provided to the questioner [see Appendix A attached to these minutes].

8.8 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani on gaming machines.

Does the Mayor share our concerns regarding the high level of gaming machines in use in Tower Hamlets that has been in the news recently?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

I am very concerned. It is shocking that in these times of recession Tower Hamlets residents have spent over £400 million on gambling.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of fixed odds betting terminals in the borough's betting shops. These machines were brought into betting shops when the industry was unregulated in 2001/2002.

The Government has made it clear that they are not going to change the law with regards to these gaming/betting machines and betting shops will continue have them in their premises.

While we are bound by statutory gambling laws here is possibility that we could use Planning and our Commercial leasing arrangements to affect further controls. This is being reviewed at present and our officers are working with the London-wide Licensing Managers Group and the Fairer Betting Group.

[No supplementary question was asked.]

8.9 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman about the Baishakhi Mela.

On the 19th September 2012 the Council passed a motion resolving:

- To call upon the Mayor to undertake a full independent review of the 2012 Baishakhi Mela to ensure that it met all of its contractual obligations and provided a service which best served the community.
- To call upon the Mayor to make public the findings and report of the independent review into the 2012 Baishakhi Mela and to report back to Full Council on 23rd January 2013 on the findings.

Can the Mayor explain what progress has been made on this issue?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

At the end of November an Independent Panel reviewed the performance of the Baishakhi Mela Community Trust over two days. The Panel recommended that subject to the completion of a satisfactory audit the Boishakhi Mela Community Trust Ltd continue to manage the Boishakhi Mela for 2013; and that a further independent review take place at the conclusion of the 2013 Mela rather than at the end of three years.

The Mayor has accepted these recommendations. The independent audit referred to in the recommendations is still underway although it is nearing a conclusion and will be provided to Members once it is finished.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Can I seek assurance that the independent review will be brought to the Council and when this will be; and is it true that the Mela will be moving from Brick Lane?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

The review will be presented to the Cabinet and you will be welcome to ask questions there.

Time limit for item

At this point the Speaker informed the meeting that the time allocated for Members' Questions had expired.

The remaining questions 8.10 to 8.27 were therefore not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to these questions after the meeting.

[Note: the written responses subsequently provided are included in Appendix A attached to these minutes.]

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

9.1 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2012/13 - MID YEAR REPORT

The Council considered the mid-year report of the Acting Chief Finance Officer on the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2012/13.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **MOVED** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED

To note the content of the report.

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

There was no business under this heading.

11. OTHER BUSINESS (IF ANY)

11.1 BUDGET COUNCIL MEETING DATE - Tabled Paper

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services and agreed the reasons for urgency as set out in the report.

RESOLVED

That the date of the Budget Council Meeting be amended from 20th February to Wednesday 27th February 2013 (7.30 p.m. start); and the provisional date for any second Budget Council Meeting (if required) be amended to Thursday 7th March 2013.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Procedural Motion

Councillor Anwar Khan **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded** a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered to consider Motions 12.3 “Motion regarding fire and police station closures”, 12.6 “Motion regarding Blacklisting of Workers” and 12.9 “Motion regarding Decent Homes Prioritisation“ and then move on to the Exempt part of the meeting. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.”

12.3 Motion regarding Fire and Police Station Closures

Councillor Abdal Ullah **moved**, and Councillor Denise Jones **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda and subject to an amendment as tabled.

Councillor Shahed Ali moved a further amendment:- “That the Council additionally (i) notes the tragic deaths of two fire fighters based in the borough in 2004; and (ii) believes that the proposed reduction in fire engines is an insult to the families of those fire fighters.”

Councillors Abdal Ullah and Denise Jones accepted the first part of Councillor Ali’s proposed amendment and altered their motion accordingly.

In relation to the proposal contained in the motion to invite the Borough Commanders to address a Council meeting, the Service Head Democratic Services advised the meeting that the Council Procedure Rules did not specifically provide for this and that the Council meeting was subject to a strict time limit. It may therefore be more appropriate for a separate briefing to take place outside the formal meeting. Councillors Abdal Ullah and Denise Jones agreed and further altered their motion accordingly.

The motion as so amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That the first duty of politicians is to protect residents.
- That crime has been increasing in Tower Hamlets and across London.
- In 2009/10 there were 26,989 crimes reported in Tower Hamlets, in 2010/11 there were 28,670 and in 2011/12 there were 29,485. This represents over a 9% increase.
- Last year Tower Hamlets had by far the greatest number of fires in London (1,523) as well as the 5th highest call outs for specialist fire services (1,821) and the 3rd highest for false alarms (2,586).
- In total in 2011/12 there were 5,930 call outs attended by Tower Hamlets Fire Brigade.
- The tragic deaths of two fire fighters based in the borough in 2004.

This Council Further Notes:

- Boris Johnson has proposed £65m cuts to the London Fire Brigade and over £300m cuts to the London Police Service budget.

Fire Brigade

- That the Mayor of London announced earlier this month that he proposed closing Bow fire station and halving the number of fire engines at Whitechapel fire station.
- The cuts for Tower Hamlets Fire Brigade come on top of additional cuts to neighbouring boroughs with Silvertown in Newham (1 pump) and Kingsland in Hackney (2 pumps) both earmarked for closure. This will have a significant impact on Tower Hamlets' ability to deal with major incidents.
- Last year the target set by Tower Hamlets Fire Brigade for fires in the home was 227 however the actual number of these fires was 308, this is over 35% higher.

Police Service

- Tower Hamlets lost 58 PCSOs (45%) and 103 Police Officers (13%) between March 2010 and April 2012.
- The London Mayor, Boris Johnson has proposed closing half of the borough's police stations, Bow, Poplar and the Isle of Dogs, as well as reducing the service at the Limehouse police station from 24 hours to daytime only.

- The positive impact of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams introduced by the Labour Government and Labour Council in Tower Hamlets. That the SNTs helped to not only reduce crime in Tower Hamlets but also increased public confidence in the police.
- Boris Johnson's plans to cut Safer Neighbourhood Teams to the bone by cutting the teams to one police officer and one police community support officer per ward, down from six officers and staff at present.

This Council Believes:

- Closing Bow fire station and reducing the service at Whitechapel as well as closing half of the borough's police stations is reckless and a dereliction of the Mayor's duty to protect residents.
- The levels of high density housing in Tower Hamlets makes the threat and potential loss of life from fire much greater than in more less densely populated boroughs. This, paired with the fact that Tower Hamlets already has the highest rate of fires in London makes the Mayor's proposed closures completely irresponsible.
- Boris Johnson has chosen to pursue a political gimmick in giving Londoners a 7p a week cut in Council Tax which will result in massive cuts to the vital services they rely on.

This Council Resolves:

- To condemn the Mayor of London's deep cuts to fire and police stations in the borough.
- To support Labour's 999 SOS campaign against the cuts to police and fire stations in Tower Hamlets.
- To invite the Police Borough Commander to attend a meeting with all Councillors, open to the public and held in the Chamber immediately prior to the next, post-budget, Full Council meeting to brief councillors on the Mayor of London's police station closures proposals and their impact on crime levels in Tower Hamlets.
- To invite the Fire Brigade Borough Commander to attend a meeting with all Councillors, open to the public and held in the Chamber immediately prior to the next, post-budget the next, post-budget, Full Council meeting to brief councillors on the Mayor of London's fire station closures proposals and their impact on the fire brigade's ability to responds to fires in Tower Hamlets.

Procedural motion

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, that under Procedure Rule 14.1.13 the order of business be varied to debate

motion 12.13 'Motion against erasing the history of Tower Hamlets' as the next item of business. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The following Members requested that it be recorded that they voted **in favour** of the above procedural motion:- Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Rofique Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfu Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Stephanie Eaton, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina Khan, Rania Khan, Harun Miah, Maium Miah, Oliur Rahman and Gulam Robbani.

12.6 Motion regarding Blacklisting of Workers.

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Councillor Bill Turner **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda and subject to an amendment as tabled.

The motion as so amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The GMB campaign to highlight that 3,213 workers were blacklisted by construction firms and which calls for all of those affected to be given an unreserved apology and compensation by the firms.
- That in 2009 the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) seized a database of 3,213 construction workers used by 44 companies to vet new recruits and keep out employment trade union and health and safety activists.
- That of the 3,213 workers identified on the blacklist only 194 have been informed that they appear on the list.
- Of the 194 people identified as featuring on the blacklist, 39 of these were based or attempting to find work in London.
- That some companies have admitted that they did employ a system of blacklisting workers and have apologised but have refused to pay any compensation to those workers affected.

This Council believes:

- Blacklisting is an unacceptable practice which cannot be condoned.
- That the construction firms which engaged in blacklisting should apologise to those who have been affected and denied jobs as a result of the list.

- That the Information Commissioners Office should inform all those who feature on the blacklist.

This Council resolves:

- To support the GMB campaign against the blacklisting of construction workers.
- To call on the Mayor to make clear to all construction companies bidding for Council contracts that any unlawful blacklisting of workers will not be tolerated.
- To ask Legal Services to explore how to enable the council to not contract with companies that have engaged in blacklisting and haven't paid compensation to workers.

12.9 Motion regarding Decent Homes Prioritisation

Councillor Marc Francis **moved**, and Councillor John Pierce **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- Brodick House on the St Stephen's Estate is the last big tower block remaining in the ownership of Tower Hamlets Council;
- It is home to 130 households (121 tenants and nine leaseholders) across 22 storeys;
- Brodick House was completed in 1968 and most flats within it still retain the original kitchen and bathroom;
- The block has suffered from persistent problems with water penetration for many years and an ineffective storage heating system that tenants have to supplement with expensive electrical heaters;
- These problematic conditions undermine the health, education and life chances of the hundred or so children in Brodick House and the well-being older residents;
- In 2005, Old Ford Housing Association demolished two similar blocks on the Monteith Estate (Antrim House and Cavan House) and upgraded the remaining (Clare House) at a cost of around £6 million;

- In 2010, East End Homes upgraded two similar blocks (Berkeley House and Grafton House) at a cost of around £10 million each;
- The reduction in Government funding for Tower Hamlets Council's remaining estates means that, in Years 1 and 2, it has concentrated resources on those homes that are easiest to bring up to the Decent Homes Standard;
- The Budget indicates that £25 million should be available for Decent Homes works in 2013/14 and £45 million in 2014/15.

This Council believes:

- The Conservative – Lib Dem Coalition Government is wrong to force councils to prioritise works on those properties with least problems;
- Tenants in Brodick House have suffered too long in very poor conditions and that improvements to the block, including new kitchens, bathrooms, and a new heating system should be a council priority.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Mayor to commit to prioritise the most in need blocks, such as Brodick House, in the Decent Homes programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

In accordance with the agreed procedural motion, following the conclusion of the debate on Motion 12.9 the meeting moved on to the next item of business.

Motions 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.7, 12.8 and 12.10 – 12.18 were not considered due to lack of time.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**RESOLVED**

That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted contains information defined as Exempt in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

The Council agreed a number of amendments to the draft restricted minutes of the 11th July and 20th December 2012 meetings.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the amendments agreed, the Part 2 (restricted) minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 28th November 2012 and of the

Extraordinary Council Meetings held on 11th July 2012, 11th December 2012 and 20th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

15. ESTABLISHMENT OF APPOINTMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE - RECRUITMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE/HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Council considered a report of the Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development on the above matter. The special circumstances and reasons for urgency were agreed as set out in the report.

Councillor David Snowdon moved, and Councillor Craig Aston seconded, a tabled amendment to the recommendations in the report.

The amendment and the substantive recommendations as amended, were put to the vote and were **agreed** unanimously. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

1. To confirm the extension made by the Service Head HR and WD to the notice period of the Interim Head of Paid Service from 14th January until 23rd January 2013.
2. To invite Stephen Halsey to act as Head of Paid Service, retaining his role as Corporate Director CLC and with the following powers, until October 31st 2014

Non-Executive functions

- Head of Paid Service (Local Government & Housing Act 1989)
- Officer with delegated power to approve premises for the solemnisation of marriages (Marriage Act 1949)
- Community Governance – various functions relating to Community Governance Reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Power to appoint staff below Deputy Chief Officer level (Local Government Act 1972, section 112)
- Powers relating to the preservation of trees (Town & Country Planning Act 1990)
- Crime prevention policies and measures (London Local Authorities (No. 2) Act 1990)
- Gratuities to non-pensionable employees (London County Council (General Powers) Act 1930)
- Expenses of councils in connection with ceremonies (London County Council (General Purposes) Act 1951, section 32)
- Compensation to persons in the Council's service on abolition of office (London County Council (General Purposes) Act 1921) [subject to pay policy]

'Proper Officer' designations

The Head of Paid Service is designated as the “proper officer” for the following functions:

- S.83 (1) Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 – the person to whom the Mayor or a Councillor shall deliver her/his acceptance of office
- S.83 (3)b LGA 1972 – the officer before whom the Speaker of the Council and Deputy Speaker of Council make their declaration of acceptance of office
- S.88 (2) LGA 1972 – the officer who may call a Council meeting for the election to the vacant office of Speaker of Council
- S.4 LG&HA 1989 – the Head of Paid Service
- S.15 LG&HA 1989 – the officer to receive notices relating to the membership of political groups
- Schedule 12, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1 paragraph 4(2)(b) – summons to attend Council meeting.

Other delegations

- Section 4.1 of the constitution (Council Procedure Rules) contains various references to the Chief Executive as the officer who formally calls or may cancel Council and Committee meetings
3. To ask the Service Head, Democratic Services, to undertake the roles of Returning Officer (Representation of the People Act 1983, section 35) and the Electoral Registration Officer (Representation of the People Act 1983, section 8)
 4. To ask the Head of Paid Service to continue to work with the LGA to review governance arrangements to ensure that they are robust
 5. To defer the recruitment process for a CE until October 2014.

The meeting ended at 10.23 p.m.

Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Speaker of the Council

Appendix A**WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED TO THOSE PUBLIC AND MEMBERS' QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 23RD JANUARY 2013****6.3 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney**

Can the Mayor explain what has been the Council's financial settlement from Central Government for this year?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you for your question Kathy. I can understand local residents' concerns about the ongoing cuts to our budget by this Tory-led government.

This year's cut was 3.2% of our budget. This was a smaller cut than in previous years and was in line with what we had anticipated, although this is still a cut of 8% in real terms.

We have now set a balanced budget for the next two years. This budget still:-

- Protects vulnerable residents
- Protects frontline staff
- Protects services that residents rely on such as libraries and Idea Stores, youth services, free homecare and Children's Centres
- Protects our investment in the third sector

And puts more money into residents' pockets through the Council Tax freeze; protection of Council Tax Benefit; extension of the London Living Wage; the Mayor's Education Awards; making it easier for local businesses to bid for Council contracts; and holding down Residents' Fees and Charges

6.5 Question from Mr Junel Uddin

Housing is the single most important issue affecting residents in this borough. Figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government show that Tower Hamlets is building the highest number of homes in the country. Is that true?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Yes, I am delighted to say that this is true. The most recent figures released by the DCLG confirm that Tower Hamlets has again built more houses than any other local authority. We have delivered 2,922 units last year.

This is important, not just because of the much needed homes they provide, but also because of the level of New Homes Bonus this awards us. The Government introduced the New Homes Bonus, which rewards Councils for building new homes. Due to our impressive house building record we have been awarded a total of over £16.1m, the highest in the country.

Figures from central government also show that we have built more affordable units than any other local authority in the country. From 2008 – 2012, we have delivered 6,300 affordable homes.

At a time when private sector rents are soaring and the Government is slashing Housing Benefit, I am delighted that we are providing affordable homes for the residents of this borough.

The Labour Party should stop the playground politics and support the Mayor in addressing some of the most pressing needs of our residents.

8.7 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun

What plans does the Mayor have to ensure that all of the borough's major roads and walkways are gritted and ice free during the cold winter months?

Written response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Councillor Khatun will be pleased to know that following previous extreme winter weather conditions we have invested over £200,000 in a purpose built salt storage facility and have also purchased additional salt spreading equipment.

To date we have over 2000 tonnes of rock salt within the facility which will be sufficient to manage any severe weather conditions for a prolonged period.

The Council has a Winter Maintenance Plan which is reviewed every year and sets out the operational response to bad weather and the resilience measures for exceptional and prolonged severe weather.

8.10 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Will the Mayor outline what meetings he has had with London City Airport and who he has nominated to serve on the Consultative Committee to alleviate the problems faced by Isle of Dogs residents as a result of noise pollution from flights from the increased flights from London City Airport?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

London City Airport (LCA) and Newham have powers on this issue. The Council's representative on the LCA Consultative Committee is Stephen

Mutton, who was appointed on 23rd November 2011 by the General Purposes Committee, which the Labour Group control.

We are making sure LCA are aware of all our residents who will be affected on the Isle of Dogs and demanding that they provide insulation to those residents' properties.

Perhaps the councillor can raise the issue with his London Mayor about his plan to address this issue – what some have dubbed Boris Island.

8.11 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

On what basis did the Mayor agree to cut public health services?

Written response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Saunders, there are no cuts to these budgets.

8.12 Question from Councillor Stephanie Eaton

Does the Mayor share my concern about the impact of the 2005 Gambling Act and the increase in the number of betting shops in the Borough and the potential impact that gambling may have on vulnerable residents, and, will he ensure that the LBTH Gambling Policy contains measures to:

- Prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder
- Protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling
- Protect people who may not be able to make informed or balanced decisions about gambling due to a mental impairment, alcohol or drugs

and will the Mayor include in the LBTH Gambling Policy measures to:

- Control access to gambling premises by children under the age of 18
- Require licensed premises to have a nationally registered proof of age scheme
- Require licensed premises to operate a self-barring scheme for problem gamblers
- Require licensed premises to provide Gam Care, or similar, information
- Require licensed premises to record attempts to enter by under-age people
- Require licensed premises to record incidents of attempts to enter by those who are voluntarily excluded, those subject to mandatory exclusions, children attempting to enter with complicit adults.

and will the Mayor ensure the LBTH Gambling Policy encourages licensed premises to prevent customers:

- Increasing the amount they have decided to gamble
- Enter into continuous gambling for a prolonged period
- Continue gambling when they have expressed a wish to stop
- Regamble winnings
- Chase losses

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

I share Councillor Eaton's concerns about the impact of gaming machines and gambling in the borough. I am happy to assure her that the new proposed Gambling Policy that has been consulted upon includes all of these provisions.

The increased media scrutiny on Betting Shops has meant that our new policy is even more important and will require effective monitoring.

A Gambling Policy is required by statute to enable the Council to carry out its statutory functions. However, there is possibility that we could use Planning and our Commercial leasing arrangements to affect further controls. This is being reviewed at present and our officers are working with the London-wide Licensing Managers Group and the Fairer Betting Group.

8.13 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

Is the Mayor planning to sign up to the LCC 'Safer Lorries Campaign' pledge which will help to improve the safety of residents by ensuring councils only sign new contracts with the safest haulage companies, which meet specified safety conditions?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Yes. We take the safety of cyclists on our roads very seriously and particularly understand the importance of reducing the risk of accidents involving larger vehicles and cyclists.

We are already working closely with our contractors and the council's own Transport Services fleet, on addressing cycle safety through driver education and vehicle technology and accessories.

In addition we have worked with Transport for London to provide free cycle safety awareness training for drivers employed by other private operators in the area. We also work frequently with the Metropolitan Police on Exchanging Places events which demonstrate blind-spots of larger vehicles to cyclists.

The Council will use its best endeavours to seek to incorporate elements of this pledge into future contracts and officers are currently considering the feasibility of this element of the request.

8.14 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

What is the Mayor doing to improve the lighting and remove the overgrown shrubbery in Wapping Woods?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Public safety is a priority for the Mayor, for this administration and for me. We were all deeply shocked of the news that two women were stabbed in Wapping. As I am sure you are aware, a man has been arrested and charged with attempted murder and is on remand awaiting trial.

My best wishes go out for the speedy recovery of the two women. Fortunately this type of serious assault is very rare in Wapping. However, it is because of these shocking incidents that I and other councillors including the ward member Cllr Haque attended the public meeting on 8th January along with senior officers from the Council, the Police and Tower Hamlets Homes to listen to residents' concerns.

A wide range of issues were discussed during the packed meeting and it was agreed that a CCTV camera would be installed within 2 days, signs would be erected to advise them that CCTV monitoring was in operation. This has been done.

Prior to the meeting officers had visited the location to assess lighting requirements for the area and had identified that some repairs were necessary and these would be dealt with immediately. In addition, Tower Hamlets were reviewing the condition and position of their lights that were adjacent to the wooded area.

Officers also undertook to meet with a local business to encourage them to turn on some lamp standards that were not operating and to cut back foliage on their property. The Council have also cut back and reduced the amount of foliage around the park.

Council services are also liaising with the police and are planning a night-time walkabout with residents to look at any additional improvements. All partners have ensured that additional reassurance patrols have taken place in the area and this includes THEOs, safer neighbourhood teams and the police partnership team funded by the local authority.

Members of the public are also encouraged to attend the local ward police panel meetings, the next one will be at St. George's Town Hall on Wednesday 6th February (6pm). All are welcome.

8.15 Question from Councillor Bill Turner

How many vacancies were there in each of the last twelve months in a) the CSF directorate and b) the AHW directorate, and what percentage of these were social workers?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Our Social Work Teams are currently amongst the best in London. In December 2012, there were 611 posts in AHWB of which 63 (10.3%) were vacant. In CSF there were 2,672 posts of which 173 (6.5%) were vacant.

There are currently 9 Social Worker vacancies in AHWB and 30 in CSF, these represent 15.3% and 18.0% respectively of all the current vacancies in these Directorates.

In AHWB, there are a total of 137 Qualified Social Worker posts. The 9 that are vacant represent 6.6%. In CSF, there are 269 Qualified Social Worker posts. The 30 that are vacant represent 11.2% of these posts.

As you will be aware, recruitment to these posts can take longer than for posts in some other Directorates and support functions due to the need to ensure CRB and other checks are completed before a successful applicant starts work with the Council. Information on each month can be supplied to you in writing if required.

8.16 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah

Due to the current economical slow down many small businesses are struggling to survive. Many are finding it hard to pay their business rates. What is the Mayor doing to help these businesses?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

There are a number of things the Council is doing to help small businesses. For small businesses having a rateable value of less than £12,000 the Council promotes the Small Business Rate Relief scheme available to small businesses that occupy only one business property:-

- By sending a letter and application form to each ratepayer that has been identified as a potential claimant; and
- By sending a Council Rating Inspector to make personal visits to all those properties that were not claiming the Small Business Rate Relief so that the benefits of the scheme could be explained in person and the ratepayer could be given assistance in completing the application

This has dramatically increased the amount of relief that we have awarded year on year from £1.5m in 2009 to £2.5 in 2010, £4m in 2011 and £4.7m in 2012.

The council also operates a reduction or remission of businesses rates for those suffering from financial hardship which is useful as a short term one off relief under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

A Business Rates Seminar was held in March 2012 for local ratepayers to help them exercise their right to appeal to lower the rating valuation of their premises.

The Mayor is also doing all he can to boost investment in the borough, grow the local economy as well as ensuring that local businesses can tender for Council contracts.

8.17 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Does the Mayor intend to change the council's homelessness policy to allow officers to cease the statutory duty to homeless families and vulnerable single people through the offer of a tenancy in the private rented sector?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question. This is why we have included a £1m preventing homelessness fund and ringfenced £1m of reserves, in our budget proposals.

As you know, the Government has made dramatic and draconian changes in the laws around homelessness and also to welfare provision. We know that the cuts in welfare are going to increase homelessness in Tower Hamlets and across London, and this is something I and the Mayor are deeply concerned by.

We are absolutely committed to finding suitable housing for all our homeless families and vulnerable single people. However, welfare reforms will not only create more homelessness, but will also make it more difficult to house homeless families. We cannot house residents in homes they cannot afford.

We are investigating all possible options but with our foremost concern ensuring that we work with vulnerable households to find housing options that work for them, and that the housing options team and all other council services working with them, support them through these changes.

8.18 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

What steps is the Mayor taking to fix the potholes on the roads of the Isle of Dogs?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

We have invested £1 million this year in a major resurfacing programme to cut down on pot holes and improve the long term maintenance of our key road network asset. A further £1 million per year has been allocated over the next two years for this function.

The entire road network is inspected by council officers to identify defects with remedial action being taken. We also inspect defects that are reported by members of the public and take appropriate action. Any road defects should be reported to the Council's contact centre. TfL roads are the responsibility of TfL, whilst estate roads are the responsibility of respective managing agents.

8.19 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock

What assessment has the Mayor / Lead Member made of the impact that the Government's 28% cut to the Early Intervention Grant will have on children's services in the borough?

Written response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The Mayor has written to Michael Gove, Education Secretary, protesting at these cuts.

The Mayor and I immediately realised the implications of the government's decision to transfer funding from the Early Intervention Grant to Dedicated Schools Grant. This was another example of a completely ill thought out policy announcement by the coalition government. To pretend that providing nursery care for 2 yr olds was going to be funded by new money was bad enough, but then to actually fund it by taking money away from existing services to young people was utterly despicable.

We realised that this would result in a £4.9m budget pressure that would affect the funding for some of our key services for young people, including children centres and our connexions service. Our commitment to these services meant that we absorbed this cut into the medium term financial plan and ensured that funding was made available to ensure these services are able to continue.

8.20 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

We were extremely concerned to hear about the recent stabbing incidents at Wapping. Can the lead member inform us what has been done to reassure local residents in that area?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Public safety is a priority for the Mayor, for this administration and for me. We were all deeply shocked of the news that two women were stabbed in Wapping. As I am sure you are aware, a man has been arrested and charged with attempted murder and is on remand awaiting trial.

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these shocking incidents that I and other councillors including the ward member Cllr Haque attended the public meeting on 8th January along with senior officers from the Council, the Police and Tower Hamlets Homes to listen to residents' concerns.

A wide range of issues were discussed during the packed meeting and it was agreed that a CCTV camera would be installed within 2 days, signs would be erected to advise them that CCTV monitoring was in operation. This has been done.

Prior to the meeting officers had visited the location to assess lighting requirements for the area and had identified that some repairs were necessary and these would be dealt with immediately. In addition, Tower Hamlets were reviewing the condition and position of their lights that were adjacent to the wooded area.

Officers also undertook to meet with a local business to encourage them to turn on some lamp standards that were not operating and to cut back foliage on their property. The Council have also cut back and reduced the amount of foliage around the park.

Council services are also liaising with the police and are planning a night-time walkabout with residents to look at any additional improvements. All partners have ensured that additional reassurance patrols have taken place in the area and this includes THEOs, safer neighbourhood teams and the police partnership team funded by the local authority.

Members of the public are also encouraged to attend the local ward police panel meetings, the next one will be at St. George's Town Hall on Wednesday 6th February (6pm). All are welcome.

8.21 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

What steps has the Mayor taken to assess the economic, employment and regeneration impact of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics on Tower Hamlets?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Council is reviewing the work that has taken place in the run up to the games and the extensive achievements that have been realised through the games period.

Legacy Communities Scheme development - Between 2005-2012 Tower Hamlets planners worked closely with the Olympic Development Authority and LOCOG to maximise the benefits of the Games for Tower Hamlets residents through close involvement on all strategic planning applications and Legacy masterplanning relating to the Olympic Park.

Our involvement has helped the Borough successfully secure the following as part of the legacy applications which will be delivered over the next 5 to 10 years:

- 650 new homes (47% affordable housing and 47% family dwellings);
- A new 1 hectare linear canal side park;
- 2 new footbridges connecting the western edge of the Park to Fish Island and Bow;
- Land for a new primary and/or secondary school;
- Approx 8,000 sqm of Community space; and
- Approx 1,000 sqm of employment space.

In order to capture the regeneration opportunities in the immediate surrounding area, the Council adopted an Area Action Plan for Fish Island which provides a clear planning framework until 2025. This will secure new infrastructure – including a new primary school, local park and improved connections to the Olympic Park - and will enable the delivery of around 3,000 new homes in the area together with 3,500 new jobs.

Since 2010, officers have also been working closely with the Greater London Authority and the Olympic Host Boroughs in jointly drafting their Olympic Legacy Planning Guidance (OLSPG) which sets out the planning policy framework to 2030 for the Legacy area which in Tower Hamlets cover Fish Island and Bromley by Bow (both east of the A12).

The OLSPG envisages that around 32,000 new homes and 1.35 million square metres of new commercial floorspace and 100 hectares of open space will be delivered across the entire legacy area in that time period. The Vision includes making it one of the best places to live and work in London by creating new family housing, employment opportunities and schools in the setting of the new Quay and leisure facilities for borough residents. The vision is underpinned by the principle of socio-economic convergence which means raising the standard of living for all East Londoners in line with the London average by 2030.

Transport infrastructure - In the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in summer 2012, Transport for London (TfL) invested in a number of key public transport schemes that will leave a lasting legacy for Tower Hamlets, East London and beyond, including providing better connectivity and ease of access. This is of key importance for local residents to engage with training and jobs opportunities and promote the area as a destination for future inward investment.

These schemes include:

- the creation of the £1.5bn London Overground 'circle' network making it possible to travel around London, incorporating the upgraded East London line, with air conditioned trains and a new station at Shoreditch High Street in the borough
- the 3-car upgrade of the DLR network increasing passenger capacity by 50%, including new links to Woolwich and Stratford International
- the extension of the TfL Cycle Hire Scheme across the borough

- the introduction and / or extension of local bus services to better serve the Olympic Park area for borough residents
- Future TfL public transport investment schemes that will benefit Tower Hamlets, East London and beyond include:
- the £15bn Crossrail 1, including new stations at Whitechapel and Canary Wharf in the borough
- double-tracking of the DLR between Bow Church and Stratford to improve service frequencies

ICT infrastructure and Tech City - The Olympics and Paralympics themselves required the development of a modern technological infrastructure from scratch on the Olympic Park with the involvement of global ICT businesses. This has in turn given credibility to plans under iCity for a continuing ICT enterprise hub at the former press and broadcast centre for the Games.

This is only one element in the opportunity to create new Tech City enterprises in area in the north east of Tower Hamlets, to add to similar developments in the City Fringe. In September 2012 it was announced that London had succeeded in a bid under the Government's Super-Connected Cities Programme. The Council's enterprise team have been working with the LGA to ensure Tower Hamlets are central to any investment into superfast broadband development for the area. Affordable superfast fibre broadband connectivity will be provided all SMEs and residents in Tech City, which includes the northern half of Tower Hamlets, and wireless superfast facilities developed along the Docklands Light Railway, from east to west (London City Airport to Tower Gateway) and from north to south (Stratford to Canary Wharf).

Jobs and experience opportunities - Tower Hamlets formed an intrinsic part of the Games Host borough unit employment programme which assisted 1,600 local residents gets jobs during the construction phase of the Olympic Park. The Mayors pledge that the Games would provide job opportunities to 1000 local people was well exceeded and LOCOG statistics have recorded 3,438 local Tower Hamlets residents working as part of the games. Across the 56 days of delivery of the Olympic and Paralympic Games this can be estimated as around £13 million in wages paid to local residents during the period. This financial investment is aside from the extensive volunteering programme, work experience and accreditation it provided for local people to have as an achievement on their CV's when looking for future work. The council's employment brokerage service Skillsmatch are working with games times workers to access follow on jobs and are working with Jobcentre Plus to identify employer recruitments which will capitalise on their experiences.

Host Borough work - Tower Hamlets remain part of the partnership which delivered the Games and the Host borough group has transformed into the Growth Borough Partnership capitalising on the legacy opportunities from the Games. This includes the extensive construction works associated with the park transformation and rebuild over the next 20 years which will bring new housing and employment opportunities.

As with the original proposal in Singapore to host the games in London, Central Government and GLA policy commitments are in place to continue to exploit and maximise the Legacy of the Games specifically to continue the regeneration of East London. The investments have and will continue to promote East London and Tower Hamlets as destination areas for future inward investment and the Council will continue to drive forward aspirations on the convergence agenda.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

In view of the interest by the Mayor in the career of George Lansbury, is the Mayor aware that when George Lansbury was inaugurated as Mayor of Poplar in both 1919 and 1937 the ceremony took place at Poplar Town Hall, Poplar High Street, which was also the venue for the meeting in which Poplar Council resolved not to levy the LCC and Metropolitan Police precepts, which resulted in the Local Authorities (Equalization) Act of 1921.

Therefore, would the Mayor explain to the public why he authorised the sale of this historic building at a low price to purchasers with close connections to him and his administration?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The property was sold to one of the highest bidders. The value secured exceeded the estimate provided by an external independent valuer. Any suggestion that it was sold to the lowest bidder is wide of the mark. There are no close/unlawful or illegal connections.

8.23 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What targets has the Council set to reduce air pollution in Tower Hamlets in this EU year of clean air?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Tower Hamlets is declared an Air Quality Management Area under the UK Air Quality Strategy as required by the Environment Act 1995. Air in the Borough exceeds the national air quality objectives for two pollutants:-

- Firstly, Nitrogen Dioxide, for which the target is to achieve a maximum of 40 micro-grams per meter cubed over one year; and 200 micro-grams per meter cubed over a one hour period.
- Secondly, Particulate Matter (PM10), for which the target is to achieve a maximum of 40 micro-grams per meter cubed over one year; and 50 micro-grams per meter cubed daily.

In response to this, the Council has produced an Air Quality Action Plan which contains a suite of measures including:-

- Reducing emissions from transport sources of pollution
- Reducing emissions from domestic sources of pollution
- Providing a Health Information service to residents (called airTEXT)
- Promoting sustainable travel, and education and awareness on air pollution and green-house gases; and
- Working towards understanding the impacts of air pollution on residents' health and well-being.

We are currently updating our Air Quality Action Plan which will be submitted to the Mayor of London and the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as part of our statutory obligations. We also report annually to DEFRA on our progress on each action item within our action plan.

For the designated European Year of Air 2013, we are arranging education and awareness events across the borough. Our work will be featured in environmental publications in collaboration with the Institution of Environmental Sciences with whom we will be working.

8.24 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

According to article 5 of the Council's constitution, the Speaker of the Council should exercise impartiality in presiding over Council meetings. In his failure to allow due debate on several items in recent months, the Speaker of the Council has failed in this. Can the Council ensure that the Speaker abides by the constitution and not a party line?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Constitution states that the Speaker of the Council has a number of responsibilities, roles and functions. In relation to chairing the Council meeting, these are:-

1. to uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution and having sought appropriate officer advice, to interpret the Constitution when necessary;
2. to preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community;
3. to ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which Councillors who are not on the Cabinet can hold the Mayor and Cabinet Members to account in public;
4. to promote public involvement in the Council's activities; and
5. to be the conscience of the Council;

Although remaining a Councillor during his/her year of office, by tradition the Speaker remains somewhat distant from party politics and in conducting Civic duties, undertakes these on a non-party basis and on behalf of the whole

Council.

As set out above, the Speaker should ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for debate, and will attempt to ensure that all sides are able to have their say on matters that are discussed. In relation to any 'move to the vote' or similar procedural motion to close a debate, the constitution provides that the Speaker will allow this 'if in his/her opinion the item has been sufficiently discussed'.

8.25 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

What advice did the Mayor receive in regards to the ownership of the Henry Moore sculpture 'The Draped Seated Woman' prior to his aborted attempt to sell it?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Mayor received the advice set out in the Cabinet Report of 7th November 2012. This advice included the creation, history and ownership of the sculpture, and specialist advice from leading Counsel on the ownership.

The sale is not aborted, merely delayed due to poor weather conditions at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

8.26 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

We were pleased to hear the Mayor announce that a new youth centre will be built at Dame Colet House at the site of the old Haileybury youth centre. When can residents expect to see this youth centre open?

Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

It is anticipated that the Youth Centre will be available from Spring 2015 though we are working with the successful bidder to compress this program if possible.

8.27 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Can the Mayor update this meeting on the steps this Council is taking to prevent violence against women?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question. In light of the tragic events in Delhi, the importance of undertaking this work has been highlighted globally.

However this is work we have always felt was of crucial importance and I am deeply proud of the excellent work undertaken in this borough.

Last year I was delighted to attend the launch of a new campaign at the Jagonari Centre, just one of the many key projects in the borough.

In the Council, we have just published our first Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Plan. This is a partnership plan, developed working with all the services that support women in the borough. This is a three year plan and we have recently recruited a new dedicated officer who is working on this.

The Council already undertakes the following actions:

- Providing training to all agencies working with victims of VAWG, including police, social workers, voluntary agencies, health and all other frontline workers.
- Commission a range of services including: refuges, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs), independent sexual violence advisors (ISVAs), a 'one stop shop' run in the Jagonari centre and we provide two drop in centres within housing and health.
- We provide a helpline for victims to directly access support which is run by the Domestic Violence team in the Council. We also run a domestic violence forum and a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) for high risk victims.
- We are currently developing our Independent Domestic Violence Advice service and have increased provision by 2 additional Caseworkers.